

CASE STUDY

JORDAN 2018-2022 / SYRIAN CRISIS

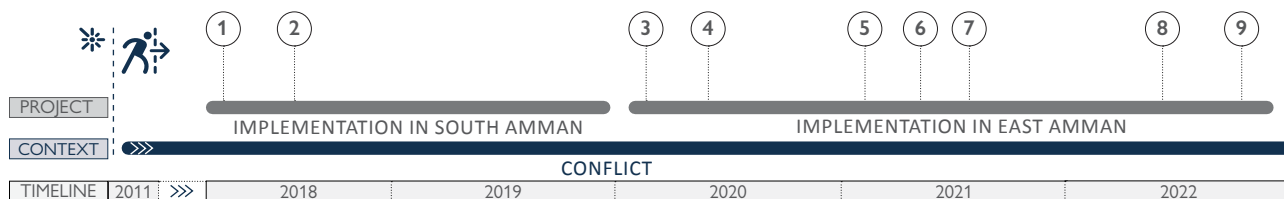
CONTEXT LOCATION	SETTLEMENT TYPE	SUPPORT METHODS
CRISIS	Syrian Crisis	
PEOPLE DISPLACED	655-675,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan between 2018 and 2022*	
PROJECT LOCATION	Amman Governorate, with implementation in Southern and Eastern Amman and other rural areas	
PEOPLE SUPPORTED BY THE PROJECT	780 HHs (3,900 ind.) with home rehabilitation (55% Syrian refugees, 45% Jordanians; over 10% included persons with disabilities; 20% female-headed households). 120,000 people overall, incl. 14% Syrian refugees.	
PROJECT OUTPUTS	780 homes rehabilitated 52 community facilities	
SHELTER SIZE	70 m² on average	
SHELTER DENSITY	12 m² per person on average	
DIRECT COST	USD 1,400 per household on average	
PROJECT COST	USD 1,820 per household on average	

* UNHCR data portal (<https://data.unhcr.org/>)



PROJECT SUMMARY

Since 2018, the program rehabilitated more than 780 homes and 52 public spaces in Amman. Beginning with a homeowner-driven approach, the intervention expanded to serve Syrian refugee households and transitioned into a contractor-driven modality. Continued funding enabled growth and the integration of sustainable green practices, underscoring adaptability and a sustained commitment to improving living conditions for vulnerable households and communities.



2011: Unrest and conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

- 2018:** Community needs assessment in Al Jezah;
- 2018:** Commencement of activities in South Amman. Within three years, 252 homes and 13 public spaces were rehabilitated.
- 2020:** Area of operation moved to East Amman to serve refugees and host community;
- 2020:** Transition from owner-driven to contractor-driven implementation.
- 2021:** Community needs assessment in Marka;
- 2021:** Expansion to 18 community service projects;
- 2021:** External funding secured for energy efficiency and "Green Homes" interventions (6 new green homes and 42 rehabilitations with energy and water efficiency over 3 years).
- 2022:** Satisfaction survey in Marka;
- 2022:** Program evaluation.



The project rehabilitated homes and public facilities in urban areas of Amman, serving both Syrian refugees and local Jordanians.

BACKGROUND

Jordan's development has been shaped by an arid climate and constrained natural resources. Predominantly Muslim with a significant Christian minority, Jordan has a longstanding tradition of hosting refugees from regional conflicts. It has remained a relatively stable monarchy, though periodic pressures have affected domestic conditions. After the Syrian crisis began in 2011, Jordan became a principal destination for those fleeing violence. The population increase strained infrastructure, services and social systems, while reinforcing Jordan's role as a key refugee-hosting state.

SITUATION BEFORE THE CRISIS

Prior to the Syrian crisis, Jordan's population was primarily urban, centered in cities such as Amman. While poverty existed, overall living standards were comparatively higher than in some neighboring states. The government sought to improve housing and essential services, but structural constraints persisted. Jordan ranked among the most water-scarce countries globally, compounding vulnerabilities linked to aridity and resource scarcity. Energy security was similarly constrained by heavy import dependence.

SITUATION AFTER THE CRISIS

The rapid influx of Syrian refugees intensified pressures in urban centers, further stretching service systems. Competition for limited resources raised the cost of living and tested social cohesion, while the need for sustainable urban planning and infrastructure investment grew more urgent. Rural areas were less directly impacted, but experienced secondary effects, such as competition for agricultural labor and resources. Refugees represented about one-third of the population, creating profound pressure on public services and housing. Nearly two million people, including 30% of Jordanians and 48% of Syrians, lacked access to affordable housing, and 1.36 million lived in substandard conditions. Rising rents heightened vulnerability and increased risks of eviction and repeated displacement. East Amman, especially the Marka district (with 43,000+ refugees), exemplified these dynamics, including early coordination gaps among local actors.

NATIONAL SHELTER RESPONSE

In collaboration with humanitarian actors, the Government of Jordan pursued a multi-pronged strategy that included the establishment of refugee camps, rental subsidies and temporary shelter solutions. Joint needs assessments informed both immediate and medium-term programming decisions across the shelter sector. The overall shelter response combined government-led initiatives with NGO programming and international financing, providing a framework within which area-based and urban-focused interventions could be adapted and implemented.

PROJECT STRATEGY

The program sought to enable dignified, stable and inclusive living environments for vulnerable populations, operating at two complementary levels.

HOUSEHOLD LEVEL: Rehabilitating homes to address safety, privacy and health, with culturally appropriate adaptations responding to each family's needs. Interventions commonly included ensuring privacy (e.g., doors on toilets), creating separate spaces for spouses, and providing separate rooms for girls and boys over 12 years old. Socio-economic and technical assessments prioritized families in substandard dwellings, identifying urgent needs and ensuring that upgrades met humanitarian standards. Security of tenure was enhanced through rental agreements—facilitating stability for tenants—and environmental awareness was promoted, including practices for responsible disposal of non-reusable materials.

COMMUNITY LEVEL: The intervention upgraded public facilities—such as schools, medical centers, community halls and WASH services—to reinforce inclusive service delivery and safety. Community consultations and focus groups shaped priorities; partners were engaged through agreements with commitments for long-term sustainability of improved spaces; supervisory visits and final inspections safeguarded quality and enabled timely disbursements.



Households were targeted based on socio-economic status and living conditions.



Beyond household interventions, public facilities and spaces were also upgraded.



PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The program operated with approvals from relevant government agencies and was coordinated through the Shelter workgroup to mitigate duplication. Implementation workstreams followed the two mentioned project pillars:

At the household level:

- Inter-agency coordination via the Shelter workgroup.
- Standardized works planned through Bills of Quantities and Scopes of Work.
- Beneficiary agreements, structured tendering, tenure security measures, quality assurance and post-completion assessments.
- Technical support with one-to-one construction guidance to households; contractor supervision through site monitoring; formal handover with completion certificates and documentation.

At community level:

- Technical assessments to identify public spaces requiring rehabilitation.
- Focus group discussions to agree on rehabilitation priorities.
- Partnerships with government bodies, Community-based Organizations (CBOs) and contractors to address post-crisis demands and ensure sustainability.
- Technical assessments, partnership agreements, tendering, implementation supervision and handovers.

Examples of repair works included: steel works (doors, handrails, bars; galvanized or sandwich panel roofing), construction and demolition (block/gypsum partitions; floor/wall removal for finishes), carpentry (doors with frames and fittings), aluminum works (doors, windows, kitchen cabinets; fly screens and glazing), plumbing and drainage (fixtures, tanks, heaters and drainage systems), electrical works (lighting, sockets, panels, fans), accessibility works (ramps, grab bars, accessible basins) and building finishes (plastering, painting, waterproofing insulation).



Among the upgrades, greywater reuse systems were installed, for instance to irrigate trees and gardens and reduce the pressure on local water systems.

The project staffing and roles evolved across phases, balancing strategic oversight and field-level technical capacity:

- Program Manager – Shelter and Infrastructure (1): overall management and strategic direction, with close coordination with the country program.
- Community Engagement Coordinator (1): bridge to partners; baseline and partnership assessments to understand beneficiaries, services, and community needs.
- Social Researchers (1–3): home visits, socio-economic assessments, eligibility verification and referrals to other services.
- Project Engineers (2–4): technical assessments for homes and communal projects; diagnosis and specification of rehabilitation measures; contractor supervision and compliance with safety/quality standards; training to contractors on green interventions and expected benefits.

Through the course of the project, the approach transitioned from an owner-driven modality to a contractor-driven one. The shift arose from quality assurance needs and beneficiary protection concerns, particularly where households had limited technical capacities and faced risks of incomplete works, misuse of funds, or exploitation. Contractor selection followed robust technical and financial evaluations in line with contracting policies, improving quality, user satisfaction and implementation efficiency.

TARGETING

Locations were identified through a combination of UN numerical analysis and fact sheets to pinpoint areas with high concentrations of Syrian refugees. Primary field surveys then prioritized highly overpopulated zones with limited humanitarian support and poor habitability conditions, with compromised access to markets and essential services.

Target groups included persons with disabilities, female-headed households, orphans, and other vulnerable Jordanian and Syrian refugee families. Entry pathways included direct applications from families and referrals from humanitarian partners.

The process entailed:

- Household assessments to determine needs and eligibility, incorporating socio-economic status and living conditions.
- Technical feasibility analysis to ensure interventions would deliver meaningful, durable impacts.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At household level, vulnerable families—including persons with disabilities, orphans and female-headed households—contributed to socio-economic and technical assessments to define interventions aligned to their priorities. Community consultations identified public-space upgrades, reinforcing alignment with local expectations. This participatory model fostered ownership, strengthened maintenance commitments, and increased beneficiary satisfaction. Communities also participated in monitoring, reinforcing accountability and smoothing implementation.

TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

Eco-friendly and context-adapted measures were introduced or reinforced to improve habitability while reducing recurrent costs. The combined impact included lower utility expenses, enhanced comfort, and a reduction in environmental footprints.

- **Sustainably sourced materials** (including low-carbon concrete, sustainable bricks and chemical-free substances).
- **Thermal measures:** foundation insulation (e.g., foam boards) to reduce heat transfer and water absorption; double-layered brick walls to enhance thermal mass and strength; polystyrene panels for wall insulation; sloped roof slabs to avoid water pooling; roof tiling to improve durability and reflect sunlight.
- **Openings and lighting:** upgrade from single-pane to double-glazed windows to reduce heat exchange and noise; transition to LED lighting to cut electricity consumption and maintenance costs.
- **Water and WASH-related conservation:** low-flow fittings; water-saving plumbing repairs; greywater reuse systems (in selected locations) for irrigation; rainwater harvesting (e.g., in Irbid) to reduce dependence on municipal supply.



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MATERIALS AND SUPPLY

Most construction inputs were procured through local markets using existing supply chains; while some materials were locally produced, many were imported due to national market dynamics. Procurement emphasized cost-effectiveness, availability and environmental performance (favoring recyclable or reusable materials where possible). Local sourcing strengthened small and medium-sized businesses and contributed to local economic activity. Supply chains responded effectively overall, with occasional delays linked to import procedures or logistics. Transport primarily relied on local distributors, minimizing emissions; where possible, suppliers were encouraged to adopt sustainable packaging and transport practices.

EXIT/HANDOVER

Although the project remained ongoing and lacked a formal exit strategy at the time of reporting, structured measures were instituted to sustain outcomes:

- Households received training on maintenance of weatherproofing and structural improvements to strengthen long-term resilience.
- For rehabilitated homes, a tripartite memorandum of understanding (entity–family–landlord) clarified that maintenance work listed in annexes was provided as a grant; all rehabilitation work carried an 8 month warranty from final receipt, obligating the contractor to address any defect within the period.
- Rent stability was reinforced by renegotiating and rewriting contracts (typically 18 months), including reductions or adjusted rates relative to area benchmarks and, in some cases, landlord concessions on overdue utilities, thereby preventing rent hikes post-rehabilitation and enhancing tenure security.
- For public projects, agreements with local/national administrations assured continued maintenance and ownership (e.g., schools, medical centers, public parks), ensuring resource allocations and responsibilities for long-term upkeep.



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Interventions at the household level included upgrades of kitchens and water facilities. Materials were mostly procured through local small and medium businesses.

MAIN CHALLENGES

Maintaining consistent compliance with housing quality standards demanded sustained effort. In the owner-driven phase, households lacking technical expertise, particularly women and older persons, encountered difficulties managing contractors and supervising repairs. Risks included partial or delayed completion and, in some cases, misuse of funds or exploitation. This necessitated increased site visits to verify materials and completed works before disbursements. The transition to a contractor-driven approach improved quality and satisfaction, as vetted contractors were engaged through technical and financial evaluations aligned with institutional policies.

CROSSCUTTING ISSUES

ENVIRONMENT

- **The program integrated practical energy- and water-efficiency upgrades within available budgets:** double-glazed windows, roof and wall insulation, waterproofing of external surfaces, improved doors and windows to reduce air infiltration, heat- and moisture-resistant tiling, plumbing leak remediation, low-flow fixtures and energy-saving lighting.
- **Climate-tailored solutions were context-specific:** in sun-rich Azraq, interventions emphasized daylighting, insulation and greywater reuse; in rain-impacted Irbid, rain collectors and storage addressed seasonal water availability; in Derallah, insulation strategies were emphasized to mitigate extreme heat. Community involvement in environmental stewardship helped cultivate ownership and long-term sustainability.

GENDER AND GBV RISK MITIGATION

- **Female-headed households were prioritized** for home rehabilitation and upgrades to mitigate vulnerabilities associated with unsafe housing and GBV risks.
- **Public-space upgrades focused on safety and accessibility** (e.g., adequate lighting, clear pathways, secure access to essential services), including improvements in inclusion centers and shelters for vulnerable groups.
- **Women's participation in decision-making** was supported through community consultations, ensuring that safety, security and privacy considerations were explicitly integrated into both household and community-level interventions.
- **Awareness-raising and education activities** equipped residents with knowledge of shelter safety, available social services and rights related to housing and tenure security.

LINKS WITH RECOVERY

The project connected immediate repairs to mid-term housing-tenure measures and long-term sustainability through community projects:

- **Housing:** Rapid repairs stabilized unsafe dwellings—e.g., roof strengthening and weatherproofing—so families could safely remain in place while longer-term solutions were planned.
- **Housing-tenure and skills:** Rental agreements (and, where feasible, extensions for female-headed households) enhanced stability; beneficiaries received maintenance training, thereby extending the lifecycle of improvements and reducing future dependency.
- **Community infrastructure:** Critical communal spaces (e.g., inclusion centers, shelters) were upgraded to improve accessibility, safety and functionality; in one case, a community center was designed to serve dual functions as an inclusion hub and an emergency shelter.
- **Partnerships:** Collaboration with the Department of Palestinian Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development aligned outputs with national recovery priorities and integrated project results into broader development frameworks.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

DRR components addressed flooding, winter storms and structural vulnerabilities by raising habitability, reinforcing structural integrity and weatherproofing, and improving safe access to shelter. At site level, drainage and flood-resistant materials were integrated in public spaces to reduce hazard exposure and service disruptions.



Insulation panels were installed where possible to improve indoor comfort.

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OUTCOMES AND WIDER IMPACTS

DIRECT OUTCOMES

- **Improved living conditions:** Rehabilitation improved health, safety and privacy; beneficiaries reported better mental and physical well-being and easier maintenance.
- **Reduced utility expenses:** Water- and energy-efficiency upgrades (e.g., LED bulbs, efficient plumbing) lowered household bills.
- **Social cohesion:** Improved living spaces enabled families to host relatives and friends, fostering stronger family and community ties.
- **Accessibility and inclusion:** Upgraded community facilities—schools, medical centers, public spaces—provided safer, more accessible services for children and persons with disabilities.
- **Livelihood spillovers:** In at least one instance, well-digging skills developed during home improvements became an income-generating activity.

INDIRECT OUTCOMES

- **Capacity building:** Community-based organizations gained implementation skills and stronger relationships with communities and referral networks.
- **Referral mechanisms:** A structured referral system effectively linked beneficiaries with complementary services beyond the project scope.
- **Policy influence:** The project contributed to national dialogues on housing/public space rehabilitation and sustainable urban development.
- **Scaling of green interventions:** Demonstrated reductions in utility costs and improved comfort spurred interest in energy-efficient housing.

WIDER IMPACTS

- **Replicable model:** The integrated approach—home rehabilitation, community engagement and green interventions—provided a framework for expansion to other contexts with similar challenges.
- **Government and stakeholder engagement:** Achievements encouraged authorities and partners to invest in sustainable rehabilitation.
- **Community empowerment:** Workshops and skills-building activities enhanced beneficiaries' and contractors' capacities to continue adopting green practices independently.

UNINTENDED POSITIVE OUTCOMES

- **Economic empowerment:** Skills acquired during improvements led to new livelihood opportunities (e.g., well digging).
- **Strengthened trust and collaboration:** Deepened relationships among the entity, CBOs and community members enhanced social cohesion.
- **Increased demand for green homes:** Observable cost savings and improved comfort created momentum for wider adoption of green technologies in housing.



FURTHER READING ON SHELTER PROJECTS

On Jordan: [SP 8TH ED. / A.20 / 2018-2020](#)

On Turkey: [SP 17-18 / A.32 / TURKEY 2017-2018;](#)
[SP 8TH ED. / A.27 / TURKEY 2017-2020.](#)

On Lebanon: [SP 15-16 / A.31 / LEBANON 2015-2016](#)



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The project aimed to increase privacy and dignity of target families living in urban areas. Interventions included partitions, doors / windows and new kitchens.



Upgrades such as damp-proof paint and tiling were installed to improve indoor living conditions. After initial challenges, the project shifted to a contractor approach.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

STRENGTHS

- ✓ **Comprehensive, multi-dimensional strategy.** Home rehabilitation, infrastructure upgrades and green interventions were combined into a coherent shelter solution that addressed immediate needs and longer-term sustainability.
- ✓ **Strong stakeholder collaboration.** Partnerships with government bodies, NGOs and community organizations increased reach and effectiveness, linking households to complementary services (healthcare, social support, livelihoods).
- ✓ **Flexibility and continuous learning.** The team adapted strategies based on assessments and feedback, including the integration of cash assistance with technical support to improve effectiveness and scalability.

WEAKNESSES

- × **Budget constraints and underestimation of costs.** Price inflation and logistics increased expenses for home and infrastructure works; future budgets should integrate contingencies and more accurate cost forecasting.
- × **Complexity of scaling cash-plus-technical-support approaches.** Some households required more oversight than anticipated; concerns about spending efficiency and quality control highlighted the need for clearer beneficiary guidance, vetted contractor networks and strengthened technical support.
- × **Inconsistent fit for regional conditions.** Standardized interventions at times did not match localized cultural and environmental needs; future programming should prioritize regional assessments and climate-appropriate, culturally sensitive solutions.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Holistic, community-centred approaches improve relevance and ownership and should be maintained and expanded.** Early and continuous engagement with communities and CBOs, combined with baseline and socio-economic assessments, ensures interventions reflect actual needs and local priorities.
- **Cash-plus-technical assistance is effective but requires stronger structure to scale.** While flexible financial support improved household outcomes, future programming should include clearer technical guidance, vetted contractor networks, and stronger oversight to ensure quality and efficiency.
- **Targeting approaches must be continuously refined to reduce exclusion.** Combining social data, community validation and feedback mechanisms can improve fairness, while tailored support is needed for vulnerable households with limited capacity to manage works.
- **Sustainability and green practices should be further integrated and scaled.** Energy- and water-efficient solutions reduce long-term costs and environmental impacts but require greater awareness, affordability measures and incentives to increase uptake.
- **Capacity building is critical for quality and long-term impact.** Training local contractors, technicians and households strengthens implementation and supports replication beyond the project and should be expanded as a core component of future interventions.