

# Jordan: Zaatari Refugee Camp

January 2024

Home to almost **78,000 Syrian refugees**, Zaatari camp is under the joint management of the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD) and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. As the lead agency for the refugee response in Jordan, UNHCR coordinates activities and services provided in the camp. Since its establishment in 2012, Zaatari has become emblematic of Syrian displacement across the Middle East. The camp's evolution from a small collection of tents to an urban settlement reflects the needs and aspirations of the camp residents and a transition to a more predictable, cost-effective, and participatory platform for the delivery of assistance.

## Key Figures



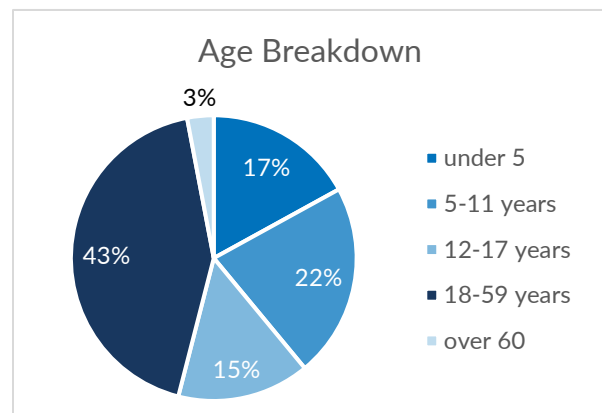
**1 in 3** households headed by **women**



**4 per cent** of population is **people with disabilities**



**Over half** of the population are **children** under the age of 18 years



## Main Activities

### Registration

- UNHCR works to ensure all camp residents are documented and have certificates proving their registration. It is essential to maintain accurate records of the camp population and ensure that the rights and needs of women, men, and children are recognized and addressed; the "Proof of Registration" is valid for one year and renewed annually. SRAD helps issue the Ministry of Interior service card for all camp residents facilitate movements and access to services.

### Protection

- UNHCR chairs the Protection Working Group in Zaatari and coordinates protection support with government and partners. This includes strengthening services for people with specific needs, protecting children from violence, exploitation, and abuse, reducing the risk of gender-based violence (GBV), ensuring a survivor-centred approach, and increasing community resilience through enhancing engagement and leadership.
- UNHCR provides protection services, including legal assistance, documentation, counselling, and referrals for cases of child protection and GBV throughout the camp at easily accessible sites, via phone, and home visits. Humanitarian and government partners regularly coordinate and refer individual cases to extend comprehensive support to refugees facing protection risks. Additionally, partners strive to ensure that these services are known and accessible to all refugees following the age, gender, and diversity approach. Partners operate several hotlines – many operational 24/7 – to efficiently address urgent protection concerns of refugees.

### Community Empowerment

- The 58 community centres in Zaatari camp are secure, disability-accessible hubs where refugees from various backgrounds come together to socialize and participate in recreation, education, and community-building activities. The centres serve as vital spaces for empowering refugees, encouraging participation in decision-

making processes that affect their lives, and facilitating diverse programmes such as sports, women empowerment, and livelihood activities.

- The Age and Disability Task Force, led by UNHCR, promotes an inclusive approach and non-discrimination. It focuses on enhancing the participation of elderly people, individuals with disabilities, and their caretakers in community planning and activities in the camp. Based on the community-based rehabilitation approach, the task force also trains volunteers to visit the homes of the elderly and people with disabilities to assess and provide basic support.
- The three Oasis centres, run by UN Women, aim to empower women, and strengthen their resilience by offering multi-sectoral services such as livelihood, GBV prevention, protection services, remedial education, and civic engagement initiatives for women.

### Basic Needs

- Every quarter, all refugees in Zaatari receive UNHCR cash assistance to replenish essential consumables such as cooking gas, diapers, and sanitary pads. In the second half of 2023, UNHCR distributed over \$1.5 million to the camp population.
- Almost all (99 per cent) households in Zaatari now receive UNHCR cash on mobile wallets, the most efficient distribution channel. UNHCR also worked with Cairo Amman Bank to install an ATM in the camp to facilitate refugees' regular access to cash.

### Livelihoods

- The Zaatari market street is a vital source of livelihood within the camp, featuring approximately 1,000 informal shops operated by refugees. These shops offer diverse services, including restaurants, boutiques, electronic stores, and food shops.
- In partnership with the International Labour Organization and the Ministry of Labour, the Zaatari Office of Employment provides work-related counselling services, facilitates the issuance of work permits to camp residents, and advertises job vacancies and training opportunities through job fairs, exhibitions, and other means.
- Incentive-based volunteering (IBV) is a critical aspect of refugee participation in delivering humanitarian assistance and other services in the camp. At the end of 2023, almost 3,000 refugees (almost 10 per cent of the camp population above 18 years) were engaged in various IBV functions.



*Since its establishment in 2017, the Zaatari Office of Employment has issued 26,500 work permits, including almost 3,000 in 2023, to facilitate access to formal jobs outside the camp. ©UNHCR/ Shawkat Alharfoush*

### Education

- UNICEF supports the Ministry of Education (MoE) to enable access to quality education for children of all ages in the camp. Around 22,600 refugee children from Kindergarten 2 to Grade 12 are enrolled in formal education, while an additional 390 children are enrolled in non-formal education accredited by MoE. Half of the students are girls.
- UNICEF supports operations of all 32 schools and 13 stand-alone kindergarten centres in the camp, with more than 250 Syrian refugee volunteers working as assistant teachers and another 700 volunteers supporting the maintenance of the schools through cleaning, construction, and working as security guards.
- The schools in the camp support disability-inclusive education for around 850 children with disabilities (41 per cent girls) through learning support and by tackling stigma and discrimination.
- UNICEF, along with MoE and partners, runs several assistive programmes to support children's learning progress. All schools in the camp implement the Learning Bridges programme, a blended learning scheme supporting cross-curricular learning for students between Grades 4 and 10.

- UNICEF-run Makani centres offer an integrated approach and provide learning support for children in Grades 1 to 9. These include a reading recovery programme, digital literacy courses, skills-building programmes, and recreational activities like sports, art, theatre, and environmental clubs. The centres also serve as safe places for children and facilitate child protection services. In 2023, 11 Makani centres in Zaatari reached more than 14,000 refugees (87 per cent children, 56 per cent female).
- Higher education is also a priority for refugee students. Since 2014, over 200 refugees from the camp have earned the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI scholarship) to support their studies.

### Health

- Six medical facilities in the camp offer primary health care, including one that provides 24/7 emergency services. There is also a referral mechanism in place to facilitate refugees' access to tertiary and specialized health services at health facilities outside the camp.
- Decreasing funding has led some health service providers to close their clinics in the camp, limiting the range of available primary health services and stretching the daily intake capacity of the remaining health care providers.



UNHCR issues a health booklet to every refugee in the camp to monitor their medical treatments during clinic visits and to ensure the documentation of prescribed medications. ©UNHCR/ Shawkat Alharfoush

### Food Security & Nutrition

- Using blockchain technology, the World Food Programme (WFP) provides all camp residents with a monthly assistance of 15 Jordanian Dinars (approximately \$21) to cover their food needs.
- Based on UNHCR's biometric registration data, WFP's cardless EyePay iris scanning system enhances the efficiency and accountability of food assistance and makes shopping easier and more secure for refugees. The assistance can be redeemed in two WFP-contracted supermarkets and four bread-selling points in the camp.
- WFP also runs a school feeding programme for the children enrolled in school. In line with the national school feeding programme, students receive 80 grams of fortified date bars daily to help meet their nutrition intakes.

### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- UNICEF provides at least 55-60 litres of clean and safe water per person per day (4,500m<sup>3</sup>) in summer and between 35-40 litres in winter; these are provided through three boreholes in the camp, external trucking, and an extended pipeline from Zaatari village. UNICEF is looking for future alternative water resources to address the deterioration of the three main boreholes.
- UNICEF, Oxfam, and the Royal Scientific Society conduct regular social mobilization activities on water conservation, equitable water distribution, and network operation and maintenance. UNICEF also ensures safe wastewater management in the camp by operating a wastewater network, trucking, and managing a wastewater treatment plant.

### Shelter & Settlement

- UNHCR provides and coordinates shelter assistance and infrastructure improvements in the camp. There are over 26,000 prefabricated shelters, each including a latrine and kitchen to ensure privacy. Shelters of people with disabilities have been adapted to their needs and conditions. While 95 per cent of the prefabricated shelters in the camp have exceeded their life span and require maintenance or replacement, UNHCR can only cover less than three per cent of the needs in 2024 due to the limited funding.
- UNHCR piloted a shelter self-rehabilitation project for 50 families willing to conduct the work themselves. UNHCR and its partner provided the families with the needed support and materials. With the positive feedback from the community, UNHCR will expand this initiative, targeting more families in 2024.

- During winter, certain areas in the camp become impassable, exacerbating hardships for numerous families, and impeding emergency teams' timely interventions. In order to address some of these issues, UNHCR initiated a road construction endeavour in some areas of the camp to improve road conditions, mitigate the associated risks for refugees and enhance access within the camp.

### Access to Energy

- Zaatari camp relies on the world's largest solar power plant to supply electricity to refugee households. As electricity provision fluctuates based on production capacity, weather conditions, and energy needs, the solar plant, initially designed to offer nearly 12 hours of energy, provides an average of nine hours of electricity every day to the camp population by end of 2023.
- UNHCR and the government agreed to transfer solar energy from a solar plant in South Amman to Zaatari camp, complementing solar energy from the existing solar plant in the camp. Since the new agreement, the camp has been running almost exclusively on sustainable energy, significantly reducing its carbon emissions.
- As part of the shift towards a more environmentally friendly camp, all streetlights in Zaatari have been replaced with low-energy consumption LED lights while smart meters were installed on the 12 transformers to better monitor energy consumption. Additionally, a separate electricity network for the market street was established to reduce the pressure on the camp network which provides electricity mainly to shelters.



Since 2023, a number of refugees in Zaatari have been working as electricians under the new Refugee UN volunteer (RUNV) programme. The programme helps refugees build work experience and serves as an important source of income for them. ©UNHCR/ Shawkat Alharfoush

## Working with Partners

- **Jordanian Government:** Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate, Ministry of Public Works and Housing, Ministry of Water and Irrigation, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Development, Sharia'a Court, Civil Registry Department, and Family Protection and Juvenile Department
- **Other Governmental Partners:** Japan International Cooperation Agency, King Salman Humanitarian Aid & Relief Center, German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)
- **UN Agencies and International Organizations:** Food and Agricultural Organization, International Labour Organization, International Committee of the Red Crescent, International Organization for Migration, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Population Fund, UNOPS, UN Women, World Food Programme.
- **International NGO:** Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development, Blumont, Business Development Center, Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network, Finn Church Aid, International Medical Corps, International Rescue Committee, Korea Refugee Project, La Liga (UEFA), Lutheran World Federation, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, OXFAM, Save the Children, Qatar Red Crescent, Qatar Charity, Questscope, Relief International, Syrian American Medical Society Foundation, and War Child.
- **National NGOs:** Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development, Holy Land Institute for Deaf, Jordan Health Aid Society, Noor Al Hussein Foundation.

### CONTACTS:

Edmund Quartey, Head of Mafrq Sub Office, [quartey@unhcr.org](mailto:quartey@unhcr.org)

Farah Al-Sa'di, Assistant External Relations Officer, [alsadif@unhcr.org](mailto:alsadif@unhcr.org)