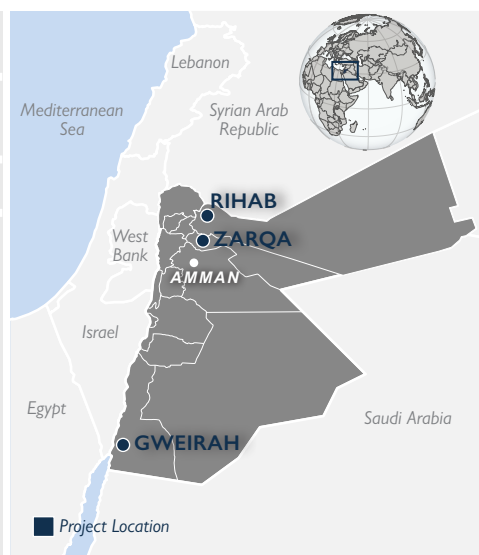


CASE STUDY

JORDAN 2018–2023 / SYRIAN CRISIS

KEYWORDS: Environmental sustainability, Livelihoods, Social cohesion

CRISIS	Syrian Crisis
PEOPLE DISPLACED	Jordan is still hosting around 674,148 Syrian refugees, leading to a 10 % increase in the total population*
PROJECT LOCATION	Gweirah (South), Zarqa (Centre) and Rihab (North), Jordan
PEOPLE SUPPORTED BY THE PROJECT	<p>First phase (completed) 656 HHs provided with livelihoods support (short-term work) which includes 54% Jordanians, 46% Syrians, 45% women, 55% men, 3.6% Persons with Disabilities 138,000 people in the surrounding area of the four parks</p> <p>Second phase (planned) 420 HHs provided with livelihoods support (short-term work) which includes 50% Jordanians, 50% Syrians of which 30% women including 3% Persons with Disabilities 19,000 people in the surrounding area of the two parks</p>
PROJECT OUTPUTS	<p>First phase 4 public spaces rehabilitated (28,400m² of land) Public space management and maintenance in 4 locations 463 trees and 1,639 shrubs planted 656 workers benefitted from short-term work and skills generation</p> <p>Second phase 2 public spaces to be rehabilitated (14,265m² of land) Public space management and maintenance in 2 locations 275 trees and 4,000 shrubs to be planted 420 workers to be benefitted from short-term work and skills generation</p>
DIRECT COST	<p>First phase USD 1,550,557 for four interventions</p> <p>Second phase USD 751,135 for two interventions</p>
PROJECT COST	<p>First phase: USD 1,924,052 for four interventions</p> <p>Second phase: USD 1,080,000 for two interventions</p>
*Jordan - Statistical Report on UNHCR Registered Syrians, March 2022	

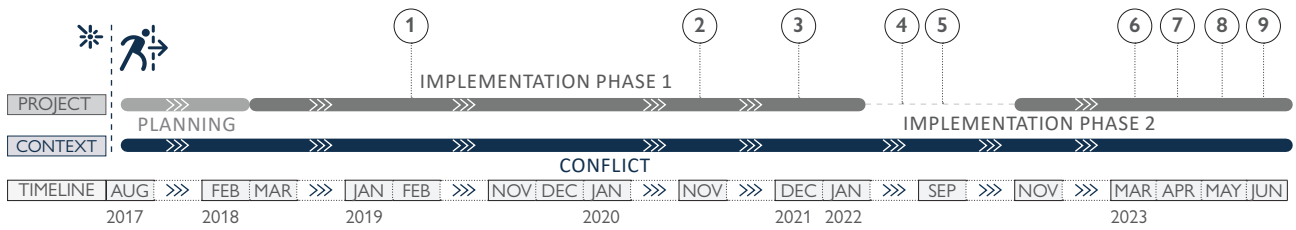


PROJECT SUMMARY

As cities become denser, access to green public spaces becomes more and more important as a space to socialise and play, contributing to social cohesion, health and wellbeing. This project in Jordan supported the rehabilitation and maintenance of public spaces through Cash for Work, using a participatory design approach. The rehabilitation of the public spaces not only improved the settlement's assets, but provided short term work to more than 1000 workers, fostering employability through trainings and labour market services, creating social cohesion between Syrian and Jordanians, and contributing to women's empowerment, including People with Disabilities. The added value of this initiative helps one to reflect on the importance of rehabilitated public spaces and its positive affects on the local community.



Women from the community involved in mosaic work for a wall in Janaa park, Zarqa, 2020.



2011: Unrest and conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

- * MoUs signed with different municipalities at all stages of the project.
- Engagement of the community on a regular basis since Mar 2018.
- Community events in the parks rehabilitated on a regular basis throughout the project timeline.
- Creation of steering committees at the end of each intervention.
- On the job training for CfW workers on construction sector, and planting and upkeeping community garden activities.

- 1 **Feb 2019:** Gweirah park and Humayma park (Aqaba Governorate) rehabilitated. Gweirah park handover to the municipality.
- 2 **Nov 2020:** Janaa park and Queen Noor Park (Zarqa Governorate) rehabilitated. Humayma park handover to the municipality.

- 3 **Dec 2021:** Rihab and Djenieh park (Mafraq Governorate) rehabilitated. Janaa park handover to the municipality.
- 4 **Aug - Sep 2022:** Trainings to mainstream the protection component in CfW interventions, especially towards children, gender and People with Disabilities issues.
- 5 **Sep 2022:** Public spaces networking event which served as a kick-off moment to unite the stakeholders and ignite debate.
- 6 **Mar 2023:** Potential extension (phase 3) including new locations and additional cash workers.
- 7 **Apr 2023:** Queen Noor park handover to the municipality.
- 8 **May 2023:** Djenieh park handover to the municipality.
- 9 **Jun 2023:** Rihab park handover to the municipality.

CONTEXT

As of figures from March 2022, Jordan was host to 1.3 million refugees, of which 674,148 were Syrian. About 19 percent of this Syrian population has been identified as having a specific need, including serious medical conditions (10.1 percent), specific legal or physical protection needs (4.4 percent) and/or children at risk (3.7 percent). Jordan is the second largest refugee-hosting country per capita in the world, after Lebanon.

Moreover, since the beginning of the Syrian refugee response, the country has allowed for refugee inclusion in critical areas including education, health care, and (most recently) universal access to the national COVID-19 health response and vaccination program.

The displacement of refugees from Syria is protracted, while national, regional, and global socio-economic dynamics in recent years provoked shocks that deepened the vulnerabilities of the population across Jordan. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated pre-existing challenges, including poor economic performance at the national level, food insecurity, water scarcity, high electricity tariffs, and weak infrastructure. It has also significantly reduced access to livelihoods for refugees and host communities.

SITUATION DURING/AFTER THE CRISIS

By June 2019, more than 664,000 refugees from Syria were officially registered in Jordan according to UNHCR. However, a large number were not officially registered as refugees under the Geneva Convention.

This influx resulted in more than a ten percent increase in the country's population in just a few years. Around 80 percent of refugees would not live in refugee camps, but in host communities such as urban areas.

The rapid population growth put immense pressure on Jordan and its people, forcing them to compete for jobs, water, electricity, and food. In many municipalities, infrastructure no longer met the needs of the growing population and municipalities lacked the resources to maintain and create public open spaces. Jordan is one of the most arid countries in the world, and during the rapid process of urbanization – the planning of public green spaces was not prioritized.

Adequate and accessible green open spaces are a key factor to human well-being as they stimulate recreational activities and support social cohesion. Functional public green spaces, networks, and recreational areas are essential for the improvement of the urban climate, which can foster biodiversity and contribute to climate change adaptation.

At the time of implementation, the unemployment rate in Jordan was around 19 percent and there were few job opportunities in the low-wage sectors – of which, not all were open to non-Jordanians. As a result, the living conditions of refugees and vulnerable Jordanians in urban, suburban, and rural areas were deteriorating rapidly. Under the economic pressure, environmental challenges were not regarded as a priority, yet Jordan's natural systems are extremely fragile.

NATIONAL SHELTER STRATEGY

While there was no specific national strategy for public spaces, the Jordan Response Plan (framework addressing the Syrian crisis in Jordan) indicated two main pillars: Refugee/Humanitarian and Resilience. These consisted of three components: Refugee Needs, Host Community Needs, and Infrastructure and Institutional Capacity Development. Therefore, projects should contribute toward the self-reliance of Syrian refugees while maintaining quality services for the host community.



Before and after images of Janaa park, taken in 2019 and 2021 respectively. The community was involved in each phase of the intervention, from design to implementation.

PROJECT DESIGN/STRATEGY

The objectives of the project were to support the rehabilitation and maintenance of public spaces using a participatory design approach, and to create short-term employment opportunities, skills, and employability.

This was achieved using a labor-intensive approach (Cash-for-Work [CfW]) which benefited both displaced persons (Syrians) and host communities (Jordanians). The laborers raised walls, installed benches, planted trees, created picnic areas, and restored parks, playgrounds, and sports facilities, using local materials to minimize the impact on the environment. The project paid particular attention to the needs of women and girls in public, especially regarding safety in public spaces and gender-based violence (GBV)-related issues. All CfW activities targeted also women and girls, enhancing their livelihood capacities through marketable skills development (e.g., mosaics, paintings, and planting). These activities also employed Persons with Disabilities in the rehabilitation – creating a safe and comfortable work environment that responded to those specific needs, as well as capacity building for both the host community skills development (e.g., mosaics, paintings, and planting). These activities also employed Persons with Disabilities in the rehabilitation – creating a safe and comfortable work environment that responded to those specific needs.

Around 1,000 workers were employed for at least two months in three locations. Of these, 50 per cent were vulnerable Jordanians, and 50 percent were Syrian refugees. About 40 percent of the total were women. The workers benefitted from on-the-job training in mosaic production, mural painting, earth, and stone construction, planting, and training in life skills, and labor market services. More than 30 training sessions were completed, and also more than 30 community events such as co-design workshops, planting, women's and children's sessions, and inauguration events were organized to promote ownership of the parks by the community and raise awareness of environmental topics.

Youth were engaged in awareness sessions and recreational activities to spread awareness on the value of public spaces. Women requested dedicated events to address women's-related issues and to spend time together in a comfortable space. This engagement improved the use of

the space and empowered women and youth to inhabit other public spaces in their community, which made them more visible in the public sphere and promoted equal access and ownership.

IMPLEMENTATION

MUNICIPALITY-LEVEL MOU

Engagement with local authorities played an important element in the sustainability and ownership of the project through joint planning, induction sessions, and the co-design of activities. In preparation for implementation and prior to their commencing, memorandums of understanding (MoUs) were signed with municipalities to agree and define tasks, roles, and responsibilities.

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PROCESS

The project design phase was conducted in collaboration with the community and local stakeholders through co-design workshops. This approach had several benefits such as fostering community involvement, enhancing ownership, identifying community strengths, and generating realistic expectations about the project. Co-design workshops with the municipality and local community managed expectations and the need for the open green spaces that were incorporated into a proposal for the rehabilitation work. The workshops also offered an opportunity to provide information about the CfW initiative and register potential workers.

CASH-FOR-WORK

One objective of the project – the creation of job opportunities for the local community – was maximized using a labor-intensive approach which required a large workforce. The construction techniques for the proposed open green spaces follow these criteria: Proposals were a) labor-intensive, b) technically feasible with an unskilled workforce, and c) environmentally friendly, using locally available materials and resilient planting using low water consumption of native species to reduce negative environmental impact.

Although these criteria were prioritized, some essential urban furniture elements such as playground equipment, pergolas, and lighting needed to be delivered and installed using skilled local contractors, who were also requested to train unskilled cash workers in construction techniques.



Before and after images of Humayma park, taken in 2019 and 2020 respectively. Safe spaces for women were created, taking in account their needs and expectations.



Textile production process carried out by the women in the community, Gweirah, 2019.

TARGETING

Worker registration was conducted via a public announcement, followed by a vulnerability assessment of each candidate using the following criteria: household income, household size, household members' age and condition (presence of pregnant women, Persons with Disabilities or illnesses, etc.), and housing tenure (rented/owned).

COORDINATION

There is a clear need in Jordan to restart and mainstream a debate around public spaces. A lack of commitment and technical/financial capacity is one of the constraints identified in previous public space interventions in Jordan, jeopardizing the sustainability of such initiatives.

To influence the national debate around public space, the implementing organization kicked off a debate on public spaces in Jordan through a networking and discussion event hosted in Amman in June 2022. This was followed by field visits to several municipalities to show, document, and discuss innovative practices for public space creation and management while highlighting social benefits and community impact.

MAIN CHALLENGES

VANDALISM: Some cases of vandalism by local youth were observed during the project. The individuals were

identified and included in community engagement, psychosocial and recreational activities. Engaging the individuals reduced the risk of incident recurrence by exhibiting the value of the open space for the community.

MAINTENANCE: After the handover of the parks to the municipality, women maintenance committees were established in each location to ensure day-to-day maintenance in coordination with the community, municipal authorities, and key stakeholders. This provided a continuous presence in the parks to ensure the longevity of the greenery planted and the replacement of those that had died, allowing a continuation of awareness raising in the local community and municipality on the importance of proper maintenance and use of the park and strengthening the space management committee – giving women more visibility in the public sphere.

LOCAL AUTHORITY ENGAGEMENT: In one case, the organization faced challenges in engaging local municipal authorities, which resulted in the limited use of the park. Without municipal authority support, it was not possible to guarantee maintenance and surveillance after regular working hours. The park remains functional almost every day during daylight.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

The parks were transformed into a safe space where women can socialize and spend time with their children and friends. The initial assessment found that the areas lacked a recreational space where children and families could spend time together and meet with other people from the community. From a safety and security point of view, women wanted a quiet, clean, and pleasant space where they could stay without being harassed, fearing for their children, or suffering from the heat.

Additionally, Cash-for-Work activities engaged Persons with Disabilities, providing them with opportunities to learn new skills and connect with new people. Moreover, by including Persons with Disabilities' voices in the design of the intervention, the implementing organization was able to consider specific aspects and elements to ensure a friendly and inclusive architectural space (e.g., ramps, hand-rails, colorful signals, etc.).



Before and after images of the terrace area in Janaa park, taken in 2019 and 2021. 463 trees and 1,639 native shrubs were overall planted during the first phase.

The rehabilitation of green public spaces contributed to the overall improvement of neighborhoods from a social, economic, and environmental point of view. Environmental awareness sessions and events were organized, and participants were trained on how to take care of the park, respect, and upkeep the environment.

EXIT/HANDOVER

After the handover of the parks to the municipality, a presence was maintained through support to the space management committees, employing women’s maintenance committees, and organizing regular community events. This helped to ensure a smooth transition, allowed the trees and plants to settle and grow, and promoted the ownership of the parks by the local community and municipality.

WIDER IMPACTS

Through the project:

- Six public green spaces were rehabilitated.
- A total of 1,000 people were trained and provided with short-term work.
- More than 30 community events were organized.

The project was conceived as a second phase and scale-up of a previous project implemented in 2018 in the south of Jordan, which consisted of two rehabilitated and reopened parks in Gweirah and Humayma. Women, who previously were unable to leave their homes without male

accompaniment, took ownership of the park since the rehabilitation works and oversaw daily maintenance. The open spaces were transformed into safe spaces for women where they could socialize, spend time with their children and friends and organize communal activities. By including women in the design, implementation and maintenance of public spaces, the project created a space which responded to their needs and expectations.

The project was observed with interest by other municipalities who requested it to be expanded to six parks in the center and north of Jordan. The project showed also how the CfW approach can be used to create, rehabilitate and maintain inclusive public spaces in a participatory and sustainable way, reducing social tensions and contributing to smarter cities. In response to positive project feedback from engaged communities, the implementing organization encouraged the creation of Space Management Committees (SMC). The SMCs would oversee decisions on the future scope of the parks, as well as organizing events and activities for children and other attendees of the space.



Mosaic training for women, Humayma Park, 2019.



Before and after images of the grandstand area in Janaa park, taken in 2019 and 2021. The project encouraged the use of locally available materials in its construction.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

STRENGTHS

- √ **Empowering women** to safely and comfortably inhabit public spaces in their communities would also enhance their visibility in the public sphere.
- √ **CfW provided equal access to opportunities** and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded (women, Persons with Disabilities, etc.). By engaging people from different backgrounds, social cohesion was fostered, facilitating exchanges and relationships between the host community and displaced population.
- √ **CfW opportunities enhanced skills development** in target communities while building a better understanding of the job market in the area and of the possible opportunities for cash workers and their new skills through a comprehensive labor market services component.
- √ **The promotion of training in traditional Jordanian techniques**, such as mosaic and stone production, enhanced the dissemination and safeguarding of cultural heritage.

WEAKNESSES

- × The project faced a **lack of municipality commitment** in one location. The park is only partially open during municipality working hours, not allowing the local community to enjoy the facilities on a regular basis.
- × Challenges to the long-term maintenance of parks remained due to a **lack of awareness** concerning the value and importance of green open spaces. Financial resources will also be needed to implement maintenance interventions.
- × CfW is a valid option in contributing to enhanced skills and employability. However, to meaningfully enhance worker employability post-intervention, it must be part of a **wider program supporting additional actions** that directly affect skills development.



Children at Gweirah park after rehabilitation, 2020.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Holistic public space rehabilitation:** The rehabilitation of public spaces can be instrumental not only in improving green infrastructure, but also in providing short-term employment, fostering employability through trainings and labor market services, creating social cohesion between Syrian and Jordanians and contributing to women's empowerment and Persons with Disabilities inclusion.
- **Participation and Sustainability:** Enhanced participation is necessary for project sustainability. In this project, participation is promoted in the design phase, through the implementation of the works and during maintenance with the establishment and follow-up of the space management committees.
- **Social cohesion:** Through CfW it is possible to foster inclusiveness and social cohesion, by providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded by creating safe working environments.
- **Empowering women:** This intervention, while enhancing accessibility to open green spaces, also serves to empower women in safely and comfortably inhabiting public spaces in their community, making them more visible in the public sphere and promoting fair and more equal access. The inclusion of women in the design, implementation and maintenance of public spaces was crucial in creating spaces which responded to their needs and expectations.
- **Safeguarding the cultural heritage:** CfW can be extended beyond traditional sectors such as agriculture into green infrastructure and cultural heritage preservation through training in traditional local techniques such as mosaic production and stone construction.



FURTHER READING ON SHELTER PROJECTS

On Jordan: [A.20 / JORDAN 2018–2020](#); [A.12 / JORDAN 2014](#); [A.10 / JORDAN 2013](#)

On environmental sustainability: [A.4 / DEM. REP. OF THE CONGO 2019–2020](#); [A.11 / BANGLADESH 2018–2021](#)

On Cash-for-Work: [A.8 / SOUTH SUDAN 2017–2018](#); [A.12 / BANGLADESH 2019–2020](#)