



MEDITERRANEAN CITY-TO-CITY MIGRATION

CITY CASE STUDY

AMMAN

SOCIAL COHESION IN BADR NAZZAL:
BRINGING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND REFUGEES TOGETHER



Implemented by



This case study was developed in the framework of the Mediterranean City-to-City Migration Project (MC2CM), a project coordinated by ICMPD and funded by the European Union and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The MC2CM project has been working since 2015 with Amman, Beirut, Lisbon, Lyon, Madrid, Tangiers, Tunis, Turin and Vienna to increase the knowledge base on urban migration.

Additionally the project has sought to nurture a peer-to-peer dialogue and mutual learning on specific urban challenges such as social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, employment and provision of basic services for migrants, among others. This case study was selected by the Municipality of Amman in order to showcase a practice that contributes to social inclusion of migrants at the local level.

AMMAN'S BADR NAZZAL DISTRICT USES SPACES OF ENCOUNTER AND SOCIAL NETWORKING TO BUILD SOCIAL COHESION BETWEEN HOST COMMUNITIES AND REFUGEES



ABSTRACT

In 2016 alone, more than 435,000 Syrians were reported to be residing in Amman. The influx of Syrian refugees has increased the pressure on municipal infrastructure and public services, particularly with regards to education, transport, public spaces, waste management, energy and water. Greater Amman Municipality's overall response is to seek ways of reducing socio-cultural tensions and spatial segregation between host and refugee communities. This broad objective builds on multi-stakeholder partnerships. One such example is the initiative between the Greater Amman Municipality, the French Agency for Development, the French Red Cross and the Jordanian Red Crescent. This cooperation aims at

strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations, improving living conditions, expanding social communication between refugees and the local community, and establishing community-based activities and opportunities for capacity building in Badr Nazzal, a district located in the south of the city centre. The below case study highlights two micro-initiatives within this broader initiative, namely the rehabilitation of local parks; and the organisation of football training courses for Syrian and Jordanian children. Both initiatives demonstrate how social cohesion can be strengthened through the creation of spaces of encounter and social networking programmes.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Amman is the capital and most populated city of Jordan. It is also its economic, political and cultural centre. Situated at the centre of the Middle East region, Jordan has a long history of migration acting as both a vertical and horizontal corridor for migration throughout the region. The country has always been open to migrants and people fleeing their home countries and in need of assistance. Relative to its own population, Jordan stands as the second largest refugee-hosting country in the world, with refugees representing more than 30 percent of the total population. Despite this fact, Jordan has not signed up to the 1951 UNHCR Refugee Convention and does not have legislation that regulates the status of refugees.

The Municipality of Greater Amman consists of twenty-two districts and divides clearly into two socio-economically and geographically distinct parts. Whereas the western districts are mainly inhabited by upper-class households, the east is almost exclusively comprised of middle- and lower-class households.

Approximately 30 percent of Amman's 4 million inhabitants report as foreign-born and the influx of migrants into Amman has sharply increased since 2013, with the mass arrival of Syrian refugees. In 2016 alone, more than 435,000 Syrians were reported as residing in Amman¹. On the whole, despite this increase, the city has responded effectively to meeting the needs of both new and settled communities. Throughout the city, essential municipal

services are provided to people regardless of their country of origin or nationality. Nevertheless, for a number of districts in Amman, the growth of refugee communities has caused increased pressure on municipal infrastructure and public services, particularly regarding education, transport, public spaces, waste management, and the provision of energy and water.

This case study concerns Badr Nazzal, a district located to the south of Amman's city centre. In response to growing levels of need within the district, the French Agency for Development (AFD) has initiated a partnership between the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), the French Red Cross (French IFRC) and the Jordanian Red Crescent (Jordanian IFRC). The project emerging from this cooperation follows a social cohesion approach and aims at strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations, improving living conditions, expanding the social communication between refugees and the local community and establishing community-based activities and capacity building opportunities. Through various micro-initiatives, the project also aims to promote social cohesion by fostering the emergence of a district-based identity, common to all residents irrespective of background.

¹ UNHCR, information from Jordan Times, Aug 7, 2016, <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/over-half-syrian-refugees-jordan-are-children%E2%80%9999>

IMPLEMENTATION

Although composed of numerous micro-initiatives, the main objectives of the Badr Nazzal project centre around providing improved access to social, economic and cultural opportunities for refugees as well as promoting initiatives that bring refugees and the host community closer together. Project activities promote universal human rights and have thus focused on the facilitation of refugee access to work and medical care. Additionally, the project aims to create spaces of encounter, where people can meet and where barriers inhibiting exchange can be collectively dismantled. Such spaces are provided through local charity bazaars; through the rehabilitation of local parks (e.g. Shura park and Jordan park); and through the creation of social networking programmes such as football training courses for children.

The present case study seeks to highlight the latter two initiatives; namely the rehabilitation of the Shura and Jordan park and the organisation of training courses for young footballers within the local community – a group that includes both Jordanian and Syrian children.

Initiative 1: Rehabilitation of Shura and Jordan park: The rise in numbers of refugees living in Badr Nazzal district has increased pressure on public places such as parks and open-green spaces. Indeed, two local parks, Shura park and Jordan park, proved incapable of meeting the maintenance requirements associated with increased visitorship. Thus, guided by the Head of Development and Citizen Services Units Bader

Nazzal at GAM, the AFD, together with the French and Jordanian IFRC, designed a micro-project to improve park facilities and preserve these two parks as spaces of encounter.

All micro-initiatives were designed in an intensive planning phase, which lasted three years. The implementation phase of the rehabilitation of local parks initiative started in June 2016 and took six months to complete. The main objective of this initiative was the creation of opportunities for increased interaction and improved social cohesion between Jordanian citizens and Syrian refugees. Active community participation has been a key element of the project throughout, and both Jordanian citizens and Syrian refugees were actively encouraged to participate in the project's development and implementation. Furthermore, the inclusion of Syrian refugees as labourers has been promoted, providing access to capacity building and employment opportunities. Across the two parks, activities included the rehabilitation of both soft and hard landscape areas, additional planting, carpentry and playground maintenance.

Initiative 2: Training courses for young football players: A second micro-initiative supported by this multi-stakeholder cooperation is structured around the provision of football training courses for local children aged 8–12 years. Participants in this programme come from local families, with both host and refugee communities represented. This social programme was designed to increase social cohesion and cultural inclusion within the district through the development/strengthening of communication lines between local Jordanian and Syrian children. This initiative

promotes the social participation of refugee families, and contributes to maintaining and enhancing a sense of social security. The project was initiated by the local community in collaboration with the Badr Nazzal district in February 2016 and ran for seven weeks. During this time, young residents received professional instruction from trainers drawn from similar social communities in spaces provided by the GAM.

FINANCING AND RESOURCES

The overall project, including the two presented micro-initiatives, is funded through the financial support of international agencies and organisations. The main donor has been the AFD. The French and Jordanian IFRC took responsibility for the implementation of project activities, including capacity building requirements, as foreseen in the project design.

RESULTS AND IMPACTS

The overall Badr Nazzal project is comprised of several short-term initiatives, each delivered with relatively modest budgets. This mode of operation encourages active community participation through the regular delivery of tangible short-term impacts.

The rehabilitation of local parks succeeded in redesigning public spaces to meet evolving local needs. The community's satisfaction with the renovation project is made visible through an increase in park visitorship. This, in turn, creates further opportunities

for social interaction between the host community and refugees. District employees have confirmed an observable increase in park usage by members of both the refugee and host communities.

Equally important, the visible involvement of Syrian refugees in the implementation of project activities has had a positive impact on their wider social inclusion, mitigating the threat of social segregation and countering localised discrimination. Furthermore, it can be argued that the employment opportunities provided for 15 Syrian refugees during the renovation activities enabled them to build a daily routine and offered a form of psychosocial support to a frequently traumatised community.

Similarly, the football training programmes have also worked positively towards improved social cohesion in Badr Nazzal. During the programmes, project managers have observed noticeable improvements in the way that children participants behaved and engaged with each other. Playing football together enabled them to cross social and cultural divides. Overall, 50 children participated in the football training course – 25 Jordanian children and 25 children from Syrian families – and the beneficiaries of this initiative generally showed increased acceptance of children from other backgrounds.

This case study presents just two examples from a number of initiatives connected with the Badr Nazzal district social-cohesion project. The broader project is subject to an overall evaluation as conditioned by the support provided by the AFD (timeline tbc). Similar initiatives are also supported in oth-

er districts of the Greater Amman Municipality, although these are almost exclusively located in the eastern part of the city, where most of the Syrian refugees currently live.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

During its implementation phase, the rehabilitation of Shura and Jordan park faced several obstacles. These were predominantly related to project activity timeline delays. Such delays were triggered by issues with external contractors, but also as a result of both parks remaining open to the public for the duration of the rehabilitation works.

In contrast, the implementation of the football training scheme did not experience any major challenges in terms of implementation. On the contrary, the project, which had originally been initiated by the local community, benefited from broad support from all involved parties. However, where this project can perhaps be seen as limited is in terms of its focus on a heavily gendered activity. In fact, no girls participated in the project activities.

Overall, both initiatives are limited in terms of temporal and financial scope. Whilst limited, projectised budgets can be useful during a pilot phase, insofar as they allow innovative practices to be tested, ultimately, they represent a barrier to scale and risk impeding the longevity/sustainability of overall project objectives.

LESSONS LEARNED

The GAM works towards the fulfilment of universal human rights for all residents of Amman and undertakes efforts to reduce socio-cultural tensions and mitigate the risk of segregation between host and refugee communities. The above micro-initiatives form part of these wider efforts and present short-term, tangible and easily accessible projects for refugees and local communities.

In many ways, they display the characteristics of “good practices”, as captured by studies relating to social cohesion/migrant inclusion in cities. Both initiatives, for instance, build on an awareness that the earlier inclusion programmes for migrants are carried out, the better the chances for social cohesion.² Additionally, the active involvement of refugees in the rehabilitation of the local park, reflects an appreciation of the linkages between capacity building at an individual level, and broader urban resilience.³

Fundamentally, the two initiatives entrench the notion that the involvement of non-native residents in neighbourhood development and recreational activities is key to enabling spaces of encounter and

² MC2CM Peer Learning. (2016). Social cohesion and intercultural and inter-religious dialogue: The role of local authorities in public policies for the social inclusion of migrants. UCLG.

³ 100 Resilient Cities. (2016). Global Migration - Resilient Cities at the Forefront: Strategic actions to adapt and transform our cities in an age of migration. Athens: 100 Resilient Cities. p. 5

opportunities for dialogue. The football initiative shows that the provision of active recreational activities is an effective means of bringing young people of different backgrounds together, providing access to a healthy lifestyle while diffusing the potential for inter-cultural tensions. Some have even argued that such youth activities might also function as a bridge for enhanced parental interaction. However, such suggestion would require validation via further research.

The football micro-initiative also suggests ways in which community initiatives, designed in direct response to self-assessed needs, have the potential to be catalysed and scaled up to a district level. In theory, this local ownership creates a firm foundation for longer-term, sustainable programming. In so doing, the football initiative and the park project highlight the value of designing a diversity of micro-initiatives that take different entry points into promoting social integration of migrants.

However, this approach can be further strengthened if the design of pilot inclusion projects, such as those presented above, were embedded within a longer-term strategy to transform them into programmes that are adequately resourced and protected by local policy. It is thus important that such small-scale activities are followed-up, scaled-up and integrated into a broader and longer-term approach to social cohesion.

The comprehensive institutionalisation of participatory, inclusive processes has the potential to contribute to increased stability and local security at the city level.

REFERENCES

The case study builds on information provided by UCLG and the Greater Amman Municipality. This includes information collected during several telephone interviews, as well as unpublished information concerning the two micro-initiatives and a draft version of the forthcoming MC2CM Amman City Migration Profile. Official documents pertaining to the wider Badr Nazzal project have not been made available to the author; nor was it possible to arrange further interviews with stakeholders outside of the GAM.

This case study has been prepared by Katrin Hofer under the coordination of Barbara Lipietz and Tim Wickson from the Bartlett's Development Planning Unit (DPU), University College of London (UCL) and the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, in the framework of the MC2CM Project.

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