



How one woman's determination changed her life and the lives around her

Umm Mubarak is a 65-year-old woman from the village of Bayouda, in the Balqa governorate in the middle of Jordan. Like many women her age her life has been, at times, exceptionally tough. For years her and her husband, Abu Mubarak, had struggled to make ends meet. They cherished the five children they had raised, but knew it was becoming increasingly difficult to support them. Abu Mubarak always worked hard to raise the family, but then one day he fell ill.

They were at a loss. For years they struggled to get by and now their only source of income was gone. Umm Mubarak knew she had no choice. She had to seek help.

Having been told about the World Health Organization and Ministry of Health's healthy village project, she decided to meet with them. She was told that the healthy village project aimed to help local communities build a healthy and self-reliant society through the education, training, and income support of its residents.

Umm Mubarak epitomized 'the healthy villages' beneficiary; a strong, principled and dedicated woman who had unfortunately fallen on hard times. A woman who was not only willing to fight to better herself and her family - but one who also had an idea. Umm Mubarak explained that if she was given the grant she would buy land, grow herbs and raised sheep, selling the products to others in the village and surrounding areas. Her passion, dedication and knowledge meant that it was an easy decision to make - she was accepted onto the loan scheme.

Over the coming months, she became one of the most recognized people in Bayouda. Umm Mubarak was not only pivotal to her family, but also become a role model to the whole village. As she became an expert sheep farmer – she decided to raise chickens; as her herb garden flourished – she took her hand to growing cacti.

But she didn't stop there. She also began to garner a great interest in health issues. She was a regular attendee to the health awareness seminars in the village's health centre. She became passionate about the health of herself and her family; always explaining what she had learned in the seminars to her husband and children. If, for whatever reason Umm Mubarak could not attend a health seminar, she would make certain at least one member of her family did joined - such was her passion. Umm Mubarak understood the need for a healthy lifestyle too. She educated herself on the specific health benefits of certain herbs, and began to cultivate herbs rich in vitamins and minerals. The 'healthy villages' programme educated Umm Mubarak on the need for good food, and a clean environment.

It has been one year since her 'healthy villages' loan, and she is more determined than ever. Though Abu Mubarak has sadly passed away and she is now the matriarch for fifteen members of her family, her dedication, determination, hard work, and zest for life has unwaivered. She has helped her five children through college, and hopes to do the same for her grandchildren. She has become a teacher to others in the village, who has seen her success and hopes to replicate it. Umm Mubarak continues to look better herself, to improve her skills, and keep herself busy.

"The healthy villages programme has helped me so much. Through this scheme I have been able to support my family, and enjoy a healthier life. I hope that my success can be used to show others, particular women, that there is always another way. The support of WHO and the Ministry of Health is vital – and I hope it can continue forever" Umm Mubarak.

Umm Mubarak believed that with a little help she could better herself. She was right.

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