

Sport for Development

Refugees displaced and local people in Jordan and Iraq are using sports activities to promote a healthy lifestyle and peaceful coexistence in the community

The challenge

The war in Syria and the rise of the terrorist militia Islamic State has driven millions of people from their homes since 2011. By mid-2016, more than 655,000 Syrians refugees were officially registered in Jordan alone – although estimates place the figure twice as high. Around 200,000 Syrian refugees are registered in Iraq. Over one million people are still on the move in Iraq as internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Both in Jordan and Iraq, those seeking refuge live mostly outside the refugee camps in host communities. In some cities, such as Dohuk in northern Iraq, the population has doubled since 2011. Despite this, access to basic services and health care must be ensured for all population groups. In addition, they are to be provided with psychosocial support, education, and leisure activities. Traumatized children and young people require professional guidance and support. Providing such services comes with enormous challenges: local governments and schools are overburdened, and teaching staff are already working a double-shift system, with 60 children per class; Jordanian children attending school in the morning shift and Syrian children attending the afternoon shift. Within the existing education system, but also beyond, there is hardly any access to sport activities. However, team sport in particular can play a role in emphasising social cohesion between refugees, IDPs and local people.

Our approach

From football and basketball to climbing, taekwondo and dancing – sport not only strengthens the body, but it also promotes interpersonal communication and cooperation. German development cooperation activities are harnessing this aspect to promote stability and social cohesion.

Project name	Exchange, education and conflict transformation through Sport for Development
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ);
Project region	Jordan: Nationwide Iraq: Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Baghdad, Basra, and Niniweh Governorates
Lead executing agency	Jordan: Ministry of Education Northern Iraq: Ministry of Planning, Kurdish Regional Government
Duration	2016 - 2024

On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH support local organizations to introduce sports activities into refugee camps and host communities in Northern Iraq and Jordan. Refugees, internally displaced and local people aged between 8 and 24 will be engaged in sport activities in a safe environment. This will provide them with an opportunity to experience and gain many values that over time have become neglected because of war and displacement: respect for others, fairness, self-confidence and belonging to a community.

The project focuses on the physical and mental development in addition to the rehabilitation of children and young people. Local experts are trained to identify and enhance the potential of sport for children's development. Social workers, teaching staff and trainers learn how to communicate social skills and values through sport.



Photo (1): Girls Playing football in Zaatari Refugee Camp.



Photo (2): Kids participating in S4D festive – Amman.

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By adapting sports activities that are based on scientifically acknowledged pedagogical methods, the project can also integrate disadvantaged and disabled young people. It also encourages girls and young women to get involved.

In a region in which they traditionally have little access to sports activities, involvement can open a way to greater self-determination. Group sport builds many bridges: it provides opportunities for children and young people from all sections of the population to meet, get to know each other, establish friendships, build hope, and prevent violence.

The benefits

Many refugees live in host communities in the Jordanian provinces of Amman, Irbid, Mafrak and Zarqa. With GIZ support, these people are being provided with gender-sensitive sports activities at over 300 schools and 318 community centres.

In the northern Iraqi Governates of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah as well as in Baghdad and Mosul, Sports activities are benefiting children and young people in eight refugee camps, ten youth centres and over eighty schools.

The project is training more than 1100 teachers and coaches (50% female) in sports activities and coaching methods to ensure

the Sport for Development approach is used sustainably to promote psychosocial support, violence prevention and conflict transformation; as a result, Sport for Development project has reached out to over 150,000 children and young people so far, with the aim to reach over 175,000 beneficiaries and conducting an Impact Study in both Jordan and Northern Iraq by 2024 to improve the long terms influence and effectiveness of Sport for development methodology.

An example from the field

Maryana Haddad, a former football player, for Jordan Women's National Team, in 2017 she became a certified advanced trainer in the sport for development project, and since then she shares her knowledge and experience to benefit coaches and consultants within the sport sector.



'I quickly recognised the enormous potential of the programme concept. What makes the Sport for Development project unique in Jordan is the combination of a professionally organised football training and targeted support for personality development with young people. I really enjoy working with children and fostering their development, regardless of their nationality, age, or gender. And in turn, I grow in my role as a coach, I also grow and try to be a role model for the kids – both on and off the pitch.'

The project is part of the BMZ special initiative 'Tackling the Root Causes of Displacement, Reintegrating Refugees', which provides short-term support to refugees and their host communities. In the long term, sustainable measures are designed to combat the structural causes of displacement, such as poverty and a lack of prospects. This project contributes to personal and professional development, promotes conflict prevention, and strengthens social cohesion within refugee camps as well as between refugees and host communities.

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