



DEPARTMENT OF SERVICE TO PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

On a Visit to Jordan

On a visit to Jordan in October 2019 I had the opportunity to explore the work done by the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees in Jordan and getting to know their excellent work. A special highlight was the visit of the Jerash Camp. I feel honored to get to know the occupants of the camp. Jerash camp was set up as an „emergency“ camp in 1968 for 11,500 Palestine refugees and displaced persons who left the Gaza Strip as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. It is known locally as Gaza camp. The camp covers an area of 0.75 square kilometres and is situated 5km from the famous Roman ruins of Jerash. In order to withstand the harsh winters, the original 1,500 tents were replaced with prefabricated shelters. Many roofs are still made of corrugated zinc and asbestos sheets, which can cause diseases such as cancer. According to a FaFo report published in 2013, Jerash camp is the poorest among the ten Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, with 52.7 percent of Palestine refugees having an income below the national poverty line of JD 814.



The children from the kindergarten dances palestine art.

Since the beginning of the camp, there has been a DSPR Jordan Center in the center of the camp. In the course of time, women of the camp have found a home and a place of security here. This is especially thanks to the DSPR team in the center, who try with passion and heartfelt warmth to give the women and children hope and support for life. I was impressed by Khitam, who lives in a neighboring camp and is a lawyer. She helps the women with her skills and supports them in legal matters. I was warmly welcomed in the kindergarten by the newly enrolled children of the school year 2019/2020. Full of enthusiasm they showed me their Palestinian dances.

A group of mothers learned handicrafts in the camp, which were then sold by DSPR at the local market. The income goes to the centre. In this group I met Susan, who embellished my hand with henna. She is also one of the women who starts her own business together with her husband, supported by the Business Recovery Service and Fund Program that DSPR started together with ICCO and Kerk in Actie and Tuvalu Netherlands. The project aims to promote the economic development and employment of refugees and Jordanian entrepreneurs by supporting business development. Through the provision of both technical and financial support, the BSR&F program was able to support 6 entrepreneurs to overcome the social, legal, and financial barriers to starting and scaling-up their businesses. This support took the form of training, mentoring, opening networks and providing start-up loans.

Thanks to the DSPR Jordan team for your excellent work and a warm welcome to me.

Damaris



Susan, a woman from the camp shows me the henna art. She is starting her own business now.