Humanitarian and Development Overview

With the Government of Syria largely retaking the southern regions of Dara’a and Quneitra, the capacity and political space for UN and NGOs to undertake cross-border activities from Jordan immensely reduced over the summer.

Further east, the humanitarian situation of some 45,000 people at Rukban continued to raise strong concerns over the summer and in August, several hundred families were reported to have moved out of the camp due to poor living conditions while no agreement on humanitarian convoy was reached. Security clearance for medical admission for the most serious cases remains largely insufficient compared with the needs: in July and August, only 134 referrals were admitted in Jordan’s hospitals. The situation in Rukban would later extremely deteriorate in the following months, especially the access to medical care, with dramatic consequences on the population, including cases of death.

At the end of August, Azraq camp was hosting 40,846 registered individuals, a decreased number largely due to the ‘amnesty’ process undertook by the Government of Jordan and UNHCR to ‘rectify’ the status of Syrian refugees who had previously left the camps for the host communities without authorization. Of note, the number of refugees in V5 increased, with 9,803 individuals in Village 5 (V5), due to the forced relocation of individuals from host communities to the camp, officially on security grounds. Over July and August, the screening process allowing V5 residents to transfer out of the fenced areas of the camp was still ongoing, albeit slowly.
At the end of August, **112,686 work permits** had been issued by the Government of Jordan since January 2016. As a progress, the Cabinet granted an exception to Syrian refugees in the manufacturing sector so they are not targeted by the reduction of foreign labour quotas.

### Partners activities

#### Camps

**World Vision: Protecting an oasis in the desert through effective solid waste management**

The Azraq Wetland Reserve was established in 1978 to conserve the precious oasis. Twenty-six kilometres west lies Azraq Refugee camp, which generates around 21 metric tons of solid waste daily.

Prior to the establishment of the Green Centre in October 2017, all the solid waste generated in the Azraq refugee camp were collected and sent directly to the municipal landfill. Today, the Green Centre (built by the Environmentally Responsible Solid Waste Management Project and funded by the European Union and World Vision) recovers an average of 34 tons of recyclable waste per month. The segregation of solid waste within each refugee shelter and the sorting of collected waste in the Green Centre is reducing the volume of solid waste sent to the landfill.

“The safe disposal of solid waste is critical to ensuring the protection of the environment and public health,” says Nicole Peter, Interim Response Manager “World Vision Jordan project also includes a behavioral change component, which provides indispensable services in the camp.” “We started to think differently about waste: garbage is seen as a source of opportunity providing income to Syrian refugees through its cash for work and recycling components” She added.

Hasmik Kocharyan, Project Manager stressed “after the transition of the solid waste management services in the camp into a new system, we were able to ensure a stable waste collection for 36,699 refugees. The proceeds from the sale of recyclable materials cover the landfill cost thus removing the burden from the international community” she added, “Most importantly, we were able to engage the refugees through the collection, sorting, campaigning and segregating of waste in the camp!”

The volume of solid waste sent to the landfill was reduced to 514 tons monthly with the current waste sorting. A solar grid generates sufficient electricity to operate the Green Centre including the bailer to compact waste. A conveyor belt and plastic shredder are in the process of acquisition to further enhance the efficiency of the Green Centre.

In June 2018, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) began the construction on a new SANAD community center in Village 5 of Azraq camp.

Construction of the center, completed in October, was carried out by Syrian refugees recruited through the official camp incentive-based-volunteering (IBV) scheme run by CARE and UNHCR. Beneficiaries living in Village 5 were integrated in the project design: they provided inputs through focus group discussions and community dialogue fora. DRC is currently hosting structured and recreational psycho-social support (PSS) activities, vocational and life skills training, and cash-for-work opportunities for the vulnerable population living in Village 5.
Similar to its activities in villages 3 and 6, the livelihood training and PSS activities are facilitated by skilled Syrian refugees, also recruited in coordination with CARE through the IBV scheme, and who have received intensive training from DRC’s protection and livelihood staff. In the initial stages of the project implementation, it was clear to DRC staff that individuals living in village 5 have heightened levels of trauma and possess additional needs in comparison to those living in the open areas of the camp.

The first advanced training course in sewing and tailoring began October 2018 and PSS activities are expected to begin in the weeks to come. In the upcoming period, DRC will coordinate closely with partners working in Village 5 to conduct a more in-depth needs assessment to gain a better understanding of the unique needs of the most vulnerable individuals living in Village 5.

**Care inaugurates an art showroom in Azraq Camp**

The Arzaq art showroom is a curation of the work produced over the past four years by CARE’s artistic initiatives run in the camp. The showroom is located in the CARE Community Centre in village 6, and is run completely by Syrian refugees. It showcases a variety of work created by them such as paintings, sculptures, ceramics, accessories, clothes, toys, and embroidery.

The main purpose of this showroom is to colour the lives of the refugees and give them a new sense of hope in the arid land and environment that they live in. It also acts as an open depository for the art pieces produced, where the refugees can display their work and take pride in what they have accomplished. The showroom also offers the artists a chance to sell their artwork and generate income which is crucial, given that the work opportunities in the camp are limited. The showroom also helps skilled refugees to share their skill and knowledge with others, and keep their talent alive. It also provides a platform to keep their heritage and roots embedded in a home away from home.

Since its opening, more than fifty men and women, girls, and boys have showcased their artwork, improved their psychosocial well-being, and their financial situation.

**FCA runs English classes in Azraq Refugee Camp**

Ayman, 13, and his family left their hometown, Minbii in the north of Syria, to Jordan in the early of 2016 and ended up in Azraq camp for Syrian refugees in Jordan. Life in the camp was a big challenge for him. He had been away from school for about two years back in Syria and had to adapt to an entire new setting, a new school, and a new educational system.

“At the beginning, I spent most of the time at the shelter, I only left home to school” Ayman says. “I didn’t have any friends or relatives here in the camp”. But this didn’t detract his passion for learning English, so once he heard about the Finn Church Aid's (FCA) English courses, he enrolled directly, supported by his father, Mr. Abd Alhade.

Very quickly, Ayman moved up from one level to another, showing unmatched motivation. His father, an agronomist, started attending the English classes as well to support his son and refresh his own English language skills.

“I love seeing my father sitting beside me in the class” Ayman explains with a smile “It helps me a lot, especially when I do some mistakes as he corrects me... And I even corrected his!” Ayman says. “At home, we revise the new words we learnt during the day, which helps me to memorize them easily “.

This extraordinary relationship between the father and his son became an example for the students and other parents started attending classes with their children to stimulate them. Ayman now has lots of friends who take him as a role model. Moreover, he has been honoured in his school for being the first in his class.
IMC: Women are benefiting from life-changing surgeries at Azraq Refugee Camp

When Hajar, a 39-year-old refugee from Homs, first met with Dr. Hamza at International Medical Corps’ (IMC) hospital in Azraq Refugee Camp, she thought she was losing her mind. For two years, she had been severely anaemic, constantly tired and often confined to her shelter. Ordinary tasks such as food shopping, spending time with her family or going to the toilet had become a struggle. But Hajar was also haunted by an unspoken agony—an overwhelming feeling of shame.

As soon as Dr. Hamza examined her, the reason for her anaemia and fatigue quickly became clear: a very large fibroid—a benign tumour—was growing inside her womb. It was large enough for people to believe that she was expecting another child. No wonder that seemingly ordinary tasks had become so difficult.

Hajar’s condition, however complicated, had to give way for more urgent cases at Azraq Refugee Camp, constrained by limited aid and unlimited need. Hajar was stuck—she was not sick enough to be put forward for surgery but was so unwell that she could not live a normal life. And things were getting worse. As the tumour grew, it required more blood—leaving Hajar tired to the edge of desperation.

It was not until European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), by request of IMCs’ hospital manager Dr. Hamza, stepped in and gave the green light that Hajar finally received the treatment that she needed—and deserved.

Two days after her surgery, Hajar was already up and walking, on her way to a speedy recovery. Hajar’s surgery is a testament to how large-scale aid truly can deliver life-changing impact on a small scale. Hajar’s intervention will not only benefit her health and well-being; it serves a greater purpose, too. Because Dr. Hamza wants more women to get the help that Hajar did, he encourages his patients to speak to their community about the services the hospital provides. This will go a long way toward breaking taboos and addressing silent struggles like the one Hajar faced.

Spark Building entrepreneurs to combat unemployment rates

In the second quarter of 2018, the unemployment rate in Jordan rose again to 18.7%. The struggling economy needs a boost in order to provide jobs for the country’s young population, of which approximately 55% are under the age of 25. SPARK and the University of Petra (UoP) have been responding to this urgent need by introducing entrepreneurship as a viable career path for youth.

This summer, SPARK held an entrepreneurship course and competition whereby applicants with the most promising business ideas were invited to join the advanced 3-week course in the Startup Incubation Quarter (SIQ) at the UoP.

This course offered the unique opportunity to collaborate with the International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), founded by SPARK. The IBCM developed a syllabus and shared valuable content with the Jordanian university, which in turn provided feedback to tailor the materials for the local context.

Four experienced entrepreneurship experts taught the different modules alongside the university’s local professors. The co-teaching method produced interactive sessions and exposed the students to international and local case studies. To bridge the gap between theory and practice, the course included guest speakers, field visits and one-on-one coaching.
The 3 weeks training ended with 12 teams pitching their business ideas in front of a jury of incubation experts, CEOs, business owners, and SMEs. The ‘Takallam team’, who won the first prize, had designed a product dedicated to assisting people with a stutter. The device and accompanying app they developed reduces the rate of stuttering by up to 90%! The entrepreneurship course helped the team to sculpt their idea and presentation skills in a way that made it appealing for potential investors.

The runner-up business idea went to the ‘Q.Jo team’, which business idea involved designing an interactive, digital platform for daily competitions, called ‘Questions and Answers’. The winners went home with cash prizes and a one-year incubation at SIQ to support them on their journey.

SPARK is now expanding this model to work within 5 universities on Winter Entrepreneurship School in Jordan, where it will be implemented according to each university’s needs. Learn more

IOCC Hosts Job Fair for Jordanian and Syrian Refugee PWDs in Amman

On September 4, International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) held its second job fair for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Amman. The event was attended by 316 job seekers, including 270 PWDs. The event’s aim was to connect employers and PWDs, including those who have completed employability classes and vocational training through IOCC’s Livelihood Resource Center in East Amman.

In total, 15 companies participated in the job fair, ranging from a bakery to food manufacturing to hotels. In addition, representatives from the Ministry of Labor Office of Employment of PWDs, the International Labor Organization, and a local organization that supports persons with mental disabilities attended to provide additional support in job matching.

PWDs face numerous barriers to formal employment in Jordan – including stigma, transportation difficulties, and concerns within companies about perception and performance of PWDs. IOCC is working to raise awareness among PWDs (both Jordanians and Syrian refugees) about their rights under Jordanian law, as well as ensuring that employers are aware of their responsibilities under Law No. 20 for the Year 2017: Law on the Rights of PWDs Act.

Under this law, PWDs may not be excluded from work or training because of disability. Government and nongovernment authorities must also provide reasonable accommodation to enable PWDs to perform, retain their jobs, and attain promotions. Companies or organizations with 25–50 employees must pledge to hire at least one PWD; those with more than 50 employees must assign 4% of relevant vacancies to PWDs.

Despite the challenges that Jordanian and Syrian refugee PWDs face, those participating in IOCC’s livelihood programming are enthusiastic about potential opportunities in Jordan’s formal labor market.

Action Aid: For the love of voluntary work

Rahel Barakat is a 22-year-old young woman with a passion for voluntary work. She participated in ActionAid’s Arab Region projects “Strengthening youth civic and political engagement in Jordan” funded by Danish Arab Partnership Program (DAPP) and in June visited a youth hub in Denmark, as part of an exchange program organized by ActionAid Arab Region and their partner Tammey.

Rahel’s main priority was to learn, discover, and empower herself, she wanted to make a change in her community. “Since my first year in the university I was involved in different voluntary work”, she said.
She added: “I think our Ministry of Youth should invest more in giving opportunities for youth to travel, discover and exchange ideas and learn from each other, it will change the way they think”. She continued “There is a lot of unique things that can be easily applied here in Liwan, one example is how they are using furniture in a smart and environmentally friendly way. We can work on that”.

Liwan Space/youth hub is located in Amman, and it is part of "Strengthening Civic and Political Participation of Youth in Jordan", the project is funded by, implemented by DAAP, Action Aid Arab Region and their partner Tammey.

Check out the space on social media: Facebook

LWF: Food Production and Self-Help Group

Noor is one of those people who face every difficulty with a smile and a positive mind.

The mother of four has been part of Nashmiat Urduniat for a couple of years. Each group member established home gardens to grow their own fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Some are also raising rabbits and chicken, which provides the eggs and meat necessary for their catering activity, while others are producing olive oil, yogurt, and soaps. These homemade quality products are one of the strengths of Nashmiat Urduniat.

The Lutheran World Federation’s (LWF) project provided an additional support to their activity. Besides new material for the group, each woman greatly benefitted from the various training programs offered during the past year. Noor especially mentioned the marketing training that helped the group to better market and sale their produce. She participated in the two Bazaars, which was an enriching experience and a great opportunity to increase the group’s visibility. The various training and Bazaars were also a chance to discuss with women from other Self-Help Groups and learn from them.

War Child: Time to be a child project

War Child Canada is implementing Time to be a Child project (funded by IKEA foundation) since January 2017 in Hashmi Al Shamali and Sweileh in partnership with two local community based organizations (CBO). This project aims to improve the psychological health of refugee and vulnerable host community members by providing Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) programs, psychological support programs (PSS) for children and youth, youth empowerment, recreational activities, psychosocial skills and support for parents.
Ruba, a 30 year-old Syrian refugee and mother of two decided to participate in the Parenting Program in Sanabel Al Khair CBO in Hashmi Area in Amman. Nervous, she used to get angry easily and did not know how to deal with her issues and to negotiate with others.

The PSS program allowed her to control her emotions and solve her issues, which has reflected on her family. Along with the other participants, she started a Whatsapp group in order to stay in touch and continue supporting each other.

In July and August, 487 beneficiaries, including 218 children and 269 parents benefitted from the program. WCC will expand programing to include livelihoods, Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and legal aid for beneficiary groups in those target communities.

ICMC: Empowering Women Through Literacy

Literacy is a right, as well as a tool for achieving other rights. It increases economic opportunities, mobility, and the chance to overcome poverty. However, 26% of International Catholic Migration Commission’s (ICMC) adult Syrian beneficiaries report that they cannot read and write. Unable to fulfill even simple tasks, many struggles to find work and are at increased risk of exploitation and abuse. Breaking the cycle of illiteracy in vulnerable communities is crucial.

Fairouz knows the daily struggle brought by illiteracy all too well. Having grown up in rural Damascus with limited access to education, Fairouz and her entire family arrived in Jordan illiterate. “Illiteracy is dark. When you are unable to read, the world is a dark place.” Whilst she learned to cope in her hometown, Fairouz found it extremely difficult to adapt to living in the host community. “Life became very difficult when we arrived in Mafraq because we were in a new place and couldn’t read signs, doctors reports, or use a phone”. Fairouz is the primary caregiver of her son, who has severe physical disabilities and suffers from brain seizures and convulsions. She found it difficult to keep up with the doctor’s instructions or read his prescriptions. "Not being able to read made it so much harder to care for him".

ICMC’s Arabic literacy program seeks to empower illiterate women like Fairuz and support them to secure their independence, building their skills and confidence progressively over a 3-month intensive program.

The overwhelmingly positive impact of the project highlights the importance of literacy for women’s empowerment and equality. Pre and post-testing demonstrate that 100% of the students report feeling more independent as a result of taking the course, 100% report access to information became easier, 100% found leaving the house alone has become easier, and 99% of participants felt more confident after the course.

Fairouz also reported that her life had improved drastically since undertaking ICMC’s adult literacy course. Not only could she better navigate the healthcare system for her son, she felt more empowered to support her children to further their own education. “The only good part of this entire experience of having to leave Syria is learning how to read and write. Now I have these skills, I understand how important they are for my children too. And now I can help them to learn".

ACTED provides sustainable work opportunities to Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians

The agricultural sector in Jordan has been struggling since the closure of the Syrian markets and faces major barriers to growth, including outdated technology and practices, yield gaps, limited access to water, limited investment, and overstretched agricultural support services.

With the support of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM), ACTED is enhancing the capacities of eight International Labour Organization (ILO)-network cooperatives to identify and develop economic expansion opportunities in the market and support Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians in engaging in sustainable income-generating opportunities.
Abdulkafi, a Syrian beneficiary, married and a father of 6, left Syria almost 4 years ago, and currently acts as a Team Leader in this project. In Syria, he worked as a gymnastic teacher but also had experience in farming. The project gave him the outlet he needed to generate his own income.

In consultation with the cooperatives, ACTED selected and trained 40 Team Leaders to facilitate four-month training with the beneficiaries. Abdulkafi received a Training of Trainers (ToT) on Field Farmer by a qualified consultant with ACTED, focusing on building Team Leader’s interpersonal skills and technical capacities. He now transfers knowledge to his group, that he meets them twice a week in Irbid, Kufur Sum.

In addition to the PRM-funded project, they will establish, Abdulkafi and his group started a small-scale seasonal agricultural project for grading and selling guava, a project idea that blossomed during the peer-support group sessions. Today, the project is already making a profit, which is split between all the parties involved.

**Tdh: An application to promote child rights “made by children for children”**

Manal Abu Safiah and Mohammad Al Shaweesh met at the JOHUD’s center for Psycho-social support in Marka. They both attended a life skills training targeting young people and children affected by or at risk of child labor implemented in partnership between JOHUD and Terre des hommes (Tdh).

Having learned about children’s rights and child protection issues, the two youth of 17 and 20 years old combined their passion with their talents in technology to develop an application that promotes child’s rights amongst children (6-18 years old) and raises awareness of child protection issues.

“The idea of the app is to target children who do not know anything about child protection and share information with them in an interesting way through a game,” seventeen years old man told Tdh.

The application, Haki wa Hmayati (My Rights My Protection), which can be downloaded for free, is a game of four stages. The first two stages illustrate children’s rights by asking the player to match pictures depicting some right with similar ones. The last two stages promote awareness of child protection issues by asking the players to put a puzzle of an image together and reflect on what it stands for.

Mohammad developed the whole application thanks to the ideas provided by the children who attended the life skills training and Manal worked on the design and images. Both Mohammad and Manal self-taught themselves through practice and tutorial on the internet.

Manal grew up in Shuna in Balqaa governorate while Mohammad grew up in East Amman. However, they both say that young people and children face similar challenges in their communities: neglect and limited learning opportunities.

“There are not sufficient training and learning opportunities in order for (young people) to increase creativity,” Manal said. “Once youth combined their skills together they will be able to achieve so many big things they did not originally expect to achieve,” Mohammad told Tdh.

Both are proud of the app, but for them, it is just the beginning. “We will continue to develop and improve the app based on the children’s feedback,” Mohammad said. Their aspiration is to reach as many children via social media not only in Jordan but also aboard. “We want the entire world to know that this idea came from the children of Jordan,” Manal concluded.

Download the app [here](#) and check out the [video](#)
**Voices from Jordan**

**IRC: Ibrahim, the creative cobbler**

“In Syrian families, craftsmen and artisans pass their skills on from generation to generation. It’s the same for my family. My great-grandfather, my grandfather and my father – all of them worked as cobblers.” This is how Ibrahim starts his story as we sit down in his small shop in a busy, narrow street in East Amman.

Ibrahim keeps the door open because he thinks it is a nice way to welcome the customers, and... “I can smell Falafel from the corner shop where the local merchants buy their lunch.” He adds. “My grandfather’s shop in Aleppo was also small, but I loved being there. Later, my father took the shop over, and I have learned the traditional techniques from them. But I add something to the mix. I am creative, and I think outside the box.”

Ibrahim is 22 years old. He is originally from Aleppo, Syria. Together with his family, he moved to Amman in 2007. “My father sold everything and we moved to Amman. It was a bold move,” he explains. But business wasn’t picking up, and by the end of 2010, the family was ready to return to Syria.

“My brother went to Aleppo to arrange for our return. That’s when the war started and things escalated. He was called for his military duty, and he had to go. The rest of my family had no choice but to stay in Amman,” Ibrahim recalls.

This is how Ibrahim found himself with the responsibility of making ends meet for his entire family. “We are six at home. I went to high school, but my family couldn’t afford to send me to university. I started working here and there, but I really wanted to open my own business as a cobbler.”

Seven months ago, Ibrahim joined the International Refugee Council/Ruwwad business training “I did the ‘Preparing Youth for the World of Business’ training. I learned how to plan and run my business, and how to add value to my products and service so they sell better,”

After the training, he received a grant of 1000 JOD to start his business. He bought a sewing machine and raw materials, rented a shop and turned the attic above the store into a workshop. “I produce three different shoe models now and sell them to merchants downtown and to individual customers in our neighborhood. I realized that high heels are in high demand, so I sell them at a higher price. I even have two part-time employees now”, he says proudly. “I have regular clients who come every month to see my new collection and to order shoes. I also started buying shoes with defects from different stores. I repair them and then resell them at a reasonable price.”

Ibrahim concludes, “I have great ambitions and big dreams. This project is my baby. I will continue until I make my business one of the main shoe workshops in the entire country”.

IRC and Ruwwad, through generous support from the European Union, helps young Syrians boost their economic resilience so they can support their families and increase their capacity to generate income and live an independent, dignified life.
Adapting to life as a refugee here was extremely difficult for us at first. My family and I arrived in Za’atari refugee camp in September 2013. I have fourteen children, six of whom have disabilities. We weren’t used to living in tents, to the unforgiving environment, to the frigid cold in winter and the blazing heat in summer. In those days there was garbage everywhere – along with the insects and other pests that come with it. Za’atari camp had dumpsters for people's garbage, but they overflowed to the point that there was nowhere but the ground to throw trash. It was not easy.

A few months after my arrival in Za’atari, I started working for Oxfam in a cash-for-work program, which provided a basic income for Syrian refugees in exchange for work. My job was to clean the streets of the camp. It was far from satisfying, but it helped me earn some money to support my family and pass the time.

In early 2015, I heard that Oxfam would be launching a pilot project to try recycling in one of the districts of Za’atari camp. They needed to find a way to collect, sort, and sell recyclable materials, all while providing a basic income to Syrian families. One of Oxfam’s engineers knew about my experience in waste management in Syria, and he began to call me with questions. Over time his calls became more and more frequent, at all hours of the day, asking me for help with small details, big ideas and everything in between. I was so excited to be using my skills again. Then, I was asked to help manage the new recycling project, and of course I said yes.

Little by little, I was filling the void I felt when I arrived in Za’atari camp.

The recycling project became our baby. We ran into so many problems at first. It seemed like everything about the environment of Za’atari was different from what we knew, and new challenges were always popping up. But we persisted. We worked late at night, on holidays – we didn’t mind. We weren’t doing it for the money; we did it because the recycling project had become personal to us. This project had to work, and the work was ours.

After four years, our small pilot project has grown and now collects waste from all districts across Za’atari camp. Our project is responsible for diverting 21% of the waste produced in Za’atari away from landfills – that’s 259 tones every week! The garbage piles and pests that I remember from when I first arrived four years ago have all disappeared.

It isn’t just the environment that we are supporting. Our cash-for-work team of 180 men and women educate the community on recycling, collect recyclable materials from different households in trolleys, and turn the waste into materials that we can sell to traders. Like me, the other cash-for-work team members brought their skills and expertise with them, and they have been inspired in countless ways to use those skills in any way they can. Former tailors are making rugs for the winters out of old clothing, engineers are making mechanical toys for our children, and farmers have built multiple greenhouses from recycled bottles to grow fresh vegetables.

In 2016 Government of Jordan promised to issue work permits to Syrian refugees, but it hasn’t had an impact on my life so far. Permits for Syrians are only available to work in certain sectors, such as agriculture, cleaning, and construction. There are many people like me who have skills and experience, but not in these limited areas. For people living in Za’atari camp, it is even more complicated. While it isn’t possible right now, I would love to build on what I have achieved here – to work in a recycling center in one of the cities in Jordan, outside of the refugee camps.

One day, I hope that there will be peace in Syria, so that I can return with my family to rebuild my business and our beautiful country. Until that day, we are here.

Jasem Al-Wrewir is the Team Leader in the Cash for Work Programme of Oxfam’s Recycling Project in Za’atari Camp.
Innovation

MEDA: A surprisingly Cool Desert in Summer

Feynan Ecolodge is a one of a kind Eco and internationally acclaimed lodge in the heart of Wadi Feynan in Dana Biosphere Reserve, managed by the Royal Society for the Conversation of Nature (RSCN) and EcoHotel. With more than 20 international awards, it provides visitors with a plethora of unique and authentic experiences while contributing to the conservation of the Dana reserve. Feynan Eco lodge is also working with the surrounding Bedouin community (400 local people) by offering them different income generation opportunities.

The hot summers of the desert and lack of electricity for cooling the rooms, especially at night, led the lodge to have single digit occupancy rates in the summer months. The low occupancy had a negative impact not only on EcoHotels but also on the lodge’s local staff, the local community micro businesses, the RSCN and the environment as a whole. Feynan Ecolodge’s sustainability as a destination was under threat and an immediate solution was required.

At the end of 2017, EcoHotels reached out for MEDA JVL to support the launch of environmentally friendly cooling measures, a new photovoltaic (PV) system. The PV system, which was successfully commissioned in August 2018, and significantly increased electricity capacity of the lodge, allowing it to power fans, fridges, and freezers.

The results of the cooling have started to be felt at Feynan. Occupancy levels have started to increase (40% increase in August 2018 compared to August 2017). Mr. Nabil Tarazi, EcoHotels Founder & Managing Director, expressed his satisfaction and gratitude,” thanks to MEDA and the installation of the new PV system and cooling measures, we can now promote the lodge in the summer months knowing that the guests will be able to have a comfortable sleep at night, without the need to sleep on the lodge’s rooftop terrace. We are starting to see the positive results and we look forward to having double-digit occupancy rates in the summer months that will allow us to at least cover our costs during the slow season”. He added, “now we can also ensure continued direct benefit to the local community all year long. As an example, our local community bread supplier, Um Khalid, will not see her income reduced in the summer months anymore. With increased visitor numbers, we now plan to support additional community micro businesses to enable them to benefit from tourism”.

Advocacy

CARE: 2018 Urban Assessment – Eight years into Exile

Since 2012, year after year, CARE International conducts this Assessment which highlights the situation of Syrian and non-Syrian urban refugees, and vulnerable Jordanian host community. This year, CARE aimed to assess the primary needs of Syrian and Iraqi refugees, and Jordanian citizens in the sectors of protection, gender, and age, refugee durable solutions, sustainable livelihoods and education. By doing so, CARE hopes to promote evidence-based programming and ensure relevant, efficient, and comprehensive catering for the multiple needs of refugees and the host community; in livelihood, education, health and comprehensive catering for the multiple needs of refugees and the host community; in livelihood, education, health and protection, through programs and advocacy.

HI and iMMAp publish a disability assessment of Syrian refugees

Despite the increasing interest in disability in humanitarian contexts, very few information has been collected on the number of persons with disabilities and how various barriers affect their daily life. The lack of data is one of the main reasons why they face exclusion and discrimination, including during the distribution of humanitarian aid and in access to shelter, water, health, and education services.

This is the main reason that led Humanity and Inclusion (HI), in close collaboration with its partner iMMAp to launch an ambitious disability survey among Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan in October 2017. Supported by the Australian Government, the study was conducted in areas with an important concentration of Syrian refugees, such as Azraq and Zaatari refugee camps, and the governorates of Irbid (Jordan), Bekaa and Baalbek-Hermel (Lebanon). 1,665 households and 8,876 people were surveyed.
“Stories of Solidarity is a campaign launched by the Jordan INGO Forum in 2018 to showcase the countless acts of solidarity between people impacted by the Syria crisis in Jordan. The objective is to counter the dehumanized narrative that too often opposes refugees to host communities, and instead shed the light on individual stories of trust and friendship. In collaboration with Comicipate/IDare, JIF launched a comic book, based on six true stories harvested in different parts of Jordan, and illustrated by four young artists. For this issue, we take you to Jabal Al L’Weibdeh in Amman, to meet Abu Samir.

Morning routine

If you ever visit Jabal-al-Weibdeh, you might bump into Abu Samir, strolling on the broken pavements of the hill, stopping every now and then to greet familiar faces, or drinking tea with the storekeepers. Everyone knows his name and he would remember every single detail of the stories he is told, the favorite food of the butcher’s children, the seven names of the baker’s extended cousins. Abu Samir is a figure of Weibdeh, and though it looks like he has always belonged here, his heart and “first 70 years of his life” are deeply rooted in Syria – a home he had to flee in 2012.

His journey to Jordan was difficult – “I had to leave behind my sons and grandchildren, my house, my neighbours...and I lost my beloved wife, who had been by my side for more than 50 years” he explains. “Who would have thought I could re-start a life here in Jordan at my age? It takes a lot of strength – and support, friends, community”. Today Abu Samir leads Weibdeh’s elder’s community group at Helpage, and he takes his role very seriously: for a man who has worked his way through life, having a job and being financially independent is vital. Most importantly, participating in community life, representing fellow elders, and leading initiatives such as running a tree-planting campaign or fundraising for the most vulnerable has brought him purpose, and friends.

It was during one of these neighbourhood rounds that Abu Samir met Abu Omar, a “seventy-something” year-old Jordanian tailor, whose grandkids regularly invade his pocket-size workshop to play with fabric and clothes. Over the years, the two grandfathers have become inseparable friends and formidable checkers adversaries. After the morning’s prayers, they spend hours leaning over the checkerboard, sharing stories and memories from Damascus to Amman while sipping tea and cardamon coffee. As Abu Samir mentions his ambitious project to create retirement club in Amman, Abu Omar smiles “we could do a “checkers club”, I’ll help you”.

Abu Samir works for Helpage, an INGO that helps older people claim their rights, challenge discrimination and overcome poverty, so that they can lead dignified, secure and healthy lives. I-Dare is a local NGO working on community change and new narratives. They encourage youth participation through arts and new media.

Read the comic book Stories of Solidarity on our website and the feature on Abu Samir.