



Abeer (left), Nabila and Iman have established a rich Food Bank in two greenhouses constructed by DSPR Jordan with funds from international donors. It has changed their lives. Photo DSPR Jordan

## Autumn Story

# TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE IT

BY GILLIAN SOUTHEY | CWS COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR.

**T**wo greenhouses stand in the crowded and dusty Al Husn refugee camp in northern Jordan. The flourishing gardens inside are the pride and joy of three women: Abeer, Nabila and Iman. With the help of our partner DSPR Jordan (Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees), they have turned a tiny patch of ground into a Food Bank, a source of hope and sustenance for their community.

In the 18 months since the greenhouses were opened, the women have grown mountains of fresh food –to feed their families, sell some for profit, and supply DSPR’s kitchen. The produce is used for courses on food production and small business skills, held in the community kitchen, part of DSPR Jordan’s Vocational Training Centre. Their enterprise has encouraged others to start something new and contributed to DSPR’s work with one of the poorest communities in Jordan. During last year’s lockdown when there was no way to use the produce, the women distributed food to older people and those most in need.

Abeer, a young agricultural engineer, says she is excited to use her knowledge and skills to do what she loves the most – small-scale farming. Nabila and Iman work closely with her, growing lettuce, zucchini, cabbage, beans, tomato, parsley, thyme, cucumber, eggplant and strawberries. The women have been instrumental in spreading the ‘grow your own’ message to the mostly younger women enrolled in the Home Garden courses. They share gardening tips for the hot climate where water is in short supply.

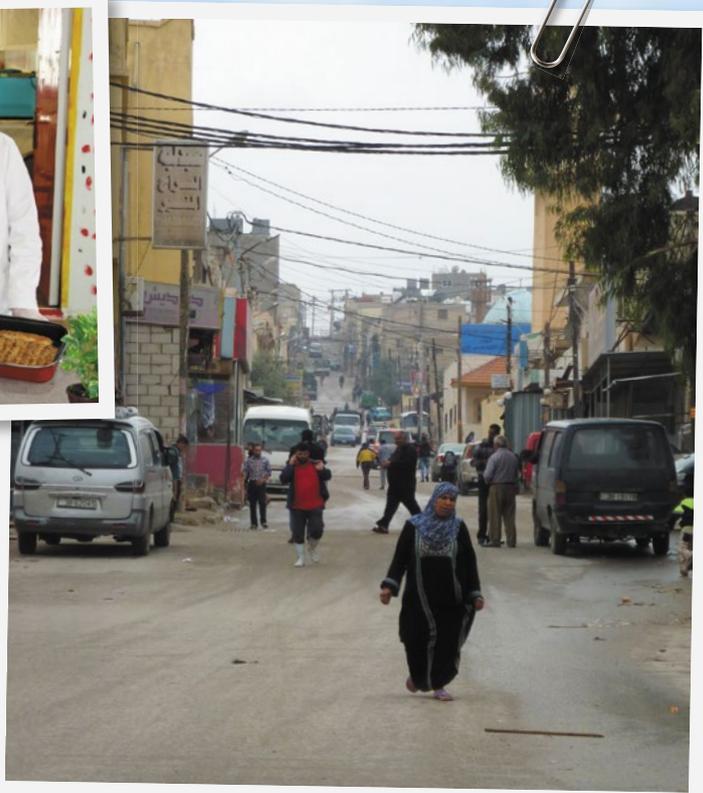
“We started producing all kinds of food, pastries, and sweets and managed to organise local bazaars which was a great start on the revenue level. Schools,

Volunteer Abeer loves to share her gardening expertise with other mothers through DSPR’s Home Garden programme. Few can afford to buy fresh vegetables.



housewives, medical centres and other institutions inside the camp have started sending orders for food to be delivered to their sites which gave us a great push. We are generating income for ourselves and for the Centre. The next step will be advertising for the project outside the camp in the surrounding villages,” says Abeer.

For many of the people living in the camp the past year has made hard times even tougher. They have lost jobs because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the level of United Nations humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian and Syrian refugees has tumbled. Hunger has been a constant worry – a challenge faced by many across the planet.



“Our lives are completely changed. We are more confident, and the most important thing, we are independent and able to support ourselves as well as our families,” she adds

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Many of the women have limited education or have lost their husbands. They have few opportunities to earn an income and like 80% of refugees in Jordan, are dependent on some form of humanitarian assistance. When funding falls, their families sink deeper into poverty and their children miss out on a healthy diet.

The first refugee camps were set up by the United Nations in 1948. Al Husn was opened in 1968 to shelter some of the Palestinians fleeing the West Bank and Gaza after the Arab-Israeli war. More than 40,000 Palestinians plus a further 3,000 Syrians have found shelter there. Palestinians can live and work in Jordan, but it is the poorest who reside in the camps. Homes are overcrowded and there is limited access to sanitation and often food.

From its beginning in 1951, DSPR Jordan has evolved into a highly respected organisation carefully balancing the new waves of refugees with those already resident in the 10 camps set up for Palestinians. It runs vocational training programmes, two medical centres caring for over 10,000 people, free medical days using volunteer medical staff, a network of women’s support groups, and provides mentoring and other help to small business initiatives.

Palestinians fear for their future and long for the chance to return home. The more recently arrived Syrians live in poverty, often traumatised by their experiences and having missed years of schooling.

An estimated one percent of the world’s population is displaced. Like Abeer, Nabila and Iman they need a path out of poverty. DSPR Jordan is one group helping people find a way. The women lead by example: “Together we

Above, left and right: Start Your Own Business courses have been a life saver for refugee women caring for families. Learning to make pickles and bake goods for sale have supplemented dry rations from the United Nations. Al Husn Camp before the pandemic (right). Credit: DSPR Jordan and CWS/Trish Murray.

can make it”. Your donation to the Autumn Appeal will help displaced people have enough food and participate more actively in their communities.



CWS will launch this year’s fundraising campaign on June 20, World Refugee Day. Join us to help refugees in Jordan and Lebanon with education, emergency support and medical care. Contact Eric at [eric.park@cws.org.nz](mailto:eric.park@cws.org.nz) for more information.

**Please support our Autumn Appeal so mothers can feed their families every day.**

**\$44** will fund a Covid-19 hygiene kit of 10 items

**\$77** will pay for a food parcel of 14 items

**\$515** will pay for one woman to attend a Start Your Own Business course

**Donate now at [www.cws.org.nz](http://www.cws.org.nz).**

Phone 0800 74 73 72 or post to CWS, PO Box 22652, Christchurch 8140.



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