

HARVESTING OPPORTUNITY: IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF SEASON'S MARKETS IN JORDAN FROM LOCAL MARKETS TO SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

سوق
سوق الموسم
Season's Market



*By the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) in collaboration
with the Renaissance Strategic Centre (RSC) at ARDD*

The Season's Market is an ARDD Initiative, implemented within the Project “**Future Forward:
Unlocking sustainable local opportunities**” under the European Regional Development and
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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Executive Summary

In Jordan, a significant segment of the population, including refugees, women, and informal workers remains sidelined from the formal labor market.¹ This exclusion is rarely a result of a lack of skills, but rather a systemic lack of access to regulated platforms. The **Season's Market Initiative**, supported by the **Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD)**,² within the framework of **Future Forward project**,³ served as a strategic intervention to bridge this gap. By leveraging existing local knowledge and vendor agency, the Season's Market Initiative developed an inclusive economic opportunity, shifting away from "top-down" aid models toward a sustainable, context-responsive livelihood mechanism.

As part of this initiative, ARDD promoted the participation of small-scale vendors and home-based entrepreneurs in six (6) season's markets across Amman, between 2024 and 2025, offering participants the opportunity to generate income, develop their businesses, and connect with customers, donors, and civil society actors. The results are compelling: all 12 interviewed vendors reported increased income, improved market access, and heightened business confidence. Most notably, the initiative demonstrated a **92% transformative increase in household economic impact**, illustrating the untapped potential of seasonal markets for groups often excluded from traditional employment.

By situating the Season's Market Initiative within the broader landscape of Jordan's traditional marketplaces, this report aims to document the specific economic and social outcomes achieved by participating vendors, and to generate evidence-based advocacy for integrating market-based schemes into national economic strategies.

Based on the findings, the report offers practical recommendations for donors, policymakers, civil society organizations, and private sector on how to replicate, formalize, and expand such initiatives as part of Jordan's broader livelihood and localization agenda.

1.2 Key Findings

The findings of this report confirm that localized, market-driven livelihood models are both *viable and scalable*. Data gathered through quantitative analysis and qualitative Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) highlight three main achievements that justify increased investment and policy support towards Season's Markets:

- 1. Bridging the Exclusion Gap:** Organized bazaars provide immediate, measurable income, especially for those often excluded from formal employment systems. By offering a low-barrier entry point, these markets enable marginalized groups, such as refugees, women, and informal workers, to generate revenue and participate economically, thereby addressing systemic inequalities in accessing job opportunities.

¹ Relief web: Labor Market Assessment Report (Danish Refugee Council), Jordan, 2026: <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/jordan-labour-market-assessment-report-february-2026>

² ARDD Website: <https://ardd-jo.org>

³ Future Forward Project: Unlocking sustainable local opportunities: <https://ardd-jo.org/project/future-forward-unlocking-sustainable-local-opportunities/>

2. Building on Human Capital Development: Beyond simply generating revenue, these initiatives play a vital role in enhancing human capital. They foster an environment that boosts confidence, cultivates entrepreneurial skills, and facilitates the transition from isolation to semi-formal economic participation. As vendors engage with customers and peers, they also build social networks that provide support and mentorship. This empowerment encourages a sense of agency and belonging within the community.

3. Policy Viability, Sustainability and Scalability: With the right institutional backing, particularly in terms of flexible licensing and supportive regulations, these bazaars have the potential to evolve from temporary, project-based events into permanent, self-sustaining economic instruments. Their design allows for easy replication, making them adaptable to various contexts, in different communities, contributing to broader economic resilience and inclusive growth. Institutional support is then fundamental for the sustainability and scalability of such initiatives: successful models can be expanded to include more vendors, diverse products, and additional services, thereby maximizing their social and economic impact.

The initiative demonstrated a **92% transformative increase in household economic impact**. This report presents concrete evidence that the Season's Market Initiative has been a successful intervention, serving as evidence-based incubator to harvest alternative livelihood opportunities, achieving tangible economic and social results. Ultimately, by proposing **locally based solutions for livelihood opportunities**, this initiative aims to foster **equitable and resilient economic systems that benefit all members of the society**.



2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Redefining Livelihoods through Agency and Inclusion

“This is more than a craft; it’s a story of patience and hope a way to keep tradition alive and turn creativity into opportunity” Mohammad (Vendor at the Seasons Market Initiative)

Jordan currently navigates a complex landscape of socio-economic pressures, exacerbated by the protracted Syrian refugee crisis, regional instability, and the increasing impact of climate change.⁴ These external shocks have deepened the structural gaps within the national labor market. The statistics are stark: Jordan has some of the highest unemployment rates and the lowest labour force participation rates globally. Despite a robust education system and high literacy, the country grapples with a youth unemployment crisis that far surpasses global averages.⁵ In the 20-24 age group, youth unemployment exceeds 46-61%, according to some studies.⁶ Even higher education offers no guaranteed shield, with high unemployment rates among university graduates, reaching 25.8% in 2024, representing a significant portion of the unemployed, particularly among women.⁷ For the most vulnerable, specifically women, refugees, and home-based micro-entrepreneurs, the formal job market is often inaccessible due to rigid regulatory hurdles, limited mobility, and the high costs of establishing permanent businesses.⁸ Consequently, a vast number of informal and home-based workers remain trapped in unstable working conditions.⁹

In response to these challenges, localized markets and seasonal bazaars have re-emerged as practical, low-threshold avenues for economy participation. Popular markets are often initiated by vendors themselves, reflecting strong elements of self-organization and agency. Evidence shows that vendor-led decisions, such as selecting market locations, are frequently more successful than top-down planning approaches. By bypassing formal market barriers, local bazaars allow home-based artisans and

⁴ ILO Response: Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan and Lebanon; <https://www.ilo.org/regions-and-countries/ilo-arab-states/areas-work/employment-promotion-arab-states/ilo-response-syrian-refugee-crisis-jordan-and-lebanon>

⁵ Rosenstengel, G., Truzzi, E., Schumann, C. “Jordan’s Structural Unemployment Problem” Global Policy Research Group, 2024: https://www.jsf.org/uploads/Jordan_s%20Unemployment%20Problem-word.pdf

⁶ Dr. Al Tal, R., Dr. Hussein, J. “Youth Unemployment in Jordan: Failed Strategies and Deferred Promises,” ARDD, 2023: <https://ardd-jo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Youth-Unemployment-in-Jordan.pdf> ; UNICEF Policy Brief, Assaad, R., Krafft, C., and Sieverding, M. Barriers to Economic Participation for Young People in Jordan: A Gendered Analysis, UNICEF, 2021: <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/media/9156/file/Policy%20Brief-%20Barriers%20to%20Economic%20Participation%20for%20young%20People%20in%20Jordan-English.pdf>

⁷ Al-Masaeid, M. “Jordan’s employment and unemployment key insights from labour market panel survey 2025,” Final Report JOR 25318, International Growth Centre, March 2026 : <https://www.theigc.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/Al-Masaeid-Final-Report-March-2026.pdf>

⁸ Global Gender Gap Report 2025: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2025/>

⁹ Jalal Abu Saleh, “Labor in the Arab World: Reforms Still on Hold!,” *Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development*, 2025, <https://ardd-jo.org/blogs/labor-in-the-arab-world-reforms-still-on-hold/>.

refugees to transform domestic skills into immediate income and facilitate public economic participation.

Moreover, building on the tradition and knowledge of local markets, the Season's Market Initiative represents an important shift in the humanitarian and development paradigm. Moving away from conventional approaches based on *aid dependency*, which often treats individuals as passive recipients of aid, this initiative is built on the principles of **vendor agency and economic empowerment**. By recognizing participants as active economic actors, the initiative honors their existing local knowledge and entrepreneurial drive, offering them the tools to navigate the market on their own terms. In this model, the Season's Market wants to be a professional incubator, where livelihoods are sustained through dignity, skill-building, and direct market engagement.

Beyond immediate income generation, the Season's Market Initiative has also provided a **live advocacy platform**, physically connecting micro-entrepreneurs with a strategic network of national and international actors, and potential donors. This direct interaction breaks the isolation of home-based businesses and fosters a cross-sector dialogue strategy. By emphasizing an advocacy-driven approach, ARDD seeks to secure institutional support and demonstrate how these markets can be formalized and included into Jordan's national livelihood strategies.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Structural Heritage of Local Markets in Jordan: An Economic Enabler or a Missed Opportunity?

(Insights from ARDD Analysis)

Local markets have historically served as crucial economic and social hubs throughout the Middle East region, including Jordan. Even before the development of formal retail systems, these markets were the main venues for exchanging goods, supporting livelihoods, and fostering community cohesion. This tradition continues to be relevant today, especially in areas facing recurrent economic instability, and restricted access to formal jobs. Popular markets in Jordan represent a long-standing socio-economic phenomenon that extends beyond their function as spaces for trade. These markets are deeply embedded within the broader context of the informal economy and have historically emerged as adaptive responses for inclusive economic development.¹⁰

Importantly, the sustainability of popular markets is closely linked to their ability to respond to actual demand within communities. Research underscores that markets do not create demand; rather, they emerge as a response to existing needs. They are characterized by **affordability**, **accessibility**, **flexibility**, and **responsiveness** to real market demand. Beyond their economic role, these markets fulfill critical social functions. They serve as livelihood mechanisms for individuals operating at the margins of the formal economy, including home-based businesses, informal workers, and vulnerable populations. Simultaneously, they contribute to social cohesion by creating shared public spaces that facilitate interaction, exchange, and community engagement.

Although local markets show significant potential in providing alternatives to addressing the contextual economic bottlenecks, they continue to be marginalized in the institutionalized livelihood strategies and policies. Often viewed as informal, temporary, or supplementary, they are not regarded as essential economic ways, deserving significant investment and institutional backing. This gap between the demonstrated value of local markets and their marginal status in national policy has constrained their ability to scale, achieve long-term sustainability, and contribute meaningfully to broader economic development and poverty reduction goals.

3.2 The Season's Market Initiative by ARDD

To bridge this gap between historical potential and policy neglect, the Season's Market Initiative, within the Future Forward project, was designed to provide the empirical evidence needed to move local markets from the informal periphery to the center of national livelihood strategies. The Future Forward project is a joint initiative implemented by ARDD and funded by the European Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP III), seeking to foster innovative ideas and collective community efforts to design sustainable livelihood solutions, rooted in the country-

¹⁰ ARDD Season's Market: Experts Highlight the Importance of Supporting Markets to Strengthen Livelihoods: <https://ardd-jo.org/news/seasons-market-experts-highlight-the-importance-of-supporting-markets-to-strengthen-livelihoods/#:~:text=Share,by%20ARDD's%20Renaissance%20Strategic%20Center.>

specific social and economic dynamics.¹¹ To boost sustainability and resilience among local communities,¹² throughout 2024 and 2025, this Season's Market Initiative featured six (6) seasonal bazaars strategically held across various locations in Amman, with the objective to integrate marginalized populations into major economic avenues, promoting social cohesion, and empowering people to become self-sufficient. Designed as more than just sales events, the initiative served as a comprehensive platform that combines livelihood generation, learning opportunities, and advocacy efforts.

The consistent participation in six seasonal bazaars gave vendors immediate opportunity to earn a sustainable income, while also allowing them to learn through practice. By engaging directly with customers in real market conditions, vendors were able to test pricing strategies, improve product presentation, strengthen communication skills, and expand their customer base. This hands-on experience contributed to greater confidence and business resilience, particularly for home-based and micro-enterprises with limited access to formal support services. Moreover, the initiative fostered collaboration across sectors, offering insights on how localized market platforms can support inclusive economic pathways.

The initiative placed a strong emphasis on data collection as well, systematically gathering both quantitative and qualitative insights from each bazaar. This included information on sales performance, market access, and the challenges faced by vendors, obtained through surveys and focus group discussions. By doing so, the initiative could feed measurable evidence that demonstrates the economic and social benefits of localized, market-based livelihood models.

Through this initiative, ARDD aims to provide a replicable model, proving how localized markets can serve as effective tools for economic development, while promoting economic inclusion, social cohesion and empowerment within the whole community.

¹¹ Future Forward: Unlocking sustainable local opportunities: <https://ardd-jo.org/project/future-forward-unlocking-sustainable-local-opportunities/>

¹² Season's Market: Experts Highlight the Importance of Supporting Markets to Strengthen Livelihoods: <https://ardd-jo.org/news/seasons-market-experts-highlight-the-importance-of-supporting-markets-to-strengthen-livelihoods/>

4. THE IMPACT REPORT

4.1 Assessing Seasonal Markets

By examining the participation of 12 vendors across six bazaar cycles between 2024 and 2025, this report aims at assessing the impact of this initiative on vendors' livelihoods, drawing on both quantitative data from surveys and qualitative insights from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The analysis sheds light on how these bazaars influenced participants' *economic performance*, *business development*, and *market access*. While the small sample size necessitates a cautious interpretation of the findings as indicative rather than statistically conclusive, the report provides valuable guidance for further research and strategic planning.

The report aims to achieve two primary objectives: (a) to outline the economic and social outcomes of the initiative; and (b) to generate evidence-based advocacy arguments for the integration of localized, market-based livelihood models into Jordan's national humanitarian and development policy agenda.

Given the small sample size of 12 surveyed vendors, the quantitative findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than statistically representative. They provide useful insight into participants' experiences and outcome trends; however, these findings should not be generalized beyond the assessed group without further research.

Targeting donor agencies, NGOs, private-sector partners, and government officials involved in livelihood projects and localization policy dialogue, this report situates the Season's Market Initiative within a broader context of popular markets in Jordan. In doing so, it not only assesses immediate outcomes but also contributes to a deeper understanding of how such interventions can be designed as sustainable, context-responsive livelihood support mechanisms. These mechanisms build on local knowledge and vendor agency, rather than relying on externally designed models, recognizing the significant added value of local markets.

Assessment Snapshot

- **Project Period:** 2024-2025
- **Number of bazaar cycles:** 6
- **Location:** Amman-based seasonal market venues
- **Survey respondents:** 12 vendors
- **FDG participants:** 4

Participant profile

- Women: 7 (57%)
- Men: 5 (43%)
- Syrian and Iraqi refugees and Jordanian host community members
- Mainly micro and home-based businesses

Key Economic Outcomes

- 92% reported the bazaar as their primary source of income during participation
- 58% reported a significant increase in sales
- 42% reported a moderate increase in sales

Market access

- 92% reached new customers or markets
- 100% established valuable business contacts

Business development

- 92% reported improvements in products, sales methods, or customer engagement

Participant satisfaction

- 100% reported positive participation experiences
- 75% were very satisfied

Key aspects emerged from the analysis include:

- The extent to which organized bazaars replicate or enhance the core functions of traditional popular markets, particularly their accessibility, affordability, and responsiveness to local demand.
- Their effectiveness in supporting income generation and business sustainability for small-scale vendors and home-based entrepreneurs.
- Their role in bridging informal and semi-formal economic participation, especially for vulnerable groups such as refugees, women, and low-income households.
- The gaps and limitations that must be addressed to strengthen their long-term impact and ensure their integration into broader livelihood frameworks.

4.2 Report Methodology

The triangulation of survey data and FGDs provides a high degree of internal consistency, validating the qualitative depth of the findings.

- Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative component drew on survey data collected from **twelve (12) vendors** (out of a pool of 20 season's market participants), attending the **six (6) Season's Market bazaars** between 2024 and 2025. The survey assessed the following dimensions: income generation, sales volume, market access, business sustainability and development, and overall satisfaction and perceived impact.

- Qualitative Component

The qualitative component consisted of **four (4) FGDs** conducted with selected **12 vendors** across the bazaar cycles. The discussions explored four thematic areas: markets as accessible economic entry points, increased visibility and confidence, structural barriers to business expansion, and the broader value of market participation beyond immediate income gains.

- Limitations and Pathways Forward

While the sample is exploratory rather than statistically representative, the consistency of findings across both quantitative and qualitative data points to clear and meaningful patterns. The following limitations are acknowledged alongside concrete steps to strengthen future assessments:

- **Sample size:** The current sample of 12 vendors reflects the pilot nature of the initiative. As the Season's Market scales and reaches more participants, future assessments should expand the vendor survey to capture a larger and more diverse sample, strengthening the statistical robustness of the evidence base.
- **Geographic Scope:** The initiative has primarily focused on Amman. Replicating the initiative and its documentation across other governorates would allow for comparative insights and demonstrate the model's adaptability to different economic and social contexts throughout Jordan.
- **Self-Selection Bias:** Vendors who participated in the data collection may represent a particularly engaged subset of the sample. Establishing systematic data collection as a standard component of all future bazaars, rather than a separate opt-in exercise, would ensure more comprehensive and representative findings over time.
- **FGDs documentation:** Standardizing FGD protocols across all bazaar cycles going forward will facilitate more consistent tracking of vendor experiences and outcomes.

- **Short-Term Focus:** The current analysis is based on a limited timeframe. Future assessments should consider conducting enduring studies to track changes over time, offering deeper insights into the long-term impacts of participation in the Season's Market.
- **Variable External Factors:** Economic conditions, seasonal variations, and social dynamics can influence market performance and vendor experiences. Future studies should account for these factors to provide context for the findings.

Together, these steps would transform future editions of this assessment from an exploratory snapshot into a long-term, evidence-based report capable of demonstrating the sustained and growing impact of the Season's Market model to donors, policymakers, and partners.

5. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES

5.1 Quantitative Outcomes

The quantitative survey results provide insight into how participation in the Season's Market initiative influenced vendors' income opportunities, sales performance, market access, and business development. Although the sample size is limited (12 vendors), the findings offer valuable indicative evidence of the initiative's economic and business-related outcomes.

To ensure alignment with the assessment methodology, the findings are organized according to the key indicators used in the survey.

- **Income Generation**

Participation in the Season's Market initiative created significant income opportunities and contributed to short-term livelihood stability for vendors during the bazaar cycles. Specifically, **11 out of 12 vendors, the 92%, reported that their participation served as their primary source of income during the bazaar period, with a critical impact on their livelihood.** This finding highlights the important role that seasonal markets can play in providing accessible income-generating opportunities for small entrepreneurs, particularly those operating micro or home-based businesses with limited access to formal employment or permanent retail spaces. The results also suggest that periodic market events can serve as vital supplementary livelihood mechanisms, enabling vendors to earn income while maintaining flexible and low-cost business operations.

- **Sales Volume**

Survey results indicate a strong positive impact on vendors' sales performance during participation in the seasonal markets. All respondents reported increased sales, with 58% noting a significant rise and the remaining 42% experiencing a moderate increase. Notably, no vendors reported stagnant or declining sales during the events. These findings suggest that seasonal bazaars create favorable conditions for small businesses to generate higher revenues through direct customer interaction and opportunities to showcase products to a wider audience. Vendors also reported that the market setting allowed them to test new products, refine pricing strategies, and gain insights into customer preferences, ultimately enhancing their commercial performance over time.

- **Market Access**

Beyond immediate income and sales outcomes, the Season's Market Initiative significantly broadened vendors' access to new markets and customers. The survey revealed that 92% of respondents gained access to new customers through their participation, while all respondents (100%) established valuable professional contacts during the bazaars. These connections included interactions with customers, fellow vendors, and representatives from organizations and private sector actors, highlighting that seasonal markets function not only as commercial spaces but also as networking and visibility platforms that enable small businesses to expand their customer base and strengthen their local market presence.

- **Business Sustainability and Development**

Participation in the seasonal markets not only supported immediate business improvements but also laid the groundwork for long-term sustainability and growth among vendors. The 92% of respondents reported that their involvement helped enhance various aspects of their business operations, including product offerings, packaging, sales methods, and customer engagement strategies. By learning through direct market exposure, vendors were able to refine their product presentation, adjust pricing strategies, and enhance communication with customers. This iterative learning process contributes to sustainable business practices that are responsive to market demands and customer preferences. Furthermore, the seasonal markets provide a low-risk environment for entrepreneurs to experiment with new products and sales approaches while receiving immediate feedback. This is particularly significant for micro and home-based enterprises that often lack access to formal business development support or training programs. Ultimately, the initiative fosters a culture of continuous improvement and resilience, equipping vendors with the skills and confidence necessary for sustained growth and adaptability in an evolving market landscape.

- **Satisfaction and Perceived Impact**

Survey responses indicate a very high level of satisfaction among participants with the ARDD backed Season's Market initiative. All respondents reported positive experiences, with 75% expressing that they were very satisfied and the remaining 25% indicating satisfaction. No neutral or negative responses were recorded. These results reflect strong appreciation for the experience, highlighting the perceived value of the seasonal markets not only in economic terms but also in terms of networking opportunities, visibility, and learning experiences.

Overall, the findings suggest that the Season's Market initiative is widely regarded by vendors as a beneficial platform supporting both income generation and business growth.

5.2 Qualitative Outcomes: Insights from FGDs

While the quantitative survey provides measurable indicators of economic outcomes, the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) offer deeper insights into how vendors experienced their participation in the Season's Market initiative. The qualitative discussions highlighted broader social, economic, and structural dimensions that cannot be fully captured through survey data alone. Four key themes emerged from the FGDs: markets as accessible economic entry points, increased visibility and confidence, structural barriers to business expansion, and the broader value of market participation beyond immediate income gains.

- **Markets as Accessible Economic Entry Points**

Participants consistently emphasized that seasonal markets serve as low-risk and accessible entry points into economic activity, particularly for individuals facing barriers to formal employment or permanent retail operations. For many vendors, especially women entrepreneurs and home-based businesses, the challenges of opening a permanent shop or entering formal commercial spaces can be financially and administratively daunting. In this context, bazaars provide a flexible alternative, allowing entrepreneurs to sell products, test market demand, and gain experience without the high fixed costs associated with formal business operations. This accessibility is particularly relevant for vulnerable groups, enabling them to seek income opportunities while managing financial risk. Participants noted that the seasonal markets foster an environment where small businesses can experiment with new products, refine pricing strategies, and gradually build a loyal customer base.

- **Visibility, Recognition, and Business Confidence**

Beyond income generation, vendors highlighted the significance of visibility and social recognition gained through participation in the markets. Being part of an organized and well-promoted bazaar not only increased vendors' sense of legitimacy but also bolstered their confidence as entrepreneurs. Several participants noted that their involvement helped them overcome stereotypes tied to their refugee status or social circumstances, allowing them to be recognized for their skills and creativity. Vendors reported personal and emotional impact of participating in the markets:

“Being part of an organized market made us feel recognized and trusted.”

And:

“People didn't see me as a refugee, but as a creator who restored my confidence and life.”

Vendors also noted that the markets enabled them to engage with a broader range of customers and communities, enhancing their understanding of consumer preferences and expanding their social and professional networks.

- **Structural Barriers to Business Expansion**

Despite the positive experiences reported by participants, the FGDs revealed several structural challenges that continue to hinder the long-term expansion of small businesses. Participants frequently mentioned difficulties related to business registration procedures and regulatory requirements, particularly challenges associated with the national e-invoicing system. These processes were often described as complex, time-consuming, and lacking in accessible technical support. Vendors expressed concerns that formalizing their businesses could jeopardize their eligibility for certain social support programs, including assistance from the National Aid Fund or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Limited access to financial resources was another major constraint identified during discussions. Participants explained that many small businesses lack the capital necessary to enhance product quality, invest in better equipment, or expand their production capacity. Additionally, participants highlighted the need for stronger business management skills, encompassing project management, accounting, marketing, and effective communication with potential donors or supporting organizations. Strengthening these skills is viewed as vital for improving long-term business sustainability.

- **Value of Market Participation Beyond Immediate Income**

Participants also emphasized that the value of seasonal markets extends well beyond immediate sales or income outcomes. Many vendors highlighted the importance of networking opportunities, peer learning, and exposure to new organizations and stakeholders. By participating in the bazaars, vendors were able to interact with other entrepreneurs, exchange experiences, and learn from each other's strategies and challenges. Exposure to civil society organizations, donors, and private sector actors was regarded as a significant benefit, creating opportunities for future collaborations, additional market participation, and access to other support programs. These experiences contributed to increased business confidence and helped vendors bolster their resilience as entrepreneurs.

Overall, the qualitative findings reinforce the quantitative results by demonstrating that the Season's Market initiative not only supports income generation but also contributes to long-term entrepreneurial development, social recognition, and market integration for small businesses.

Did your participation in the seasonal market lead to an increase in your overall sales?

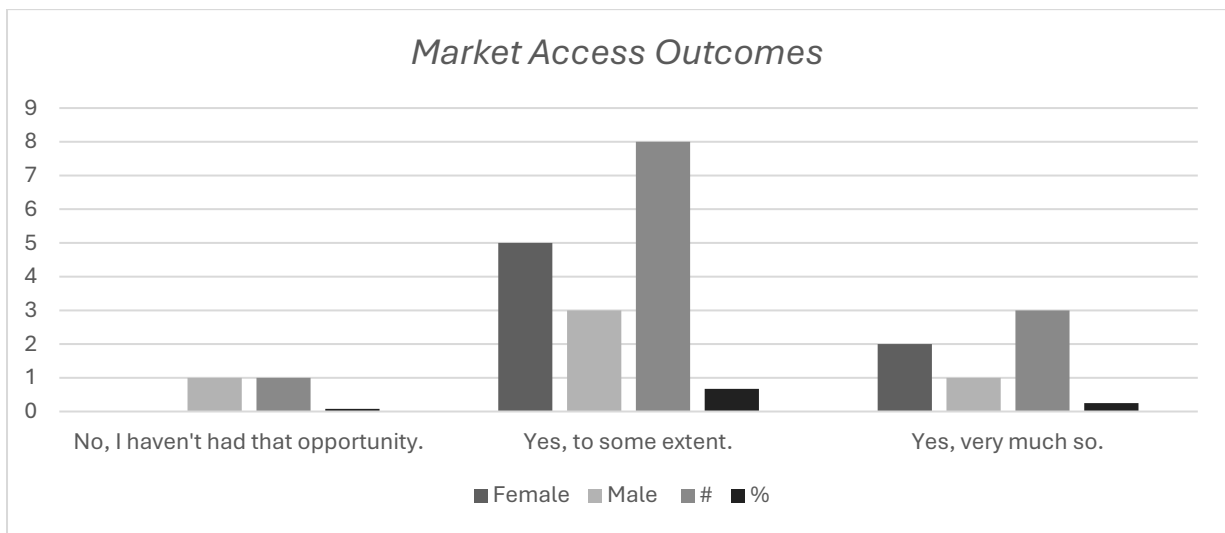
Row Labels	Female	Male	#	%
Huge increase	0	0	0	0%
Significant increase	4	3	7	58%
Moderate increase	3	2	5	42%
Slight increase	0	0	0	0%
No increase	0	0	0	0%
Grand Total	7	5	12	100%

Is the project considered your primary source of income?

Row Labels	Female	Male	#	%
No	1		1	8%
Yes	6	5	11	92%
Grand Total	7	5	12	100%

Participation

	Female	Male	#	%
Winter Bazaar 2024 - Century Park Hotel	4	3	7	15%
Ramadan Bazaar - Al Manara, Al Weibdeh	4	3	7	15%
Spring Bazaar - Sweifieh Village	6	5	11	24%
Summer Bazaar (1& 2) - Jara	6	5	11	24%
Winter Bazaar - Hyatt Amman Hotel	6	4	10	22%
Grand Total	26	20	46	100%



6. KEY TAKEAWAYS

6.1 From Pilot to Impact: Empirical Results of the Season's Market Initiative

Local markets serve as vital links between community economies and national development goals. The Season's Market Initiative demonstrates how thoughtfully designed markets can **generate income, support small businesses, and foster lasting economic resilience**. The empirical findings highlight three foundational pillars achieved by the ARDD supported Season's Market Initiative:

1. **Bridging the Exclusion Gap:** Organized bazaars provide an immediate, low-barrier entry point for individuals traditionally sidelined from formal employment, such as refugees and women. By providing a safe space for trade, this initiative bypasses systemic hurdles to labor market entry.
2. **Building Human Capital Development:** Beyond revenue generation, the initiative serves as a confidence-builder and networking engine, transitioning vendors from isolation to semi-formal economic participation, transforming invisible workers into recognized economic actors.
3. **Policy Viability, Sustainability, and Scalability:** With institutional backing, particularly regarding flexible licensing and regulations, these bazaars can evolve from temporary project-based events into permanent, self-sustaining economic instruments.

In particular, the initiative has demonstrated that local markets can drive several impactful actions:

- **Economic Catalyst:** 100% of the 12 participating vendors reported between consistent and moderate sales growth, contributing to a 92% transformative increase in household economic impact.
- **Market Integration:** The community-based bazaars enable home-based vendors to test products, engage with diverse customer bases, and network with civil society and private sector actors.
- **Sustainability:** This initiative generated real-time data proving that localized, market-driven models are not only viable but also represent a sustainable approach to livelihood, driven by local needs and demands, easy to replicate nationwide.

6.2 Local Markets as Systemic Economic Enablers

Beyond the scope of a single project, local markets generate broad socio-economic outcomes that strengthen Jordan's national fabric. Their systemic impact can be summarized across four strategic areas:

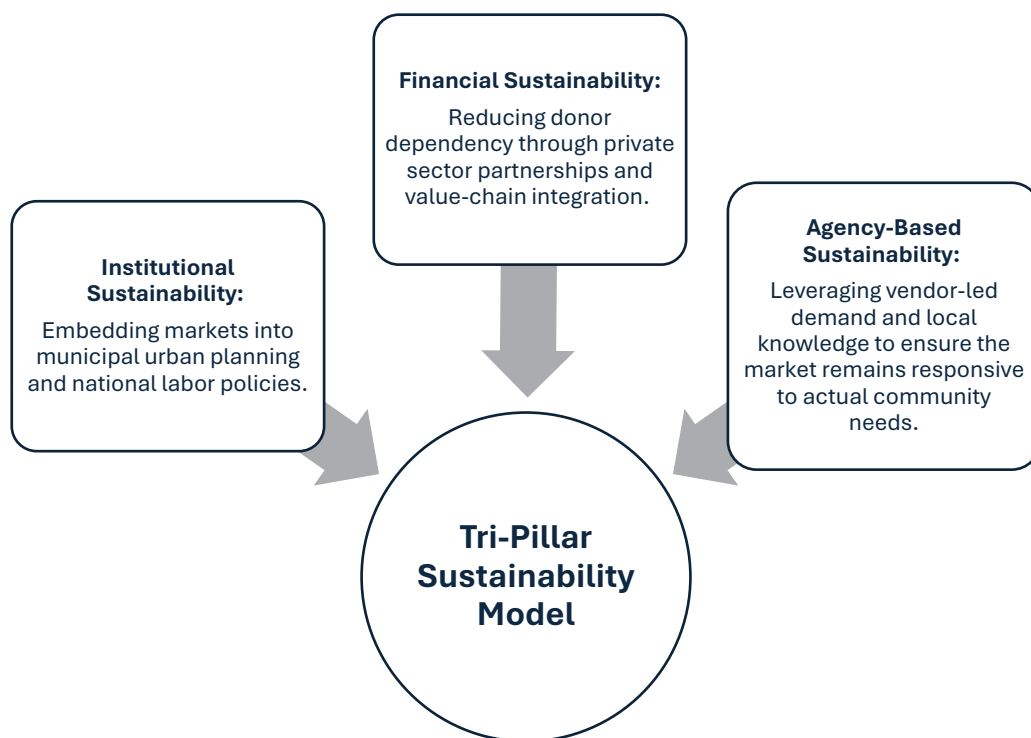
1. **Economic Inclusion and Job Creation:** By lowering startup costs and reducing regulatory hurdles, these markets facilitate entry particularly for those facing structural barriers to formal employment. Participation across multiple cycles helps vendors stabilize income, build brand trust, and diversify sales channels, contributing to broader inclusive growth.
2. **Strengthening Local Value Chains:** Local markets bolster small businesses by providing a platform to establish their presence. This focus on **local sourcing** reinforces community ties and strengthens connections between producers, consumers, and the private sector, contributing to support the local entrepreneurship efforts.
3. **Capacity Building & Adaptive Resilience:** Direct market exposure allows for *learning by doing*. Vendors improve customer engagement, product presentation, and financial planning through practice. This hands-on experience equips them to adapt to shifting market demands independently of external aid.
4. **Institutionalizing Livelihood Platforms:** The local markets transition from informal events into **established economic platforms** reduces market fragmentation and aligns community-level practices with Jordan's national economic and localization goals.

7. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Recommendations for Scaling Impact and Sustainability

This report demonstrates that inclusive, locally led initiatives possess the unique capacity to create accessible economic spaces where traditional models fail. The Season's Market Initiative, spearheaded by ARDD, provides empirical evidence that localized, vendor-led markets can successfully transition from a pilot project to a national livelihood strategy. The sustainability of popular markets is closely linked to their ability to respond to actual demand within communities. In fact, markets do not create demand; rather, they emerge as a response to existing needs. To ensure that these markets evolve beyond isolated events, **sustainability** must be addressed through three dimensions: **institutional, financial, and local ownership**.

Seasonal markets should function as continuous, well-structured livelihood platforms, allowing vendors to plan effectively, stabilize their income, and cultivate a consistent customer base. A primary pathway to this goal is **institutionalization**: embedding bazaars within local systems rather than maintaining them as standalone, project-driven events. This involves a progressive transition of ownership to local actors, including the JONAF network,¹³ community-based organizations (CBOs), and municipalities, ensuring continuity beyond specific donor cycles. Reducing dependency on external funding through local partnerships and cost-sharing models is essential to demonstrate long-term viability to policymakers. Furthermore, linking these initiatives to broader livelihood pathways (such as value-chain integration) strengthens their role as **advocacy tools**. Sustained engagement with stakeholders, grounded in tangible field evidence, is critical to influencing the regulatory environment in which popular markets operate. The following actions are recommended for key stakeholders.



¹³ Jordan National NGOs Forum

7.2 Recommendations for Policymakers and Government Institutions (National & Municipal)

Goal: Institutionalization and Regulatory Reform

- **Implement Flexible Regulation Frameworks:** Develop transparent, low-cost temporary licensing specifically for seasonal bazaars. This would allow refugees, women-led micro-enterprises, and home-based businesses to operate legally during market cycles, effectively bridging the gap between formal regulatory requirements and the realities of the informal economy.
- **Integrate Markets into Urban Infrastructure:** Municipalities should move beyond temporary permits and formally designate permanent public spaces for seasonal bazaars. Establishing locations for regular, predictable market schedules. This would allow for better vendor planning, enhances customer retention, and transforms these markets into recognized, permanent economic infrastructures.
- **Transition to Local and Community Ownership:** Ensure the long-term continuity of these platforms by progressively shifting coordination to local actors. This includes empowering municipalities and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to take operational ownership, ensuring the markets survive beyond specific project timelines and donor cycles.
- **Adopt Vendor-Led Governance Models:** Institutionalize the participation of vendors in the decision-making process. Evidence shows that vendor-led choices regarding location, timing, and products are more successful than top-down planning. Co-management models between municipalities and vendor committees ensure the market remains responsive to actual community demands.
- **Promote Coordination:** Establish coordinated governance between the central authorities and local municipalities, while documenting and sharing best practices from successful pilots like the Season's Market will facilitate the replication of these inclusive models across different governorates in Jordan.
- **Digital Platforms:** Support the digital visibility of local markets. Government-backed digital platforms or social media promotion can expand vendor reach and provide a transparent way to track the economic contribution of these markets to the national GDP.

7.3 Recommendations for Donors and International Partners

Goal: Financial Sustainability and Localization

- **Support the Localization Agenda:** Promote and boost the handover of market coordination to local actors, including the JONAF network, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and municipalities. Financial support should be tied to clear localization milestones that ensure the model embodies the demands and needs of the local community.
- **Promote Tailored Micro-Financing:** Small-scale grants, and flexible microfinance options should be specifically designed and made available to facilitate the small-scale vendors and micro-entrepreneurs, to help them access to finance tool and meet the requirements of the formal economy.
- **Establish a Multi-Stakeholder Coordination Platform:** Support the establishment of new coordination platforms and boost the presence of those

already existing (JONAF) to involve government agencies, civil society, and the private sector. This will facilitate joint planning, reduce project fragmentation, and strengthen accountability across the livelihoods sector in Jordan.

- **Shift to Long-term Strategy:** Move beyond financing individual, one-off bazaars. Instead, prioritize investment in the long run, such as into the infrastructure sector, as storage facilities, regional transport hubs, and shared digital e-commerce platforms, that allows these markets to become self-sustaining.
- **Sustain Capacity Building:** Sustain projects for skills and capacity building that should be practical, and market-integrated, focusing on business growth, market access, licensing facilitation, and value chain integration.

7.4 Recommendations for Civil Society

Goal: Evidence-Based Advocacy

- **Markets as Live Policy Labs:** Transform every bazaar into a data-collection point to provide government stakeholders with real-time evidence of how local trade reduces poverty.
- **Informing Policy:** Feed the findings into policy recommendations and broader advocacy strategies, while recognizing informal workers as essential economic actors.
- **Strengthen Community Partnerships:** CBOs and CSOs to act as mediators between communities and municipalities to establish community-led initiatives.
- **Peer-to-Peer Mentorship:** Peer mentorship between experienced and new vendors, which already happens organically at the markets, should be formally recognized and supported as a cost-effective capacity building tool.
- **Catalysts for Social Cohesion and Inclusion:** Beyond economics, CBOs should leverage markets to promote social cohesion. By deliberately bringing together local communities, refugees, women, and youth in a shared space, CBOs turn the market into a neutral ground that fosters mutual trust, reduces social tensions, and

Championing Evidence-Based Advocacy

Beyond immediate income, Season's Markets serve as a dynamic data incubator. By transforming vendor testimonials and sales data into outward-facing evidence, real-time market insights can be immediately shared, through digital platforms, social media (such as ARDD's platforms) and partner networks, to create a living, continuously updated case for model's impact. This can directly inform donor conversations, policy dialogues, and replication efforts by other organizations.

strengthens the broader social fabric.

7.5 Recommendations for the Private Sector

Goal: Value Chain Integration and Market Expansion

- **Investment:** Expand private sector engagement to integrate vendors into formal and bigger value chains.
- **Alignment:** Align market efforts with national employment and economic development plans to enhance institutional support and scalability.
- **Integration:** Encourage large retailers and the tourism sector to use seasonal markets as sourcing hubs for high-quality local products, local handicrafts and agricultural products (e.g., the National Olive Festival model).
- **Increase the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Shift from one-time sponsorships to sustainable partnerships, where private firms provide logistical and marketing support as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

Impact at a Glance: The 92% factor

Evidence shows that seasonal markets are not just events; they are essential economic livelihood opportunities. The 92% of participants in this report outlined a transformative increase in household income and stability, proving that market-based solutions outpace traditional aid models.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 From Pilot to Policy: Reclaiming the Economic Potential of Local Markets

The Season's Market Initiative has demonstrated that popular markets in Jordan are far more than temporary trading spaces. As investigated in recent ARDD analysis, these markets are deeply embedded within the broader context of the informal economy and have historically emerged as adaptive responses to gaps in formal economic structures, proving that their sustainability is inherently linked to their ability to respond to actual community demands. They satisfy existing needs through accessibility, affordability, and flexibility.

Despite their importance, popular markets in Jordan continue to face structural challenges, including fragmented policy approaches, limited institutional recognition, and tensions between formal regulatory frameworks and the realities of informal economic practices. These challenges often result in missed opportunities to leverage such markets as effective tools for inclusive economic development and sustainable livelihoods.

Building on this context, the Seasons Market initiative by ARDD can be understood as a targeted intervention within the ecosystem of popular markets, designed to support small-scale vendors and home-based businesses through organized, seasonal bazaars. The findings from the 2024–2025 bazaar cycles highlighted in this report proved that the **92% of vendors participating in the survey experienced transformative increase in household impact**, meaning that a structured, localized market participation is a viable pathway to economic empowerment for those traditionally sidelined, including women, refugees, and home-based entrepreneurs.

However, as humanitarian funding faces challenges and development organizations prioritize sustainability and localization agenda, this initiative aims at encouraging the transition from **pilot to policy**. Supporting these markets requires a genuine dialogue between government, donors, the private sector, and civil society. To achieve this, the future of localized livelihoods in Jordan must be built around these three steps:

1. **Institutionalization:** Embedding bazaars within municipal systems and national labor strategies to move beyond project-driven cycles.
2. **Localization & Sustainability:** Transitioning coordination to the local networks, CBOs, and local authorities to ensure long-term sustainability, continuity and reduced donor dependency.
3. **Evidence-Based Advocacy:** Leveraging bazaars as Live Policy Labs where real-time data feed into policy recommendations and broader advocacy strategies, while recognizing informal workers as essential economic actors.

In conclusion, the Season's Market Initiative serves as a strategic incubator for alternative livelihood opportunities. By recognizing seasonal markets not as informal stopgaps, but as essential tools for inclusive development, Jordan can foster an equitable and resilient economic system. The success of this initiative is a call to action for policymakers and donors to invest in models that honor local agency, promote social cohesion, and turn creativity into sustainable opportunity for all.

“Popular markets are social and cultural spaces that reflect the identity of local communities, while also generating job opportunities and empowering marginalized groups. Supporting them should go beyond infrastructure to include legislation and policies that encourage innovation and sustainability.”¹⁴

“Popular markets have a long history of social and cultural exchange. They are a mirror of people’s daily experiences and ways of life. Developing these markets requires a deep understanding of vendors’ needs and behaviors, and genuine dialogue between government, the private sector, and civil society to develop sustainable, practical solutions. This is essential to enabling markets to create real livelihood opportunities for local communities, including refugees, and integrate them into the local economy.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Insights from ARDD Season’s Market Initiative: ARDD Season’s Market: Experts Highlight the Importance of Supporting Markets to Strengthen Livelihoods: <https://ardd-jo.org/news/seasons-market-experts-highlight-the-importance-of-supporting-markets-to-strengthen-livelihoods/#:~:text=Share,by%20ARDD's%20Renaissance%20Strategic%20Center>

¹⁵ Insights from ARDD Season’s Market Initiative: ARDD Season’s Market: Experts Highlight the Importance of Supporting Markets to Strengthen Livelihoods: <https://ardd-jo.org/news/seasons-market-experts-highlight-the-importance-of-supporting-markets-to-strengthen-livelihoods/#:~:text=Share,by%20ARDD's%20Renaissance%20Strategic%20Center>

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FROM LOCAL MARKETS TO SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

How Season's Markets unlock economic opportunities for refugees, women, and home-based entrepreneurs in Jordan



Season's Market: An initiative implemented by the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) under the project "Future Forward: Unlocking sustainable local opportunities", supported by the Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP), to strengthen sustainable livelihoods and local economic opportunities.

1. THE CHALLENGE: WHO IS LEFT BEHIND?

- Refugees
- Women
- Home-based businesses
- Informal workers



Face barriers to formal employment due to regulations, limited mobility, and high business entry costs.

2. THE SEASON'S MARKET MODEL

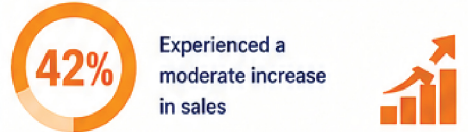
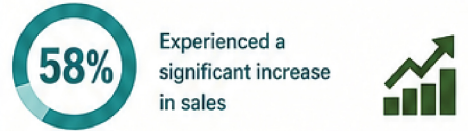
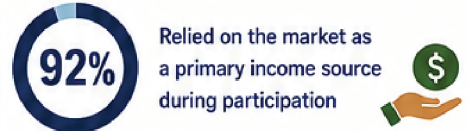


6 SEASONAL MARKETS
Amman, Jordan
2024 - 2025

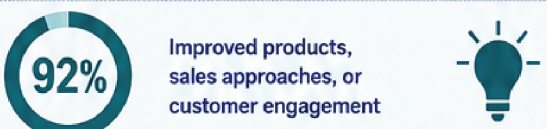
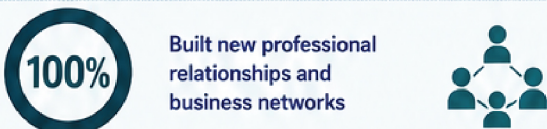
12 VENDORS ASSESSED

- 57% Women
- Refugees and Jordanian host communities
- Mainly micro and home-based businesses

3. LIVELIHOOD IMPACT: TURNING SKILLS INTO INCOME



4. MARKET ACCESS & BUSINESS GROWTH



5. BEYOND INCOME: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE More stable income opportunities

SOCIAL CAPITAL New partnerships and networks

ENTREPRENEURIAL CONFIDENCE Improved skills and stronger business identity

PATHWAYS TO GROWTH From informal to semi-formal economic participation



6. THE BIGGER MESSAGE



LOCAL MARKETS ARE MORE THAN SALES SPACES

They are inclusive, low-barrier economic platforms that transform local knowledge, creativity, and skills into sustainable livelihood opportunities.



Scalable and self-sustaining models for inclusive economic development in Jordan.



ABOUT THE INITIATIVE
The Season's Market Initiative is an ARDD initiative, implemented under the project "Future Forward: Unlocking sustainable local opportunities", supported by the Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP).



