



# The Success Stories Edition

Welcome to the November edition of WHO's monthly newsletter. This newsletter specifically focuses on stories from our stakeholders, partners, and beneficiaries. As well as WHO events from the previous month.

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## Where there is a will, there is a way

How one woman's determination changed her life and the lives around her



Um Mubarak tends to her farm

Um Mubarak is a 65 year old woman from the village of Bayouda, in the Balqa governorate in the middle of Jordan. Like many women her age her life has been, at times, exceptionally tough. For years she and her husband, Abu Mubarak, had struggled to make ends meet. They cherished the five children they had raised, but knew it was becoming increasingly difficult to support them. Abu Mubarak always worked hard to raise the family, but then one day he fell ill.

They were at a loss. For years they struggled to get by and now their only source of income was gone. Um Mubarak knew she had no choice. She had to seek help.

Having been told about the World Health Organization and Ministry of Health's 'Healthy Villages' project, she decided to meet with them. She was told that the 'healthy villages' project aimed to help local communities build a healthy and self-reliant society through the education, training, and income support of its residents.

Um Mubarak epitomized 'the healthy villages' benefi-

ciary; a strong, principled and dedicated woman who had unfortunately fallen on hard times. A woman who was not only willing to fight to better herself and her family - but one who also had an idea. Um Mubarak explained that if she was given the grant she would buy land, grow herbs and raised sheep, selling the products to others in the village and surrounding areas. Her passion, dedication and knowledge meant that it was an easy decision to make - she was accepted onto the loan scheme.

*I hope that my success can be used to show others, particular women, that there is always another way.*

Over the coming months, she became one of the most recognized people in Bayouda. Um Mubarak was not only pivotal to her family, but also become a role model to the whole village. As she became an expert sheep farmer - she decided to raise chickens; as her herb garden flourished - she took her hand to growing cacti.

But she didn't stop there. She also began to garner a great interest in health issues. She was a regular attendee to the health awareness seminars in the village's health center. She became passionate about the health of herself and her family; always explaining what she had learned in the seminars to her husband and

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## WHO celebrates World Mental Health Day

In partnership with the Ministry of Health and International Medical Corps



Actors from the Sadrad performing arts group

All around the world, health, social, and educational institutions came together on October 10, 2012 to advocate and support mental health issues. This year the topic was "Depression: A Global Crisis". Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide with over 350 million people estimated to be currently living with the disorder.

Under the patronage of His Excellency the Minister of Health, WHO and IMC celebrated the World Mental Health Day at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The event played host to a number of key note speakers including: H.E. Dr. Abdellatif Woreikat Minister of Health; Dr. Akram Eltom, WHO Representative in Jordan, and Head of Mission; Mr. Seamus Jefferson, Country Director for International Medical Corps; Dr. Nayel Al Adwan, Director of the National Center for Mental Health; and Mrs Amira Al Jamal, President of the "Our Step" Users association, a local organization created to represent individuals who suffer from mental health issues.

All speakers were in agreement that depression in Jordan is a major concern. They believed it was

important for schools and other community care centers to recognize the symptoms of depression and accept and support the people who suffer from it. They also agreed that the stigma that has afflicted many sufferers of depression is a problem for both the individuals themselves and mental health practitioners. They hoped that through events like this, a new culture of understanding can be created, allowing individuals to understand the causes and effects of mental health.

The 200 guests that attended (which included individuals from ministries, UN bodies, international and local NGOs) were privy to a short play arranged and performed by "Our Step" Users Association beneficiaries in cooperation with the Sadrad performing arts group. This play explored the true problems that currently face people who suffer from mental health, including the symptoms and stigmas.

The event was concluded with a number of volunteers from "Our Step" receiving awards for the excellent work they have carried out in the promotion of mental health in their communities.

Depression in Jordan is an unspoken problem. The world mental health day aimed to highlight the need for advocacy and social understanding and recognition.

WHO Representative Dr. Akram Eltom stated:

"Mental health remains a priority for us. Important initial steps were made by its champions in the Kingdom; yet a lot remains to be done. I wake up depressed thinking about such challenges. But then I come to this kind of uplifting event or I go visit a health center where government, NGO and user associations work hard together to serve patients struggling with mental health issues. And suddenly, the sun shines on me with sufficient warmth and light to help me overcome such challenges".

***And suddenly, the sun shines on me with sufficient warmth and light to help me overcome such challenges.***

## WHO participates in UN Day

All UN bodies came together on October 23 to celebrate their continued efforts in the region



On October 23, WHO-Jordan had the pleasure of participating in UN Day 2012 at the United Nations Country Team headquarters. The day was a celebration of the continued work of all UN bodies in Jordan, and was attended by a number of UN organizations. The guests were privy to speeches from the UN Resident Coordinator in Jordan, Ms. Costanza Farina, and (via video) UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki Moon.

WHO was invited to present written materials and information regarding the current health situation in Jordan. This information covered a wide range of subject including; mental health, displaced Iraqis, community based initiatives, and advocacy materials. The information stall was seen to be very popular amongst visitors to the UN Day, and WHO was able to further advocate its health initiatives.

Many WHO staff, including Dr. Sana Naffa - a national programme officer, attended to help disseminate WHO materials or to learn more about other UN bodies in Jordan. Dr. Sana stated that “the work that is carried out by WHO and the UN in general has always been important in Jordan. It is great that the UN Day celebrates all the hard work that we have put in the previous year. It also gives the WHO a chance to learn more about the projects implemented and the techniques used by other UN agencies”.

## WHO continues its assistance to Syrian refugees

Medical support a top priority for fleeing individuals

The beginning of November sees a continued influx of Syrians fleeing across Jordan's borders. This has meant that WHO and other health partners have had to maintain their momentum in order to prevent and manage various illnesses both in Zaatari refugee camp and across the country. With over 200,000 Syrians in Jordan, WHO and partners continued to implement / introduce a number of health initiatives.

In partnership with UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, UNFPA, MoH and the Department of Statistics-Jordan, WHO is participating in the nutritional assessment of children under the age of five years and women at child-bearing age through a cluster sample approach of Syrian refugees in Jordan. This survey is designed to additionally assess the food intake of Syrians refugees aiming to eventually improve the quality of their diet.



WHO Sub-Regional EHA Coordinator  
Dr. Nada Al Ward in Al Zaatari refugee camp

One of the issues that are being addressed is the problem of intestinal parasites. WHO is working with the MoH

to implement a deworming campaign that will see 250,000 deworming tablets provided to school children 5 – 14 years of age, both Syrians and Jordanians. Led by the MoH, WHO and UNICEF are planning the measles and polio immunization campaign for Irbid and Mafraq, coupled with the vitamin A supplementation, which will begin in the near future. This campaign

## WHO is participating in the nutritional assessment of children under the age of five years and women at child bearing age.

targets both Syrian and Jordanian children.

WHO continues to raise funds for its projects and initiatives, through submitting proposals to potential donors. WHO actively participates in various health coordination meetings both inside and outside the Zaatari camp. WHO is also working with the MoH and the DoHs to strengthen the disease surveillance system outside the camp. WHO supports three community mental health centers in Jordan, which provide mental health services to Syrians, Iraqis, and Jordanians.

As the influx continues, WHO and its health partners endeavor to provide health assistance to the refugees in Jordan. WHO believes that the health of the refugees is of paramount importance, not just to the individual, but to the communities as a whole.

## WHO Representative visits the south of Jordan

*Over 4 days Dr. Akram Eltom toured the south of Jordan meeting many partners, beneficiaries, and stakeholders*

**October 14-18** - WHO representative for Jordan Dr. Akram Eltom toured the south of the country to observe and monitor WHO southern based projects, as well as meet with partners and other stakeholders.

To begin his tour, Dr. Akram was invited by the local health organization “Aman Association” to attend, as a guest of honor, their ‘free medical days’ event. This event was located in Deseh, Wadi Rum, and was designed to give local residents an opportunity to seek medical advice. Under the patronage of acting Governor of Aqaba Mr. Mohammed Al Madani, Dr. Akram toured the medical center and was introduced to the work carried out by the Aman Association. Ms. Nuha Al Majali the director of Aman Association gave thanks to Dr. Akram and the WHO for their continued support. The event helped WHO learn about a good local initiative and to understand better medical needs in the area. Dr. Akram had the privilege of meeting both partners and beneficiaries in Deseh. “Days like today are vital in the health and wellbeing of Jordanian citizens. Stated Dr. Akram “I am sure that the WHO and Aman partnership will grow from strength to strength”. The free medical day event last for three days. Over 650 local residents, of all ages, were assisted.

Dr. Akram continued his visit by touring a number of locations as part of WHO’s healthy villages programme. Dr. Akram visited Ayl, Basta, and Fardakh in the Maan Governorate and Rahmah village in the Aqaba Governorate. He was visited the health facilities of these villages and met with the medical officials to discuss possible partnerships. “I am very impressed with the work carried out by these villages” Dr. Akram said “these medical facilities are important to the local residents, and WHO is proud to work with them”. Dr. Akram also met with Aqaba Health Director Dr. Damen Al Abbadi, where they discussed future initiatives.

Dr. Akram concluded his trip with a visit to the National Women’s Health Center (NWHC) in the Tafiliieh Governorate, where he met with the director of the center Rudina Maaita. The NWHC focuses on assisting local women in receiving necessary, and sometimes urgent, medical care. Dr. Akram was shown the modern facilities the center had to offer.

“The NWHC is a superb center. Though still relatively new, it is assisting many girls and women in the area. I am particularly interested in their mental health activities and would love to find out more about this. Hopefully one day WHO will be partnering the NWHC in mental health activities”.



Dr. Akram attends the Aman Association's 'free medical day' event

## where there is a will, there is a way

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children. If, for whatever reason Um Mubarak could not attend a health seminar, she would make certain at least one member of her family did joined - such was her passion. Um Mubarak understood the need for a healthy lifestyle too. She educated herself on the specific health benefits of certain herbs, and began to cultivate herbs rich in vitamins and minerals. The 'healthy villages' programme educated Um Mubarak on the need for good food, and a clean environment.

It has been one year since her 'healthy villages' loan, and she is more determined than ever. Though Abu Mubarak has sadly passed away and she is now the matriarch for fifteen members of her family, her dedication, determination, hard work, and zest for life has unwaivered. She has helped her five children through college, and hopes to do the same for her grandchildren. She has become a teacher to others in the village, who has seen her success and hopes to replicate it. Um Mubarak continues to look better herself, to improve her skills, and keep herself busy.

"The healthy villages programme has helped me so much. Through this scheme I have been able to support my family, and enjoy a healthier life. I hope that my success can be used to show others, particular women, that there is always another way. The support of WHO and the Ministry of Health is vital – and I hope it can continue forever" Um Mubarak.

## A Healthy Success

*The 'Healthy Villages' Programme has reinvigorated the women of one community*

**Abu Bana village** is quite the Jordanian stereotype. Surrounded by rolling deserts and ancient ruins this quaint little community is beset with charm and beauty that graces many towns around Jordan. As with all charming communities it is the residents that really make it special.

Since 1990 the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health in Jordan have worked together in Abu Bana to improve the lives of the women in the village. In many villages around Jordan women are unable to access vital information on health or community problem solving. It was with this in mind that the 'Healthy Villages' project was created. The project's focus is to foster a community that understands the necessities of a healthy life and a healthy community; to work together on local issues; to learn new skills; and to have fun.

For over 20 years the women in Abu Bana have developed important life changing skills. Now they have become role models to others in the village and beyond. The 'Healthy Villages' project has allowed women to become self-reliant and independent, learning new skills in sewing or hand-crafts that can be then transferred into a success income generating business. Similarly the women in Abu Bana have been educated on vital aspects needed to create a healthy community. This includes seminars and lectures on sanitation and environmental issues. The women have taken the knowledge that they have gained and educated others in the village.



Women during a health education seminar

The aim of the healthy villages programme is to create both a healthy village and healthy villagers. WHO utilized the project to teach and educate the women in Abu Bana on the importance of health, and the health of their families. The women soon became knowledgeable on important woman, child and reproductive health issues. Now the women are seen as pioneering spokespeople; helping organizing events and fairs on the importance of a healthy lifestyle and the need for a clean and environmental community.

A once shy and retiring community has become a beacon for community change. Abu Bana is a success story in the purest term. The women in the village are now health educators and as well

as mothers, businesswomen and as well as sisters, village spokespeople and as well as daughters. They now aspire to better understand the problems that face their community. They now aspire to better understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. They now aspire to better understand the mechanisms needed for the running of a small business.

They now aspire to better themselves.

***"I now recognize the importance of physical activity in the improvement of my health."*** Healthy Villages participant.

## On the road to recovery

*How a mental health center's 'recovery' approach changed the life of one woman*



To many people, it would seem that Ms. Amira Al Jamal has always been a joyful and outgoing person. Married with 4 children, and college educated, there was seemingly nothing that she should have worried about. Unknown to others however, – Ms. Al Jamal has suffered from depression for most of her adult life.

When her symptoms first began to appear some 15 years ago, Ms. Al Jamal, like many sufferers of depression, believed that the feelings would pass. She tried to continue performing her everyday routines, but began to find them increasingly difficult. She slowly retreated from her social circles, and found solace only in sleep. For four years Mrs. Al Jamal suffered from debilitating depression. She began to experience less enjoyment in her life, and started to have suicidal thoughts. At that moment, she knew she had to seek help. Initially she was prescribed anti-depressant medication, and for many years she continued on medication with only some improvement in her symptoms. That's when she heard about a newly-established community mental health center in Amman by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with WHO.

Established in 2009, this center was created to introduce the latest evidence-based methods in the treatment of mental health problems and disorders. The clinic's multidisciplinary team focuses on a comprehensive, bio-psycho-social approach, assessing all facets of the individual and intervening in different areas of the person's life. It also adopts the 'recovery' approach, which focuses on supporting the beneficiaries to reach their potential and achieve their goals along the way to recovery.

After 6 months Ms. Al Jamal's symptoms began to greatly improve. The treatment sessions taught her not only to cope with and manage her stress, but also how to re-build social relationships and new friendships. At the clinic, she met several people with similar problems and slowly began to realize the importance of mutual support and the empowerment of people with mental health problems. That's when she joined WHO's initiative for establishing a specific association that represents mental health beneficiaries in Jordan.

Ms. Al Jamal is now a world away from the person who was held back by depression only 5 years ago. With the help of the WHO and Ministry of Health, she is now the President of 'Our Step Association', a group that advocates for supporting and empowering people with mental health problems as productive and active members of their communities. Ms. Al Jamal has become a productive, active individual, who has influenced the lives of many people around her. The 'Our Step Association' is now a leading player in the mental health field, and the only body representing mental health beneficiaries and their families in Jordan. Ms. Al Jamal knew that she needed help, and though she admits the road to recovery is long and uneven, she urges anyone who experiences similar problems to seek help immediately. Doing so changed her life completely, and she knows it could change theirs too.

## Transferred Assistance

*Tertiary health care supports vulnerable displaced Iraqis in Jordan*

For many years Jordan has had people from surrounding countries look to it for help. Wars and crises have meant that Jordan has regularly been seen as a safe space for refugees. Most recently, Jordan has opened its borders to Syrians in need of help, but historically it has also been the Palestinians and Iraqis.

WHO has long believed that all individuals should be privy to healthcare, especially those who are at great risk such as women, children, the elderly, in addition to other vulnerable adults. Starting in 2008 WHO initiated the 'tertiary health care services to vulnerable displaced Iraqis in Jordan', focusing on those with life-threatening diseases. This was to combat the growing need for medical support by displaced Iraqis. Over the following years, WHO utilized the existing health infrastructure, to provide such services for vulnerable Iraqis in Jordan. This was primarily hospital-based health services, provided through a technically efficient referral network of partner clinics and their affiliated hospitals.

From 2008 – 2011, WHO supported the treatment of vulnerable Iraqis with cancers through agreements with King Hussein Cancer Foundation, and the treatment of Iraqis with thalassemia and multiple sclerosis through agreements with the Italian Hospital.

Starting in 2012, and through its expert technical guidance, WHO partnered with UNHCR and two national NGOs, Jordan Health Aid Society and Caritas-Jordan, to support the provision of hospital-based services to Iraqis in need. In collaboration with UNHCR, and utilizing its already existing mechanisms (the public health unit, the exceptional care committee, and the refugee assistance information system), this continued support is made available to vulnerable Iraqis who cannot afford the cost of hospital-based care. The list of conditions covered under the program included in addition to those addressed earlier, the treatment of chronic renal failure, complicated chronic conditions and the emergency admissions for life-saving procedures.

WHO believes that the continued promotion of this program is fundamental to the well-being of Iraqis in Jordan. "We are trying to help the most vulnerable people in Jordan. These are not only people who have a critical health condition, not only people who have limited financial resources, but also people who have been displaced from their own homes. They are in need of our help – and we will always endeavor to help".

Vulnerable people are quiet often overlooked in society, especially those who are displaced from home.

## One step at a time

*WHO employee strides to a healthier lifestyle*

**Ms. Layan Kindi** has a busy life. Being a full time worker at the World Health Organization in Jordan, and a dedicated mother would tire the best of us out. However, Ms Kindi knows about the need for exercise and a healthy lifestyle.

Ms. Kindi first heard about the 'walk to be happy' initiative four months ago, from her friends. A scheme initially set up by a few individuals, the group now has 1161 members, and attracts around 150 people in most walks. Ms. Kindi states that "walk to be happy consists of three 2 hour walks per week mainly in the evening but occasionally on Friday mornings. The group walks throughout the streets of Amman. It is designed to introduce people of all ages and backgrounds to a healthier lifestyle". Ms. Kindi believes that this scheme has greatly improved her lifestyle, as she is not only feeling physically fitter and has lost weight, but she has made new friends and has seen parts of Amman that she would not have.

"As part of the group activities we went for a trip to Wadi Rum" said Ms. Kindi. "We walked in the deserts, it was amazing. We also sometime go for cycling, camping, and barbeque trips. You do not realize the distance you are walking sometimes, every walk is about 10km, but because you are amongst friends time goes very quickly. Don't get me wrong, at the beginning it could be quite tiring, but pretty soon you see the difference in your fitness, and your friend's fitness. It's great!"

As a WHO employee Ms. Kindi knows all too well the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, but understands the difficulties in finding time and energy. "The good thing about walk to be happy is that it is fun, you do different routes every time, and you begin to look forward to these walks. I do not see it as exercise at all. We are one big family, and all negative energy that you may have built up during the day is simply walked away!"

WHO believes that regular exercise is very important, even if it is just a short walk once or twice a week. Layan has proven that through regular exercise a person can; improve their fitness, lose some weight, see new sites, and make new friends. All of which can improve a person's lifestyle.

**For more information about 'walk to be happy' or how to improve your lifestyle please contact WHO.**



**Ms. Layan Kindi**

## A Message from the WHO Representative for Jordan

“Dear Friends of WHO,

Eid Mubarak and we hope its blessings bring you good health!

WHO Jordan continues its drive to share news of our events, programs, and initiatives here in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. In this second edition of our WHO Jordan Newsletter we are focusing on success stories. In highlighting successes, I wish to invite you to comment on them, critique our work to help us improve and, most of all, to share with us your own successes. Indeed, we could not have done anything during our presence in Jordan over the past 25 years without the strong leadership and commitment among the Government, the health workers, the communities, the individuals, the private sector, the academic institutions, the development partners, and the vibrant civil society in the Kingdom who tirelessly support to support health. We share with you what we think has worked as programs or approaches, but we are genuinely keen to hear your alternative views and your own successes. Perhaps in future newsletters, we'll specifically solicit your constructive critique by asking for lessons learnt.

It is with great pleasure that I also comment on the magnificent work carried out by my staff members and our partners last month. October saw WHO take a lead role in the promotion of 'World Mental Health Day' in support of the Ministry of Health and in close partnership with International Medical Corps. It was an event that left me and many other people touched by the passionate commitment amongst the WHO Staff and partners we are privileged to be working with.

We hope the stories in this newsletter will inspire you as they continue to motivate us in WHO. Please remember: to send us your candid inputs, thoughts and ideas for how the next edition of this newsletter can better reflect our partnership with you to achieve health for Jordanian citizens. Very soon, we'll be able to receive your inputs in Arabic as well as through social media to give you more options for giving us feedback and contributions.

Until then, we offer the Jordanian wish of “Ya'ateek al afyeh!”



Dr. Akram Eltom with staff members from WHO Jordan

## Useful Links

**WHO Jordan** / [www.emro.who.int/countries/jor](http://www.emro.who.int/countries/jor)

**WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean** / [www.emro.who.int](http://www.emro.who.int)

**WHO Headquarters** / [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

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