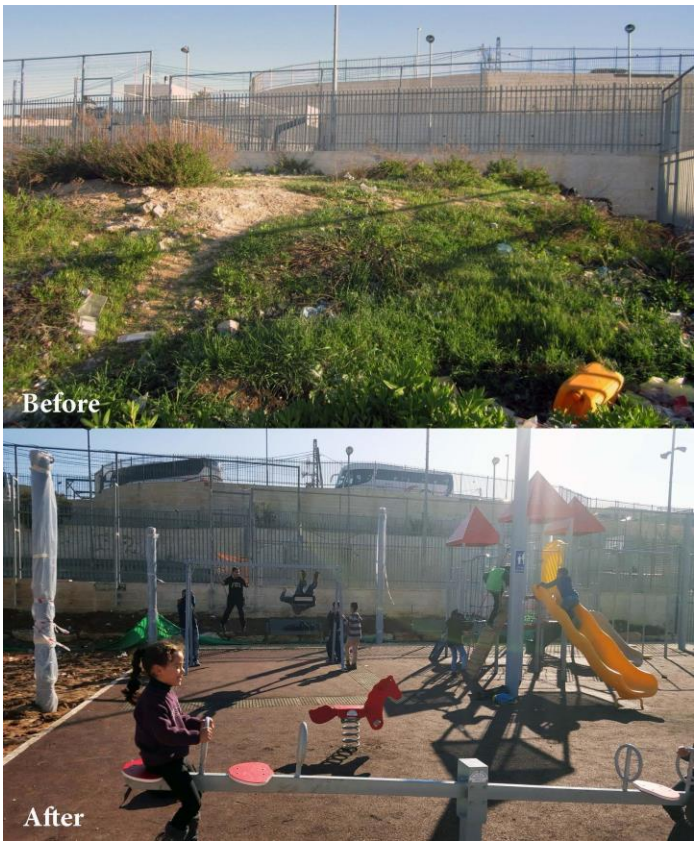
UN-Habitat supports a community initiative in East Jerusalem

Wednesday
February 10th, 2016



Sur Baher, East Jerusalem – On February 8th, 2016 UN-Habitat jointly with Bimkom – Planners for Planning Rights and the Local Community Center of Sur Baher inaugurated a playground in Sur Baher. This initiative comes as part of the ***Scaling up and Deepening of Planning Support to Palestinian Communities in East Jerusalem*** project funded by the Belgian Government and aims at facilitating an immediate improvement of living conditions and easing displacement pressures, while securing growth opportunities for Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem.

While Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem suffer from a severe shortage in public spaces, parks and playgrounds, UN-Habitat jointly with its partners have undertaken this intervention to develop a small playground that serves and supports the local community of Sur Bahr and benefits more than 40,000 residents in the neighborhood.

In East Jerusalem there are only nine playgrounds serving more than 370,000 Palestinians living in the city. The lack of public services in general and public spaces and parks in particular has an extremely negative impact on the quality of daily life for Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem. Many children resort to playing in the streets or other unsafe areas, which can risk their health and wellbeing. Creating public spaces that are safe and secure for community use helps improve the urban environment and the living conditions of the residents, in particular women, youth, and children and at the same time provide higher levels of safety and well-being inside these neighborhoods. "We did not have a place to play at before, but now we have a playground with swings and slides that we can enjoy," said the 12 years old Tasneem Hammad from Sur Baher.

The inauguration started with an opening word by Mr. Khaled Abu Khalaf, the Sur Baher's local community representative, who reflected the community's experience in mobilizing community members and allocating available resources to reshape a neglected space into a safe playground for public use. Following that, the Head of Development Cooperation at the Consulate General of Belgium in Jerusalem, Ms. Florence Duvieusart, highlighted the importance of supporting such initiatives to improve residents' living conditions and children in particular.

"This initiative has proven that small, tangible interventions have great impact in terms of creating results on the ground that enhance the quality of the living environment, support the resilience of the community, and create safe and accessible public spaces," said Joe Hooper, UN-Habitat Head of Office in Palestine.