

Disability-Inclusive and Accessible WASH Services for Refugees in Jordan

SUMMARY

UNICEF in Jordan provides humanitarian response to the affected population and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services are one of the critical responses that UNICEF offers to refugees in camps, including those with disabilities. Refugees with disabilities can face significant barriers to accessing safe water and the dignified, independent and hygienic use of latrines. UNICEF is overcoming these barriers and meeting the water and sanitation rights and needs of Syrian refugees with disabilities in Za'atari, Azraq, King Abdullah Park (KAP) and Rukban refugee camps.

Camp-wide water and waste water systems in Za'atari refugee camp ensure equitable access for every household. In Azraq camp, while refugees still need to collect water from communal collection points, an extension of the water network to the plot levelⁱ is being planned. This will provide easier access for all residents, and persons with disabilities are being consulted in the design process. In all camps, community mobilization activities, with the help of community volunteers, are contributing to smoother and more equitable WASH operations. UNICEF and partners are taking a systematic approach, creating sustainable systems to identify vulnerable households and prioritize and meet their WASH needs in refugee camps.

The influx of refugees has placed the education infrastructure in Jordan under strain, resulting in overcrowding and exacerbated difficulties accommodating the needs of students with disabilities. UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Education to strengthen WASH in schools' policy and practice throughout the whole Kingdom, to create hygienic learning environments for all children, including refugees and children with disabilities, by providing disability accessible toilets and hand-washing facilities. Equitable, inclusive and accessible WASH is a key component of inclusive education for children with disabilities.

UNICEF and partners operate 139 child-friendly spaces, called Makani centres, in host communities, refugee camps and informal tented settlements (ITS) in Jordan. These safe spaces provide opportunities and services in learning, child protection, life skills and innovation, and are fully accessible to children with disabilities, including via accessible WASH facilities.

WASH FIELD NOTE

ⁱ In Azraq refugee camp, a plot includes 12 households.

Context

As a result of the conflict in Syria, since 2012 around 1.3 million Syrian refugees are estimated to have arrived in Jordan.¹

As of August 2021, there were 669,497 registered Syrian refugees in Jordan.² The largest proportion of refugees,

81 per cent, live in host communities and ITS,ⁱⁱ while 19 per cent live in refugee camps.³

UNICEF provides WASH services in Jordan to refugees in Za'atari camp, Azraq camp, King Abdullah Park (KAP) and Rukban camp. Table 1 shows the number of refugees in each of these camps.

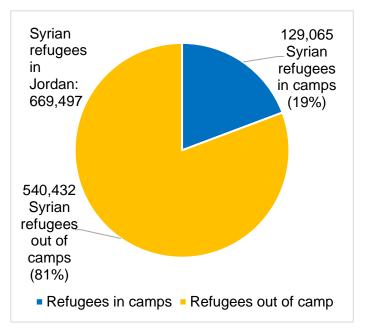


Figure 1. Syrian refugees in Jordan⁸

Table 1. Refugees in the camps where UNICEF provides WASH services

Camp	Number of refugees
Za'atari camp	78,8804
Azraq camp	37,946 ⁵
King Abdullah Park (KAP)	600 ⁶
Rukban camp	12,0007

within the official refugee camps and are not part of host communities.

ⁱⁱ Informal tented settlements (ITS) are clusters of housing that refugees have created that are not

According to the Higher Council of Affairs of Persons with Disabilities, in Jordan 13 per cent of the population has a disability.⁹ Given that conflict increases the number of persons with disabilities,¹⁰ it is not surprising that the disability prevalence is significantly higher amongst Syrian refugees in Jordan than amongst the general population. The disability prevalence rate of Syrian refugees is estimated to be 30 per cent.¹¹

A disability assessment found that prevalence varied between the refugee camps as well as in the host community, with 30.5 per cent of Za'atari camp residents having a disability, compared to 13.8 per cent in Azraq camp (see Figure 2).¹² At the household level, at least one member with a disability was identified in 68 per cent of Za'atari households, compared with 48 per cent in Azraq.¹³

Za'atari was opened first, in 2012, and became the first point of settlement for many Syrian refugees fleeing the conflict. This likely explains the difference in disability prevalence between the camps. Due to the significant humanitarian needs, a wide range of services was established in Za'atari, which is why refugees with disabilities that required specific services were more likely to be located in Za'atari.¹⁵

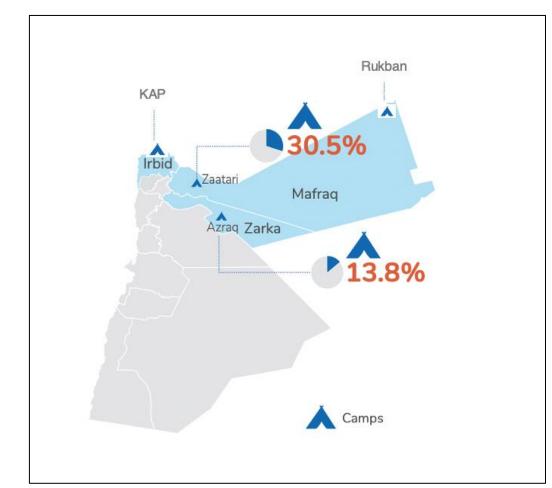


Figure 2. Disability prevalence by location, Jordan refugee camps¹⁴

In the camps, females have slightly higher rates of disability than males (this is aligned with global prevalence data).¹⁶ In terms of the cause of disabilities, an assessment found that 25 per cent of refugees with disabilities in camps in Jordan considered the cause of their disability to be linked to the Syrian conflict.¹⁷

As an agency, UNICEF has endorsed the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disability in Humanitarian Action (2016), which recognizes that "persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies and face multiple barriers in accessing humanitarian assistance."18 As a signatory, UNICEF commits to "strive to ensure that services and humanitarian assistance are equally available for and accessible to all persons with disabilities."19 UNICEF's WASH response in refugee camps in Jordan demonstrates this commitment to disability inclusion and equity for persons with disabilities in humanitarian situations.

Disability-inclusive WASH services in Za'atari Refugee Camp

The accessibility of Za'atari Refugee Camp for persons with disabilities was considered soon after the camp was established. An accessibility assessment of the camp was conducted in November 2012 by Humanity & Inclusion (HI), just four months after the camp officially opened. Accessibility issues were identified, and practical recommendations provided, including technical designs for accessible toilets, showers and handwashing facilities. UNICEF, the lead WASH coordinator in the camp, disseminated the recommendations to other WASH partners and HI monitored construction to ensure compliance with standards.²⁰ Figure 3. Ahmed pushes his daughter Safa, 6, in a wheelchair in Za'atari refugee camp



The WASH services that UNICEF and partners provided in Za'atari camp when it was established were typical of an emergency response, with water provided via trucks, a communal water supply and delivery points.²¹ Trucks would fill communal tanks shared between multiple households. When the tanks were full, people had to queue to access the water and haul it back to their shelter. The latrines were also for communal use. These conditions were challenging for persons with disabilities living in the camp.

BOX 1.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"I used to use the communal toilets. It was hard for me to use them. My father had to carry me there. It made me feel uncomfortable."

- Sami (16 years old and a wheelchair user living in Za'atari camp)²²

With no private toilets initially within the camp, the communal WASH latrines were particularly difficult to access and created risks for girls with disabilities, who had to go some distance to reach the latrine, including without any lights at night.²³

Since the establishment of the camp, the provision of WASH services in Za'atari has evolved from an emergency response to a more sustainable and inclusive WASH service provision that meets the rights and needs of the whole community, including persons with disabilities.²⁴ In a bid to improve efficiency, cost-effectiveness and sustainability and to reach all households, since early 2019 the camp has had a full water and waste water system that provides household-level services.^{III} Every household now has a toilet, water tank or tap and is connected to the water network. The provision of WASH services at the household level is particularly important for persons with disabilities, who previously faced significant difficulties collecting water and using communal toilets.

The final phase of the UNICEF-supported Za'atari water project was completed in 2019 and delivers safe water, via 300 km of pipeline, directly to households, benefiting all of the camp's 17,000 households. The system delivers between 40 (in winter) and 57 (in summer) litres per person per day. The water system was designed based on an assessment of the older communal water point system that identified access inequalities for women-headed households, the elderly and people with disabilities.²⁵ Some of the identified challenges included the need to queue for and haul water.²⁶ Household connections were provided irrespective of the demographic of the household and additional support was provided for households with specific needs.

^{III} The waste water network in Za'atari camp was completed at the end of 2017, while the water network was completed in February 2019.

BOX 2.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"I would be alone at home and have to go to the public water point and carry it home... it made a big difference when they connected the water to the houses. It helped a lot of people, with and without disabilities."

 Iman (17 years old and has a prosthetic leg)²⁷

An assessment found that there was no difference between households with and without disability in accessing safe water from reliable sources in Za'atari camp,²⁸ indicating that water is being equitably delivered to households with no significant accessibility barriers. However, 20 per cent of both households with and without disabilities do face some challenges accessing water, mostly due to water scarcity during the summer.²⁹ UNICEF provides additional water trucking in the summer months to ensure water needs are met.

Figure 4. Before the water network, water was collected from communal points in Za'atari



To better meet the sanitation needs of the most vulnerable in Za'atari, a camp-wide survey identified households with elderly people and/or people with disabilities. In the 1,600 households with persons with disabilities, UNICEF and partners installed private toilets that have been designed to meet accessibility standards, including raised seats, handrails and ramps.³⁰ As part of this process, HI trained engineers to apply accessibility standards for toilets and worked with community mobilizers to identify and communicate with persons with disabilities when determining eligibility.³¹ Toilets continue to be upgraded to be disability accessible, based on request and assessment via the vulnerability matrix (discussed further below).32

One of the challenges identified by HI in the provision of private latrines for households with persons with disabilities was families not initially recognizing the importance of an accessible latrine that would allow use by the family member with a disability in a safe, dignified and independent manner.³³ Where there were disagreements within households on the style of toilet (squat or the more accessible western-style), in some cases both were provided in either two separate cubicles or in the same cubicle.³⁴ A key lesson learnt from this process was the importance of involving persons with disabilities in decision-making and ensuring that the adaptation of the sanitation facility was based on the individual needs of each household, "rather than a blanket application of international accessibility standards."35

Meeting the WASH needs of the most vulnerable in Za'atari camp

Following UNICEF's installation of a campwide water and waste water system in Za'atari refugee camp to provide householdlevel services, there was a need to establish a system to identify vulnerable people in need of more specific WASH support on an ongoing basis. In 2020, a vulnerability matrix was developed by UNICEF, Oxfam and ACTED for Za'atari Refugee Camp.

Figure 5. After being connected to the water network, households have water from the tap in their kitchen



The vulnerability matrix is specific to WASH and assigns a priority score for different groups. The scores vary by group as well as across the different WASH services: Water Services: Waste water Services: and Private Latrines. Single persons with disabilities are assigned a high/critical (3) priority rating for water, waste water and latrines.³⁶ A person with a disability living with at least one caregiver is considered a medium (2) priority. When requests are made related to WASH services and infrastructure via the camp WASH hotline or through volunteers, the requests are prioritized according to the vulnerability matrix and entered into a database. WASH infrastructure requests are sorted in the database according to vulnerability and the database is used as a tool to prioritize requests, as well as to track the completion of WASH support. This prioritization is particularly important when funding for WASH infrastructure is limited, as it allows funds to be directed towards the

most vulnerable. The vulnerability matrix has also helped to guide and inform frontline workers and decision-makers on the factors that make people vulnerable in the context of Za'atari Refugee Camp.

Another mechanism to identify and support persons with disabilities, as well as ensure their participation in WASH services, in Za'atari Refugee Camp is the Community Engagement and Volunteering Structure (CEVS). The newly established CEVS will engage with UNICEF and WASH partners to facilitate community participation and ownership of the water and waste water networks, as well as all other WASH operations. The CEVS has been designed to have diverse representation of different groups, including across gender, age and geographical location in the camp, as well as disability. To date, 15 out of 60 volunteers of the CEVS are either persons with disabilities or caregivers of persons with disabilities.

In addition, a community feedback and reporting mechanism has been established to address complaints immediately, ensuring that no one is left behind in their access to WASH in the camp.

Disability-inclusive WASH in Azraq Refugee Camp

Azraq Refugee Camp is smaller than Za'atari camp and is home to just under half as many Syrian refugees as Za'atari. In Azraq camp, 61.5 per cent of the refugee population are children³⁷ and 13.8 per cent of refugees aged 2 years and older have disabilities.³⁸

Water needs in Azraq are met via a UNICEFestablished water supply network, with over 300 tap stands that provide an average of 40 litres per person per day.³⁹ The daily supply was increased to 52 litres per person per day to respond to increased demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁰ An assessment in 2018 found that 99.6 per cent of households with persons with disabilities had enough safe water from reliable sources in Azraq camp.⁴¹

Sanitation in Azrag is provided by toilets and bathing cubicles, with two WASH facilities (gender separated) shared between every six shelters.⁴² Private latrines have been progressively provided to vulnerable households and persons with disabilities. In the early stages of the camp design, the WASH cluster, coordinated by UNICEF, included a disability focal point. As a result 10 per cent of the sanitation facilities were accessible and the location of households with persons with disabilities informed the location of the accessible facilities.⁴³ However, in 2018, it was found that 15 per cent of households with persons with disabilities continued to face challenges related to latrine accessibility.44 In addition, the shared facilities also raised concerns for safety, with one in five families worried that they could be harmed or injured while using latrines in the camp, which may be partly linked to the accessibility of the facilities.⁴⁵ To increase access for persons with disabilities to sanitation in Azraq camp, UNICEF led the construction of private latrines in the households of persons with disabilities.46 UNICEF also operates a hotline in the camp to respond to any WASH-related complaints.

Disability-inclusive WASH services in Rukban and KAP refugee camps

To ensure that people with disabilities have access to clean water in Rukban refugee camp, UNICEF's partner in the camp is using carts to deliver water to the shelters of persons with disabilities. This service is also provided to elderly people and to people of concern who live far from the tap stands and have no means of transport to haul water back to their shelters.

UNICEF also ensures inclusive WASH services in KAP refugee camp by providing latrines to every household, prioritizing persons with disabilities. While 14 private latrines were installed at shelters of persons with disabilities by the end of November 2020, private latrines have now been expanded to the rest of the camp. Moreover, by the end of 2020, water tanks were installed for all shelters, providing easy access to safe drinking-water to all households, including those with persons with disabilities.

UNICEF partners in both KAP and Rukban refugee camps facilitate equitable service delivery to all refugees in the camps, prioritizing persons with disabilities and other vulnerable people.

Disability accessible childfriendly spaces in Jordan

Following the influx of refugee children into Jordan, UNICEF developed a programme based around child-friendly spaces to deliver services and provide psychosocial support to children affected by the conflict. In host communities, refugee camps and ITS in Jordan, UNICEF and partners operate 139 child-friendly spaces,^{iv} called Makani centres (Makani means 'my space' in Arabic).⁴⁷ Designed to be inclusive and nondiscriminatory, Makani centres are safe spaces for children (0–18 years old) that provide an integrated package of learning support services, child protection, life skills and social innovation labs.⁴⁸

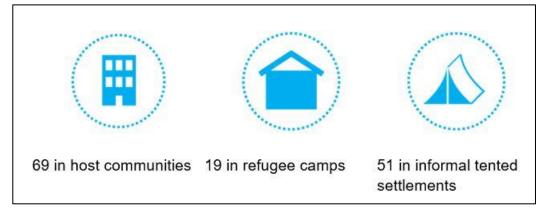


Figure 6. Number of Makani centres in Jordan in 2021

^{iv} Number of active Makani centres as of July 2021.

The Makani programme provides children with information on hygiene, including critical COVID-19 related messages on hand washing and social distancing.⁴⁹ When the Makani centres closed due to the pandemic, this information was shared online through videos as well as message/text groups and voice notes.⁵⁰

The Makani programme undertakes regular community outreach in order to identify vulnerable children. Children with disabilities are considered to have specific needs and vulnerabilities that must receive particular attention within the programme.⁵¹ The Makani programme plays an integral role in providing learning and psychosocial support, particularly to children that are out of school. A survey of children attending Makanis found that 6 per cent of children without disabilities were out of school, compared to 23 per cent of children with disabilities being out of school.⁵²

Between January 2019 and June 2021, 3,517 children with disabilities (51 per cent female) had accessed Makani services across Jordan. The majority (94 per cent) of these children were in host communities.⁵³

The Makani programme has internal minimum standards for the accessibility of Makani centres. Makani centres are assessed against accessibility specifications, with scores provided for the accessibility of each area, including WASH facilities. The minimum standards provide specifications for WASH facilities' manoeuvring space, grab rails, wash basin height and taps. As children with disabilities are more likely to be out of school, Makanis are critical for social interaction with peers, education and mental health, and having accessible WASH facilities reduces barriers to their participation in the programme. Figure 7. Ammar, 12 years old, who has an intellectual disability, in his Makani centre in Zarqa



WASH in schools' system strengthening to be disability inclusive

The arrival of 1.3 million refugees into Jordan has exacerbated existing challenges in the education system infrastructure.54 Since 1960, schools in Jordan have adopted the approach of double shifts to cope with situations of overcrowding.55 With the influx of Syrian refugee children, the approach of double shifts was expanded across the country.⁵⁶ The pressure placed on the education system by the influx of refugees has made it even more difficult to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities.⁵⁷ A UNICEF study on out-ofschool children found that children with disabilities are likely to have never entered education.⁵⁸ And if they did, many students with disabilities drop out due to barriers in the environment, attitudes and a lack of accommodations to meet their needs.59

UNICEF Jordan's work on disability-inclusive WASH goes beyond the provision of WASH services to refugees with disabilities to also working with the government to create equitable and inclusive national WASH systems. Jordan has signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.^v The Government of Jordan has also endorsed a law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Law Number 20 for the Year 2017).⁶⁰ The law stipulates, in Article 17, that "it is forbidden to exclude someone from any educational institution on the basis of, or because of, disability."⁶¹ Further, Article 18 states that the Ministry of Education is responsible for providing accessibility in all government educational institutions and ascertaining non-government education institutions' commitment to accessibility.⁶²

UNICEF led the development of the National Standards for WASH in Schools in Jordan (2017)⁶³ and is working closely with the Ministry of Education on the roll-out of the standards. In alignment with the law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the standards have equity and inclusion, including for children with disabilities, as a key area for positive impact. The standards, which incorporate design guidelines, lay the groundwork to align all schools in Jordan with basic international standards, enabling all students in Jordan to learn in a clean and hygienic school environment.

The design guidelines include disability accessibility considerations for:

- Toilets (each school to have at least one toilet accessible for children with disabilities);
- Hand washing (one hand-washing facility per school accessible for users with disabilities).⁶⁴

The specifications provided for disability accessible toilets are comprehensive, covering manoeuvring space, door width, handrails, door handles, toilet seat and ramps. In addition, the standards remind readers that other school infrastructure, beyond WASH, needs to be accessible for children with disabilities.

Box 3.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"Some children didn't go to school before [toilets were accessible] because they were afraid they might need to go to the bathroom and their house is far away."

 Abed Elmajeed Noaimi, UNICEF Communication Specialist.⁶⁵

Box 4.

INCREASED ACCESS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

All UNICEF schools and Makanis in Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps have accessible toilets. In 2020, UNICEF reached 1,143 children with disabilities in humanitarian settings with access to WASH facilities in schools, temporary learning and child-friendly spaces.⁶⁶

The WASH in Schools Standards are ambitious in their scope, especially considering that in 2018, only 1 in 3 (33 per cent) of schools in Jordan had basic sanitation services and only 11 per cent of schools had toilets accessible to students with limited mobility.⁶⁷ Given this, the Ministry of Education has developed a support system to accompany the standards and help

^v The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was signed in March 2007 and ratified in March 2008.

schools to reach them. The support system builds on UNICEF and GIZ's Three Star Approach to WASH in Schools⁶⁸ and provides milestones for schools as they work towards reaching the national standards.⁶⁹ Schools that achieve a three-star rating have full accessibility for children with disabilities.

As accessible toilets and hand washing are a barrier for children with disabilities to enrol and attend school, the disability accessible components in the National Standards for WASH in Schools are critical to achieving inclusive education as outlined in the 10-year Strategy for Inclusive Education.⁷⁰ UNICEF has made special efforts to strengthen inclusive education in Jordan, reaching 4,695 children with disabilities (48 per cent girls) with education interventions in refugee camps and host communities.⁷¹ Support includes training teachers on inclusive education techniques and equipping resource rooms where children are provided with oneon-one support, aligned with their Individual Development Plan.

Lessons learnt

- In Za'atari Refugee Camp, UNICEF's establishment of a camp-wide WASH network, reaching every household, facilitated access to basic water and sanitation services to all families, ensuring equitable water distribution and overcoming barriers in hauling and queuing for water.
- For persons with disabilities, the impact of access to water and sanitation within the household was immediate and life changing,⁷² increasing dignity and overcoming significant barriers.
- In Za'atari, the camp-wide water and waste water system increased access for all households, but mechanisms such as the vulnerability matrix and database are required to identify and meet the specific

needs of vulnerable households, including those with persons with disabilities.

- UNICEF and partners installed disability accessible latrines within shelters for households of persons with disabilities, in both Za'atari and Azraq camps, which has strengthened independent and dignified access to sanitation, while eliminating the need to travel and wait in line for communal latrines that may not be accessible. This is particularly significant for women and children with disabilities, for whom accessing communal latrines at night raised safety concerns.
- In Azraq, although the communal tap stands are accessible with ramps, UNICEF is expanding the water network to provide water at the plot level. This will decrease the distance needed to travel to collect water and reduce queueing time in cases of high demand, overcoming these barriers for persons with disabilities.
- WASH community engagement mechanisms in both Za'atari and Azraq camps have included representation of persons with disabilities and their caregivers. They have created a forum for their voices to be heard and their WASH rights and needs to be identified and met.
- Disability accessible WASH facilities in schools, temporary learning spaces and child-friendly spaces are critical to reduce some of the significant barriers that children with disabilities face in accessing an education. UNICEF's installation of accessible toilets in all schools and Makanis in Za'atari and Azraq camps, as well as working with the government to develop WASH in Schools' standards that include accessibility, are milestones towards the inclusive education strategic goal for children with disabilities "to achieve full enjoyment of education and access to

all programs, services and facilities in educational institutions."73

 UNICEF has taken a systemic approach to inclusive and accessible WASH in Jordan, by working with partners to create systems for vulnerable groups and with the government to improve policies, standards and practice, resulting in persons with disabilities rights to water and sanitation being strengthened in refugee camps and within the Kingdom.

Next steps

In Za'atari refugee camp

UNICEF and partners will continue to focus on WASH service provision for the most vulnerable, in Za'atari refugee camp. Following the development of a vulnerability matrix to systemically identify vulnerable households and provide WASH support to meet their specific needs, periodic vulnerability assessments will be conducted. These WASH assessments collect information to update the vulnerability matrix and ensure that no one is left behind in Za'atari in their access to water and sanitation.

The CEVS established in Za'atari camp will continue. The CEVS provides an important function, facilitating community participation, consultation and ownership of water and waste water networks, and WASH operations in the camp. The structure will be evaluated to ensure it is providing a two-way engagement space between WASH service providers and a diverse range of refugees, including refugees with disabilities, women who head households, the elderly and young people.

UNICEF will further strengthen the participation of persons with disabilities by planning activities and initiatives to be fully accessible and providing opportunities for persons with disabilities to lead WASH activities in the camp. This includes WASH meetings and community WASH trainings, as well as planning and leading volunteers on community initiatives, for example cleaning of water tanks or community messaging. UNICEF also plans to conduct periodic assessments of the participation opportunities and engagement of persons with disabilities and their caregivers.

In Azraq refugee camp

As part of the community mobilization strategy being rolled out in Azraq camp, UNICEF supports the inclusion and engagement of persons with disabilities in the new Youth Community Forum. As part of the forum, 130 Youth Community Representative (YCRs) are in the process of being selected (females and males aged between 18 and 24 years). Young persons with disabilities have been encouraged to apply to be YCRs. The YCRs will play a major role in community engagement, which is one of the pillars of the WASH Community Mobilization Strategy for Azrag camp. They will represent the needs, opportunities and challenges of youth with disabilities in the camp and are assuming this role in mid-2021. UNICEF and WASH implementing partners will ensure that persons with disabilities are represented and have their voices heard in community engagement mechanisms within Azrag camp.

UNICEF and partners are focusing WASH infrastructure efforts in Azraq on improving access to water. Water connections in the camp will be extended to the plot level to reduce distance and waiting times while collecting water. These planned infrastructure improvements are particularly significant for persons with disabilities who face difficulties queuing or hauling water.

For the WASH in Schools programme

UNICEF aims to ensure clean, gendersensitive and disability accessible toilets and hand-washing facilities are available in schools, with soap available at all times. In order to continue strengthening inclusive WASH services to schools in Jordan, UNICEF will roll-out nationwide the WASH in Schools standards (that include provision for disability accessibility), improving facilities in 100 schools to meet the standards.vi This is being achieved through the construction of additional WASH facilities or rehabilitation of existing ones to reach the defined national standards. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, UNICEF will also review and update the WASH in Schools standards after three years of implementation. This will ensure that the disability accessibility requirements for WASH facilities in schools are periodically reviewed and re-evaluated to ensure they are meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

BOX 5. VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"I want to be an engineer because now I have seen these engineers who think about people with disabilities. I'm inspired to be just like them and to build a new future that doesn't discriminate against people with and without disabilities because you have to think about both."

 Hamza (11 years old, lives in Za'atari refugee camp and uses a wheelchair)⁷⁴



Figure 8. Hamza, in his accessible bathroom in Za'atari refugee camp

vi There are 3,685 public schools in Jordan.

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