



The DPA Trainer (center) and participants in the entrepreneur training course. Taking into account cultural restrictions that make it difficult for women to be away from the home for more than a day, JICA designed each training session so that it can be completed in one day.



Market in the Baqa'a camp, lined with stores run by the refugees themselves.

IS IT A SHAME IF A WOMAN WORKS? POVERTY IS BECOMING MORE SEVERE IN REFUGEE CAMPS

This is not just a camp—it is a town. The road, about 20 km north of Amman, the capital of Jordan, feels like an ordinary road, but it is inside the Baqa'a camp where Palestine refugees live. With barbers and clothes shops run by refugees themselves, the market street is crowded.

There is no physical border dividing “inside” and “outside” of the camp. However, the density of old buildings and the littered alleys wet with rain or domestic wastewater make it look a little different from the townscape seen before entering the camp.

The number of Palestinians in Jordan who are registered as refugees by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was approximately 2.25 million as of January 2016. In the Baqa'a camp, which was established in 1968, approximately 128,000 people are currently living in an area of only 1.5 square kilometers.

The lives of the refugees here are difficult. Compared with other Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, the Baqa'a camp has especially high poverty and unemployment rates. People desperately need to participate in economic activities and secure stable incomes.

Opportunities for women to earn cash income are particularly limited, because it is considered a shame for women to work outside the home in many Arabic societies, including Palestine. “In their culture, both men and women generally consider it embarrassing if a wife is gainfully employed, because it means that the husband fails to make enough money,” explains a JICA expert who works on a gender and social disparity project in Jordan. “Therefore, men don't approve of their wives and daughters being employed, and women hesitate to work.”

JICA began supporting refugee women in cooperation with the Department for Palestinian Affairs (DPA), part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Jordan, in 2006. The DPA operates training and employment centers for women in four Palestine refugee camps in Jordan including Baqa'a. JICA cooperates in reviewing the curriculum and helping train the staff. During activities, it became apparent that there is a lot of social prejudice against women working outside the home. And in 2009, JICA initiated a project to enhance opportunities for women to earn cash income

and to encourage refugees in the camps to consider different perspectives on women's employment.

SKILLS FOR WOMEN CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF MEN AND SOCIETY

Five Palestine refugee women look cheerful while taking notes around a table on which pans, scales, and various liquids have been placed. “How much should we price the sample?” They are learning how to make body cream under the guidance of a female staff member of the DPA.

In less than two hours, the table fills with different kinds of cream. They enjoy checking how each one smells and feels. Everyone seems happy with the results.

This is an example of an entrepreneur training course for married women who have difficulties in working outside the home. The DPA ran classes like this at the training and employment center in the Baqa'a camp in mid-January this year. The training is intended to enable women to earn income by making simple products at home without going out to work.

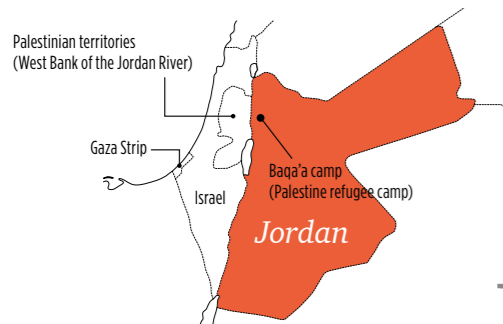
“Among the refugees in the camp, women, particularly from households with economic difficulties, are selected as participants. Compared with men, the refugee women have fewer employment opportunities and less education,” says Mamoun Alghol, who supervises the Baqa'a camp where 128,000 refugees reside. He is also a lecturer at the training and employment center, where he helps women acquire skills.

When it began in 2009, the training program in the first two phases of the project was financially supported by JICA, but the current, third phase is run by the DPA without any financial aid. This elevates the sense of ownership and mission among those who are engaged in the project.

In addition to entrepreneur support, in phase II, JICA began promoting education to change negative

Palestine refugees

Palestine refugees are those who were forced to evacuate from Palestine (including all of Israel, the West Bank of the Jordan River, and the Gaza Strip) between June 1946 and May 1948 because of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War as well as their descendants. The UNRWA was established in 1949 to relieve Palestine refugees from starvation and poverty.



Finding New Ways for Women Refugees to Work

In Arabic societies, both men and women have negative feelings about women working outside the home. In increasingly impoverished Palestine refugee camps, JICA is helping promote new ways to expand women's possibilities and improve their livelihoods while respecting long-held cultural norms.



Speaking about perception changes regarding women's employment, Mamoun of the DPA says, “We expect that appealing to married women and their families will have a positive effect on children.”

Gender Issues in Conflict and Disaster : JORDAN

attitudes towards women's employment. Workshops are regularly held in the Baqa'a camp under titles such as "Is it a shame for a woman to work outside the home?" and "Does Islam allow women to work outside?" Around 1800 refugees have participated in these workshops.

However, some older men tend to insist, "I agree with the idea of getting rid of a sense of shame about women's employment, but I wouldn't approve of my own wife working at a factory or somewhere," which often causes an argument with the DPA lecturers. The presence of Mamoun is very important because he, as a man, promotes women's employment outside the home.

JICA's gender expert points out, "In Arabic societies, a woman can be employed only when approved



A female DPA member gives a lecture at a workshop. It is not easy for a young woman to speak about women's social participation in front of older men, but her confidence builds up as she gives more lectures.

A man is participating in a workshop that encourages participants to notice their unconscious gender discrimination and prejudice.



by a man: husband, father, or brother. Therefore, it is necessary to take a long-term view of promoting behavior change, involving those who are influential in the community, including older men."

"I SUPPORT THE FAMILY FINANCES" RESPECT FOR WOMEN'S WILLINGNESS TO WORK

Fatmeh Abu Safieh, a mother of five children, has been making and selling perfume, soap, and detergent at home in the camp to support the family finances since 2012, when she participated in the entrepreneur training course. She says, "I went home to sell the perfume that I made in my first training session, and it sold out instantly. With connections from my relatives, I have gained many customers outside the camp as well. As I can work from home, my husband is agreeable with that."

Her husband, also a refugee, does not have work-

Fatmeh makes perfume on the spot. The profit is about 60% of the regular price. Her two daughters are interested in beauty and sewing businesses and now participate in the camp's vocational training.



permit and is therefore unable to work. Two years ago, he suffered a heart attack and still needs medical treatment at the hospital. "I am the mainstay of the family. The cost of living is at least 450 U.S. dollars a month including the rent," Fatmeh says. "The more the children grow, the more it will cost, and we have to pay the medical fees of my husband, too. But even though our life is tough, the fact that I can work improves my self-esteem."

Although Fatmeh is modest, her business sense and ambition are clear: "I need to enhance my marketing in the future. I wish JICA established a store in the camp and supported sales promotion."

In another Palestine refugee camp, there is a woman who attended a similar entrepreneur training course and eventually opened a beauty salon with cooperation from her family. How many more women are there who are talented but not allowed to take a chance?

Mamoun has been appealing to the refugees in the camp to sweep away prejudice against women's employment. He emphasizes, "I wish that women would be able to work at will and earn income to buy what they need for daily living, and that the living standards in the camp would improve."

As the Baqa'a camp has a history of nearly 50 years, many of the refugees were born here, and Fatmeh is one of them. Support is provided not only because she is a poor refugee woman, but also because she is a human being. It is important to make sure that her opportunities are not limited just because she is a woman.

A NEW ATTEMPT TO PROTECT MOTHERS AND CHILDREN: ANOTHER TYPE OF SUPPORT FOR REFUGEE WOMEN

In Jordan, JICA also supports Palestine refugees through an initiative on maternal and child health. JICA started making a Palestinian version of a mother and child health handbook in 2005, and three years later, it distributed the completed handbook in Arabic throughout Palestine. In addition to the Palestine territories in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank of the Jordan River, the mother and child health handbook has also been distributed in Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon through United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) clinics. For more effective dissemination, JICA worked on an electronic version of the handbook.

Why digitize the mother and child health handbook, when it already exists on paper? Akihiro Seit, Director of UNRWA's health program, explains, "When the mother and child health handbook is digitized, even those who have been uprooted, such as refugees, will be able to continue their children's medical care with only one cell phone application wherever they are. In addition, anyone can use a phone application easily, so fathers will be able to use it and be more involved with mother and child health."

Now that the development of the cell phone application is complete, and it has been available for Palestine refugee mothers to download since April this year. The largest issue was how to add extra value through digitization. Omar Al-Asseh, who engaged

in the development of the IT system for the app says, "Besides notification about vaccinations and outpatient appointments, there are functions for nutrition and breastfeeding instructions and lullabies."

In order to improve refugees' maternal and child health, it is crucial that every mother have access to the mother and child health handbook. Therefore, instead of replacing the paper copies with the digitized version, both formats will be available, each with its respective advantages – the portability of the app, and the familiarity of the book.

Women who are forced to live as refugees must receive support so that they will not lose their free will and precious children on top of losing their homeland. A refugee can be a mother with a happy family, and she can even be an entrepreneur. JICA's assistance aims to help in both areas.



Many refugees now have access to smartphones and the Internet. Seit expects that applications helpful to refugees will become widespread. Long-term solutions require more than technology – he emphasizes the importance of understanding the root causes of displacement and refugee camps: "Humans can never be healthy unless society is healthy."



Omar is developing an IT system to digitize the mother and child health handbook. JICA and UNRWA survey the women at the refugee camp and discuss with them what features and information are important to them.