



## Press Release:

# Small space with a large impact: UN-Habitat creates a public space for women in the old city of Ramallah



Ramallah, old City– Photos before and after of the implemented space as a social gathering space for women in the neighborhood

**Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2021, Ramallah** - UN-Habitat, through the HAYA Joint Programme, funded by the Government of Canada, in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) and the Ramallah Municipality inaugurated today a small public space intervention in the old city of Ramallah to be used as a social gathering space for women in the neighborhood.

The design concept is inspired by the vernacular architectural style found in the old city of Ramallah, as the site is perceived to be a public courtyard that imitates traditional inner courts (Al Housh) surrounded by residential units for the extended family.



This is seen through the configuration of the seats composed of two traditional stonewalls (Sinsilah) facing each other defining a small court that enhances social interaction and respects the privacy of women using the space by directing the orientation of the seats away from the street.

To improve the accessibility and inclusivity of the intervention, parts of the original stone wall (Sinsilah) in the site were removed to create defined access for women with strollers and people with disabilities. The removed stones were utilized to build the seats.

The social space allows for small-scale planting by the women, where they can grow herbs, in addition to climbing plants placed on two arches that mirror the existing façade of the old house surrounding the site. Every part of the design was developed in a participatory manner based on a community consultation workshop that was organized in coordination with Ramallah Municipality, targeting women living in the neighborhood. The participants expressed their need for a well-designed social space that extends beyond the borders of the left-over corner, to include an attractive and colorful pedestrian crossing to increase the safety index of the site, and create a shared road where people claim their right to the public space in the neighborhood.

In his speech, the UN-Habitat's Head of Country Programme in Palestine, explained that "the intervention is implemented by UN-Habitat, through HAYA Joint Programme, where UN-Habitat's focus is to create safe and inclusive public spaces for all. This intervention demonstrates how a small intervention could be of great social impact if designed with and for the local community". Additionally, the representative of the Government of Canada expressed that "Canada is pleased to have supported this initiative implemented by UN-Habitat through the HAYA Joint Programme. Such initiatives are vital as they provide safe, accessible and inclusive public spaces for women and children." While the speech of the representative of Ramallah Municipality stressed the importance of the participatory approach in implementing such interventions: "work on this intervention started last year, and the design idea was developed based on the needs of the local community when meeting with them. This space was neglected and it was also a private property, hence the municipality had to facilitate the process of utilizing it as a public space, designed to respond to the needs of all community members".



In the inauguration event, the women living in the neighborhood showed their excitement to have a well designed public space near their homes: “The design has contributed to enhancing the aesthetics of the old city, and I hope to see other similar interventions in all the neighborhoods of the old city. This public space provides a breather recreational space where my neighbors and I could meet in the afternoons”

The intervention also aligns with SDG 11.7 to provide universal access to safe, inclusive, accessible, green, and public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

### **About the HAYA Joint Programme**

The HAYA Joint Programme is funded by the Government of Canada and is jointly implemented by a consortium of UN agencies consisting of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). HAYA brings together the Palestinian Authority (PA), UN agencies, civil society organisations, community-based organisations, and other partners to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to all forms of violence and from the threat of such violence. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development are key partners of the HAYA Joint Programme, along with other ministries including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Local Government, and various municipalities, civil society and community-based organisations. HAYA seeks to end violence against women and girls in the West Bank and Gaza Strip through various outreach and awareness-raising activities to change harmful practices and attitudes perpetuating and validating violence, increase access to necessary services for survivors of violence, as well as strengthen the institutional capacity of government officials to develop and implement legal and policy frameworks promoting and protecting women’s and girl’s rights to live free from violence.



It also focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, and making cities inclusive safe, resilient, and sustainable.

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