The Improving Local Development to Increase the Resilience of Host Communities and Refugees in North Jordan Programme (LED)

YEAR THREE REPORT

01 August 2024 - 31 July 2025



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

"LED"	The Improving Local Development to Increase the Resilience of Host Communities and Refugees in North Jordan Programme
AIA	Archaeological Impact Assessment
BoQ	Bill of Quantities
CBO	Community Based Organisations
CIP	Capital Investment Project
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DAILL	Decentralisation, Accountability, and Integrity on the local level (DAILL) in Jordan
DoA	Department of Antiquities
DOA	Document of Action
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EUD	European Union Delegation
GLDU	Governorate Local Development Unit
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
JFDZ	Jordan Free and Development Zones Group
JoRRIS	The Jordan Response Information System for the Syria Crisis
LED	Local Economic Development
LDD	Local Development Directorate
MFI	Micro-Finance Institutions
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoLA	Ministry of Local Administration
MoPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
MoT&A	Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
OWG	Operational Working Group
PPP	Public Private Partnerships
PSO	Project Support Office
PSU	Project Support Unit
PWD	Persons With Disabilities
RSCN	The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VAT	Value Added Tax
VT	Virtual Reality

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE ACTION

The development challenge that the "Improving Local Development to Increase the Resilience of Host Communities and Refugees in North Jordan" Programme is designed to address the issue of high rates of unemployment and recessive nature of the local economy in Irbid and Ajloun Governorates. The "Programme" focus is on the creation of economic and employment opportunities and improved public services for host communities and Syrian refugees from Ajloun and Irbid governorates.

The "Programme" also supports the governorates of Ajloun and Irbid in effectively identifying and availing investment opportunities to stimulate the local economy in tourism and agriculture sectors. The capital investment projects, and the complementary small-scale initiatives will contribute to the private sector in creating jobs, enhancing environmental sustainability, and benefiting all residents in the area, Jordanians and Syrian refugees alike.

To alleviate the development challenges faced, the Programme aims to promote local economic development (LED) at the Irbid and Ajloun Governorate by adopting an area-based development approach focusing particularly on Umm Qais Heritage Village and its surrounding urban areas in Irbid Governorate, and the Ajloun Agritourism Route in Ajloun Governorate, both of which are key contributors to the local economies. The Programme addressed the available resources in both areas, particularly those supporting the agricultural and tourism sectors. By utilizing natural and human resources, the Programme aims to boost labour engagement, strengthen interlinked areas, revive local supply chains, connecting producers, markets, products, packaging, pricing, and quality standards) within the sector's core economic activities. The programme seeks to improve, complement, and energise the economic sectors that have a competitive advantage in the selected governorates, that contributing to job creation, economic growth, entrepreneurship, and sustained local development.

The Umm Qais Heritage Development Project is a strategic initiative aimed at transforming Umm Qais into a premier cultural tourism destination. The project focuses on enhancing the site's historical, architectural, and natural assets while promoting sustainability, community participation, PPP, and economic development. The project aligns with Jordan's national tourism strategy and international standards for heritage and sustainable tourism development.

In Ajloun, the programme is advancing the implementation of a flagship intervention: the development of a 19.8 km agritourism route. This innovative route is designed to connect visitors with agricultural practices, ecological assets, and key historical, cultural, and tourism landmarks. The intervention actively engages local communities, the private sector, intergovernmental actors, and relevant line ministries—including the Ministry of Agriculture, which provided technical guidance and selection criteria for the track—under the leadership of the Ajloun Governorate. The Ajloun agritourism route represents a strategic pilot for integrated local development, combining infrastructure investment, private sector engagement, and inclusive human capital development. It supports Jordan's green growth objectives and aligns with the EU's priorities on sustainable livelihoods, gender equality, and refugee inclusion.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF REPORTING PERIOD

This progress report covers the period from 01 August 2024 to 31 July 2025 and highlights achievements on the LED programme's key results:

- **Revision and analysis of strategic and sectoral plans:** In-depth review and update of existing local development plans, sector strategies (agriculture, and tourism), and needs assessments was carried out in the target areas. The selection of these areas was based on the socio- economic situational analysis and an environmental needs assessment. This process was conducted in close coordination with Governorate Local Development Units (GLDUs), governorate councils, municipal councils, and sectoral directorates, to ensure that the Programme's core interventions align with local priorities and respond to the recommendations of local development plans.

- **Identify Capital Investment Projects (CIPs)**:
    - The Umm Qais Heritage Village and its Adjacent Urban Fabric Development Project. A bid has been awarded to the selected contractor and approvals gained from the Ministry of Tourism on the interventions for the design and studies related to Umm Qais Heritage Site Development of High-Quality Assets.
    - Ajloun Agritourism Route (track) design procurement is underway and approvals on the core interventions on the Route are approved by all relevant local stakeholders.

- **Community consultations were conducted to identify perceived service gaps**, especially the priority needs of women, youth, persons with disabilities (PWDs) in hosting communities, and refugee households. Through community consultations aimed at fostering an inclusive and secure environment for business development, key service needs were identified for each target area. These needs, aligned with the sector and type of Capital Investment Projects (CIPs) and fully compliant with national and international standards, will be addressed in the design and implementation of the CIPs.

- **University of Jordan Applied Research Incubator Hub launched a call for applications and subsequently received study applications and proposals for research covering** local governance and sustainable local economic development areas.

- **The Olive and Olive Oil Sector Value Chain Analysis** Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Market Research Report are completed. However, based on feedback from the EU Delegation

during negotiations on the extension phase, this component has been discontinued and will not proceed to implementation. The Value Chain Analysis will be documented and its evidence- based methodology will be reviewed in collaboration with the University of Jordan Applied Research Incubator Hub.

CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

1. The delays in obtaining approvals from key stakeholders, particularly the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOT&A), and extended discussions on final interventions, especially in Umm Qais have impacted the original timeline of the design and implementation process of the CIPs.

2. The change in the taxes and Value Added Tax (VAT) procedures implemented by the government have adversely affected the implementation of programme activities. It should be noted that traditionally all projects funded by development partners including the EU and those implemented by the United Nations (UN) agencies were exempted from taxes. However, the new regulations following the issuance of a memo from the Prime Ministry, dated 09/03/2020 decrees that when a ministry hosts a project, it is responsible for bearing all costs. It took some time for the ministry to be able to reallocate resources to meet this condition.

3. Delays were experienced the during the realignment of the Programme outputs and activities that have impacted the implementation of programme activities which were subsequently delayed to the upcoming reporting periods.

PROGRAMME REPORT

REPORTING PERIOD RESULTS & PLANNED ACTIONS FOR NEXT REPORTING PERIOD

The results and activities presented in this reporting period are aligned with the amended Description of Action (DOA) developed for the programme extension, with a primary focus on implementing the approved Capital Investment Projects (CIPs); Umm Qais Heritage and Urban Areas and the Ajloun Agritourism Route. Activities have been categorized into two phases: those completed or initiated between July 2022 and June 2025 (which are marked with an (A) in the activity coding), and those planned for the extension period from July 2025 to March 2027 (which are marked with standard numbering). This section outlines key outputs completed to date, prioritizes next steps for implementation in Y4 (2026), and demonstrates how the programme will achieve its intended results. All activities have been updated to reflect the amended scope—incorporating job creation, MSME and small- scale businesses support, as well as skilling components—while aligning with the revised implementation timeline.

Programmatic Response:

With technical designs finalized and contracting processes either completed or ongoing, this report focuses on the implementation and completion of the two CIPs related to tourism and agritourism. The programme team has initiated efforts towards designing and advancing the skilling components linked to the economic and social priorities of these CIPs, ensuring outreach to and inclusion of the intended beneficiaries, including hosting communities, Syrian refugees, PWDs, women, youth and owners of small business within the two CIPs sites and surrounding areas.

Outcome 1: Job creation and living conditions are improved for both host communities and refugees, by boosting selected economic sectors at municipal or inter- municipal level.

Output 1.1: Selected economic sectors are supported.

The progress of activities under each selected CIPs Umm Qais heritage site, and the development of an agritourism circuit in Ajloun, during the reporting period is as follows:

1.1.1. Implementation of Tourism Development at Umm Qais with Green Economy Integration

The Programme launched a heritage-based economic intervention at the historic site of Umm Qais in Liwa Bani Kinana – Khalid Ibn Al Walid Municipality, Irbid Governorate. Key objectives include improving infrastructure and visitor services, developing engaging tourism products, conserving heritage elements, integrating local communities into the tourism economy, and implementing environmentally sustainable practices.

Throughout the reporting period, the programme worked in close coordination with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOT&A) to advance concept development, finalize architectural designs, and initiate procurement for renovation and rehabilitation works. Several supporting studies both specialized and community based were conducted to inform the architectural design and ensure that proposed interventions align with the national, international and UNESCO guidelines and standards. Some of these studies were requested by the MOT&A, while others were essential to guide the design process. Those are:

- Comprehensive Site Analysis Study and Evaluation Report (March 2025) *(Annex 3);* the report provides a comprehensive assessment of the site's conditions and constraints, emphasizing the local community and the current "Tourism Product." It aims to ensure that design concepts are innovative, feasible, and aligned with the site's potential and project objectives, particularly in Tourism Asset Development. The analysis includes data collection, stakeholder workshops, site surveys, design and construction criteria, and preliminary design suggestions, all informed by the Umm Qais Master Plan and prior studies by MOT&A.

- Community Workshop/ Meeting Report (June 2025) *(Annex 4):* The workshop engaged local community participants in discussions about the current state of tourism services at Umm Qais, identifying challenges and opportunities to enhance the site's role in economic and social development. Key challenges include underutilization of diverse historical and environmental assets, poor accessibility and infrastructure, weak safety measures, lack of clear signage and guidance systems, low marketing effectiveness, disorganized tourism during peak seasons, and unregulated guiding services. Opportunities focus on empowering the local community through participatory tourism initiatives, developing integrated regional tourism strategies linking Umm Qais with surrounding villages, and emphasizing intangible heritage and storytelling. Proposed initiatives include training local guides, creating specialized itineraries, organizing an international heritage festival, promoting handicrafts through markets and training centers, and enhancing visitor facilities such as the visitor center, arrival plaza, and heritage houses. The workshop outcomes informed a design philosophy centered on developing a comprehensive site management strategy, improving infrastructure and safety, establishing inclusive tourism trails, rehabilitating heritage buildings for multi-functional use, creating public gathering spaces, integrating heritage narratives into thematic tours, and enhancing visitor accessibility and experience. These strategies aim to boost community participation, diversify tourism offerings, and foster sustainable economic and social benefits for the region.

- Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) Report (May 2025) *(Annex 5)*, the report presents the findings from GPR surveys conducted in areas designated for intervention. Due to the archaeological and historical significance of the site, as standard practice UNDP conducted the GPR analysis of the intervention areas in the site. The primary objective was to detect and map any underground archaeological features to ensure the safety of both the excavation and construction processes. The results will help mitigate the risk of damaging subsurface heritage elements and safeguard the integrity of the archaeological context both below and above ground during the implementation stage.

- A Conceptual Design Report and presentation (June 2025) (*Annexes 6&7*), reflecting an integrated approach that considers the site's historical, environmental, and social significance was prepared to support the programme design. The concepts listed below fully align with the programme objective and aim to enhance the visitor experience, support local community engagement, and preserve the authenticity of the site. Further elaboration on the design concepts is provided:

- Conservation & Adaptive Reuse of Al-Sharif & Al Omari Housh Houses (part of Umm Qais Rest House #6): this includes all necessary restoration works for walls, floors, roofs, and outdoor areas. The building will be rehabilitated to host popular food services including food preparation and serving areas, seating and dining spaces, and local food sales area. In addition, space will be allocated for small- businesses offering traditional local processed foods, folklore activities, souvenirs, and traditional outfits presented by community members (both Jordanian and Syrians), along with required facilities and services.

- Development of Site Trails (Main Trail – Red Line, PWDs Trail – Green Line, Secondary Trail – Dotted Blue Line): A comprehensive tourist route will be developed following a chronological order and connected to secondary sub-paths, including a dedicated trail for persons with disabilities (PWDs) this trail called "Umm Qais for All". The proposed interventions include:
    - Ground treatment for safety and comfortability.
    - Provide benches and wastebaskets along the path.
    - Redesign and distribute the signage in line with MOTA guidelines.
    - Provide an assembly area near the ticket booth and provide golf cars for disabled and elderlies.
    - Rehabilitate sanitary units near the ticket booth aside the proposed assembly area.

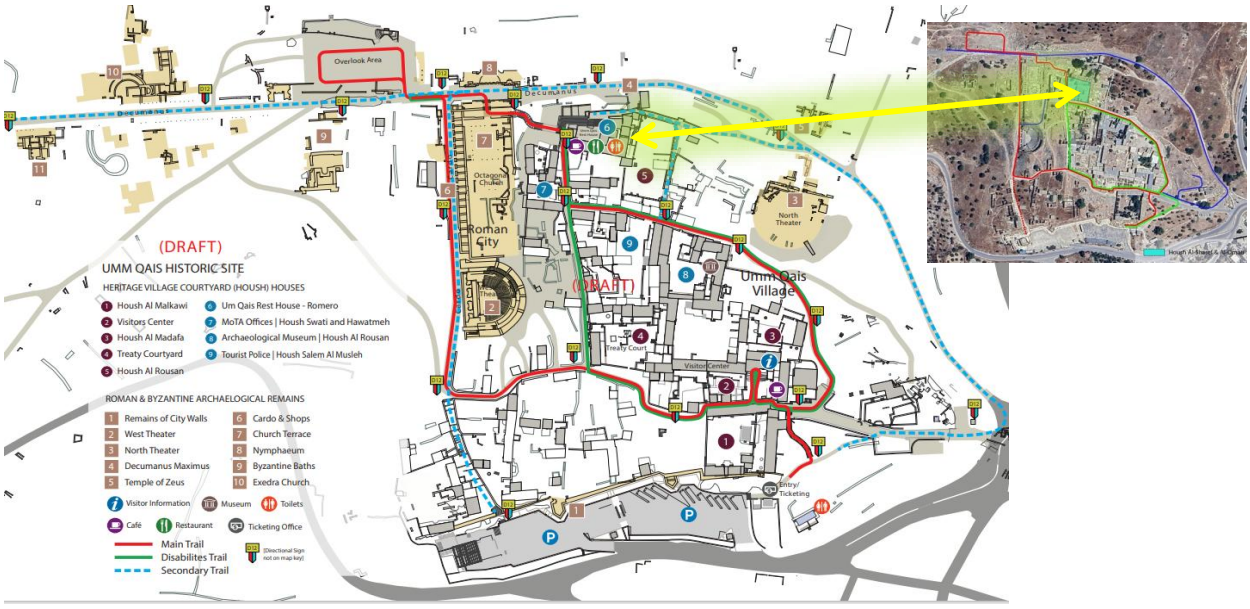
- Development of Outdoor Rest, Sightseeing Areas: Prepare three locations with distinctive sightseeing views. Work will include ground treatments, provision of seats, sign boards, and shades for visitors.

- Improvement of the Visitor Centre:
    - Provide accessibility for PWDs (including purchase 6-10 golf carts).
    - Install an outdoor city (site) model.
    - Add seating and shading elements.
    - Treat the building's glass façade to improve aesthetics and functionality.
    - Provide an indoor information desk.

- Establishment of Umm Qais Seasonal Market: Rehabilitate the area adjacent to the kiosks and sanitary facilities in the outdoor parking area to create a seasonal market for local products, to be managed and organized by civil society organizations or/ and the Khalid Bin Al Walid Municipality. Proposed interventions include:
    - Provision of mobile light stalls and kiosks for product display.
    - Execution of necessary on-site maintenance work.
    - Installation of shading structures and landscaping where feasible.
    - Reorganization of the existing kiosk area.

- Gadara by Night: A final design and implementation plan for night lighting across the site, highlighting key features and landmarks to enhance the site's attractiveness and visitor experience during evening hours. The lighting will be environmentally friendly, designed to avoid any harm to the archaeological site, and installed in a manner that minimizes impact while withstanding weather-related changes.

- Branding Umm Qais; Develop a visual identity (brand) proposal, the topic of Branding is proposed to be presented to the relevant stakeholders and the local community for voting.



- List of potential economic opportunities *(Annex 8- list in Arabic)*, The list outlines potential economic activities at the Umm Qais Heritage Site, aligned with the approved conceptual design. These opportunities are categorized into small-scale businesses, SMEs, and public-private partnership (PPP) initiatives.

- The MoT&A, MoI, Department of Antiquities (DoA), the Governorate of Irbid, along with the Sectoral Directorates of Antiquities and Tourism in Irbid Governorate, endorsed and approved the following progress:

On 30 July 2025, a collaborative meeting was held between the Ministry of Interior (MOI), the Department of Antiquities (DOA), LED/UNDP, and Al Bitar Consulting Company to finalize the interventions—specifically the type, quality, and treatment of materials—in accordance with DoA standards and requirements. During this meeting, the programme successfully gained approval on the next step of finalizing the Bill of Quantities (BoQ) for the renovation and rehabilitation works. All interventions consider the site's sensitivity, aiming to minimize impact while preserving the site authenticity and integrity.

1.1.2. Implementation of Green Agritourism Routes Development in Ajloun

As part of the LED Programme's strategic objective to promote local economic development through capital investment and, green economy transition and sustainable tourism development. The initiative promotes inclusive economic growth, job creation for host communities and refugees, and the empowerment of women and youth and serves as a scalable model for integrated territorial development, enhancing tourism retention, fostering MSME development, and aligning with broader frameworks for sustainable and inclusive economic empowerment.

During the reporting period, the following steps were implemented to finalise the scope of the Agritourism Route:

1. GIS Mapping and Route Demarcation within the Tanmiah Tool. (Link) As part of the Tanmiah Tool's GIS component, a comprehensive mapping and demarcation exercise was conducted to define the boundaries and length of proposed agricultural and tourism routes, as well as to map economic and industrial establishments. Key actions under this activity included:
   - Administrative Demarcation: GIS mapping populated areas, natural features, roads, tourism sites, and economic hubs.
   - Route Development and Segment Analysis: Identifying accessible and engaging routes with clear start and end points and dividing routes into segments with details on transportation, distances, terrain, and services. Delivering route data in GIS and KML formats, integrated into the Tanmiah Tool and aligned with MoI systems.
   - Visitor Attraction Mapping: Geo-referencing key points including villages, historical and natural sites, accommodations, and MSMEs.
   - Land Use and Ownership: Mapping land ownership and use to ensure safe and viable routing and protect private ownership.
   - Photographic Documentation: Capturing images of key locations for GIS integration.
   - Agritourism Value Chain Mapping: Identifying constraints and opportunities along each route.

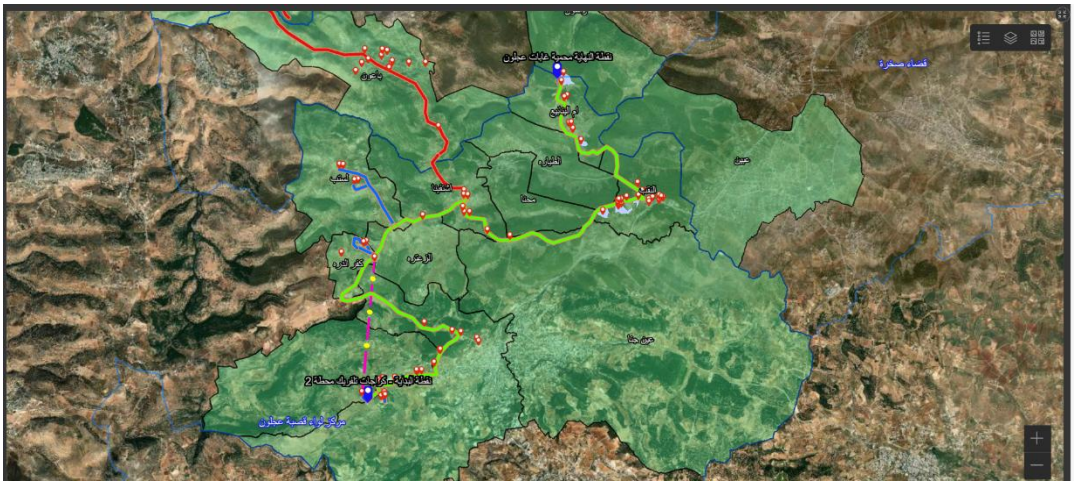


Image: 1: The route's visualisation on the Tanmiah Tool.

2. Alignment and coordination with existing actors across the route:

The 19.8km agritourism route begins at Ajloun's Teleferic Gate B parking area and ends at the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), passing through a corridor that includes 127 registered landmarks within a 150-metre margin on either side. The route capitalizes on Ajloun's unique topography, agricultural diversity, and cultural heritage, offering an ideal foundation for a multi-sectoral intervention that promotes rural development through tourism and agricultural sectors. It is being implemented in partnership with key institutions, including the Ministry of Interior, the Ajloun Governorate Executive and Governorate Council, the two municipalities along the route, Greater Ajloun Municipality and Al Ayoun Municipality, which are responsible for local services provisions, the Jordan Free and Development Zones Group (JFDZ) oversees the first 7 Kilometers of the Route, aligning it with their broader development plans for the area, particularly the Teleferic zone. RSCN is also a core partner in this effort it comes at the end of the Route. The JFDZ's involvement added strategic value, particularly by aligning the intervention with the national investment priorities —most notably, the operational "Teleferic" cable cart project, which is now fully integrated into the agritourism route's framework, enhancing its connectivity, visibility, and economic potential.

3. A comprehensive socio-economic assessment *(Annex 9)* of communities, households, and MSMEs along the proposed route, including Syrian refugee inclusion was developed. The assessment revealed the following:
   - 99% of participants expressed interest in the route and 96% are willing to participate.
   - Identification of economic opportunities in agriculture, cultural experiences, traditional food production, and eco-tourism.
   - Review of informal employment trends.
   - Market analysis of existing tourism dynamics and barriers, including seasonality and infrastructure gaps.
   - Recommendations on training needs, financial access, marketing strategies, and regulatory facilitation to improve local readiness and ensure inclusive participation.

Output 1.2: Transition to green economy is promoted.

1.2.1 Smart and Climate-Resilient Capital Investments

The Programme is supporting the CIPs at the Umm Qais Heritage Site and its adjacent urban area and the Ajloun Agritourism Route in identifying local natural and human resources that can contribute to ongoing urban projects, improving the quality of services, and promoting the use of smart and green technologies. These efforts aim to create

better conditions for the climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable local economic development, also attracting private sector investment and enhancing access to green finance.

To be able to support smart and climate-resilient CIPs, inconsistencies and discrepancies in administrative border definitions and jurisdictional claims needed to be addressed. During the design and field validation of the proposed agritourism route, discrepancies particularly in areas where physical landmarks do not align with official records highlighted the need for accurate internal administrative border demarcation within the selected intervention areas.

To address this serious gap, an activity was introduced to establish spatial coherence and jurisdictional clarity across targeted intervention areas, serving as a critical enabler for the effective and sustainable implementation of agro-tourism and other sectoral initiatives under the LED Programme. This foundational activity produced clear delineation of administrative and functional boundaries that strengthen local governance, improves coordination among stakeholders, and mitigates jurisdictional disputes. It will further facilitate equitable local natural resource allocations, integrated territorial planning, and the designation of sector-specific development zones—including tourism corridors and agricultural clusters—in alignment with local development priorities. This intervention is expected to have a transformational impact on planning, service delivery, and local economic development on the long term.

1.2.1.A Carry out exchanges with European cities implementing urban development and smart cities to learn from these experiences and promote projects in medium and small cities in Irbid/ Ajloun, benefiting host communities and refugees alike. *(Completed)*

During implementation, Umm Qais and Ercolano, Italy, formalized a five-year twinning agreement in the presence of HRH Prince El Hassan, who described the partnership as a step toward deeper cultural dialogue and Mediterranean unity on May 26th, 2025. Although not directly achieved under the programme, the agreement further supports the Umm Qais site by promoting international collaboration in heritage, tourism, and education, advancing its role as a model for sustainable cultural development.

Moving forward, the programme will ensure full support towards advancing this twinning agreement under the CIPs.

Output 1.3: Service delivery in specific areas is improved.

1.3.1.A Assess the coverage and state of public services in the areas of influence of the capital investment projects. *(Completed)*

Under this output, the Programme will strengthen basic municipal services within the project's areas of influence, specifically targeting Umm Qais and the Ajloun route communities. Planned interventions include enhancing the institutional capacities of local municipalities to manage, operate, and maintain capital investment projects (CIPs) and associated service delivery sites.

A GIS mapping was conducted to identify gaps and opportunities for CIP projects towards enhancing the decentralization and responsiveness of public service delivery. By establishing clear governance boundaries, supporting strategic local economic development and tourism planning through spatially defined zones of interventions and contributing to improved management and sustainability of natural resources, including land and water systems.
The programme has conducted studies for:

1. Irbid: Development of High-Quality Tourism Assets at the Heritage and Historic Site of Umm Qais
   - Site Analysis, Study & Evaluation Report
   - Archaeological Impact Assessment
   - Architectural Designs
2. Ajloun: Agritourism Route and the Olive & Olive Oil Sector.
   - Socio-Economic Mapping

- Olive & Olive Oil Sector Value Chain Analysis & Market Assessment Report

3. A comprehensive mapping exercise *(Annex 9)* was conducted to assess the availability of financial and non-financial services in the Ajloun and Irbid governorates. The goal was to identify service gaps where UNDP and other stakeholders could step in and collaborate to improve the wellbeing of local and host communities. To conduct this assessment, various tools were used, including primary data collection through interviews, secondary sources, and qualitative analysis.

4. Financing models were developed to support MSMEs and small-scale businesses to access finance and achieve local economic development goals. Based on the results of the extensive study on the access to finance conducted in the target area with all related stakeholders 6 financing models were presented *(Annex 10)* as follows:
   - On-lending Funding: The on-lending funding model involves the UNDP providing credit lines to MFIs, which then re-lend to Jordanian women, youth (18–39 years), refugees, and individuals with disabilities in Irbid and Ajloun to support businesses in ICT, agriculture, small-scale industry, and tourism.
   - Technical Assistance Partnership: The partnership model between the UNDP and local MFIs in Irbid and Ajloun provides technical assistance to enhance MFI capacity and promote sustainable financial products and services for their target markets.
   - On-lending and technical assistance partnership model: This model combines the on-lending financial model and the technical assistance partnership model to provide MFIs in Irbid and Ajloun with financial support and tailored loan products.
   - Partnership between different stakeholders to provide blended finance: This intensive model leverages various stakeholders to create a blended finance solution that combines financial support with capacity-building initiatives for end beneficiaries.
   - Incubation: This model enables UNDP to support business incubators in Irbid and Ajloun through technical assistance or fixed fees, allowing incubators to aid startups in exchange for 5–10% equity, fostering a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem.
   - Loan Guarantee: This model involves UNDP providing loan guarantees to incentivize MFIs to expand direct lending to target beneficiaries in sectors like ICT, agriculture, small-scale industry, and tourism.

Planned Actions for Year 4 Quarter 1 (August to November 2025)
Outcome 1: Job creation and living conditions are improved for both host communities and refugees, by boosting selected economic sectors at municipal or inter- municipal level.

Output 1.1: Selected economic sectors are supported.

Activity 1.1.1. Implementation of Tourism Development at Umm Qais with Green Economy Integration

- Award the bid of the implementation and rehabilitation of the 1.7 km trail, including Housh Al Shareef; trail of disabilities (PWDs) and elderly, lighting, marketplace; platforms; signage; and enhanced safety measures especially the railings and entrances.

- Initiate the collaboration with the District Administrator Office (Mutasarrifiya) and Municipality of Khalid Ibn Al Walid to decide on the boundaries, the design, and subsequent development plans for the adjacent area to the Umm Qais archeological and heritage site. Including **architectural and urban design with a renovation plan for** the facilities, public spaces, and street-facing shops. The plan should enhance the local commercial market and support small businesses offering diverse products (e.g., traditional food, handicrafts, convenience goods).

- Initiate with Khalid Ibn Al Walid Municipality the plan of the development of an integrated road network that connects the Umm Qais Heritage Site with the surrounding key tourism projects (Al Himmah Resort), commercial establishments, and landmark destinations along the main entrance streets.

- Collaborate with the DoA for the development of the Virtual Reality (VR) initiative of the guided tours of the sites.

Activity 1.1.2. Implementation of Green Agritourism Routes Development in Ajloun

The following activities are planned to advance sustainable, inclusive agritourism development in Ajloun:

- Participatory Route Planning: Completion of the visitor experience plan, route design, rehabilitation strategy, and community engagement framework. Building on the mapping efforts, the programme has prioritized high-potential agricultural and natural assets along the route. These include family farms, nature trails, artisanal workshops, and community-owned facilities that are being targeted for support and upgrade.
- Infrastructure Works: Initiate implementation of trail rehabilitation, signage, rest areas, public amenities, and guesthouse-style accommodation upgrades.
- Experience Development: Co-creation of curated experiences (e.g.**,** food tastings, harvests, soap-making) with local cooperatives and producers.
- Technical Assistance to Cooperatives: Provide support to enhance service quality, visitor satisfaction, and market alignment.
- MSME Coaching: Targeted business support for MSMEs on sustainability, digital marketing, and financial access.

Output 1.2: Transition to green economy is promoted.

Activity 1.2.1 Smart and Climate-Resilient Capital Investments

In parallel, environmental monitoring practices will be introduced at project sites within the architectura**l** design and construction implementatio**n** process to track key indicators such as energy consumption, water savings, and waste generation. This activity aims to instil a green mindset and operational capacity across both public and private stakeholders, positioning the intervention area as a model for climate-resilient local development aligned with Jordan's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

Output 1.3. Service delivery in specific areas is improved.

Activity 1.3.1.A: Test pilots for local service delivery via co-production, outsourcing, concessions, public-private partnerships etc. The "Programme" will encourage the participation of local companies, CSOs and CBOs.

- Conduct mapping of SMEs and CBOs and their impact on creating enabling environment for sustainable green local economy.
- Engage SMEs and CBOs in sustainable economic interventions within the LED programme selected capital investment projects to stimulate local economic activity and foster inclusive growth.
- Carry out improvements, refurbishing and maintenance of the public service facilities and the operation of the services.
- Provide facilitation for establishment of partnerships between SMEs and financial institutions.
- Integrate financial accessibility training as part of the SME recruitment process.
- Lead a local dialogue with financial service providers facilitated to improve MSMEs access to suitable financing starting with LED projects through:
  - Facilitating workshop with relevant grant providers, MFIs, commercial banks, and MSMEs to introduce the available financial products and application requirements.
  - Delivering tailored coaching sessions to enhance MSMEs investment readiness, by preparing loan or grant applications and pitching their offers.

Output 1.4: Municipalities are better equipped to be developmental actors.

Output 1.4 focuses on strengthening the capacity and systems of local authorities (municipalities and governorate) to plan, finance, and manage development projects effectively, beyond the immediate investments of this Programme:

1.4.2. Support Municipalities in Access to Finance

This activity involves creating a robust yet practical local development planning methodology and testing it in the field. To support local development and improve access to finance, the programme will initiate processes to link municipalities and MSMEs with financing opportunities and capacity-building support.

Outcome 2: Community-based initiatives are promoted to generate employment and improve living conditions.

Output 2.1. Inclusive local development groups (LDGs) are formed and mobilised around community-driven needs and opportunities. *(Completed)*

- LDGs were established in phase 1 of the Programme as part of the executive councils in Ajloun and Irbid. To support advancing inclusive and sustainable local economic development. Their engagement ensured that interventions are context-responsive and aligned with community priorities, to maximize the investment of local natural and human resources in the selected areas.

- Extensive community engagement and socio-economic studies in Irbid and Ajloun were conducted to align interventions with local needs.

  The Umm Qais community workshop convened a diverse group of 34 participants including residents, public institutions, NGOs, and community-based organizations, to collectively assess barriers and opportunities for sustainable tourism development. The participatory dialogue highlighted key constraints such as poor infrastructure, limited accessibility, fragmented tourism offerings, and weak marketing. At the same time, participants reaffirmed the site's exceptional historical, cultural, and environmental value. The discussions led to actionable recommendations aimed at improving site management, strengthening local engagement, developing integrated tourism trails, establishing local crafts and food markets, training community-based tour guides, and leveraging digital tools to enrich the visitor experience. Insights from the sessions will inform the design and implementation of inclusive, community-driven tourism initiatives focused on economic empowerment and enhanced visitor satisfaction.

Umm Qais Community Sessions		
Men	**Women**	**Total**
27	7	34

The Ajloun Socio-Economic Report demonstrated strong community engagement during the three interactive sessions conducted as part of the socio-economic assessment for the Ajloun agritourism route. A total of 58 participants were involved, representing local associations (23), households along the proposed route (25), and owners of small and medium enterprises (10). The sessions were designed to assess stakeholders' interest, readiness, and potential contributions to the agritourism initiative. Gender representation was nearly balanced, with 30 men and 28 women engaged across all categories. Discussions highlighted opportunities for local economic participation, mapped existing community assets, and identified key challenges that could affect future engagement in the agritourism value chain.

Ajloun Agritourism Route Socio-Economic Report Community Sessions			
Session	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**
CBOs	12	11	23

Households	13	12	25
Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)	5	5	10
Total	30	28	58

Output 2.2: Access to information and opportunities is improved.

Activity 2.2.1 A Mapping and clustering of MSMEs related to the selected sectors. *(Completed)*

- The programme is working on the design of a financing model that will help MSMEs to access finance and achieve local economic development goals. Based on the results of the extensive study on the access to finance (Annex 11) conducted in the target area with all related stakeholders 6 financing models were presented. The 6 financing models are as follows:

  1. On-lending Funding: The on-lending funding model involves the UNDP providing credit lines to MFIs, which then re-lend to Jordanian women, youth (18–39 years), refugees, and individuals with disabilities in Irbid and Ajloun to support businesses in ICT, agriculture, small-scale industry, and tourism.
  2. Technical Assistance Partnership: The partnership model between the UNDP and local MFIs in Irbid and Ajloun provides technical assistance to enhance MFI capacity and promote sustainable financial products and services for their target markets.
  3. On-lending and technical assistance partnership model: This model combines the on-lending financial model and the technical assistance partnership model to provide MFIs in Irbid and Ajloun with financial support and tailored loan products
  4. Partnership between different stakeholders to provide blended finance: This intensive model leverages various stakeholders to create a blended finance solution that combines financial support with capacity-building initiatives for end beneficiaries.
  5. Incubation: This model enables UNDP to support business incubators in Irbid and Ajloun through technical assistance or fixed fees, allowing incubators to aid startups in exchange for 5–10% equity, fostering a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem.
  6. Loan Guarantee: This model involves UNDP providing loan guarantees to incentivize MFIs to expand direct lending to target beneficiaries in sectors like ICT, agriculture, small-scale industry, and tourism.

Activity 2.2.2 A Organise a structured dialogue with the private sector based on the selected sectors, their clusters and value chains (ongoing)

- The Programme will involve stakeholders from the onset and seek coordination and collaboration to implement the capital investment projects. The capital investment projects may boost the demand or supply within the market.

Activity 2.2.3 A Identify specific comparative advantages, opportunities, and shortcomings to be addressed by the public-private collaboration (Completed)

- The programme analysed the situation of the selected value chains and clusters. A study on MSMEs access to finance was completed (Annex 11). These findings will continue to inform the MSME and Upskilling component of the programme as reported under 2.2.1.

Output 2.3: Development initiatives and local businesses are supported.

- As part of the LED Programme's integrated approach to area-based local economic development, Output 2.3 focuses on the design and delivery of targeted skilling and entrepreneurship interventions to enhance employability, increase home-based income generation, and strengthen the sustainability of capital investment projects (CIPs) in the tourism and agri-food sectors. These efforts directly contribute to the socio-economic inclusion of host communities and Syrian refugees, with a specific emphasis on empowering women and youth. Priority sectors for intervention that were prioritized for their potential to support labour market entry, preserve intangible cultural heritage, and foster microenterprise development in underserved rural areas. The interventions are:

    1. Hospitality
    2. Traditional food services
    3. Kilim weaving
    4. Jewellery-making
    5. Embroidery

To date, the Embroidery (Tatreez) initiative is the first component to have been launched, engaging 68 women (60% Jordanian and 40% Syrian) in technical training on the "Raqmeh" stitch that started on May 18th, 2025. This initiative contributes both to cultural preservation and economic empowerment, with efforts underway to link participants to tourism circuits, exhibitions, and museum platforms to enable sustained income generation beyond the training phase.

	Number of Participants		**Number of Trainings**
	Jordanians	Syrians	
Irbid	26	7	21
Ajloun	15	20	21
Total	41	27	
	68		42

- The remaining skilling tracks are in advanced stages of preparation and scheduled for rollout in the upcoming implementation period.

- The programme is developing Guidebooks for Irbid and Ajloun which has commenced and represents a key strategic benchmark under the programme. This process is being carried out in close coordination with all relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, community leaders, and civil society actors across both governorates. Efforts are being made to ensure alignment and coherence with ongoing initiatives to reflect diverse perspectives and areas of expertise. Importantly, the Guidebooks will document and highlight the experiences of Syrian refugees in Irbid and Ajloun since 2011, recognizing their contributions to the socio-cultural and economic fabric of the host communities. This inclusive approach aims to ensure that the Guidebooks serve not only as tourism and cultural references but also as tools for promoting social cohesion and shared heritage.

Planned Actions for Year 4 Quarter 1 (August to November 2025)
Outcome 2: Community-based initiatives are promoted to generate employment and improve living conditions.

Output 2.1. Inclusive local development groups (LDGs) are formed and mobilised around community-driven needs and opportunities

Activity 2.1.3 Appraise, qualify, and select the projects

- The evaluation and selection process will be carried out with the participation of the interested communities. The evaluation criteria had been defined in advance by the programme, and they ensured that these actions were framed within the principles of the green economy, gender equality, and the empowerment of women.

Output 2.2: Access to information and opportunities is improved.

Activity 2.2.2 A Organise a structured dialogue with the private sector based on the selected sectors, their clusters and value chains

- The Programme will involve stakeholders from the onset and seek coordination and collaboration to implement the capital investment projects. The capital investment projects may boost the demand or supply within the market.

Activity 2.2.4A Organise fairs, exhibitions, open markets/bazaars, and annual competitions for economic organisations involved in agriculture, industry, tourism, and food production.

- The programme will facilitate the participation of embroidery skilling component beneficiaries in the UNDP Permanent Exhibition, providing them with a platform to showcase and market their products. Additionally, the programme will support the organization and promotion of events that highlight local tourist destinations, including shopping festivals and city branding initiatives aimed at boosting domestic tourism. To further enhance market access and economic opportunities, the programme will also contribute to the coordination of fairs and exhibitions focused on promoting locally produced agricultural and industrial goods.

Output 2.3: Development initiatives and local businesses are supported.

- As part of the implementation of Output 2.3, the programme has initiated the rollout of specialized skills development components targeting key sectors that align with local economic value chains. These training programmes are designed to meet the specific needs of both host and refugee communities, with a focus on enhancing employability and supporting livelihood creation. The Programme will focus on rolling out the jewellery-making (20 participants), kilim weaving (60 participants), food enterprise development (60 units), hospitality services (160 participants) skilling components.

- Moreover, market integration and sales development activities are to be initiated to ensure trained individuals are effectively linked to economic opportunities. This includes the organization of local fairs and exhibitions, the establishment of tourism-linked sales channels in strategic locations such as Umm Qais and Ajloun, and the facilitation of access to finance for MSMEs and home-based entrepreneurs. These complementary interventions aim to create a full pipeline from skills to self-employment and market access, enhancing economic inclusion, sustainability, and resilience in the target governorates.

- The remaining skilling components will be delivered through targeted training programmes designed to build local capacities and enhance economic resilience. Hospitality training for eco-lodges and tour operators will be implemented in collaboration with the Ammon Applied University College of Hospitality and Tourism Education, ensuring alignment with industry standards and quality service provision. In parallel, rural producers will benefit from culinary and food safety training, equipping them with the skills necessary to meet market requirements and improve the quality of local products. In support of cultural heritage and sustainable crafts, specialized workshops on kilim weaving and sustainable jewellery-making will be conducted, with a focus on preserving traditional techniques while introducing contemporary design approaches. To complement these efforts and strengthen the market presence of participating micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), digital marketing and e-commerce modules will be integrated, enabling beneficiaries to promote and sell their products more effectively through online platforms.

- The trainees from the embroidery skilling component are expected to showcase their handcrafted products in October 2025 at the UNDP Permanent Exhibition[1] in Amman, providing them with a valuable opportunity to gain

[1] The "Establishing Permanent Platform to Exhibit and Promote the Natural and Socio-economic Values of Jordan Badia and its Adjacent Rural Areas" is a flagship initiative implemented by UNDP Jordan, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment/Badia

market exposure, engage with potential buyers, and generate an income. This platform will allow them to demonstrate the outcomes of their training while supporting their transition into sustainable economic activity.

Each specialized track under Output 2.3 will benefit from the following interventions:

- Business management, market analysis, and financial literacy modules for 20 MSME-owners.
- Training women artisans in sustainable jewellery-making using local materials and linking them to tourism-based markets.
- Reviving kilim weaving skills among women in Ajloun and Irbid with market integration strategies led by local CBOs.
- Upgrading food enterprises with training in hygiene, packaging, and customer service to strengthen regional food branding.
- Expanding advanced embroidery training for Jordanian and Syrian women and connecting them with modern market platforms.
- Delivering practical hospitality training tailored to the Ajloun and Irbid tourism circuits, with on-the-job placement opportunities to strengthen service quality and boost employability.

Initiatives	Jordanians	Syrian Refugees	Total
Jewellery-Making (Ajloun & Irbid)	14	6	20
Kilim Weaving (Ajloun & Irbid)	35	15	50
Strengthening Food Sector Competencies in Ajloun	35	15	50
Embroidery (Tatreez – Ajloun & Irbid)	41	27	68
Hospitality in Ajloun	49	21	70
Hospitality in Irbid	49	21	70
Total	223	105	328

Restoration Programme. It provides a permanent exhibition and marketplace in Amman that showcases the natural heritage and locally produced goods of Jordan's Badia and surrounding rural communities, linking conservation efforts with socio-economic development. The platform serves as both a cultural and commercial hub, offering indoor and outdoor exhibition spaces, training venues, and hospitality facilities to strengthen market access and sustainability for rural cooperatives.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Programme Workplan Y4Q1

Annex 2: LED Programme Logical Framework

Annex 3: Umm Qais Comprehensive Site Analysis Study and Evaluation Report

Annex 4: Umm Qais Community Workshop/ Meeting Report

Annex 5: Umm Qais Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) Report

Annex 6: Umm Qais Conceptual Design Report

Annex 7: Umm Qais Conceptual Design Presentation

Annex 8: Umm Qais potential economic opportunities List (in Arabic)

Annex 9: Ajloun socio-economic assessment

Annex 10: Market Assessment and Mapping

Annex 11: Access to Finance Modalities

ANNEX 2: LOGICAL FRAMEWORK					
Results	Results chain: Main expected results [maximum 10]	Indicators [it least one indicator per expected result]	Baselines (values and years)	Actuals 2025	Targets (values and years)
Impact	To strengthen the resilience of North Jordan local host communities and refugees (Governorate of Irbid and potentially Ajloun) through improving inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development opportunities, service delivery.	1. Poverty rate in communities in the Northern regions (%) disaggregated by gender and group 2. Unemployment rate in the Northern regions (%) disaggregated by gender and group	Poverty Rate (2022): 24.1% based on official Department of Statistics Unemployment rate Irbid, 2021: 18.9%(total) 22.8% (women) 18.1% (non-Jordanian) 37.3% (non-Jordanian women)	Poverty Rate (2022): 24.1% based on official Department of Statistics Unemployment rate Irbid, 2021: 18.9%(total) 22.8% (women) 18.1% (non-Jordanian) 37.3% (non-Jordanian women)	Poverty Rate (2027) 23.8% Unemployment rate in Irbid, 2027: 18% (total) 22% (women) 17.6% (non-Jordanian) and 37% (non-Jordanian women)

Outcome 1	Job creation and living conditions are improved for both host communities and refugees, by boosting selected economic sectors at municipal or inter-municipal level.	1.1 Number of inter-municipal Capital Investment projects implemented	0	0	2
Outcome 2	Community-based initiatives are promoted contributing to employment and living conditions are improved.	2.1 Number of initiatives that engage community members proposed under the programme (disaggregated by type) 2.2 Percentage of participants (disaggregated by refugee/host, gender) who report improved income or employment status after participating in skills/initiative activities	0 0	1 0	30 70
Output 1 related to Outcome 1	1.1 Selected economic sectors are supported	1.1.1 Number of municipalities directly supported 1.1.2 Number of sectors supported	2 0	0 1	4 3

Output 2 related to Outcome 1	1.2 Transition to green economy is promoted	1.2.1 Number of interventions connected to green economy directly or indirectly resulting from the proposed action	0	0	10
Output 3 related to Outcome 1	1.3 Service delivery in specific areas is improved	1.3.1 Number of additional people (disaggregated by gender and social group/refugees) benefiting from improved services	0	0	3864
Output 4 related to Outcome 1	1.4 Municipalities are better equipped to be developmental actors	1.4.1 Perception of the extent to which municipalities are active in promoting local development	Low engagement	Low engagement	High engagement
Output 1 related to Outcome 2	2.1 Inclusive local development groups (LDGs) are formed and mobilised around community-driven needs and opportunities	2.1.1 Number of LDGs formed	0	2	2
Output 2 related to Outcome 2	2.2 Access to information and opportunities is improved	2.2.1 Number of "one-stop shop" supported or created	0	0	1

Output 3 related to Outcome 2	2.3 Development initiatives and local businesses are supported.	2.3.2 Number of jobs created resulting from these projects (disaggregated by gender and social group/refugees)	0	0	927 (642 – Jordanians 285 Syrian Refugees)