



IN  
**THEIR OWN  
VOICES**  
II

CARE International in Jordan

**JUNE 2018**



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Written by: Sara Rashdan



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# INTRODUCTION

This is the second publication of Women Leaders at CARE International in Jordan. We wanted to highlight the achievements, aspirations and challenges of CARE Women team members.

This publication is a tribute to those women leaders, their families, CARE Jordan and all those who supported them, and contributed positively to their careers.

We will continue to document the amazing stories of women team members at CARE, therefore; we will be sharing another ten stories in the coming months.

A personal thank you from myself to Sara for leading this publication and to the wonderful committed women leaders at CARE International in Jordan. Keep up the great work.

## **SALAM KANAAN**

*Country Director*

*CARE International in Jordan*



# FOREWORD

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to interview a variety of our staff members and discuss their experiences, thoughts, concerns and highlights of their careers.

I was emotionally moved to see the depth of their reflections, their devotion, commitment, and utmost dedication to duty.

It was even more interesting for me to put pen to paper and write their stories. I expect that I was able to inform as well as entertain readers, hoping that nothing was lost in the translation.

## **SARA RASHDAN**

*Executive Assistant to the Country Director – Innovation  
CARE International in Jordan*





**AHED SHISHANI**

*CARE Monitoring and Evaluation Officer  
Azraq Camp for Syrian Refugees*

In October 2015 and during my final Agricultural Engineering semester at the university, an additional external training at a company or an NGO was required to complete my degree. Purely by chance, I came across a leaflet that was distributed by CARE in Azraq Town for volunteering opportunities. I immediately sent my resume, conducted the required interview and was accepted as a volunteer at Azraq camp. This came as a surprise as I was under the impression that I will be working in an urban location. On my first day on the job, I was told that CARE will compensate me for my work as volunteer in the form of "transportation fees." But when I found out that transportation was already provided, I felt uncomfortable by the idea of receiving financial compensation for a volunteering job that is aimed at serving refugees; it felt like defeating the point; so I went to the admin officer and asked what the was payment for. She explained that CARE provides a nominal payment to volunteers as an incentive and an appreciation for their time and effort and not a form of financial compensation as such. After a month of volunteering, I took my first cheque with the same embarrassment. Three months later, I was accepted for a Case Management vacancy, and I worked my way till I became an Monitoring and Evaluation officer.

Since I live and study in Azraq city, I had to pass by the camp on my way to university every day. This daily journey gave me an almost real-time view of how the camp took shape; I knew it as an empty land, until I started to notice what seems like a few small, white boxes here and there. This gradually grew in number to create a whole camp. Not once in my daily commute did I imagine that I would one day be working for a humanitarian organization. I always thought I would be working in a sector related to the environment, and if you ask me where I imagine I'd be in ten years, then I would say in an organization dedicated to environmental causes, preferably an NGO that I will establish myself.

During my time as a Case Manager, I used to come across numerous new cases on a daily basis. I heard so much and witnessed even more. Once, while I was walking between the shelters on a cold day, I found a heavily pregnant woman standing outside in the soaking rain. The second we exchanged glances, I felt that we were both stranded

in the desert, but her face lit up, a sparkle came to her eyes as if I were her knight in shining armor. "Miss! Please help me, my roof is leaking, my husband isn't in the camp, I have two children and I can't even walk to the CARE community center to file a complaint." I contacted our team and the maintenance crew arrived to stop the leak in no time. Days passed and I found myself still thinking about this woman, so I decided to establish a filing system in my head, now I can close this case and move on to the next one. As I go along I now have closed files and pending ones carried with me wherever I go.

Six months later, I was transferred to village five. At the height of my busy schedule, I had to go back to village six to complete an admin task and as I was ready to go I heard a woman shouting: "Miss! look at baby, Ahed!" I looked at this cute baby and wished with all my heart that her destiny will be a better one, but as I turned to walk away the mother called me again: "Miss! I'm the pregnant woman you helped on that rainy day. I stood there for a very long time and you were the only one to help me, so I named my daughter after you." I had to go back to the filing system in my head to reopen that closed file and update it with a happier ending. I walked away speechless with goosebumps, tears in my eyes, and a great sense of achievement came over me. I realized that my life was not as banal as it seems, and surely is worth living. Destiny treated me well. Had I not gone through the career path of being a humanitarian worker, I would have probably never felt this way. I still remember the feeling that came over me when I first saw her and we were both stranded in the desert. By naming her child after me my feeling came true, I am now destined to be with her for the rest of her life, baby Ahed will continue to help her and give her hope.

Being a female aid worker has its pros and cons. For starters, I feel like a strong woman. Sometimes I feel so strong I get the impression that I might have superpowers! My personality has also changed a lot since I started working with CARE. I'm not the same girl I used to be. My thoughts and outlook on life have changed, and my mind got introduced to new horizons. I see the big picture, just like going to the mountain top. I used to be shy to stand in front of my class to present a project or a lesson, but

now I easily stand in front of 200 refugees, service providers, partners, and donors and give an information session. I feel so lucky and privileged to have had this life changing experience at a fairly early stage in my life. I am only 25 years old and I have realized that I need certain people in my life; people with rich life experiences that I can learn from. I hope this makes me a better judge of character and gives me the strength to better cope with events that life throws at me, in general, and even in my personal and emotional lives. Matters that deal with the heart will not anymore be celebrated unconditionally. I will now be looking beyond virtue signaling and romance.

Having said that, I also have to confess that this job took its toll on me; I somehow feel old. I look at my other friends, and I can see the difference between us in almost everything we say and do; we no longer have the same interests, nor do we share the same passion. I listen to their conversations, and I immediately feel that I have grown past them. I do not particularly know if this is a good or a bad thing, but I grew older, quickly, and unexpectedly. For example, my threshold for sympathy has changed. My friends might sympathize with a vulnerable individual living in a harsh situation, but the harsh situations and the vulnerabilities that I see are not on the same level; I've become desensitized. I fear the idea that someday I will have no feelings left for my day-to-day life complaints and obstacles, and I promised myself that if one day I lost all feelings and compassion, and because of that loss, I neglected to help person in need, no matter how small, then I will quit my job. I hope that I will be able to adapt to the different levels in life and somehow strike a balance.

When I started working in village five, I witnessed the influx of refugees and was filled with a sense of dismay because I knew that these people will not be going back home anytime soon. They felt a great sense of relief to have fled a war zone, I felt awful. When the solar farm was inaugurated and electricity became available for refugees, they were very happy, but I couldn't share their joy because this only meant that they are making their stay in this desert away from their homes more permanent. I don't know if what I'm saying is horrible, but I always keep thinking that the camp shouldn't be a permanent

solution, and more work should be done to ensure that they return safely to their homes. In parallel, I also want to make sure that they live comfortably while they are here, hopefully temporarily. One of the most difficult things in life is to have two conflicting ideas in one's head and still be able to function.

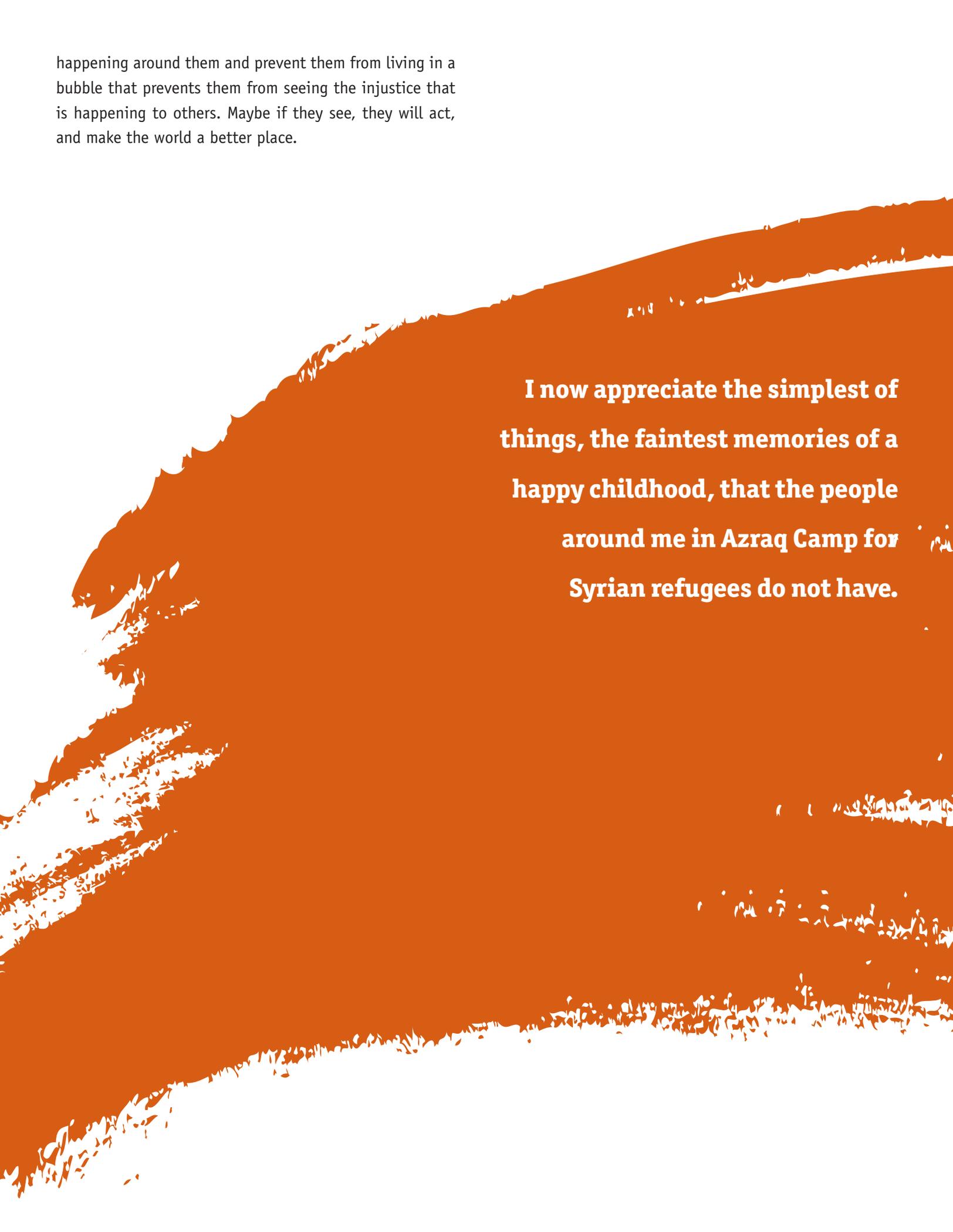
As a child, I lived on a farm where my father had my siblings and I run around doing chores all day. There were horses, dogs, cats, sheep, cows, ducks, and chickens that I fed. Some of the children at the camp, especially the ones who were born here, have never seen an animal, except for the rare sighting of a stray cat or dog. Their children should have been born in Syria, where it is green and lush, and where the animals are more abundant. What's happening now is not fair. This single thought makes me appreciate the simplest of things, the faintest memories of a happy childhood, or even the smallest of my invaluable possessions that the people around me do not have.

But putting aside my dark inner feelings, I still try to learn and get inspired from everyone around me. I look up to our Country Director, Salam Kanaan, who has taught me that nothing can stand in your way if you are determined to reach your goal. She also taught me that a strong woman is not ridden of emotions; on the contrary, emotions can be an asset and an added value in the roles of leadership, unlike what I thought.

One day I will hopefully have a family of my own. My biggest investment would be to educate them, to make sure that they have the weapon of knowledge. I will also do my best to open their eyes to everything that is



happening around them and prevent them from living in a bubble that prevents them from seeing the injustice that is happening to others. Maybe if they see, they will act, and make the world a better place.



**I now appreciate the simplest of things, the faintest memories of a happy childhood, that the people around me in Azraq Camp for Syrian refugees do not have.**



**ANN MAZEN**

*CARE Community Development Assistant  
Azraq Camp for Syrian Refugees*

I started working with CARE back in 2014 as a Recreational Activities Coordinator for children at the Azraq Camp. I didn't know what the Camp was really all about at the time, nor did I understand its environment. I didn't realize then the depth of our work; we were creating a new future and raising a new generation that would have been lost had it not been for the work we are doing there. Soon enough, I started to see the positive impact our efforts had on them and the happiness that results from CARE's activities and celebrations. This is when my job became more of a mission to me, rather than a way to make a living.

I started as a volunteer, and soon after, CARE became my first job experience. I was interviewed for an hour and a half, which was quite a challenge especially considering I'm an only child who's quite spoiled, having, within limits, everything I ever wanted without having to work hard for it. Starting a job was a life-transforming experience, a big challenge and a main task for this princess! I really wanted to prove to my doubtful family that I am capable of change and that I am up to the tasks ahead. My first day on the job was the day the camp opened, and refugees started arriving from the Syrian border. My learning curve shot up immediately; I adjusted my spirit, awareness and expectations in line with what I am seeing. Worries about the availability of cold water at the camp became not only silly but also a marginal matter.

In short, I toughened up as I continued my work at the reception area, witnessing people entering from the berm in Rabba Al Sarhan border crossing in their most vulnerable state; tired, exhausted and withered. I immediately sprang into action, offering help in carrying their belongings and bags and finding them a place to rest. They just wanted a place to sit, a place to fall asleep after being on the run for days on end. We helped them by giving them information and psychosocial first aid. All they needed was to feel safe. They needed immediate action in order to build trust and realize that the good fortune they are witnessing is true and is really happening. Two months later I officially became a staff member.

The great thing about our job is that it comes naturally as it answers our inner call to help others. Although we were

trained on how to deal with personal trauma as refugees enter the camp, self-initiative is also a must have as human interaction differs from one case to the other. Some refugees do not want to talk or listen, and others just scream for help and for any human interaction to console them. It doesn't matter what you learn or what the protocol is, you learn something new with every case you deal with. The real training is in the field.

I'm a completely different person because of this job. I have changed drastically from being a spoiled, short-tempered person to an empathetic, patient, attentive and hard-working one. I believe that I have more wisdom now and better judgement in dealing with situations. I realize that each of the refugees I meet was living a better life in Syria, with their own dreams, goals, and aspirations. I know how in one instant, one's life can change forever. This made me aware that one should always have a bigger goal, but also live one day at a time. The only negative thing that has affected me is that I don't really have a social life anymore. I reached a point where I became so obsessed with my job, that all I wanted to do was go home at the end of a long the day and sleep. As days passed, I learned to deal with this; not only did I make new friends here at the camp, but my colleagues became my second family. The hours I spend away from my family and home are spent with my other family. I fell ill once and had to get a minor operation done, when I was waking up from the anesthetic, I didn't call out for my mother or father, I only called out the name of my colleague and friend Asma Al Abdallah!

My favorite part of the job is the visible impact that our programmes have on people, and how Syrian refugees move from being negative to being more hopeful in their future outlook. I love how the smallest of gestures, a balloon, a piece of chocolate, can draw a smile on children's faces. I also love to see women who seek my help in solving a certain problem become leaders themselves within the different platforms that CARE provides for them in order to support one another and become more empowered.

My least favorite part of the job is the fact that I still feel so sad and burdened when I know that the aid that we are

providing is hardly covering the needs of all these people. I hate it when we are unable to be there, such as on the weekends and during public holidays. I always feel guilty when that happens.

Back in 2014, something happened to me that left a strong mark during a cash distribution session; there was a man carrying a three-year-old girl and crying hysterically with a woman standing right next to him. Pointing at the woman next to him, I approached the man and asked him to give the baby to her mother and to go and collect his money and come back. He told me that this isn't her mother, just a woman trying to help him with the crying baby. He explained that the girl's mother, his wife, died back in Syria with the baby in her arms. They had to force-open her fingers as she would let go of her dead mother, and the baby has barely stopped crying since then. I was so heartbroken by the story that I asked him if I could hold her. She came to me, held the collar of my shirt really tight, called me "mama" and fell asleep. I will never forget this girl, nor will I forget this incident. I never saw her again because they had left the camp.

My biggest accomplishment in the camp is the vocational training center in village six, established early in 2015. I consider this center to be my child, my baby, my biggest pride and joy. We started with a sewing workshop in a very small room that was not even equipped for sewing or training. Then this room grew and we got sewing machines for people to start making clothes, mend or alter existing clothes. Some women started approaching the center cautiously to explore what is happening. As they eased their way in, I put my training into action and gave them the sense of safety that they were looking for. Soon enough, the word spread. This small room became the space in which they learn, talk, laugh, cry, and get to know one another. By 2016, the new vocational training center was built, dedicated solely for vocational training in various areas such as beautification, hairdressing, barbering, sewing, tailoring, and shoe repair. When the equipment was being carried into the center, I felt that I was furnishing my own home, or even setting up my very own business. I knew that this would go a long way at filling a missing gap in the camp. The interest was immense. Most women signed up for all the workshops;

they couldn't get enough, and they were all eager for more. They were upset that we do not open on the weekends and public holidays. The center allowed the women to change their way of thinking and relieve some of the stressors they were going through, not to mention boredom, idleness, and the general feeling of uselessness. We didn't only build skills in a certain vocation, we helped create new relationships, and change the mindsets of many women and men. The biggest proof is the fact that at the end of the first sewing workshop, we held a fashion show where the women went from being shy, to modeling their designs on a runway to an audience that consisted of men and women from different organizations, fellow refugees, and even the camp management.

In our work, it's very different to measure the impact, but this fashion show, amongst many other incidents, has shown me the importance of the work that we do. We empower. We nurture. We build. How many other people can say that?



A scenic view of a mountain range with snow-capped peaks and a valley with a winding road and a small town.

**My favorite part of the job is the visible impact that I see on people due to our programming and interventions; the gradual development in the refugees' mindset, how they move from being morbid and negative to being more hopeful, optimistic, and positive in their future outlook. We empower. We nurture. We build. How many other people can say that?**



**BUTHAYNA HAYAJNEH**

*CARE Case Manager & Community Mobilization  
Azraq Camp for Syrian Refugees*

I love to see the positive reactions of people that we help on a daily basis. This is, and will always be, my favorite part of the job. Just like when you go and look for a present to give your friend, you put an effort in finding what he or she needs, wrap it nicely and wait for their reaction when they open it.

It's funny that I'm being interviewed for this story today because only yesterday I encountered one of the toughest cases a manager can handle. I welcomed into my office an elderly man with an obvious disability and a serious health condition. I generally don't like to see anyone cry, and to see an old man cry is the worst scenario I can imagine. This man was crying in such a heart-wrenching manner asking me for help. At first, I couldn't understand a word he was saying, and I was feeling helpless, knowing that I could only

help him if he calms down. After comforting him for a few minutes, he calmed down a bit and told me that he and his family are new at Azraq camp as they were just transferred from Zaatari camp. He explained that his family which consists of his wife, two sons, and himself are all diabetic. They were allocated a shelter that is very far from all the services. I immediately sorted out his problem while he was still in my office. Things went unusually smooth for this man, as if everything was already prepared for him, as easy as changing your hotel room for one with a better view. When I called UNHCR, they told me that a shelter was just vacated by a family, and this man and his family can move in within the hour!

Another case I encountered happened about a year ago. A five-year-old boy used to come barefoot to the CARE Community Center. I decided to raise his case with the management team; immediate action was taken to give him new shoes. The effort was minimal but the reward was received as this little boy's face lit up when he saw the shoes! He kept looking down at his new shoes, then back up at us with the widest smile possible. What a rewarding job I have!

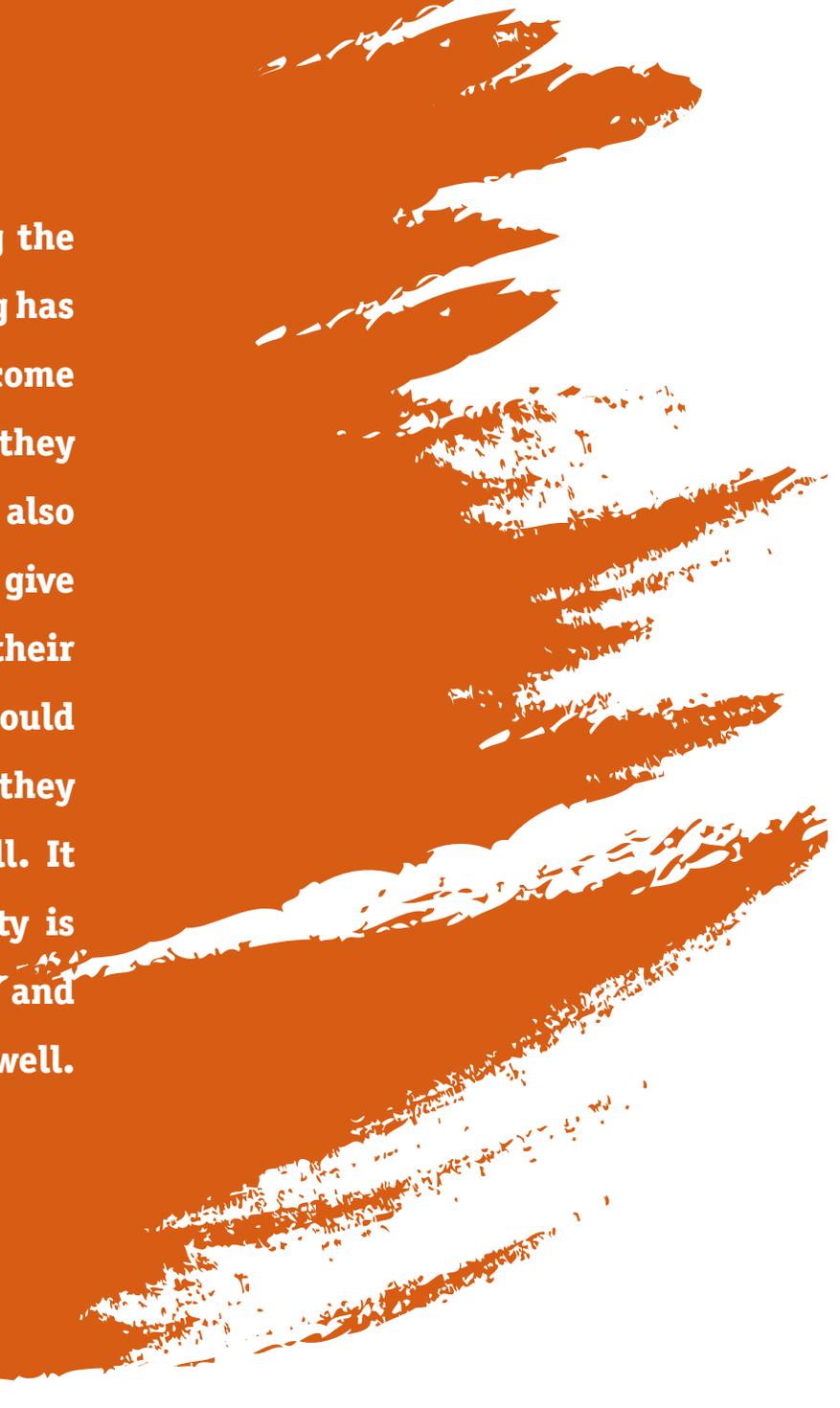
My work in the camp has changed my personality for the better. I am a much stronger woman, which is an additional advantage considering I'm a humanitarian aid worker. My communication skills have also improved drastically. I

used to find it very hard to communicate with the refugees and beneficiaries because of the various dialects used. Now I understand every word they say, and sometimes I even find myself using their own dialect and vocabulary, making me more and more as one of them. One negative effect of my job is the fact that I have no social life now. Zero! But I know I can work more on this issue by creating a life-work balance, because many of my colleagues here are able to do so.

As a Community Mobilizer, I also find great gratification in seeing our programme's impact on beneficiaries. Some women come with no skills whatsoever, and in no time, they become not only skilled, but also trainers. I wish I could explain the pride I see in them once they realize that they now have a skill. It seems like their entire personality is more developed, their mood and psychosocial well-being is lifted as well. This type of service that we give will enable individuals to generate their own income, and one day to sustain themselves.

I always strive for excellence because my mother taught me to do so; she is my role model and my mentor. My father passed away when I was only five years old, and my mother was only 25. She refused to remarry and dedicated her entire life to give my sister and myself the best life possible. She dedicated all her time and attention to us. I don't think I'll ever be able to repay her. Her influence on me is very evident because I feel that I also give without expecting anything in return, and this selflessness compliments the nature of my job. The gratitude I see in someone's eyes or a smile on a child's face is the biggest reward I will ever need. In five or ten years, I still see myself working in the humanitarian field, but probably more focused on youth empowerment, as they are the building blocks of the future.

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**DIANA QAWASMI**

*CARE Human Resources Manager/ People and Culture  
Program Support*

As of February 2018, I have completed my tenth year at CARE Jordan. I started as a receptionist, worked my way up till I very recently became the Human Resources Manager. I would not have been able to develop my career had it not been for the great talent development program that CARE provides.

My main responsibility is implementing our mission and vision on the ground. Throughout the past ten years, I have developed a very strong bond with this organization, I feel it is part of my life, it has shaped the person I am.

The nature of my work has no shortage of memorable moments, and the Camp Program is one of them. The Azraq Camp Program's preparations started at the end of 2013, which meant that the logistics, management, and naturally, the HR teams were alert and ready to commence at a moment's notice. The Government of Jordan was about to open the borders at any time, and the influx of refugees was likely to be in numbers that we have never seen before. We needed to be ready. My part was to recruit and build a team of 40 staff at the time, that are ready to deal with this rather huge responsibility. The HR department had only two members at the time, and to add to the difficulties faced, I, myself, happened to be pregnant in my third trimester with my now only child Victoria. This was my biggest challenge; I remember holding my very big stomach and whispering: "Mama Victoria, just hold on a bit longer till I finish the recruitment."

Despite all the challenges, the task was completed. New, qualified team members were hired and were undergoing simulations and training for the Azraq camp opening. Relieved, I went on my maternity leave, and gave birth to my healthy and beautiful daughter Victoria, who filled my life with joy. A few weeks later, the camp management announced that there will not be an opening of the camp, and all activities are to be suspended until further notice. I felt so disappointed because all of our hard work had gone to waste. The staff members that were hired had to be sent home since there will be no operations, and consequently no funding to pay for their salaries. On my first day back to work during January 2014, we received notice that the operations to open the camp are back on

track. I felt a bizarre connection between the organization and myself; as if the operations were waiting for me to come back. This is why the Azraq Camp Program is the closest program to my heart. I include it in all orientations for new staff members as it is the perfect example of responding to emergencies; from information provision, to psychosocial support, the program has it all.

I know each and every person who works here at the organization not just by name, but by academic qualifications, family members, health conditions, annual leaves, personal requirements, and even personal concerns and complaints. When I think about a person that has influenced me during my work, I would not be able to limit that to one particular person. Each person had their own influence on me, each person affected me in their own way. I'm inspired by each and every one of them. But if I had to choose one person, I would choose Salam Kanaan, our Country Director. Not only has she helped me personally in the past five years to develop and continue my search for excellence, but her devotion to work, commitment and vision made me witness a huge leap in the quality of our programming. I remember when she assumed her role as Country Director for CARE Jordan, she asked me: "what would you like for CARE to do differently?" and at the time, I told her that we need to be recognized more widely on a local level. Indeed, she included communications, innovation, and many other aspects that placed CARE on the map.

My favorite part about my job is that I am always looking for talent to include in our team and reach our goals of commitment to the CARE core values. My least favorite part, which I consider to be one of the toughest tasks that one can carry, is letting go of these talents, due to project closures, funding gaps, or any similar reason. I personally feel guilty when I am forced to end a contract and watch someone leave.

As a woman, I feel lucky to be working in an organization that has women's issues as a main pillar. I am able to fill my duties as a mother while performing my job. But who are we kidding? Being a working mother is not easy; at the



beginning it was difficult to strike a balance between my work and personal life, but I developed some tools that have helped me over the years. I started to include my family in some details of my job, so that my husband would understand that my job is demanding. You'll now find my husband reminding me of report I need to write or asking me about specifics at work that interest him. I also see my daughter Victoria looking up to me, as a hero working in a place that saves lives. I share with her stories about children who are living in harsh conditions to open her eyes to all the blessings around her. I believe that every mother working in our field is an extraordinary woman and an extraordinary mother as well.

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**HIBA SARHAN**

*CARE Quality and Accountability Coordinator  
Programs Quality Unit*

When I first started working with CARE as a volunteer in 2014, I designed psychosocial activities for refugees at Azraq Camp. I had a lot of room to be innovative and creative while interacting with beneficiaries. I later became a Case Manager then a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, and now I'm CARE's Quality and Accountability Coordinator. I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to work in different fields, gaining in the process an experience I never imagined I would have in such a relatively short time.

In a nutshell, here is what the Quality and Accountability Unit does at CARE: We make sure that our programming is being implemented in the best possible manner. Units start with a needs assessment; based on these needs, the programs design their interventions making sure that these interventions are being implemented according to CARE's standards. Implemented projects go through a compliance check with donor requirements making sure a high level of transparency for the beneficiaries, the general public, stakeholders, governmental entities, and staff members is applied.

I have many memories, but the most haunting is that most of the kids residing in the camp have started to become aware of life in the surrounding environment. The first time they ever saw electricity was when it was provided for them in the camp, the first time they realized what home is, it was a shelter made out of corrugated metal sheets in the camp, a series of firsts within a camp in the middle of the desert. As difficult as this may seem, credit is due to all colleagues working on the ground for the services provided in the spirit of creating a home-like environment as much as possible. I also need to praise the real stars, the refugees who show resilience in spite of all the hardships they had to go through in times of war.

I have learned a lot throughout my many posts and roles at CARE, but one thing I've realized about my self during all this continuous work is the fact that I do not have a work-life balance scenario; but I'm working on it! At the beginning when I had to complete tasks A and B, I would add C and D without being asked to do so. I'm now working on creating a better work-life balance with the help of our line management. I've therefore decided to study and take

the ILETS exam in order to possibly apply for immigration to Australia. I'm single and do not have the responsibilities or commitments that come with married life. So why not take a huge step? One of the eye-opening moments that I will never forget is when we had a psychosocial support session for staff members at the camp conducted by Laila Atshan. She asked me: "tell me more about yourself." Naturally, I started to explain to her what I do at work, and what my job is, so she interrupted me and said: "forget about CARE! Tell me about you." I froze, and I had nothing to say. If Laila asked me the same question now, I would have a different answer; I would tell her that I'm a raw modelling clay that is waiting to be shaped into something beautiful.

Having mentioned the negative implication of my job on my personal life, I must say that I am extremely lucky to work with leaders such as Jameel and Firas who always lead me in the best possible direction, and never hesitate to share knowledge and information with me. Another positive impact that my job has on me is that I got to learn how to seize opportunities and, in some cases, create them. I acquired this skill mostly from working directly with refugees; their resilience and power to create things from absolutely nothing will never cease to amaze me.

A photograph of a rocky coastline with waves crashing against the shore under a bright sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

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**LINA MASADEH**  
CARE Project Officer  
Sustainable Development Program

The nature of my job as a project officer entails me to be in direct contact with the local grassroots community. When I first started going to the Community Based Organizations (CBOs), I was definitely the funky outsider coming from Amman with purple hair. I was perceived as the external auditor, the know it all, the one who is coming to change the way they work with no regard to tradition, or the manner in which they implement their work. It can't get worse, what a tough task I had on my hands! I whispered to myself! Little did they know that I am, just like them; a simple woman originally from a small farming village in the North of Jordan. The only difference is that I have purple hair! To close the gap, my approach was to show them the similarities we have in respect to our various programs, which all centered around Gender-Based Violence (GBV). I explained that all women undergo some form of GBV, including myself, a woman living in the capital where the people are less conservative. It definitely took some time before they warmed up to me and began to see me as part of them. A weird part, maybe, but nevertheless a part of them.

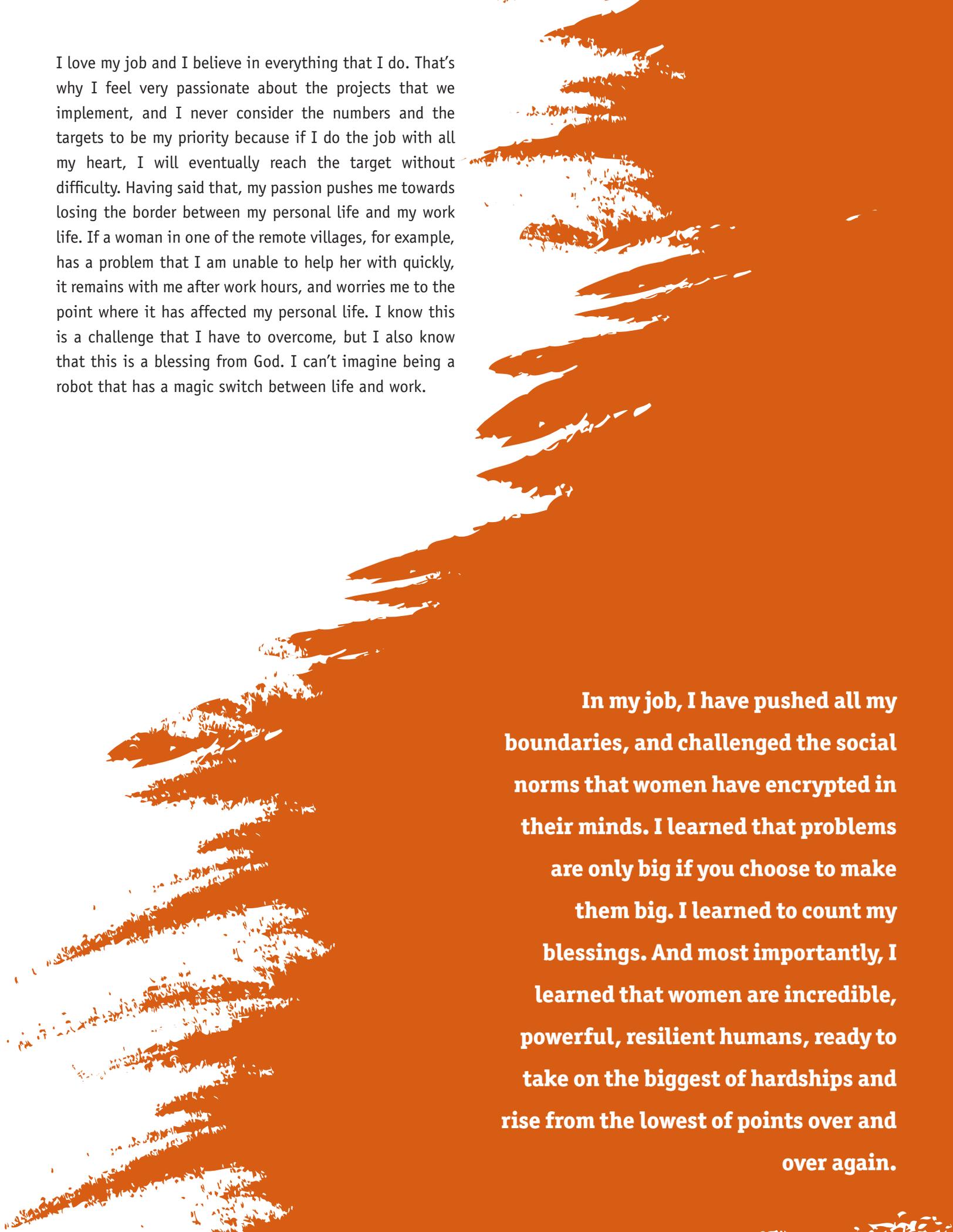
I wish I could show you how strong my relationship with the refugee women I work with has become. They consider me as a friend, they let me in on their secrets, as the topic of Gender Based Violence (GBV) is taboo in their culture. My role is to raise awareness on GBV and introduce the correct and positive reactions. My aim is to create a healthy mindset about GBV, where women can have a platform to share their experiences for the sake of preventing future incidents as well as becoming community leaders for other women. Trust is key in such programs, and transferring ownership is our biggest ambition.

Towards the end of the project, the women would call me regularly just to chat and ask about me. They would send me some of the products that they make in their own homes, like soap, olive oil, cheese, makdoos (pickled and stuffed eggplants), and other items simply because they see me as a friend, and want to maintain the relationship beyond CARE, beyond projects or implementations and beyond failure or success. My target was to reach 120 women, but by the end of the project, I had 140 solid, genuine, and impactful success stories from 140 women. We worked on CARE's pillar of multiplying impact, which

meant that when I visited one of the women's homes, her husband would be present, and onboard with her to become a community leader and raise awareness on topics that he originally would have never have allowed to be discussed, especially publicly.

This job is personally rewarding. I single handedly changed the mindset of one woman who was once subject to domestic violence, who in turn changed the mindset of her husband, and her neighbor, and they changed the mindsets of others... and so on. The most beautiful snowball effect! When the project ended, and during the final session, there wasn't a single dry eye in the room.

Another part of my job in the Sustainable Development Program is Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE), where we help women generate income through a certain vocation or skill. A key component of the WEE is called the Savings and Loans Association (SLA). CARE has promoted (SLAs) for over 25 years to enable women living in poverty to increase their financial skills, gain access and control over resources, and generate economic opportunities and income. In a nutshell, SLAs are a self-managed group of 20 – 30 women that meet on a regular basis to provide their members with a safe place to save their money, to access loans at no interest, complying with the Islamic Sharia Law, and to obtain emergency insurance. One of the success stories resulting from the SLA groups was a woman and her daughter who lived in a small village called Berein. The woman had a few chickens in her backyard that laid eggs for her to sell. The woman was also skilled at making dairy products from milk she purchases from farmers. Her daughter was a fresh graduate from university struggling to find a job in order to pull her weight around the house; a weight increasing by the day. I introduced them to the SLA groups, and they were able to partner up and expand their business together to include a rooster, more chickens, pigeons, rabbits, and a coop. They would call me every step of the way, sometimes late in the afternoon to tell me what they have purchased and what profit they were able to make. Nonetheless; the biggest highlight was that they were able to buy a goat to cut the cost of purchasing milk from farmers. These two women made it from scratch using the very basic loans system. This is, without a doubt, one of the proudest moments of my entire career so far.



I love my job and I believe in everything that I do. That's why I feel very passionate about the projects that we implement, and I never consider the numbers and the targets to be my priority because if I do the job with all my heart, I will eventually reach the target without difficulty. Having said that, my passion pushes me towards losing the border between my personal life and my work life. If a woman in one of the remote villages, for example, has a problem that I am unable to help her with quickly, it remains with me after work hours, and worries me to the point where it has affected my personal life. I know this is a challenge that I have to overcome, but I also know that this is a blessing from God. I can't imagine being a robot that has a magic switch between life and work.

**In my job, I have pushed all my boundaries, and challenged the social norms that women have encrypted in their minds. I learned that problems are only big if you choose to make them big. I learned to count my blessings. And most importantly, I learned that women are incredible, powerful, resilient humans, ready to take on the biggest of hardships and rise from the lowest of points over and over again.**



**MYASSAR AMARIN**

*Office Attendant  
Program Support*

I have been working as an office attendant at CARE for 13 years. I started as a volunteer and worked very hard for two months until I got employed as a staff. I wanted nothing more than to get this job as I had to support my husband, my kids and my parents. I tended to five different offices throughout these 13 years, and finally I am now at the main management office. I've witnessed our team respond to the Iraq and the Syria conflicts. God willing there will be no more crises after that.

In the past, there was a daycare at CARE in Jordan. I used to take my children with me to work in the morning. They felt so proud to come to work with me, and used to tell their father in the evening that they were helping me out in the office. My children and I grew up at CARE, a place we now consider as our extended family.

Working with CARE has strengthened my personality a lot, I meet a lot of people and guests, and I deal with each and every staff member and I know them so well. I feel like I am their mother! I know how each person takes their coffee or tea; what their eating habits are, and when they are expected to come down to the kitchen to heat their meals. I know who's messy and who's neat, remember, I clean all the offices early in the morning before everyone comes in. I love my job to the point where I get bored on the weekend and wait for the week to begin again. The work I do at home is only an extension of what I do at CARE. I take care of both my immediate and extended families. I also had to overcome some challenges, but I still consider myself to be lucky to work in an esteemed organization and see the real challenges and difficulties that people face. I show my children that no matter how hard they think life is, they should always count their blessings. They now complain much less and rarely whine. I've also taught my children to be as independent as possible, so if I'm not home, they can heat food for themselves, clean up and study. I've taught them responsibility because I learned responsibility myself.

I was very scared when they told me that I was going to be transferred to the management office because there will be no room for error with management. My colleagues in the other office would tell me things like: how will you go and deal with the Country Director herself?! Be careful

with everything. Do this. Don't do that! This frightened me a lot, but when I got here I looked at our Country Director and found a warm smile that immediately welcomed me which shed all the worries that I had carried with me on my first day. So, I thought to myself, if the head of the organization herself is this kind, then everyone else must also be kind; and it's true.

My favorite part of the job is the discipline and organization. I like it when the employees start coming in the morning to clean offices, tidy desks, and freshly brewed coffee. I like to take care of people and feel that they depend on me. Another part of the job that I like is that people confide in me without realizing it. There's a thing about the kitchen that makes people literally spill their beans! I hear all the phone calls, and listen to the accidental gossip and complaint, whether about colleagues, or about personal matters. Sometimes they realize that I'm in the kitchen, but everyone knows that I am only a mother figure.

I am now the main breadwinner for my family. You should see me at home and how my children keep saying "mama, mama, mama". I work because I have to but also to set an example for my children so that they can have the best life possible in the future.



**I've witnessed our team respond to the  
Iraq and the Syria conflicts. God  
willing there will be no more crises  
after that.**



**RAJAA SALEH**  
*CARE Senior Procurement Officer  
Program Support*

I work in the procurement department at CARE International in Jordan and have been for the past six years, however; that's not where I started. In 2008 and after being awarded a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics, I volunteered for administrative work with CARE. Although the job was not in line with my speciality as a mathematician, the idea of working outside the realm of my curriculum knowledge appealed to me so much. I loved the people and the atmosphere so much that I volunteered again until a vacancy in the same department was opened, to which I immediately applied. In the beginning, I continued with more administrative work until I started to venture into the fields of procurement, vendors, tenders and sealed envelopes. Since then, and for the past six years, I have been purchasing everything from tissues, stationary to Rubb Halls<sup>1</sup>.

Unlike many of my female colleagues who struggle to find their life partners due to the nature of our work, I happened to meet my future husband here at CARE. Fate intervened, we met, fell in love and the road was paved for us to start our everlasting bond. To comply with our internal code of conduct, my then future partner informed CARE's Country Director of his intentions and asked my father for my hand in marriage. Shortly after, we were married and my husband moved to another NGO. So you can safely say that I have lived through some of the most important stages of my life whilst at CARE. It is where I started working, where I fell in love, got married and became a mother of two boys (Qusai and Mohammad.) How much more nostalgic can one be to one's company, I wonder?

In the beginning, I found it somehow difficult to give my full attention and care to my family. The responsibilities seemed overwhelming. Then I realized, being a mathematician, that the equation is really simpler than I had anticipated. Being a procurement staff member, my tasks end with the end of our working hours, mainly because most vendors share the same time, which is not very long. There is plenty of time left in the day. I've learned to time-manage and prioritize all my tasks at the

office during my available time, with a few exceptions when required. This way my family has my undivided attention for the remaining time of the day. This has helped me set boundaries between my personal and professional life.

As a Senior Procurement Officer, I go shopping for the organization almost every day. I buy mainly stationary items, but my favourite items are the startup kits that we distribute to our beneficiaries after they complete a vocational training course. For example, women who take a beautification course get kits that contain makeup and beauty items which will help them open their own home-based businesses. Different kits go for different trainings, such as barbering, cooking, etc. those are my favourite items because buying them combines both shopping and creativity. My least favorite items to procure are the general office supplies... such a boring task for me because I do it almost every month. I buy the same tea, sugar, coffee, tissues, toilet paper... etc. I dislike it so much that when the time comes for me to do my home shopping, I ask my husband to do it instead of me.

When I started working as a Procurement Officer, it was just me and one other staff member in the department, and we had three projects; with BPRM, ECHO, and DIAC funding. Suddenly, the operations started to scale-up in response to the Syria crisis, and the projects all got approved, including the UNHCR project to open Azraq Camp. It was mayhem! The three projects that we had, suddenly seemed like the calm before the storm. It was my first experience preparing for a camp and it opened my eyes to a broad new horizon of how a number of procurement departments in different NGOs were able to build a refugee camp hosting over 55,000 people.

The best thing about my job is that I get to learn so much about the items that are requested for purchase. For example, if I'm requested to buy construction material, then I will have to research and figure out the specifications and related details in order to make the right purchasing decision. My biggest success was learning everything there is to know about animal feed! What do most people know about animal feed, I wonder? Probably as much as I did when I got the request: not much. But in 2016 I was

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<sup>1</sup> A Rubb Hall is a commercial name for particularly large, relocatable tent-like structure often used in situations of emergency (e.g. humanitarian).

requested to buy animal feed to be sent across the border to Syria. I started collecting information from poultry, sheep, and cow farmers until I was able to pin down the exact type and product of the animal feed to purchase. It was such a fun experience for me which I will never forget.

My job has taught me to be truly thankful for everything that I have, and pass this feeling of fulfilment – no matter how difficult life gets – to my kids. I know that most refugees have nothing, but they still thank God and say Al-Hamdullilah, because they know things can be worse.

**As a Senior Procurement Officer, I go shopping for the organization almost every day. I buy mainly stationary items, but my favourite items are the startup kits that we distribute to our beneficiaries after they complete a vocational training course. For example, women who take a beautification course get kits that contain makeup and beauty items which will help them open their own home-based businesses. Different kits go for different trainings, such as barbering, cooking, etc. those are my favourite items because buying them combines both shopping and creativity.**



**RANIA MALAHMEH**

*CARE Conditional Cash Officer  
Urban Protection Response Program*

It all started for me way back during the Iraqi crisis. That was when I first started working for CARE as a social worker. Doing so set a trend of a lifestyle or a career path that to this day, never ceases to amaze me. So I continued in my job when the Syria crisis began. A double impact kind of feeling as I witnessed CARE's "Program Shift" on how efforts were merged, responses were combined and crises programs were united in order to rise up to the bigger challenge. We were ready, motivated and experienced to be able, as they say, hit the ground running; and surely no time was wasted. One crises program to fit both the Iraqi and Syrian crises. I feel lucky that I was able to listen to so many stories, help so many people, and engage in life saving projects.

I later became the focal person for a pilot program that CARE launched in 2014 entitled "Conditional Cash for Education and Protection" or Conditional Cash Assistance (CCA). The CCA is a protection program which aims at eliminating child labour, early and enforced child marriage. It targets children who are out of school and at risk of dropping out, and girls in particular who face the greatest risk of being forced into marriage at a very young age. Individuals targeted were returned back to school. The program is implemented in close collaboration with families, parents, key community leaders, CARE's community committee members, Civil Society local partners and the Ministry of Education.

The program consists of a well-structured set of program stages that were implemented and tested from past experiences; by gathering the essential information, the needs assessment stage is the first stage to go through. The case management, the psychosocial program follows and finally the monthly cash payment of \$100 per household is issued for a period of 10 months. CARE has a monitoring system in place built in such a robust way in order to ensure maximum success and overall benefits. Parents/child support is closely monitored, more closely observed are the children themselves. Their attendance, performance, problems, thoughts, how they fit into the education system and last but not least, their achievements, scorecards and grades are all under the radar all the time.

The pilot project started with 100 children in 2014; with the help of volunteers, I was the only staff member overseeing the implementation of this project. Today, I can proudly declare that after three scholastic years we have reached 1,846 girls and boys in five different geographical locations in Jordan, who at the time, were out of school. They were returned back to school and given proper education.

I never imagined that I would directly be working with children, but as you can see, as a case manager, I have met many children. I was once asked to take on the task of preparing a psychosocial activity for children that included psychodrama activities and an interactive theatre play acted out by the children. To my surprise, I had an immediate connection with all the children; I found myself completely immersed; it was so evident to all around me, which is why my supervisor at the time probably found that I was the most suitable staff member to be responsible for the pilot project.

I've always been interested in humanity and always saw myself working and having a career in this field. Which is probably why at an early age, I opted to study sociology at university. I close my eyes and envision myself working as a humanitarian aid worker. I wish I could be inside Syria for example. Oh, how I want to take all the children to safety with me so they won't witness a single traumatic memory that would haunt them and keep them up at night.

I will never forget the day where I was on a personal leave and an activity for children was taking place at our Community Center in East Amman at the same time. One of the boys on his way to the centre spilt juice on his shirt. He cried so much while nagging his mother that he wants to go back home and change because he doesn't want "Miss Rania" to see him with a dirty shirt. He doesn't want me to see him like that. Would you believe it? Although I was on leave somewhere else, I felt so touched to know that these kids love me to the point where they want to look their best. I must have had an impact... I hope. When I heard the story, I phoned him, where he proceeded to tell me how his mother didn't let him go back to change his shirt. I promised him a visit only for

him to make it up. Since then, I try my best to never miss an event or an opportunity to see the children.

I am always working. People around me say that I eat, drink, and sleep work; which is very true. My work has had the greatest impact on me. I am not able to switch off humanity; my life, my work and my personality interlink, just like my heart and soul. My work is with me wherever I go; when I see a pretty toy, when I pass by an amusement park, when I watch an event for children I imagine them. No child should ever need to work in order to provide for their family. Every child is entitled to their childhood. My job has become my life mission, and life missions do not end with working hours. I'm unmarried, but these children have become mine, and somehow, covered for and in some ways fulfilled my personal motherly instinct gap. When looking at it differently, I guess that I am lucky. Life has compensated me with 1,846 boys and girls that I can call my own.

I consider one of my biggest successes in life is a story that links my previous job working with the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation, to my current

job with CARE. In 2011, I was part of the team that removed the very last landmine in Jordan, and celebrated a "landmine-free Jordan". I was standing with the team on our Northern borders with Syria, where the biggest number of landmines were placed. We were wondering, as we said our goodbyes, where would life take us, what does time has in store for us, what we would be doing and where would we go. Who would have known then that I would be part of a team that would make the route from Syria to Jordan safe for refugees to flee into Jordan unharmed? I felt like an unknown divine power that offered the light for them, so they can tread safely into the unknown.

For the next stage of my life and having worked at returning kids back to schools. I want to highlight a word that I will repeat three times! Education...Education... Education. Without it, there is no future. And for our wondering at the end our demining task, I say: We can travel the world by reading a book, and for those of us who do not travel, read only one page. I want to put the universe, the stars, and everything in it in the corner of my room. I know now that I can do it in the form of a library.



**My work has had the greatest impact on me. I am not able to switch off humanity; my life, my work and my personality interlink, just like my heart and soul.**



**ZEINAB AL AQRA'A**

*Project Manager  
Urban Protection Response Program*

I got the opportunity to work with CARE at the end of 2012 as a receptionist with a non-renewable one-month contract. I had no other choice at the time to be honest because I needed to work, besides, there were many other colleagues in the same situation as I, who do not mind working for just one month. Any addition to a rather empty C.V. is greatly welcomed. I am glad that I did work this month, because at 4:00 pm as we were all heading out, the project manager approached me and whispered the greatest one sentence I ever heard: "Come to work tomorrow."

Apparently, all the hard work that I was doing over the course of the month was visible, and on January 2nd 2013, I signed a contract to become an Administration Officer. We got busy very quickly; I remember the days when the reception would not be visible due to the number of people queued to receive aid. We used to receive a minimum of 300 refugees daily, as most of our programs were distributing Emergency Cash Assistance to vulnerable refugees and members of the host community. Five years later to this day, I now manage the cash distribution plans for two of the biggest projects at CARE Jordan.

I have many friends at CARE, and my work is like a cross between the Program and the Program Support teams. I will never forget the day when I recited a funny poem that I've written myself about each department and the struggles I encounter with every person at an all team meeting. I let it all out, the little things that annoy me, the slow people, the people who talk too much, and the ones I have to chase for information. It was a name and shame session. I expected people to like it, but it was more than that, they were all laughing hysterically, and some Senior Management Team Members had tears of laughter rolling down their faces. I wish I could translate it for you, but it was concluded with a stanza about the great leadership of our Country Director, Salam Kanaan, whom under severe pressure and a huge responsibility, showed resilience, patience and courage, keeping a smiling face and a kind of determination that is only fit for a mentor, a great leader and an example to follow in life. The words used in my poem at the time, turned tears of laughter into emotional and sincere ones. The poem was written and performed from the bottom of my heart, and

I think that the standing ovation lasted for more than a minute, which makes me smile every time I remember how proud of myself I was at that moment.

One of the people that have really touched me is a Syrian woman, who is my age and is called Reema. She volunteered at CARE as a receptionist who organizes the turns of beneficiaries coming to the Community Center, photocopied documents, prepared for sessions, distributed leaflets and did other minor tasks. Back in Syria, she had finished her education and was employed. Fleeing a warzone has put her back at square one here in Jordan. I saw how she looked at me with grief in her eyes: she saw a woman just like her, but with a career, steady income, home, safe family, and known future. She lost everything, but that didn't stop her from smiling every morning as she came in wishing us a good morning. She taught me that no matter the situation, negativity will not get anyone anywhere. Reema is now in Sweden, and I hope that she found a better job opportunity and that she continues to be a role model for others.

My job is like a vast ocean, no matter how much I learn, there is still more to be learned the next day. I have acquired so much knowledge throughout the past years, and employed this knowledge to the benefit of our programs and implementations, and I think this is why I am the project manager for the two biggest funds for CARE. I've also realized that the devil is in the details, and this is what the donor looks for when reading a proposal requesting a fund. I take all the lessons learned from past projects and I employ them to the best of my ability in the implementation of the next phases of projects. As for the part of my job that I hate the most... I have one word for you: Pamodzi<sup>1</sup>.

My work at CARE has definitely shown me a different side of life. I knew of course that there are less fortunate people suffering all over the world, but I had encountered this suffering face to face. I come from a simple family, I studied in a public school, and then a public university. My home is a simple home. Nevertheless, the people and

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<sup>1</sup>Pamodzi', a Kiswahili word meaning "togetherness". It is also the name of an online system that CARE has developed for budget holders to approve the expenditures of budgets.



stories that I encountered have made me see the treasures that I have; I learned to understand that some people lack even the simplest of things that we take for granted. I've also learned that I have to work harder on developing myself and building the assets that will come in handy if, God forbid, I have to go through a similar situation to the one that most of these refugees had to go through.

**My job is like a vast ocean, no matter  
how much I learn, there is still more to  
be learned the next day.**

