

BUILDING A GREEN FOOD MOVEMENT IN AMMAN

After returning from Cairo, **Jihad Zawaidah** burst into action. The Jordanian, representing the Watershed and Development Initiative (WADI), had attended the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Green Cities Study Tour, together with his colleague Diana Naghwai. During the visits to Cairo's rooftop gardening initiatives, Jihad was particularly drawn to the intensive hydroponic growing systems he saw.

Hydroponic growing systems use soil-less agriculture techniques that can produce 70% more food while saving up to 90% of water. The lightweight systems can be installed on rooftops or balconies in urban areas and can help boost food production in cities suffering from water scarcity. With Jordan being one of the most water scarce countries in the world, increasing community resilience and water management efficiency have become survival strategies.

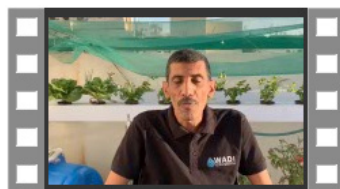
Funded by the U.S. Forest Service, WADI aims to advance water conservation and land stewardship practices in Jordan. Jihad and Diana are planning to install a simple hydroponic system as a rooftop pilot project in order to engage local women in food production. Together with their local partner, the Tal Al-Rumman Women's Cooperative, the two want to create a sustainable income generation opportunity for women. Less than one-fifth of Jordan's workforce is made up of women, with even lower numbers in rural areas. Encouraging women to start businesses on their own roofs is a promising opportunity in rural cultures where women are still being discouraged from working outside the home. Engaging women in hydroponic growing also raises awareness of water efficient living and food production.

Jihad originates from Wadi Rum in Jordan's desert and understands what living with water scarcity means. When lockdown started shortly after his return from Cairo, he decided to put the extra time at home to productive use. On his own roof in the suburbs of Amman, he built a test hydroponic system with remote technical assistance from Abdallah Tawfik, the Cairo-based co-founder of Urban Greens. Besides that, Jihad set up a long line of pots in which he planted a variety of herbs. The active Jordanian hopes that WADI can replicate his system as part of the initiative's future community engagement work.

In the two videos below – an English and an Arabic version – Jihad shows us the system he has built and explains the potential it may hold for urban areas in water scarce Jordan.



English



Arabic

