EDITORIAL

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to a new issue of the UN Women Jordan and Syria Country Office Friday Notes which covers the work of the last two months and also presents a brief of some of the initiatives and projects we are currently implementing.

This issue gives special attention to the Women’s Economic Empowerment Programme which is a key area of intervention by UN Women in Jordan. Within this area, we highlight a large project that will address the most marginalized and vulnerable women in one of the poorest areas of the country, the Al-Mafraq Governorate.

Furthermore, the Friday Notes discusses the actions and efforts in response to the ongoing Syrian Crisis, especially regarding the activities at the UN Women’s Women and Girls Oasis in Zaatari Camp.

The Country Office has finalized its Strategic Note that will guide our work for the next four years. An extensive consultative process was carried out with UN Agencies, Ministries, Governmental Agencies and the Civil Society Advisory Group. Without any doubt this process was an absolute novelty for UN Women Jordan and very well received by the partners.

We hope you enjoy the reading of this issue of the Friday Notes and look forward to receive your feedback.

Warmly,

Giuseppe Belsito
Representative
UN Women Country Office for Jordan and Syria

“We simply can no longer afford to deny the full potential of one-half of the population. The world needs to tap into the talent and wisdom of women. Whether the issue is food security, economic recovery, health, or peace and security, the participation of women is needed now more than ever.” –Michelle Bachelet, former Executive Director / UN Women
Women’s Economic Empowerment Program

Poverty Pockets

The UN Women Country Office for Jordan and Syria is implementing a powerful project which widens its window of opportunities to the most marginalized and vulnerable women in the poverty pocket area in Al-Mafraq Governorate.

The project is funded by the Kuwait American Fund and will be implemented during the period of 2013-2015, based on the information generated through the Needs Assessment previously conducted by Queen Zain El Sharaf Institute for Development (ZENID).

The different initiatives of the project are as follow:

1. First UN WOMEN and UNESCO’s joint project

UN Women and UNESCO have signed a joint project which aims to empower the marginalized and poorest women in the village of Umm el-Jimal in the north of Jordan. The main objective of this initiative is to improve women’s livelihoods through the management and promotion of the Umm el-Jimal archaeological site.

3. Solar Mamas Initiative

One of UN Women’s projects in Al-Mafraq focuses in the preservation and protection environment of Jordan. This project gives continuity to a previous initiative in which two Bedouin women, Rafea and Umm Badr, from the village of Gayath were selected to participate in a six-month training program, at Barefoot College in India to learn how to use solar power in their villages. After their return, one of the aims of the initiative was to reproduce the model of establishing solar power in other remote rural areas in Jordan.

In this phase, UN Women will work closely with the Jordanian Friends of Environment Society, to improve the capacities of local women entrepreneurs from rural villages around the country. The aim of this project is to set up similar model cooperatives and to create jobs in the rural areas in the field of resource management, specifically concerning solar energy projects.

More information about the initiative can be found in the film Solar Mamas as part of the international “Why Poverty?”, a multimedia project that looks at the causes and possible solutions to global poverty.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GN_NQ1HnRYs

2. Capacity Building of Marginalized Women

The second main area of intervention of the Poverty Pockets project in Al-Mafraq, aims to support income generating projects through building the capacities of the most marginalized and excluded women of this area. This intervention is focusing on three dimensions. First, developing the capacities of both marginalized women and members of local community based organizations (CBOs), to be able to run and manage their entrepreneurial initiatives with the main objective to improve their living conditions. Secondly, raising awareness of the local communities on gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s rights issues. This initiative is implemented in partnership with a deep-rooted Jordanian NGO, Families Development Association (FDA). The third dimension of the initiative includes revolving loans, grants and business development systems to support the most entrepreneurial and innovative ideas led by the most marginalized and vulnerable women.
4. Spring Forward Initiative: Regional Programme for the Economic and Political Empowerment of Women in the Southern Mediterranean Region

UN Women in partnership with the European Commission (EC), has initiated a regional programme on women political participation and economic empowerment in the Southern Mediterranean Region. At Jordan’s intervention level, UN Women has signed agreements with national partners to strengthen capacities of Jordanian women, in both political and economic dimension, over 4 years (2013-2016) with a budget of 750,000 US $.

As part of the Regional Programme, the Country Office has formulated a number of interventions to promote the access of vulnerable women to economic opportunities and to public participation in Al-Mafraq Governorate. UN Women is working with national NGO’s such as the Jordan River Foundation and other local community-based organizations. This work includes supporting the access to microfinance and the capacity development of local CBOs. It also includes developing marketing actions and providing business development services. On the other hand, the initiative sets as a priority to work towards awareness raising for target groups, especially women and girls, on their rights, gender equality and women empowerment.
Minister of the Netherlands’ visit to Zaatar Camp stirs excitement at Women and Girls Oasis

The orderly life at the UN Women Oasis in Zaatar usually runs on except for those occasions where the rhymed daily work and activities, gives way to an exciting mass of new faces, procession of authorities, cameras and flashes. Last September 11th, the Oasis received the visit of Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands Government, Lilianne Ploumen, who showed great enthusiasm about UN Women projects in Zaatar Camp and also to have the chance to chat with Syrian women refugees at the Oasis.

Ms. Ploumen started her tour in the tailoring center where refugee women told her about the new project they are involved in, the production of baby kits which will be distributed to every woman who gives birth at the French Hospital in the Camp. The Minister had the opportunity to see one of the samples and was impressed about the quality of the materials and their work. On their behalf, refugee women were delighted to answer her concerns and questions and they also felt confident to express their needs for the further development of their work.

The hairdresser center was the second stop of the visit and coincided with a very busy training day in which Syrian refugee hairdressers were giving a workshop to young Syrian women. Ms. Ploumen enjoyed the mixed atmosphere made of laughs, hairdryer noise and shampoo smell and she didn’t hesitate to accept the henna tattoo offered by one of the hairdresser which was, without any doubt, one of the funniest moments of the morning.

The visit ended at the English class caravan where Ms. Poumen gathered with female students who attend this daily workshop at the Oasis. She carefully listened part of the lesson and afterwards, they shared some views regarding the need and importance of learning another language.

Women and Girls Oasis at Zaatar Camp was established by UN Women last November 2012 in response to the Syrian Crisis. The initiative, which is intended to promote women’s economic empowerment and self-esteem through implementation of income generation activities combined with prevention and response activities to address risks and consequences of gender based violence, receives funding from the Government of the Netherlands.
Agreement with the French Hospital for Baby Kits Distribution

As part of the income generation activities through cash of work approach, UN Women Oasis tailoring center have started the production of baby kits which will be distributed to every woman who give birth at the Gynécologies Sans Frontières clinic ( GSF clinic) at the French Hospital in Zaatari Camp.

The Oasis Syrian refugee tailors who are delighted about this project have already started the work by making some samples of different items. The project aims to distribute 450 kits until the end of the year.

Additionally, the tailors collective have also started to design school uniforms for children. Meetings with school principals at the camp are taking place in order to receive different suggestions or ideas for this project to begin.

UN Women Advocates for Boys and Men involvement in the Camp

The overall humanitarian response recognizes the lack or absence of an overall gender equality approach as there is no strategy and expertise to have a proactive approach in involving men and boys in community services work. In this sense, one of the challenges UN Women project faces is also the involvement of men and boys in Zaatari camp. For this reason, during this new phase, the project will advocate with partners supporting community mobilization activities to start developing and implementing economic recovery / cash for work schemes targeting men and boys as well. A new location in the camp has been already selected for this purpose.

French Delegation visits the Oasis

Mrs. Hélène Conway-Mouret, Minister Delegate for French Nationals Abroad, attached to the French Minister of Foreign Affair, accompanied by the French Ambassador to Jordan Mrs. Caroline Dumas, visited on Friday 27th of September UN Women’s Oasis in Zaatari camp. The visit was conducted by the UN Women Representative for Jordan and Syria, Mr. Giuseppe Belsito and the Recovery advisor, Mrs Blerta Aliko, in charge of the project in Zaatari. Mrs Conway-Mouray made a financial donation to support the sewing and in kind donation for the hairdresser center of the Oasis.

Establishment of a Female-Headed Household Committee

Last July, UN Women initiated the development of a quantitative survey to assess the vulnerabilities and protection risks of female-headed households residing in the Zaatari refugee camp. With the help of community members, including Syrian staff from the Oasis who are themselves female heads of household, the survey was distributed to more than a dozen female heads of household. These women later participated in focus discussion groups, as well as individual qualitative interviews, to gain a better understanding of their needs, concerns, and expectations for service providers.

In order to capitalize on the strength and knowledge of this core group of women, participants were invited to attend a first meeting where they would be provided with the tools to begin mobilizing Zaatarí’s female-headed household community. More than 15 women participated in this meeting, and discussed their concerns about living conditions and protection risks in the camp, with a special focus on the need for more work opportunities and basic infrastructure improvements in order to ease the daily challenges female headed household face.

Since then, the Oasis holds a weekly Female-household Committee meeting which works towards improving their living conditions.
Country Strategic Note Consultative Process

The Country Office is in the last stage of finalizing the new country strategic note for the period 2014-2017. UN Women has carried out an extensive consultation process among a wide number of actors and partners. In line with national priorities, UN Women will work in 5 priority areas: participation and leadership in decision-making, economic empowerment, violence against women, gender-responsive budgeting, and Syrian refugees and host communities. The country strategic note takes as reference the CEDAW Committee recommendations on Jordan (23 March 2012) in light of the obligations contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

As part of the consultation process, a meeting with representatives from key Ministries and national agencies took place on September 25th. The participants welcomed UN Women’s approach to support the capacity of local civil society organizations and the focus on rural women living in the governorates with the highest rates of poverty to ensure impact. In the poorest governorates, it is extremely necessary to organize awareness raising campaigns on women’s rights with a strong legal component, as many women are not even able to keep their salaries. Economic empowerment of women through micro-enterprises and small projects focused on income generation should reach women within the family units. UN Women emphasized the need to count with support from the Ministries to support women occupying middle level positions in government agencies. There was consensus that the role of UN Women will be very important in terms of supporting gender advocacy in the context of international processes and instruments. Asma Khader, the head of the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), greatly welcomed the consultative process undertaken by UN Women and the alignment of the country strategic note with the Jordan National Strategy for Women developed by the JNCW.

The Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) met on September 26th to discuss the draft country strategic note. The Jordanian Women’s Union (JWA) on this occasion hosted the meeting in one of its community centers that offers support to women and children in the town of Khaldiyye, one of the poverty pockets in Al-Mafraq Governorate.

The CSAG emphasized the need to contribute to legal and policy reform in order to promote women’s human rights in the country and ensure a human rights-based approach to economic empowerment of women at the local level. The 4-year programme includes very relevant priority areas and UN Women should seek the coordination with other development actors in the country. Awareness raising efforts on women’s rights and gender equality should be a cross cutting theme in all areas, including the engagement with the private sector. The meeting included a segment in the afternoon with civil society leaders from refugee-hosting communities. The participants stressed the lack of income opportunities and the isolation of their communities. While identifying the impact of the Syrian refugees influx as one of the current challenges they face, they also acknowledged some opportunities as the government and the donor’s community are now paying more attention to their situation and identifying solutions.

UN Women also convened a meeting with UN Agencies on October 2nd to present the draft country strategic note, identify synergies, potential collaboration and avoid replications. Representatives from UNICEF, FAO, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNFPA, RC Office participated in the discussion and provided valuable comments in all priority areas. UN Women emphasized the importance of collaboration and the aim of developing joint programmes. Advocacy efforts to promote gender equality should also been undertaken as a joint effort by the UN system, especially in the framework of the upcoming 16-day activism against gender violence campaign. UN Women has identified specific UN Agencies as partners in each priority area. Additionally, UN Women will be part of existing UNDAF working groups such as the sub-working group on Violence against Women under the social equity working group.