

JORDAN INGO FORUM NEWSLETTER



JORDAN
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FORUM

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April Update

JIF SECRETARIAT

Jordan is currently facing several challenges, including rising poverty levels, increasing debt, and high rates of unemployment. Furthermore, the country is grappling with a significant influx of refugees from countries like Syria, Iraq, Sudan, and Somalia, with over 760,000 registered refugees. Addressing these issues will require a coordinated and collaborative response from all stakeholders to ensure that aid is targeted, effective, and sustainable.

During the holy month of Ramadan, people in Jordan come together to demonstrate generosity, kindness, and compassion to those in need. Jordan has a long-standing commitment to hosting refugees since its independence, and while significant steps have been taken to provide basic services to refugees, international support is still necessary.

JIF addresses these challenges by advocating for greater coordination in the humanitarian and development sectors, streamlining project approvals, enhancing government aid cooperation, and fostering a greater understanding of global aid mechanisms. Building synergies with the Economic Modernization Vision is also crucial to supporting vulnerable communities, enhancing social cohesion, and creating a brighter future for all.

JIF News:

In March 2023, JIF and regional CSO networks co-organized a two-day event in Amman called “Hear Our Voice”. The event brought together CSO platforms, NGO forums, and representatives of affected populations, refugees, and diaspora to discuss the current state of the humanitarian response in the region. The event aimed to identify areas for collective action and proactive influencing rather than finding a single voice. Key themes included finding durable solutions for internally displaced populations and refugees, the future of the response, early recovery, and resilience-building approaches, as well as the role of local actors.

The event was co-hosted by major regional NGO forums or platforms, and it was a hybrid event with up to 100 participants attending in person. The event was conducted in Arabic and English with simultaneous interpretation. The outputs of the event are expected to contribute to upcoming regional and global events.

In addition, JIF plans to pursue its support for the ongoing revision of the Inter-Sectorial Working Group’s terms of reference and strategies. JIF will also strengthen its collaboration with HIMAM and JONAF around key advocacy efforts to improve project approval mechanisms across the humanitarian and development sectors.

THE CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE CVT

Women Helping Women by Sharing Power and Hope International Women's Day 2023

What are the connotations of the word “Power?” It is a difficult question with many answers, and everyone will answer this question from their own perspective. Power means to act with great strength and the capacity to take actions or accomplish something, and to never lose hope because storms make people stronger and never last forever.

This question was answered by my client as she was exposed to major stressful situations. She had not been in touch with her family for as many as 17 years, her husband went missing, and she was the sole and principle earner for two dependents, her kids. Despite these tense situations, she was like a mountain, strong enough to provide support for herself, kids and people around her.

She was also a cancer survivor. “Life is too short and fragile, and all it takes is a simple moment to change everything you have taken for granted,” the client told me. She focused on what matters: to recover and overcome cancer. And not only did she combat cancer but she also immersed herself in providing support to cancer patients.

She came to CVT Jordan to continue her recuperation journey and to take care of herself because she said that self-worth was vital for her happiness. She said, “If you don't feel good about yourself, it is hard to feel good about anything else.” She was committed to attending her sessions, to doing her home program exercises, and she shared what she learned from CVT with the cancer patients she supported. She was always keen on doing the exercises better and asking questions more broadly in order to ensure accuracy.

For this client, power is potency, capacity and ability to provide support. She harnessed her power to serve other women with cancer, and she tried to provide them with the support that she always needed. “Sometimes, all you need is stressful and

challenging situations to get your adrenaline spiking to help you realize your potential,” the client said.

Her goals were to help people, especially women, to draw a smile to their faces and teach them how to be independent. She wanted to teach them to never lose hope, because hope is the light awaiting at the end of the tunnel despite all the dominant darkness.



Ansam Abu Sabha, senior physiotherapist, CVT Jordan

PLAN INTERNATIONAL

A Journey Towards Education



Meet Maher, the 8-year-old Syrian boy experiencing school for the first time through Plan International Jordan's Ishraq 2 project!

The project aims to combat the worst forms of child labour in the agricultural sector of the Jordan Valley area through educational sessions for children and income-generating opportunities for parents. Due to his work in agriculture, Maher's father constantly moves for jobs, meaning his family's ability to be involved in social activities and school is negatively impacted.

"My parents value education, but the places we live in have no schools in the area. So, my siblings and I never had the chance to attend school", says Maher.

As a result, Maher spent most of his time helping his father with work, something he assumed was in Maher's best interest.

"I would help them harvest produce. I was getting paid a very small sum in return. It wasn't until we met with project facilitators that they informed my family that I was engaging in child labour".

When it came to his education, Maher's father was always looking for ways to educate and teach his children, but with no access to schools, he turned to informal education sessions provided by the

project.

Maher, along with his siblings were enrolled in the project, and soon after, his love for education flourished. His teachers highlighted how his participation and curiosity made him a standout student.

Once his father witnessed Maher's commitment to his education, he realized that it was in his son's best interest to enroll in traditional schooling, but with no schools in their areas, he decided to send Maher to live with his grandparents and aunt.

When speaking about his expectations for his new experience, Maher stated that there was one unexpected outcome out of his new journey... friendship!

"I never really had friends, I was always surrounded by adults from our camp or from work, but children my age who have the same interest as me, never".

To enroll Maher in school, his father works extra hours to afford the monthly 50 Jordanian Dinar tuition fees along with a 22 Jordanian Dinar monthly payment for transport.

In the future, Maher hopes to become a pilot. He also hopes to one day build a hospital to treat all those in need who live far away and work in the agricultural sector like his father.

MERCY CORPS

At Al Zubairyah Village, Mercy Corps builds the community's capacity by enhancing its resilience



Water consumption and agriculture continue to be closely interlinked in Jordan, and they both play crucial roles in ensuring the long-term sustainability and resilience of rural communities. According to The Government of Jordan, 25% of low-income families in Jordan are estimated to rely on agriculture for income, facing unregulated working conditions and unreliable income streams during the off season. Rising temperatures are also having a severe impact on crop quality, affecting food security in rural villages. Moreover, the lack of suitable work opportunities in rural villages makes it difficult for farmers, and especially youth, to invest their time and energy in the community.

Located in Al Shoubak District, on the northwestern edge of the Ma'an Governorate, is the village of Al Zubairyah. Al Zubairyah is one of the rural villages in Jordan that is struggling with these challenges. However, what sets this village unique, though, is the way it self-manages its sole water source. Unlike other villages, Al Zubairyah Village does not rely on the government to provide water

to Households. The community established a local community-based organization (CBO), Al Furat CBO to manage the water well without support or supervision from the local authorities.

“This water well is considered a primary source of income for the community members of Al Zubairyah, approximately 50,000 trees rely on irrigation from the water pump station.” - Abdallah Al Habahbeh, member of Al Furat CBO.

Mercy Corps Jordan, through its Livelihoods and Environmental Actions for Development (LEAD) project, has begun working in Al Zubairyah to help the community improve its ability to cope with shocks and meet its long-term needs in a climate-responsive community-based approach, thereby enhancing the community's livelihoods and resilience.

“Women residing in Al Shoubak are in dire need of capacity and skill-building programs, they need to be empowered economically.” - Basma, President of Al Shoubak Women's Association.

Driven by local needs and priorities, Mercy Corps' LEAD project partners with local CBOs in Al Zubairyah and Al Shoubak to support local CBOs, smallholder farmers, food producers, and youth to better manage natural resources and strengthen rural livelihoods, through:



Livelihoods and Environmental Actions for Development project, funded by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SCD), is a two-year initiative that is being implemented in Zubairyah Village to support local CBOs, smallholder farmers, food producers, and youth to better manage natural resources and strengthen rural livelihoods.

LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION LWF

Improving Children's Well-being through Safe Spaces for Learning through Play

Za'atari camp is home to over 82,000 Syrian refugees, more than half of whom are children. While over time the camp has turned from a tented refuge to a permanent settlement, its capacities have not been able to fulfill the needs of early childhood education for the thousands of pre-school age children.

LWF's Smurf Center, the first daycare in Za'atari camp operating in District 5 since 2019, provides educational activities to children aged 3 to 5. Since its establishment, the center has welcomed over 2,600 children. In contrast with the bleak camp scenery dominated by dust and white caravans, Smurf Center is visually welcoming for children, full of colors, paintings, instruments, music, and toys to develop fine motor skills and socialize with other children.

The center offers a safe and friendly learning environment that combines different holistic methods to develop children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills. Montessori-type activities help children learn letters and basic arithmetic operations by playing and working on fine motor skills. LWF also employs other innovative educational approaches, such as storytelling using puppet shows, to educate toddlers about dealing with stress and explaining real-life events.

The daycare program promotes equal access to services, social interaction, and acceptance of children with disabilities. To increase their self-confidence, facilitators assign them various tasks in line with their capabilities and accompany them on their way to accomplishment. One of the children with disabilities who attended the Smurf center is Mohammed AlNaser, a five-year-old boy living with a mental disorder presented by short memory, speech, and movement delay. According to Mohammed's mother, Mannar, he has found a place that contributes to developing his cognitive and motion skills.

«Mohammed started going to the Smurf Center ... and he likes it a lot because he enjoys playing with cars and in the playground. He has new friends, and his movement has improved. Also, I noticed that he asks more questions since he started going to the Smurf center... I noticed he is more conscious and has more energy.» *Mannar AlNaser*



LWF's Smurf Center, the first daycare in Za'atari camp

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS

Short-term goals lead to long-term success

Hayat, an 82-year-old Syrian refugee, that has been in Amman, Jordan since 2012.

Life has never been easy for Hayat and her family. Prior to the conflict in Syria, Hayat explains that the situation was manageable but when the conflict started in Syria and more specifically in Homs, it became more dangerous than ever.

Given the implied risks, Hayat and her family had enough and decided to flee to Jordan. They stayed in Al Zaa'tari Camp for 3 days and then got settled in Amman.

Her children lived in a tough environment, especially with no jobs which that the family has no kind of income.

Hayat spent nine days at Al-Basheer Hospital, after a fall in her home in mid-August and left her with a broken right hip. She couldn't practice her daily routine.

"We were always afraid of getting sick due to the financial burden implied" Hayat said.

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS' ASSISTANCE AND HOW IT HELPED

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS' ASSISTANCE AND HOW IT HELPED

Hayat was hospitalized for several days. She underwent surgery to fix her fracture with a metal plate to repair her broken hip.

The cost of the medical expenses, consumables, and additional medications that Hayat's family had to pay for was beyond their means and sought assistance from International Medical Corps cash health team for urgent assistance.

Proper counseling and guidance were provided to the patient by the team. In addition to support as well as reassurance in receiving the required urgent relief.

Once settled in Al-Basheer Hospital, Hayat's case began to shift as she watched her medical team carefully craft a plan to help her recover from her fracture and get back to her former routine. A board in her room that projected her plan of management and accomplishments was a monumental motivator.

Our cash-for-health team has responded to the urgent need of the family and provided them with the require assistance and the ongoing support needed through the whole period and worked 24/7 to settle her payment and invoice and provide her with the needed support.



*JordanAwni Al Dahamsheeh,
Cash for Health Officer at
International Medical Corps*

Hayat's positive attitude and hard work helped her improve. She will continue her therapy at home as she grows stronger each day. She said she's looking forward to practice her daily routine again spending time with her family.

"I once read a quote that has inspired me to always go the extra mile in supporting our beneficiaries. Helping others is not limited to providing food, shelter, and so forth, but includes relieving the basic causes of suffering and providing the basic causes of happiness. This indicator was measured by the happiness we felt as a team while working to provide relief for the beneficiaries." Al Dahamsheeh said.

As we all know, a functional family is a basic condition for the optimal social functioning of all its members. Through the fulfillment of functions imposed by society, the family creates a safe environment for the survival and development of family members. Family functioning depends on the functioning of the family in different dimensions.

Two of the key dimensions are financial stability and family members' health, which we aim always to meet through our intervention

BLOMUNT

From Desert to Oasis: Supporting a Woman-Owned Succulent Farm in Water-Scarce Jordan

Jordan is among the most water-scarce countries in the world, with renewable water resources per capita well below the global average.[1] This poses a major challenge for people who want to make a living off their agricultural land.

For Tamadur, a woman from Mafraq, Jordan, nothing seemed to grow well on her property. But as she looked over her dry land one morning, she noticed something was growing – a potted cactus on her balcony that had started sprouting. That's when she had the idea to start a cactus and succulent farm.



Tamadur had always wanted to make something of her land. Unfortunately, the area lacks a sufficient supply of water, a critical resource to cultivate this tough terrain.

Tamadur, hoping to use the few natural resources at hand, started separating the small cacti to help them multiply and planting them in pots around her property. As the cacti grew in size and number, she began to sell them.

Operating a business was new to Tamadur and her family. She did not know how to manage the business, calculate costs and profits, or market her products. She also needed a proper greenhouse for the growing cacti and succulents but was not earning enough to invest in that level of equipment. Faced with these challenges, Tamadur sought support to help grow her plant nursery. She came across a social media page for Smart DESERT, a program funded by the French Development Agency and implemented by a consortium of organizations led by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Within this consortium, Blumont leads an effort to directly support 255 agricultural home-based businesses to generate off-season income. Our team provides educational, administrative, and legal support to Syrian and Jordanian entrepreneurs before giving them resources to start or expand their at-home projects. With these tools, agricultural entrepreneurs can build sustainable sources of income.

Soon after Tamadur discovered the Smart DESERT program online and applied for support, she received guidance, legal support, training, and adequate equipment for her plant nursery.

Tamadur saw the potential for her business to benefit from the program's trainings and comprehensive assistance. Excited at the opportunity, she applied online, joining a cohort of hundreds of home-based business owners in Jordan receiving support from Smart DESERT.

Once enrolled, Tamadur found the Smart DESERT trainings highly helpful – particularly the marketing and finance units. “After the training, I made a page for our project on social media, through which I was able to reach many customers who live in other governorates,” she said. “I did not have any previous knowledge about e-marketing, cost management, and profit calculation, but now I use all these skills to develop and improve my project.”



Smart DESERT empowers agricultural entrepreneurs like Tamadur and her husband with supplies and resources for sustainable success.

To overcome the financial barriers of a start-up, our team equipped Tamadur with greenhouses, pots, gardening tools, and peat moss for her cacti. These resources help her grow more plants, reduce costs, and supply new markets.

“The equipment from Smart DESERT sped up the production process and increased our sales. Currently, all our plants are inside greenhouses to protect them from weather, especially in cold winter periods,” she said.

With Tamadur overseeing and leading the business and her husband helping tend to the plants, their family has a new source of regular income despite water scarcity in the region. The couple has also taken on two part-time employees to meet the growing demand for their cacti and succulents.

In the desert, Tamadur's business is blossoming.

GOOD NEIGHBORS INTERNATIONAL

Using gifts-in-kind to promote solidarity and social cohesion.

Since its establishment in 2020, GNI Jordan is emphasizing 1) humanitarian intervention, Community Development projects; 2) Partnership and Networking; 3) Climate Change response; 4) Gifts-in-Kind, and 5) Localization.

Gifts-in-kind program is one of the core keywords for GNI Jordan's strategy which supports promoting solidarity, and social cohesion among different communities in Jordan's urban, and rural areas, and refugee camps.

In line with the emphasis on comprehensive partnerships with diverse stakeholders, GNI Jordan secured Gifts-in-Kind Winter Clothing items distribution in cooperation with more than (23) national and international partners including governments, national agencies, UN agencies, and community-based organizations from **East Amman, Zarqa, Balqa, Azraq City, Mafraq (Ruwaished), Jerash, Ajloun, Irbid, Karak, Ma'an, Aqaba, Palestinian Refugee Camps, Northern, and Southern Jordan Valley** to provide feasible targeted humanitarian aid assistance to benefit Jordan's underprivileged, as well as the marginalized Syrian, and other refugees, particularly women and girls in urban, rural, and most remote areas in Jordan.

A total of (31,248) girls and young women regardless of their nationality, status, ethnicity, race, gender, age, religion, sexuality, ability, or any other factor were targeted in the campaign, including girls and young women with disabilities aiming to ease the burden of winter on them and their families. Further distributions have also been organized to benefit (70) girls in schools in the Kingdom.



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Global Village (GV) program

One of the unique features of Habitat for Humanity is our ability to engage volunteers in our work. The Global Village (GV) program provides opportunities for people of different cultures to live and work together in a spirit of partnership and volunteerism in more than 40 countries. Team members experience firsthand the burden of substandard housing, they learn what Habitat for Humanity is doing to address the issue and how all people can help to break the cycle of poverty.

In 2003, Habitat for Humanity - Jordan hosted the first volunteering group and since that the groups continue to come to reach more than one hundred (100) groups, almost 1200 volunteer under GV program until under this program until COVID-19. Participating in a Global Village team offers a unique travel experience and an unforgettable opportunity to be fully immersed in the local community. Team members experience great personal growth through cultural and linguistic challenges and return to their home countries transformed.

Since last year, the Area Vice President - Europe & Middle East, has announced that the GV program will be relaunch in March 2023 in a few countries, including Jordan. Last month, HFHJ hosted more than 200 volunteers coming from Georgetown University in Qatar and New York University in Abu Dhabi to participate in our GV program with our local partners in Al Azraq and Al Korah district in Irbid governorate.

Volunteers have engaged in the construction of three new sites; new green home in Al Azraq city, one new home and one school in Al Kora district in Irbid in collaboration with our local partners, we offer a unique volunteering experience and an unforgettable memory when being fully immersed with the local community. Volunteers experience great personal growth through cultural and linguistic encounters and return to their home countries transformed. More volunteers from the GV network are currently planning to visit Jordan by May.

Habitat for Humanity has adopted green initiatives in all its interventions through the “Promoting Green, Sustainable Households in Low-Income, Vulnerable Households & Communities across Jordan” project which aim to support vulnerable Jordanian and Syrian households to improve shelter security, strengthen household climate resilience and reduce household energy consumption, support vulnerable Jordanian and Syrian households through the provision of green, inclusive and sustainable housing, and increase the understanding of energy efficiency and climate resilience at a household level

within targeted neighborhoods and communities. This project demonstrates that all families, regardless of income level, can build or rehabilitate their homes to reduce household energy consumption and adapt to a changing climate.

Green homes are important because they are designed to minimize the negative impact on the environment and human health while maximizing energy efficiency and sustainability. They use renewable resources, reduce waste and emissions, and promote a healthy living environment. Green homes not only help to reduce the carbon footprint and save on energy costs but also contribute to the overall well-being and quality of life of the occupants.

It is worth to mention that Habitat for Humanity is a global non-profit humanitarian organization that works to empower people in the poorest communities in the world to overcome the chronic shortage of adequate housing and provide homes worthy of human dignity by building, rehabilitating, and repairing substandard homes for refugees and low-income Jordanian families. It also plays a role in raising awareness among beneficiaries regarding shelter and energy consumption by working with volunteers and many local partners in the local community. She is still working on projects for the revolving fund and the refugee crisis initiative in the Middle East during the new year, funded by Habitat for Humanity International and supported by its branches in 70 countries around the world.



The GV from Georgetown University in Qatar and helpers from Wahat Al-Azraq CBO

HUMANITY & INCLUSION

HASAN, THE RADIO SHOW BENEFICIARY

Hasan A., 56-year-old man, from Salt Governorate in Jordan, with an amputation below the knee in his right foot as an implication of diabetes in February 2022. He lives with his wife and youngest son in a modest one-bedroom apartment with a steep 37-staircase to access, which the neighbors are helping to renovate.

He used to work 12-hour days driving buses until a nail in the foot changed his life forever.

Left untreated at first, Gregarine spread and lost sensation in his foot after being treated at the Salt General Hospital for 14 days with no success. The whole family gathered at the hospital for support when Hasan had to take the final decision to amputate. He never left his house again and began having phantom pains some nights and searching for his leg other nights.

The story began when a local morning radio show was fund-raising for Hasan on air to support him in fulfilling his dream of acquiring a prosthetic leg. He sought public assistance, stating that he had received a small sum of money from relatives, about 500 JOD to begin with. An HI employee was on his way to the office by taxi when he overheard the situation on the radio and didn't hesitate to call the show and tell them about Humanity and Inclusion–Jordan Mission Services and that there is no need to continue the donation campaign from the public. As part of the HI rehabilitation program, with the generous funding of the U.S. Department of State:

Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration will cover the prosthetic and any physical therapy sessions required.

HI's P&O technical officer visited Hasan at his home in Salt to identify his needs. After the assessment, Hasan was referred to HI's partner Community Development Center (CDC) in Al-Baq'aa, which was the closest center to his residence.

Hasan started with 8 physiotherapy sessions in order to strengthen his lower limb muscles to be ready for prosthetic fitting. After that, he was referred to P&O Workshop to take the measurements. Hasan received a transtibial prosthesis, and he took several sessions on how to use his device.

Hasan was very happy with the provided services and kind treatment, as well as with his new prosthetic limb, regardless of the unpleasant events that he went through.

Hasan has a motivated personality; he insists on walking again. His will to be active was shown to all staff who were involved in his treatment journey. He isn't used to the prosthetic yet and needs more hours and experience using it to get over his fears.

Hasan used his both hands to climb up the stairs before his first assessment session with HI, and eventually left the rehabilitation center walking on foot.



“Now I can use the bathroom by myself and visit my relatives with the walker,”

INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

CHARITIES

Waseem's Story: Overcoming Speech Challenges to Pursue His Dreams

When Waseem, a Syrian refugee child living in Jordan, was three years old, he had an accident. Then his mother, Arwa, began noticing issues with her son's speech. Seemingly overnight, Waseem struggled to communicate with his family, causing Arwa and her husband to worry. They began taking Waseem to nearby public and private centers for evaluation but could not find anyone in Zarqa, where they live, who could help their son.

Arwa's sister recommended they visit the clinic of IOCC's local partner King Hussein Foundation Institute for Family Health (IFH) in Zarqa for a consultation. Arwa's sister had taken her daughter there and had seen great progress through the rehabilitation sessions with disability specialists. Based on Arwa's poor experiences visiting centers and her inability to find support for her son, she was hesitant but eventually decided that she would try one more option.

Through assessment by trained community-based rehabilitation workers (CBRWs) and a consultation with disability specialists at IFH who assessed speech and perceptual and cognitive skills, IFH determined that Waseem needed one-on-one speech therapy.

Through an IOCC program supported by the US State Department Bureau for Population, Refugees, & Migration (PRM), Waseem attended 24 speech therapy sessions with a specialist. By the conclusion of his treatment plan, he was showing significant improvement in communication and interaction with others.

Waseem dreams of being a civil engineer and participating in his school's radio program; however, his accident and its impact on his communication skills looked as if they would derail his plans. His struggles communicating also impacted his social behavior, attitude, and ability to engage with others.



But after undergoing intensive rehabilitation sessions, Waseem can now engage in his community, particularly in school. Last year, Waseem and his mother had discussed his hopes to participate in a school radio program. "My dream came true," Arwa told IOCC. "He signed up for the radio show ... and began practicing his speech with me. He is more confident now, and his speech is smoother than before. When he speaks, everyone can tell the difference." Waseem returned to the IFH speech therapist, beaming with pride, and said, "So far, I've spoken twice on the school radio, and I am planning to do it again and again!"

With support from PRM, IOCC has helped Waseem and other refugee and vulnerable Jordanian children with impairments and disabilities. Through provision of assistive devices, rehabilitation therapy, psychosocial support, and other activities, IOCC ensures the inclusion of children with disabilities in their classroom and their wider community.

JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE JORDAN JRS

The healing power of art, the story of Fowza, artist and refugee from Somalia

Fowza came to Jordan when she was 16 years old. Somalia, her homeland, was not a safe place to live and grow up. Her mother decided to move with the family looking for safety, and a chance of better opportunities for Fowza and her siblings. “She is my role model.

She is a resilient woman, and she has been through a lot, and she never lost hope. She wanted us to become role models, and leaders, and change-makers, and we are still working on it.” Fowza started soon to attend JRS courses. “At that time I was not very confident in myself, I was a bit shy, but all the knowledge and skills, and the people that came across my way, helped me to become a confident, an open-minded and non-judgmental person” she tells. From being a student, she started then to volunteer as English teacher with JRS and as Diploma program coordinator with JWL (Jesuit Worldwide Learning).

She says that “this was a blessing for me, because I have always dreamed to continue with my education, and finding these opportunities was a dream coming true”. She says, “JRS feels mostly like home to people. It gives them opportunities again. It makes them feel they are valuable, they are important, they are cared for. The outside world sometimes can be risky, and dangerous, but when you enter JRS place you feel a sense of calmness, because you see different people, a diverse group of students, and teachers.

It makes us build bridges of acceptance, of empathy also, and destroy the walls. Because before people have walls, and they are scared of everything that is different, but when they came under the roof of JRS, they step outside their comfort zone and they get to know different people. This helps them make friends, and connect with other people and learn from them”.



Fowza started painting just as a hobby, when she was a kid. What started as a hobby became then an expression tool? “It helps me to organize my thoughts, communicate my message, and to connect with other people through art. So it’s more like a therapy to me. It helps me to relax, to release some stress and the outside pressure. It helps me sometimes to disconnect from the world” she tells. Fowza started to collaborate with JRS and portray refugee stories and inspirational messages of solidarity, resilience and hope through her drawings. In a colorful and blossoming painting, she portrayed the story of a refugee from Iraq, Amal*, met at JRS. The painting represents the strength and resilience of Amal, despite all the difficulties she faced. The colorful flowers represent the light and love inside her, whose seeds and petals fly and spread around her, to her community and the people she cares for.

The hand and watering can be JRS, that waters her with care, support, love, and helps her to blossom.

Jordan: Improving familial and social cohesion through PSS

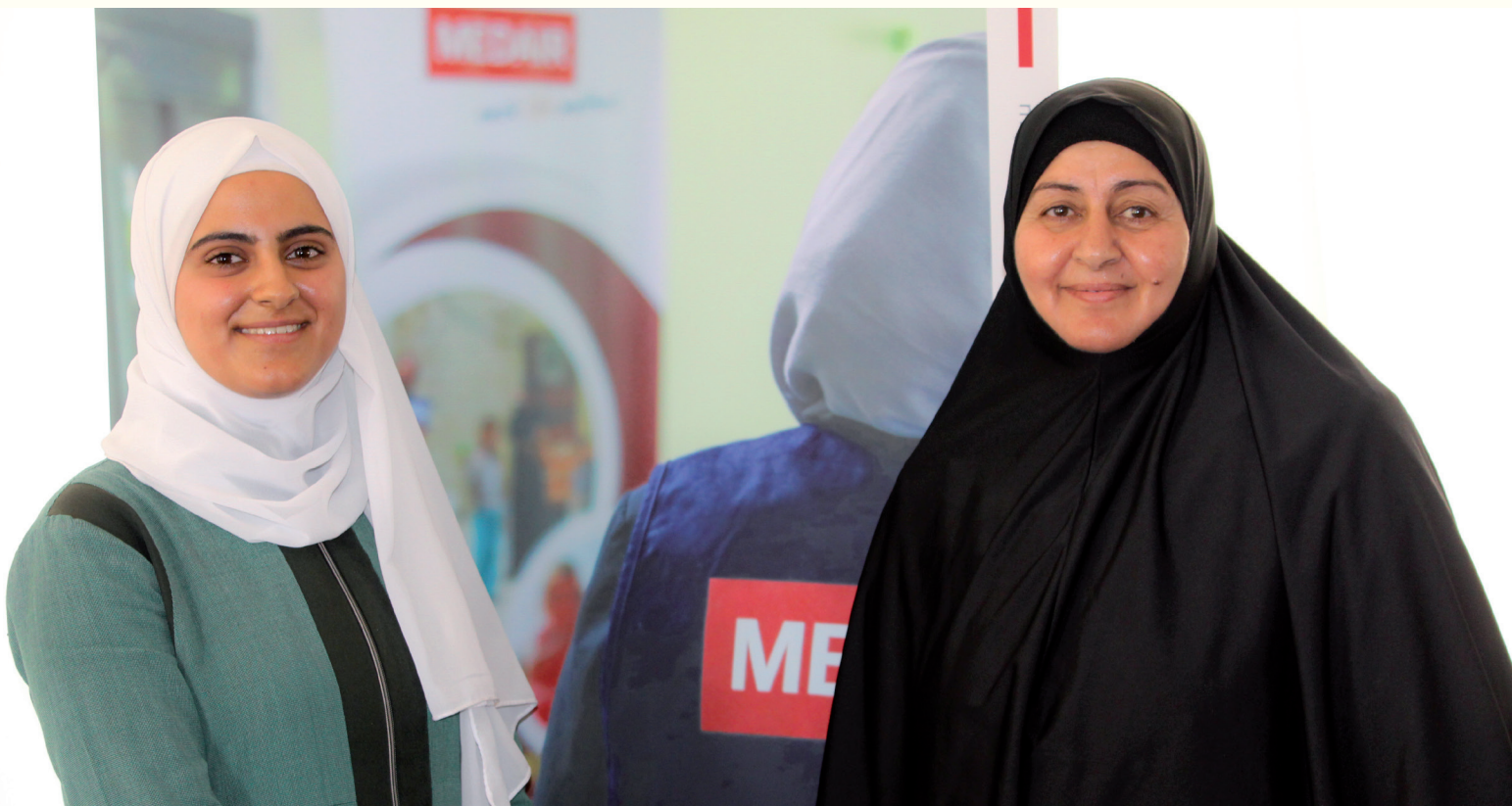
High levels of psychosocial stress continue to burden refugees and in focus group discussions, Medair heard from families who expressed increased interpersonal stress due to changing circumstances, and that adolescents and caregivers within families find it challenging to communicate well with each other. Adolescents often feel misunderstood and pressed by caregivers, while caregivers fear of 'losing' their child to a changing world, not knowing how to reach out and support them anymore.

Medair's Psychosocial support (PSS) curriculum seeks to promote well-being and healthy psychosocial development of adolescents, in addition to creating room for improved communication between adolescents and their parents/ caregivers through peer-to-peer support groups. Medair delivers six sessions with adolescents, two sessions with caregivers and one joint session for adolescents and their caregivers to enhance mutual understanding and harmony. Adolescents feel supported in their self-development (development of social, emotional and self-management skills), feel better able to communicate with their parents about issues they care about and feel more connected to each other, their family and the community they live in, fostering familial and social cohesion.

Lama, is 16 years old, and is a Syrian refugee. Through Medair's PSS group sessions, she improved her social and communication skills. She can now better express herself clearly. She shared: "the sessions helped me recognize harmful thoughts and replace them with thoughts that help me heal". Lama said.

The sessions for caregivers and parents provides an opportunity for them to come together with their children. They work on improving communication skills, which helps to reduce gaps between children and their parents and caregivers. "The sessions have improved family communication," pointed out Lama's caregiver. Some parents discover the talent, dreams, problems, strengths, and weaknesses of their children in this session.

"The lessons from the sessions will stay with me forever. I have learned how I should talk with parents, how I can help them, and how the relationship between us can be like a friendship. I want to say to my parents that I love you more than anything in the world, and I'm so glad to be your daughter" Lama added.



SPARK JORDAN

Three influencers join SPARK's Women's Day campaign meeting entrepreneurs and women-led businesses

To celebrate International Women's Day, SPARK invited three of the Middle East's top social media influencers, Farrah Matalqa, Mohammad Sabbagh, and Ala'a Hamdan, to visit women-led businesses in Jordan and highlight women's challenges in bridging the gender gap in the digital sector.

This year's International Women's Day was dedicated by UN Women to 'DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality'. At SPARK, we strive to close the digital divide for young people, especially women and refugee women, living in fragile and conflict-affected areas. To celebrate women in tech, women-led businesses and women improving their digital skills, SPARK was joined by three of the Middle East's top social media influencers.

Farrah Matalqa, the founder of the Giving Joy Foundation, is known by her audience for supporting less fortunate students by providing them with scholarships in Jordan through crowdfunding campaigns. Farrah visited several women-led startups that have been supported by SPARK and our partners. Farrah met with the Alefredo Books team, made up of 9 females and 1 male, to discuss their EdTech platform. Alefredo Books supports all grade students with exams, summaries, and an academic book marketplace in hard and digital formats. They also encourage book recycling and respect for intellectual property. The EdTech platform joined the From Innovation to Creation program to become market-ready and gain access to a valuable network, providing opportunities for scaling up.



Farrah went to Irbid, north of Jordan, to meet the two founders of Studio-Raa, Raneem Muqbel and Rawan Mistareehi. Studio Ra is a sustainable and unique design studio that offers personalized and

eco-friendly products and sells them worldwide through their website. Studio Ra received custom coaching sessions through the Economic Resilience through COVID-19

program, which enabled them to launch a new production line that provided jobs for 13 refugee women. and Yasmina Made With Love, which has each benefited from marketing, packaging and shipping support through Souq Fann and has increased their sales. "Enabling women to participate in the digital sector is essential as it offers them opportunities to broaden their customer base. Based on the examples I have seen today, I am confident that women are equally capable as men," Matalqa commented.

Ala Hamdan, a social media influencer, filmmaker and visual storyteller known for telling women's stories and advocating for women's rights, visited Viavii, an online community marketplace that allows people to explore, book and host in-person and online experiences from all around the world. The marketplace allows people to explore and host in-person and online experiences all around the world. Viavii benefited from SPARK's programme, Economic Resilience through COVID-19, to take advantage of customized coaching sessions and training aimed at expanding their business and accessing new markets. As a result, Viavii was able to expand its platform to include Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Ala booked and enjoyed Relief Plaster Artwork, one of the local experiences booked through the Viavii platform. Ala also visited Hanady Alzanoun, the founder of Bedouin Spirit and listened to her experience of digitalising her businesses through the SouqFann platform, supported by SPARK. "Each woman I met during the day had a unique story that deserves to be highlighted, with a particular emphasis on their need for mentorship and funding in order to address the gender gap present in the digital world," said Hamdan.

