as Qudra Programme’s phase I comes to an end, we are proud to share with you a selection of our achievements and successes accomplished over the past three years in this new issue of Qudra Matters.

Qudra has accomplished a lot over the past three years – in a good number of areas even more than we initially thought we would. It’s not easy to pull off a large and complex programme like this and it wouldn’t have been possible without our partnership with the European Union through the EU Madad Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, and the German government through BMZ. Our big thank you for excellent work and constructive cooperation goes to beneficiaries, stakeholders, partner governments, representatives of commissioning agencies, the staff of the programme and many others in the region affected by the ongoing Syrian and Iraqi refugee crises.

The beneficiaries are whom we have been working for. In this issue of Qudra Matters, please read why 20-year-old Maria from Syria now living in Jordan says: “The training made me stronger and gave me a lot of self-confidence.” Why Qudra makes 34-year-old anti-ISIS-fighter Hawar “forget about my sorrows” and gives him and his family “an income for my living”. How the “Community Support Projects Granting Mechanism” strengthens civil society in local communities and helps connect locals and refugees thus fostering mutual understanding and respect. Learn how sports can improve academic performance in school. And what a difference female role models can make to girls’ and women’s’ visions of their future.

On behalf of everyone at Qudra: Please enjoy reading! And your feedback is warmly welcome.

-Günther Taube, Programme Director
Jan-Hendrik Dannheisig is the Qudra Focal Point in Jordan. As Qudra’s Programme phase I is coming to an end, he takes a personal look at successes, achievements and into the future.

Qudra has achieved a lot over the last three years – in some areas even more than we initially thought we would. Overall the different teams together with our local partners were able to significantly impact the lives of many Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians.

In our Module 1 (“SO1 - Education Infrastructure”) 26 public schools were rehabilitated in communities with high numbers of Syrian refugees. The Module 1 team has also expanded extracurricular activities in schools and is currently working on a network to connect Jordanian universities with public schools to support teachers in offering arts and sports related activities. One highlight was the Open Space event to see enthusiastic participation from the private sector and the trainees.

Our Spanish partners from Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) have been implementing Module 4 (“SO4 - Supporting Local Administrations”) and can show remarkable success in improving the technical and financial capacities of the municipalities of Sarhan, Ramtha and Mafraq. I want to highlight specifically the municipal granting mechanism, with which local governance actors, both from government as well as from civil society, work together to implement development projects that are of need in the communities. The Spanish Cooperation has supported that civil society and municipalities collaborate on a regular basis. The Spanish Cooperation has supported that civil society and municipalities collaborate on a regular basis.

Finally, Module 5 (“SO5 - Dissemination and Dialogue”) has just successfully conducted the third round of the EU Madad Innovation Labs, which focused on innovations in women empowerment this time. The Labs thrived because of extremely engaged and motivated Jordanian and Syrian participants. In the last Lab round, we had 19 promising prototypes, of which the best four will receive seed-funding and guidance in their implementation phase.

We are very happy to have so much constructive support from all sides in this common effort.

WHAT WILL COME NEXT?

For a possible second programme phase, Module 1 would shift its focus from school rehabilitation to a more systematic look into facility management in the education sector. In this vein it would also tackle the issue of unsafe school transport, which affects quite a lot of students in Jordan. For Module 2 in Jordan, we welcome the Belgian agency “ENABLE” as a new implementing partner, who would be focusing on semi-skilled trainees, whereas GIZ would be focusing on the skilled level. As unemployment remains a major concern in Jordan, especially among youths, Module 2 would have a stronger employment promotion focus.

CFI will continue their campaigns and broadcast videos on TV and social media but will shift its focus slightly to closer align with the activities of the different components of Qudra. The Spanish Cooperation will continue their work in supporting municipalities in implementing community development projects and strengthening the capacities of governmental and non-governmental actors.

Qudra, of course, is a regional programme and it will continue to lead and enable regional dialogue and exchange experiences. We will focus on activities that showed great potential and topics where local governments and our donors see the most need in the communities. We learn from our experiences and continue to improve.
Extracurricular activities, such as sports, arts and drama clubs, are internationally recognised to improve students’ academic achievements. The Ministry of Education has acknowledged the importance and issued a decree in 2018 to all public schools to offer such activities. However, many teachers are already heavily burdened with double shifts and find it hard to engage in additional activities.

To assist educational personnel with this challenge in a sustainable and home-based approach, Qudra reached out to universities to establish if the community service programme, compulsory for all students, could be utilised to assist public schools by offering extracurricular activities. The interest expressed from Universities via the Student Affairs Council was instant and enthusiastic.

In a first joint effort by the Middle East University and public Al Arqam school in Sahab, Amman, 55 University students volunteered to offer extracurricular activities to 85 pupils under the close supervision of teachers. Jordanian and Syrian pupils enjoyed mixed remedial sessions and various other activities like art, sport, music, drama and dancing.

The school principle and teachers already observed an improvement in academic performance of pupils after a relatively short, but intense intervention. Furthermore, the increased interaction of Jordanian and Syrian students jointly participating in extracurricular activities positively influenced the atmosphere at the entire school. School pupils felt inspired by the good example of University students to engage in volunteer work themselves.

The feedback of all stakeholders involved was overwhelmingly positive: 100 percent of schoolteachers; 95 percent of pupils and 90 percent of university students wished to continue the cooperation and to even expand the scope. School students and volunteers were sad to leave each other and halt the activities due to the exam period. However, a summer programme is jointly prepared by public schools and Universities for the holiday season.

Universities and public schools in Jordan offer extracurricular activities

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In close cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Qudra will continue to support this promising approach as it has huge potential for further expansion across the country to the benefit of all stakeholders involved.
Maria Dokhan (20) from Syria is one of 5,000 beneficiaries who have successfully finished the vocational training course offered by “SO2 - Skills Development” in Jordan. She has not only gained important practical skills to help enter the labour market in Jordan, but also life skills that have helped her to gain more self-confidence.

“I heard about the training course through Al Quds College Facebook page and thought that it sounded very promising. I was interested in continuing my education and try something different, that I haven’t thought of before. The Qudra training course provided a great opportunity for me to figure out which step to take next. So, I applied and was one of the lucky applicants who were accepted to the programme. I made a lot of friends and had a good relationship with my teachers who always supported me.

The training made me stronger and gave me a lot of self-confidence. Personally, I learned the most in the soft skills course which was one component during the training: We learned how to hold presentations, speak in front of an audience and pitch an idea. I also liked the English course, because a lot of jobs in Jordan and the Middle East in general require a working knowledge of English nowadays. I was able to develop my skills and personality and started to believe in myself and my abilities. For example, before the vocational training I would have been too shy to do an interview like this, but now I feel confident enough to speak about my experiences and my professional career.

After the Qudra training programme, I was offered a job with Luminus Technical University College, first as part of the “Cash for Work”-initiative and now with a direct contract. I am currently working in the School of Hospitality and Tourism in the supplies office where I help students to get their training material and like it very much here.”
Information as a powerful driver of gender empowerment

Gender is a transversal matter to Canal France International’s “Communication with Communities” activities. Thanks to a bottom-up approach, each video clip produced and disseminated is based on a real human story as a testimony to deliver accurate information to refugees and host communities. Since the launch of the first information campaign on employment in Jordan in May 2018, several women have been able to share their experience of resilience through different topics of concern such as labour rights for working mothers, benefits of professional training and solidarity at work.

The female characters who agreed to appear in CFI’s videos significantly help other women in making them aware of their rights and opportunities. They prove that success-stories are possible, and they can become role-models to inspire other women and give them hope and courage.

Disseminating the video clips on social media and broadcasting on TV allows CFI to deliver strong messages to large communities, including hard-to-reach.

Some examples:

Knowing her labour rights made Hanan successful as a working mother

Hanan has two children and a full-time job. To succeed in this challenging situation, knowing her rights helped her to combine her jobs as an employee and as a mother: “My understanding of the labour law made me a stronger woman.”

My understanding of the labour law made me a stronger woman.

-Hanan, Jordanian citizen

Creating initiatives between Syrian and Jordanian women have generated great successes

Lara, a Syrian refugee, and Hanan, a Jordanian citizen, started a small business to provide jobs to both Syrian and Jordanian workers and help local communities that have complementary experiences to share. They targeted women because they have skills in handicraft: “We have built connections among communities.”

We have built connections among communities

-Lara, Syrian refugee

Studying Turkish meant the start of a new life for Yusra

The same mechanism has been implemented in Turkey, where an information campaign on free Turkish Language Courses in Public Education Centres (PECs) was launched in February 2019. Yusra, a Syrian refugee, had to work to support her family but couldn’t find a job because she didn’t know Turkish. She studied Turkish at the PEC closest to her home and has been able to attend a professional training and become a hairdresser.

A lot of topics affecting women remain to be tackled. For instance, new video clips have been produced on protection for women in Lebanon, to help women who suffered from violence to know their rights and inform them about the services delivered for their protection and safety in Social Development Centres (SDCs) of the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs.

In this regard, information has proved to be a powerful driver of gender empowerment.

Link to the dedicated Facebook page in Jordan: https://www.facebook.com/TogetherInJordan
Link to the dedicated Facebook page in Turkey: https://www.facebook.com/TogetherInTurkey
Link to CFI website: https://www.cfi.fr/en/project/qudra
The “Community Support Projects Granting Mechanism” is one of the initiatives launched by the Municipality of Sarhan within the framework of the Qudra Programme. With the support of the Spanish Cooperation (AECID), the municipality is strengthening social cohesion and exploring new means to encourage citizens’ participation in addressing local development challenges.

The design of the mechanism started with a consultation process which engaged over 100 stakeholders. The key results of this consultation as well as specified needs outlined in the participatory budgeting process helped in identifying the most pressing challenges. To address them, the municipality launched a call for proposals open to civil society actors and devoted to strengthening local community empowerment in 2018.

Currently, five projects are being implemented in the strategic areas of “Youth Socioeconomic Empowerment” and “Fostering Social Cohesion in Sarhan”.

Different actors, different perspectives

The Mayor of Sarhan, Khalaf al Sarhan, highlighted the importance of this mechanism as a way to strengthen the role of civil society in contributing to local development. In particular, he highlighted the significance of receiving proposals of projects involving the youth, as they represent two thirds of the population in Sarhan.

Hayat Khadr Al Zaeem, member of the local development unit in the municipality, described the main difficulties of working with the civil society in Sarhan: “At the beginning it was very difficult to reach the community and explain the existing mechanisms to become more involved in the local development.” However, she believes that the community support projects represent something new and very positive for Sarhan and the civil society.

Hayat Khadr Al Zaeem, Member of Local Development Unit

At the beginning it was very difficult to reach the community and explain the existing mechanisms to become more involved in the local development.

Abu Kamal Abdallah Ibrahim al Radi, a Syrian refugee and social leader of the Syrian community in Sarhan adds a different point: “The community support projects play a great role in bringing us closer together, because both Syrians and Jordanians benefit to the same extent.”

Abu Kamal Abdallah Ibrahim al Radi, Syrian refugee and Social Leader of the Syrian Community in Sarhan

The community support projects play a great role in bringing us closer together, because both Syrians and Jordanians benefit to the same extent.

Voices of civil society leaders

Alaa Abul Haj is responsible for the organization “Sowar Yasameen Al Khaereya”, which aims at boosting social cohesion and raising awareness of young students in local schools about important issues such as respecting the environment, healthy diet and keeping public spaces clean. Her organization has been selected to implement one of the civil society projects: Four schools will host open days and a summer camp will bring together children from both communities to provide extracurricular activities such as games and cultural events. “Normally Syrians and Jordanians kids have different school timetables, but during the open days and the summer camp they will be all together,” Alaa says.

Another project, proposed by the Sport Club Mogayer al Sarhan, aims at using sports as a tool to keep youth away from drugs, extremism and prevent domestic violence. The Director Jehad Faisal al-Sarhan said that thanks to Qudra they are organizing a football league involving boys, girls and the fathers, ping pong tournaments and sport activities. Soon, they will be able to expand their services.

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Women empowerment is giving women the chance to take actual control of their lives. According to him, their project would have an environmental impact by reducing the consumption of plastic bags in Jordan and, most importantly, it would give the women involved in it financial independence to, as he puts it, “take actual control of their lives”. Abud knows the numbers by heart: 60 percent of women in Jordan are unemployed, 68 percent of them are Syrians. To him it is obvious: Financial independence is key when it comes to women empowerment.

As participants of the EU Madad Innovation Lab III on Women Empowerment, he and his team benefitted from two weeks of design-thinking workshops that aimed at helping the participants to develop their ideas. The result: A wide variety of 19 prototypes that ranged from rooftop-agriculture to self-defence classes.

At the end of the Lab, participants had the chance to present their ideas in front of a jury consisting of representatives of the Qudra Programme, the Digital Opportunity Trust – a youth-led movement of social innovators – and the Al Ghurair Foundation for Education that had the difficult task of choosing four prototypes for seed funding. “Martha”, a software designed to help deaf children learn sign language, came up first. It was followed by “San3ati”, an online platform that seeks to deliver marketing services for women-made products; “She entrepreneur”, a social enterprise meant to provide women with the needed knowledge, network and tools to open their own businesses; and finally, “Capacity building and economic support for rural women”, which aims to support women in permaculture projects.

Even though “Qoot” did not make it for the seed funding allocation, Abud and his team do not seem disappointed. After all, 80 percent of the team is female: there is no way this defeat will discourage them to fight for women empowerment in the future.
Haikal El-Abed gives a short overview of the immense achievements of the Qudra Programme in Lebanon

Haikal El-Abed is the Team Leader of the Module 2 “SO2 – Skills Development” and the Country Focal Point in Lebanon. As Qudra’s Programme phase I is coming to an end, he takes a personal look at successes and achievements.

For Module 1 in Lebanon, I would like to mention the rehabilitation of 35 public schools, effecting around 25,000 beneficiaries of which half are female and Non-Lebanese. Until the end of July 2019, we will have finished all rehabilitation work and hand the schools over to their communities. Then I would like to highlight the cooperation between the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) represented by Qudra and the Sport for Development Programme (S4D) and the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). Jointly, a manual is developed to guide sport teachers on integrating the S4D methodology for conducting extracurricular activities in public schools.

Module 2 “SO2 – Skills Training” has worked successfully on the introduction and implementation of so-called CBTs “Competence Based Trainings” together with another EU funded project called ProVTE and the Directorate General for Vocational and Technical Education (DG VTE). The youth participating in the training programme are mainly from marginalised neighbourhoods with a weak socioeconomic background. To enhance social stability, we involve the youth in different activities through community projects; they can connect with each other and engage with their communities. Here, we witnessed a big interest in these community-based projects. The trainees together with some of our staff took part in the Beirut Marathon, which demonstrated their enthusiasm for the trainings. Since gender mainstreaming is an important topic for us, I would also like to highlight the Women’s Day on March 8th, where we conducted an awareness raising event on gender inequity, gender norms and gender mainstreaming at the public technical institute in Tripoli. Students along with their teachers were involved in sessions with a participatory approach through dialogue and playful games such as “Can you put yourself in my shoes?” or “Is it fair?”

Module 3, implemented through our French colleagues from Expertise France (EF), successfully rehabilitated 9 Social Development Centres (SDC) affiliated with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSa). In these centres, EF has worked in strong coordination with MoSa and four local NGOs to offer activities related to child, men and women protection such as awareness sessions, psycho-social support and case management. Five protection mobile units have been built during the programme, they belong to MoSa and are operated by our local partners in the catchment area of the SDCs. Since refugees in Lebanon do not live in formal camp settings, but in host communities sometimes far away from each other, the mobile units will help reaching vulnerable populations in need offering support and social services. If the Qudra Programme will go into a next programme phase, it will expand the now 10 running SDCs and their activities further, in support of MoSa’s strategy in Lebanon.

Module 5 “SO5 – Facilitating Dialogue and Dissemination”, I would like to highlight the great success with all three EU Madad Lab rounds. The interest to participate in this dialogue format was immense. Out of several hundred applications we could only choose 35 participants per round. The Design Thinking process used during the Lab, generated many innovative project ideas. In the last round five teams were pitching their prototypes, addressing women empowerment. Three of these innovative projects are currently in the implementation phase with funding support from Qudra. We are very excited and eager to see the results.

Overall, the Qudra Programme in Lebanon succeeded because of great cooperation and teamwork.
The Qudra programme has been collaborating with GIZ's regional sector programme “Sport for Development” (S4D) and the Centre for Education Research and Development (CERD) in Lebanon since the start of this year. A working group, consisting of Lebanese sport and educational specialists, have been developing a Lebanese S4D programme based on the experience of international experts working worldwide. With sport not only being a tool to foster social skills but also to encourage health habits, experts have been able to further integrate health within the pre-existing programme.

With CERD’s intention to incorporate the S4D approach directly into the Lebanese physical educational programme, a significant focus has been towards creating sportive and social assessments. Creating assessments to measure the success of the students is vital to give physical education more credibility and emphasize the need to have sport as an important part in school education.

Through three workshops conducted by GIZ S4D instructors, that teach the S4D approach, 55 participants have been trained and are now using the approach in their schools and clubs. With a wide range of those participants from different regions and varied experience levels the feedback so far has shown that the S4D approach is a great model to use in schools. Throughout the workshops, the working group members have slowly taken a more active role in leading the workshop. This is an effort to give practical experience and transfer the skills that are needed to conduct trainings. In the future, they are well-equipped to develop and conduct S4D workshops on their own.
"My neighbour wanted to paint her living room, I am so glad now that I can utilize my professional skills and the provided tools to paint her room. This is a great start for me. I am glad that I am competent and, moreover, I am happy that I can paint the walls of other people’s homes; clean and colourful walls bring so much positivity into our lives.”

-Mariam Hamad, Graduate of Competency-Based Training (CBT) in Painting Indoor Walls in Lebanon

Painting Economic Opportunities

In an effort to offer certified short-term practice oriented vocational training courses at public technical vocation and training (TVET) schools in sectors with need for qualified skilled labour in Lebanon several partners teamed up. With a common goal in mind, the EU Regional Trust Fund Madad, the German Government co-funded programme Qudra Module 2 – “Skills Development”, the EU funded Project Technical Assistance for More Practice Oriented VTE in Lebanon (ProVTE) and the Directorate for Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE) formed a cooperation.

Through this cooperation, around twenty-five vulnerable Lebanese youth and Syrian refugee youth (16-30 years old) from Tripoli and the surrounding villages were enrolled in the CBT on painting indoor walls at Al Saade Technical Institute in Tripoli. Some of the registered youth are from Wadi Khaled, Akkar, where youth unemployment rate is around 58 percent 1.

After intensive practical-oriented training in the school, all trainees went through the formative assessment and the best candidates were placed in companies to complete their on-the-job training. Following this on-site experience in selected companies, the trainees were assessed by APAVE, a leading Lebanese company in quality control and assessment in the construction sector. The approach of including an external professional body in the assessment related to the occupation gives evidence that the trainee has acquired the qualifications necessary for the specific occupation required by the employers.

Four young people were assessed as competent to receive a certificate from APAVE in addition to the certificate issued by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) on 6 November 2018.

CBT’s approach is an avenue to achieve a highly knowledgeable and skilled workforce. It’s core is a systematic approach to training that is monitored and revised based on performance and outcomes. The European Union (through its agency European Training Foundation), GIZ (through the Qudra and ProVTE programmes) and MEHE (through DGVTE) are working together to promote CBT and help in providing the Lebanese market with skilled young people. Implementing competency-based training modules in close cooperation with the DGVTE of MEHE in alignment with partner strategies for formal and non-formal education and training links need-based aid to economic and system development perspectives.

A colourful society

Qudra is not only empowering youth with vocational skills but also fostering the social stability by community events. The graduates who have completed the competency-based training module in painting, shared their knowledge and skills with other volunteers and guided them throughout the painting process.

A group of young experts from the CBT class in Tripoli together with the volunteers from various NGOs joined their enthusiasm and skills for a refurbishment initiative organised by the Lebanese NGO Live Love Beirut. Around 150 volunteers painted the walls of the playground at the Lebanese School for Blind and Deaf in Baabda, Lebanon in August 2018.

"Students will start the new academic year with a colourful playground, this is why I am proud and happy to be part of this initiative; moreover, we were able to implement what we have learned during the trainings"

A video was produced about this activity and published on Qudra Programme’s Youtube channel. https://bit.ly/2EfjsoV


"As a woman, I am very proud now that I can paint walls, not many women can do this; it is uncommon in Lebanon.”

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"Students will start the new academic year with a colourful playground, this is why I am proud and happy to be part of this initiative; moreover, we were able to implement what we have learned during the trainings"
Sunshine from within

As the Qudra Team, we once heard a story that left us speechless. Here’s what it is all about: Omar* is a 6 years old Syrian boy who was exposed to violence by his step-father which caused a severe head injury; Omar lost his sight, he can only see a small percentage through his left eye. He is currently out of school and spends most of his time alone since no school accepted his application because of his sight impairment. His father went missing in Syria and his family lost contact with him. His mother left him and his siblings and got married again. Omar and his siblings are currently living with their aunt and other cousins in a small room that belongs to a mosque.

Omar’s aunt started attending the positive parenting programme with us, and after she knew we have case management services she asked for help for Omar and his siblings. A case worker and a psychologist immediately contacted the aunt and came for a home visit to assess the situation. The Psychologist said: “When I first saw him during a home visit I couldn’t but notice his patience and his resilience that can move mountains. A boy his age is supposed to be playing outside, attending school, and simply seeing the world through two eyes. When I informed him about the psychosocial supports and counselling sessions, he was ecstatic to hear this. I won’t hide it, I too was excited about our next meeting and the challenges it will bring”.

On 19 February 2019, Omar came to the centre with his aunt. He brought the most precious gift: his smile. His aunt told the case worker that he woke up very early in the morning to wake her up and get dressed and he almost burned himself with the tea due to his overexcitement. Unexpectedly, at the beginning of the counselling session, Omar asked the psychologist to be his assistant and help him build some LEGO dreams. Omar said: “I want a car to travel to Australia, a camera to see the bad thieves, stairs next to my house, a gun to threaten bad people trying to hit me, and a jeep to go to school”. As simple as it can be.

After a while Omar decided to draw. He started with a rose, some fire and some trees. Later, he asked the psychologist to draw a sun with orange and yellow. "I want to see the sun", Omar said with a big bright smile on his face. Then he wanted to decorate the wall with his drawings and expressed his wish to go home. The next day, his aunt told the psychologist that he came back home and told everyone about the session he had and his excitement to come back again to the centre.

"While waiting for our next session, I have to tell the truth: children are the bravest tutors of resilience in life. They build their dreams with some LEGO pieces, they draw their colourful wishes, they accept the unfair pain and they overcome it with a smile. And most importantly, regardless of the storms they are confronted with, they find their own sunshine...from within", the psychologist said.

Through a holistic approach, the case worker responsible for Omar’s case will refer Omar to an educational centre that deals with children with disabilities to get a decent education and will be working on building the capacity of his aunt to be able to raise Omar and his siblings in a child friendly environment. In addition to this Omar and his aunt will continue the counselling sessions.

*Child’s name was changed in the story above due to confidentiality reasons.
On the third annual Girls’ Day, 243 students from public and private schools from across Lebanon gathered in four regions of the country to explore career prospects in male-dominated industries. Initiated in 2016 by the Lebanese League for Women in Business (LLWB) in partnership with Global Partners Project (GPP) in Germany, this year’s event was the largest and most diverse so far. Inspiring in form and substance, the event organizers also provided the students with a tangible opportunity to consider new disciplines during visits to one of the 43 private sector companies that participated in the event.

The LLWB, an association dedicated to uplifting and supporting professional women, modelled the Lebanese edition of Girls’ Day on its German counterpart and seeks to empower young women by guiding them toward careers in science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM).

Within the framework of the EU Madad Innovation Lab III on Women Empowerment, this year’s event was sponsored by Qudra. To display his support for the initiative, Deputy Head of Mission at the German Embassy Lebanon, Martin Huth attended the opening ceremony and affirmed that “legal and social hurdles constraining women and girls from economic participation must be eliminated” and added “there are only jobs for the future.”

And that future is founded on a dream, keynote speaker Captain Rola Hteit told the young women who were awestruck after her speech. Hteit, Lebanon’s sole female airline pilot, recounted her career path and emphasized that her story is not exceptional, but rather that she is a living example of women’s untapped potential.

Following the keynote speech, the students each spent two hours at one of the 43 participating companies, where they got a behind-the-scenes look at how businesses operate and learned about the job opportunities they provide.
In a joint effort of the European Union, the Federal German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), GIZ and Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA), Qudra in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq essentially supported the local administration and other organisations to respond to the repercussions of the conflict in Syria and Iraq on refugees, IDPs, and the host community.

We essentially implemented Quick-Impact Projects. We rebuilt small-scale infrastructure hand-in-hand with the local authorities and communities, providing better basic and social services and livelihood opportunities. More than 300,000 refugees, IDPs, and Kurdistan citizens are benefitting from improved electricity and water supply, access to education and health services, and economic opportunities.

Strengthening resilience implies developing individual and institutional capacities of the local administration. More than 200 government employees of the Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (JCC) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs have improved their knowledge and skills on coordination principles, communication, team work, and teaching methods.

Our implementing partner HIA, focusing on strengthening economic and employment opportunities, supported more than 650 families in their agricultural livelihoods and more than 500 young people to start-up a small business.

Through additional funds that we received in late 2018, we were able to provide more than 4,000 returnees from Germany and other third countries, refugees, IDPs, and local host communities with new and market-oriented vocational trainings and labour market services and contribute to promote (self-) employment.

Qudra facilitated dialogue by essentially organising three rounds of EU Madad Innovation Labs, creating a platform for exchange and joint learning. 80 participants of hosting and displaced communities joined the labs on Skills Development, Youth and Digitalisation, and Women Empowerment. In an inspiring and productive Design Thinking process, 12 groups developed prototypes, innovative, new, practical project ideas addressing underlying challenges and problems.

Currently, the prototypes of the lab on Women Empowerment are developed. I am looking forward to seeing the outcomes.

For a possible follow-on programme phase, we proposed a comprehensive concept based on the success factors and lessons learnt of Qudra I: Interlinking rehabilitation of small-scale infrastructure, relief (MHPSS), and economic and employment promotion; Continuing our support in KRI and expanding to the liberated/return areas of North-Iraq.

I very much believe that the dedicated Qudra team in KRI has been able to contribute to strengthen resilience of refugees, IDPs, returnees, host communities, and the local administration and other organisations. The great sense of ownership and commitment of the KRG, and the excellent partnerships that have been built over the past three years, will sustain the success and the tangible results. We’ve made a difference in people’s lives.

It’s been a very rewarding experience. It’s been an amazing, long, and sometimes rough road. It’s been an incredible run that wouldn’t have been possible without the support of the EU, the German Government and the KRG. Thank you.
I lost everything in life, I lost my wife, I lost my eyes and my health for the sake of protecting my people against ISIS”.

-Hawar, 34 years-old Peshmerga

The brave man who gave everything in life to protect his people

Hawar is a 34-year-old Peshmerga from Shawre Valley, Ranya City, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. He has married twice, has two sons and one daughter from his first wife. The second wife passed away when she saw her husband unconscious and his body severely injured. There was a 30 percent chance for Hawar to survive. She couldn’t handle Hawar’s bad condition, had a heart attack while she was pregnant and died with her unborn child

As a patriotic person, he was very eager to fight against ISIS and protect his people. While fighting ISIS in Mra village, in the Daquq District in April 2015, Hawar got injured by a bullet and five of his friends lost their lives. After six months at the hospital he returned home and decided to join his force again to fight against ISIS.

In September 2017, Hawar and his friends got into a trap in Hawija district. A bomb exploded. He was severely injured again and lost consciousness for 32 days. Consequently, “I lost one of my eyes and the vision of the other one is unclear. There are still 296 shrapnel in my body. I have so much pain until now”, Hawar said.

Before receiving support from the Qudra programme, Hawar was having a very difficult time. Losing his wife and being unemployed brought upon psychological troubles such as walking away from home unconsciously. His family had to search for him several times.

I have received five cows with six baby cows. It has been a short time that I have started this project. However, I believe I will have a good income because I used to raise livestock. I have experience in raising cows and it is a good financial benefit. I am so grateful for the support of the Qudra Programme. It has helped me a lot. It makes me forget about my sorrows and now I have an income for my living.
Araz, a traditional man, but an innovative entrepreneur

Araz is one of the 450 beneficiaries who managed to establish or expand their own businesses with the support of the Qudra programme in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq/KRI.

Araz had a small shop for “swing” (traditional Kurdish and Arabic clothes) for more than 20 years, but he had limited resources which prevented him from meeting the market needs. He only had one sewing machine that was very noisy, and the neighbours were getting bothered, so he was only able to work for a limited time during the day.

“I wanted to close my shop, but then my son told me that an NGO is supporting small business, so we applied: And it was so simple, they brought us three beautiful, silent sewing machines.”

Today Araz, his wife, his two sons and his daughter-in-law are all working in this small shop. They are open now from 8:00 am until 3:00 am without bothering anyone, and their profit has increased by 500 percent compared to before.

“I have to say I’m grateful for what you gave me. Now I can feed my whole family, and my younger son can get married and hopefully his wife will join this business as well.”

Araz, with his family, managed to expand their business and now they are supplying uniforms to restaurants and hospitals.

“After I saw the results and capabilities, my next plan is to open a factory so 10 more families can benefit.”
The EU Madad Innovation Lab III on Women Empowerment was launched in Erbil on April 2019. Clarisse Pasztory, Head of the EU Liaison Office in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, made an inspirational speech to the participants at the kick-off event.

Yet, on 15 May 2019, following the pitching event, the Jury received many innovative outcomes and graded the projects based on specific well-defined criteria then announced the winning teams.

One of the three top teams focus on training women in camps to be reporters. Another successful prototype called “Bayt Alhaybat” is developed by Syrian women from camps, focuses on hand craft, gathering traditional materials produced by women from both intra and extra camps. Finally, “FATA” proposes a brand-new idea in the region which encourages the inclusion of women in tourism sector. With “FATA” women will be able to find the opportunity to become tourist guides.
The Qudra Programme in Turkey started at a difficult point of time in Turkey—it was July 2016 and the country had just experienced a coup d’état that failed. It took a while to get the implementation off the ground, also because the Turkish government changed some of its policies to which we had to re-align the Programme. One such change in the education sector was the shift away from Temporary Education Centres (TECs) to integrating Syrian refugee children into regular public schools. This was a welcome change in focus which we accommodated in the revised programme plans. Also, the Turkish government wanted to strengthen the work of Public Education Centres (PECs) in adult education for Syrian refugees, and we also accommodated that. Finally, Kilis became a key area for us which had not been envisaged in the original programme plans.

Dr Günther Taube, Qudra Programme Director, gives a short overview of the achievements of the Programme in Turkey and an outlook for the future.

Qudra Programme aimed at strengthening the resilience of both Syrian refugees AND host communities. In my view, this is one of the key strengths of the programme and a very important aspect. Once these changes were incorporated into our plans, implementation got off the ground. And by now, after three years, we can proudly look back at what we have achieved. At the recently held last meeting of the Country Advisory Committee (CAC) of the Programme, our Turkish partners as well as the representatives of the commissioning agencies (EU and the Federal Germany Government) were very satisfied with our overall implementation delivery.

In education we have supported the Turkish government in rehabilitating 15 schools so that close to 20,000 pupils, including many Syrian refugee children, are benefitting from improved learning environments. We also provided teachers’ trainings, promoted extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, arts) at these and other schools.

We trained over 400 staff from PECs, and over 36,000 participants benefitted from social cohesion activities at PECs, youth centres and community centres. In Kilis, we rehabilitated two old houses (plus one floor at a third centre), which were then turned into community centres that offer lots of programmes, especially for women from the Syrian refugee and local host communities. For younger people we offered specially designed “EU Madad Innovation Labs” in which they could identify problems and solve them through innovative approaches and ideas, including robots, apps, websites and innovative training courses (e.g., to learn how to become a camerawoman). Under the heading “Refugee-Friendly Municipalities” we organised conferences, workshops, learnings for staff from municipalities (in Turkey and other countries, including Germany) that host large numbers of refugees.

In all its activities the Qudra Programme aimed at strengthening the resilience of both Syrian refugees AND host communities. In my view, this is one of the key strengths of the programme and a very important aspect. Because if you support the refugees AND the host communities, you immediately get a stronger acceptance of programme activities in the local communities, as they see that the activities are not only beneficial to the refugees. This avoids envy. And at the same time the activities address the issue of social cohesion because you work with both target groups.

Also, we have aimed at strengthening resilience, or build capacity, at various levels. First, we strengthen individuals, for example by training them in certain skills and thus improving their opportunities on the labour market. Second, we are strengthening institutions and make them stronger in dealing with challenges related to the refugee crisis. This applies to individual public schools, PECs, community centres or other local-level institutions that work with Syrian refugees. Third, we strengthen local governments, e.g. municipalities, in the way they deal with the refugee crisis.
We faced three major problems at our school: Security, Health and Education. We are very grateful that Qudra took care of all of our needs and gave the students a beautiful, new learning environment: Our heating system was renewed, we got a wheelchair ramp which we did not have before, and a toilet for handicapped students. We now have 12 classrooms, a gym, a conference hall, a gymnastics room, an archive, a dressing room and other useful facilities.

When I shared this news with the kids, they got very excited. While we just expected that the most urgent things would be repaired, Qudra took care of all of our needs and gave the students a beautiful, new learning environment: Our heating system was renewed, we got a wheelchair ramp which we did not have before, and a toilet for handicapped students. We now have 12 classrooms, a gym, a conference hall, a gymnastics room, an archive, a dressing room and other useful facilities.

According to Rifat, the school in Gaziantep, where 900 Turkish and Syrian students learn and study together, was not in a good condition when Qudra started the rehabilitation mission. “Because the facilities were posing a risk to students, we had to place teachers on every floor during break times so that we were able to constantly check up on the kids and monitor the classrooms.”

Many other public schools in Gaziantep had to deal with similar issues and there was a long waiting list for schools to be rehabilitated by the Provincial National Education Directorate (PNED). In a joint effort of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and Qudra, five schools in the province of Gaziantep were selected along with five schools in the provinces of Sanliurfa and Kilis, each for school rehabilitation in the Southeast of Turkey.

Financed by the EU Regional Trust Fund “Madad” and the German Government, Qudra’s rehabilitation work consists of 15 schools in Kilis, Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa with high numbers of Syrian refugees which are provided with extra-curricular activity facilities and complete renovation of the units in the schools such as electricity infrastructure units and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) units. All 15 public schools were rehabilitated and approved by the respective PNEDs upon finishing all works. In total, over 18,000 students and 600 teachers benefit now from the improved learning environment in public schools.
Turkey hosts the largest refugee population in the world. The number of Syrians under temporary protection reached over 3.6 million persons as of 16 May 2019. Over 90% of the Syrians reside among the host community in urban, peri-urban and rural areas mainly in the South East of Turkey, but also in large cities like Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara.

The current crisis of refugees has created new challenges to the adult education system. Adult educators had to improve their professional competencies to work with this challenging target group of learners. In this scope, the Module 2 in Turkey addresses the need for skills training to increase the employability of especially Turkish and Syrian youth and women, by enhancing the capacity of service providing institutions.

Qudra aims to support Public Education Centres (PEC) by offering training opportunities in methods for adult learning and out-of-school-youth to staff members. The PECs are also supported to be equipped with the necessary means and know-how to offer trainings for refugees and locals in technical and/or professional and reconstruction skills, which will eventually increase their (self-)employment opportunities.

Training modules such as in-service training, training of trainers, awareness trainings, strategic planning trainings targeted teachers and administrative and technical personnel.

251 Turkish teachers in formal and non-formal education, 195 PEC trainers from different fields and 167 PEC managers received training on different topics with a view to improve the management capacity. This also ensured the expansion of the teachers’ pool of the Ministry of National Education based on the needs implied by the official figures.

Teachers and professionals are not only trained for skills such as teaching Turkish as a foreign language but also received awareness raising trainings to strengthen their communication with the refugee communities. These trainings aimed at increasing awareness on the importance of multicultural education in the integration process.

After the trainings, participants experienced a positive change in their attitudes and expressed their increased professional motivation with these words:

“The training has laid the groundwork and we are building on it to produce good outcomes. Thank you for the opportunity you have provided to us and our students.”

With a special focus on adult education, by these trainings, until June 2019, Qudra has reached a total of 615 administrative and technical personnel.
The story of my life

My name is Suha. I am from Syria. I was born in Daraa, a city in the South of Syria. I lived there with my parents until I was 20. I studied mathematics and worked as a teacher for 20 years. I got married when I was 23. I gave birth to three sons and a daughter, but I got divorced because of a lot of differences between me and my husband.

In 2011, everything changed for all the Syrians. The war changed our lives. We lost our families, children, homes and everything beautiful we had. With this war, Syrians started to live in pain and they still do.

After five years of misery, I decided to flee from Syria. In 2017, I entered Turkey. It was a hard decision in many ways, but it was my only option. Because this solution gave hope and strength to my children and it gave us our survival. We settled in Mersin. All the members of my family were ready to start a new life then.

I am learning Turkish because language is very important for living. Now, my oldest son is studying in Adana University and my daughter is preparing for high school exams. My third son is in seventh grade and my youngest is in the second. And I am learning Turkish because language is very important for living.

Fear in the eyes

Ahmet is a teacher, teaching Turkish in a Temporary Education Centre for Syrians. When he started this job, he did not know a word in Arabic, nor did his students know a word in Turkish. However, they were using the language of love in the classroom. Ahmet felt grateful for being a teacher, every day when he saw all those students running towards him as he entered the school yard. He felt special to be the teacher of those children, to have a place in those little wounded hearts who had to leave their home, their country. One day, the school bell rang for teacher Ahmet and his students and everyone set off on their ways home. Ahmet was listening to three little children chatting cheerfully while walking home. He did not understand what they were saying but he enjoyed watching them telling stories to each other so joyfully.

Later they were startled by the sound of a plane, flying by very close to the ground. The joy of the three kids was replaced by worry and fear. They turned around to run away for a second, as the plane reminded them of the fighter aircrafts throwing bombs back in Syria. Only Ahmet, who was right behind the children, witnessed how their tiny bodies shook with fear. Immediately, he threw away his bag and books and spread his arms as big as he could. The children ran into his arms, he was moved to tears with pain he felt in his hearth. All four sat on the pavement. The little ones were calmed down, but Ahmet could not contain his rage.

The same question was echoing in his mind. What can be so important about war to cause the fear in the eyes of those children?
SOCIAL COHESION

We couldn’t go to the course; the course came to us
A best practice of social cohesion via language courses for parents

Hoşgör, one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Gaziantep, is about a kilometre away from the city centre. Although the neighbourhood started housing Syrian refugees early on during the migration flow, Qudra was the first international support programme which offered Turkish language courses for them. Hoşgör Primary School is right at the heart of the neighbourhood. Based on the experience gained in the field, the Expertise France (EF) team designed the strategy to expand courses in suburb and rural areas with the approval of the Ministry of National Education. They wanted to reach refugees who cannot access public education centres in the city centre.

In December 2018, Expertise France initiated a series of language classes, social and intercultural events with the aim of strengthening social cohesion among the refugees in Hoşgör Primary School. The school provided a best practice for this strategy via its changing socio-cultural environment through Qudra Programme activities.

Principle of the school Mürsel Öztürk, has been an educator for twenty-six years. According to him, the basis of social cohesion in the school is language courses for parents.

“At a meeting of the board of teachers we decided to offer literacy courses to both Syrian and Turkish parents as part of the nation-wide literacy campaign in order to support active participation of parents in learning process. We started with around 10 classes. Then, Director of Ezogelin Public Education Centre, Recep Öztürk told us about Qudra Programme. Our A1 level Turkish courses for parents then increased to 28 classes. We planned it so that teachers taught the parents of their students. In classes, the teachers gave individual attention to the parents. Think about it: you get an education at the same school and at the very same desk as your child, you get to know how the school operates.”

“Another benefit of the courses is on the prevention of information pollution which supports hate speech about Syrians. Parents from Antep who attended literacy courses got to know Syrian parents closely, they learned about the war they survived, how they make a living. They saw that the hate speech was unwarranted. Thus, the relations between neighbours improved day by day.”

School counsellors Sercan Yılmaz and Sait Kökocak share their observation on this changing environment. “The awareness of parents regarding the school and how it operates has increased through Qudra. Children and parents become more open to mutual interaction once they overcome the language barrier. This helped us to overcome problems like anger control issues and to ensure that children gain positive behavioural traits at primary school.”

For the last five years I have had Syrian students. For successful education you should win over not only the students, but also the parents. With the language courses supported by Qudra, we reached out to many parents. They now know more about the school they send their children to and they trust us more.

“Through the courses and social activities, they also developed positive relations with Turkish parents. As a result of this cohesion, most of the problems that had occurred in previous years dropped to a minimum. Two basic indicators show the effect the courses have had: First, we no longer need interpreters. Second, there are fewer problems to do with conflicts, bullying and adjustment and this has strengthened the relationship between parents, school and teachers.”

Yasemin Mangıç has nineteen years of experience in her profession and this year, she worked with Syrian parents who applied to Qudra A1 courses, especially parents of the students at her 4-B class.

“We couldn’t go to the course; the course came to us; the course came to us”

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One of the classroom teachers Cemile Subaşı says: “We shared our joys and our sorrows. As people discover how much they have in common, they begin to view one another more positively. At Hoşgör Primary School, we have made a lot of progress to this end. We all have a share in the success, all of us; classroom teachers, administrators, school counsellor and pre-school teachers. Qudra Programme gave us a stronger hand in every respect.”

This article is based on interviews extracted from the book “From Migration to Heartbreak, From Heartbreak to Resilience: The stories of Qudra”.

We have over a thousand students. Around one third of them are children of parents who are under temporary protection or parents who have since become citizens.
Turkey is currently hosting more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees. Receiving the largest number of refugees in the world, Turkish municipalities have experienced significant challenges encouraging Qudra Programme to conduct a series of events and activities.

Qudra initiated a “Twin-City Learning Network” which was successfully launched on 24 May 2017 in Ankara, Turkey at the “Refugee Friendly Municipalities Conference”. 110 participants attended the kick-off conference attended by 45 Turkish and European municipalities.

After the successful start with the “Refugee Friendly Municipalities” workshop in 2017, Qudra took it one step further to connect German and Turkish municipalities and provided a constructive dialogue platform for interactive knowledge sharing, best practices exchange and collaborative learning. 9 German and 38 Turkish urban practitioners were brought together in Istanbul from 8 to 10 November 2018 to exchange municipal experience, identify successful strategies and develop project ideas.

The “Municipalities’ Options towards Integration of Refugees and Social Cohesion” workshop provided an exchange platform for many representatives of municipalities and NGO’s from Turkey and Germany in cooperation with Connective Cities and United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia Section (UCLG-MEWA) under the scope of the “Municipal know-how for host communities in the Middle-East” Programme, implemented jointly by Connective Cities and the “Service Agency Communities in One World of Engagement Global (SKEW)”. Turkish and German municipalities created new project ideas by involving good practice examples, peer-to-peer discussions and action-planning applications.

Connecting municipalities in Germany and Turkey

Funding opportunity for the municipalities

In cooperation with Connective Cities, Qudra facilitated a follow-up workshop between 12-15 February 2019 with the aim to make existing project ideas more concrete and/or develop new project ideas, which can be implemented by potential partnerships of German and Turkish municipalities. A two days study tour to selected governmental organisations, municipalities and NGO’s including State Office for Refugee Matters, Collective Accommodation Columbiadamm, Neighbourhood Center Schöneberg and Welcome Center Berlin were organised for a deeper understanding of the migration management in the context of Germany. Following the study tour, 20 German and 20 Turkish participants worked to develop further collaboration and 7 joint project ideas on language education, social cohesion, awareness raising, capacity building, referral services, women empowerment and volunteer management were defined to be funded by Engagement Global in the upcoming months of the year 2019.

Learning from good practices for a successful integration

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EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis ‘Madad Fund’
https://ec.europa.eu/trustfund-syria-region/content/home_en