

MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION



MERCY GLOBAL ACTION

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The MIA Mercy Global Action at the UN Office would like to wish you all a Happy New Year! May 2018 be a year with renewed commitments to justice and advocacy through collaboration with communities and organizations centered on peace, inclusion, equality and solidarity. We have a call to respond to the crises of our time. With our continued efforts and being living examples of mercy, we can eliminate poverty, racism, violence, ecological abuse, and oppressive policies and structures that exploit communities and the earth.



including: displacement and marginalization, inclusion and justice. This timely theme was imperative as the Global Compact on Migration will be adopted at the end of the year. It brought faith leaders and religious organizations from around the world to create dialogue, engage, and cooperate to create a unified faith-based voice on issues of migration. Faith-based organizations have a large responsibility to use their political voice to assist the international dialogues on migration. "Around the world, faith-based organizations are found on the frontlines of crisis, providing food, shelter, education, and medical and psychological support to migrants and refugees...work[ing] tirelessly to assert their human rights and dignity, independent from national and regional political interests" emphasized Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed. Faith-based organizations must be present and involved in these processes on migration in order to be a moral voice for our nation's leaders. MIA Mercy Global Action at the UN continues to be actively engaged in the process towards a Global Compact on Migration with Member States, other organizations and grassroots ministries, especially in the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations.

MIA MGA ATTENDS SYMPOSIUM ON THE ROLE OF FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

This year, the Fourth Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-Based Organizations in International Affairs had a thematic focus on perspectives on migration,



To watch the opening session of the Symposium, [click here!](#)

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THROUGH OUR ECOSOC* EYES...

Honing in on Homelessness

The Commission for Social and Economic Development began at the United Nations on January 29th; this year's theme is "Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all". As this is the first commission of the new year, the President of the Economic and Social Council, Her Excellency Marie Chatardová, communicated her high hopes that it will set an example for the rest of the commissions this year towards building a more inclusive society.

Continuing, Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed, described the hopes of achieving the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. This year's commission, in particular, has a key role in addressing the challenges of extreme poverty of women, children, indigenous and those with disabilities, as well as identifying how countries must work to empower those experiencing poverty and address the evident root causes. She explained the importance of establishing social policies that ensure social protection, including safety nets, and how governments are responsible to keep those most vulnerable at the center of their work. She detailed how an absence of such mechanisms in many countries is unacceptable. To conclude Amina Mohammed encouraged Member States to "be creative and to prioritize accelerating action" for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.



Photo: MIA GA of the UN

The first High-Level Panel of the commission focused on the priority theme of poverty eradication. Speakers of this event included Ana Helena Chacón Echeverría, Vice-President of Costa Rica and Mark McGreevy, Group Chief Executive of DePaul International and founder of the Institute of Global Homelessness, among other notable panelists. Ms. Echeverría stressed how governments may not be "as committed as [they] should be" and how sustainable development policies must have human development at the heart, as well as gender equality. She described how Costa Rica has developed a holistic approach through identifying areas in which the greatest poverty exists, in addition to creating an index to account for factors such as housing, education, social protection and health. This index combined with political will has assisted in reducing poverty within the country.

Sharing an important grassroots perspective on poverty, Mark McGreevy described his work with those who suffer from street homelessness. He highlighted an important detail that there is no such indicator within the Sustainable Development Goals to combat it, and that many countries do not have a data collection system due to the varying definitions of homelessness across the world. How does this ensure that no one is left behind? McGreevy described the many circumstances in which people are rendered vulnerable and experience homelessness such as those affected by climate related events, religious issues, and even indigenous. His organization, FamVin Homeless Alliance, is working on a data collection system in 50 countries around the world which has seen promising results in regards to criteria such as prevention and response, as well as education and affordable shelter. Mark McGreevy's work was also highlighted at a side-event of the commission entitled "A Systemic Approach to Ending Homelessness" which included individuals who have, and still do experience homelessness, representatives of grassroots organizations and UN Member States such as Ireland. Those that experienced homelessness in New York City presented the daily challenges of stigmatization, poor diet, heavy medications, decline in health, shunning, and days filled with television at shelters. With lack of job training programs that can adequately sustain individuals with benefits and earnings above minimum wage, they risk being caught in a cycle that won't advance them onward. They are not their situation. Through it all, they offered ways to strengthen lobbying for structural change and insights into being partners in knowledge, right to adequate housing, and the right to water and sanitation for those experiencing homelessness around the world. Their lived experiences and testimonies are our impetus to make change in our communities and our world.



Photo: public domain

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THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACED PERSONS



- ***"Making Migration Work for All" Report of the Secretary General***

On January 11th, the General Assembly met for a briefing regarding Secretary General Antonio Guterres' report entitled "Making Migration Work for All"; his report will be used to exemplify the priorities to be addressed in the upcoming Global Compact on Migration. The event began with a moment of silence for the former Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG) on International Migration, Peter Sutherland, who passed away earlier that week. Sutherland's commitment and support for migrants was later commended by many Member States, and as President of the General Assembly Miroslav Lajcak stated "it is his passion that has led us here today to better protect the rights of migrants and refugees".

At the briefing, Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, presented the contents of his report. He emphasized that this year Member States have the opportunity to fashion the first ever global response to migration; it is an opportunity for leaders of the world to counter the myths and make migration work for all of our nations. The Global Compact must maximize the contributions that millions of migrants have already been making in our societies, and above all, ensure that the rights of all migrants are respected. This can be done if Member States stress a rule of law, create more legal pathways, and a solutions based Global Compact on Migration that protect migrants, especially those in vulnerable positions..

Three highlights that were stressed by the Secretary General include: (1) a desperate need for action that focuses on implementation; (2) engagement with all sectors, we all have a role to play and it is not just a state responsibility but the responsibility and commitment for all (municipalities, civil society, private sector, migrants themselves); (3) demonstrate that the UN is fit for purpose. With this, we may see change, migration out of hope rather than despair.



Watch Antonio Guterres' briefing to the General Assembly



Read the Secretary General's Report "Making Migration Work for All"

- ***One on One with Ms. Jane Connors***

Ms. Jane Connors was appointed the Assistant Secretary General and Victims Rights Advocate for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Her role at the United Nations was established as part of the Secretary General's zero tolerance approach of abuse and violence and efforts to support the victims of violence and end sexual exploitation. In her new role, Ms Connors will seek to put the rights and dignity of victims of sexual exploitation at the the forefront at the UN. She seeks a policy approach to victims in order to combat gender inequality, stigmatization, and lack of vetting with the assistance of civil society, government institutions, human rights organizations, academia and UN networks.



Photo: MIA GA at the UN

During her appointment as a Victims Right's Advocate for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Ms. Connors described her plan of action to map victims' services for prevention across the UN System, collect best practices, improve accountability mechanisms, and craft communication systems for those affected to receive the assistance they need and track the issues. She yearns to hear the stories and experiences of victims across the world and bring their voices to global concerns at an international level. This can both give hope and demonstrate an opportunity for change to happen. To watch the "One on One" with Assistant Secretary General Jane Connors, click here!

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THEMATIC AREAS

Continued

DEGRADATION OF THE EARTH



• "Water and Peace: A matter of survival"

On January 19th, MIA MGA at the UN attended the International Peace Institute hosted, with the Geneva Water Hub, an event titled "Water and Peace: A matter of survival". The event began with Danilo Türk, the Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, discussing the fundamental nature of water. Water is a measure of survival and unfortunately, no Member State of the United Nations is immune to water challenges. We see the consequences with inadequate water management, rising water scarcity, and the need to articulate new ways in which the world will need to find food when our resources are diminished. In this time of global fragility, ensuring water cooperation among countries will in turn, become an "instrument of peace"; but how does one improve water cooperation?

As a means of aiding this conversation and strengthening the global framework on issues of water, the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace launched their report "A Matter of Survival". Their report includes topics such as international water law and trans-boundary water cooperation, strengthening knowledge-based and data driven decision making with water, inter-sectoral people's diplomacy, financial innovation, and new means of water diplomacy. Currently, the international response has been fragmented and this report can work as a mechanism towards coherence and action.

Panelists provided their insights of water management and cooperation within their native countries and professional experiences. Sundee Waslekar, President of the Strategic Foresight Group detailed how "water cooperation is not only good for good water governance and sustainable development, but it is also essential for comprehensive peace and political stability". In addition, Mike Hammah, former Minister for Lands and Natural Resources of Ghana reiterated the "undeniable fact that the lack of safe drinking water is not only a health issue but a security and development challenge as well", citing challenges and considerations from his own country. To learn more about this report and the work of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, follow the links below!



Read "A Matter of Survival" Report of the Global High Level Panel on Water and Peace



Watch "Water and Peace: A Matter of Survival"

Read more <https://www.ipinst.org/2018/01/water-and-peace#12>

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USEFUL RESOURCES

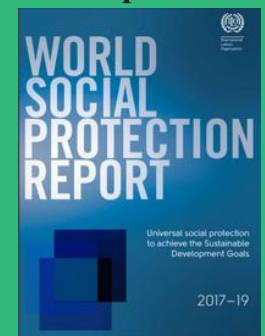
IOM's World Migration Report 2018



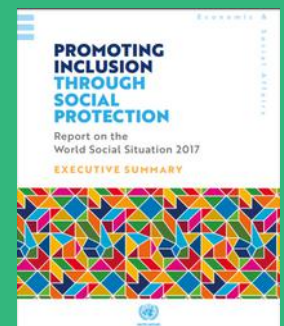
Let Children be Children



ILO World Social Protection Report



Report of the World Social Situation 2017



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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



• *Taking a Closer Look at SDG 6 "Water and Sanitation for All"*

In the light of recent global reports on water and the state of South Africa, in particular Cape Town [[click to read more](#)], understanding the implications of Sustainable Development Goal 6 is imperative. You will recall that in previous issues of our newsletter, we focused on specific parts of the water guide. Previously we focused on sections covering the water crisis and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). This issue we will focus on the actual water goal (p7). It is important to note that of the 17 SDG's there is a stand-alone goal to "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all". Considered a cross cutting issue, the water goal is seen as interdependent with other issues including sustainable agriculture, health, gender equality, energy, sustainable cities, inequalities, sustainable consumption and production, climate change and terrestrial ecosystems.

As with other SDG's the water Goal is broken down into targets. This section of the guide breaks down the targets and assesses them in the light of human rights obligations and principles (p8). Attention is drawn to Target 6.5 in which a particular paradigm of water management Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is introduced. This particular paradigm is considered controversial and a question is raised concerning its viability.

Key to this section is understanding the importance of the means of implementation. The guide clearly states, 'The test of all international cooperation under 6a will be whether it increases the State's ability to guarantee access to water, sanitation and hygiene for all persons in a non-discriminatory manner, prioritizing the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the population (p8).' As Mercy Justice Advocates this test is critical.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Expanding on our call to care for our "common home" from *Laudato Si*, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Institute Justice Team, through the Inter-religious Working Group on Extractive Industries, produced materials to deepen their commitment both to education and action. These resources offer insights into the negative impacts of extracting natural resources, such as through mining, and work towards developing your own advocacy on the subject. To learn more see:

- Two-page introduction to extractivism ([click here](#))
- Background paper on extractives ([click here](#))

UPCOMING EVENTS

MIA at the UN will be attending

- 29th January- 7th February -Commission on Social and Economic Development
- 30th January - Youth Employment as a Strategy to Eradicate Poverty
- 2nd February - Civil Society Forum
- 12th February - Holy See Workshop on Migration for "Catholic-Inspired NGOs
- 20th -23rd February- Intergovernmental Negotiations for the Global Compact Migration

MIA GLOBAL ACTION (INTERNATIONAL CENTRE)

Since returning after the Christmas break, the Global Action Team have been engaged in drawing up the year's programme in line with the Strategic Plan for Mercy International Association (MIA). Working closely with our colleagues in New York it also entails seeking the views of Mercy Global Action Network Working Group, who are the contact persons in the different Institutes or Congregations that comprise the Mercy Family. Via a conference call meeting we will prioritise the key justice areas the Global Action Team will focus on throughout 2018. Our Team is continuing our active participation in the global campaign to ban one-use plastic, which many grocery chains are using for vegetables and fruit packaging.

Pressure is building on the big multi-national chains to take responsibility for this packaging as it contributes to the destruction of our seas and oceans leading to the death of marine life.

We have attended a couple of important seminars organised by our colleagues in Oxfam – The Jordan Compact; plus the 'Feile Brid' Justice Event focussing on 'Light Out of Darkness' – Caring for Our Global Village?

Hopefully 2018 will be a productive and successful year in our collective work for justice.

'CARING FOR OUR GLOBAL VILLAGE'

Peadar Kirby, Professor Emeritus of University College Cork

On Saturday 3rd February, Denise Boyle attended the annual justice event known as 'Feile Bride' organised by AFRI, St. Patrick Mission Society (Kiltegan Priests) and the Brigidine Sisters, to mark the feast of St. Brigid as one of the patron saints of Ireland. The keynote address was delivered by Professor Peadar Kirby, an academic and activist of international renown.

In a stimulating and passionate address, Peadar shared his concerns about Earth. He began his talk by posing the question: 'Are we caring for our Planet?' Pre-empting a response he shared that a look at statistics gleaned from the 'Ecological Footprint' of different countries provided a disturbing answer.

In 1961 all countries combined were using 74% of the planet's resources.

In 1991 this had risen to 114% of earth's resources

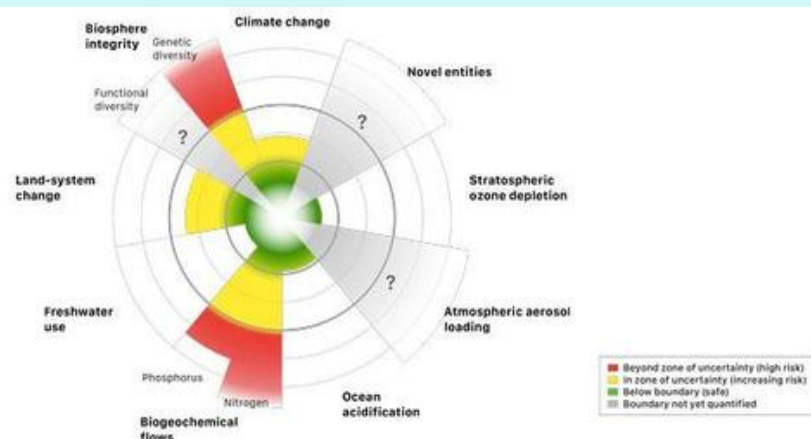
In 2017 the use of resources equaled 164%!

Turning to individual countries the statistics are both sobering and alarming. Compiling the data from areas that include carbon emissions, use of forest and agricultural land, plus energy and water use scientists worked out that:

- The United Arab Emirates needs 5.4 Earths.
- France needs 2.5
- The United States needs 4.5 Earths.

NB. Peadar suggested that each of us take the 'personal ecological footprint' test to ensure we each become aware of how we are treading on the Earth's surface. See: www.footprint.wwf.org.uk

He then introduced the topic of 'Planetary Boundaries', a concept of nine Earth system processes devised in 2009 by



28 environmental and Earth system scientists, led by Johan Rockström from Sweden and Will Steffen from Australia. Their concept is based on scientific evidence that human actions since the Industrial Revolution are the principal driver of global environmental change. The set of nine planetary boundaries are defined as a 'safe operating space for humanity' within which all peoples can continue to develop and thrive for generations. Not crossing these boundaries is a precondition for sustainable development.

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The diagram above estimates how the different control variables for seven planetary boundaries, which are measurable, have changed from 1950 to the present. The green shaded polygon represents human activities that are within safe margins; the yellow indicate those that may or may not have exceeded safe margins, whilst the red areas represent human activities that have exceeded safe margins! And the grey areas with question marks, represent activities for which safe margins have not yet been determined. Source: Steffen et al. 2015.

Of the three red areas where human activities have led to exceeding the boundary, bio-diversity is the most serious, followed by the poisoning of soils with nitrogen from artificial fertilizers.

Additionally pouring tar macadam over fertile agricultural land has serious consequences for food sustainability. All of the above according to Peadar Kirby means: 'Our activities are not getting us to where we need to go!' He quoted extensively from Pope Francis' ground breaking encyclical 'Laudato Si – On Care For Our Common Home', in the context of its urgency and the Pope's courage as the only world leader who has clearly stated the root cause of the exploitation of our fragile Earth.

L.S. 56 *'... economic powers continue to justify the current global system where priority tends to be given to speculation and the pursuit of financial gain, which fail to take the context into account, let alone the effects on human dignity and the natural environment. Here we see how environmental deterioration and human and ethical degradation are closely linked.*

In paragraph 139 Pope Francis according to Peadar, succinctly states the problem:

'...We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.'

Drawing on the wisdom in Laudato Si, plus the positive energy and goodwill following the signing of the Paris Climate Agreement in December 2015 by 195 world leaders, Peadar with his colleague Tadhg O'Mahoney wrote a book just published this year. It is called 'The Political Economy of the Low-Carbon Transition - Pathways Beyond Techno-Optimism', which addresses the global need to transition to a low-carbon society and economy by 2050.

Highlighting the techno-optimism that informs our current understanding and policy options, the authors draw on the lessons of international development to situate the transition to low carbon, within a political economy framework.

Kirby and O'Mahoney do this by critically examining the range of pathways being implemented by developed and developing countries, which they collectively identify as climate capitalism, a version of neo-liberalism, led by technology. As we are all increasingly aware of, this approach will not lead us to a low-carbon and sustainable society. Instead we need an alternative approach that the authors believe is emerging from community initiatives – bottom up - plus discussions on post capitalism and debates about wellbeing and limiting growth. The term they use for placing society and environment at the core of development is 'ecosocialism'.

In concluding his excellent presentation, Peadar stated his strong belief that the future of our Planet and human survival depends on the 'bottom up' approach. This is where real change will come from and is happening!



<https://www.pinterest.ie/explore/carbon-footprint/>

JORDAN AND THE UN GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES



Jordan has long been a host to refugees in the Middle East region. Collectively, Jordan and Lebanon make up less than one percent of the world's economy, but host around 20 percent of the world's refugees! Today, by some estimates, Jordan is thought to host as many as 1.3 million refugees from the Syrian conflict alone, equivalent to 20% of the country's total population. The UN General Assembly in approving the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, is now developing the Global Compact on Refugees, to encourage all countries to share responsibility for refugees. Globally there are millions on the move, pouring out of nations where war and conflict is rife.

Nicki Monga, Oxfam country Director in Jordan, spoke to an assembly of NGOs on January 24th in the Oxfam offices in Dublin on how Jordan is already implementing and benefitting from the Global Compact on Refugees. They are tailoring aspects of the global compact to adapt and find mutual benefit for the host and refugee communities. This is known as the 'Jordan Compact.' Nicki spoke about the initiatives Jordan with the assistance of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is developing in relation to the compact. Since the Syrian Refugee Crisis, Jordan has assumed a heavy burden due to its open border and welcome to refugees fleeing violence and war. The influx of refugees has however stretched limited resources and imposed severe stress on Jordan's economy and public services.

While the international community has helped, matching resources with needs is increasingly difficult. Nicki spoke briefly on the education system in Jordan and said that it is just about adequate, with teachers taking on double shifts so all children are able to go to school. The health system is also completely overloaded and barely able to cope. She said that the Jordan Compact must take account of the refugees and the pre-existing inequalities of poverty. Speaking about the Middle East in general, Nicki said that poverty is not seen, it is hidden. While people may not appear emaciated or poorly dressed, massive poverty is rampant. She described Jordan as an 'anomaly' – during the Arab Spring, there were just some minor protests because the king is all powerful and well respected. Overall, Jordan is a safe place to live and there is very little threat from ISIS and other terrorist groups.

Speaking on the influx of refugees, Nicki said that 80% live in the suburbs, not in camps, which in some instances has led to tensions between the poorer Jordanians and the refugees. Recently Jordan became the first Arab nation to ease the provision of work permits for Syrian refugees by waiving the usual fees and loosening the administrative requirements. The government pledged to create up to 200,000 opportunities over several years for Syrian refugees, in return for international loans, trade benefits and investment by the international community that would also benefit the local Jordanian population.

Unfortunately the visas issued to Syrians restrict the jobs refugees may apply for i.e. in the areas of agriculture, the services industry, manufacturing and construction. Teacher, doctors and nurses with Syrian qualifications are not allowed to work in their professions, thereby depriving the country of their specialised skills and frustration for those involved. This can lead to a loss of identity, or purpose and depression, which are difficult areas to address as part of a humanitarian response. With such large numbers of refugees and migrants, many become vulnerable to people who want to exploit them, so they can be subjected to eviction from their homes which is a huge problem. Some, especially adolescents and women on their own, are open to being trafficked, whilst others may be sexually harassed.



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Speaking about ‘people on the move’ Nicki said that Jordan is serious about this crisis and wants to treat refugees fairly. She cited ‘Turkey can teach us a lot about how to re-settle refugees’ because the Turkish government allows refugees to use their skills, talents and expertise according to Nicki.

In terms of moving forward and the future, new investment in Jordan is essential. A vital part of attracting business and stimulating economic growth is improved access to other markets, so to provide this, host communities need to be better supported. Additional assistance is urgently needed to address Jordan’s financial problems, ideally through grants and as part of an approach agreed with the IMF.¹

The Jordan Compact expects to identify three priority areas and they are:

1. Water and sanitation
2. Economic justice
3. Gender justice.

In Jordan, water is a critically important issue. Due to being landlocked water is more important than food. Jordanians could not afford water without water subsidies and without these, no one could afford to live in Jordan. This is an area where tension can arise between Jordanians and Syrians, because the latter use water with abandon as their country has a plentiful supply. Jordanians not understanding this, think Syrians are disrespectful in their use of water as they use too much. This friction leads to further tensions between the two groups. Nicki believes the interconnection between humanitarian aid and development cannot be over stated and this is the only way that Jordan can move forward.

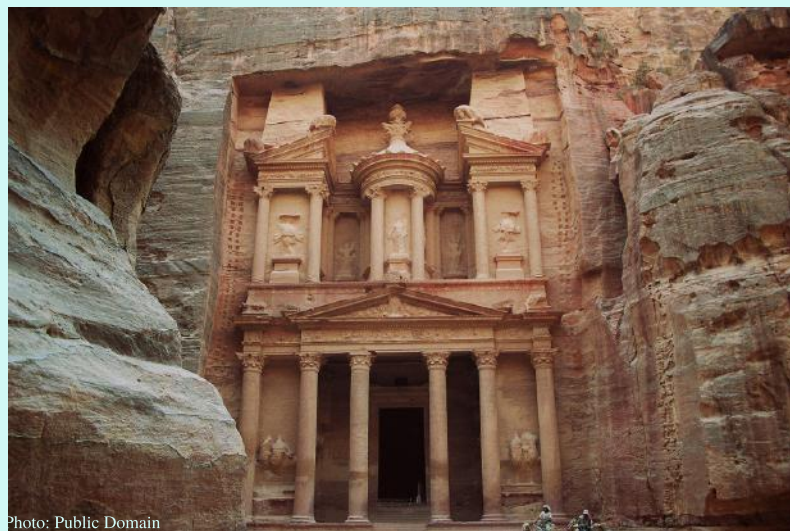


Photo: Public Domain

On a positive note she told us about an initiative that began in a refugee camp in Jordan. In 2011, hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees arrived in neighbouring Jordan, to Za’atari camp. Back then, rubbish was everywhere. The regular aid distributions of food and essential items, while crucial to meeting refugees’ immediate needs, were in part causing the waste problem. Waste facilities in the form of mobile ‘dumpsters’ were present throughout the camp, but they overflowed to the point that there was nowhere but the ground to throw rubbish. In 2015, Oxfam began piloting an innovative recycling project with the aim of mitigating the waste management issues in the camp while providing

livelihood opportunities to refugees. Drawing on the know-how of both Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities, and reaching out to the camp community, Oxfam expanded the project and now collects, sorts and processes waste from the whole camp. This project demonstrates how the collective expertise of Syrians and Jordanians when used together, can lead to an expansion of new productive sectors within Jordan’s economy. Creating new jobs is an important step on the way forward, thereby harnessing the skills of more people, to make a viable contribution to Jordanian society for everyone.

1. <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/jordan-compact-new-holistic-approach-between-hashemite-kingdom-jordan>

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