



Emergency Employment Program Impacts Women

“What do you really expect a married woman from a traditional family in a West Bank remote village to aspire to - other than a housewife and a mother?” asks Abeer Rahhal, a 40-year-old mother of five. Rahhal lives in the Kafr Dan, a village in the Jenin Governorate, 132 kilometers north of Jerusalem.

Like most women in her community, she has a family, which she loves. But Abeer had no outside challenges, domestic chores filled her days, and she had no one to listen to her. She felt alone. Her immediate family lived in Jordan and communicating in her native language, or “foreign voices” according to her mother-in-law, would not be allowed. Rahhal became more unhappy and depressed, crying in silence.

With the increasing regional political struggles, the family’s daily existence became more economically difficult. One day, her husband brought home news of a USAID-funded training course in a nearby village. The program trains women in public health, environmental awareness, embroidery and aspects of agricultural production. The women are paid a daily rate for each day they participate in the training programs. Rahhal lobbied for family support to attend.



Photo: International Orthodox Christian Charities

Abeer Rahhal uses skills learned in her training to teach other women about health.

USAID funds the emergency employment program and it is having a profound impact on villages such as Kafr Dan. Among many new activities provided by the program, Abeer learned to breast-feed. Her youngest was only 2-months-old when the training began and she decided to breast-feed him, something she didn't do for her four other children simply because she lacked this knowledge.

“Breast-feeding this baby drew me closer to him and to my other sons and daughters. I felt so much love for all of them, and I felt love for the new woman in me. This was reflected in my attitude at home and happiness replaced my anger and depression.”

“I joined and felt as though I had finally regained my freedom. I attended the course and felt every part of me rejoice as I gained more and more knowledge.

- Abeer Rahhal, program participant

Abeer is among 533 women to complete the training program of environmental awareness and public health in the West Bank. 1,746 women benefited from the different USAID training programs. After completing the course, she applied for and was granted a job as a village health trainer. While the salary she receives improves her family’s income, her status in society has changed and her family takes pride in viewing her as a leader.

She now cherishes the respect of fellow village residents while helping change the lives of other rural women. Never again to be confined within the walls of her house, Abeer’s conviction that nothing has to remain the same has been validated - bad circumstances do not have to remain unchanged.

Success Story

