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Utilizing Minecraft to design Wadi El Joz Community Garden in East Jerusalem



East Jerusalem, April 17th, 2018 – UN Habitat in partnership with Bimkom - Planners for Planning Rights, Al Enaya Community Center and the Green Mosques Youth Group inaugurated Wadi Al Joz community garden, which was developed as part of the "UN Habitat Global Public Space Programme". The project aimed at creating an inclusive public space in Wadi Al Joz neighborhoods in East Jerusalem that improves the urban environment and the living conditions for the residents, in particular children and youth, and also to support the community initiatives and encourage community participation.

After UN-Habitat's successful interventions that supported the development of public spaces in Sur Baher in East Jerusalem and El Shoka in Gaza Strip, UN-Habitat has supported the local community in Wadi Al Joz to develop their public space by utilizing Minecraft computer game as a tool to engage the community, especially the youth in the design process. On July 16, 2017 UN-Habitat organized three days Minecraft workshop with Wadi Al Joz local community, followed by several community consultations to reach a consensus on the garden's final design. More than 25,000 residents who suffer from a sever lack of public spaces will benefit from this garden.

It is worth mentioning that the Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem still lack the existence of public spaces and playgrounds due to the discriminatory policies imposed by the Israeli planning authorities. The lack of public services in general and public spaces and parks 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.

Representatives from the local community and the youth who participated in the Minecraft Workshop attended the inauguration of Wadi El Joz community garden. "This experience was not only fun to play, but also allowed us to creatively design our playground and see our ideas implemented on the ground," said Ahmad, one of the participants.

"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 inclusive public spaces," said Zeyad Elshakra, UN-Habitat Head of Office in Palestine.