Humanitarian & Development Editorial

The first quarter of 2019 was eventful for Jordan’s so-called ‘transition’ agenda. The launch of the JRP 2019 laid out a $702.9 million plan allocated to refugees, a $698.9 million projection in support of the resilience of host communities, and requested $998.2 million for budget support, with the GoJ putting the emphasis on strengthening national public systems to deliver quality services. In London, the Growth and Opportunity conference for Jordan essentially created a launching platform for the World Bank’s five-years reform matrix to stimulate growth. In the backdrop of serious economic and social concerns (high debts burden, unemployment and raising protests), the GoJ’s main success was to achieve a shift of narrative and re-brand Jordan as a country ready to undertake a much needed ‘economic transformation’ to boost the private sector and attract investors. The growth message strongly resonated in Brussels, during the third conference on supporting Syria and the region, where Jordan’s reform agenda was highlighted.

As the transition outlook is welcomed and undeniable, maintaining focus on refugees and vulnerable Jordanians remains essential: without dedicated efforts towards inclusion and humanitarian assistance, those that have missed out on growth in the past will continue to be left out. The Brussels Conference reminded the international community of the amplitude of the Syrian humanitarian crisis, despite the shift in conflicts and narratives. As the GoJ, donors and civil society reaffirmed that the conditions in Syria were not met for safe, dignified and voluntary returns, it is important to remember that the numbers of returns (approximately 15,500 individuals since the border opening and as of April 2019) do not equate to a reduction of humanitarian needs in Jordan.
Quite the contrary, Syrian refugees in Jordan remain highly vulnerable and continue to face protection and freedom of movement issues, fragile access to livelihood opportunities and unaffordable healthcare. Refugees from other nationalities experience similar, if not harsher challenges, as they remain excluded from the major humanitarian funding mechanism and do not benefit from the Jordan Compact policies. This highlights, even more, the need for a gradual transition, with simultaneous planning for inclusive growth and a renewed focus on humanitarian and protection needs of all refugees and other vulnerable groups.

Members activities

Host Communities

AFSC provides livelihood training in Irbid and Mafra"q

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), in partnership with Rehaba society located in Al-Mazar (Irbid) and another local partner in Al-Mafra"q, provides social cohesion and livelihoods training for Jordanian and Syrian women over a three-month period per cycle. The training is provided through five cycles during the course of two years. Participants learn to sew, cook, practice hairdressing/make-up and receive awareness sessions on social cohesion. The main goal of this project is to have both Syrian refugees and Jordanians implementing joint activities that build up their skills and capabilities, increase their income and in the same time create synergy and cohesion between the two communities.

Mid-February, AFSCs monitoring and evaluation team conducted focus group discussions with a number of project beneficiaries in Irbid. During the conversation, one of the beneficiaries, Ms. Huda Fayyad, shared her success story. The 32-year old Jordanian widow and mother of three was unemployed. She recently graduated from the training program in hairdressing and make-up and has already started her home-based business, using social media, her own network, and relatives to target customers.

“A week after graduating from the vocational training provided by AFSC and Rehaba CBO, there was an engagement party in my village” she explained “I was surprised when a group of young girls called me and decided to come to my house for make-up and hairdressing before the event. I earned 6 JDs per lady that day”.

Huda expressed a motivation to develop a business and generate revenues for herself and her family, using the knowledge and skills acquired during the training. “I will not stop here” she explained further “I am motivated and ready to enrol in a formal vocational training centre to acquire a certificate. I would like to open my own beauty salon in the future.”

FCA: Organic vegetables, and furniture restoration – entrepreneurship training provides new beginnings in Jordan

On a rooftop garden, young saplings are growing in plastic mugs planted into plastic tubes. A pump circulates water for 15 minutes once every two hours. Tomatoes, watermelons, cucumbers, peppers, strawberries, and flowers are grown on the flat roof.

The rooftop garden is a hydroponics prototype built by Ibrahim, 45, in Irbid. Ibrahim, who is a Jordanian engineer, previously worked in fertilizer and cement companies. After he lost his job, the life of his family with seven children changed and they ended up losing their house. They now live at his brother’s, whose living room is covered with paintings made by Ibrahim -most depicting trees and plants.
Among them is Omar. A father of two, Omar was wounded in the Syrian war when a grenade shrapnel took his legs, and he fled with his family to Jordan. To find a way to provide for his family, he had to fight. He wanted to start his own workshop, but he did not know how. After the FCA training, he found the drive to run his own business “I can develop my work and get information on my competitors. I’ve learned leadership skills and marketing. Before, I didn’t understand how important these skills were” says Omar after the FCA training.

In his workshop, Omar plans to sell traditional Syrian wooden furniture that he builds by hand. The business also provides furniture restoration and repair services.

Refugees and Jordanians attending the course have started joint business ventures. However, they are faced with a challenging dilemma: “It’s good to build a business with a Jordanian partner. Unfortunately, there is no law nor official document to corroborate my right to own a business. I’m constantly worried about losing my business”, says one of the Syrian entrepreneurs in the project.

Based on the experiences from the project, Finn Church Aid is cooperating with other international non-governmental organizations and the JIF, to advocate for a clear legal framework for joint business ventures in Jordan. This would allow Syrians to work as entrepreneurs with Jordanians as equal partners and to contribute to the Jordanian economy.

The project was funded by the European Regional Development and Protection Program for the Middle East (RDPP), supported by the European Union, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Hydroponics is brand new in Jordan, but being resourceful, Ibrahim used his brother’s rooftop to build his own prototype that he now plans to develop and expand. This type of plantation saves about 80 percent of water compared to regular growing. “At first I didn’t believe it, but I gave it a try and it’s true,” says Ibrahim, who is constantly studying and learning by doing. “I want to have a garden producing organic vegetables that welcomes customers to come and pick their own vegetables” he explains.

From 2017 to 2018, FCA cooperated with Mercuria Business College to organize compact entrepreneurship courses to refugees and Jordanians in the most vulnerable positions. After a two-month training period, participants received mentoring and a small start-up grant. 55 people participated in the courses, and so far they have started a total of 49 businesses, some of which already employ others as well. Over half of those who have started businesses are women and 10 percent are persons with disability.

LWF: From Syria to Jordan: The Story of Alma and her Family

Alma is an 11-year-old girl from Syria, and she has been living in Jordan with her family for the past 6 years. She and two of her younger sisters completed the psychosocial support (PSS) course at the Lutheran World Federation’s (LWF) Community Centre in Al Sareeh, Irbid, funded by the Church of Sweden. Alma loves school and especially Arabic class, but her hyperactivity can make it hard for her to focus. According to her PSS facilitator, her concentration improved over the past several months and she learned to channel her energy into active games. “Alma has become more comfortable talking to adults and is more social with her peers. She used to start fights with her siblings and cousins, and now she plays more nicely with them.” Her mother explained.
Although Alma was only 5 years old when she left her home, she remembers the journey the family took from Syria to Jordan, the village her family lived in and the trips she would take to her grandmother’s house. When the war began, she remembers seeing more and more police in her village. Alma’s mother remembers “The protests started in the village, and grew larger and spread to the cities. The regime’s army came to our house to ask for the names of the men who participated in the protests so that they could arrest them. If they found a man in one of the houses, they would take him and force him to fight in the army. Then the bombings started, and when our neighbour’s house was bombed we knew we needed to leave right away. I had just given birth the week before, but our children were frightened and so were we.”

They first went to Za’atari refugee camp, where they received food and shelter. Then, they travelled to Al Sareeh where a Jordanian family took them in. “We thought we would stay in Jordan for one week, but eight years later we are still here.”

The first years they were in Jordan, her children were afraid of the neighbours, whom they thought would force them to go back to Syria. When planes flew overhead, the children would cry. Over and over she told them, “you are safe now.” Now the mother frequently visits friends, takes her children to school, and attends classes at the LWF Community Centre. Most importantly, she and her family feel safe. She dreams that her children will finish their education and never have to live in fear again— “even if this means that we will not return to Syria” she concludes.

Tdh in North Jordan: From Child Labour to Access to Education

Tdh is part of the ECHO funded Education consortium alongside with Save the children, and Intersos. This project aims to enable vulnerable children to access credited educational pathways and realize their full potential in the future. Tdh intervenes in Mafraq, Jerash and Irbid governorates, working with Syrian refugees and host communities.

Fatma, 26, is the mother of 6 children. With her family, she fled the conflict in Syria 5 years ago and ended up in Mafraq. Mahmoud, 11, is one of her children. He was 6 when the family had to leave Syria. Due to economic pressure, Mahmoud and his brother used to work to support the family. They collected garbage in the streets and were also employees in a supermarket. There, they were verbally abused by colleagues.

Through the ECHO funded project "Enabling access to educational pathways and safer learning environments", Tdh works alongside with Save the Children Jordan and Intersos to enable vulnerable, hard-to-reach, out-of-school children to access credited educational pathways suitable to their needs and interests.

Tdh intervenes among Syrian and host communities in North Jordan and works directly with children out-of-school and their families by providing social protection and assistance and by conducting sessions on community-based prevention and awareness. Last year, a case manager visited Fatma’s family twice. Since then, the family has received cash assistance. Mahmoud and his brother have been enrolled in school.

"During the sessions, I have learned how to protect my children better. Before I thought that, by shouting, they would respect me more. Now, I know that they respect me more if I set up discussions with them. Now, life at home is more comfortable as we let space for children to express their thoughts and feelings. I was myself married at 13. Now, I know this is not right. I don’t want this for my daughters. I want them to study as long as possible."

Mahmoud has been enrolled in school at the beginning of the first semester last year (October/November 2018). When he used to work, he suffered from back pain. He also felt distressed and unhappy. He now feels like a child should feel. "I love being at school. My favourite course is Arabic because it is the easiest. Also, the teacher is nice and supportive. I have a lot of friends with who I play and have fun. At school, I feel comfortable and happy."

In 2018, 498 children and youth benefited from formal and non-formal education through the ECHO project. 578 caregivers attended awareness sessions. Capacity building is the third component of the project with 120 teachers and community members trained in 2018 (Tdh figures only).
Camps

War Child Canada in Jordan started the “Safeguarding Women and Girls Affected by the Syrian Crisis in Jordan” project in June 2017. This project is funded by UNTF and implemented directly in Sahab and Nuzha area of Amman, targeting vulnerable women and girls from the host and refugee communities.

The projects targets women and girls, including survivors and those at risk of Sexual Gender Based Violence, members of highly vulnerable groups such as female heads of household and out-of-school girls. The main objectives of this project are to ensure that the women and girls are able to access available protection and support services, that their wellbeing and coping skills improve, and that Sahab and Nuzha community members (including community leaders, men, and boys) advocate for women’s rights and prevention of SGBV.

DRC: Open for business: Syrian refugee brings a strand of normal life to women living in the Azraq Camp

The idea feels magnificently ordinary – even mundane. It is something that we see and experience almost every day. But for women living inside refugee camps, it is a reminder of what life back home used to be like.

Eedah was a young woman when she leaped at the chance to train as a hairdresser back in Syria, hoping to open her own hair salon one day. She says that even though she did not get the chance to open a salon back home due to her financial situation, she did make one of her dreams come true when she married the love of her life after 6 years of facing opposition from both families.

Eedah, now 33 years old, had three children and was pregnant with her fourth when she arrived in Jordan to escape the war. “We were never one of the lucky ones who found jobs inside the camp, aid was our only hope”, she said.

Shortly after settling in the camp, Eedah was faced with the sudden, unanticipated death of her husband, leaving her with four children to raise without a source of income. “Ever since we arrived here in the camp, my job was to only cook, clean and look after my children. But I suddenly had to become a mother, a father, a caretaker and a teacher to my children, and amid all the challenges, I still needed to grieve”, she added.

Refugees living inside the camps often rely on aid for food and other basic services. However, due to the high cost of living and a scarcity of resources, working-age residents often apply for temporary jobs - known as cash-for-work positions - inside the camp. These short-term jobs provided by humanitarian organizations are considered highly insufficient to allow refugees to access the labour market and maintain a minimum living standard.

Amid her grief and despair, Eedah found a ray of hope when she heard about the Danish Refugee Council’s (DRC) small business grants. “This was my chance to make my lifelong dream come true”. Funded by Denmark’s development cooperation ‘DANIDA’, the grant demanded that anyone applying for it to take a short training course on how to start a small business before receiving the money. Without hesitation, Eedah took the training and later received the grant. “I went to Amman to buy supplies and furniture for the salon and I couldn’t wait until it was ready to welcome customers. I just wanted to make women feel pretty and make some money for my children” she said as a beaming smile spread on her face.
Located inside her caravan, Eedah’s salon has become a gathering spot for women living nearby. “I’ve had 5 brides come to me so far to get their hair and makeup done for the wedding” added Eedah with exuberating excitement.

Many women around the camp see Eedah as a hero; someone they look up to and admire. But according to her, she just worked very hard to make her dream come true against all odds. She says aid organizations need to focus more on providing jobs for women inside the camp as they are “often neglected”. Eedah is now the owner of a small hair salon, running a successful business and generating income for her family. A small grant transformed her life and that of her family and influenced many others to work hard in hopes of a better life.

Voices from Jordan

CRP invites you to listen to stories of beneficiaries, told in their own words.

Passionate about their work in Amman, CRP wants to tell the world about it. But so often, the stories must be short enough to fit into a two-minute video or 600-word blog post. So in the summer of 2018, CRP created its own podcast, which gives beneficiaries the chance to tell their own stories in a longer, more intimate way.

Each episode explores the past and present of one CRP beneficiaries. They talk about everything from their experiences in their home countries, their journey to Jordan, and the struggles of life in Amman. CRP also includes a secondary interview with an expert in each episode to shed more light on each topic.

CRP marked the launch of Collateral Repair Podcast with an episode on education. Suleiman, an Iraqi teen tells the listeners about his experiences of education before and after becoming a member of CRP’s community and his interview is complemented by Karam Hayef, CRP’s Education Specialist, who explains the transformative power of learning. Talking about reading Pride and Prejudice while volunteering at CRP, Suleiman remembers “It was the first time I felt the thrill of reading”. In the third episode, Sara shares her struggle of raising children in an unfamiliar environment. She opens up about her experience of fleeing from her beloved home country of Syria and her life in Azraq camp before moving to Amman. She explains that she and her husband had hoped to spend only a few months in Jordan, but that the situation in Syria quickly became so dangerous that now they don’t expect to ever be able to return. The episode includes an interview with human rights lawyer Peter Stavros, from International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) who shares his thoughts on human rights and child protection.

CRP’s latest podcast episode opens with Waseem, a refugee from Sudan, who relates his ten-year journey from Darfur to Amman. Waseem describes his childhood in Darfur before conflict broke out. “Most people lived on farms, and kept cattle. Life was really beautiful in Darfur”, he says. Waseem was only a preteen when soldiers came to his village, and he was forced to flee with his sister and his grandmother, but without his parents. Having reached the safety of Amman ten years later, Waseem’s struggles were not over. He had to overcome the language barrier between Sudanese and Jordanian Arabic and somehow build a life for himself away from his family. In the same episode, Aaron Williams, co-founder of Sawiyan (one of the rare NGO in Jordan which serves East African refugees) discusses the many barriers East African refugees face in Jordan.

This is just a sampling of CRP episodes so far. Displaced people are so often stripped not only of their home, but of their voice. CRP’s podcast aims to give this back. The interviewed refugees are able to represent themselves in the way they want to be represented. CRP hopes to inform listeners about the suffering that refugees have faced and continue to face, and to celebrate the work that the NGOs and their volunteers do to try to help.

You can find CRP podcast on iTunes, Omnyplayer, and Spotify.
Down a narrow street in Balqaa governorate, Jordan, Sadiqa sits proudly in her modest and newly registered shop. She has neatly displayed homemade food products over the shelves on both sides of the shop.

The Jordanian 47-year-old mother of six has been making and selling readymade food products from her own home for one year now and is known for her delicious Maamoul; a Middle Eastern buttery cookie stuffed with date paste, chopped walnuts or pistachios, and dusted with powdered sugar. Her neighbours swear by it.

Sadiqa unofficially started in early 2017 with 10 Jordanian Dinars purchasing the ingredients for Maamoul and other sweets to sell in her neighbourhood. In a month, and after participating in bazars and food fairs outside Balqa to find more customers, her 10 became 100. Seeing the success, she decided to make pickles and herbs and to introduce them to the local market. Unfortunately, this time, she was not successful; the market did not buy her products as they were too expensive and not up to standard.

She did not know what was missing until she was approached by her friend who works at the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD) and mentioned a project supporting women entrepreneurs in their area. Sadiqa immediately registered with JOHUD, an implementing partner of MEDA’s Jordan Valley Links (JVL) project in Balqa that provides technical training on food processing and financial and marketing coaching for women and youth entrepreneurs in the food processing sector.

After attending seven sessions seeking support to improve her products and introduce them to the market correctly, Sadiqa learned how to pasteurize and keep cucumber pickles crunchy and appetizing for more than 18 months. “It turned out that I wasn’t pricing my products correctly nor pasteurizing my pickles,” says Sadiqa. Most importantly, she learned proper bookkeeping; “I used to subtract the cost of the ingredients from my sales, not considering costs like rent, electricity, gas, let alone me and my children’s effort,” said Sadiqa, explaining that she realized the mistake she was making after attending the financial training sessions.

Sadiqa is among the more than 1,100 women and youth in Balqa the JVL project and JOHUD provided training too with funding from Global Affairs Canada (GAC). But the determined woman did not stop there; she assigned a space in her home for producing the pickles and displaying her products and was encouraged by JVL to register her business. “I am now more confident in presenting my products and approaching the market as I have a registered home-based business,” she says, recollecting the time when a school asked to see her license as a condition to purchase her pastries.

Sadiqa was constantly looking for a chance to support her husband. She is proud that she is a productive woman who contributes to her family’s income now. Her husband and children support her and she has become a decision maker alongside her husband. Sadiqa hopes to become an example for her daughters.

The JVL project, with JOHUD’s support, plans to link those women and youth entrepreneurs in Balqa with the local and national market in Jordan to provide them with networking opportunities and market engagement. Sadiqa dreams of having a restaurant one day; “I am so proud that I have learned how to manage my business, and strongly believe that the recipe for success is determination, excellence, and tolerance”, she affirmed.
JIF actively engaged in the London and Brussels Conference preparation

Few weeks before the London Initiative, JIF organized a roundtable with livelihood specialists on the theme of inclusive growth, tapping into civil society experience and field practice in Jordan. The event reviewed GoJ’s main economic ambitions, and allowed practitioners to propose evidence-based recommendations on how to move towards a more inclusive growth. The roundtable was attended by the representatives of different embassies and UN agencies and was opened and closed by DFID. The discussion, facilitated by WANA institute, allowed Mercy Corps, NRC, Oxfam, IRC, ACF, FCA, EFE (national NGO), ACTED, and Sparks to share their best practices, lessons learned, challenges and successes in conducting livelihood and economic programs in Jordan. The roundtable resulted in the publication of the JIF Briefing paper for London, which promotes the inclusion of refugees, women and youth in the Jordan’s growth strategy.

In parallel, JIF organized 4 rounds of consultations with national NGOs and JIF members in Amman (large NGOs and INGOs), Zarqa, Maafraq and Irbid (respectively organized by ActionAid, ACTED and DRC, mainly with CBO partners) to prepare for the Brussels Conference. The consultations, focused on Education, Livelihood, Protection, Health and Durable Solutions, complemented the Jordan Compact monitoring exercise, by allowing a critical review of Jordan and the international community’s progress against commitments. They resulted in the publication of the JIF position paper, which key messages were brought to Brussels and echoed by civil society rapporteurs during the conference.

Download our last publications
“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.

Um Faris & Um Ali: The Open House

In a quiet neighborhood of Ramtha, after a flight of stairs, there is a large brick house with two doors. Behind the first one live Um Faris and her husband. Parents of 9 children, they have always lived in Ramtha and used to share the other half of the house with their eldest son, Faris. When he left Jordan to work abroad, the second door remained closed— until they chose to welcome Um Ali to their home.

“I already have 8 daughters, and you will be the ninth one” said Um Faris when Um Ali moved to the house 4 years ago. Um Ali had arrived in Jordan in 2012 with her children and had thought it would only be a matter of months before she came back to her hometown, Daraa. But a glance at the Zaatari Camp then mushrooming indicated her otherwise “It did not look temporary to me anymore, I understood we were here to stay” she recalls sadly. After living with distant relatives, moving into Um Faris’ was more than finding another shelter “it felt like finding a piece of home” she continues.

As Um Faris helped Um Ali to settle in, having breakfast together became a morning ritual. During the days, Um Faris would often knock on Um Ali’s door on her way back to the market or the bazaar, with food or small objects she thought would be useful in the house. To make the house safer for her new daughter, Um Faris suggested contacting NRC to improve the house. Quickly, the NGO fixed the main windows and reinforced the door. “And quickly I realized, what Um Faris said was not just words: I was not treated as a guest but as a family member” explains Um Ali.

Um Ali and Um Faris are both supported by NRC Shelter program, which provides vulnerable refugees and Jordanians with

- Adequate housing of their choice, rent-free for a period allowing household’s investment in positive coping strategies (search for income and repayment of debt)
- Assistance with a range of interventions in renewable energy, inclusion, awareness raising and information sharing
- Tenure monitoring as well as support to households under threat of eviction with safe and secure shelter, legal protection from eviction, and rent expenses coverage for up to six months.

In collaboration with IDare, JIF launched a comic book, based on six true stories harvested in different parts of Jordan, and illustrated by four young Jordanian and Syrian artists.

Read the comic book Stories of Solidarity on our website