



Helping Jordanian Communities Meet Water Needs

One Family's Road to Water Security

Left to Right: Al Khaldi's two-year-old granddaughter drinks from a glass as her grandmother looks on; Al Khaldi's son waters their garden with gray water left over from dish washing; A man washes off with water from a USAID-funded community cistern in Zaatari village.

Ahmed Al Khaldi has a clear view of the rows and rows of tents at the Zaatari Camp for Syrian refugees from the window of his home in Zaatari village. But he doesn't even need to travel that far to see refugees – he estimates 2,000 of them are living in his village. In fact, Al Khaldi hosts his Syrian cousin Ahmed Swaidan and his family in a house he owns right next door to his own. He took in the family in August of 2011 after Swaidan fled the embattled city of Homs with his wife, his own five children and his brother's five children. "There were tanks and Syrian Army forces in the streets... I felt my family was seriously threatened. It wasn't safe to stay in Homs," Swaidan said.

While their lives are no longer in danger, Swaidan and his family encountered a different kind of challenge in their new home. In Zaatari, surrounded on all sides by desert, water was so scarce in the best of times it was turned on for just 48 hours each week. Now, with the population still growing and aquifers continuing to deplete, the water in this village is turned on for a mere 12 hours once a week. Water in Syria was plentiful, but outside Al Khaldi's window in Zaatari, the cactus flourish next to a tree where dried-up olives hang, puckered, dusty and inedible.

Al Khaldi, 51, says his family couldn't survive, and he couldn't afford to host his

Syrian cousins, if it weren't for the cement cistern that sits in their backyard. His family is one of 22 in Zaatari village that has a rooftop catchment for collecting rain water that is fed to a cistern. Water is then pumped to a rooftop storage tank for household use. USAID, working through its partner Mercy Corps, funded a revolving loan program to pay for cistern installation and other water-saving upgrades in family homes here. When one family pays back its loan, the money is loaned to the next family on the waiting list. Each \$1,700-loan is paid back in full in 30 months.

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The loans are managed by community-based organizations (CBOs). "One of the great strengths of this project is we developed a nationwide civil society platform of more than 135 CBOs that have the tools and resources to tackle water demand issues," said Rob Maroni, Mercy Corps' Country Director.

Since its inception in 2006, the program has funded more than 6,000 cisterns and water-saving upgrades in homes, schools and community buildings throughout Jordan. In January, the project received \$20 million in funding through a USAID

special fund to expand its activities in communities in the north, like Zaatari, that have been affected by the influx of Syrian refugees.

Down the street from his home, Al Khaldi fingers his prayer beads in front of the village's community cistern, which has been hooked up to an outdoor washing basin – all installed with the help of a grant from USAID, managed by Mercy Corps.

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An agriculture student at a girls' vocational school in Mafraq works in a garden watered by a USAID-funded cistern.



“Before the cistern, the water situation was so difficult. With the cistern, I feel comfortable, I feel secure,” Al Khaldi explained.

With a total of 27 people in both families, Al Khaldi still needs to buy supplemental drinking water at a cost of about \$50 a month. But without the cistern, and the addition of his new house guests, Al Khaldi says he would have to buy water four or

five times a month at a cost of about \$100 to \$140 – about a third of the monthly pension he receives as a retired member of the Jordanian public police.

But despite the hardships, Al Khaldi says he has no regrets about taking in his cousins: “Regardless of the relationship between us, I did this because it’s the right thing to do.” Now, Al Khaldi and his family share

the water from their cistern when other neighbors run out. The families call the cistern a “kanz,” – the Arabic word for treasure. ★



Left: Girls in Jerash pose in front of their school’s storage tank, painted to look like an aquarium. Right: Al Khaldi looks on as his wife and granddaughter pump water from the storage tank in their back yard. The water in this tank comes from a rainwater catchment on the roof.



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Assessment Seeks to Identify Challenges in the Education Sector

In early January, USAID/Jordan’s Basic Education and Youth Office kicked off a Human and Institutional Capacity Development (HICD) assessment of the Ministry of Education. The assessment is being conducted by Development Training Services (DTS), which will work with the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders to identify key areas for improvement and provide a performance solution plan to help the Ministry achieve its goals under the Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy (ERfKE) initiative. The assessment will describe the conditions of the education sector for early childhood through the twelfth grade General Secondary Examination, or *Tawjihi*.

What’s New @ USAID/Jordan

USAID/Jordan on T.V.

USAID/Jordan has begun airing a commercial on local T.V. Check it out on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmFohfEJtzs>



Breaking Barriers for Women in Hospitality

USAID/Jordan’s Tourism Development Project, in partnership with the Vocational Training Corporation and the Ministry of Education, launched the first ever high school tourism and hospitality program (*Fundukia*) for girls last semester at the Aqaba Comprehensive Secondary School for Girls. In Jordan, the tourism industry has the capacity to absorb thousands of new entrants each year. This effort ensures young women are given the opportunity to enter this growing career field.

Sar Waqtha: It’s About Time International Disability Rights Day

As part of USAID/Jordan’s Civil Society Program, more than 150 young people with disabilities launched the “Sar Waqtha” (It’s About Time) Campaign on International Disability Rights Day on December 3 at the University of Jordan. The group was successful in securing a promise from the university president to ensure reasonable accommodation and accessibility for students with disabilities. Through the Youth and Disability Rights Advocacy Network, the project is investing in a new generation of disability activists.

Visit <http://sarwaqtha.wordpress.com/> for more information.

