



# Flat roofs in refugee camps become green oases through Palestinian women's hands.

## Karama's Rooftop Greenhouse Project Success Story 4: Nema from Al-Aroub Camp.

**Initiative background:** The Rooftop Greenhouse project, is an EU-funded initiative for the empowerment of 220 refugee women in the West Bank. The project, implemented by [Karama Organization](http://www.karamagreenhouses.org) from 2017-2021, constructs greenhouses on the flat rooftops of the houses in refugee camps. The women's roofs become the ideal place for growth and production, since the camps are limited, crowded places; concrete jungles where there is limited to no space for planting and (personal) growth. A greenhouse will help improve household food security and economic empower participating women through selling healthy (organic) produce and other entrepreneurial activities. For more information: [www.karamagreenhouses.org](http://www.karamagreenhouses.org)



**Participant background:** Ne'ma is a 28- year old hopeful refugee woman from Al-Aroub refugee camp in Hebron, Palestine. Ne'ma has been growing organic produce in her rooftop greenhouse for

three years now, providing to her family and neighbours. She started making her own money by selling the produce in the local community. Over the last two years, Ne'ma has shown significant psychological and social changes in her character. Through the rooftop greenhouses project, she has become more aware of her capabilities and potential. She now encourages woman to break away from negative thoughts or norms that hold them back and work to achieve their own empowerment.



### What changes did the project make to your character?

Before the greenhouse, I had a different life, I stayed at home and didn't communicate much with other people. Now I go to the project meetings and trainings and meet up with other women. It changed my life to the better. Having this greenhouse makes me very happy because I feel productive working on something by myself, without the help of my parents or family. Planting a seedling by myself and watching it grow in front of me makes me happy every time. Right now I feel that I am a better person, because I know more things, I have learnt to recognize the good from the bad all through being active in the project, which keeps me encouraged to stay active in it. It also gives me many opportunities to be active in the community and with other women, something I now love. I used to deal with negative thoughts on my own capabilities and felt restricted by social expectations. Now I feel more free and can encourage other women to not be put down by negativity but work on their own growth and that of their loved ones.

### How did you learn to maintain your rooftop greenhouse?

Since I received my greenhouse in 2017, I follow up with the project's agricultural engineer who visits my greenhouse regularly and guides me in maintaining my greenhouse. I learned to do all the basics by myself through the training sessions in the community centre that I attended with the other women of the project. The gardening training provided me many new skills I did not have before and now I apply them, not only in my greenhouse, but also around my house. I have always loved gardening and now I know much more about it. If I ever have any questions I can reach out to the engineers or to the other women of the project; I can send them pictures of my plants and leaves and we will help each other with advice.



### Is the project making any changes in your life financially?

In the previous planting season I planted and sold sweet peppers from my greenhouse, besides also sharing from the harvest with my family and neighbours. Now I am growing tomatoes and I expect a very good harvest where we can eat from, as well as sell in the community. Because I do not use any chemicals on the plants and the natural techniques I apply, I believe the taste from the produce is amazing and really stands apart from the tomatoes you will find in the normal markets. One



of the things I bought from the money I made from the greenhouse's last harvest, was a dress and a scarf. And let me tell you, this was a new feeling for me because when you buy something from your own money, it gives you a great feeling of accomplishment.

### How do you feel that you are changed as a person through the project?

Putting in my hard work in the greenhouse, taking care of my crop and selling from it gave me great personal delight. Before, it was true my family would always provide for me, but when you see results from your own hard work, it is a very different pleasure. I am glad to say this personal feeling of accomplishment has spread over to many areas of my life. I feel more at ease going out and speaking to people, I enjoy connecting with other women in the community. Now I do not feel shy anymore to voice my concerns or a problem I noticed in my home or my community – this is something the project brought me. Being active in the project also helped me to become more active in the community, as we together are supporting our communities now during this difficult time of the Corona pandemic. Before, I would have stayed on the sidelines. Now I see many opportunities to help others in need and I supported the food distributions from Karama Organization in my area.



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