



CRS and our partner staff review shelter needs with the entire household, including holding discussions around the adaptations necessary for people with disabilities. Photo by CRS staff

Gaza Shelter Rehabilitation

IMPROVED HOME ACCESSIBILITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ashraf al-Bilbisi lives with his wife, Lubna, and their eight children in Khan Younis refugee camp. His occasional work as a seasonal laborer did not provide sufficient income to meet all the needs of the 10-member family. Some cash assistance every three months from the Ministry of Social Development supplemented Ashraf's income, but the family still struggled to cover their basic living requirements.

Difficult economic times prevented them from making critical improvements, including to the kitchen and bathroom that lacked running water. There was no kitchen counter for food preparation and only a curtain between the kitchen and bathroom. Broken windows and the lack of internal doors meant the family was exposed to harsh weather and privacy concerns. "When one of my daughters wanted to use the bathroom, one of her sisters had to stand at

the entrance until she had finished," Lubna said. Also, the house was inaccessible to people with disabilities, including Ashraf and Lubna's daughter Shumue, who uses a wheelchair.

In July 2020, the family was selected to receive assistance through the Dignified Shelter for Highly Vulnerable Gazan Families project, funded by Caritas Germany and implemented by Catholic Relief Services in partnership with local partner Bayader for Environment & Development Association. Responding to acutely vulnerable households living in substandard housing, the project helps deliver urgent shelter rehabilitation that meets the specific needs of all household members, focusing on women, girls, people with disabilities and the elderly. Besides shelter rehabilitation, Ashraf and Lubna received e-voucher assistance to buy household necessities.

Before the refurbishment, the kitchen and bathroom lacked running water, there was no kitchen counter for food preparation.

Photos by CRS staff

BEFORE



AFTER



“I can now use the bathroom without help. The safety handrails make it easier for me. I can now move inside the house easily and it is much better than the past.

Shumue al-Bilbisi



The family installed solar water heaters in line with the project's environmental options to promote renewable energy and reduce demands on cost and time.

CRS supported the family to make critical improvements to enhance their home by upgrading the kitchen and bathroom, rehabilitating the bedrooms, repairing broken windows, and installing bedroom doors. Most importantly, the family was able to increase access and mobility by laying tile floors and installing handrails in the bathroom. Shumue can now move around inside the house easily, giving her greater independence and dignity.

Besides increasing the family's privacy and household accessibility, the improvements and vital household items helped mitigate health and safety risks by addressing unhygienic spaces for sleeping, cooking and bathing.

These also helped to reduce the family's risk of COVID-19 and made maintaining the house less labor intensive. Lubna said, “Now I can clean the house easily, and I spend less time in the kitchen due to the rehabilitation.”

The family also installed solar water heaters in line with the project's environmental options to promote renewable energy and reduce demands on cost and time. The family is now less reliant on gas and electricity and can put the money toward other needs.

Ashraf said, “I had spent my life dreaming of rehabilitating my house. We couldn't have done this without the assistance.”