

## To Improve or Not to Improve Reflections from Jerash Urban Improvement Project, Jordan

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**Abstract :** Palestine Refugee Camps have never been settings that can be overlooked; they even became (as physical settings) a cornerstone topic of negotiations whenever Palestinian matters are on the table (specifically in Jordan). Consequently, maintaining the familiar face of the camp with its dilapidated shelters and narrow streets that rarely allowed its residents to extinguish a fire or evacuate a building safely has become a fundamental method to protect the “right of the return” from the perspective of various stakeholders. When the Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme (ICIP) was established in 2007 as an additional UNRWA program, some concerns were raised around the newly established section, mainly due to its direct impact on the “image” of the camp through a provision of a relatively nonconventional service that differs from what the Agency used to provide in the past seventy years. By presenting the Urban Improvement Project in Jerash camp (UIP) -Jordan, this paper aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion around enduring the improvement of Palestine refugee camps “programmatically” in UNRWA or not. The UIP as a co-product by UNRWA and the camp’s community within one of the most vulnerable refugee camps in Jordan offers a remarkable opportunity to excerpt lessons that can contribute to the strategic shaping of the ICIP. The paper concludes with five mine uptakes mainly related to community engagement, power structures and UNRWA's role in camps.

**Keywords :** camp improvement program, Jerash camp, Palestine refugee camps, UNRWA.

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