



Walk the talk

Beyond the Compact

Over a decade has passed since Syrian refugees first fled to Jordan and other neighbouring countries to escape conflict. While Jordan has done much more than its neighbours to accommodate Syrian refugees, protracted displacement means that their needs remain acute. Refugees from countries other than Syria face even greater challenges and enjoy far fewer protections.

We urge the international community to continue its strong support for Jordan's refugee response and for all parties to work towards enabling refugees to access their durable solution of choice. Against the backdrop of an increasingly challenging environment for funding given recent geopolitical developments and macroeconomic trends, this includes strengthening coordination between humanitarian and development engagements to further improve the robustness and sustainability of international support to Jordan.

PROTECTION

Every refugee is entitled to have their refugee status determined and to be able to regularise their legal status in Jordan, minimising their exposure to protection risks. Jordan has provided legal residency to hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees issued with Ministry of Interior (MOI) cards. Syrian refugees with MOI cards can apply for flexible work permits to work in occupations open to non-Jordanians, and can access subsidised public services, notably education and healthcare.

However, un(der)documented Syrian refugees face significant challenges obtaining an MOI card, while UNHCR has been prevented from registering non-Syrian refugees for Asylum Seeker Certificates (ASCs) since January 2019, leaving those affected with no legal pathway to regularise their status in Jordan as an asylum seeker. Associated protection risks include the inability to register vital life events like the birth of a child, being forced to rely on informal work, the inability to access public services and the threat of detention and/or deportation. Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) present a special category of concern for whom no legal avenue exists to regularize their situation in Jordan.

Priority must be given to re-establishing a rectification of status process for asylum seekers of all nationalities. This includes enabling UNHCR to resume registration of non-Syrian refugees for ASC, as well as simplifying access to legal and civil documentation for refugees who present as complex cases, such as where missing family members are involved. Such measures will have a net positive impact in reducing protection risks while providing a clearer picture of humanitarian needs in Jordan. Existing policy requiring non-Syrian refugees to relinquish their ASC in order to apply for a work permit should be reversed, while support for legal aid services should be prioritised, accompanied by a broader discussion on the myriad protection benefits of establishing a more coordinated national legal aid system that offers free legal services for vulnerable populations, including refugees of all nationalities.

Camp residents face heightened protection risks primarily associated with restrictions on freedom of movement, which create additional barriers to accessing work and public services and compound the debilitating impact of long-term dependency on international aid. Priority should be given to reducing the physical and administrative barriers that separate camps from surrounding markets and services in order to stimulate camp markets, increase access to sustainable livelihoods and public services, and improve freedom of movement for camp residents. Importantly, due process for V5 residents should be prioritised leading to a gradual decrease in population size.

Steps must be taken to both adequately fund GBV services and strengthen coordination between GBV service providers and across sectors, such as livelihoods and cash assistance, in order to disseminate key messages on GBV risks. Support for economic recovery efforts and income-generating opportunities for families to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children in light of the increase in child labor and child marriage are also in need of attention.

- Re-establish a rectification of status process for asylum seekers of all nationalities.
- Enabling UNHCR to resume registration of non-Syrian refugees for ASC.
- Simplifying access to legal and civil documentation for refugees.
- Reverse policy requiring non-Syrian refugees to relinquish their ASC in order to apply for a work permit.
- Prioritise legal Aid support and work to establish a coordinated national legal aid system for all.
- Reduce the physical and administrative barriers that separate camps from surrounding markets and services in order to stimulate camp markets, increase access to sustainable livelihoods and public services.
- Fund GBV services and strengthen coordination between GBV service providers and across sectors.

Registered refugees have access to public health services at the same rates as non-insured Jordanians, while Jordan did not discriminate between refugees and Jordanians when it came to vaccinations and access to health care in its COVID-19 response. However, many refugees are still pushed into debt because of healthcare expenses, while rising numbers of refugees are forced to forgo treatment or medications because they cannot afford it.

Conflict, economic challenges and the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated mental health conditions in the region, including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. Stigma around mental illness contributes to a lack of awareness about mental health and limits access to mental health services. Strengthening mental health and psychosocial support services should be prioritised with a focus on developing integrated public mental health services. While the Ministry of Health is the largest provider of mental health services, it still depends on INGOs for some services.

Building quality, accessible and equitable primary health care services is the most practical, efficient and effective first step to delivering universal health care. Health actors should be supported to strengthen primary health clinics for vulnerable Jordanians and refugees, both in host communities and in camps. By preventing illness and promoting general health, primary health care reduces the need for more costly, complex care.

The ongoing support of international donors will be critical to maintaining access to healthcare for refugees. Consortia and innovative multi-year funding models could help provide sustainable support to strengthen local health capacities. Cash-for-health modalities should be prioritised to address financial barriers to accessing health services, especially for chronic disease care, access to monthly medications, emergency obstetric and neonatal services, acute medical and surgical conditions, and other essential services. Efforts to raise awareness among health providers of refugees' entitlements to public health services can help ensure that refugees are able to access healthcare, as will efforts to improve awareness among refugees of applicable laws to protect them from medical liability, exploitation and/or malpractice.

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- Building quality, accessible and equitable primary health care services is the most practical, efficient and effective first step to delivering universal health care.
- Cash-for-health modalities should be prioritized until a long term efficient and sustainable modality is developed within the health sector in Jordan.



LIVELIHOOD

Jordan has issued more than 288,000 work permits to Syrian refugees since 2016. Notably, Jordan recently extended flexible work permits to all sectors and occupations in which Syrian refugees can formally work, and has also taken steps to improve inclusion of Syrian refugees in the social security system. Progress also has been made in women's economic inclusion, including amendments to the labour law.

Looking ahead, the impact of flexible work permits should be monitored, and the list of non-governmental bodies authorised to grant these permits should be expanded. Nationality quota policies should be reviewed and new sectors of the economy should be opened to Syrian refugees, including high growth and professional sectors, based on a formula that minimises disruption to Jordanian workers. Comparable arrangements should be extended to non-Syrian refugees. Removing regulatory barriers to home-based businesses will enable more refugees to formalise their businesses and source additional income. Financial inclusion and access to financial services could support access to dignified, sustainable livelihoods opportunities and more equitable control over economic resources and assets. Increased support to National TVET providers would help young Jordanians and Syrians better tailor their skills for the labour market.

Decent work should be at the heart of livelihood engagements, including instituting a more robust regime encompassing workplace inspections, enforcement of an effective complaints mechanism, and improved access to legal support services.

- Improve monitoring the impact of flexible work permits, and the list of non-governmental bodies authorised to grant these permits should be expanded.
- Nationality quota policies should be reviewed and new sectors of the economy should be opened to Syrian refugees based on a formula that minimises disruption to Jordanian workers. (switching from restrictive list for refugee to protected list for Jordanians...)
- Removing regulatory barriers to home-based businesses.
- Improve financial inclusion and access to financial services.
- Increased support to National TVET providers.
- Strengthen workplace inspections, effectiveness of complaints mechanism, and improved access to legal support services.



Since 2016, Jordan has enabled a generation of Syrian school children to continue their education in exile, preparing them to support Syria's future recovery. More than 150,000 Syrian children were enrolled in public schools at the start of the 2021/2022 academic year, exceeding targets, while children with disabilities are entering formal education in greater numbers.

In the immediate term, preserving past improvements in the education sector will require a sustained commitment from the Ministry of Education (MoE) and education actors to compensate for lost learning during COVID-19 school closures, as well as reaching students who dropped out of school during the COVID-19 pandemic. The success of MoE's two-year learning recovery program will largely depend on how well it can accommodate differences in academic preparedness between students. Regular and effective monitoring and evaluation is required to track the program's effectiveness in addressing student needs as well as to enable program modifications where needed. Donor partners must also ensure the program is adequately funded so that all planned engagements are successfully delivered.

In addition to extending documentation waivers facilitating school enrollment for refugee students, MoE should strengthen monitoring and follow up with schools to ensure compliance. Enrollment numbers can also be increased by updating policy guidance to extend exemptions of donation fees to all non-Syrian refugees, while penalties should exist for schools found to refuse student enrollment based on nationality.

Improved coordination between the health, protection and educational sectors can enable greater access to schools for children with disabilities, including greater support for parents of children with disabilities to overcome physical, financial and other barriers to regular school attendance. Better school transport can improve accessibility of education for all children.

Promoting teaching as a profession, enhancing teacher training and providing annual contracts for all teachers will improve the quality of education students receive in Jordan. Pathways to higher education should be expanded through programming to support market-appropriate TVET training alongside partnerships with universities and institutions.

Reducing disparities in educational outcomes between double-shift and single-shift schools must remain an overriding priority to ensure all children have equal access to quality education. This includes increasing contact hours for afternoon sessions in double-shift schools as well as for schools in refugee camps.

- Sustained commitment to compensate for lost learning and dropped out of school during COVID-19 school closures.
- Track the program's effectiveness and enable program modifications where needed.
- Extend documentation waivers facilitating school enrollment for all refugee students.
- Strengthen monitoring and follow up with schools to ensure compliance
- Improve accessibility of children with disabilities (transport, Inter-sector coordination...).
- Promoting teaching as a profession, enhancing teacher training and providing annual contracts.
- Improve access to higher education through programming to support market-appropriate TVET training alongside partnerships with universities and institutions.
- Increase contact hours for afternoon sessions in double-shift schools as well as for schools in refugee camps.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Women's and youth empowerment

Gender inequality has its roots in tradition and social norms that today are upheld through familial, customary, educational, and political structures. Civic space for women's activism and grassroots organising is shrinking, political participation waning, and SGBV rising. Jordan has taken a backward step compared to progress previously reported under the Compact. The pandemic has ushered in efforts to enhance protections for women on paper, including through legal reforms aimed at addressing workplace harassment, eliminating wage discrimination, and extending parental benefits. Yet much more must be done to see these rules translate into practice at the institutional level alongside additional behavioural change at the community level.

Youth are also grappling with a sense of hopelessness and limited opportunity, demonstrating higher dropout rates in school and weaker learning outcomes in recent years. This has been made worse by the pandemic. The youth unemployment rate of 52% paints a grim picture of the future as youth search for hope and a sense of purpose. In this environment, Jordanians' preoccupations over emigration have loomed large with an estimated 45% of those aged 18-35 having considered leaving the Kingdom in the past few years. These challenges do not discriminate between the refugee and non-refugee population. They underscore the value of a vulnerability-based approach to aid which meets the needs of various subsets of society by linking up existing social protection schemes with other forms of assistance.

Coordination and capacity

The humanitarian response has made valuable progress in recognising localisation and embracing The Grand Bargain commitments as a feature of the coordination architecture, with growing space and leadership of policy-oriented coordination bodies being ceded to national actors. We commend recent examples of this in the adapted co-chairing arrangements of the Humanitarian Partners Forum's Localisation Task Force and the development of a Localisation Framework. Such steps must be accompanied with efforts to expand the potential of a more diverse range of national responders to participate in the aid response on more equal footing with international actors.

There is also a growing need to align the well-established coordination structures of the refugee response with ongoing development efforts in order to better address the needs of beneficiaries which often span the two. Establishing a platform where these parallel systems can connect would foster synergies, coherence, and efficiency of service delivery. This would also help to bridge the short-term activities initiated by some actors with the longer-term programmes of others in support of enhanced humanitarian-development coherence.

Climate risk adaptation

As rising temperatures and climate shocks affect the whole region, use and demand for water in Jordan are far outpacing supply. This is leading to an erosion in groundwater quality and a depletion of non-renewable and renewable water levels. As one of the four driest countries in the world, Jordan's water scarcity is a significant barrier to future growth and development and a source of increasing risk due to climate change. While not a central component of the Jordan Compact, climate risk adaptation in the face of such hazards is core to meeting the underlying needs and vulnerabilities of the population in a manner that is consistent with the principle of 'do no harm.' Jordan's development of a Green Growth National Action Plan and support pledged by the EU for energy efficiency and other projects signal commitment to climate adaptation. Yet, such investments must happen in the context of ongoing and planned development efforts, including in the areas of public transportation, waste management, and water resource management. They must also be matched with steps to orient the humanitarian response to be more green in its own implementation and to proactively help ecosystems and communities resist future shocks.

Furthermore, considering the dependency on the agricultural sector as a provider of job opportunities and work permits alike for refugees and migrants, threats to its viability in the coming years poses risks to refugee employment and livelihoods, and to food security more broadly. Some 15% of Jordan's population is dependent on income from agriculture despite its decreasing contribution to GDP, also suggesting that the possibility of reduced agricultural productivity due to water shortages will disproportionately impact livelihoods, income and food security of the most vulnerable communities in Jordan including women refugees, migrants and local host communities particularly in rural areas.