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USAID COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT SUCCESS STORY

Turning on the Lights in Al Sarhan

The Al Sarhan municipality, located in the governorate of Mafraq, is made up of nine widely dispersed villages. It is located 20 kilometers to the west of Mafraq city, close to the Syrian border. It is one of the Jordanian communities most affected by the recent influx of Syrian refugees, absorbing approximately 12,000 Syrian refugees over the past five years, increasing its total population to more than 43,000. This influx has affected basic services in many sectors, such as health, infrastructure, sanitation, education and municipal services.

The USAID Community Engagement Project (USAID CEP) worked side by side with the community, municipality and volunteer Community Enhancement Team (CET) in Al Sarhan to prioritize the community's needs. One of the most pressing needs expressed by the community was for the installation of street lighting in the area, in order to minimize car

accidents, petty crime and the hazards of stray dogs. This prioritization process resulted in the design and implementation of the "Enhancement of Al Sarhan Infrastructure" project, an in-kind grant valued at approximately \$552,000. The project consisted of 11 different interventions ranging from the installation of new lighting units in high priority streets, to awareness raising campaigns about the importance of preserving public property conducted in the schools of Al Sarhan and during Friday prayers in the mosques, under the slogan "Safe Roads...Beautiful Roads".

Mahdi Al Sarhan, Al Sarhan municipality's representative in the Al Sarhan CET, has worked closely with his fellow CET volunteers for the past two years. Describing the results of the CET's hard work he said: "The lighting units were crucial for Al Sarhan. It was nearly impossible, if not terrifying, to walk in the streets after sunset,

especially in the winter. The municipality received 600 sodium lighting units through USAID CEP and installed them in the main streets of the nine villages. The streets were selected according to a criteria developed by the CET members based on the need for lighting units and how many people those streets serve – like streets with mosques and schools. It is a different and safer place now."

Badeea'a Nassar, one of the project's beneficiaries, had this to say about the new streetlights: "My house is located on a remote agricultural road. We suffered a lot from the gathering of young men in front of our house in the darkness of the night. It was also very difficult to move from one point to another due to the fear of stray dogs. I have young daughters and we couldn't sit on our balcony in the summer because of the darkness and the disturbances from the young men. Now I am safe to go wherever I want, even at night! Due to the brightness of the lightning units our house has become a landmark!"

Abdullah Al Sharif, a Syrian refugee who escaped the war zone in search of shelter, safety and acceptance, moved to the Al Sarhan community in 2012. He quickly integrated himself into the community, moving into a house located on a main road and starting his own restaurant, "Ya Mal Al Sham". However, even though he felt comfortable in his new community neither he

nor his customers felt safe at night due to the lack of lighting.

"I've been living in Al Sarhan for three and a half years now. I am originally from Dar'aa in Syria. The streets here were very dark at night, making it difficult



for my customers -- particularly women -- to come after sunset and buy meals from my restaurant, due to local traditions and fear of harassment by young boys hanging out around the streets. The lack of lighting was a big issue, even bigger than the lack of customers! It was a security matter. Sadly I was robbed twice; no one could see who the robbers were and because of the lack of lighting I couldn't install cameras. After multiple robberies, all of the local shop owners signed a petition to the municipality requesting lighting. However, due to the lack of municipality resources our requests were never fulfilled. Our efforts eventually paid off with the support of USAID CEP who responded to all of our needs. Since the lights were installed our sales have increased by 40%. In the past, I used to keep my restaurant open until 11pm, but now we can open till 2am. We even expanded our restaurant, and for that we are truly thankful."

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Rouba Al Shoushi

Communications Officer

USAID Community Engagement Project

Mafraq Field Office

E-mail: relshoushi@cep-jordan.org

Mobile: 0778 4040 21

<http://www.globalcommunities.org/jordan>