

# Social scientists and conservationists explore impact of wildlife conservation on lives of mobile people

AMMAN (JT)

Sociologists, anthropologists and conservationists are gathered in Wadi Dana for open discourse on the current impact of wildlife conservation on the lives and livelihoods of mobile people in remote areas.

Her Royal Highness Princess Basma, who acted as patron of the event, pointed out that Jordan is no stranger to the issue of mobile people as many of its people comprise both the indigenous bedouin and refugees. Princess Basman told the attendees to the conference on "Mobile People and Conservation" that serious considerations presently need to be addressed in relation to the use of Jordan's remaining natural areas.

These communities, she

said, "should not be forced to give up their ways of life or their culture, nor should they be displaced by development or by long-term and large-scale commercial tourism."

Settled communities have been the focus of most debate concerning conservation and sustainable development, said conference speaker Dawn Chatty, deputy director of the Refugee Studies Centre of Oxford University.

Kahlid Irani of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) talked about the initiatives promoted in Dana and Wadi Rum, which are predominantly economically oriented, focusing on creating income-generating and job opportunities, linked to the nature reserve and the philosophy of conservation

These nature-based socio-economic programmes have contributed towards changing local perceptions and attitudes to nature conservation and have brought about greater community support and involvement, Irani said.

Princess Basma expressed gratitude to Chatty for organising the event and providing an opportunity for various countries to assess the Dana initiative as well as relate to the RSCN's experience.

The four-day conference is hosted at the Wadi Dana Nature Reserve by the Refugees Studies Centre, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford, in collaboration with the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Environment, the IUCN World Commission of Protected Areas and Oxfam.