IWMI
International Water Management Institute

Project Insight Note #3

Adaptive Management

Adaptive Management in Project Start up: Lessons from Jahez "Ready" Project in Jordan

Jahez Project

Climate-ready refugee hosting communities in Jordan

- Led by the **International Water Management Institute (IWMI)** In partiship with the **Ministry of Environment** and the **Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation** of Jordan, **Met Office (UK)**, the **Royal Scientific Society (RSS)** and the **Climate Action Association (CAN)**
- Supported financially and technically by **UK International Development**
- Implementation sites in Jordan:
  - Greater Irbid Municipality, Irbid Governorate
  - Al-Ramtha Municipality, Irbid Governorate
  - Al-Azraq Municipality, Zarqa Governorate

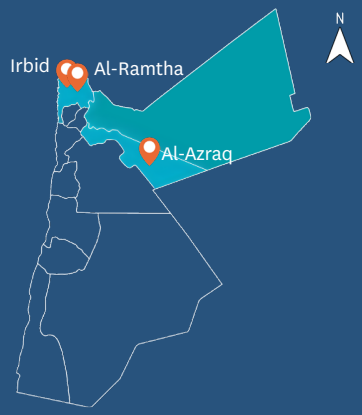


Figure 1. Geographic location of the Jahez pilot sites in Irbid, Al-Ramtha and Al-Azraq municipalities in Jordan.
Note: Schematic map; not to scale.
Source: Authors (2026).

Background

Jordan is a climate risk hotspot, consequently resilience building is a pressing priority for the Government of Jordan (GoJ) as evidenced by Jordan's national climate change policies including its national adaptation plan. Jordan is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world and hosts one of the highest shares of refugees per capita globally, which make up over a third of its population and are along with their hosting communities particularly vulnerable to climate change and hazardous weather. The GoJ and other stakeholders see an urgent need for action to help these communities build resilience through actions on disaster risk management, protection of vulnerable populations and longer-term water, agriculture and settlement strategies that ensure sustainability.

In response, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), through IWMI, is supporting the GoJ "Climate-Refugee Nexus Initiative" (CRNI) launched by HM King Abdullah II at COP27 which is part of the package of solutions for the COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace. "Jahez (Ready)" project aims to improve anticipatory action and climate change adaptation to build the resilience of refugees and their host communities in Jordan. It focuses on supporting effective localized use of impact-based weather and climate change forecasts to inform implementation of inclusive and equitable community-based Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Nature based Solutions (NbS) that address unique vulnerabilities of refugee–host communities.

This research for development initiative is expected to deliver measurable improvements in climate and disaster resilience for both refugee and host communities at three demonstration sites across Jordan: Irbid City, Ramtha, and Al Azraq. The central premise of Jahez is to demonstrate effective resilience-building strategies through anticipatory action plans, long-term adaptation strategies, work package implementation, and robust monitoring and forecasting systems.

UK International Development — Partnership | Progress | Prosperity
Met Office
CAN Climate Action NGO in Jordan
الجمعيّة العلميّة الملكيّة Royal Scientific Society
Ministry of Environment
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

Innovative NbS solutions, such as watershed rehabilitation, will protect assets, infrastructure, agricultural production, and livelihoods from climate change extremes. This supports improved water and food security, health and wellbeing, and green growth outcomes. The long-term goal is to mainstream learnings into policy implementation, investment strategies and support the design and improvement of technical tools for use by host communities, refugees and local authorities. The project collaborates with not only development and humanitarian partners but also climate funds and the private sector to maximize impact within targeted sites as well as unlock new climate finance for refugee hosting communities to replicate and scale proven approaches to resilience building..

Key Insights

In the MENA region, IWMI is accelerating several applied research for development projects that emphasize evidence-based implementation approaches. These projects are expected to deliver measureable and tangible impacts on community resilience, economic development, social development and biophysical sustainability. In this context, it is not always possible to undertake extended research approaches that take time to consolidate findings and results before applying actions. These projects require a nimble 'learning whilst doing' approach, allowing projects to pivot and adjust to rapidly changing contexts. This is especially relevant in fragile, and conflict affected regions where there is significant migration and movement of populations. An adaptive management approach, however, is relevant to most of the operating contexts IWMI works in where climate change, geo-political shifts and unstable economic systems face significant uncertainty, making fixed research and implementation plans challenging to rigidly follow and deliver on. Furthermore, Jahez highlights how adaptive management approaches can be integrated into project design and start up processes to address uncertainty head on and build flexibility into the project management systems to allow for evidence-based adaptations to be made relatively painlessly.

Transition Period Between Project Design, Operationalization and Implementation

The start-up phase of any project is often the most challenging. This is when the conceptual approaches proposed in the design phase must be translated into realistic and implementable research activities and interventions. Due to the nature of donor funding, we often set highly ambitious goals in our proposals and often do not have the time or resources to comprehensively assess the implementation context when submitting proposals.

Often new team members are recruited to lead the implementation phase of activities who were not involved in the design. To support the operationalization of activities, it is important that there is a strong transition period between the design team and the implementation team. This was carried out in Jahez where the design focal point provided a comprehensive sensitization to the incoming Project Lead and Post-Doc Fellow. This included introductory meetings with the donor, key government stakeholder and relevant humanitarian and development partners.

It is additionally important to allow an adjustment and project refinement period – where possible this should be built into the project design: this period allows for an updated context analysis to review any significant shifts in the political, environmental and social conditions since the project design period. Relationship and trust building with key partners is another key focus of this period. Jahez is a high-profile project as it is contributing to a Royal initiative – CRNI. There is significant interest and motivation across government Ministries to ensure that the project is successful and contributing towards national strategies. The Jahez Project Management Team (PMT) must build that trust and confidence rapidly to demonstrate our ability to implement successfully.

To support this trust building exercise, the Jahez PMT has used the start-up phase to translate the technical proposal into a technical implementation strategy to guide project implementation. This includes a Jahez Technical Strategy document that provides an overarching technical vision for the project. It presents the goals and intended impacts of the initiative through the project Theory of Change (ToC) and then highlights implementation approaches to achieve these goals. These are presented under structured work packages, with clearly defined implementation approaches, as well as a Concept Note/ Standard Operating Procedure with more details on package implementation.

The implementation strategy is guided by a set of principles that ensure the project is locally driven, evidence informed, contextualized to refugee and host communities, and building sustainability from the design stage. The strategy also highlights operational structure through the PMT, Jahez Steering Committee, Technical Working groups, GoJ, as well as other critical stakeholder groups. Clarity in the ways of working helps build trust amongst partners and establish a set of principles that all project partner share and work towards. Figure 2 below illustrate implementation principles.

The Project steering Committee, comprising of multiple government ministries is responsible for approval and endorsement of the project approaches and workplans. The technical implementation strategy succinctly presents Jahez to the SC and establishes a platform for co-design. It also allows the implementation team to realign the ambitious expectations set during the proposal phase with the realities of the available resources and operational context (see below). This is a living document that will be updated and adapted through the life of Jahez to incorporate any major project adaptations and refinements.

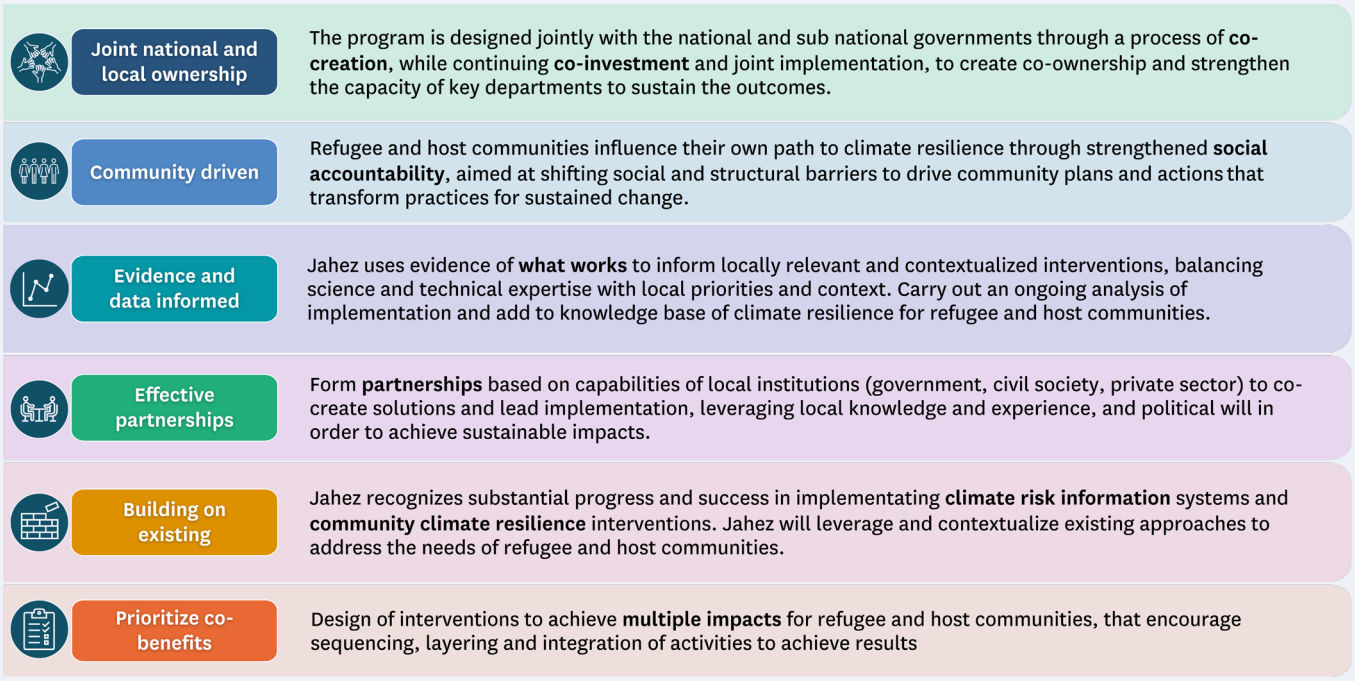


Figure 2. Jahez implementation principles. *Source*: Jahez Technical Strategy Document (2025).

Results-based Budgeting

Project proposals often present interventions and budgets at a high level and leave space for the implementation teams to define the specific configuration, number and geographical spread of activities. In Jahez, detailed workplans are being developed based on the co-design process during start up. To support accuracy in planning, Jahez is undertaking a results-based budgeting process. This approach establishes units that will support achievement of the key outcomes in the project. The unit is then realistically costed with some contingency built in in case of inflation or other cost factors changing. An example would be breaking out training activities into the specific costs for each individual training event or establishing the cost of implementing a certain set of activities per community or individual. This allows any adjustments in the number of units to be reflected easily in the updated budget.

This project refinement period also allows for calibrating the actual technical inputs and staffing time required on projects. This again was estimated during project design based on the concept; however, as Jahez implementation principles highlight a focus on localization of technical assistance, the budget had to be re-aligned to add more budget for national implementing partners and local specialists who are familiar with the nuance of the context of refugee and host communities in Jordan. Time allocations for researchers and other operational team members and consultants may vary based on detailed implementation plans versus the proposal estimates and therefore flexibility needs to be applied to the budgets during start-up phase. Where possible this flexibility should be negotiated with the donor during the proposal submission.

Rapidly Evolving Context and Monitoring for Adaptive Management

Jordan is at the center of a rapidly evolving geopolitical context and the war in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and the fragile cease fire along Jordan's Western border brings substantial uncertainty. The recent fall of the Assad government, after thirteen years of conflict that caused the displacements of up to 1.4 million Syrian refugees to Jordan, paves the way for potential pathways for refugees to return to Syria. However, uncertainties in access to shelter, livelihoods and basic services on return to Syria mean that many refugees have not yet made the decision to return. Given the focus of Jahez on Syrian refugees, this has a potential impact on the implementation strategy. Despite the potential positive implications of refugees returning to Syria, this still represents a project risk that must be monitored. The Jahez PMT is therefore regularly checking in with both the IWMI business continuity team, the risk monitoring team in FCDO and other humanitarian partners in the region to get updates on the context. At present the determination is that the project activities still present significant added value to highly exposed refugee and host communities in Jordan and no major shift in approaches is required. However, a regularly reviewed risk register and ongoing consultations with partners will provide continuous review of the context.

Another factor potentially impacting the implementation of Jahez interventions is an expanding climate resilience sector in Jordan with many actors and new projects entering the DRR/CCA space since the design of Jahez. This offers significant opportunities to leverage investments and complement activities for collective impact, however, also potentially risks duplicative efforts, inefficient use of humanitarian and development funds and breakdown in trust with communities and participants if they are overburdened by poorly coordinated assessments and interventions.

Jahez has adopted a principle of building on existing systems (as highlighted in Figure 2) and establishing effective partnerships. Jahez intends to apply community-based DRR and CCA strategies, leveraging existing strategies and

structures in Jordan and avoiding establishing any parallel systems or activities that will not be recognized by formal and informal DRR actors. This acknowledges Jordan's substantial progress in developing DRR policies and strategies, with specific government departments mandated to lead disaster management.

To ensure interventions are locally appropriate and not duplicating efforts, a concept note has been finalized for a DRR/CCA and climate and weather information landscape analysis. This systems analysis will assess the core functions of DRR/CCA and weather information systems in Jordan, identifying key actors and stakeholders at the national and local levels and mapping out gaps in DRR systems. Recommendations will help strengthen tailored and unique DRM and climate adaptation in refugee and host communities. For example, through the stakeholder analysis, Jahez identified other development partners undertaking similar initiatives and have adjusted methodologies to focus on the local level and to use findings from other assessments instead of duplicating efforts.

The Jahez PMT during stakeholder consultations with governors and municipalities at the three demonstration sites discovered several very similar initiatives being implemented by other development partners. Coordination meetings with these partners has resulted in tentative agreements to combine efforts in overlapping geographies and hold stakeholder coordination meetings with Local government officials to align objectives, develop joint workplans and distinguish our activities to leverage each other and achieve collective impact at those sites.

Regular context monitoring and project progress monitoring should inform project review and reflection meetings to identify project adaptations either to technical approaches or operational systems to improve implementation efficiencies. Hold regular review and reflection within the project activities and ensure cross learning across portfolio of projects eg the wider Al Murunah/FCDO portfolio to ensure knowledge management and adaptations and contributions to scaling at a portfolio level.

Figure 3 highlights a process for adaptive management in applied research for development initiatives. It emphasises a "learning by doing" approach with steps for analysing and interpreting contextual information and progress data. This process should inform regular reviews to interpret findings and interrogate what it means for project interventions and activities. It also allows for potential project adaptations to be costed and for targeted advocacy and influence tactics to be crafted to pursue systemic change across actors. This also ensures ongoing review of operational systems for optimal efficiencies in project delivery.

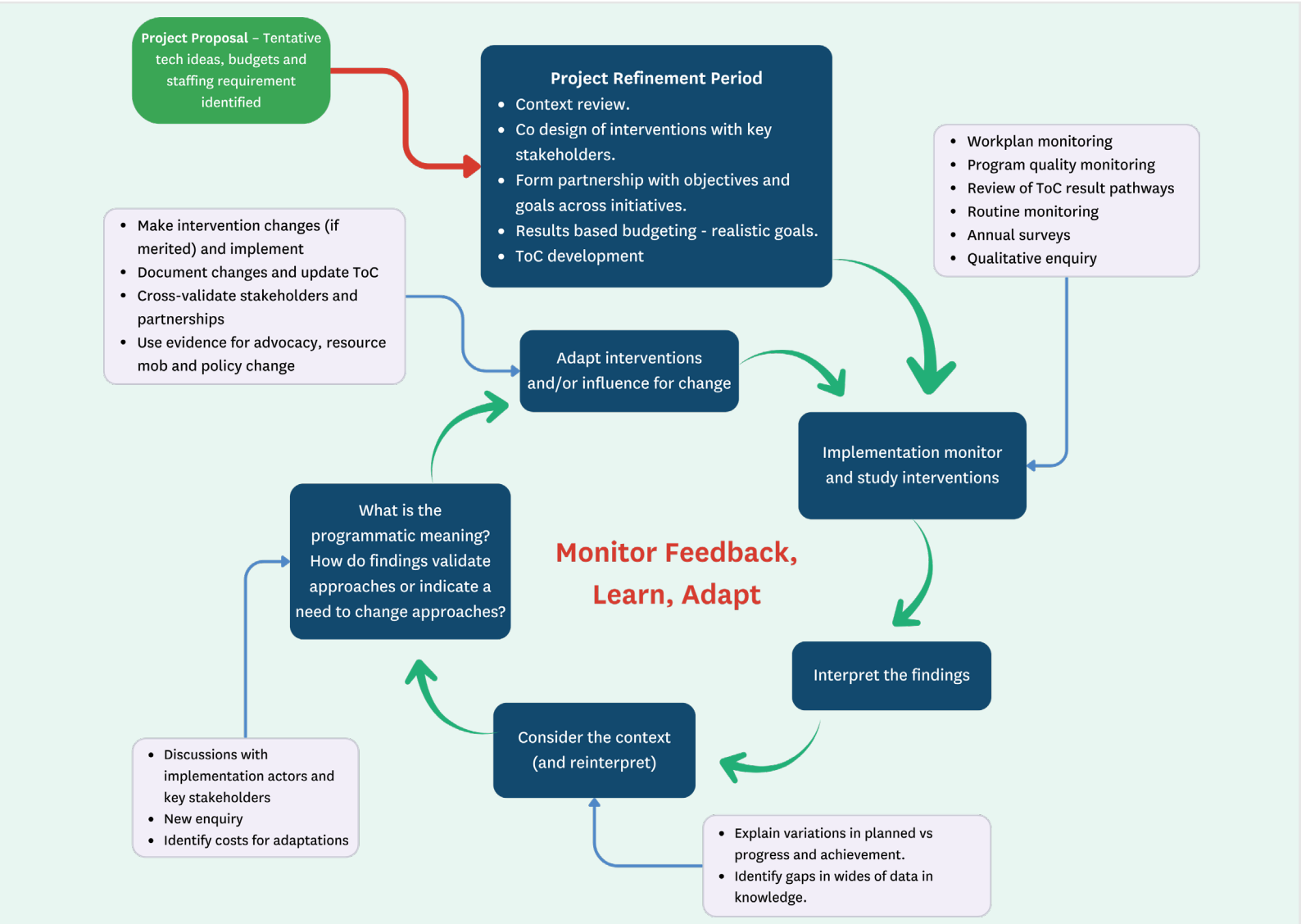


Figure 3. Diagram highlighting structure for adaptive management in applied research for development initiatives (Adapted from the USAID Nawiri CLA framework).
Source: Authors (2026)

Conclusion and Key Takeaways

Applied research for development initiatives can proactively adopt an adaptive management approach from project design through implementation and can encourage these tools to be applied through local implementing partners and key stakeholders in the project.

A robust adaptive management strategy has multiple co benefits beyond just supporting effective implementation. If applied appropriately, it will help map out a scaling strategy through leveraging co-investments and partnerships beyond project investments. It will contribute to sustainability of interventions by ensuring that contextual shifts cause minimal disruption to activities (during and beyond the project lifecycle). Finally, it contributes to technical excellence by generating a thorough understanding of factors that contribute to optimal enabling environments for new techniques, technologies and approaches for resilience building by addressing technical issues, operational issues and understanding the systems and behaviours that influence success and sustainability of an initiative.

Project Refinement Phase:

- **Set clear, achievable and measurable goals and objectives** that clarify expectations to all stakeholders (implementing partner, donors, government counterparts and participants of the project initiatives).
- **Hone a strategic implementation document** that succinctly documents objectives, approaches, targets and implementation strategies. This should bridge between the proposal conceptualization and an operational and implementable strategy.
- **Review implementation and operational costs and develop a results-based budget** that realistically costs out each intervention and activity, including associated staff and operational costs, and assigns a unit cost that can be easily adjusted if the context changes and some activities need to be adjusted or reassigned to different budget lines.
- **Co-design with key stakeholders** including review of critical partnerships and aligning common initiatives and investments through establishing shared objectives. This will contribute to collective impact and scaling opportunities across projects and initiatives.
- **Regular implementation and context monitoring** to inform review and reflection meetings and identify project adaptations.

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Project

Jahez (Ready) - Climate-ready refugee hosting communities in Jordan is a three-year project supported financially and technically by UK International Development and implemented by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and Met Office (UK), in collaboration with the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and the Climate Action Association (CAN) at the sub-national level. The project is jointly steered by Jordan's Ministry of Environment (MoEnv) and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), together with other key partners, including the Ministry of Water and Irrigation (MWI), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the National Center for Security and Crisis Management (NCSCM), the Jordan Meteorological Department (JMD), the Ministry of Local Administration (MoLA), Jordanian National Commission for Women, as well as relevant municipalities and local actors.

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