

Strengthening the mental health system and improving access to services for Syrian refugees and the vulnerable Jordanian population



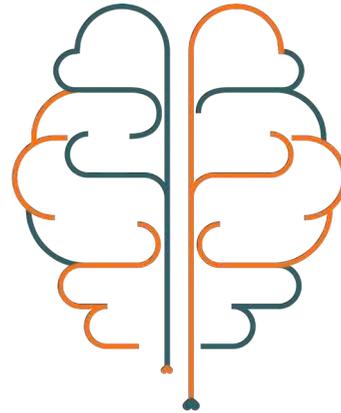
community awareness  
health-promotion literacy  
empowerment

Project report &  
stories from the field

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Manufactured in Jordan

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Strengthening the mental health system, improve  
access and services for Syrian refugees and vulnerable  
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I learnt that it is **normal** to have **up and downs**, even those phases when everything looks so **dark** and you can't actually find the **light**. It was **relieving** to know that other people go through the same things as I do. And **talking about it** and **dealing** with this uncomfortable feeling it is so much **comforting**.

”

Addressing an issue as multifaceted as mental health is a daunting task, at the very least. When taking on this project, we faced challenges in addressing culturally-ingrained stigma, lack of access to services, as well as the multiple existing barriers facing refugees and the most vulnerable populations in Jordan. Yet, throughout the implementation of this initiative, we have been fortunate to see how transformative mental health education can be.

At the beginning, there was resistance to the ideas presented; why seek out mental health services when religious guidance existed? How do individuals face the stigmas associated with accessing mental health services? By the end of the activities, however, the response was completely different; from the Syrian mother worried about her closest friend's mental health, to the Jordanian teachers deeply engaged in developing inclusive curricula in their classes, there was a clear understanding that seeking support when dealing with mental health concerns is of the utmost importance. The project's activities engaged a significant number of individuals in each of the four governorates, highlighting the urgent need for programming such as that delivered. In particular, there was a significant need from the most vulnerable populations - refugees and Jordanians from host communities.

Now, looking back on the project, we can be confident that UPP has laid the groundwork for further initiatives addressing mental health education and services in Jordan. A significant barrier has been overcome simply by creating space to have discussions on mental health, and we have been challenging stigmas. The seeds have been planted - all that is left is to let the ideas grow.

Our ardent thanks go out to the partners, supporters, and individuals who made this feat possible.

Sincerely,

The Project Team

# UN PONTE PER...

## WHO WE ARE

**Un Ponte Per...** (UPP) is a voluntary association founded in 1991, immediately after the bombing of Iraq, which promotes solidarity initiatives for Iraqis dealing with the fallout of conflict.

The aim of UPP is to prevent new conflicts, particularly in the Middle East. This is achieved through advocacy campaigns, programs which educate and encourage cultural exchange, collaborative projects, and peaceful civil interventions.

UPP strongly rejects war as a solution to international conflicts and encourages encounters between different cultures, languages, religions, and traditions with the ultimate objective of developing a more equal and peaceful coexistence.

## WHERE WE WORK

**In Iraq,** *Un Ponte Per...* has conducted health, cultural and educational interventions, while supporting peace and human rights for over 25 years. Long-term commitment to the Iraqi and Kurdish peoples and their rights has always been the foundation of our humanitarian work in the country. This work has continued throughout the entirety of the Iraq embargo, and through the 2003 war, with the implementation of emergency interventions in the most affected areas. Post-conflict, *Un Ponte Per* launched initiatives in support of Iraqi civil society, committed to protecting cultural heritage, human and environmental rights, the rights of minorities, freedom of expression and association, and promoting a culture of nonviolence. UPP has also been active during recent conflicts with emergency interventions, first response and constant aid distribution, as well as peace-building projects



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**In Syria,** *Un Ponte Per...* has been operating in the north-east of the country since 2015 by sending humanitarian aid and supporting the important work of the Kurdish Red Crescent in response to the health emergency caused by the conflict. At the same time, a program to support Kurdish municipalities was launched.

Since 2011, *Un Ponte Per...* has also been carrying out extensive programs of assistance to refugees in neighboring countries, such as Jordan, where a mission was opened in 2004 to assist displaced Iraqi populations and vulnerable host communities.

**In Jordan,** *Un Ponte Per...* has been working with local community-based organizations and international partners in support of the most vulnerable and marginalized communities and populations: current and previous projects target women, children, unemployed youth, and persons with disabilities, adopting a need-based approach to services and involving Jordanians, Syrians, and non-Syrian refugees such as Iraqis, Somalis and Sudanese. The Jordanian mission retains expertise in the Health, Education, Livelihoods and Protection sectors, maintaining a cross-sectoral focus on gender equality, social cohesion and the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

In 2017, a peace-building program was also launched, thanks to the engagement of the first Civil Peace Corps mission from Italy and National Civil Service humanitarian workers, who operated in collaboration with local partners in the governorates of Irbid, Zarqa, and Amman. This intervention was in support of women, minors, mental health users and youth, and worked to build bridges among Syrians, Palestinians and Jordanians through community-based activities.

**In Lebanon,** *Un Ponte Per...* promotes solidarity through the support of Palestinian and Syrian refugees. Since 2016, UPP has been hosting National Civil Service humanitarian workers and the Italian Civil Peace Corps to conduct social cohesion and peacebuilding activities in refugee camps, schools, and recre-

ational centers managed by local partners. Solidarity delegations also visit Palestine, where the association is engaged with *Civil Peace Interventions* and the promotion of awareness campaigns.

**In the Balkans,** where *Un Ponte Per...* has been active since 1999, the association collaborates with displaced Serbian communities, particularly in Kosovo, where it supports families most in need.

**In Italy,** *Un Ponte Per...* works in close contact with schools, universities, communities, and trade unions to build bridges of peace and knowledge within countries in which UPP operates. UPP supports campaigns for peace and disarmament, and promotes the inclusion of migrants and refugees within civil society. *Un Ponte Per* is engaged in actions of institutional advocacy for the protection of human rights activists and defenders around the world.

## ... AND WHY

The mission of *Un Ponte Per...* is to prevent the outbreak of new conflicts, particularly in the Middle East, through advocacy campaigns, cultural exchanges, cooperation projects and civil peace interventions. *Un Ponte Per...* lays the foundation for its solidarity actions in the commitment to building links between the Italian civil society and the civil societies of the countries of intervention.





## Mental Health in Jordan

The conflict in Syria and the subsequent exodus of Syrians to neighbouring countries has now reached its eighth year, with great socio-economic consequences for host societies.

UNHCR has registered 671,551 Syrian refugees in Jordan to date, of which 81.2% reside in underserved host communities outside the camps, with the highest concentration in the areas of Amman, Irbid, and Mafraq.<sup>1</sup>

The demographic impact of the Syrian refugee crisis has significantly affected Jordanian host communities and Jordan's resources. Not only does this mass exodus place a burden on displaced communities, it doubly affects host communities that already lack comprehensive access to essential resources and basic services. In particular, the health sector faces challenges in providing adequate and timely response to those in need.

As a result of the social and economic challenges facing Syrian refugees and Jordanians alike, economic instability is a significant factor affecting mental wellbeing.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) highlight the causality of emergencies in contributing to mental health conditions including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder; these issues can persist even years after leaving unsafe conditions.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>UNHCR Operational Portal, Syria Regional Refugee Response - Registered Syrians in Jordan, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/36>

<sup>2</sup>International Medical Corps (2017) "Understanding the Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs, and Service Utilization of Syrian Refugees and Jordanian Nationals," <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/62036>

<sup>3</sup>Médecins Sans Frontières (2018) "The less visible humanitarian crisis : Refugee mental health needs in urban Jordan," <https://www.msf.org/mental-health-needs-refugees-urban-jordan>

Displaced Syrians have expressed concerns including fear, worry, and grief, with a survey finding 54% of adult respondents expressing formal diagnoses with depression and anxiety.<sup>4</sup> 50% of Syrian children are currently coping with mental health concerns, appearing as symptoms of bedwetting, sleep problems, or more as a result of their mental distress.<sup>5</sup> In fact, it is important to note that many symptoms of mental health conditions appear as physical symptoms – including sleeping problems, loss of appetite, fatigue, heart issues, and more – all of which can inhibit the ability of these displaced populations to participate fully in their new environments.<sup>6</sup>

According to a survey by the International Medical Corps (IMC), the Ministry of Health in Jordan only maintains three psychiatric hospitals within the work of the National Center for Mental Health, and only one facility for substance abuse treatment.<sup>7</sup> The presence of psychiatric professionals is low; with only two psychiatrists for every 100,000 Jordanian citizens.<sup>8</sup> Jordan's existing capacity for addressing mental health concerns is low.

With the increase of Syrian refugees into the country, Jordan has been struggling to cope with the demand on public services. The barriers to accessing healthcare for Syrian refugees has increased in recent years, including the elimination of free access to primary and secondary care for Syrian refugees (since November 2014), as well as the high cost of accessing effective and necessary mental health care.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Syrians accessing healthcare now have to pay the rate for uninsured Jordanians, which presents a significant barrier in addressing mental health treatment within the country.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> International Medical Corps (2017)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Hassan, G, Kirmayer, LJ, MekkiBerrada A., Quosh, C., el Chammay, R., Deville-Stoetzel, J.B., Youssef, A., Jefee-Bahloul, H., Barkeel-Oteo, A., Coutts, A., Song, S. & Ventevogel, P. Culture, Context and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Syrians: A Review for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support staff working with Syrians Affected by Armed Conflict. Geneva: UNHCR, 2015

<sup>7</sup> International Medical Corps (2017)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

The challenge is doubly reinforced by social stigma in local communities, which often pre-emptively dissuade individuals with mental health conditions from seeking treatment or support. According to IMC, women are more likely to be discouraged from seeking treatment as a result of the stigma accompanying mental health conditions, which then makes them less capable of effectively caring for dependents, including children and the elderly.<sup>11</sup> Sometimes, clients can even reinforce these stigmas, expressing their mental health disturbances as being evidence of possession or attacks by Jinns, thereby precluding the opportunity to seek out appropriate treatment.<sup>12</sup>

Addressing the prevalence of mental health concerns, particularly within the Syrian and vulnerable Jordanian communities, is a matter of not just mental health treatment, but also preventative physical care and healing following tragedy. Reducing the stigma associated with mental health conditions can be accomplished through community-wide efforts to address barriers in accessing mental health care;

culturally, equipping community groups with the knowledge to support and guide one another to reduce stigma, address mental health concerns, and seek treatment is most effective within social cultures like that of Jordan.<sup>13</sup> Literature strongly supports the link between community engagement and positive coping.<sup>14</sup>

As a result, this project aims to strengthen community-based activities, increase awareness, and empower mental health service users within Jordan, particularly in the governorates of Irbid, Karak, Amman, and Zarqa. This project aimed at promoting mental health awareness at a community level, targeting vulnerable youth, both women and men from Jordanian and refugee communities. The project was designed to fill the lack of knowledge concerning very basic notions of mental health by focusing on better identification of symptoms, referral pathways and available treatments, as well as by tackling the widespread stigma of mental health users in all layers of society, addressing discrimination and marginalization.

<sup>11</sup> International Medical Corps (2017)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



# PROJECT OVERVIEW

Through the provision of basic mental health education to youth and community members, the *“Strengthening the mental health system, improving access and services for Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanian population”* project contributed to strengthening the mental health system with the most marginalized populations in the Amman, Zarqa, Irbid, and Karak governorates in Jordan.

Building capacity through local community-based organizations, this initiative would improve understanding related to mental health symptoms, causes, support systems, and referral pathways.

The project also included a specific referral mechanism for those requiring further life- saving, secondary and tertiary health care services.

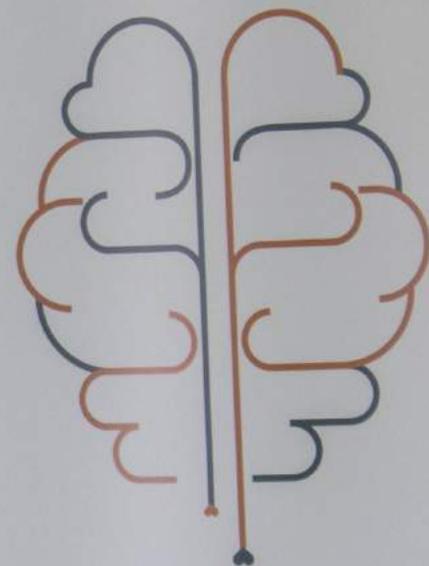
With a focus on the governorates of Amman, Zarqa, Karak, and Irbid, which host some of the largest populations of Syrian refugees alongside Jordanian host communities, this intervention doubly served both Jordanians and Syrians.

The intention was to ensure that the most marginalized populations – women, youth, Syrian refugees, and vulnerable Jordanians – had access to informed, quality information pertaining to mental health. While working to reduce the stigma of accessing mental health care, the project intended to not only improve participants’ health, but also but also their inclusion and participation in the community, in particular for mental health service users.

This result was reached through a combination of outreach activities, including awareness campaigns, mental health literacy sessions, and capacity-building trainings. These initiatives targeted community members, youth, as well as educators and outreach workers working with, and from, both the Jordanian host and Syrian refugee communities. In order to maximize the efficacy of the intervention, a radio campaign was launched to disseminate information on mental health conditions – in particular, depression and anxiety – as well as other health-related topics, including patients’ rights, access to treatment, and confronting myths about mental health.

A photograph showing a group of women, likely in a community center or meeting, wearing various styles of hijabs. The women are seated and looking towards the right side of the frame. The background is slightly out of focus, showing a plain wall and some dark wooden furniture. An orange text box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing a paragraph of text.

This project was the outcome of a collaboration between *Un Ponte Per...* and local community-based organizations, including Our Step Organization, the Jordan Hashemite Fund for Development (JOHUD), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), HelpAge International and Farah al-Nas Radio Station. The involvement of local partners with a long-term presence in the communities contributed towards effective outreach and ensured the sustainability of the project, promoting the sustainability of this project.



community awareness  
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تعزيز نظام الصحة النفسية، وتحسين  
وصول الخدمات للاجئين السوريين  
ضعفين من المجتمع الأردني المد

# OUR PARTNERS

## Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development - AICS



AICS - the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development - is committed to carrying out international cooperation initiatives to improve people's living conditions, promote sustainable development, and strengthen democratic institutions and rule of law, as well as sustain post-conflict stabilization.

AICS Amman contributes to the increasing demand for humanitarian and resilience aid in Jordan and Iraq, with projects focused on the rehabilitation of basic needs and public services, and on refugee response. AICS prioritizes and establishes efficient objectives to pursue sustainable and long-term improvement initiatives in the areas of Education, Health, Infrastructure, Livelihoods, Food Security, and Protection.

## World Health Organization



The World Health Organization (WHO) Country Office in Jordan is a part of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (WHO/EMRO). The Representative Office in Jordan was established in 1985 to provide technical support to the Ministry of Health and coordinate country health activities with other health partners.

One of the World Health Organization's top public health priorities in Jordan is to support and strengthen mental health services, and work closely with the concerned partners in the efforts of achieving the set objectives. In 2008, under the Royal Patronage and support of HRH Princess Muna Al Hussein, WHO partnered with Jordan's Ministry of Health and the Jordanian Nursing Council to support the reform of the mental health system, based on evidence and best practices. Several achievements were accomplished at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of care. One of the recent major achievements is the development of the National Mental Health and Substance Use Action Plan (2018-2021).

# People of Concern

This project initially aimed at reaching 1000 youth, including women and men, from both local host and Syrian refugee communities. The intention was to build capacity through awareness, education, training, and peer-to-peer initiatives, thereby allowing community members and youth to become focal points to support their family, friends, and peers in seeking mental health treatment when necessary.

Through the intervention, nearly 1500 youth and community members were given basic mental health education, supported in identifying signs of mental health concerns, and given access to referral pathways and treatments for mental health conditions. Activities including movie screenings discussing mental health myths and facts, as well as addressing stigma, were launched in the four targeted governorates, while a nation-wide radio campaign on mental health awareness was broadcasted through Farah al-Nas radio. Awareness sessions on basic mental health literacy were also delivered to community members. A peer-to-peer

initiative was launched in Russayfah at the local community-based organization Our Step, building capacity among local youth to become 'focal points' on mental health in their communities. This project took place in the governorates of Amman, Zarqa, Karak, and Irbid. In total, more than 1400 individuals were targeted. With an emphasis on working with the most marginalized, 73.8% of those engaged were women. In addition, 44.9% of participants were Syrian refugees, ensuring that the representation of Syrian refugees and Jordanians from host communities was nearly equal.

WHO specific material on mental health, including anxiety, depression, treatment services available, among other resources, was disseminated in every location. The project also involved referring people with mental health concerns to support and treatment and, most importantly, joining coordination meetings of organizations involved in health promotion and mental health and psychosocial support across Jordan.

**TOTAL: 1450**



**GENDER**





**34** awareness sessions on mental health provided



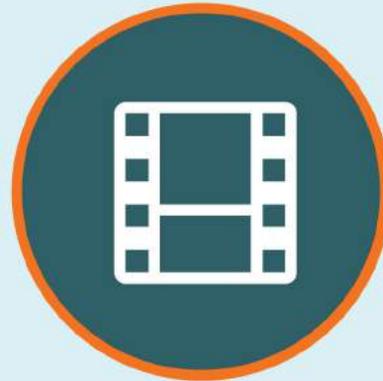
**15** peer-to-peer sessions provided for the teenagers' community in Russayfah



**102** referrals to secondary health care and mental health services



**229** teenagers from the community in Russayfah trained by the local CBO Our Step



**508** beneficiaries attended movies and videos screening on mental health sensitive issues



**1** nationwide radio campaign informing on mental health matters



**4** governorates targeted by all the activities of the project



**16** outreach workers from Zarqa trained over 10 ToTs sessions



**20** school teachers trained in Irbid with the Mental Health in School package



**7,110** WHO brochures handed out informing on mental health sicknesses and possible solutions

# ACTIVITIES



Mental Health Awareness Sessions

Community inclusion is the most effective way to support those dealing with mental health conditions. UPP provided basic mental health literacy programs to equip communities with the knowledge to support their family, friends, and community members who may be dealing with mental health conditions. In the governorates of Amman, Zarqa, Karak, and Irbid, more than 650 youth and community members were engaged over a period of four months.

The main goal of the sessions was raising awareness about mental health, educate people about mental disorders, treatment and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health in an interactive way. Understanding that learning styles vary between individuals, information was disseminated through a variety of mediums, including a lecture-style presentation, videos, and interactive discussions. With a mental health expert on hand to deliver the content, sessions worked to deliver the key messages and encourage people who are suffering in silence to seek help.

Topics discussed in the sessions varied depending on the participants, who were able to direct the conversation in relevant and applicable directions. Generally, the topics covered included the definition and importance of mental health; the importance of

raising awareness; a discussion about the prevalence of mental disorders, particularly in Jordan; causes of mental disorders, which included a discussion about myths linking religion and mental disorders; signs and symptoms for the most common mental disorders, particularly depression and anxiety; treatments available; as well as a brief discussion about substance abuse and suicide. Information about service providers dealing with mental health concerns, as well as referral pathways available to participants, were also shared during sessions.

Material concerning mental health conditions, treatments, and content to address stigma was also distributed to participants. The content of these brochures was developed by the World Health Organization, and included information on bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, addictions and substance abuse, and more.

The feedback from attendants was positive, with many seeking personal referrals to psychosocial support services following the sessions. Some people shared positive personal experiences consulting a psychologist or a psychiatrist and the improvement in mental health they experienced.

With a focus on youth empowerment, this project aimed to build capacity within local communities through the education of the youth population. As a result, working in the town of Russeifah in the Zarqa governorate, UPP conducted peer-to-peer training for youth on the topic of mental health.

In partnership with local community-based organization 'Our Step', youth between the ages of 18 to 30 were educated on topics related to mental health, including indicators of mental health, possible treatments, and referral pathways. The intention behind these sessions was to ensure these young people become 'focal points' for the community, shifting the stigmatized culture against mental health conditions from the youngest generation. The benefit of the training sessions reached community members through word-of-mouth, to the extent that general community members requested training.

The content of the training was explained in an interactive manner, combining a formal, lecture-style presentation with demonstrations, engaging activities, and discussions. Printed material was also provided for future reference.

Youth expressed their appreciation for the relevance and value of the content, especially as it related to their daily lives, so much so that attended sessions more than once to refine their skills. Many participants shared their positive experience with the peer-to-peer training either in person or through social media.

Brochures developed by the World Health Organization and concerning mental health-related topics including bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, addictions and substance abuse, and more, were also shared with youth participants.

It was interesting to find that the participation of males was higher than that of females, as, generally, we found that female participation in activities is higher than its counterpart. Generally, with activities taking place during the work day, engaging males was difficult and rare. In order to ensure society-wide cultural change and support, however, both males and females must be engaged in mental health literacy programming. As a result, having high male participation in the peer-to-peer sessions, coupled with female participation across other activities, ensures that mental health education is society-wide, and not restricted to a small subgroup of the population.



Peer to Peer Training Sessions

# Radio Campaign

Addressing stigma begins with engaging communities. To engage communities, UPP developed a radio campaign that worked to debunk myths about mental health.

In partnership with Radio Farah Al-Nas, ten episodes were aired dealing with common misconceptions about mental health conditions and treatment. Episodes address misinformation frequently found within the Jordanian and Syrian communities about disorders, therapy, side effects of mental health disorders on patients, as well as the importance of the surrounding environment and families in supporting those dealing with mental health disorders.

These radio episodes were aired during campaigns launched to raise awareness about mental health across Jordan during the months of October and November 2018, honouring

the occasion of World Mental Health Day (October 10th, 2018) and the first Mental Health and Psychosocial Forum in Amman, Jordan (October 31st, 2018).

Specific topics aligned with the material disseminated by other activities within this project; seven radio episodes covered topics including anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress disorder, personality disorder. Symptoms of these conditions, as well as risk factors, treatments, and diagnoses were discussed. The general public was invited to submit questions and comments about the topics through Farah Al-Nas' social media platforms, which were then discussed with specialists hosted by the radio program.

# Radio Campaign

One episode discussed the sensitive issue of suicide. Reasons for suicidal attempts, thoughts, and the comorbidity of suicide and other mental disorders were explained during the episode. Moreover, selected tips to deal with suicidal attempts were discussed, simultaneously dispelling the stigma that deters individuals with mental health concerns from seeking treatment and support.

Finally, the program ended with episodes discussing general topics related to health services and treatment, including the rights of mental health patients and specialists, confidentiality, and a general discussion about the cost of treatments.

This radio campaign aimed to increase community awareness on topics related to mental health, dispel stigmas, and break barriers preventing those with mental health conditions from participating fully within their communities.



# Movie Screenings

To bring the discussion of mental health to a wider audience, movie screenings on the topic of mental health were held to engage the general public. Short films were presented about mental health, depression and anxiety followed by a discussion hosted by a mental health expert. The videos delivered the main messages in a simple and non-judgmental way: mental health specialists explained symptoms in a clear language; individuals shared their personal journeys dealing with mental illness, in particular facing the stigma from society; and the ways in which psychotherapy and social support can support and promote healing for those with mental health conditions.

These movie screenings were hosted in partnership with local community-based organizations in the governorates of Amman, Zarqa, Karak, and Irbid. More than 500 community members were reached and engaged during these discussions, which were held during campaigns honouring the World Mental Health Day (October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018) and the first Mental Health and Psychosocial Forum in Amman, Jordan (October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018).





## Training of Trainers on Mental Health in Schools - Kufr Assad

Understanding that many young people with mental health conditions face challenges in education, particularly when educators and teachers are not equipped to deal with these conditions, a Training of Trainers was conducted in the Kufr Assad Charitable Association CBO, located in Irbid governorate. Bringing together 20 educators from the area, information on supporting young students dealing with mental health conditions was disseminated, building the capacity of these teachers and educators to support students on their paths to success. This curriculum was developed by WHO and UPP, and approved by the Jordanian Ministries of Education and Health. Best practices in delivering this content were implemented, based on the previous iteration of this training under another two UPP projects, Madrasati Ahla and Ibtisam, which equipped teachers working in schools with basic mental health literacy.

Over the course of four days, educators were taught how to identify signs of mental health challenges and conditions, the referral pathways and services available for young people, as well as the ways in which curricula can be accessible to those dealing with mental health concerns. Simultaneously working to build capacity in a sustainable way, the participants of the training are now certified as trainers, themselves, and capable of sharing their knowledge with other educators and teachers in local schools.

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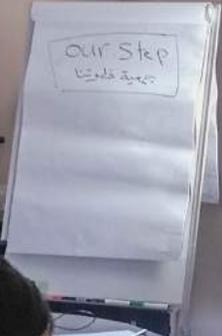
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## Training of Trainers on how to deal with Mental Health Users - Russeyfah

Through a partnership with the community-based organization 'Our Step', a Training of Trainers was delivered to outreach workers working with Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians in the town of Russeyfah. The mental health challenges facing Syrian refugees are unique and largely tied to the trauma of dealing with war, displacement, and violence. Jordanians in the host community often feel the stress and repercussions of welcoming refugees into their communities, particularly when already struggling with poverty, lack of jobs, and challenges in accessing quality education. As a result, it is imperative that those who are working with these communities understand the ways in which mental health conditions can manifest in multiple populations, including men, women, and children, and how best to support those who are dealing with mental health challenges. Fifteen outreach workers were brought together and trained on techniques to deal with mental health challenges, signs and symptoms of different mental health disorders, as well as trained to disseminate this knowledge within their wider communities.





## Partners Coordination

Collaborations with partner organizations were crucial in effectively delivering programming, as UPP was able to rely on local expertise in disseminating information on mental health. The collaboration with UNHCR and JOHUD allowed UPP to conduct sessions in the Community Based Protection Centers in Amman, Zarqa, Karak, and Irbid, reaching out individuals previously identified in these communities to benefit health promotion services. Our long-time partner Our Step Association, a focal point for the community in Russayfah, hosted the peer-to-peer initiative and the training for outreach workers in their organization. The NGO Help Age International, together with the support of Noor Al-Hussein Foundation and the Network of Arab Youth Activities (NAYA), assisted us in the delivery of several awareness sessions focused on their target of expertise, the elderly, who often neglected in humanitarian programming. Having local partners with existing networks of individuals to engage with was imperative in ensuring all programming was delivered to the appropriate target groups. UPP hopes to continue to build capacity in partnership with local, community-based organizations in future project.



community and  
health-promotion library  
empowerment

تعزيز الصحة النفسية، وتحسين إمكانية  
خدمات اللاجئين السوريين  
في المجتمع الأردني المضيف

Strengthening the mental



## Building Bridges: Referral Pathways

The project has also facilitated access to referral pathways through the establishment of a comprehensive, cross-sectoral referral system in coordination with UPP's internal referral system. Many beneficiaries, despite challenging the concept of 'mental health' and the need for mental health treatment at the beginning of sessions and activities, later reached out for referral services to seek support for themselves or family members with mental health concerns. Throughout the project's activities, more than a hundred beneficiaries sought services providing psychosocial support.

UPP's referral pathway will enable the provision of comprehensive assistance to beneficiaries in all governorates targeted by this project, with the support of international organizations and Jordanian ministries engaged in the response to the humanitarian crises. The referral system built internally through UPP will aim to connect beneficiaries with necessary psychosocial support services, among other services (including winterization, financial support, job support, legal aid and more).

UPP will continue to strengthen this referral pathway through current and future projects, with the intention of building a sustainable, comprehensive strategy to serve the most vulnerable populations.





## Cross-Projects Synergy

As in previous UPP projects, an effort was made to scaffold programming across different projects in order to integrate interventions and encourage sustainability within local communities. As a result, under this project, three activities were strategically planned in order to build upon previous projects conducted by UPP.

The training for trainers on Mental Health in School, delivered to educators in Kufr Assad, Irbid, was a way to reach individuals who were interested in making education mentally accessible, and who were not eligible to participate in UPP's previous project, *Madrasati Ahla*.





## Key Challenges

The goal of this project was to disseminate general knowledge on the main issues concerning mental health, signs and symptoms, causes, and treatments. Working within the social and cultural context of the Jordanian and Syrian communities, it was difficult to “break the barriers” of culture, religion, and stigma concerning mental health. A common rhetoric was the belief that help from mental health professionals (i.e. psychiatrists or psychologists) is not needed, as religious expertise is enough to treat multi-faceted mental health issues.

The stigma towards the treatment of mental disorders, including the idea that medications are harmful and cause addiction, was also highlighted by participants numerous times. Predominantly from older populations, and in particular from men, there emanated a deeper sense of mistrust and disbelief towards the content presented, often resisted out of a disbelief of mental health being an ‘illness’ rather than an inherent dysfunction of an individual. Content presented worked to address beliefs surrounding mental health in a simple and accessible way; the feedback from attendants was positive, with many later seeking personal referrals to services addressing psychosocial support.

Stories from the field



## HelpAge - Mental Health Awareness Sessions

Coffee was slowly sipped as almost 15 men have gathered on the patio just outside of HelpAge in Jabal al Lweibdeh, Amman.

They had just spent an afternoon talking about mental health issues with UPP experts.

"We have a mindset where, if anyone wants to be treated for mental health issues, they are instantly assumed to be insane or crazy and this is a problem. It is completely normal and is just as important as getting treated for a physical problem," says Mohammad, who had attended the session.

It is necessary to create space for conversations with young people, as well as the older generation, about mental health - because depression or anxiety can happen to anyone, and should never be a taboo.





## Kufr Assad - Training of Trainers

“ Being able to support all my students equally has always been one of my top priorities as a teacher, as it should be in all classrooms around the world. Unfortunately, in the context we operate [Kufr Assad, Irbid] it is not an easy task to understand and assist students, the majority of whom come from difficult family circumstances such as poverty or displacement. Indeed, after the training received from Ms Huda Najem, I will be more equipped for dealing with such cases, in the hope to foster an inclusive education for those in desperate need of it. ”



## JOHUD Community Based Protection Center - Movie Screenings

“

Today, after the movie I watched with my community, I decided that I will never judge anybody, anymore. We don't know what it took someone to get out of bed, look and feel presentable as possible and face the day. We never really know the daily struggles of others.

”

## Our Step - Peer to Peer Training

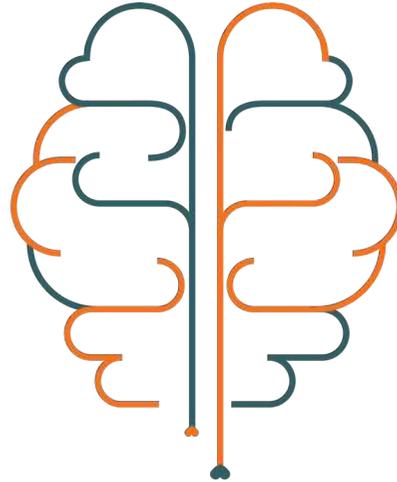
“

It's important to me that I can help my friends when they are dealing with things like depression. Before this training, I didn't know what to do, but now I know that sometimes they just need someone to talk to, or someone to help them get psychological help.

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community awareness  
health-promotion literacy  
empowerment

