



# Update March 2017

## Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory

### Green shoots for women in the West Bank

The small Bedouin community of Al-Rawa'in lies to the south-east of the Bethlehem governorate in the West Bank. Residents have faced increasing challenges to earning a sustainable living. The main source of income used to be rearing livestock, but escalating costs meant that most of the animals had to be sold. Local men started travelling to other villages and cities to work for some months each year, to support their families.

In this remote area, with the closest market 18km away, no public transport, and a vegetable merchant who passed through up to twice a month, villagers struggled to procure fresh vegetables.

In response to these challenges, in 2015, the East Jerusalem YMCA worked with 22 women in the village to establish 19 gardens, benefiting 35 families (240 individuals). Each garden is 150-250 square metres and has a fence, drip irrigation pipes and a water tank. The women received basic agricultural training, fertilisers and machinery, seeds and cuttings.

Three months after starting their gardens, families no longer needed to buy vegetables as they were producing large crops of tomatoes, lettuce, thyme, courgettes, aubergines and other vegetables. Those with a surplus sell or trade vegetables with each other. The gardeners are saving money and are now buying seedlings and cuttings.



**Mona with her prized molokhia crop. This leafy vegetable provides vital nutrition and income for her family.**

As the women had trouble selling their surplus crops outside of the village, the YMCA connected them with two merchants from Bethlehem, who now travel to Al-Rawa'in periodically to buy vegetables.

Mona Arara, who has a household of 13, says: 'Before I had a garden, my family could only eat what was locally accessible. Meals were not diverse. Now we are able to eat a variety of healthy vegetables we grow ourselves.'

**'Now we eat a variety of healthy vegetables'**

**Thank you for your support for women through Commitment for Life, which has enabled them to secure a livelihood for their families.**

### Sourced campaign success

**Just over a year ago we launched a campaign asking supporters to contact their local council about tax transparency in their procurement processes.**

**In January 2017, the voluntary policy we asked councils to adopt was made mandatory by UK Government.**

**Councils spend billions of pounds each year on goods and services and now have to ask companies**

**tougher questions about their tax practices. This greater scrutiny of companies' tax affairs will prompt businesses to adopt more responsible tax practices, in the UK and in the world's poorest countries.**

**Thank you to all who supported this campaign. For more information on this and other ways you can help us campaign for global justice, please visit: [christianaid.org.uk/ActNow](http://christianaid.org.uk/ActNow)**

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