

## Background and Overview

Jeel 962 Network (formerly UNICEF Change Agents Network UCAN) is a Youth Volunteer Network that focuses on spreading active civic engagement throughout Jordan. It is a platform through which young people can interact, learn, analyze, and take actions on rights; a coaching process that builds the capacity of members and other young people to become active citizens and eventually effective change agents in their communities. The new Network targets youth aged 13-24 throughout Jordan's 12 governorates by capitalizing on their enthusiasm to engage in governance and decision-making. It opens new alternative and more transparent channels for dialogue and community-driven solutions by giving youth the chance to act as active agents of development and empowerment.

The overall objective of this Network and its associated online platforms, is to contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for youth-led organizations and young women and men to meaningfully engage as active citizens, particularly in issue-based advocacy and decision-making relating to political, social, economic, educational, and cultural policy making and planning.

Based on the recommendations of the CRC Shadow Report which was prepared by adolescents with the support of UNICEF and the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA), the idea of, at the time, "UCAN" was generated depending on the partnership UNICEF started in 2006 with the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) that involved approximately 100-150 elected youth from 22 districts - 470 schools to be members in Amman's Child Municipal Council (CMC). Through bringing together a number of youth from the CMC and CRC shadow report adolescents committee, along with other active adolescents and youth, what is now Jeel 962 continues the work that was done with GAM and NCFA utilizing the lessons in the development of the network. While on the way for independence and striving to adopt their own activities and programs, Jeel 962 members support UNICEF and its partners' programs and activities.

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In partnership with CMC, Jeel 962 also advocates for children's needs, rights, and concerns by working on influencing decisions of the adults municipal council. The network ensures the inclusion of youth from different geographical locations, social classes, and age groups, taking gender balance into consideration. Youth with disabilities in the network's activities are a priority; activities and trainings are made as accessible to the needs of youth with disabilities as possible.

UNICEF's Youth and Adolescents section has established an active and meaningful engagement strategy to include youth and adolescents in community service projects so that they can interact directly with UNICEF and partner programs on child rights and other related issues. Jeel 962, being a youth arm to UNICEF programs including Child protection, Education, as well as Health and Nutrition, support campaigns related to these programs such as the back to school campaign, the vaccination campaign, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) and youth resilience building in Jordan.

Findings from a 2010 assessment conducted to assess the Child Friendly Cities efforts revealed that there is a need for more coordination between the stakeholders, NGOs and GAM as well as a more efficient reporting and tracking structure on issues raised by children and youth in their communities. Jeel 962 enables plotting down cases reported in locations around Jordan; it will also serve as a social monitoring and evaluation tool for young citizens and will enable both local and central governments to track their responses and collaboratively undertake actions.

Youth in Jordan have limited opportunities to participate in their communities, they are often excluded from taking decisions affecting their lives, and have a very limited say in how their community is managed and shaped. Jeel 962 is working on giving youth in Jordan the power to advocate and contribute to positive change, create empirical evidence on risks their community faces, and establish common grounds for community and government collaboration on the shared goal of improving living conditions for the community at large. Jeel 962 works with partners and CBOs to promote inclusive governance through issue-based advocacy that integrates the use of digital technology tools and strategies with traditional advocacy tools. With wider mobilization capacities of

digital technologies and new media, this approach will help build awareness on youth rights by increasing youth access to information; mobilizing young citizens and CBOs to report their views and experiences and contribute additional data on social services.

### **Collaborations and partnerships**

In addition to their work with Jordanian youth and adolescents, Jeel 962 members and task-forces are involved in the UNICEF emergency program by working with Syrian youth and adolescents in refugee camps and host communities. Members of Jeel 962 will continue this collaboration with young Syrian refugees living in host communities and engage them in the network's activities, including campaigns, civic engagement, and capacity-building and basic life skills trainings. Existing adolescents and youth friendly spaces in refugee camps will be used as venues in implementing Jeel 962 activities and trainings, by focusing on social cohesion through collaborative initiatives and resilience building among Jordanian, Palestinian and Syrian youth.

Jeel 962 also partners with the private sector, NGOs, academia, government, civil society, and youth in facilitating dialogue, identifying pressing challenges facing youth and adolescents in Jordan. Jeel 962 activities and corresponding reports will mobilize actors and provide opportunities for engagement with young people including collaboration in seeking creative ways of addressing the identified challenges and linking young people with policy makers.

In the year 2016, three task-forces were created in the Network under which projects and initiatives can be proposed, planned and implemented. Issues adopted by the task-forces were based on various mapping exercises in the past year in various communities in Amman. Priorities identified included Education, Rights of People with Disabilities (PWD), and Environmental issues. Accordingly, projects suggested for this year include spreading various formal and non-formal ethics education programs in UNRWA Schools in Jordan, and engaging in a campaign to advocate for the rights of youth with disabilities in the labor market amongst other ideas.

## Digital Engagement and Activism

As Jordan witnesses a remarkable growth in use of mobile telephony among young people and in adoption of new media tools for cross-platform and border-less communication, the reliance on technology as a medium comes as a natural consequence to today's booming technology and its widespread use by youth in the region. Youth think that it is only about time that new channels of communication and constructive dialogue are created. Jeel 962 answers to such demands by capitalizing on the enthusiasm for new low-cost and replicable technologies among youth throughout the Middle East and engages young people through ICT tools for wider meaningful social engagement aimed at enhancing their contributions to society.

The Network enjoys 3 digital engagement platforms for youth including an online portal, an interactive map and a mobile application connected to them. The goal of the Online Portal isn't to use technology for the sake of technology, but to leverage it as a tool to achieve social objectives. It gives members the opportunity to create personal accounts through which they interact with each other and collaborate on various initiatives and calls for action. The platform also showcases the latest volunteer and training opportunities creating a space for engagement and improvement for youth all over Jordan both online and on the ground with various partners.

The use of the Portal is not only limited to Jeel 962 members (although those have special rights within it); it allows anyone interested in the development and volunteer work to participate in certain activities that are advertised for non-members and voice their support for various initiatives that could be, then, taken on by a member and turned into an initiative.

The Interactive Digital Map is featured on the online portal. It enables mapping techniques that provide for visualization of Jeel 962 research findings and act as an Interactive Action Research platform. The Interactive Digital Map facilitates analysis of locations against key existing data (socio-

economic), and allow “click through” to further details and a variety of feedback tools. The interactive digital map will allow filtration by type of issues, location, demographics among others.

The mobile application compliments the map by being a mechanism that enables citizens, particularly youth, to report issues of concern and then share it publicly thus providing an opportunity for others to vote for these issues and make them a priority for users of the Portal. This would also allow users to either act and advocate for the issue via an online campaign or create a response offline in their communities.

The newly available Digital Engagement Platforms will be used to crowd-source youth input on issues of concern by offering an easy-to-use system that builds on the core values of good governance and one’s need to innovate solutions to issues that have proved of utter importance to the community. The Portal; “[www.Jeel962.org](http://www.Jeel962.org)” aspires to become the region’s biggest online youth hub for innovation and community solutions.

UNICEF’s experience in the region and beyond, confirms that when youth are given the proper digital media training and tools they can be influential and effective collaborators with government, can effectively activate and drive change into their communities. Through using the Digital Engagement Platforms, the network will reach out to communities with the most vulnerable children and youth. By adopting an innovation culture in Jeel 962, youth will be able to exercise their rights and meaningfully engage as active citizens, particularly in decision-making relating to political, social, economic, educational and cultural policy and planning processes.

### **Sustainability**

Jeel 962 is posing itself, its rationale and activities on the priority list of youth developmental efforts in Jordan. Therefore the network is a priority for the UNICEF- Jordan current country programme 2013-

2017. In co-operation with stakeholders, partners and counterparts, UNICEF will showcase and promote the Jeel 962 products across a wide range of sectors including government, private sector and partners for the scale up phase through 2017. Tech Tribes; a Jordan-based ICT4D organization will act as the primary mentor and umbrella of Jeel 962 in their first two cycles of projects through 2016. This will ensure guidance and programmatic support for the members in their initiatives and projects. Tech Tribes will also supervise the activation and utilization of the Digital Engagement Platforms for 2016 and support Jeel 962 in their branding, marketing and outreach efforts. This mentorship period is aimed at creating a strong structure internally that would allow members and committees to take on the Network towards independence and internal governance as professionally and smoothly as possible.

Capacity-building of Jeel 962 members during the above-mentioned period will ensure a cohort of youth who undertake youth policy engagement among peers, with government, public institutions and civil society and youth related stakeholders throughout the development of the network's structure and activities. To achieve that a series of targeted trainings for Jeel 962 leaders and members will be implemented by UNICEF, Tech Tribes and other partners to ensure the members' proficiency in the field of new social media and online technologies to better achieve their mission and enhance their capacity to run community-led initiatives using digital tools for youth civic engagement.

The network's plans will be participatory developed and monitored- enabling efficient and consultative monitoring and evaluation of the activities implemented and verification of achieved results. The processes will include the youth members of the network, their mentors, and beneficiaries. The online portal will post and share lessons learned and experiences which will be disseminated widely to communities, giving other youth groups the chance to replicate initiatives from the shared experiences.



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The design, rationale, and structure of Jeel 962 are about bringing together young members of society and linking them with local and national governance to be able to effectively contribute towards addressing social needs and challenges both online and offline while creatively bridging this divide with innovation and cooperation.