

Jordan: Zaatari Refugee Camp

December 2024

Home to almost 76,000 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 a semi-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



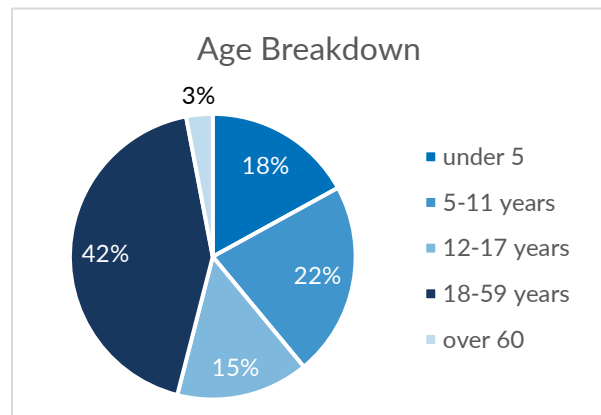
1 in 3 households headed by women



4 percent of population is people with disabilities



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



Main Activities

Registration

UNHCR ensures 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; 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 to 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 holistic 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 41 community centres 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 programs such as sports, women empowerment, and livelihood activities.

- The Age and Disability sub-working group, 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, partner organizations train volunteers to visit the homes of the elderly, injured, and people with disabilities to assess and provide basic support and ensure adequate coverage of their needs in Zaatari.
- 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.



Refugees in Zaatari camp launched the Clothing Bank initiative to donate and distribute clothes. The initiative has helped over 1,000 families in need with clothing, particularly during winter and Eid. ©UNHCR/ Shawkat Alharfoush

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 2024, UNHCR distributed over \$2.5 million.
- Almost all households (99 percent) in Zaatari receive UNHCR cash on mobile wallets, the most efficient distribution channel. UNHCR also worked with Cairo Amman Bank to facilitate regular access to cash through an ATM installed inside the camp.

Livelihoods

- The Zaatari market street is a vital source of livelihood within the camp. It features approximately 1,000 informal shops operated by refugees. These shops offer diverse services, including restaurants, boutiques, 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. Almost 2,900 refugees (nearly 10 percent of the camp population above 18 years) are engaged in various IBV functions.

Education

- UNICEF supports the Ministry of Education (MOE) to enable access to quality education for children of all ages in the camp. Over 23,000 refugee children from kindergarten 2 to Grade 12 are enrolled in formal education, while an additional 383 children are enrolled in non-formal education accredited by MOE; half of them are girls.
- UNICEF supports the operations of all 32 schools and 22 stand-alone kindergarten centres in the camp, with more than 400 Syrian refugee IBVs working as assistant teachers and another 700 IBVs supporting the operations of the schools through cleaning, maintenance and working as security guards.
- UNICEF supported the installation of 16 new classrooms to address overcrowding. This expansion, guided by the Directorate of Education's class formation plan, enhanced access to education and reduced students' movement between schools throughout the educational journey from Grade 1 to 12.
- UNICEF runs different reading programme for students with reading difficulties (Grade 5 and 6 students who cannot read at Grade 3 level) or for refugee children (KG2) to improve their foundational reading skills. Around 4,000 students and children have benefited from these programmes.
- UNICEF runs eight Makani centres offering a safe and inclusive space where vulnerable children, youth, and parents can access an integrated package of services tailored to their age group and needs. These services are linking interventions in Early Childhood Development, Education, Child Protection and Youth Empowerment. By December-2024, Makani centres in Zaatari had reached more than 13,000 Syrian refugees (87 percent children, 13 percent parents and caregivers, 58 percent female).

- UNICEF Horizon Youth Centre offered diverse capacity-building opportunities for camp youth, including digital skills, entrepreneurship, and volunteerism. In January 2024, the centre provided services to over 380 youth. Additionally, UNICEF's youth centres serve as safe spaces for young people, particularly young girls, to connect, learn, develop their skills, and share experiences.
- Higher education is a key priority for refugee students. Since 2014, over 300 refugees from Zaatari have been awarded scholarships through initiatives such as the DAFI and EDU-Syria programs. Additionally, seven students have obtained scholarships through a collaboration between the French Embassy and Zarqa University. In 2024, the EDU-Syria program granted 47 scholarships to support students from the camp.

Health

- Four comprehensive health centres and one primary health clinic in the camp run by NGOs and INGOs offer free integrated primary health care; in addition to two health facilities, one provides 24/7 emergency services and outside camp referrals and to mental health and psychosocial support and noncommunicable diseases care, and the other provides emergency sexual and reproductive health and basic obstetric care. A referral mechanism also facilitates refugees' access to lifesaving secondary and tertiary specialized health services outside the camp at Ministry of Health facilities.
- Decreased funding has led some service providers to close their clinics in the camp, limiting the range of available primary, non-emergency secondary, and tertiary health services and stretching the daily intake capacity of the remaining health care providers.



Lujain, an 8-year-old, has been managing type one diabetes since 2021. With her parents' support, she takes four daily insulin doses, receiving her medication from a camp clinic.
 ©UNHCR/ Shawkat Alharfoush

Food Security & Nutrition

- The World Food Programme (WFP) provides all refugees living in camps with JOD 15 (approximately \$21) per person every month to meet their dietary needs. This reflects a 65 percent decrease of what they used to receive in previous years due to limited funding.
- A card-less EyePay system that uses blockchain and iris scanning technology facilitates payments in WFP-contracted facilities. The system helps enhance the efficiency and accountability of food assistance while also making shopping easier and more secure for refugees. WFP is also expanding the delivery of assistance through mobile wallets, which supports the financial inclusion of refugees.
- WFP also runs a school feeding program for the children enrolled in school. In line with the national school feeding program, 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 (totalling 4,500 m³) in summer and between 35-40 litres in winter; the water is provided through three boreholes in the camp, external trucking and an extended pipeline from the neighbouring Zaatari village. UNICEF is looking for future alternative water resources to address the declining groundwater levels of the three main boreholes.
- UNICEF and its partner conduct regular social mobilization activities on water conservation, increased community ownership, equitable water distribution, and network operation and maintenance. Hygiene promotion, including menstrual hygiene management, and climate education are also rolled out in Makani centres.
- UNICEF ensures safe wastewater management in the camp through operating and maintaining wastewater network and the on-site wastewater treatment plant in collaboration with the Water Authority of Jordan.

Shelter & Settlement

- UNHCR coordinates shelter assistance and infrastructure improvements to ensure equitable, gender-appropriate access to adequate shelter, basic facilities, and a sustainable energy supply. There are over 25,000 prefabricated shelters, each including a private latrine and kitchen. Some shelters have been adapted to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities. Most shelters in Zaatari have reached their expiry date and need rehabilitation or replacement. UNHCR, with the support of partners and donors, distributed over 900 new shelters in 2024 to replace those in the worst condition.
- UNHCR offers shelter support to the camp community through three different methods: shelter rehabilitation, which involves major maintenance of damaged shelters; shelter replacement for those beyond repair; and a self-rehabilitation approach, where refugees receive a combination of materials and cash to carry out their own shelter maintenance.
- During winter rains, certain areas in the camp became impassable due to mud, exacerbating hardships for numerous families and impeding emergency teams' timely interventions. In response, UNHCR initiated road and drainage construction to mitigate the associated risks for refugees and enhance access within the camp.



A shelter in Zaatari Camp being replaced. ©UNHCR/ Shawkat Alharfoush

Access to Energy

- Zaatari relies on the world's largest solar power plant in a refugee camp 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, now provides six to nine hours of electricity every day to the camp population, depending on consumption levels during different seasons.
- UNHCR and the government agreed to transfer solar energy from a solar plant in South Amman to the Zaatari, 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.
- All shelters are connected to the electricity network through 12 main transformers. A separate network, comprising three transformers, has been set up for the market streets, primarily to supply electricity to the shops.

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, and German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).
- **UN Agencies and International Organizations:** Food and Agricultural Organization, International Labour Organization, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Organization for Migration, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Population Fund, UNOPS, UN Women, World Food Programme.
- **International NGOs:** Blumont, Business Development Center, Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network, Finn Church Aid, International Medical Corps, International Rescue Committee, Korea Refugee Project, La Liga, Lutheran World Federation, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, OXFAM, Save the Children, Qatar Red Crescent, Qatar Charity, Questscope, and Syrian American Medical Society Foundation.
- **National NGOs:** Arabian Medical Relief, Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development, Holy Land Institute for Deaf, Jordan Health Aid Society, Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization, and Institute of Family Health.

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