

جمعتنا قوتنا

OUR STRENGTH
IS IN OUR UNITY

HOW DID A GROUP OF
WOMEN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

**BUILD THEIR
POWER** TO CHANGE THEIR REALITY?

Year One: 2024



HOW DID A GROUP OF

WOMEN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

**BUILD THEIR
POWER**

TO CHANGE THEIR REALITY?

A story of change rooted in the land,
led by women agricultural workers in
Jordan's Northern Jordan Valley, during
their first year of collective action.



From “Why me?” to “Our Strength is in Our Unity”

Basima worked in a date-packing workshop. Careful hands, steady pace. The supervisor kept singling her out, piling on tasks, testing her patience.

One day the supervisor snapped, “If you don’t like it, stop.”

Basima stood her ground: “You don’t decide. If the owner wants me to leave, let the owner say it to me.”

By evening a message came: “Do not come to the workshop tomorrow.”

Basima went to management with her sister. The manager listened, said he hadn’t fired anyone, and checked. The supervisor was dismissed. It was frightening, but it was fair. Basima left with a clear thought: if she kept quiet today, someone else would face worse tomorrow.

She began calling co-workers and visiting them at home. They talked on bus rides and over kitchen tables. Small circles formed so no one would face trouble alone. More women joined. The story moved beyond one workshop to the fields of the valley.

Basima is now a leader in Our Strength is in Our Unity, a campaign for women agricultural workers' rights. They began with the basics of health and safety: gloves, masks, first aid.

"A co-worker was bitten by a snake and spent a week in the hospital. There was no first aid," one woman says.

"The shears cut my leg badly. I had to pay for treatment myself," says another.

Their hope is simple: go to work at ease, finish the day, and keep dignity and health intact. A lesson spread from Basima's stand: if each woman brings together five co-workers and asks for her right, reality begins to shift.

**If every worker
brings together
five others and
they demand their
rights, we change
the reality.**

Basima

Women agricultural workers in Jordan in a fragile sector without protection

In the Northern Jordan Valley, thousands of women work long hours in agriculture for low pay and without basic health and safety. They face daily risks like bites, cuts, and heat stress, often without gloves or first aid, and without health coverage or injury compensation.

They are the backbone of a vital sector, yet they work with little real legal protection. There are no binding contracts, no clear complaint paths, no representative body, and no union to defend their rights. Work is seasonal and insecure, which heightens their vulnerability.

Jordan's Labor Law was amended in 2008 to include agricultural workers, and a dedicated regulation came in 2021. It lacks enforcement. Most workers do not know it exists, and those who do rarely find an agency that follows up or compels employers to comply. Officials often point to the sector's "informal" nature to explain the absence of oversight.

For thousands of women, the work was hard and unsafe, with almost no protection. A group refused to accept it. They broke the silence, organized, and began to shift the balance.



Many workers earn 5 JOD per day, below the legal daily minimum for full-time work in 2024 (about 8.5 JOD).

Some work more than 10 hours a day in hazardous conditions without contracts, protective gear, or social security.

Although the law changed in 2008, a dedicated regulation only arrived in 2021, and without real enforcement it left most workers outside effective protection.

How it started... Building the base

Unifying the base through popular education

The campaign began with learning, not demands. The women felt the injustice, but there was no unified base and not enough trust to stand together. Calling for change too soon would not last.

In early 2024, ten women from five areas in the Northern Jordan Valley started a popular education journey with Ahel. They initiated it themselves.

Each pair formed a small team with co-workers from nearby farms and held regular sessions. In these circles they broke the silence, shared daily stories of control and discrimination, and talked about power, justice, and collective action from their own lives. The aim was not theoretical knowledge. It was to build a shared language, a shared sense of responsibility, and the ability to act as one group.

After each session, every woman hosted a home meeting to carry the conversation forward. These meetings were organizing in practice. They built trust, widened the base, and encouraged initiative. At the end, they signed a Supportive Practices Pledge as a collective commitment to the values and practices that tied them together.



“
**I am not alone
anymore. We are
one voice now.**”
Popular Learning Participant



Thanks to this process, 30 women moved from participation to active leadership roles, which strengthened the campaign's ability to grow and self-organize.



What is popular education?

Popular education, as Paulo Freire developed it, is not lecturing from above. It is a liberating path rooted in daily life. People share their stories to reflect, then make a public commitment to an action that turns insight into practice. With each action, limits set by oppression are pushed back, and justice and dignity are rebuilt on the ground.

At Ahel, this approach sits at the heart of organizing. It builds critical awareness, ties people to their cause, and treats leadership as a collective act. We have used it with teachers, refugee women, and other grassroots groups.

In Our Strength is in Our Unity, popular education opened the way to trust and commitment among the women. Listening turned, step by step, into collective actions that changed conditions in the fields. An organizing core took shape with shared understanding, mutual trust, and practical tools. At their final gathering, they launched a first collective action and signed the Supportive Practices Pledge, affirming the values that unite them. Learning became ground to stand on: home meetings, pledges to act together, and readiness to join the campaign.

How popular education changed the campaign's organizing

Popular education did not stay a simple circle or learning experience. It changed how the women organize.

They found a shared language for what they live. They made small public commitments and kept them. Home meetings carried learning from house to house and farm to farm. The Supportive Practices Pledge set how they relate to one another and how they act together.

From here, a core group formed with clear trust and usable tools. They mapped the farms, counted who could move with them, chose a first demand they could win, and practiced the conversations and negotiation they would need. What began in listening became coordinated steps on the ground. Learning stopped being the end. It became the engine of a campaign led by women agricultural workers.





From standing up for what is right... to the demanding of rights

Nareeman had worked on farms for years, long days under the sun picking tomatoes and cucumbers. One hot day an older worker fainted. The women rushed to help. The supervisor blocked them, as if her life could wait.

Nareeman said, "We cannot leave her alone. If she did not need the income, she would not be here."

The moment shook her. She felt small, but knew that saying what is right, even alone, is real strength. She started looking for a way to change this.

She joined learning circles with other women, hesitant at first. When someone proposed a "fingerprint" pledge, every woman agreed on the spot. In that moment she saw their power and what unity could do.

Later, a colleague invited her to a gathering of groups organizing for their rights in change campaigns. It was the first time she saw, up close, stories of campaigns that had succeeded, and women and men leaders speaking about their experiences with confidence. One woman's strong presence stayed with her and sparked a conviction: a big problem can change when we come together.

"I felt part of something bigger, and I knew change is not impossible," Nareeman says.

Today, Nareeman is one of the women leaders in Our Strength is in Our Unity, a campaign for women agricultural workers' rights. They began by asking for the basics: health and safety tools, first aid, and a workplace that protects dignity and reduces risk. Behind these demands is a clear message. Change begins with refusing what is wrong, and with the insistence that no one stands alone.

**I felt part of
something bigger,
and I knew change
is possible.**

Nareeman





From learning to organizing: the campaign begins

By the end of the popular education journey, moving to action was not automatic. It was a turning point that needed collective, strategic thinking. The women were clear: when they lead the campaign themselves, it gains legitimacy, builds trust and turnout, and is more likely to win real change rooted in the people of the cause.

They formed a leadership team from five areas and asked the core question: what first demand can unite us and start change on the ground? The answer did not come from theory or outsiders. It came from wide consultations with co-workers in the farms and careful listening to daily experience. Many issues surfaced, from low pay to lack of protection from violence. The women chose one starting point: provide basic health and safety tools. It is concrete, improves work instantly, needs no complex approvals, can be negotiated directly with farm owners, and it is already supported by existing legal guidance. Choosing it did not simplify the problem. It set a firm base to build on.

The campaign set out with two theories of change:

If employers see that providing health and safety tools is simple, low cost, and protects workers while lifting productivity, they will accept it.

If the women know their rights and learn how to demand them together, they will move to claim them.

Once the campaign began, they tested these assumptions on the ground. Through repeated tactics and direct relationships among the people of the cause, they sensed the community's pulse, widened the circles of commitment, and prepared for a coordinated action in their name. This was the true start of building a base that moves with confidence and knows where to begin.





TACTIC:

“Hand in hand, we teach one another”

Sharing knowledge to build commitment

After choosing the first demand, the women moved on the ground with a simple, strategic tactic: hand in hand, we teach one another. The aim was not only to share information, but to build a relationship, deepen trust, and create shared commitment.

Knowledge had to travel in ways that fit their days. Many women do not read or write, and legal language did not match their lives. So the campaign made simple picture sheets that show rights through images, not dense text.

They did not drop from above. They moved through real relationships, hand to hand. A worker would look at a sheet and explain it in her own words to a co-worker at home, on the bus, at the shop, or while waiting at the clinic. These were not formal trainings, but one-to-one conversations and small home gatherings where trust grows through everyday stories. In these circles, the questions that build commitment were asked:

Will you teach someone else?

Will you stand with us when we demand?

Each woman became a link. She did not just receive knowledge; she built a circle of understanding and commitment around her. Over time, a strong network formed.

Women who pledged wore the campaign cap. It was more than a symbol. Everyone who joined was added to a contact list so follow-up was easy when action was needed. The base grew with care and connection, building trust and preparing the group to act.

With this tactic, learning turned into organizing, and personal ties grew into collective power ready to move. Hand in hand, we teach one another.



Progress of change: in numbers

More than 250 workers learned their rights to health and safety tools.

177 workers pledged to act together to win these rights.





TACTIC:

"Safety in or we're out"

Direct negotiation as a tool for demands

After building the base, the women moved together on a clear, concrete demand: with safety we stay, without it we leave. Employers must provide basic health and safety tools in at least seven farms. Simple on paper, deep in effect. It sets a minimum level of protection at work and shows that collective action wins real replies.

They chose direct, collective negotiation. No written complaints. No go-betweens. Teams were formed from the women themselves. Each team was coordinated by a worker from inside the farm and paired with a colleague from the coordination group. They practiced how to ask for their rights together and prepared for the different answers they might hear.

There were real fears. Someone could be fired, mocked, or refused. What they had learned gave them steadier footing. They knew their rights and what dignity at work means, and they stepped past the barrier of silence.

The results confirmed their path. All eleven employers they approached agreed to provide the tools.

This showed that organized, collective action led by the women themselves can win concrete demands and shift parts of the power balance, even in a fragile sector like agriculture.



Progress of change: in numbers

114 workers took collective action.

11 farms have already provided health and safety tools.





From breathlessness to a strong voice

Reema woke before dawn each day, got her home and children ready, then squeezed into a crowded ride to the farm. One day, exhausted and with a chest infection, she stepped into the tomato greenhouse as the owner began spraying pesticides while the women were still inside. She asked him to wait until they stepped out. He refused, saying he was following the boss's orders. As her breathing tightened, she went outside for air. He only sent her home, refused to take her to the clinic, and docked her pay.

Her condition worsened. An ambulance took her to the hospital, where she stayed ten days. She left with a chronic lung condition and now relies on inhalers. "I wish I had known my rights then," Reema says. "I would not have let him leave me like that or deny my right to treatment

and pay.”

With Our Strength is in Our Unity, everything shifted. She learned her rights and began facing employers when wages were stolen or safety rules ignored. “I look him in the eye and say, I have a right with you. I claim it out loud.”

Today she sees the change. No spraying while workers are inside the plastic houses. Masks and protective clothing are present. Employers think twice before breaking the law or denying rights. In a similar incident after the campaign began, when Reema felt short of breath, the owner stopped work and drove her to the clinic himself.

**When we stand
together,
everything
changes.** ”

Reema





Celebrating the win

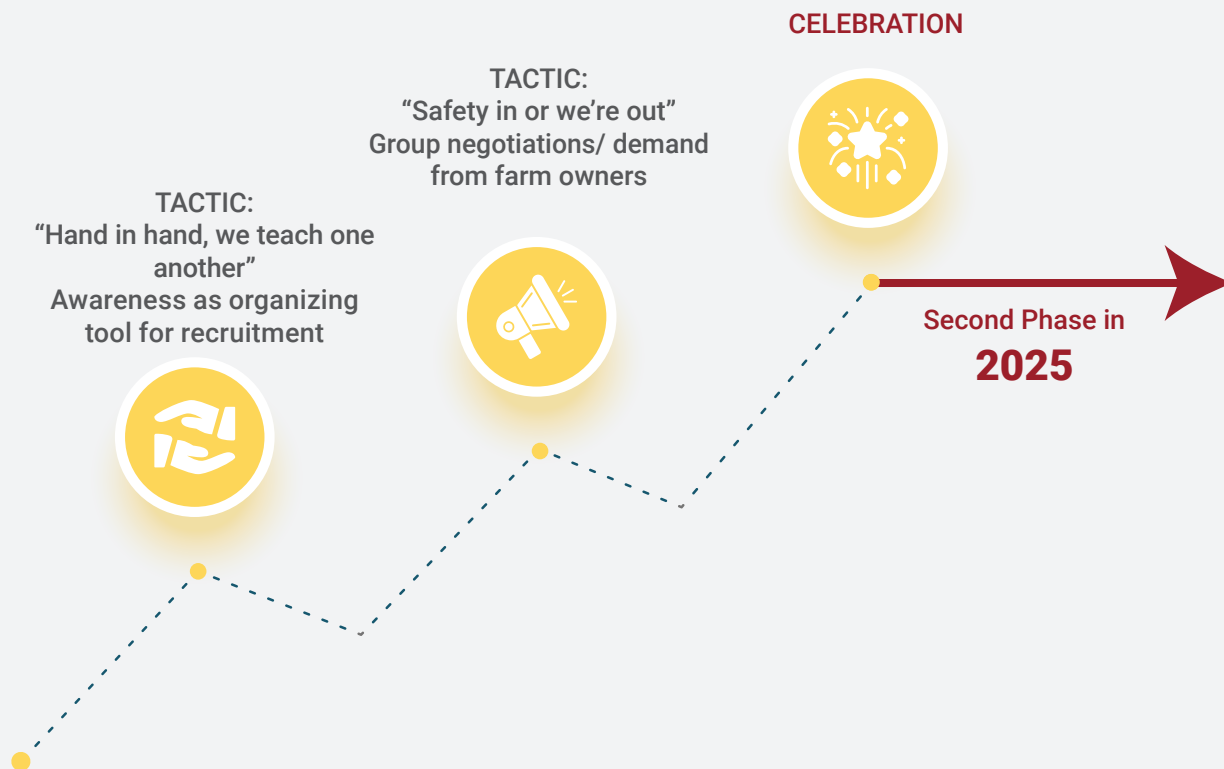
Consolidating gains and building alliances

After securing the first demand in 11 farms, the women chose not to stop at the result. They set out to fix it in place and widen its effect.

They organized a community celebration attended by the mayor, the local police chief, farm owners who responded, and women from different areas.

At the heart of the event was a strategic move: honoring the farm owners who provided the tools. It was not a token thank-you. It sent a clear message that this is a partnership worth continuing. The women wanted a positive relationship with those who stepped up, so they can stand as allies in the next stages, especially as the campaign moves toward larger demands involving public bodies like the Ministry of Labor and Social Security.

The celebration became an organizing tool. It affirmed what was achieved, drew more people into the circle of commitment, strengthened the campaign's local presence, and showed that while women agricultural workers lead, everyone has a role.



A structure rooted in the campaign's reality

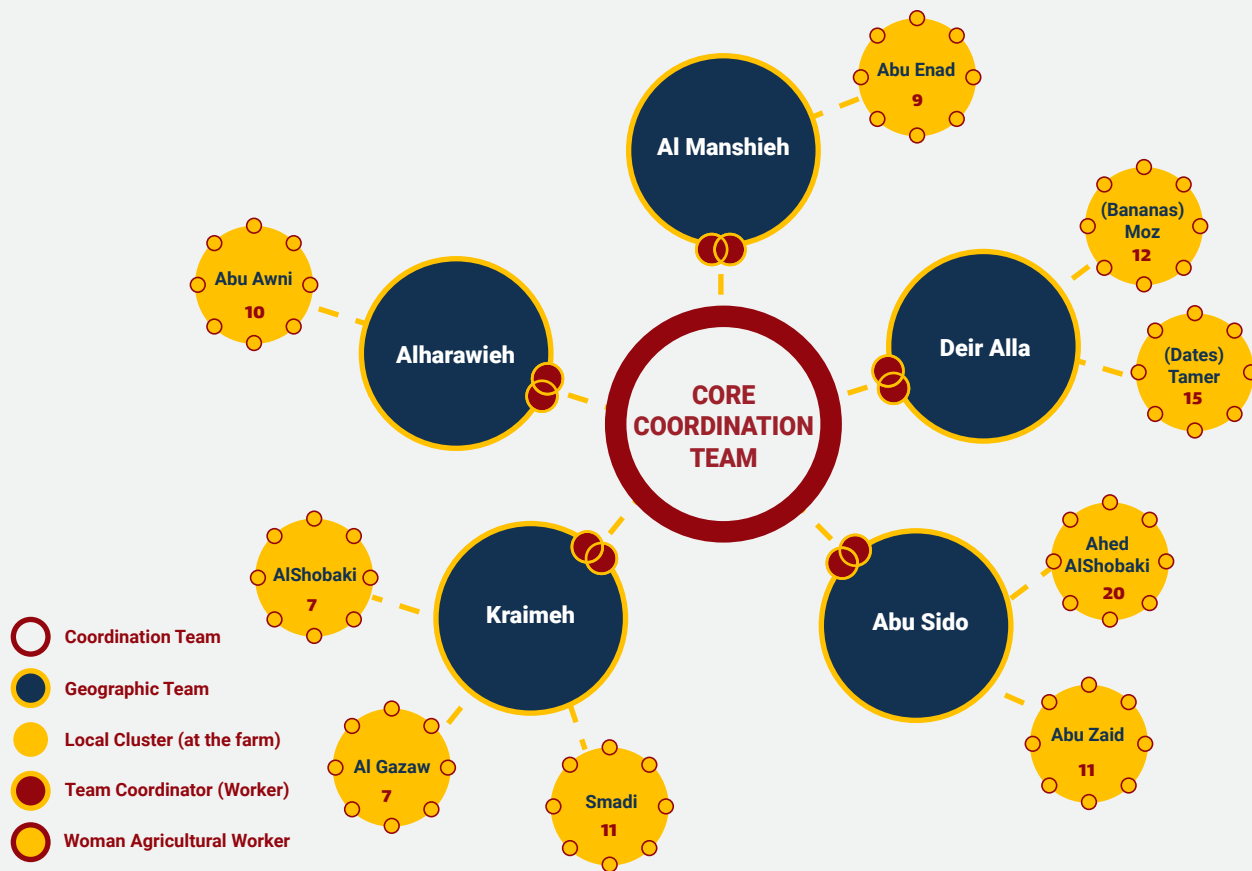
The structure grew from the base, not from a template. It was built around where women actually work and the rhythm of seasonal labor.

At the center is the coordination team—women from five areas who helped launch the campaign, walked the popular-education journey, and shaped strategy. Around it are area teams for each of the five areas. Within each area, every farm is a local cluster—the on-the-ground unit where action happens.

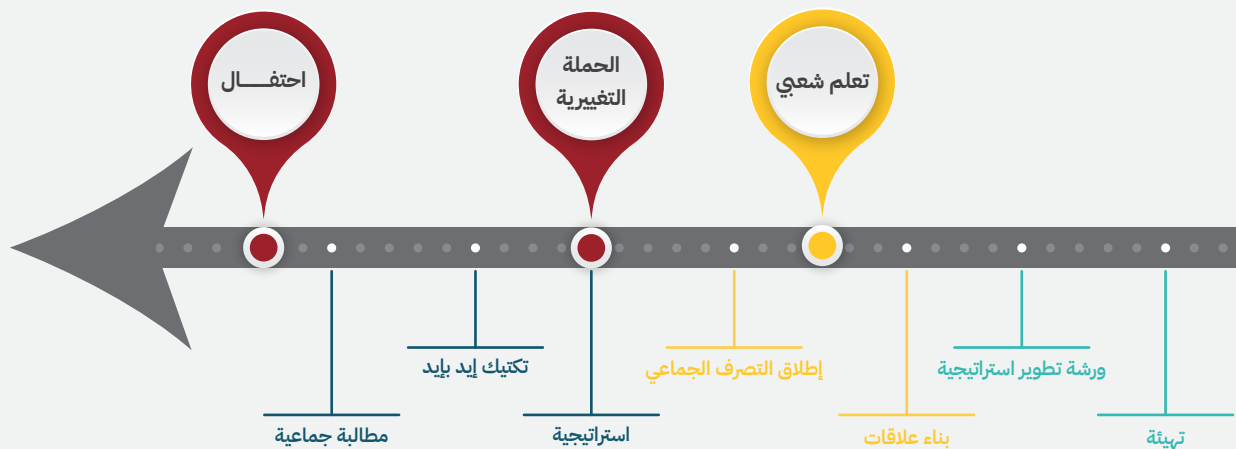
It is not only geography; it is capacity to act. To press a demand in any farm, there must be a real cluster of workers inside it who can move together. One person is not enough. These clusters became the home for tactics.

Clusters form and shift with the seasons. Agriculture has a season map: okra in summer, citrus in autumn and winter, bananas year-round. The teams update their on-the-ground map month by month so they can plan ahead and act in the right place at the right time.

The coordination team did not start from “where do we want to build,” but from “where are we now.” It is a teams-of-teams design and a living tool that moves as needed—built by and for the people of the land.



المرحلة الأولى: 2024



From pain to hope

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Lessons from organizing in a fragile, informal sector

Organizing to build power

The women knew that success is not only about numbers. It is about cohesion and continuity. So organizing stretched on three planes:

Inside the farm: from one co-worker to another, until a local cluster forms.

Within the community of the people of the cause: through existing ties, meetings, and shared spaces.

With the circles around the campaign: so the voice carries outward and finds support.

This was not only organizational. It was social. It reconnected women to one another and to their cause.

How we measure success

Individual: confidence grew, voices rose, and new leaders emerged who can speak, rally, and coordinate.

Community: effective base clusters took shape inside and beyond the farms, exchanging support and organizing from where they stand.

Impact: the first goal was won, and the campaign is now expanding in both demands and reach.

Adapting to resources

The work fits the context and the people. Many women do not read or write. Silence and fear are common. Safe public spaces are rare. So the campaign used picture sheets rather than dense text, home meetings instead of formal workshops, and personal and shared stories instead of theory. Challenges became tools for organizing, not obstacles to it.

Organizing as a path, not just a demand

The first demand, health and safety tools, was chosen because it is achievable, has direct impact, and avoids long formal procedures. More important than the demand itself is what formed around it: a network of women able to act and ready to take on bigger demands.

What makes this an important organizing experience?

It started from the people of the cause, not from outside.

It linked awareness to action, and personal ties to collective structure.

It produced a grounded leadership base that can continue and grow.



The campaign moving forward

After winning the first demand by late 2024, the women set a new plan for 2025 to widen the organizing and deepen impact. Keeping the gains needs steady work and broader participation. They are putting this plan into action now.

The focus is expansion to nine areas, including four new ones, and building a larger base of 750 women learning together about their labor rights.

New demands

Provide sanitary facilities on farms to ensure a safe work environment.

Guarantee coverage for work injuries so women receive treatment and fair compensation.

Organizing as a sustained collective act

This organizing is a deliberate collective act, built step by step from the women's experience inside the farms. The circles keep widening in a systematic way, as more women learn to turn individual awareness into collective action.

The aim is not only to win partial demands, but to build collective power able to protect rights and ensure they last. The women work for new gains without stepping back from what they have already won. Organizing has become a steady force in their lives, not a temporary campaign.





As the people lead

Holding space for shared leadership while accompanying a campaign

Our compass is the leadership of the people of the cause. They know best what a woman agricultural worker faces each day, what might make her hesitate to claim her right, and how she relies on her own resources and the tools within reach.

As a coach with Ahel, my role is to hold and protect that leadership space. I enable shared leadership and organizing practices that help build a cohesive base able to reach the goal it set for itself.

I move in parallel with the group. I do not decide for them. My responsibility is to make sure their decisions in narrative, strategy, structure, and values are carried out in ways that strengthen their leadership and build real power rather than reactions.

I am proud of the path we have walked together. The women's action to build their people's power, and their ability to reshape beliefs that once felt fixed, inspire me. In their strength and success, whether winning a concrete goal, acting as a community-rooted group, or each one growing her leadership and overcoming challenges, I see a living example of what collective power can do when it stands together. I am confident and eager for what comes next with them.

Farah Halasa
Campaign's Coach



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