

# Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Egypt

November 2012

This assessment was implemented by:



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## Introduction

The unrest in the Syrian Arab Republic has been mounting since March 2011 leading to displacement of large numbers of civilians. As of early June 2012, external displacement has increased dramatically to neighbouring countries including Egypt.

Protection that should be provided to those fleeing Syria must respect the fundamental humanity and dignity of the individuals and guarantee minimum humanitarian standards as well as access to the necessities of life. This consists of adequate protection, shelter, food, health care facilities and education.

Principles of family unity, non-discrimination, freedom of movement, and above all access to territory and safety, as well as protection from refoulement should be maintained.

The Government of Egypt has taken several decisions that facilitate access of Syrian asylum seekers to public services, mainly health care and education. Additionally, recently a decision was made to treat Palestinians with Syrian travel document similarly.

At the same time many initiatives have been launched by Egyptian non-governmental organizations to provide assistance to Syrian families. These include accommodation, cash assistance, health care and distribution of food and non-food items. This support, provided mainly by faith-based organizations, is well received by Syrian families. However, the findings of this joint assessment conclude that many of those fleeing to Egypt are not having all of their basic need met.

It is expected that the protraction of Syrian crisis may put more pressure on Egyptian local resources and may lead to an increased deficiency in assistance programmes.

During 2012 UNHCR has responded to the protection and assistance needs of some 7,000 Syrian asylum seekers through its regular programme. This programme caters for some 40,250 refugees from countries including Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

This assessment has collated data on the situation of Syrian asylum seekers in Egypt and will inform the preparation of Egypt's chapter of the Syria Regional Response Plan to be launched on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2012.

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The government of Egypt ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol in 1981, as well as the 1969 OAU Convention governing specific problems of refugees in Africa in 1980. However, it has not developed any domestic asylum procedures and therefore in accordance with the 1954 MOU between UNHCR and the Government of Egypt, the functional responsibilities for all aspects related to registration, documentation and refugee status determination are carried out by UNHCR's Regional Representation in the Arab Republic of Egypt that is based in Cairo.

Refugee status determination (RSD) takes place on the basis of UNHCR's mandate, taking into account that Egypt is both a signatory state to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as well as the 1969 OAU Convention. The active caseload amounts to a total of 48,654 individuals (as of the end of October 2012).

The estimated number of Syrians in Egypt as of the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012 was 90,000<sup>1</sup>. During 2012 there has been an increase in the numbers of Syrians registering with UNHCR from a total of 6000 individuals up to the end of 2011 to the current total of 8,158 (27 November 2012), expected to increase to 10,000 by the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013. This increase in registration by some 5000 persons during 2012 means that Syrians will constitute roughly one fifth of Persons of Concern (PoC) to UNHCR in Egypt. The high number of Syrians now in the country and the rapid increase in asylum requests has highlighted a growing need, prompting the current joint assessment between UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF.

The Government of Egypt does not require entry visas for Syrians. They are able to enter Egypt freely for three months as tourists. However, after this period they need to regularize their stay in the country through the Department of Immigration of the Ministry of Interior. At this point, renewal of residence is only granted only for 3 months, although the Government of Egypt has indicated it intends to grant one year residency permits to Syrians.

The government has taken several decisions that grant Syrians access to basic services such health care and education. Furthermore, Palestinians with Syrian travel documents will now receive similar support.

However, Syrian families and individuals seeking asylum in Egypt are facing different difficulties and challenges. Thus, this joint assessment has been implemented jointly between UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF in order to identify protection needs and design

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<sup>1</sup> Estimates have gone as high as 150,000 but have not been confirmed by the Government of Egypt.

assistance programmes in the fields of self-reliance, shelter, basic needs, education, food security and health care.

## **Key Findings**

The main protection challenges for Syrians seeking asylum in Egypt are in the following areas: Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), child protection, documentation, residency, discrimination, fear of deportation and security threats. Furthermore, Syrian families are facing a shortage of school supplies and clothes including winter items and hygiene kits.

Although a number of families have been assisted with their housing needs, particularly during the summer months when the main influx began, challenges around accommodation are placing an additional burden on many Syrian families.

Many families suffer from limited finances as for the majority savings are the main source of expenditure. These savings are however expected to become depleted in the coming weeks and months. Some are also receiving cash support from NGOs and relatives abroad, but this support is not thought to be sustainable either.

Despite the general impression that Syrians are capable of integrating in the Egyptian labour market, most of the households interviewed are still unable to find jobs and consequently this avenue of income is closed to them.

Ensuring food was recognized as a priority. The assessment has concluded that many Syrians in Egypt have been forced to change their eating habits with regards to both the quality and quantity of food items.

Syrians also rank education for their children as one of their main concerns. The joint assessment concluded that the main issues affecting the education of Syrian children are related to school distance, registration processes, fees, violence, accent barriers, and the difference in the curriculum.

Public health care is not easily accessible for Syrians and accessing health facilities and medicine is expensive in comparison to the prices in Syria.

Young children have been witness to violence and other distressing scenes in Syria and many adolescent girls have been terrified by stories of gender-based violence, which has affected their outlook towards life in Egypt.

Some Syrian human rights activists in Egypt have reported the exploitation of single women and female headed households. Some have allegedly received offers of sex work and / or to be a party to forced and early marriages. The early marriage of three under-aged girls was reported by those interviewed.

## **Recommendations**

### **Protection:**

- Organize mobile registration missions for Syrians residing in remote areas.
- Facilitate community self-management through the establishment of community centres and community activities.
- Raise awareness among Government officials on protection issues and advocate treating Palestinians carrying Syrian travel documents equally in matters related to visas and residency.
- Raise awareness on protection issues and provide legal aid especially for the most vulnerable.
- Raise awareness on SGBV issues and enhance national efforts to fight harassment.
- Support Syrian community based organizations to implement activities aimed at child protection, with special attention to preventing early marriage.

### **Child Protection:**

- Provide families and children who have undergone severe stress with community-based psychosocial interventions (i.e. mobilizing Syrian youth and/or existing community groups) and, where appropriate provide specialized professional support.
- Map vulnerable families (female headed households, single women and UASC) and design an integrated package of services, to strengthen their role in protecting and caring for children.
- Map existing local civil society organizations in the respective neighbourhoods for possible provision of child friendly spaces for younger children who do not go to school, including recreational and educational activities.
- Organize psycho-social activities with special emphasis on youth and children.

### **Basic needs:**

- Distribute winter clothes, shoes and blankets.

### **Housing:**

- Financial support for shelter: Implement housing projects including financial support and facilitation of identifying residences.

### **Livelihood and self-reliance:**

- Facilitate the access of Syrians to income generating activities.
- Support Syrians with employment services consisting of advice and orientation to business opportunities and the labour market.
- Provide unemployed entrepreneurs with grants or loans to start up their own businesses.

- Improve livelihoods of female headed households in order to protect them from negative coping mechanisms.

#### **Food security:**

- **Implement a food assistance project:** The interviewed households prefer the following food items: a) Cereals such as shami bread and rice; b) pulses such as lentils, local beans (foul) and chick peas; c) dairy products such as milk and processed soft cheese; d) vegetables such as tomatoes and cucumber; and e) proteins; eggs and meat.

**Livelihood support:** increase the level of income through livelihood interventions which will have a positive effect on food security.

#### **Education:**

- Expand the programme of education grants provided by UNHCR to cover all Syrian school aged children registered with UNHCR.
- Enhance advocacy efforts with the Ministry of Education on facilitating the school registration process and exemption from fees.
- Explore the Possibility of establishing schools that teaches the Syrian curriculum by Syrian teachers.
- Provide financial and material support to public schools to cover costs of increased enrolment of Syrian students.
- Encourage international and Egyptian Universities to support Syrian students with scholarship slots.
- Explore the possibility to support the organization of remedial classes for students facing difficulties.
- Explore the possibility to organize extra-curricular activities and psychosocial support.
- Provision of school supplies for school children
- Explore the possibility of establishing community KGs and schools, for the age groups 4-5 and 6-12 respectively, close to their localities.

#### **Health:**

- Expand capacity and geographic coverage of UNHCR health partners to serve Syrian patients.
- Improve the quality of service of UNHCR health partners.
- Support Ministry of Health's centres that provide services to Syrians.
- Conduct mapping of medical centres and hospitals providing low price medical services.

## Methodology

This rapid assessment was conducted from 6<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012, jointly by UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF. It was based on six focus group discussions and 67 household interviews in six different locations (6<sup>th</sup> of October, Obour, Faisal/El Haram, Alexandria, Naser City/Rehab and Zamalek). Each team included one rapporteur.

In addition to focus group discussions, the assessment has used data from available documents and previous needs assessments. Other information was collected through interviews with key community leaders and officials. The main documents that were used to prepare the needs assessment are:

- ✓ UNHCR rapid needs assessment for 183 Syrian families in Cairo (September 2012)
- ✓ UNHCR rapid needs assessment for 137 families in Alexandria (October 2012)
- ✓ UNHCR rapid needs assessment for 189 families in Damietta (November 2012)
- ✓ UNHCR information notes on Syrians

Each focus group was formed by ten to fifteen persons and the total number of participants was 67 persons in total (table 1). Discussions assessed the needs in the following fields:

1. Protection
2. Basic needs
3. Livelihood and self-reliance
4. Food security
5. Education
6. Health

Table 1: Participants in focus group discussions

Age group	Participants		Total
	Male	Female	
6-8	4	5	9
10-15	0	13	13
16-18	0	8	8
19-39	17	2	19
40+	13	5	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>67</b>

## **Limitations:**

There is limited information available about Syrians in Egypt, particularly in that they are widely dispersed across the country and that a high number are not registered with UNHCR. The number of households that were interviewed is relatively small, and hence the results may not be representative of the entire Syrian population in Egypt. However the collected data allows for indicative analysis of their protection concerns, food security status, coping mechanisms and basic need of the PoC. The timeframe was short and therefore this document is considered to be a rapid needs assessment.

## **Regional Asylum trends**

Syria has road borders with four neighbouring countries namely: Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq and a closed border with Israel. Increasingly however Syrians are fleeing directly to Egypt or transiting through Lebanon. This trend is in the main due to certain challenges in bordering countries within the asylum context, as well as established community ties in Egypt.

More specifically Syrian asylum seekers in Egypt have cited a number of reasons for coming to Egypt that include the encampment policies in Jordan and Iraq; the high cost of living in urban centres in Jordan and Lebanon (as the number of Syrian asylum seekers in these countries increases further); protection and security concerns in Lebanon; as well as historical ties and relations between the Syrian and Egyptian populations.

There is also a strong pull factor related to community cohesion, which draws Syrians to Egypt. For example, Syrians in Damiette are predominantly from East Ghouta in Syria, which is well known for furniture making. Some craftsmen from East Ghouta established themselves in Damiette prior to the conflict and have encouraged family members, relatives and friends to join them. Whilst some of those in Damiette are self-sufficient, those arriving in recent months have come with very limited resources other than the knowledge that a Syrian community from the same place of origin exists.

Similarly, the Syrians in Alexandria are from coastal cities and came hoping to find seasonal work, whilst the same trend of community linkages can also be found in specific neighbourhoods in Cairo.

## **Basic facts**

Since the start of the conflict in Syria in 2011, UNHCR office has registered 8,158 individuals (up to 25<sup>th</sup> of November this year). The majority of Syrians arriving in

Egypt are residing in 6<sup>th</sup> of October, Al Haram, Faysal, Al Obour, Nasr city and Al Rehab; another big group resides in Alexandria. UNHCR received information that other groups are living in other cities like Damietta, Mansoura, Hurghada, Suez, and Ismailia.

Table 2: Age groups of registered Syrian asylum seekers in Egypt

Age Group	Individuals	Percentage
1 – 5 years old	1237	15.2 %
6 – 11 years old	1263	15.5 %
12 – 18 years old	1274	15.6 %
19 – 40 years old	2822	34.6 %
41 – 60 years old	1284	15.7 %
> 60 years old	278	3.4 %
Total	8158	100%

Table 3: Syrian Asylum seekers disaggregated by sex

Sex	Individuals	Percentage
Female	3964	48.6 %
Male	4194	51.4 %
Total	8158	100%

It is expected that numbers of registered Syrians will increase to reach 10,000 persons by the end of the year if the registration rate continues in the same pattern.

The majority of Syrians registered with UNHCR are coming from Homs in addition to other cities like Damascus and Aleppo. They are mainly anti-Government and there is a strong activist population, many of whom are organizing support to the newly arriving Syrians. It may therefore be difficult for Syrians who were associated with the current Government to obtain support from the existing networks.

All flights departing from Damascus and Aleppo are fully booked for at least the next two months. Some Syrians are leaving by land to Lebanon and eventually reaching Egypt by air. Others are travelling to Egypt by land from Jordan with the eventual aim

of crossing into Libya. However, since the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2012 the Libyan authorities have imposed entry visa requirements on Syrians at the border.

The Government of Egypt does not require entry visas for Syrians. Thus, they are able to enter Egypt freely for three months on tourist visas. After this period, they are required to regularize their stay in the country through the Department of Immigration and the Ministry of Interior. At this stage, renewal of residence is only granted for 3 months. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has indicated that 12 months residency will be issued.

A large number of Palestinians with Syrian travel documents have also entered Egypt. Sixty-two Palestinian families comprising 180 individuals have requested registration with UNHCR. Whilst these families have been allowed to enter Egypt, they have generally been unable to extend their visas. UNHCR has so far not been allowed to register this group and they are therefore unable to access UNHR services. Discussions with the Government of Egypt are on-going on this population and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has indicated that Palestinians with Syrian travel documents will be allowed to enter Egypt and will not be refouled.

This is noteworthy because this group does not have access to any of the public services such as educational and healthcare that others are entitled. As such it is important to include them in the assistance and support planning for the Syrian population.

## Key Findings and recommendations

### Protection

- **Residency:**
  - The Egyptian authorities are stamping on passports of Syrians registered with UNHCR that *“residency and associated data was transferred to UNHCR refugee card”*. This practice is raising fear among Syrian refugees who are concerned about the implication of this practice if they should return to Syria. Some participants have mentioned that this is the main reason that increases the hesitation of Syrians to register with UNHCR.
  - Government officials are requesting proof of accommodation, generally a copy of the lease agreement, from applicants seeking to get a residency on their national passport. In a few cases, landlords were asked to report to the Ministry of Interior to verify the lease agreement.
  - Some interviewees considered that transferring the residency from the passport to UNHCR yellow card limits their ability to travel to other countries.
  - Some Syrians are still hesitating registering with UNHCR for confidentiality reasons since they believe that their information may be transferred to Syrian security authorities.
- **Situation of Palestinian-Syrian refugees:** Palestinian refugees with Syrian travel documents are not treated as Syrian on matters related to Residency.
- **Long distances to access UNHCR registration centres:** Although mobile registration missions have been organized in different governorates and a permanent registration centre was established in Zamalek, documentation procedures are still posing a burden on households who need to travel a long distance to reach UNHCR registration locations.
- **Deportation threats:** Deportation threats have been reported particularly for cases of expired visas where the grace period only extends to 7 days.
- **Security threats:** Syrians living in different areas of Egypt are reporting theft and physical aggression incidents. In this framework, it is worth mentioning that the security situation in Egypt has deteriorated since the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution in 2011 and crime has significantly increased. Thus, the security challenges that Syrians are facing could be part of the generalized security deterioration. Moreover, some Syrian families have reported that criminal gangs are specifically targeting them for exploitation assuming that they are arriving into Egypt carrying cash and assets.

Female heads of households have expressed their profound fear of this type of incident and highlighted the difficulties they face when reporting similar incidents to police stations as well as the re-issuing of stolen documents (passports, ID

cards, etc.). Girls' groups raised security concerns in their area pointing out the selling of drugs and fights on the street.

Some Syrian community members are also reporting the presence of persons who report directly to the Syrian which exposes their relatives in Syria to persecution and physical threats if they are identified.

- **Sexual and Gender Based Violence:** the widespread phenomenon of harassment of women and girls in Egypt is also impacting on Syrian women. Incidents of harassment usually take place on the streets, on public transportation, in super markets and any other public spaces. This is limiting the mobility of women, who in order to avoid harassment will no longer leave the house if not accompanied by men.
- **Child protection and Youth:** Young children have been witness to violence and distressing scenes prior to their arrival in Egypt. Stories of gender-based violence during the Syrian upheaval have terrified adolescent girls and affected their outlook towards life in Egypt. The perception that the violence children have been exposed to, is now part of the normal day-to-day routine, was expressed by most respondents.

The death of close family members or the disappearance of relatives has impacted on the psychological wellbeing of children. This is manifested in through sleeping disorders, fear of loud voices (associated by younger children with the arrival of armed groups), as well as fear of going out on the streets. The concerns of adolescent girls are also magnified through the harassment they quite often encounter on the streets of Cairo.

Reports of early marriage were conveyed by some of the interviewees, who reported the marriage of three under-age girls. Some faith-based organizations that provide aid to Syrian families (housing, food and non-food items, etc.) were, according to interviewees, involved in organizing marriages between Egyptian men and Syrian young girls, including minors. Some Syrian human rights activists reported the exploitation of single women and female headed households, ending up with offers to work in prostitution or forced and early marriages.

Some parents have chosen to keep their children at home and refrain from sending them to school. In addition, children who have been sent by their parents to public schools have reported being exposed to verbal and physical abuse by the teachers should they fail to understand or respond correctly to questions. This problem is magnified by their inability to understand the Egyptian accent clearly. Children sent to private schools or to the existing Syrian school did not seem to face this problem. Younger children, who are constantly at home with their parents, are deprived of recreational activities that can be supportive and release tension.

Figure 1: Psycho-social situation of children (sample of 183 Syrian families in Cairo)

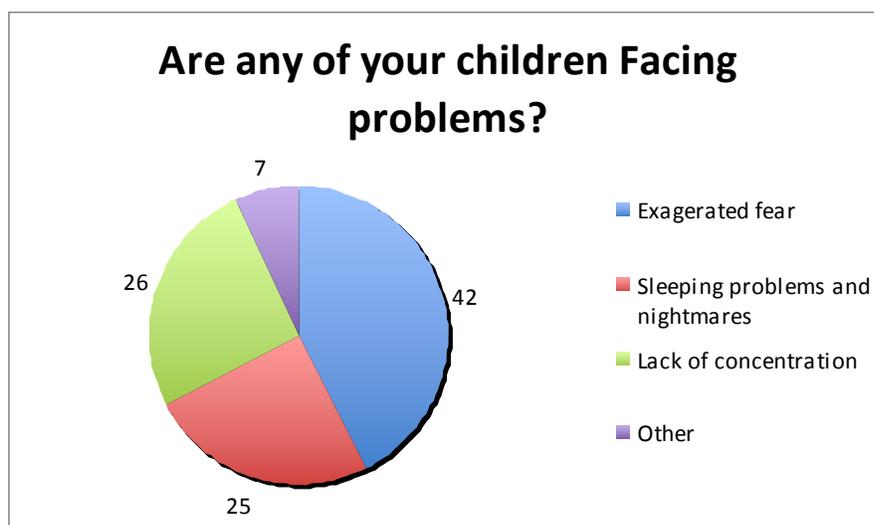


Figure 1 demonstrates clearly that psycho-social support for children is one of the top priorities. The engagement of Syrian young men and women, who are currently not employed, in the provision of recreational and psycho-social support to the children is recommended as a more effective way of reaching out to the traumatized children.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Organize mobile registration missions for Syrians residing in remote areas.
- Facilitate community self-management through the establishment of community centres and community activities.
- Raise awareness among Government officials on protection issues and advocate treating Palestinians carrying Syrian travel documents equally as Syrians in matters related to visas and residency.
- Raise awareness on protection issues and provide legal aid especially for most vulnerable groups.
- Raise awareness of women on SGBV issues and enhance national efforts to fight harassment.
- Support Syrian community based organizations to implement activities aiming at child protection with special attention to preventing early marriage.
- Organize psycho-social activities with special emphasis on youth and children.

#### **Child Protection**

- Provide families and children who have undergone severe stress with community-based psychosocial interventions (i.e. mobilizing Syrian youths and/or existing community groups) and, where appropriate, with specialized professional support.

- Map vulnerable families (mostly female headed households and single women) and design an integrated package of services, to strengthen their role in protecting and caring for children.
- Map existing local civil society organizations in the respective neighbourhoods for possible provision of child friendly spaces for younger children who do not go to school, including recreation and educational activities.

### **Basic needs**

Although a significant number of Egyptian and Syrian individuals, community groups and charity organizations have initiated aid campaigns, it is clear that provision of basic services for Syrian families should be enhanced through institutional assistance programmes.

One of the concerns related to the satisfaction of households' basic needs is the long waiting period to access services provided by UNHCR partners. Due to lack of income sources, refugees are running out of resources and can therefore not tolerate a long waiting period to receive medical and social assistance. The distance to access centres of UNHCR partners was also highlighted as a challenge.

Shortage of winter items, hygiene and school materials was also raised in focus group discussions as well.

- **Winter items:** shortage includes mainly blankets and clothes.
- **Hygiene items:** shortage in soap, hygiene products and sanitary napkins was highlighted. Additionally, girls mentioned that they are shy to ask their parents to buy women hygiene pads for them. Tap water filters were highlighted by some families.

#### **Recommendations:**

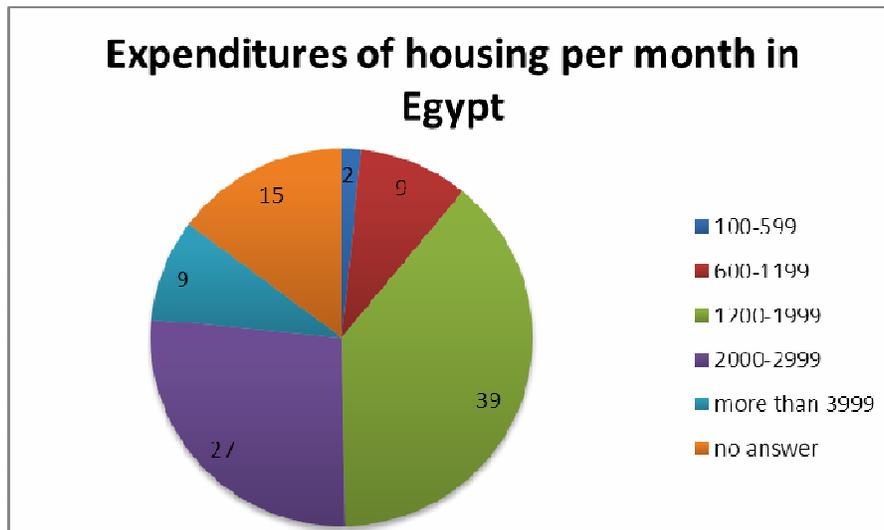
- Distribute winter clothes, shoes and blankets.

### **Housing**

Housing is at the top of the list of basic needs. All the focus groups were in agreement that housing is expensive for Syrians and consumes a large percentage of disposable income. Women in Obour clearly stated that they have started borrowing money to pay rent, while young girls in 6th of October City complained about sharing apartments with other Syrian families.

Although a number of families were assisted with accommodation needs during the summer months the issue is on-going and was raised by most Syrian families. Many are affected by the high cost of rents that have increased in-line with supply and demand, as well as advance payments such as security deposits. The current assistance provided by community members, Egyptian individuals and organizations is filling part of the gap; however, institutional intervention was requested by interviewees since they believe that individual support is not enough and may cease at any time.

Figure 2: Housing expenditures (sample of 183 Syrian families in Cairo)



Sixty six per cent of families interviewed during the registration with UNHCR in Cairo said that they spend between 1200 and 3000 Egyptian pounds per month on housing. During the assessment some families indicated that rent consumes between 60% and 100% of families' monthly financial resources whether these be savings, financial assistance from a third party or remittances.

**Recommendations:**

- Financial support for shelter: Implement housing projects including financial support and facilitation of finding residences.

**Livelihood and self-reliance**

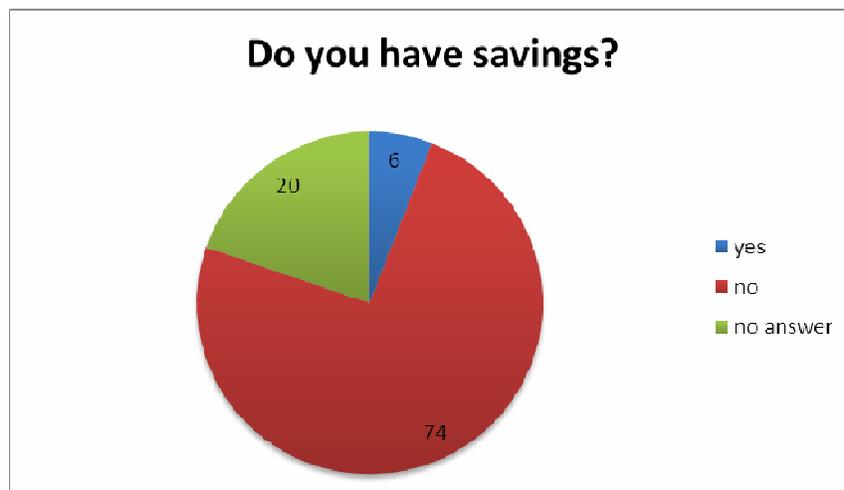
As discussed the main source of income for the majority of Syrian households are savings brought to Egypt. These savings however are expected to become depleted

in the coming weeks and months. Some families receive cash support from NGOs and relatives abroad, but this support is unlikely to be sustained in the long term. Very few young men have started work and manage to generate a small income for their families.

According to most of the households, house rent is the major expenditure item which requires a minimum of L.E. 1500 per month. For a household of 4 or 5 individuals, food expenditure is never less than L.E. 1000 per month. In addition, transportation costs and health care are perceived to be very expensive. Many of them stated that the minimum expenditure for a household (4 to 5 individuals) is L.E. 3000 per month. Many of the women stated their willingness to work, whether as teachers, cooks, handcrafts etc.

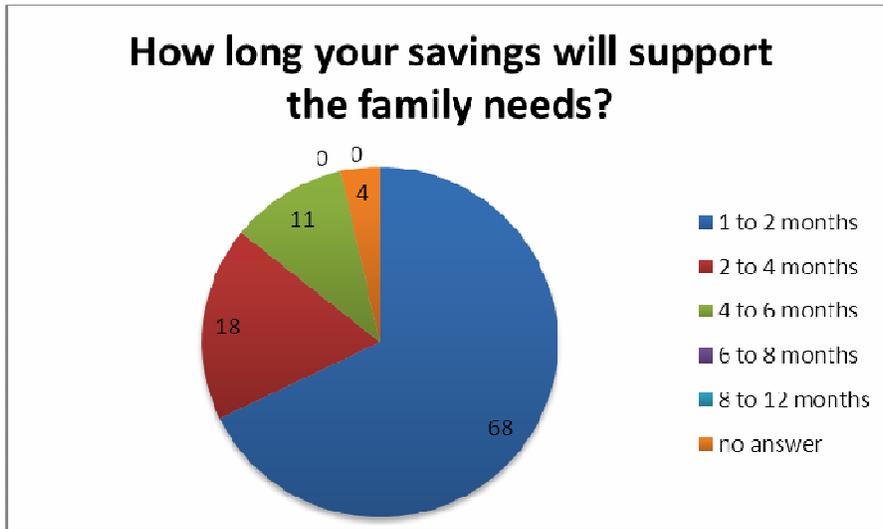
**Cash availability:** in an urban setting like Cairo, families need cash in order to satisfy their basic needs. This covers transportation costs, food, services' bills, school fees and other unforeseen expenditures. In this framework, families are suffering from shortages even if they are receiving housing support. The most vulnerable group is those families who do not have a source of regular income. The phenomenon of selling personal belongings like gold and jewellery has been reported. This is evidence that families are becoming desperate as according to Syrian culture selling gold should be the last resort. Difficulties in receiving remittances have been reported and the main reason is the economic sanctions imposed on Syria.

Figure 3: Limited savings (sample of 137 Syrian families in Alexandria)



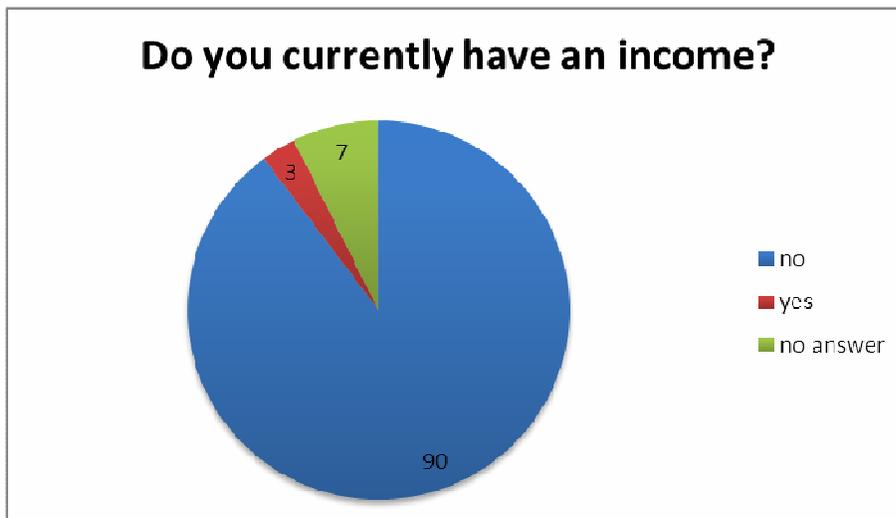
Seventy-four per cent of families interviewed during the registration with UNHCR in Alexandria said that they don't have savings.

Figure 4: Running out of savings (sample of 183 Syrian families in Cairo)



Eighty-six per cent of families having savings mentioned that they will not be able to cover their expenses after 1 to 4 months.

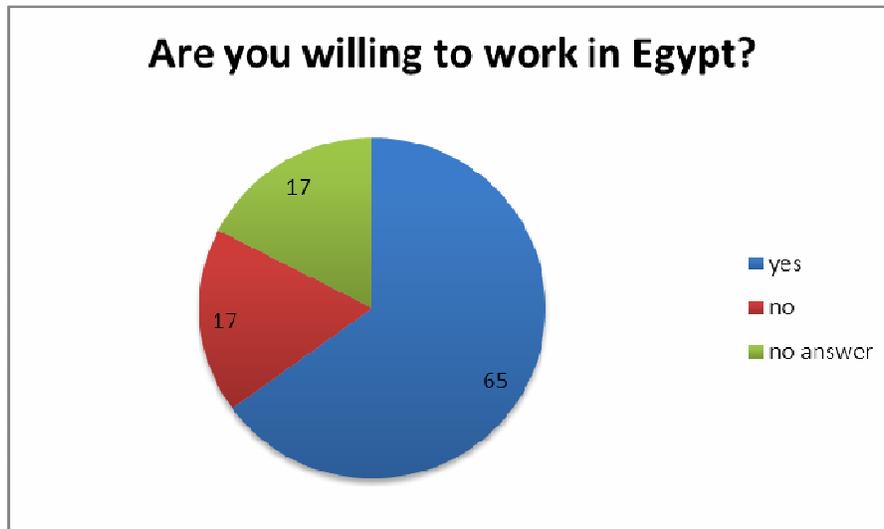
Figure 5: Lack of income (sample of 137 Syrian families in Alexandria)



Although there is a general impression that Syrians are able to integrate in the Egyptian labour market, most of the interviewed households are still unable to find jobs and consequently do not have any income support for their families other than some charitable assistance. Ninety per cent of interviewed families in Alexandria don't have any source of income.

At the same time, some Egyptian private sector institutions have expressed their interest in hiring Syrians workers. Some male household heads are skilled workers and were offered work opportunities for LE 45/50 per day for 10 working hours every day for 10 working hours every day which sums to LE 1,000 per month.

Figure 6: Willingness of Syrians to work in Egypt (sample of 183 families in Cairo)



Sixty-five per cent of 183 interviewed families in Cairo expressed their willingness to work in Egypt.

Despite the willingness and the positive factors of cultural and language similarity, Syrians are still facing some difficulties in finding work in Egypt. The main obstacles are 1) lack of financial capital to start-up businesses, 2) low wages and 3) limited information on labour demand and opportunities.

A large proportion of Syrians fleeing to Egypt used to be small business owners in their country of origin. Thus, they are interested in re-starting their businesses in the country of asylum but the lack of capital and uncertainty play negative roles.

General trade, clothes retail selling and food businesses are the main economic sectors for Syrians; however, when asked about their interest, most of interviewees expressed flexibility in accepting jobs. Furthermore, a good number of former professionals (teachers, civil servants, accountants, etc.) are trying to benefit from their previous experience to generate income.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Facilitate the access of Syrians to income generating activities.

- Support Syrians with employment services consisting of advice and orientation to business opportunities and the labour market.
- Provide unemployed entrepreneurs with grants or loans to start up their own businesses.
- Improve livelihoods of female headed households in order to protect them from negative coping mechanisms.

## **Food security**

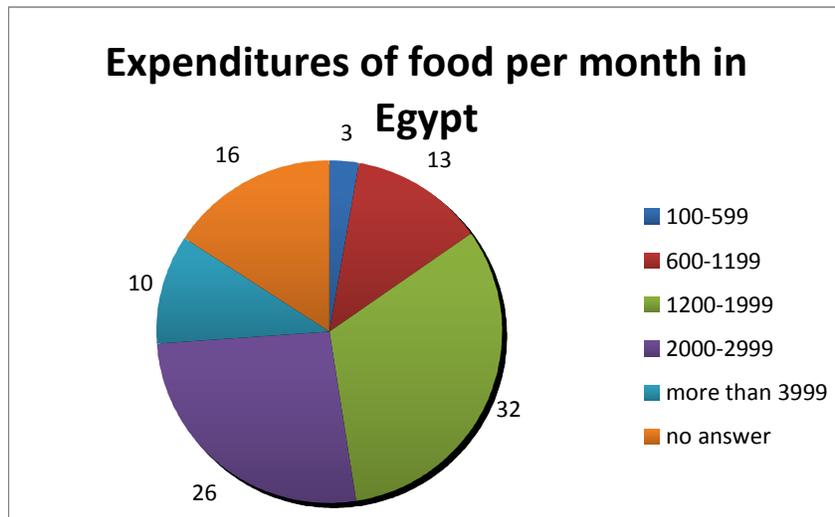
Food security ranked among the top priority needs. The assessment has reached a conclusion that Syrians in Egypt have had to change their eating habits, quality and the quantity of food consumed.

**Food Availability:** From a macro perspective, food availability in the market is good and can very well absorb the needs of the current Syrian refugees in Egypt. The number of Syrian refugees in Egypt is so far relatively small and if there is no major refugee influx in the coming months, it is unlikely to have notable impact on local demand.

The refugees have limited purchasing power and the majority of household heads are still unemployed. Most of the interviewed refugees depend on what's left of their savings, relatives' financial support and minor support from local NGOs.

There are variations in the consumer preferences and eating habits of the Syrians, yet the essential and commonly consumed food items are available in local markets. Food prices for refugees are considered expensive, and their ability to purchase frequently consumed items like olive oil, haloumi cheese and bulgur wheat (برغل) is often beyond their purchasing capacity. Many of the refugees complain about the quality of bread and the different taste of meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products that make them unpalatable for some children as well as adults. Despite the considered poor quality, these food items are also relatively more expensive in Egypt than in Syria.

Figure 7: Food expenditures (sample of 183 Syrian families in Cairo)



Fifty-eight per cent of 183 interviewed families in Cairo need between 1200 and 3000 Egyptian pounds per month for food.

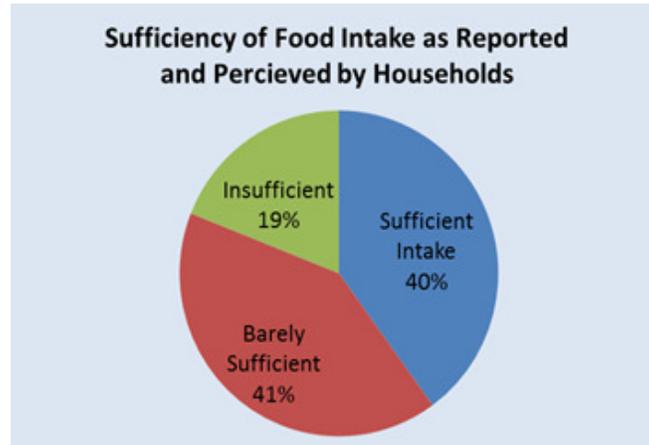
**Accessibility:** Most of the households (93 %) had diversified diets and an acceptable frequency of food consumption during the 7 days preceding the assessment, however in terms of sufficiency the collected data from 46 households indicate that 19 % of the refugees had insufficient quantities of food intake, while 41 % of them could barely meet their food needs.

Whilst many of the refugees currently appear to have access to sufficient amounts of diversified foods, this is often facilitated through the support of local NGOs as well as their own rapidly depleting savings.

In the coming weeks, these refugees will be highly vulnerable to food insecurity due to the following:

- Most of the interviewed household heads are unemployed (79%) without a sustainable source of income;
- Only 28 % of households receive regular food support from local NGOs;
- They have no access to the government's food subsidized ration system;
- Food prices in Egypt are expected to rise during the next quarter due to global trends and local seasonal factors;
- Rents – which exhaust most of their total monthly expenditure - are rising which leaves less room for food expenditure; and
- More Syrians are expected to arrive placing further stretch on the capacity of local NGOs to sustain their support.

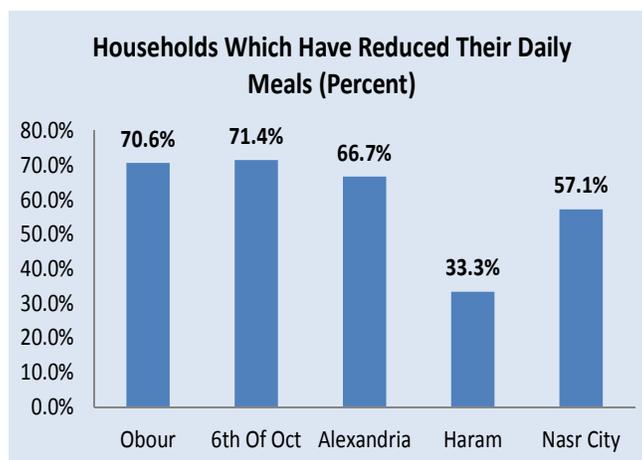
Figure 8 Sufficiency of Food Intake



Households in 6<sup>th</sup> of October and Alexandria reported regular food support from NGOs, mainly rice, sugar and vegetable oil, which often cover 1-2 weeks of their total monthly needs. Some families reported that they have received daily food support during Ramadan. Half of the households interviewed have reduced their meals from three to two meals per day. The most frequently consumed food groups are cereals, sugar and oil, which are consumed on a daily basis, followed by pulses. The average food consumption scores for each of the visited sites indicate that the area of "Obour" attracted the poorest and most vulnerable group of refugees, followed by "6<sup>th</sup> of October" and Alexandria. Those residing in "Nasr City" and "Haram" were better off. It is clear that geographic location of refugees and their economic status are strongly correlated.

**Coping Mechanisms:** Approximately 64 % of surveyed households have been adopting negative coping mechanisms to meet their food needs. Nearly half of the interviewed households cope by reducing the quantity of the meals they consume daily and/or shifting to less-diversified foods.

Figure 9: Reduction in Household Daily Meals



**Vulnerability:** The assessment was conducted in 6 sites out of which 3 (Obour, 6<sup>th</sup> of October and Alexandria) are considered to be highly vulnerable to food insecurity especially as their current assets and support deplete over time. The vulnerability of these refugees varies and any support should be targeted to the highly vulnerable groups which can be profiled according to the following:

- By geographic location, Obour, 6<sup>th</sup> of October and Alexandria have relatively higher numbers of vulnerable households. It is important to note that many of those who accepted to work under the current circumstances are highly vulnerable (as they have no choice but work for little remuneration). Hence employment status should not be considered as an eliminating factor for eligibility for food support;
- Those with school-age children who are unable to provide a healthy balanced diet;
- Households that include members with chronic illnesses. Also, female-headed households are more vulnerable than male-headed households.

**Recommendations:**

- Implement a food assistance project:** The interviewed households prefer the following food items: a) Cereals such as shami bread and rice; b) pulses such as lentils, local beans (foul) and chick peas; c) dairy products such as milk and processed soft cheese; d) vegetables such as tomatoes and cucumber; and e) proteins; eggs and meat.
- Livelihood support:** increase the level of income through livelihood interventions which will have a positive effect on food security.

## Education

Although the Government of Egypt has granted Syrians access to public schools and exempted them from some documentation requirements, a significant number of Syrian children are still facing either enrolment or integration problems. The joint assessment concluded that Syrian children face multiple challenges to accessing education. These include school distance, registration process, fees, class environment, accent barriers, and curriculum differences.

Interviewed families highlighted that some Egyptian schools are hiring Syrian teachers. This is a factor attracting Syrian families to enrol their children, as well as the paperwork being requested by these schools being less than many public schools' requirements. In this framework, families highlighted that the presence of Syrian teachers in Egypt could be an added value and should be taken into consideration when putting forward solutions for education challenges.

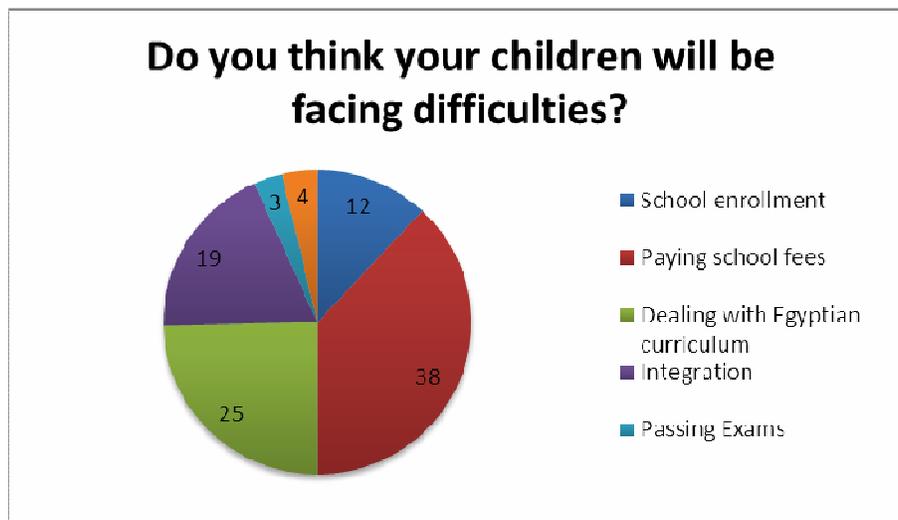
### General challenges:

- **Documentation:** due to limited awareness of the circumstances some public and private schools are still requesting documents that Syrians cannot provide (certificates of accomplishment and letter from the Embassy of Syria).
- **Bureaucracy:** bureaucracy of government officials and school managements is cited as an obstacle by some Syrians. Some families see the long waiting period or the complicated paperwork as discrimination and humiliation for refugees.
- **Loss of scholastic years:** some children have entered their second scholastic year without education especially those arriving from Homs.
- **School fees:** families who did not enrol their children in public schools are paying high amounts of school fees in private schools.
- **Certificates' equivalence issues:** the equivalence of Syrian secondary third-year certificate (baccalaureate) is possible in Egypt. However, families reported that their children are allowed to enter social sciences faculties and not health and engineering.
- **School supplies:** shortage includes school bags, stationary, notebooks and uniforms.
- **Distress:** threats and traumatizing situations that children faced in their country of origin lead to distress that is affecting in-turn their ability to integrate at school.
- **Fraud and mistrust:** the Syrian community in Egypt has heard about fund raising initiatives for humanitarian assistance including the establishment of schools. However, several sources reported that a couple of fraudulent schemes have raised funds for the establishment of a school in 6<sup>th</sup>October which were transferred to personal accounts outside the country.

### Challenges at school:

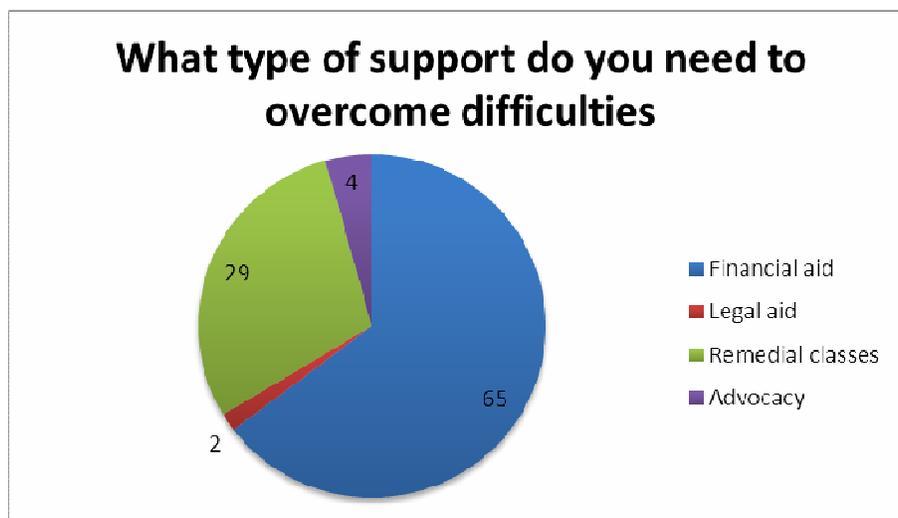
- **Aggression:** mothers and children highlighted in the focus group discussions that Syrian students are subject to violence in schools.
- **Egyptian curriculum:** students have mentioned that the Egyptian curriculum is very different from the Syrian one and they find it difficult.
- **Teaching methods:** Syrian students are suffering from the change in teaching methods and standards.
- **Egyptian accent:** despite the similarity of language, the difference in accents sometimes complicates the communication between children and teachers.
- **Overcrowding:** one of the most important educational challenges in Egypt is overcrowding in classrooms where the number of students in one class can reach eighty. Syrian children, especially those who are between six and twelve years old, are either dropping out or hesitating enrolling in public schools because of this.
- **Classification exams:** in order to classify students who do not carry with them certificates, public schools are organizing classification exams in order to ensure the levelling for students. These exams are particularly difficult for students due to difference in the curriculum. Families have complained that their children are given lower levels than they used to have in Syria.

Figure 10: Children facing difficulties in school (sample of 137 families in Alexandria)



The two main problems for Syrian students are paying the school fees (38% of answers) and the Egyptian curriculum (25% of answers).

Figure 11: Needed support to overcome children difficulties in schools



The financial aid has been classified by Syrian families as the first rank assistance and the second priority was for organizing remedial classes for children who are facing difficulties. This explains the concerns that families and students have with regards to the Egyptian curriculum.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Expand the programme of education grants provided by UNHCR to cover all Syrian families registered with UNHCR.
- Enhance advocacy efforts with the Ministry of Education on facilitating the school registration process and exemption from fees.
- Explore the Possibility of establishing schools where the Syrian curriculum is taught Syrian teachers.
- Provide financial and material support to public schools to cover costs of increased enrolment of Syrian students.
- Raise awareness of Syrian families about how to conclude the paper work in order to register children in Egyptian schools.
- Encourage international and Egyptian Universities to support Syrian students with scholarship slots.
- Explore the possibility to support the organization of remedial classes for students facing difficulties.
- Explore the possibility to organize extra-curricular activities and psychosocial support.
- Provision of school supplies for school children

- Explore the possibility of establishing community KGs and schools, for the age groups 4-5 and 6-12 respectively, close to their localities.

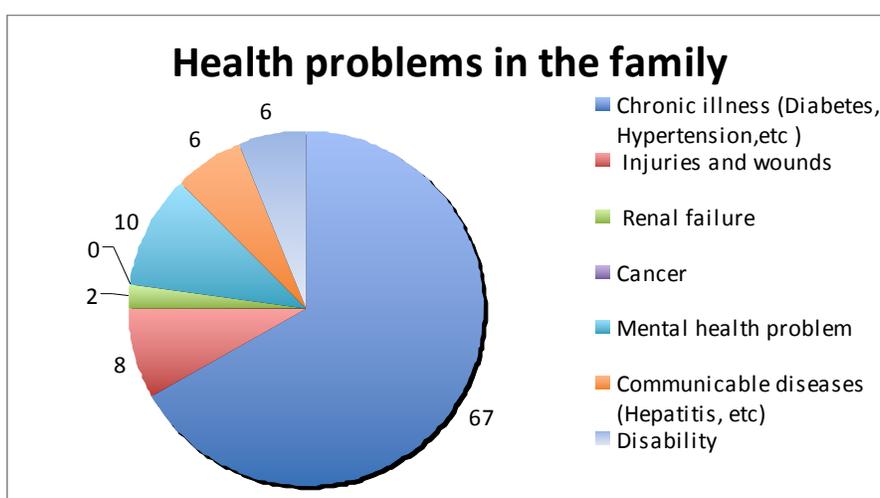
## Health

Some large Syrian families arriving to Egypt have several medical problems and need primary, secondary and tertiary health care. Since Syrians are scattered in several Governorates, one of the main concerns for them is the accessibility to medical services in remote areas.

There is often a lack of awareness amongst the Syrian population about Ministry of Health centres where some free services are available. Awareness raising in this area could remove some part of the financial burden experienced. Compounding this challenge, many Syrians consider that the quality of health services in Egypt is low and they are subjected to waiting periods that they consider are too long. Furthermore, there is a perception that doctors are referring patients to clinics and other facilities that are distant, thus placing on them an additional burden of time and cost.

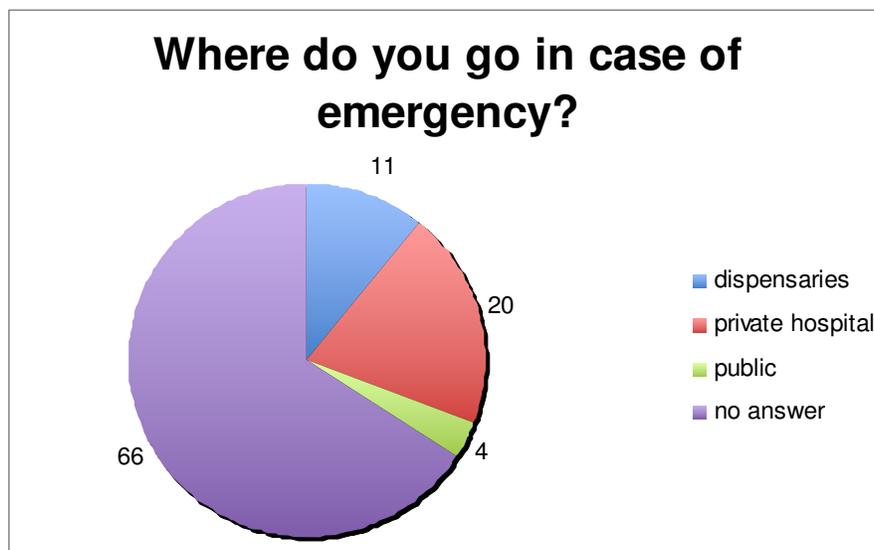
In addition, a trust issue extends to the brands of drugs that are available to those who are long-term sufferers of non-communicable diseases. As many household report individuals who are suffering benefit could be provided from education around more cheaply available generic brands that serve the same purpose.

Figure 12: Health problems (sample of 137 families in Alexandria)



Sixty seven per cent of interviewees in Alexandria during registration with UNHCR have indicated that at least one family member has a chronic illness.

Figure 13: Plan for medical emergencies (sample of 189 families in Damietta)



Sixty-six per cent of families answered that they are not sure where to go in case of medical emergencies. This indicates the low preparedness level of Syrian families for urgent medical situations in Egypt.

#### Main Challenges:

- Public health care is not easily accessed by Syrians while other health services, especially medicine, are very expensive compared to prices in Syria.
- Not all newborn and infants are covered by Egypt's expanded programme of immunization.
- Some Syrians suffer from non-communicable diseases like hypertension, ischemic heart disease, rheumatic diseases, diabetes and renal failure which require costly lifelong medication.
- Older refugees are suffering from a number of diseases including diabetes, heart disease and asthma as well as strokes or aneurisms being reported.
- When seeking care in private hospitals, medical centres and laboratories, some Syrians have been charged high expatriate rates.
- There is some lack of awareness about Ministry of Health centres that offer free services for Syrians.
- Syrians expressed unwillingness to visit clinics of some service providers believing that the quality of services is low and the waiting period is long. Additionally, interviewees mentioned that some doctors refer patients to far clinics which puts additional burden on them.

- Some Syrians mistrust medication in Egypt and try to get brand names that they used to take in Syria which adds a cost burden.

### **Recommendations**

- Expand capacity and geographic coverage of UNHCR health partners to serve Syrian patients.
- Improve the quality of service of UNHCR health partners.
- Support Ministry of Health's centres that provide services to Syrians, especially in remote areas.
- Conduct mapping of medical centres and hospitals providing low price medical services.

## **Annexes**

### **Annex 1:**

#### **UNHCR/UNICEF/WFP Assessment targeting Syrians in Egypt-November 2012**

##### **Terms of Reference**

##### **Objectives**

- Assemble data on the situation of Syrian asylum seekers in Egypt to enable participating agencies to compile a Joint Plan of Action (JPA).
- Launch a joint appeal to secure funds for participating agencies to provide immediate assistance to the Syrian community in Egypt.
  - Review demographic profile and background of Syrians in Egypt.
  - Review protection situation for Syrians in Egypt and identify protection risks.
  - Document the food security and nutritional situation of Syrian refugees in Egypt.
  - Review the quality and appropriateness of on-going food security, livelihood and education interventions and identify effective interventions that will protect and ensure the refugee protection and food security.
  - Identify timing, location and duration for specific interventions with emphasis on protection, food assistance, winterization, basic needs and education activities.

##### **Methodology**

The assessment will use available documents and collect complementary information through interviews with key informants and conducting focus group discussions (FGD).

Available documents are:

- ✓ Rapid needs assessment for 183 families in 6<sup>th</sup> of October
- ✓ Rapid needs assessment for 137 families in Alexandria
- ✓ Two information notes prepared by UNHCR
- ✓ Needs assessment prepared by a Syrian researcher

In addition to FGD, information will be collected from key informants and other sources of information:

- Ministry of Interior-Department of Immigration
- NGOs working with Syrians
- Syrian community leaders and activists

Focus groups will gather from 10 to 15 persons and discussions will be conducted to assess the need for assistance in the following fields:

1. Protection issues
2. Basic needs
3. Food security
4. livelihood and self-reliance
5. Education
6. Health

In addition to the list of questions, prioritization of assistance and exploration of distribution manners will be conducted during the focus group discussions.

Participating agencies will work together to agree on five main questions to explore information related to each field of intervention.

Blank papers will be distributed to participants to ensure collection of statements that participants may not be willing to share publicly.

Teams will meet after focus group discussions in order to wrap up/discuss findings and share notes with the rapporteur.

### **Sites**

- 1) 6<sup>th</sup> of October (young girls between 10 and 16 years old)
- 2) Haram/Faysal (young boys between 10 and 16 years old)
- 3) Nasr city (households)
- 4) Obour (women)
- 5) Registration centre in Zamalek (households)
- 6) Alexandria (households)

### **Teams**

- Five teams
- Each team will include one rapporteur
- A report writer will work closely with rapporteurs and compile all report sections.

## **Timeline**

Activity	Responsible	Expected output	Timeframe
Conduct planning meeting and prepare TOR	Coordinators from WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR	TOR and plan of action	Tuesday 6 November
Prepare FGD list of questions	Coordinators from WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR	5 Focus group guidelines prepared	Before Sunday 11 November
Formulate teams	Coordinators from WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR	5 groups	Before Sunday 11 November
Schedule focus group meetings in 6 different sites	Field work teams	Field work scheduled	Before Monday 12 November
Provide orientation to field teams on focus groups and distribution of tasks between teams	Coordinators from WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR	Groups trained and ready for field work	Sunday 11 November from 10:00 to 14:00
Conduct field visits, focus group discussions and wrap up meetings	Field work teams	Data collection conducted	Between 12 and 15 November
Draft first draft report	Rapporteurs and report writer	Report drafted	Before 19 November
Revise first draft	Report writer and coordinators from WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR	Report finalized and shared with HOAs	Before 22 November
Endorse final draft	HOAs	Assessment finalized	29 November
Present to UNCT		Findings disseminated	

## **Report content**

Executive summary: key background information, needs identified and recommendations.

### Methodology:

- How the different phases of the assessment was conducted, when, which methods and tools were used
- Limitations and challenges faced in achieving the overall JAM objectives
- 

### Basic facts:

- Overall picture of the refugee situation: origin, number, sites, host community relations.

- Context: political, humanitarian, social, economic, only if relevant to the refugee situation analysis, including likely changes in the short-mid-term and how they are likely to affect the refugees.

Key findings:

- this section will elaborate on needs, how current assistance answer the needs and assistance that should be provided in the areas below:
  - 
  - 1- Protection
  - 2- Basic needs
  - 3- Livelihood and Self-reliance
  - 4- Food security
  - 5- Education
  - 6- Health

Recommendations: Activities that should be conducted

Joint Plan of Action: Matrix of assistance that will be provided with timeframe and responsibilities.

Annexes:

- o Terms of Reference
- o Teams composition
- o List of sites visited, people met and FGD held
- o List of questions and FGD guideline

**Schedule of Focus Group Discussions**

12 November	13 November	14 November	15 November
From 12:00 to 14:00 Zamalek Households Marwa	From 9:00 to 11:00 Haram/Faysal Young boys (10-16) Rasha/Sima	From 12:00 to 14:00 Oubour Women Marwa/Rasem/Salma	From 12:00 to 14:00 Alexandria Households Marwa
	From 13:00 to 15:00 6 October Young girls (10-16) Rasha/Sima		From 12:00 to 14:00 Nasr City Households Marwa

**Annex 2: PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT FORM**

**Facilitators:**

**Group Location:**

**Date:**

**Group profile:**

<b>Protection Risks/ Incidents</b>	<b>Causes</b>	<b>Capacities within community or current available opportunities</b>	<b>Solutions proposed by the participants</b>	<b>Solutions proposed by facilitators</b>

**In order of importance, list the most critical issues to address:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Age group	# of participant per Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
10-13			
14-17			
18-39			
40+			
Total			