

Livelihood Opportunities for Refugees

February 2019

Operational Context

Discussion on livelihoods and the Right to Work for refugees in Jordan happened frequently after the Jordan Compact which was signed in London in February 2016, at the Syrian Regional Conference hosted by the United Kingdom, Germany, Kuwait, Norway and the United Nations.

On that occasion, which brought together international humanitarian and development actors, the Government of Jordan pledged to make 200,000 job opportunities available to Syrian refugees by 2020, measured by number of work permits issued.

The Compact combined humanitarian and development funding through multi-year grants (USD 700 million annually for three years) and concessional loans (USD 1.9 billion).



A Syrian refugee working in a sweets shop in Jordan ©UNHCR / Najwan Aldorgham

Accordingly, the Jordanian Government, through the Ministry of Labour (MOL) has issued over 120,000 work permits for Syrian refugees in between 2016 and 2018, in the construction, agricultural, manufacturing and food and processing sectors. Additionally, in November 2018, the Ministry of Labour issued a decision allowing Syrian refugees in Jordan to establish their own home-based businesses, in food processing, tailoring, and handicrafts. UNHCR welcomes this decision as a way to further empower Syrian refugees to earn a living.

The objectives of the Jordan compact have compelled the collaboration of humanitarian and development actors through an inter-sector mechanism commonly known as the Livelihoods Working Group (LWG). The LWG, co-chaired by UNHCR and Danish Refugee Council (DRC), was created to swiftly address policy changes, and any socio-economic developments within the livelihoods sector. The LWG continues to be a forum for sharing information and trends prevalent within the labour market. Participants include: the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC), the Ministry of Labour, the International Labour Organization (ILO), GIZ, JICA, Donors (EU and USAID), Microfinance institutes, UN agencies, INGOs, and NGOs.

Partnerships in Livelihoods

- UNHCR provides technical support relevant to livelihood to the Syrian Refugee Unit (SRU) in the MOL. The SRU was established under the Directorate of Policies and International Cooperation.
- The ILO adopted [the Guiding principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market](#), thus becoming a key player in the realisation of the Jordan Compact. [The Letter of Understanding between UNHCR and the ILO](#) allows for synergies, increased coordination and more effective advocacy.
- UNHCR funds the Danish Refugee Council and the Jordan River Foundation to implement the *Alternative Pathways to Cash Assistance* project, inspired by the Graduation out of Poverty approach. The project supports more than 1,000 Syrian refugees every year, to find jobs with employers, set up their own small businesses, or take part in trainings and awareness sessions. Help with small start-up grants and financial literacy training are also provided, with the aim of refugees becoming less reliant on cash assistance.
- The Social Enterprise, SEP Jordan, founded in 2013 by an Italian entrepreneur, aims at building a lifestyle brand that changes the lives and perception of refugees worldwide. SEP became a Made 51 partner which allows for a global market platform for refugee artisanal products to be branded, launched and managed. With UNHCR funding, SEP trained Syrian refugee women to produce hand-embroidered items that is a fusion of Middle Eastern craftsmanship and Italian style. Women were consequently introduced into the SEP workforce as freelancers.
- Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD), the Government of Jordan's department which deals with Syrian refugees is heavily involved in the employment centres inside the camps, by facilitating the mobility of refugees in and out of camps.



Another Syrian refugee working with SEP and creating various special designs
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Main Activities

UNHCR Job Matching, Outreach, and Referrals

UNHCR helps humanitarian actors by reaching refugees through SMS, town hall meetings, supporting job events, and disseminating information. The UNHCR helpline “tickets” refugee livelihoods queries on livelihoods opportunities and their legal framework. Refugees are then put in touch with UNHCR livelihoods unit and are consequently referred to services offered by humanitarian actors in Jordan.

Based on well-coordinated Data Sharing Agreements with partners, the unit shares specific refugee information regarding cash assistance rotation.

Private sector employers can contact UNHCR seeking information regarding refugee employment. Community Support Committees (CSCs) across the country bring refugees and employers together through job fairs.

Steps towards Financial Inclusion

UNHCR is partnering with the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA) and with Grameen Credit Agricole to promote financial inclusion in a number of countries for the years 2017-2021. UNHCR and Grameen Credit Agricole have identified some Financial Service Providers (FSPs) in Jordan willing to provide loans to refugees. SIDA and Grameen Credit Agricole will provide FSPs with debt financing and technical assistance in April 2019. The program would help refugees and host communities' in accessing credit for both income generating activities and cash flow, with the goal to improve their livelihoods, self-reliance and resilience.

UNHCR facilitated [an assessment on the needs of refugees for financial and non-financial services](#), through the HQ consultant, and Microfinanza Srl; a private consulting firm specialized in the microfinance sector. UNHCR also collaborated with financial inclusion initiatives, namely, the Netherlands Development Finance Company (FMO).

The Zaatari Office for Employment (ZOE) and Azraq Center for Employment (ACE)

ZOE and ACE are unique joint initiatives of ILO and UNHCR. Established inside the two refugee camps, the offices allowed refugees to receive counselling services on employment, issue work permits, and attend job fairs where they can meet employers. A database programmed by UNHCR records the work permits and facilitates the movement of workers in and out of the camps, helping them make the most of their jobs through this increased mobility.

Support to Artisan Work – Made 51

The Centre for Export Promotion of the Netherlands (CBI), which is a Made 51 partner, visited Jordan in November 2018. During this mission, Local Social Enterprises (LSEs) such as Tribology, More Than Shelter, Turquoise Mountain, JRF, Sharqi and Teenah were assessed, and they were all advised to partner with Made 51. Recently, their products were showcased at Made 51 global exhibitions.

Cash for Work

Cash for work in urban and the Incentive Based Volunteering in camps, are important tools for short term employment opportunities for refugees. In addition, it helps refugees gain work experience in selected sectors, mainly construction, agriculture and water and sanitation.

Jordan River Foundation (JRF) and IKEA Business Partnership

First of its kind, this innovative partnership between a multinational corporation and a Jordanian NGO brings business solutions in addressing the country's biggest humanitarian & developmental challenges while creating new jobs and providing

economic growth opportunities. UNHCR supported 75 Syrian refugee women to become officially employed in the JRF/IKEA production line.

Research and Evidence

To better understand refugees' challenges on formalizing their work, UNHCR, the World Bank and ILO have set up an annual survey on Syrians working in Jordan. The annual survey targets employers and refugees with or without work permits. Data collection is collected through UNHCR volunteers and helpline.

UNHCR conducts base line and end line surveys for its Alternative Pathways to Cash Assistance project. The results of the assessments measure the impacts, identify the gaps, areas of strengths and challenges. These assessments are crucial to track the progress of refugees in all aspects; socially, economically as well as professionally.

In 2017, UNHCR Jordan supported the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) with a targeting study on Syrian refugees working in agriculture, to ensure better targeting and to identify main wealth groups and livelihoods strategies for IFAD. The study was conducted in four governorates in Jordan: Amman, Madaba, Irbid and Mafraq.

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For more information, please visit <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/working-group/49>