



7 YEARS INTO EXILE

How urban Syrian refugees, vulnerable Jordanians and other refugees in Jordan are being impacted by the Syria crisis

A SUMMARY

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CARE International in Jordan's sixth annual urban assessment builds upon the organization's important work responding to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan. CARE Jordan has consistently targeted its programming to Jordan's most vulnerable, including Syrian refugees in camps, urban Syrian refugees, and vulnerable Jordanian host community members.

In order to tailor its programming, CARE Jordan has carried out yearly needs assessments since 2012. The first was a survey of Syrian urban refugee needs; the annual assessment has now expanded to include Jordanian host communities for the second year in a row. This year, other minority refugees (from countries including Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Egypt, Yemen, and the Russian Federation) were included to more accurately gain a comprehensive picture of the needs and vulnerabilities facing Jordan's most vulnerable. Additionally, the geographic scope of the study was widened to include the southern Jordanian governorate of Karak, in addition to four northern governorates (Amman, Irbid, Zarqa, and Mafraq) with the highest populations of Syrian urban refugees.

BACKGROUND

Over the last three years, the number of registered Syrian refugees in Jordan has stayed much the same, numbering 660,315 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR as of June 1, 2017. Over two-thirds (78.5%) of these refugees are living outside of camps, primarily in Jordan's northern governorates. In addition to Syrian refugees, Jordan hosts multiple other refugee populations, including Palestinians who arrived in 1948, 62,173 Iraqis, and another 10,000 from Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen. This influx is a significant strain on Jordan's public resources, which are already stretched thin in providing services for the kingdom's approximately seven million citizens.

Access to cash is difficult for Syrian refugees, and only in 2016 did the Jordanian government prioritize access to legal and safe work for Syrian refugees. CARE's 2016 assessment showed a dramatic increase in the proportion of Syrian urban refugees who gain their income from humanitarian assistance instead of work. The cash crisis has pushed families to use harmful coping mechanisms including child labor or early/child marriage. One-third of Syrian children remain out of school, many of them for several years now.

The signing of the Jordan Compact outlined the country's commitments to encouraging legal work for Syrian refugees, including easing access to legal work permits. However, refugees were hesitant to take advantage of

the opportunity, due to confusion about the application procedures and fears that they would put their access to emergency assistance at risk. Some 40,000 Syrian refugees have gained work permits, giving them access to certain jobs and protecting them from exploitation, low wages, unregulated work, etc.

Jordanian host community members have also reported cash shortages, particularly in paying their rent. They feel acutely the impact of Syrian refugees on their daily lives, finding or maintaining access to employment, accommodation, or educational services, giving rise to fears of tension and conflict, which have thus far proven largely unfounded in Jordan.

Other minority refugee groups face serious protection needs and gaps in service provision that arise in part from a lack of visibility and aid availability in comparison with their Syrian refugee counterparts.

CARE has adapted its programming to respond to the needs of refugee families and Jordanian host community citizens. It has established five community centers in the governorates with the highest population of refugees, offering a range of services including cash assistance, needs assessment and in-depth case management, psychosocial activities and support and sustainable livelihoods opportunities. These services, taken together, offer a comprehensive protection approach that helps to meet the most urgent needs of refugees and their Jordanian hosts and reduces insecurity over the long term.

Cover: Syrian refugees Yousra (left) with her daughter Raghda (in background) in the small house they rent in the northern Jordanian town of Irbid. In the foreground are the two women's children: Lemar, 4, and Remas, 3. Credit: Richard Pohle/The Times

MAIN FINDINGS

The 2017 urban assessment's main findings were split into several parts, first describing the priority needs and vulnerabilities of Syrian urban refugees, Jordanian citizens, and other refugees and analyzing those findings in light of previous assessments. The assessment also details these groups' access to available humanitarian assistance. Gender and age analyses are central to the report, which will be available in full from CARE International in Jordan.

According to the primary data collected for this study, the average Syrian has 4.7 family members, including an average of three children. Over two-thirds of respondents reported having two or more adults in their family (53.9%), while more than one-fifth (22.4%) had only one. Female respondents were almost three times more likely to report that there was only one adult in their family (32.9%); while only 12% of men reported so. Notably, 70.5% of respondents lived in a male-headed household, an almost ten percent increase from 2016's urban assessment.

About the Study

Research tools employed by Riyada Consulting and Training in April 2017 included a quantitative survey administered to a total of 2,184 respondents, including 1,447 Syrian refugees, 272 other minority refugees, and 465 vulnerable Jordanian citizens. Most of the respondents had accessed CARE services. Qualitative tools included 18 key informant interviews with key stakeholders, including senior CARE Jordan staff, representatives of the Jordanian government, and staff working in local NGOs. Additionally, 26 focus group discussions were carried out with Syrian, other minority, and Jordanian men and women in each of the five targeted governorates.

The refugees surveyed were geographically distributed across the northern governorates with the highest concentrations of Syrian non-camp refugees (including Amman with 25.3% of respondents, Zarqa with 19.7%, Irbid with 21.8%, and Mafraq with 19.5%) and from a southern governorate, Karak, with 13.6% of survey respondents.

Retaj, 2, lives with her mother Hadija, 32, and brother Motaz, 15 months (names changed). As an infant, her mother was forced to seek shelter for them in mosques and on the streets. Today the family lives in a one-room apartment in Mafraq, Jordan, where her mother struggles to make ends meet. Credit: Mary Kate MacIsaac/CARE



Protection highlights

- **Cash and cash for rent** were identified as primary needs by Syrian urban refugees, vulnerable Jordanian citizens, and other minority refugees
- **82%** of Syrian urban refugees surveyed are living below the poverty line
- Humanitarian assistance continues to make up **40%** of Syrian urban refugee family income (although **work income, at 36%**, has increased since 2016). Minority refugees had other diverse resources, including family abroad
- Dependence on harmful coping mechanisms is decreasing among Syrian refugees, with a decline in those who relied on marrying off daughters or removing children from school to meet livelihood needs
- Just over **1/5** of Syrian refugees of working age had a work permit, primarily citing the high cost of obtaining one (despite the waiving of fees), and the requirement of a one-year work contract
- High levels of **psychosocial stress** continue to burden Syrian urban refugee families, most intensely affecting female-headed households and refugee children
- Obstacles to legal protection endangers children of other minority refugees because they cannot access educational services for their children without legal status
- Vulnerable Jordanian female-headed households reported coping by removing children from school (5.9%) and relying on child labor (3.3%) at twice the rate of male-headed households

Priority Needs and Vulnerabilities

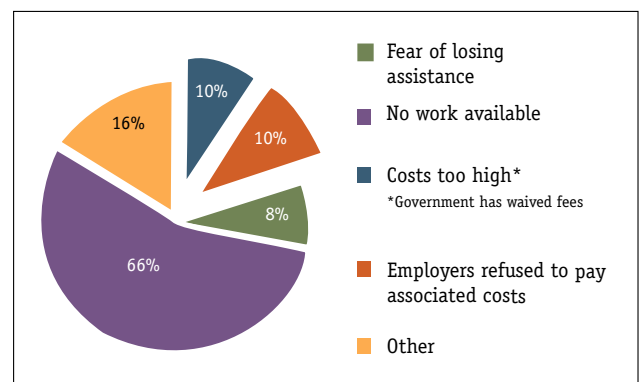
Syrian urban refugees, Jordanian citizens, and other minority refugees each identified cash and cash for rent as their primary needs, consistent with data from 2016's urban assessment. A remarkable 82% of Syrian urban refugees surveyed are living below the poverty line. While there has been no change in the proportion of refugees reported to have moved in the year prior to the study, a notable increase was seen in the percentages of Syrian refugee families who reported moving because they were evicted, or could not afford rent anymore (from 6.1% of respondents in 2016, to 10.3% in 2017). All refugees identified education as a primary need for their children.

In terms of their protection needs, high percentages of Syrian refugees were registered with the relevant authorities (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Ministry of the Interior) guaranteeing basic legal protection. Nevertheless, Syrians' protection needs remain high, including children's access to education, women's rights to safe work, and girls' protection from child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) and sexual violence.

Syrian urban refugees continue to gain their monthly income equally from work and humanitarian assistance, while other minority refugees gained their monthly income from more diverse sources, including assistance from family out of the country. Jordanians earn an average of 20 JOD more each month in comparison to Syrian urban refugees (195.2 JOD and 176 JOD, respectively), while other minority refugees reported lower average monthly incomes, at 169 JOD.

Unemployment rates amongst Syrian urban refugees and vulnerable Jordanian citizens are extremely high (77.8% and 65%, respectively) among the sampled population, however their legal contexts differ vastly. Only a little over one-fifth of the Syrian refugees of working age sur-

Syrian refugee reasons cited for not obtaining a work permit





Ahmad with his cousin, Omer, both 13. Each boy tried working, but found it difficult and would rather be enrolled in school. Credit: Mary Kate MacIsaac/CARE

veyed had a work permit, primarily citing fees that employers appear to be demanding in order apply for the permit (despite that the government has waived employee fees), and the requirement of a one-year work contract. Many Syrians work in construction or other fields where a long-term contract is rare. Female workers also appear to face added barriers to obtaining work permits, as they were underrepresented among those who hold them.

Syrian refugees' expenditures are on average 25% more than their income, while Jordanians' income-expenditure gap, according to CARE assessments, almost tripled between 2016 and 2017 (56 JOD and 123.7 JOD, respectively). Syrian urban refugees, other minority refugees, and Jordanian citizens all reported spending half or more of their monthly expenditures on rent.

Most of the families surveyed—88.9% of Syrian refugees, 80.9% of Jordanian citizens, and 79.6% of other minority families—reported being in debt. High percentages of each group reported relying on borrowing, which is not

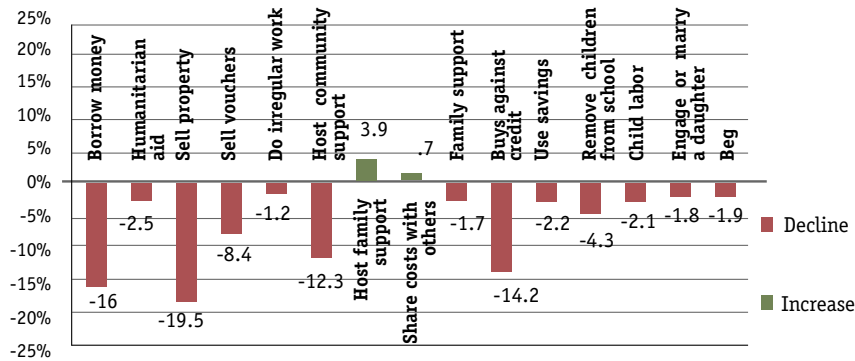
considered a negative coping mechanism, but is also not sustainable over the long term, to close the income-expenditure gap. Jordanian citizens primarily borrow from their families, while refugees more often reported being in debt to neighbors.

Dependence on harmful coping mechanisms is decreasing amongst Syrian refugees, however some families still rely on marrying their daughters early or sending their children to work instead of school in order to meet their livelihood needs. Both refugees and citizens in Jordan report relying on cheaper, lower quality foods as a coping strategy to meet their food needs.

The vast majority of Syrian and other minority refugees live in rented accommodation, and are facing increasing housing insecurity, especially among Syrian female-headed households. Both refugee populations are most in need of cash for fuel in winter, and furniture, as primary needs.

“There are cases when you think of committing suicide because of the situation, where you have lost hope of returning to your country or that the situation in Jordan will improve.” – Syrian refugee woman, Mafraq

Percent increase or decline in reliance on coping mechanisms between 2016 and 2017



Though over half of Syrian refugees reported they were able to access health services when they needed to, Syrians’ overall access to health services decreased over the past year, including access to prenatal care. Additionally, Syrian urban refugees reported that they had high psychosocial health needs. Other minority refugees reported similarly notable psychosocial distress, and that they are in need of cheaper/free medication/services to meet their health needs.

Humanitarian Assistance

On average, Syrian refugees had contacted service/aid-providing institutions more than three times in the last two months, primarily receiving cash and food assistance. However, many refugees reported that there was assistance they needed but could not find.

Both Syrian refugees and other minority refugees primarily learn of available services through their friends, family, and neighbors, however reported preferring to learn about services through direct interactions with service providers. Other minorities, meanwhile, reported

contacting service-providing institutions at least once in the last two months, primarily receiving emergency cash assistance and winterization items and cash.

Gender & Age

Similar to previous years, Syrian, Jordanian, and now other minority families are facing massive shifts in family structures that are transforming gender and age roles and creating new vulnerabilities. Of particular note, Syrian refugee families continued to seek to engage or marry off daughters, or marry off a Syrian female as a second or third wife to a Jordanian man as a means of relieving financial pressure. Anecdotally, some Syrian men are taking additional wives to add to the household’s income-generating potential. Refugee families were more likely to remove their daughters rather than their sons from school for financial reasons, while boys were more likely to be asked to contribute to the family income.

Both Syrian and Jordanian women have vulnerabilities associated with working in the informal sector, including a lack of legal protection or benefits, and increased vul-

Psychosocial health

When asked about their psychosocial and mental health, half of Syrian refugee respondents reported that they have lost interest in things they once enjoyed, preferring to remain idle instead during the past month.

- 10% reported that they constantly feel afraid and unable to calm down
- 22.9% reported that they feel perpetual helplessness to the extent that they do not want to continue living
- Nearly one-fifth of respondents (18.8%) felt these feelings so often that they were unable to carry out their daily activities

nerabilities. However, Syrian refugee women face greater obstacles to obtaining legal protection for safe work. In order to meet their work needs, many refugee and Jordanian women asked for increased vocational training or assistance to create a home-based business.

High levels of psychosocial stress continues to burden Syrian refugee families, most intensely affecting female-headed household and refugee children. Other minority refugee families pointed out that the obstacles to legal protection further endanger their children; many minority refugee families face obstacles in obtaining legal status and then also cannot access educational services for their children without legal status.

Social Cohesion

Syrian urban refugees are increasingly living in more mixed neighborhoods with Jordanian citizen neighbors, similarly to other minority refugees. Both sets of refugees primarily characterize relationships with their neighbors as positive, and report that they do not suffer any issues with their Jordanian counterparts. Additionally, the worsening economic situation was noted to affect vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees similarly, causing competition for jobs in both the formal and informal sectors, and a general reduction in sympathy for the Syrian refugees. Though Jordanian citizens were similarly likely to rate their relationships with their neighbors as positive, more than two-thirds (75.3%) reported that the presence of Syrian refugees had impacted their lives, primarily negatively.

Vulnerable Jordanians felt the impact of Syrian refugees in finding and maintaining accommodation, finding or maintaining gainful employment, and accessing health-

care services. Jordanians cited that there was no need for conflict mitigation strategies, as the host and refugee communities were largely separate and that conflict primarily occurred within the refugee community itself rather than between refugees and Jordanian citizens.

Resettlement & Durable Solutions

Though the percentages of Syrians returning to Syria for a brief period remain low overall, 2017's urban assessment found a 2% increase in refugee families reporting they returned to Syria, primarily for reasons that indicate a trend towards resettlement in Jordan, i.e. to get family members (32.3%), retrieve documents (23.2%), instead of checking on property (4%) or harvesting crops (3%).

Some 5% of respondents (70 families) had family members who had returned to Syria permanently, citing marriage, death of a relative, or economic and personal hardship in Jordan.

There has been a positive change from previous years in the proportion of Syrian refugees that say their conditions have improved (18%) or stayed the same (49%) since they arrived in Jordan; fewer respondents (33%) said that their conditions have deteriorated.

In the same vein, though one-fourth of Syrian urban refugees reported that they would prefer to return to Syria, half stated that if the situation were to become too difficult where they were currently living, they would find another place to live in Jordan. In contrast, other minority refugees replied that they would emigrate to another country or apply for resettlement if the situation where they live were to become too difficult.

Comparison of Syrian refugees' reasons for returning to Syria over the past two years

Reason	2016	2017
Retrieve documents	6.4%	23.2%
Get family members	24.4%	32.3%
Check on property	14.1%	4%
Take school examination	5.1%	5.1%
Harvest crops	14.1%	3%
Collect pensions	1.3%	2%
Visit family members/attend ceremonies, funerals, etc.	3.8%	16.2%
Other	30.8%	14.1%

CONCLUSIONS

The needs of both Syrian urban refugees and Jordanian host communities are stabilizing, reflected in trends that have continued over the last three years. The difficult economic situation is universally affecting vulnerable communities. There is increased pressure on female-headed households and refugee women, and continued shifts in gender roles, which lead to further vulnerability.

All respondents reported wanting to learn about services through direct interaction with organizations. Additionally, the southern Jordanian governorate of Karak showed high levels of vulnerability and is an underserved locale. Further, non-Syrian refugee populations are in need of specific services, such as financial assistance to pay illegal residency fines, that should be addressed through targeted programming.

Overall, community tensions were low, however social cohesion was also deemed as low. Syrian refugees, reporting better or similar living conditions since their arrival in Jordan, appear increasingly interested in settling in the there. Still, one-fourth want to return to their country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Government of Jordan:

1. Better publicize information regarding work permits, and the procedures for obtaining them, to all refugee communities, both for Syrian refugee applicants and employers, to remove a key obstacle to Syrian refugees' legal work such as the one-year contract obstacle and the required percentages of Jordanians visé foreigners in some sectors as well.
2. Conduct thorough service mapping across Jordan, and encourage a more coordinated service sector to provide for the diverse needs of multiple refugee populations with distinct vulnerabilities.

To Donors and the International Community:

1. Ensure specific actions on behalf of the Jordanian government to increase refugees' access to legal,

dignified work are incorporated into future funding agreements.

2. Commit specific funding for non-Syrian refugees, especially in the wake of worsening conflicts in Yemen, Iraq, and other countries.
3. Build upon the steps taken in the Jordan Compact to grow the Jordanian economy, as the worsening economic situation impacts both Jordanian host communities and refugees.

To National & International Humanitarian Actors:

1. Increase in-person outreach to target beneficiaries, particularly in underserved locations such as the south of Jordan, to better publicize services, programs, and information.
2. Increase economic empowerment programming for refugee and Jordanian women.
3. Mainstream gender-sensitivity into all service provision and humanitarian assistance programming.
4. Focus on vocational training, microfinance, and support for both Jordanian and refugee women working in micro-enterprises.
5. Pioneer cash assistance programming for other refugee groups, particularly Yemeni refugees, which helps them to cover daily fines for illegal residence.
6. Specify cash assistance programs for Syrian refugees' largest cash needs, including the need to buy fuel for heating in winter.
7. Focus assistance targeting Jordanian citizens on marginalized Jordanians—namely, families or elderly people without children.
8. In future urban assessments, more focus should be given to the development themes that emerge in light of findings from the 2017 assessment that Syrian urban refugees are trending towards resettlement in Jordan.