



SIX YEARS INTO EXILE

The challenges and coping strategies of non-camp Syrian refugees in Jordan and their host communities

A SUMMARY



CARE INTERNATIONAL IN JORDAN AMMAN, JULY 30, 2016

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JORDAN'S SYRIA REFUGEES

“My sister has four children and her husband died in Syria. She forced them to drop out of school and work for two or three JODs a day to pay the rent.”

Jordan has hosted multiple refugee populations since its establishment, beginning with Palestinian refugees in 1948, followed by waves of additional refugees fleeing nearby instability and conflict. Beginning in 2011, Syrian refugees fleeing the war in Syria have flocked to Jordan's borders. As of June 2016, 655,217 Syrian refugees have been registered with UNHCR in Jordan, 79% of which (518,149) are urban (non-camp dwelling) refugees, while the other 21% (137,068) reside in one of Jordan's three official refugee camps. More than half of them are youth under the age of 25.

Syrian urban refugees have immense needs for rent, food, cash, health, shelter, work, clothes, education, and items for children. The most prominent of these needs is the ability to pay rent, a lack of available accommodation, and poor quality housing. Access to food is the second most reported need, in part due to the World Food Programme's decreased assistance since 2014. Also, health concerns are growing. More than half of the Syrian refugee population in Jordan has chronic health conditions, compounded by growing psychosocial needs, yet Syrians are unable to pay the costs of healthcare. These growing costs are leading many Syrian refugee families to adopt negative coping strategies, including resorting to child labor, in order to meet the family's basic needs. Worrying percentages of Syrian refugee children are not attending school, due to the costs of education and the need for additional income provided by their work. Lastly, newly-introduced restrictions on accessing protection documentation have negatively impacted Syrian refugees' ability to use public services in Jordan.

In parallel, the needs of Jordanian citizens have grown rapidly, with increased competition for resources straining the Jordanian government's ability to meet the needs of its citizens. The economic costs of an adequate response to the Syrian refugee crisis by the Jordanian government in 2016 is estimated to be US 4.2 billion. Education and health services have been compromised,

with many schools now functioning as “double-shift schools,” and healthcare facilities insufficiently staffed and stocked with medicines. Additionally, competition for jobs, accommodation, and access to public services is feeding increasing prejudice against Syrian urban refugees by the Jordanian host community.

Responses to the Syrian refugee crisis have been led by the UN and the Jordanian government, with Jordanian response plans focusing on building resilience through assistance to Jordanian host communities and infrastructure. UN and regional plans have targeted the needs of Syrian refugees living in Jordan. The most recent of the Jordanian government's plans, the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2016-2018, integrates the needs of Syrian urban refugees with Jordanian citizens in each sector. It has only been partially funded, however, with the vast majority of funding going to refugee response.

Various policies have accompanied the Jordanian government's official plans, affecting Syrian refugee access to Jordanian services. Since mid-2013, various border crossings between Syria and Jordan have been closed partially or completely, for reasons attributed to security concerns. Security has also been cited as a reason for deportations. Increasingly, Jordanian government policies have restricted Syrian refugees' free access to public services, most notably healthcare services.

In response to growing needs and shrinking resources, CARE International in Jordan has expanded its programming to respond to the needs of Syrian urban refugees and Jordanian host communities. Assistance has included the opening of urban Community Centers in the governorates most highly affected by the Syrian refugee crisis. These provide information, winterization assistance, emergency cash assistance, case management, and psychosocial support services to urban Syrian refugees.

Cover: Rahab (names changed), 37, holds her youngest, Mohtasim. They live in crumbling accommodations with her husband and eight other children, in a crowded one room space in Amman. (Credit: Mary Kate MacIsaac/CARE)

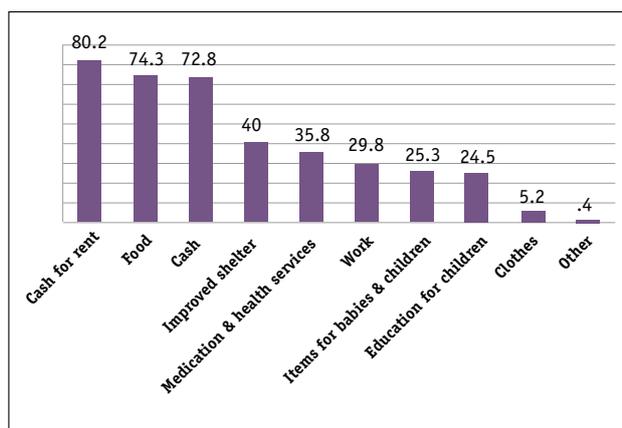
STUDY FINDINGS

This assessment sought to measure Syrian urban refugee and Jordanian households' priority needs and vulnerabilities, including livelihood needs and coping strategies, and community relations.

Priority Needs & Vulnerabilities

Cash for rent continues to be the primary need for Syrian refugee families in 2016, reflected in the fact that almost all of the Syrians surveyed reported living in rented accommodations. The cost of rent continues to comprise over half of Syrian families' monthly expenditures. In ad-

Syrian refugee respondents report primary needs



About CARE & Its Annual Assessments

Since 2011, CARE International in Jordan has been working alongside the Government of Jordan, the United Nations, and other international humanitarian organizations to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan. CARE's work has expanded over the last six years to directly impact urban and peri-urban Syrian refugees, Syrians in Jordan's camps, and Jordanian host communities in the most heavily-affected governorates across Jordan.

CARE has carried out yearly assessments of the needs and coping strategies of these various groups, beginning with a survey of Syrian refugees in Amman in 2012. This year, the assessment has grown to include data from four governorates in Jordan, researching the needs and coping strategies of Syrian urban refugees and Jordanian host communities. In April 2016, Riyadh Consulting and Training was contracted to carry out CARE Jordan's 2016 assessment, collecting qualitative and quantitative data on the needs, coping strategies, and perceptions of Syrian urban refugees and Jordanian host communities residing in Amman, Irbid, Mafraq, and Zarqa (including Azraq town).

This document summarizes the findings of the main assessment report. Recommendations

are then made on the basis of the findings and comparisons with previous years' data.

Methodology

The assessment utilized a mixed methodology approach in order to obtain the most comprehensive set of data for analysis. Research tools included a quantitative survey administered to 1,608 urban Syrian refugee households and 471 Jordanian households, distributed throughout the Amman, Irbid, Mafraq, and Zarqa (including Azraq town) governorates. Both Syrian and Jordanian households had benefited for CARE services, the former group selected by CARE staff performing a vulnerability assessment and the latter selected by Jordanian partners, also chosen for vulnerability.

A thorough review of secondary data was carried out in early May 2016, reviewing reports from UNHCR, CARE, the Government of Jordan, and various INGOs and other stakeholders. Qualitative tools included 12 interviews with key stakeholders, including senior CARE Jordan staff, representatives of the Jordanian government, and staff working in local NGOs. Additionally, 24 focus group discussions were carried out with Syrian and Jordanian men and women in each of the targeted governorates.

In Brief

- Access to basic needs has deteriorated, with food and cash needs dramatically increasing since 2015
- Identified needs varied greatly among Syrians living in different Jordanian localities.
- Proportion of refugees that cited “work” as their primary source of income halved since 2015
- 75.2% of Syrians said that they were not working at the time of the survey - 85.4% of women and 65.2% of men
- Only **39%** of Syrian refugees plan to take advantage of the government’s waiving of job permit application fees; those remaining say the waiver will not increase legal work for them
- Youth were **3X** more likely not to hold a valid registration with UNHCR, usually because they were not aware of registration procedures.
- More than half of the Syrian refugee population in Jordan has chronic health conditions, compounded by growing psychosocial support needs, yet Syrians are unable to pay for healthcare.
- **22.1%** of refugees sought to return to Syria, only half the number that sought to return in 2015
- Jordanians emphasize the need for services equal to their refugee counterparts

dition to high rental costs, Syrian refugees overwhelmingly live in cramped accommodations where their family members feel a lack of privacy and safety. Most Syrian refugees identified buying household items, including furniture, as their greatest shelter priority.

Most Syrian refugees (94%) reported eating two or three meals in the day before the survey. In the week prior to the survey, however, most also reported using negative coping strategies to cover food costs at least one day of the week (most commonly two days in the week), including limiting portion sizes or number of meals throughout the day. Almost half of Syrians cut other needs—such as education and health—in order to cover the costs of food.

Syrian refugees are not immune from Jordan’s continuing water crisis—only 38.6% of survey respondents reported having water every day in the previous month.

Adult Syrian refugees are three times more likely than youth to suffer from chronic diseases, while identifying the high cost of services and medication as primary barriers to accessing quality healthcare, and high costs of transportation as barriers to health clinics and hospitals. Additionally, pregnant and lactating women were only able to access health services half of the time.

The costs associated with education continue to be a barrier for Syrian refugees, who especially cited the costs of higher education as a major obstacle.

Almost all surveyed Syrian refugees are registered with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), citing access to WFP food vouchers as the main benefit of registration. Youth, however, were three times more likely overall to not have a valid registration with UNHCR, usually because they were not aware of the procedures for registering.

Lastly, psychosocial wellbeing is negatively impacted by multiple factors, including ongoing stress experienced by adults that in turn impacts children through tension and violence.

Livelihood Needs & Coping Strategies

Sources of income have drastically changed since 2015, with work and humanitarian assistance cited equally as respondents’ primary sources of income. Monthly income has decreased on average from 209 JOD in 2015 to 185 JOD in 2016. Accordingly, monthly expenditures have followed a downward trend since 2014, as Syrian refugees have smaller amounts of cash to cover their basic needs.

In addition to rent, food, and utilities, Syrian refugees reported spending the next-largest proportion of their

income to cover debt. The average amount of debt per household totals 628 JOD, an increase from 2015.

Syrians report utilizing a range of coping strategies to cover their income-expenditure gaps, primarily relying upon personal loans and the receipt of humanitarian assistance. The vast majority of Syrian refugees are unemployed. Although the Government of Jordan recently announced an application fee waiver for Syrian refugees to obtain work permits, only 39% of Syrian refugees planned on taking advantage of the waiver, citing other hurdles such as employers' fees as a primary reason that the waiver would not increase legal work for Syrian refugees in Jordan.

The overwhelming majority of surveyed Syrians were registered with CARE, primarily receiving emergency cash assistance and psychosocial support. When asked which forms of assistance they most needed but could not find, Syrian refugees identified cash assistance as the most important (cash assistance is usually one-off or provided over a short period and beneficiaries may seek further cash aid). Cash assistance was also identified as the service most Syrian refugees would like more information about.

Additionally, the assessment revealed the continuing shift in gender roles for many Syrian households in Jor-

dan—not only for men and women, but also for youth and children. Increased pressure on female heads of households has propelled many women to work, often-times in the informal sector, and sometimes in insecure employment. Some Syrian refugee families are resorting to child labor in order to close the income-expenditure gap. Alongside the high impact on children's and women's psychosocial wellbeing, shifting gender roles has also created resentment among male- and female-headed Syrian refugee households.

Community Relations

Perceptions and attitudes among Syrian refugees living in Jordan are relatively positive toward Jordanian host communities, with a third reporting they had received help from their neighbors. However, many Syrians also reported feeling acutely aware of negative perceptions from Jordanians about Syrian refugees.

Jordanian perceptions were overwhelmingly positive on a personal level but grew more negative when respondents were asked about the effects of the Syrian refugee crisis on Jordanian citizens in general. Competition for jobs, housing, education, and safety were all cited as primary reasons for negative perceptions.



Additionally, Jordanian citizens overwhelmingly believe that international aid to the Jordanian government should be increased to provide more services to Jordanian citizens, along with greater programming from INGOs targeting Jordanian citizens' needs.

Jordanian host community needs echoed that of their Syrian counterparts, with most of those surveyed reporting needing cash, followed by cash for rent. Jordanians reported a higher monthly average income of 356 JOD,

but also had higher monthly expenditures, totaling 411 JOD. Like Syrian refugees, Jordanians reported relying on borrowing money to cover income-expenditure gaps.

Jordanians additionally reported high psychosocial needs, however utilizing both positive and negative coping strategies to meet these needs. When asked what type of assistance they would need from humanitarian organizations, Jordanians continuously cited livelihood and psychosocial support.

“I am responsible for 17 people, including two orphans, eight of my brother’s children, my disabled mother and sister, along with my family. My brother is in Syria and I’m the only one who can provide for them, while I have diabetes and can’t really work. How can I live? When they reduced our food vouchers, my family suffered.”

CONCLUSIONS

Universality of Needs: Generally, Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians reported the same primary needs—cash for rent, cash, and greater access to services. Given the two groups' vastly different resources for meeting those needs (in terms of access to work, legal protection, humanitarian assistance from international and national organizations, the privileges of citizenship, social discrimination, etc.), in which Jordanian citizens have the advantage, the similarity indicates that primary needs are not being met due to increased competition for limited resources.

Shifting Gender Roles: Additionally, both vulnerable Jordanians and Syrians have seen a shift in gender roles, with Jordanian and Syrian women increasingly entering the workforce. This shift has seen women employed in traditionally male-dominated fields, which some Jordanian women attribute to the lack of jobs available to women. Simultaneously, Syrian refugee women are increasingly the primary wage earners (with a more than 10% increase from 2015), leading to a dramatic transformation of family dynamics and women's leadership in the family.

Shifting Children and Youth Roles: As Syrian women's roles change, so do those of their children. Both Syrian and vulnerable Jordanian women reported negatively coping with psychological stress through physical violence towards their children. Increasing numbers of Syrian children are staying in school (71% in 2016), reflecting a positive trend towards children's access of education. However, increasing percentages of Syrian children and youth are also working and married, the majority of which are Syrian girls. Almost four times the numbers of Syrian minors married in 2016 (54 in total)

than in the previous year (14 in total), with an increase in male minor marriage.

Competition for Resources: The increased competition for limited, strained, and underfunded resources is a major factor influencing tense community relations between vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees. While Syrian refugees report awareness that Jordanians' blame them for increased competition for finite resources, Jordanians also report resentment over what they perceive as unequal service provision from humanitarian actors and lower wages due to increased competition for jobs.

Economic Dependence: While there is a vast income difference between vulnerable Jordanians and Syrians, with Jordanians earning 171 JOD more per month on average than Syrians, both groups reported borrowing money as a primary way to cover their income-expenditure gaps. Syrian refugees are increasingly covering expenses with humanitarian aid rather than work, a stark deviation from 2015, in which Syrian refugees overwhelmingly gained income from work. The data reveals dangerously increasing debt for Syrian refugees, while average income has dropped, and greater economic dependence for both vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees. (It should be noted that, like the most vulnerable Syrians, vulnerable Jordanians selected for CARE assistance and then to participate in this survey may not be able to work due to disability, age, health issues, etc.)

Lack of Specialized Humanitarian Aid: Vulnerable Jordanians widely reported a lack of services focused on aiding Jordanian citizens, while Syrian refugees also over-

whelmingly reported that there were many services they needed, however could not find: primarily cash, food, and non-food items. In addition to an underfunded National Resilience Plan that does not afford the Jordanian government the ability to provide all the services needed by Jordanian citizens, there could also be some misinformation about the services available to Syrians, or a lack of services meeting Syrians' most pressing needs.

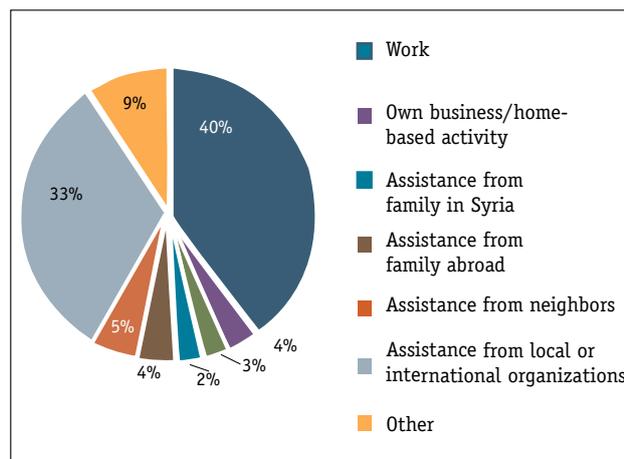
Increasing Urgency: Syrian refugees are increasingly likely to resettle either in Jordan or abroad, continuing a trend established in the 2015 assessment, and are increasingly unlikely to return to Syria should the situation in Jordan worsen. There is an urgent need to find sustainable solutions to gaps in resources for both Syrians and vulnerable Jordanians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Government of Jordan

- To continue to apply flexible policies allowing people to earn a legal living. Specifically:
 - Extend the duration of the fees waiver for work permits for Syrian refugees.
 - Increase information provision to employers and other stakeholders about the work permits process, and the benefits of assisting Syrian refugees with obtaining an official work permit. Though the quantitative data showed that the majority of Syrian refugees were aware of the application fee waiver for Jordanian government work permits, focus group feedback indicated that the primary reason refugees are not applying for work permits is due to remaining obstacles/fees faced by their Jordanian employers. Therefore, in order to meet Syrian refugees' most pressing need (i.e. cash), the Jordanian government should work with employers to raise their awareness of new policies, and how increased Syrian refugee participation in the economy can benefit Jordan overall.
 - Consult with the private sector on which protected sectors still demand protection, and which sectors could benefit economically from more Syrian labor through the easing of protections.
- In line with the Jordan Response Plan, ensure the transition from immediate humanitarian assistance to longer-term, resilience-based initiatives that benefit refugee and host communities alike, and improve community relations.

Syrian refugee respondents reporting primary sources of household income over the last month



- Provide services for refugee protection, in particular for prevention of and responses to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and child protection.
- Invest in youth services and interventions, and promote joint interventions which enhance social cohesion.

To Donors & the International Community

- Prioritize services to Jordanian host communities through direct assistance to the Government of Jordan in order to implement resilience-based programming for Jordanian host communities. Secondary data shows that the vast majority of donor assistance is funding the Jordanian Government's refugee response programs, while the Jordanian resilience plans that directly aid the Jordanian host community's resilience are severely underfunded. Now entering its sixth year, the Syrian refugee crisis continues to put incredible strain on Jordanian host communities through increased public infrastructure and service use. International funding assisting these target groups will propel enhanced community relations between Jordanians and Syrian refugees, allowing for sustainable resilience.
- Implement aid packages differently according to location, allowing for communities to access targeted services. Though Jordanian and Syrian primary needs are the same across Jordan, secondary needs differ vastly between governorates. In order to implement assistance that more effectively responds to specific needs, donors and the international com-

munity should adapt their assistance programs to the specific needs of Syrians and Jordanians in each governorate, thereby increasing impact within each group.

- Prioritize the following sectors: a) shelter and shelter programming in host communities, as the assessment highlighted that housing-related concerns continue to be the primary need of Syrian families; b) food assistance programs, with the transition to more sustainable livelihood policies and interventions; c) cash modalities as a tool for protection; and d) support for health and education sectors, and additional resources for youth access to secondary education. While higher education is not a humanitarian priority, access to tertiary education may need to be rethought given the needs of refugee youth.
- Support Jordanian civil society and international organizations through multi-year funding and increased funding to be able to address efficiently the impact of the Syria crisis for the Syrian refugees and the Jordanian host community.
- Invest in livelihood and employment schemes for refugees and host community members, to ensure access to financing and dignified living.
- Expand resettlement to demonstrate that donor nations are willing to share the burden fairly.
- Provide continued funding for refugee protection, in particular for prevention of and responses to SGBV and child protection.

To National & International Humanitarian Actors

- Expand support to women and men for prevention of SGBV, in particular early marriage and intimate partner violence. Involving men in the process is critical and means supporting them in finding ways to cope with the stress of displacement and idleness due to the inability to work (legally). Much more intensive engagement with communities is needed to prevent early marriage, which has become a means of coping with the challenging economic and living conditions of families and the perceived need to protect girls' "honor."

- Increase vocational training for both Syrian refugee women and Jordanian women. As both Jordanian and Syrian women have lower rates of participation in the workforce, and feedback shows women filling work positions that have traditionally been held by men, vocational training could help prepare women for these roles and increase their economic independence. As both groups primarily report needing cash, increased work would directly respond to both Jordanians' and Syrians' most pressing needs.
- Increase psychosocial support assistance to both Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities, particularly women and children. Psychosocial and psychological support were identified as needed forms of assistance by both Syrians and Jordanians who have suffered under growing hardships. Increased psychological and psychosocial wellbeing directly impacts both family and community, creating a society that is more resilient. Additional psychological and psychosocial assistance to both Jordanians and Syrian refugees in Jordan could more effectively ensure sustainable coping mechanisms for these groups into the future.
- Increase support for the prevention of child labor, and in particular support youth ages 12 to 18 in completing their secondary education.
- Increase awareness between Syrian refugees and Jordanian host populations through communal activities. Focus group feedback from both Jordanians and Syrian refugees indicates the need for community-building and awareness-raising activities among both of these target groups to ease communal tensions. Humanitarian actors could incorporate these activities into their assistance packages at minimal cost, and would directly enhance positive relationships and perceptions of "the other."
- Develop information mechanisms for Jordanian citizens to learn of services specific to them. Many Jordanian citizens reported that they have no mechanisms informing them of potential services, whereas Syrian refugees reported hearing of services through text messages and direct contact with humanitarian organizations. In order to promote potential services amongst Jordanian citizen target groups, humanitarian actors could adopt specialized forms of communication for Jordanian citizens.

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Prepared by

