Success Stories: Providing sustainable work opportunities to refugees and vulnerable Jordanians in the agricultural sector

Irbid, Mafraq and Balqa Governorates - September 2019 to November 2021

In Jordan, 25% of the population depend on agriculture as a source of livelihoods, particularly Syrian refugees whose work permits are, in majority, issued in this sector. However, its expansion is limited by scarce support services, technical and financial capacities and seasonal fluctuations in income.

To address these challenges, ACTED fostered innovative agricultural practices and business management support to improve livelihood opportunities and resilience for approximately 1,350 vulnerable Jordanian and Syrian-refugee farmers.

ACTED supported agricultural cooperatives and micro businesses to foster sustainable growth and livelihood

ACTED helped develop 9 agricultural cooperatives and 248 microbusinesses through climate-smart agriculture, business and operational capacity building and grant awards.

3 cooperatives
Al-Saro
Berkish Cooperation
Kufor Sume

81 microbusinesses

2 cooperatives
Al-Qubtan
Tal al-Roman

102 microbusinesses

4 cooperatives
Anwar Badia  Northern-Western Badia
Aeade Badia  Sharq Mafraq

65 microbusinesses

Project funded by the U.S. Bureau of Population, refugees and Migrants
Volcanic rocks
6 microbusinesses have started using volcanic rocks as an all-natural way to improve roots systems, reduce water usage and increase yields.

Permaculture
One microbusiness has piloted a perma-garden, increasing productivity and soil health through environmentally-friendly practices and maximizing land space.

Azolla production
6 microbusinesses have adopted azolla farming, which offers a cheap and water-efficient alternate feed supplement for livestock.

Hydroponic system
45 microbusinesses have established hydroponic systems that grow crops directly in nutrient-rich water, without using soil.

OUR MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

With ACTED’s support, 897 farmers have implemented innovative agricultural practices

ACTED reinforced capacities of 9 agricultural cooperatives...

Capacity building of 9 cooperatives, through business development and marketing trainings as well as grants award, reaching 450 members.

Grant provision for 2 business solutions to improve small farmers access to market.

In collaboration with Badia Fund, establishment of revolving microloan portfolios for small farmers within 2 Mafraq cooperatives.

Facilitated the engagement among agricultural stakeholders through the creation of 9 Agricultural Initiative Support Groups.

... and helped start and scale up 248 agricultural microbusinesses.

Supported microbusinesses operating in 9 different sectors such as hydroponic, conventional agriculture, greenhouses or food processing.

Provision of 222 small grants to microbusiness owners to support their activity and gain market access.

Tailored technical trainings carried out to 897 Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians to engage in, restart or expand their microbusinesses.

Following their participation in the project, 89% of beneficiaries reported that they have observed an increase in their monthly income.
KUFOR SUME COOPERATIVE BASED IN IRBID

ACTED’s intervention helped Kufor Sume grow its yearly turnover from 6,000 to 13,000 JDs between 2019 and 2021 and provide efficient agriculture development services to 4,245 annual beneficiaries such as:

- Provision of 47,000 JDs in microloans to support 34 entrepreneurs business development
- Annual distribution of chickens and vegetable seedlings to 820 families for livelihood activities
- Supporting the economic empowerment of women through specific trainings

In August 2021, ACTED selected Kufor Sume's proposed business solution, designed to diversify market access for its members.

Through ACTED's support, the cooperative rented an heritage Jordanian house and rehabilitated it into a restaurant and a local shop. The solution is an opportunity for farmers to expand their market access by buying ingredients from local farmers.

The house also serves as an handicrafts training center which are sold in the shop. In June 2022, 74 individuals, both Syrian refugees and Jordanians benefited from the solution.

AEADE AL-BADIA COOPERATIVE BASED IN MAFRAQ

Aeade Al-Badia cooperative provides water and agricultural services for its 1,845 annual beneficiaries as well as the surrounding community to promote inclusive livelihood development. Under ACTED's intervention, the cooperative contributed to:

- Management of 4 hydroponic cultivation greenhouses to test sustainable, innovative agricultural techniques
- Empowerment of over 45 women to create value added products through dairy processing technical trainings
- Improved water resource management by raising awareness among over 500 community members

In August 2021, ACTED selected Aeade Al-Badia's proposed business solution, designed to facilitate access to bazars for its members.

Thanks to ACTED’s contribution, the cooperative acquired a refrigerated truck to increase farmers' access to bazars in Amman and the rest of Jordan. Aeade Al-Badia also signed a cooperation agreement with Jordan's #1 Bazars coordinator.

In June 2022, 361 individuals, Syrian refugees and Jordanians, signed agreements with Aeade Al-Badia to benefit from the solution.
Ahlam, a Jordanian woman, pictured on the left, has been running her beekeeping business in Irbid since 2018. Her husband had an accident in 2019 that prevented him from working. Thanks to ACTED’s intervention, Ahlam was able to strengthen her business and financially support her household on her own throughout her husband's incapacity.

"My project was only an idea, but I decided to implement it after participating in the field schools. The project provided me with work opportunities. I was a housewife and now I can support my children and my husband."

Ahlam, beekeeping microbusiness owner, Irbid

Thanks to the field school trainings and dialogues in Peer Support Groups carried out under the project, Ahlam enhanced her beekeeping skills and business knowledge. Through ACTED’s financial support, she managed to buy 11 beehives and produced 250 kilograms of honey.

Fouza, perma-garden microbusiness owner, Mafraq

DIVERSIFYING FARMERS INCOME OPPORTUNITIES

Fouza, a Jordanian woman, first started wheat farming to bake and sell bread in Mafraq. However, with ACTED’s support she chose to develop hydroponics agriculture instead as it is less water-consuming.

With ACTED’s financial contribution, Fouza managed to buy some livestock and launch a small perma-garden to support her family’s food intake.

Fouza is now looking into expanding her business into experiential tourism. With ACTED’s help, she has successfully enlisted her farm on Sawwah digital app, a travel booking platform that promotes local travel experience.
Azolla is a new agricultural crop that did not previously exist in the area, it is easy and profitable with low production costs.

Afaf, project team leader, Mafraq

Six microbusinesses supported in Balqa and Mafraq have started to sell azolla surplus to local farmers, thus ensuring access to a new source of income. Azolla farming has helped farmers raise chickens at lower costs by reducing the monthly livestock feeding expenses by 80% to 90%.

After witnessing the financial benefits from azolla production, farmers have already begun to spread their knowledge and teach their friends and neighbours on how to replicate this approach.

Nadia, a 56 year-old Jordanian woman, had never worked before getting involved with ACTED. Supporting her 12 kids, she is now one of the 5 members of a shared hydroponics microbusiness in Mafraq.

Thanks to ACTED’s grant, the business first started with food processing activities such as pickles and jams production. Through the trainings and field days, Nadia was encouraged to adopt hydroponics technique after witnessing firsthand the success of the farms that had implemented it and the amount of water it saves. Nadia’s business also benefited from the support of ACTED’s engineer to overcome challenges with the fertilizer production.

We learned from each other and did research online to develop the project. Every day, we work and cook together to develop our products.

Nadia, hydroponics microbusiness shared-owner, Mafraq

Azolla production in shared microbusiness, Mafraq

Chicken feeding with azolla, Mafraq

Nadia, on the right, hydroponics business member, Mafraq

We learned from each other and did research online to develop the project. Every day, we work and cook together to develop our products.

Nadia, hydroponics microbusiness shared-owner, Mafraq

INTRODUCING INNOVATIVE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

FOSTERING CLIMATE-SMART TECHNIQUES

Supporting Agricultural Businesses

SUPPORTING AGRICULTURAL BUSINESSES
Suha, a 39 year-old Syrian women is one of the 4 members of a women-led confectionery microbusiness from Irbid. A housewife before ACTED’s intervention, Suha chose the food processing sector as she has always had a talent for baking back in Syria. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic was particularly challenging for her business, thanks to ACTED’s mentoring and coaching, Suha and her partners kept their activity running.

“I bettered myself and grew more with ACTED. I’m proud that I worked in this project.”

Suha, confectionery microbusiness shared-owner, Irbid

Through ACTED’s support, Suha’s microbusiness gained access to new markets. In 2021, she had the opportunity to participate in 2 Bazars to showcase and sell her products. One of her fondest memories under this project was when she attended the Bazar at the American Embassy in Amman, pictured here.

Kifaya is a Jordanian woman who is now a member of a baked goods microbusiness in Irbid, shared by 7 women and 1 man, and launched under ACTED’s intervention. Kifaya has 5 children, and thanks to the income generated from her business, she is now able to support her 2 eldest children who are attending university.

Moreover, ACTED’s support helped her expand her market size by participating in Bazars both in Amman and Irbid. She participated for 3 days in the Olive oil Festival in Amman, where she earned approximately 2,500 JDs (€3,543) by selling her products. She also took part in the Irbid Pomegranate Festival where she made around 1,500 JDs (€2,126). Thanks to her participation, Kifaya has now developed a regular pool of customers in Amman.
NEXT STEPS IN SUPPORTING VULNERABLE FARMERS IN JORDAN

Moving forward, ACTED is building upon its best practices and expertise to expand its support to vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees from recovery to long-term resilience. ACTED's long-term agricultural programming (2022-2025) revolves around the following approaches:

- Leverage **climate-adaptive and regenerative approaches** for efficient land use and water management through **perma-garden models**.
- Foster **market linkages and integration**, including e-commerce platforms, wholesale markets, trade fairs, seasonal bazaars and networking events for agricultural stakeholders.
- Facilitate farmers’ **livelihood diversification** through food processing, artisan activities and eco-tourism to ensure **year-round income**.
- Strengthen **local capacities** among government, private and civic stakeholders and raise awareness on **decent work and labor rights**.

Through its Flagship Programme, **THRIVE (Towards Holistic Resilience in Vulnerable Environments)**, ACTED is committed to regenerate agricultural ecosystems. **Integrated approach based on livelihoods, market viability and social cohesion** to improve soil health and crop productivity in (semi-)arid agricultural rangelands, thereby leading to increased income generation. THRIVE is aligned with SDGs, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030).

This programmatic strategy is based on 3 components: soil regeneration, financial empowerment of local farmers and populations as well as support to sustainable agricultural and economic development. This is currently implemented across 7 countries in Africa and the Middle East, including Jordan, where it supports approximately 311,232 beneficiaries.

With continued financial support from **BPRM (2021 to 2023)**, ACTED will build on the previous programme to enable **diversification and sustainability of year-round income streams**, particularly through food processing and artisanal livelihoods, while also promoting **integrated farming techniques**.
NEXT STEPS IN SUPPORTING VULNERABLE FARMERS IN JORDAN

ACTED is building upon its best practices and expertise to expand its support to vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees from recovery to long-term resilience.

With continued financial support from donors, ACTED will build on the previous programme to enable diversification and sustainability of year-round income streams, creating further work opportunities for refugees and vulnerable Jordanians in the agricultural sector.

ACTED will also utilize its global flagship, THRIVE, which promotes efficient land management and sustainable water resource management for improved soil health and crop productivity, and therefore enhanced income generation.