

BUILDING GENDER- INCLUSIVE CITIES



*TOWARD MORE GENDER-INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMES,
PUBLIC SPACES & CITIES IN THE ARAB REGION
BY UN-HABITAT 2021*

TABLE OF CONTENT

01 BACKGROUND

02 REGIONAL URBAN AND GENDER CONTEXT
AND FACTS

03 REGIONAL GENDER
CHALLENGES

04 REGIONAL APPROACH TO GENDER-RE-
SPONSIVE INTERVENTIONS IN CITIES AND
HUMAN
SETTLEMENTS

05 THEMATIC INTERVENTIONS
AND PROJECTS IN THE REGION

06 WAY FORWARD



BACKGROUND

In a world that is urbanizing rapidly, and when cities are expected to host 60% of people globally by 2030, women, men, girls and boys experience urbanization and cities differently. It is thus paramount to design, plan and build inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities where no one is left behind, especially women and girls.



UN-Habitat's vision of "a better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world" can offer various benefits for women and girls, as cities open the doors to more diverse employment and education opportunities, better access to healthcare and more possibilities to redefine the traditional roles of men and women.

UN-Habitat is committed to advancing **gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls as an integral part of its projects and interventions with a special focus on the areas of equal accessibility, mobility, safety from violence, security of tenure and resilience to climate change.**

The New Urban Agenda also calls for the prevention of all forms of discrimination and violence and emphasizes the need for gender-responsiveness in all aspects of sustainable urban development, through clear principles and illustrative actions.

Additionally, the Strategic Plan of UN-Habitat 2020–2025 mainstreams gender equality into urban planning, legislation, finance, and economic development.

REGIONAL URBAN AND GENDER CONTEXT AND FACTS

The rate and scale of urban growth presents daunting challenges across the globe, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is no exception. Home to more than 260 million people living in cities, Arab/MENA citizens are more than ever in need of adequate transportation, housing, sanitation, energy, social and physical infrastructure.

The developmental plans of the Arab/MENA cities must be designed with an inclusive approach where no one is left behind, especially women and girls who represent half of the population. However, the region has made the slowest progress on gender equality across multiple indicators despite the documented progress achieved in the past few years. The political and economic upheaval, conflict, occupation, and the COVID pandemic have also aggravated the situation.

Facts and Figures

20%
of women are
in the
labor force

- Violence against women and girls has been identified as the highest priority in the fight for gender equality across the region.
- The region has one of the lowest percentages of female representation in national legislatures worldwide.
- Female youth are more than twice as likely to be not in education, employment, or training than male youth
- Informal employment tends to be higher amongst women and girls (especially agriculture).

Women
are 19%
of members
of
the parliament

*“When cities are planned for women – they are fit for all.”
-Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat*

Gender-Urban Facts

59%
of Arab
Population
is Urban

- On average, **women feel less safe in their cities** than men (increased in emergency)
- The main reason for the gendered nature of the mobility patterns and land use is the unequal gendered division of household labor, given that **globally women spend on average between three and six hours per day on unpaid care activities**, while men spend between half an hour and two hours per day
- Gender impact on urban mobility and land use allocation strategies are totally ignored in the cities' developing policies
- The Arab/MENA region is the most water scarce region in the world, including 15 of the most water-scarce countries worldwide. **Water scarcity can amplify domestic work burden on women and girls** at both household and community level

03

REGIONAL GENDER CHALLENGES



“Our kids play in the streets due to the lack of parks and play areas in the neighborhood» – Jordanian mother

«Our houses are not really our houses... because we have no documents” -Najat Naadosh Ali, 21, Iraq

On a daily basis in the Arab/MENA region, women face many obstacles, including loss of civil and Housing, Land and Property (HLP) documents, civil documentation and cadastral services in areas of conflict; lack of safe and affordable public transportation; high unemployment rates; harmful social norms; limited access to public spaces; gender based violence and sexual harassment; gender gap in labor market and political participation; restricted access to financial resources and unresolved inheritance issues, security of tenure and illegal occupation of land and property.

In addition to these challenges, a woman who is faced with the adversity of a destroyed house in a war-torn area now has to push through humanitarian challenges and the disproportionate burden that falls on a woman during conflict and war.

Emergencies, conflicts and natural disasters’ impacts are discriminatory due to predetermined gender roles. Crises dramatically increase the number of women supporting their families on their own. More than 70 per cent of women in crisis situations have experienced one or more types of gender-based violence.

04

REGIONAL APPROACH TO GENDER-RESPONSIVE INTERVENTIONS IN CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS



Through social inclusion and ensuring gender is mainstreamed in its Strategic Plan 2023-2020, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States is moving on its way toward safe urban settings that are empowering for all women and girls.

UN-Habitat prioritizes safety in urban development plans, gender-responsive local programmes, inclusive mobility and transport networks and safe and economically viable public spaces through partnerships with local and national governments and the engagement of women, among other community actors, in the planning stages.

By collecting gender-specific data and conducting gender-sensitive analysis that addresses men's and women's respective roles, needs and aspirations, UN-Habitat builds on its

urban profiling experience. Through community consultations, the data feeds into evidence-based and community-led interventions.

In conflict and post conflict contexts, UN-Habitat ensures "Building Back Better" through identifying gender specific sensitivities and implementing gender responsive infrastructure.

Further, UN-Habitat's work addresses HLP rights and builds awareness around equal HLP rights, with a focus on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugee communities.

Through its normative and operational work, UN-Habitat seeks to improve women's access to land as a key contributor to stabilizing societies in crisis and/or post-conflict.

05

THEMATIC INTERVENTIONS AND PROJECTS IN THE REGION

Housing, Land and Property Rights



Growing up in the Yazidi township of Borek in Sinjar, Iraq, Najat and Layla, among their families, were forcibly relocated in the 70's. This was part of the previous regime's discriminatory policies against ethnic and religious minorities.

With no documents to prove their right to their houses, how can Najat, Layla and their families return?

Housing, land and property are not just assets, they are a representation of freedom, shelter and well-being.

Realizing women's land rights is an integral part of the gender-responsive implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Securing women's land and property rights is fundamental for women to take a step closer to realizing their right to equality and ensure they're more capable to provide for themselves and their families. They would also be better protected from physical and psychological violence and natural hazards. This could contribute to women's increased meaningful participation in decision-making processes within communities and in public discourse and debates.

In this light, UN-Habitat is implementing a series of interventions in the Arab/MENA region that tackle HLP rights.

Housing, Land and Property Rights (HLP)

Women and Land in the Arab region

Why women need HLP rights?

When women have housing, land and property rights...

...they are more likely to enjoy a range of interconnected human rights, including adequate standard of living and protection from forced eviction.

www.arabstates.gln.net



As the Arab/MENA region is undergoing a decade of profound change, there is an increasing realization that the way land is accessed, used and controlled is a key element of sustainable, social and economic development, as well as peace and stability.

Women in the Arab/MENA region (especially those affected by conflict, displacement and migration) are widely acknowledged to be lagging behind their access to land and property rights. Desertification, land degradation, drought and water scarcity are historical land-based resources challenges in the region, now being made more severe because of climate change and increased population pressure.

On 18 February 2021, UN-Habitat, Global Land

Tool Network (GLTN) and the Arab Land Initiative launched the ongoing Women and Land Campaign to raise awareness around the challenges Arab women face in accessing their HLP rights and empowering them to claim such rights.

Through a step-by-step approach, the campaign explains why secure HLP rights are a catalyst for the realization of human rights, poverty reduction, economic prosperity and sustainable development, leading to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda and other regional and national strategies aiming at poverty reduction and sustainable development.

A displaced woman in Syria faces many barriers in accessing her HLP rights. The main challenges in Syria revolve around displaced individuals' living conditions; illegal and undocumented HLP transactions; HLP disputes; access to land for livelihoods; land contamination with landmines and lack of personal and HLP documentation. Since 2018, a joint program between UN-Habitat, United Nations Development Programme, Norwegian Refugee Council, Food and Agriculture Organization and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is being implemented to address immediate HLP issues in Syria through the formation of a legal database, development of thematic papers, guidance notes and policy paper, with a particular attention to those who are vulnerable based on either their gender or socio-economic background, including women, children and youth. To date, UN-Habitat developed analytical papers on land and conflict to guide staff governmental and non-governmental organizations, risk analysis, papers on HLP rights for Palestinians and HLP due diligence use of land and secondary occupation, all including gender as a main component. More documents were prepared by UN-Habitat's partners addressing HLP and gender, in addition to the engagement in HLP legal advice and counselling for vulnerable groups in several cities.

**The messages reached
83438 people on digital
media in the Arab region
41398 engaged with them
through likes, comments and
shares**

Housing, Land and Property Rights

In the Sinjar area, Northern Iraq, around 400,000 Yazidis (almost all of Sinjar's Yazidi population) were subjected to violence or forced to flee when ISIL swept into the region in August 2014.

Following the fall of ISIL in Iraq, Yazidi returnees face major challenges while trying to prove their ownership or occupancy land rights, particularly where official documents are missing, damaged, destroyed or in the absence of cadastral and registry information and maps delineating land and property to prove ownership or occupancy rights.

Since 2016, UN-Habitat has been addressing land rights of Yazidi minorities in Sinjar area, as well as vulnerable internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees.



Young Yazidi women gain knowledge on their housing, land and property rights, Sinjar, Northern Iraq

Growing up in the Yazidi township in Sinjar, Iraq, Najat and Layla, among their families, were forcibly relocated in the 70's. This was part of the previous regime's discriminatory policies against ethnic and religious minorities.

"Every family in Borek has a unique story about their displacement", Najat says. Her family was split during the escape: while some took the road to Kurdistan, her father and brother sought refuge in the Sinjar mountains, where her sister-in-law was eventually kidnapped by ISIL.

Layla's family, along with many others, fled to the Sinjar mountains where they stayed for 10 days without food or water.

Stories abound of people who couldn't survive the hunger and thirst. Layla was lucky; they were able to escape to Syria. "We did it all on foot", she recalls, "we could not find vehicles with fuel to cover the long distance."

Now twenty-one-year-old, Najat and Layla have become active in their community. "In Borek, young women have few opportunities to earn a living. Business training would also help us," Najat says.

In 2018, UN-Habitat launched a programme with the aim of supporting the sustainable return of the displaced population by contributing to the resolution of property claims.

Awareness raising being a cornerstone for empowering communities, the programme intends to strengthen the knowledge on HLP rights among Yazidi people.

In line with UN-Habitat's gender-sensitive approach, in May 2019 a female-only session allowed 67 women to discuss, in a safe and friendly environment, what these rights mean to them.

Layla's and Najat's household were surveyed at the beginning of 2019 and have now received their certificates to prove ownership of their houses.

Safe & Inclusive Public Spaces



«If I did not work for one day, my family would have nothing to eat for lunch,” Nafla Mohammed Ali, an Iraqi mother, remembers.

To her, Public Spaces were more than a place: they formed an opportunity to learn a skill and earn a living as a gardner.

Public spaces are parks, streets, sidewalks, markets and playgrounds that can define the character of a city and enhance its urban image. The network of public spaces in a city does not only improve quality of life, but also enhances mobility and the functioning of the city.

Regretfully, across the world, women and girls fear and experience various types of sexual violence in public spaces from unwelcome sexual remarks and touching to rape and femicide

In the Arab region, %37 of Arab women have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime. There are indicators that the percentage might be higher.

Safe & Inclusive Public Spaces

In Palestine, ensuring the security and safety of communities for women and girls in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is a priority.

The “HAYA” Programme, aiming at eliminating Violence Against Women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, is a five-year joint programme, supported by the Government of Canada, with an overall objective of building just and secure communities for women and girls.

This can be achieved through making progress in decreasing harmful practices validate violence against women and girls, increasing access of women and girls to services addressing Violence against Women and strengthening institutional capacity to develop and implement legal and policy frameworks that protect women and girls’ rights.



An estimate of 268,595 women and girls will enjoy free access to safe, inclusive and accessible public spaces

UN-Habitat helps launch exclusive Gaza promenade for women, girls, families

Women, girls and families in this Palestinian city can now enjoy a new safe, inclusive and accessible public space entitled the “Haya Promenade” designed exclusively for them.

With 14 per cent of Khan Younis public spaces associated with high levels of harassment and crime, the new promenade provides a comfortable space where the city’s more than 200,000 women and girls can easily and safely exercise their rights to the city.

The public space, inaugurated in 2021, was led by UN-Habitat, through the HAYA Joint Programme, supported by the Government of Canada, UN-Habitat, in close cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Local Government, Khan Younis Municipality and the Palestinian Housing Council. “Standing in the garden where each element is inspired by our designs, I can say that this unique experience has encouraged our interest and willingness to participate in community development and other types of public engagement,” Reem Bashir, 17, says.

She is one of the girls who participated in a workshop to visualize and design the place using the popular Minecraft game, as a way to include and engage youth.

“I couldn’t imagine that our contribution will so yield a new community garden that is urgently needed in our neighborhood very quickly,” Reem adds.

Through the development of gender-responsive policies and strategies, UN-Habitat continues to strive to strengthen the capacity of national and local governments to promote safe, inclusive, accessible, and gender-based violence-free public spaces.

Safe & Inclusive Public Spaces

In Syria, a mother and her family might benefit from a space for social activities, offering them connection with other residents of the area in which she resides. However, as a result of a decade of crisis, urban and rural areas all over Syria were subjected to a large scale of destruction. Dar'a city was one of the most affected areas. A major portion of the city was exposed to different degrees of damage to houses, productive urban and rural assets, markets, infrastructure and services (schools and health facilities), as well other social service facilities, including gardens and social centers. The conflict also caused displacements and homelessness. Focusing on community recovery, as well as urban and rural resilience in Dar'a and Deir ez-Zor governorates, UN-Habitat carried out a project to restore safe access in public spaces, communal and social facilities used by women under the Joint Programme and supported by the European Union and Norway.

Dedicated to engaging women in the development of safer access to social services for women and girls, UN-Habitat, in cooperation with UNFPA, held a consultation workshop, in which twenty-five women participated, representing different areas in Dara'a city.

The women agreed on the high priority locations that can enable them to access the social facilities and services within the city. These facilities included access to the hospital, university, girls' high school and market areas.

55 Syrian women & girls participated in consultation workshops

15,000 women and girls are expected to benefit from recovery of public spaces in Dar'a & Deir ez-Zor governorates, Syria



Women contribute to the restoration of public spaces in Syria

"This is the first time I feel that my voice is heard and my role is vital," Mrs. Eman says.

Mrs. Eman, who thought UN-Habitat's visit was to distribute humanitarian assistance, received a much more important package instead: social contribution and self-fulfillment.

In the consultation workshop, held by UN-Habitat, in cooperation with UNFPA, Mrs. Eman showed interest in reading the map of her location and voiced some of her ideas, including mentioning places that she also thought needed rehabilitation.

"I'm so content that I had the chance to share my point of view for the advancement of my city," Mrs. Eman comments.

Safe & Inclusive Public Spaces

Meanwhile, in Iraq, conflict changed everything for women and their families. Now, after eight years of being internally displaced, families struggle to make ends meet. .

UN-Habitat and the European Union are rehabilitating one or two large public spaces, including gardens, in five different targeted cities. to help returnees rebuild their lives.. In Yarmouk Park, Mosul, UN-Habitat delivered a vocational training course for female gardeners, in which thirty women participated. After this month-long training and apprenticeship, the five best trainees were later recruited by the Municipality and received a regular salary.

Struggling Iraqi mother learns new gardening skills

After struggling to support her family for the past six years, Nafla Mohammad Ali is now a gardener at Al Yarmouk Park.

Nafla and her family used to live on a chickpea plantation in the town of Batnaya, north of Mosul, but during heavy fighting in 2014, they fled to Mosul and settled near Al Yarmouk Park.

When her husband lost his job due to spinal issues, Nafla was forced to support both of them and five children.

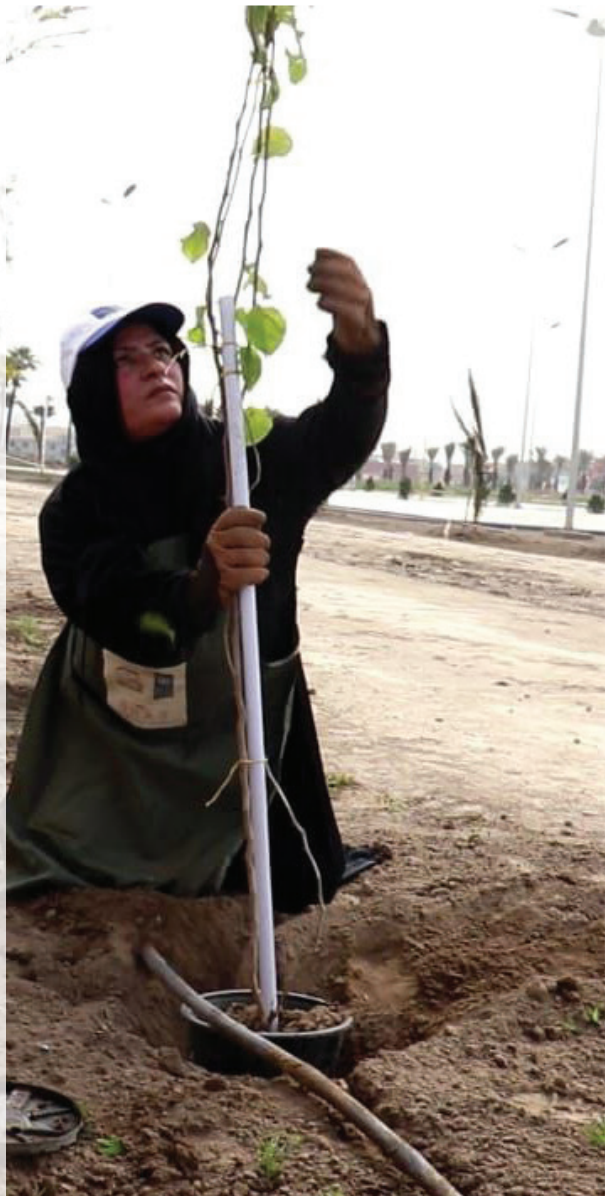
«If I did not work for one day, my family would have nothing to eat for lunch,” she remembers.”

She came across UN-Habitat’s horticulture training programme, which was recruiting female gardeners as one of the initiatives under the UN-Habitat urban recovery programme, supported by the EU.

Nafla is one of the thirty women selected from the 410 women who applied to UN-Habitat’s «Horticulture Training Programme for Women.»

«I feel so proud of the trees that I have planted and took care of with so much love,” Nafla says

The initiative provided Nafla and her colleagues with an intensive ten-day vocational training comprising core lessons in horticulture, including soil composition, plant species, planting, pruning and general maintenance. The training was held in close consultation with the Agriculture Department in Mosul University, Ninewa Agriculture Department and Mosul Municipality.



Safe & Inclusive Public Spaces

In the suburban district, Hay Hlel, Tunisia, a group of about thirty women learned pottery and sell their products in public spaces. However, the Hay Hlel district is characterized by being non-regulatory and precarious. Its inhabitants are socially and economically excluded and marginalized.

With the community needs at heart, UN-Habitat, in cooperation with the local authorities, are implementing a project within the framework of the National Urban Policy to develop public spaces accessible to girls, women and children. The Hay Hlel informal settlement and the pottery site act as a starting point.

Within the process of the Healthy Cities Program led by WHO in Tunisia, UN-habitat provides its expertise in terms of innovative co-design for vulnerable populations and for solutions implementation, aiming to facilitate access to inclusive public spaces for women, girls and children of the area.



«We learned pottery to make traditional Tunisian braziers that are used to bake traditional Tunisian bread,” one of the women living in Hay Hlel says. “Today we are a group of about thirty women who work in pottery and the public space is our place of work. We want dignity by improving our working and living conditions

Safe & Inclusive Public Spaces



The urban sprawl and lack of urban planning in Jordanian cities since the 1960's has resulted in high costs to guarantee infrastructure and services.

UN-Habitat in Jordan, in partnership with United Nations Office for Project Services and International Labor Organization, is implementing a project to enhance the socio-economic conditions of vulnerable women living in Ghor Al Safi. This is expected to happen through the provision of a safe and green public space and the creation of livelihood opportunities.

Through the project, which is implemented in collaboration with the Municipality of the Southern Jordan Valley and Zaha Cultural Center, UN-Habitat seeks to unlock the transformative power of safe and green public spaces for strengthening livelihood opportunities and enhancing the socioeconomic empowerment of vulnerable women in Ghor Al Safi.

It is expected that minimum of 10,000 users will visit the public space and community center per year. One-fifty women will benefit from using the established market space in the public space to sell their products. "Our kids play in the streets due to the lack of parks and play areas in the neighborhood," one of the mothers says. «I would prefer that the design of this park includes playgrounds for the kids and shaded seating areas for us mothers to chitchat while our kids play.»

Moreover, another project in Maraka Neighborhood implemented in partnership with Greater Amman Municipality, aims to fosters social cohesion among the community members with a focus on women and persons with disabilities through the rehabilitation of the public space in Marka will benefit 148,100 people who live in the area.

**148,100 People living
in Marka, Jordan, are
expected to benefit
from the public spaces**

Public Transportation

Historically, the development of a country's public transport sector has been an indicator of its success. Due to their specific needs and responsibilities such as caring for children, the elderly or people with disabilities, going to work, as well running the household, women generally tend to have different travel patterns than men. Many women are often subject to sexual harassment on public transport or encounter barriers such as poorly lit streets and bad quality footpaths, which inhibit their access to public transport.

These barriers may also limit access to education and employment opportunities, which in turn entrenches the weak position of women in society and acts as a brake on the economic growth prospects of countries.

Until recently, transport planning is operated under the assumption that women and men benefit from services equally. Reality, however, dictates a different experience. UN-Habitat in Egypt in partnership with the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA), UN Women and Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, undertook a study on gender equity in Greater Cairo's public transport system, including a series of surveys and focus group discussions with commuters in the city to develop a better understanding of the challenges women face while using the transport system. This study was conducted to understand the needs of women in transportation to help inform the design of a new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System in Cairo and Giza governorates, as UN-Habitat, in partnership with NUCA, has introduced the concept of BRT to operate in Greater Cairo. The results of the study help to inform the transportation planning process, ensuring the inclusion of data-driven gender concerns in the service plan and infrastructure designs.



Public Transportation

In an effort to widen transport options in Tyre, Lebanon, UN-Habitat launched a bike-sharing initiative. In early 2021, the Municipality of Tyre in Lebanon launched two bike-sharing stations through a city-to-city Partnership with the City of Zurich, facilitated by UN-Habitat.

To date, bikes have been rented by more than 450 people for recreational purposes, including tourism, shopping, sport and more.

Additionally, bikes provide users an alternative mode of transportation that is not only green, but can also decrease exposure to COVID19-, while reducing traffic congestion, accidents and pollution in the city.



Aya Saleh uses the bike-sharing system in Tyre city, Lebanon, and looks forward to more initiatives I wish there would be more stations across the country to encourage people to adapt to bike-sharing culture

In addition to the bike-sharing stations, the partnership between the cities of Tyre and Zurich is expected to continue into a second phase. In this phase, it is envisioned that a central parking facility will be established with a bus shuttle system, including specific routes and schedules through the city for daily commuting and tourism.

This partnership is expected to improve the performance of the Municipality of Tyre and achieve a long-term positive impact in the field of soft mobility through sharing the knowledge and expertise related to best practices for mobility and social cohesion between host and refugee communities.

"I wish there would be more stations across the country to encourage people to adapt to bike-sharing culture. I hope that this is the start of the establishment of more public spaces that are friendly to all: youth, children and families," Aya reflected.

"I use the bike in Tyre area because it's a small city, so I find it easier to use the bike than the car," Aya Saleh, 30, resident of Tyre, says.

Women Refugees, IDPs & Returnees

“Today, we are really happy because we planted flowers and we want them to grow,”

Reem, a young girl living in Souf camp, Jordan, says.

Reem planted a flowerpot with her name on it and attended interactive awareness-raising activities to protect her and her friends against the pandemic

One out of three migrants and refugees in the Arab world are women and girls.

With migrant women playing a pivotal role around the world to sustain communities, the empowerment of all women and girls and their human rights is an underlying principle, along with addressing the unique needs of women and girls.



Women Refugees, IDPs & Returnees

10,490 Amman residents will benefit from capacity building & awareness-raising in response to flash floods

Heavy rains in Jordan have paralyzed the city, affecting schools, transportation, livelihoods and the power grid, thus exacerbating vulnerabilities for the poorest segments of the Jordanians and Syrian refugees and deteriorated access to quality basic services. Women and girls are among the many groups who are affected by climate-related risks, as climate change threaten food security, health, water availability and more.

UN-Habitat, in collaboration with the Greater Amman Municipality and with the support of the Government of Japan, is implementing a project to strengthen resilience of vulnerable Jordanian communities and Syrian refugees in Amman against flash floods.

UN-Habitat aims to provide an integrated response against flash floods through community consultations,

awareness raising and capacity building to enhance resilience to floods, as well as improve urban management and construction standards. This integrated approach engages communities, especially vulnerable groups including women, from the outset to ensure the sustainability of its outcomes.

Within this context, women launched an initiative named “zero waste home” to reduce the impact of flash floods in the downtown area.

“We learned a lot from the training, specifically on agriculture practices and how to utilize home waste products. We are willing to help educate neighbors,” Sawsan, one of the participants who designed her own small water harvesting model during training, says.

Further, UN-Habitat Jordan, is also working on enhancing the safety and resilience of Palestinian refugees through Improving access to water and sanitation facilities in Public Spaces, as well as COVID19- response, in partnership with the Department of Palestinian Affairs.

During the pandemic, women were significantly impacted, their mobility was further limited and their wellbeing was hindered. Through the project's activities, UN-Habitat is expected to reach nearly 50,000 Palestinian refugees that are living in Souf and Al-Shahid camp (over %50 are women).



Today, we are really happy because we planted flowers and we want them to grow so we will water them every day and take care of them,” Reem, a young girl living in Souf camp, says.

Alongside her friends, she planted a flowerpot with her name on it and attended an interactive play that highlighted the importance of wearing a mask when leaving the house, social distancing, keeping hands clean, and maintaining the parks and public areas.

50,000 Palestinian refugees are expected to receive improved access to water & sanitation facilities in Public Spaces

Women Refugees, IDPs & Returnees

Lebanon is facing a myriad of crises including a severe economic depression and currency devaluation,

the aftermath of the Beirut Port explosion, COVID19- pandemic and the Syrian displacement crisis.

In Bourj Hammoud, Lebanon, residents suffer from lack of access to basic services, safe public spaces, weak socio-economic situation, deteriorating built environment and lack of safety and security.

Aiming to improve basic services and living conditions of host and refugee populations residing in the Maraach sub-neighborhood in Bourj Hammoud, UN-Habitat, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and the Embassy of Japan in Lebanon are implementing a project in response of the urgent needs of the communities.



Alaa was among those selected to take part in the cash-for-work activity under the UN-Habitat project, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and the Embassy of Japan in Lebanon, aiming at improving the well-being of host and refugee population through enhanced environmental and hygiene conditions in Maraach neighborhood. Through her work in rehabilitation of private electrical wires in the project's area, Alaa reached improved access to education and was introduced to new skills that improved her livelihood condition through increased job opportunities.

The project's three main pillars are: sub-neighborhood rehabilitation, capacity building and awareness-raising and Cash-for-work activities.

“Due to my family's economic situation, I could not pay my university tuition fees,” Alaa Sultan said

Women Refugees, IDPs & Returnees



42 women received vocational training in Iraq

In Iraq, both women and men are trained on skills required for rehabilitation and reconstruction activities.

Graduates of the vocational training are recruited for rehabilitation and reconstruction activities under a Japan-supported project through cash-for-work modality. Forty women are benefiting from this project.

Additionally, self-reliance of the returnees in the targeted communities is enhanced through vocational training and increased employment opportunities.



800 families received cash-for-rent support in Lebanon

The crises in Lebanon have consequences on the nation's infrastructure, housing stock and supply of basic services such as electricity and fuel that have left streets unlit and means of public transportation scarce.

This has directly affected women and girls and has increased sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) such as domestic violence, early marriage and harassment, among others.

The UN-Habitat Lebanon Country Programme is striving to mitigate some of the knock-on effects of the crises that directly affects women through its projects. Whether it's by empowering women who are supported by projects or involved in their implementation, UN-Habitat ensures that women's perspectives and views are included into the design, implementation and sustainability of its projects. Following the Beirut Port explosion, UN-Habitat Lebanon supported over 800 families living in the areas affected with cash-for-rent for a period of four months through funding from the United Nations Central Response Emergency Fund (UN CERF).

Of these 800 households, many were led by women who either are or were the main breadwinners of their homes before the crisis. The provision of cash-for-rent enabled beneficiaries to put funds which would have gone to rent into other essential needs such as food, medicine, hygiene supplies.

"I used the money to secure nappies, milk and other essential items for my baby" Shika, a Bangladeshi female head of household supported by this project, says.

She used to make her income from domestic work prior to the COVID19- pandemic. In addition to the cash-for-rent support, project beneficiaries joined gender-based violence awareness-raising sessions organized by the Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering (RDFL) to learn how to better protect themselves in Lebanon's current security context and a hotline number was shared for them to report cases to.

UN-Habitat Support to Local Female City Leaders

“The City of Tomorrow is a city of development, prosperity, equality between women and men where selection is based on competence and not gender. This is the city we all aim for” -Dr. Manal Awad, Governor of Damietta, Egypt



Strong cities require strong female representation and leadership.

In the Arab region, women are becoming more prominent in business and management levels. Highlighting this, UN-Habitat led a campaign to showcase the efforts and achievements of women in leadership positions, including mayors and governors, as well as founders and managers of companies and organizations in the Arab/MENA region.

A number of influential women from Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and Kuwait participated through video recordings, in which they shared their experience and challenges they faced during their journey toward leadership.

WAY FORWARD

UN-Habitat ROAS will continue to work toward promoting inclusive Arab cities with spaces that welcome and engage girls and women. Through its active programmes in 18 countries across the region, priority will be given to the advancement of gender inclusive mobility, access to basic services in cities especially in conflict areas and informal settlements, housing and land ownership, participation in decision making and policy development, and access to economic empowerment.

Upcoming Regional Programmes and Interventions

Besides country-led programmes, a number of regional programmes and initiatives will be adopted to further advance social inclusion and gender equality:

Makanuha – Advancing the gender-responsive public space agenda in the Arab States

Makanuha is a four-year Programme focusing on advancing the gender-responsive public space agenda in the Arab States to improve the accessibility and safety of women and girls through their engagement in urban governance, accessibility to gender-sensitive quality public spaces and capacity building.

The Empowerment of Women in the Arab/MENA Region through increased access to HLP rights

This is a 3 years programme focusing on empowering women in the Arab region - and particularly those affected by conflict - through a comprehensive and integrated set of interventions aiming at increasing their access to, use of and control over HLP rights.

The Collection of Ingenious Initiatives for Sustainable Urban Development

The new phase of the Collection of Ingenious Initiatives for Sustainable Urban Development, hosted by UN-Habitat in cooperation with Griffith University and Bond University, will spotlight the contributions made by women to the design and implementation of socially and environmentally sustainable urban and architectural development around the world.

Women's participation and leadership in architecture and urban planning facilitates the mainstreaming of gender equality in the design of built environments. Gender-sensitive designs is essential to the full integration of women and girls in the economic, social, political and cultural life of cities.

*TOWARD MORE GENDER-INCLUSIVE
PROGRAMMES, PUBLIC SPACES & CITIES IN
THE ARAB REGION*