



IRC Jordan Country Program



Cross-Sectoral Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Urban Areas of South and Central Jordan

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1. Executive Summary

This assessment was launched as part of the international community's shift from camp-based to off-camp and urban programming responses for Syrian refugees in Jordan and across the region. Although there has been a heavy focus from international organizations on Zaatari refugee camp, coordinated response and assistance for Syrian refugees in the urban settings remains weak, particularly in south and central Jordan, where interventions to date are limited and under-resourced. The need for a shift toward urban and off-camp responses is highlighted by the estimate that as many as 80% of the estimated 420,000 Syrian refugees now in Jordan are residing outside of the camp environment.¹ Over five days in January 2013, a team from the International Rescue Committee (IRC) with expertise in health, protection and gender-based violence (GBV) engaged in a rapid assessment of major urban areas in south and central Jordan. The goal of this assessment was to get a better sense of the conditions facing refugees outside of the camp setting in Jordan, and to use this information to contribute to improved program design.

Of particular concern, the findings illustrate significant gaps in protection services including protection monitoring, information dissemination, rights awareness and assistance, case management for survivors of trauma, sexual violence and torture, and an absence of effective referral systems. Many refugees in the urban setting have not yet been registered or are currently awaiting renewal of their registration status, leaving many without legal status, and therefore without access to essential services or proof of identity. Registered and non-registered refugees alike often lack information about their rights, available services and how to access them. As more and more Syrians exhaust their savings and turn to increasingly negative coping strategies, many are compelled to take on illegal or informal housing, employment and credit relationships. This creates a risk of exploitation, arrest, detention and extortion by the police, local authorities and others, a risk that is compounded by the refugees' lack of information or support in seeking legal redress for any such violations. Women and children in this group may be particularly vulnerable as they often arrive in Jordan unaccompanied, and may have very limited coping strategies to which they can resort. For example, refugees report increasing levels of forced marriage, the commoditization of sex and children in the labor market.

There is an urgent need to respond to and mitigate the particular protection concerns Syrians face in the urban north, south and center of Jordan as well as in the camps. Violence, rights violations and denial of services that refugees faced in Syria and currently face in Jordan require the provision of comprehensive protection services including access to information, legal counseling and assistance, economic support, support for GBV survivors, child protection and psychosocial services. Access to this full range of protection services is urgently required to address high levels of trauma and anxiety, reinforce positive social coping mechanisms and help create a sense of agency among refugees in general, and women and children in particular.

¹ Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Sub-Working Group Jordan, "Findings from the Inter-Agency Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Assessment in the Za'atari Refugee Camp", (2013).

2. Key Findings

Detailed findings with recommendations by topic can be found in sections 7 and 8 of this report.

PRIORITY NEEDS AS IDENTIFIED BY SYRIAN REFUGEES

The top three priorities reported by refugees are: Rent and shelter maintenance, healthcare, and access to unconditional cash assistance for household and personal items. Access to employment ranks as the fourth most important priority.

Broad-Spectrum Protection Concerns:

- **Exhaustion of economic coping mechanisms:** Coping mechanisms used by Syrian families are becoming exhausted as financial resources and material assets are depleted. Families and individuals are deploying ever more negative strategies to survive, leading to an increasingly negative protection cycle.
- **Information gaps:** Lack of information on a range of topics is fueling anger, insecurity and tension among refugees and between refugees and host communities, as well as creating opportunities for corruption, extortion and exploitation. Key information gaps include:
 - a. Who is entitled to receive aid and what are the vulnerability criteria;
 - b. What aid is available and how to ensure access;
 - c. Legal rights (particularly related to housing, employment and access to justice); and
 - d. How to access UNHCR for registration, renewal and urgent needs.
- **Increases in child marriage, forced marriage and survival sex:** Local and foreign men are seeking out sexual services from refugee women/girls in exchange for money, food or household items. Families are seeking out marriages for their daughters or offering their sexual services to local/foreign men. Unaccompanied/separated women are seeking out marriages or sex work to provide for themselves and their children. This is not something that is spoken of freely among the Syrian community.

Barriers to Accessing to Services:

- **Registration and issues of access (health):** Many refugees have not registered with the UNHCR out of fear of the authorities (Syrian and Jordanian) and are in hiding, rendering them unable to access essential services. Refugees awaiting registration renewal likewise unable to access essential services. This presents particular problems in the area of healthcare, where unregistered refugees and those awaiting renewal must either pay for private healthcare or go without. This is particularly problematic for pregnant women, children and those with chronic or acute medical needs.
- **Cultural constraints in reporting Gender-Based and Domestic Violence:** Cultural norms often limit women from accessing medical or mental health services related to rape, sexual or domestic violence. Identifying oneself as a survivor can bring great shame upon a family. Women are encouraged to keep silent or risk loss of reputation or further violence (or even death) from their own family members seeking to restore family honor.

Socio-Economic Needs:

- **Host community needs:** The global economic crisis has hit Jordan hard, bringing high levels of unemployment, inflation and an increasing cost of living. Jordanian host community members could also benefit from employment opportunities and increased access to essential services. As the international

community responds to the crisis, lack of attention to host communities is likely to increase tension and conflict.

- **Access to Income for Female Headed Households:** Widows, female headed households, and families with daughters but no access to income were identified as the most vulnerable in the refugee community. The elderly, disabled, those suffering from war injuries and the chronic or acutely ill are described as being under the care of their own or other refugee families, but those families are becoming less able to cope with the burden of care. Acutely poor families also experience heightened vulnerability, with many living in dire conditions.
- **Access to employment:** Access to employment is of primary concern to the majority of refugee families. Refugee men, women and youth (over 18) are permitted to work, but most cannot afford the 300 JoD work permit fee. This results in high levels of informal and irregular employment, which creates opportunities for exploitation and abuse.

Health and Psycho-Social Needs:

- **Need for increased international intervention:** Syrian refugees are quick to acknowledge the considerable generosity of the Jordanian people and Jordanian Government, but also that this level of support can no longer be sustained.
- **Reproductive Health:** Although reproductive health services are available to registered refugee women, refugee women who are not registered or are awaiting renewal cannot access these services. Women and female youth report that when consulting for reproductive tract infections, gynecological exams are often not being conducted and in some cases, health professionals have refused to conduct them. Further, specialized clinical services are reportedly not available for refugee women and female youth who have suffered some form of sexual violence before or after becoming displaced.
- **Complex medical care and prescriptions:** Refugees with complex or acute medical or surgical needs, such as cancer or dialysis patients, lack access to advanced medical services in government facilities across Jordan and cannot afford private medical care. Refugees report limited or no access to prescriptions for chronic diseases.
- **Mental health and services for the disabled:** Lack of information on how to access mental health and disability services is widespread, meaning that refugees in need are not able to secure essential care services.
- **Assistance to survivors of trauma:** Syrian refugees of all ages and genders have witnessed and/or survived extensive amounts of violence, including sexual violence and torture, and are suffering from high levels of emotional trauma. Many experience high levels of anxiety, depression, stress and violent behavior as a result, often exacerbated by lack of employment, and social and learning opportunities.

Barriers to Accessing Education:

- **Integration into Jordanian Education System:** The majority of children are accessing public schools, although parents and children report that the curriculum is much more challenging than in Syria. Some students report bullying in the public schools and on the street, due to the refugees' status as outsiders. All children identify the lack of social, physical, learning and play opportunities as a major problem.
- **Barriers to Accessing Education:** Children who are not in school are reported to be absent because: parents cannot afford school-related fees; children have been pulled out to work; children have been pulled out to avoid bullying and conflict with Jordanian families; school is too far; girl children are not considered to be safe; and parents of children with disabilities think they cannot be managed by public schools.
- **Interrupted Higher Education:** The concern most commonly stated by refugee youth and their parents is the fact that their higher education has been interrupted, followed closely by their lack of social and developmental opportunities in Jordan.

3. Summary of Recommendations

Information:

- **Protection monitoring:** In coordination with existing data collection activities, engage in systematic protection monitoring to identify numbers, location, needs and specific vulnerabilities of the refugee community for transmission to UNHCR and relevant service providers. Particular attention must be paid to families/individuals with heightened vulnerability, including female headed households and those with daughters and no income source, the elderly, disabled, working children and others identified as particularly vulnerable.
- **Data collection:** Provide training and support to community leaders, youth leaders and other stakeholders to systematize data collection methods and mechanisms. Support development of cross-networked electronic databases.
- **Service mapping and referrals:** Map service providers across south and central Jordan. Support development of referral pathways and monitoring systems covering all segments of the population.
- **Information dissemination:** Disseminate information on legal rights and legal/administrative processes, civil and social rights, available services, how to access, what to expect, and whether there is any system in place for prioritizing particular vulnerabilities. This could include publication of UNHCR mobile unit dates and sites.
- **Public information materials:** Develop information and rights awareness materials specifically targeting children. Include materials that are accessible to children as well as materials targeting parents/caretakers about services available for children, including disabled children.

Legal Status:

- **Access to UNHCR:** Facilitate regular bus transport to Amman for UNHCR registration renewal and/or coordinate regular UNHCR mobile visits to Aqaba, Karak, Ma'an, and possibly Tafileh, with dates that can be publicized.
- **Registration status and access to health:** Advocate for extension of access to health services during renewal appointment period and/or fast tracking of refugees with urgent health needs (e.g., expectant mothers, the chronically ill or elderly).
- **State ID card:** Advocate for clarification on the purpose and function of the state ID card and disseminate this information as part of broader information dissemination activities.
- **Access to civil documentation:** Provide legal counseling and assistance to refugees on issues of civil documentation. Provide technical and organizational development support to national NGOs engaged in civil documentation activities.

Access to Justice:

- **Legal aid and empowerment:** Provide legal counseling and assistance to Syrian refugees, particularly in the areas of housing, employment, debt recovery and other civil disputes, including family and personal status issues. This should be done through a legal empowerment model, building refugees' skills and capacity to self-advocate while offering representation in more complex cases. Provide technical and organizational development support to national NGOs engaged in legal aid activities.
- **Access for minors:** Provide legal assistance in cases involving refugee minors.
- **Legal awareness:** Provide training and support to leaders and designated volunteers from the Syrian refugee community on legal and administrative rights and processes.

Women's Protection:

- **Case management:** Establish specialized case management services for GBV, including sexual exploitation and abuse, which require immediate care and protection and through timely and comprehensive services. Specialized services should be provided within a larger set of health, legal or more generalized case management or psychosocial support services to enable women, men and child survivors to meet these needs as well as more safely and easily access survivor services.
- **Specialized psychological and psychosocial counseling:** Provide specialized psychological and psychosocial counseling to GBV survivors to address their experiences of significant distress and trauma due to exposure to severe levels of violence in Syria, during population movement and in Jordan. Such experiences warrant the need for specialized psychosocial support programs that help survivors cope and recover, and that promote psychosocial wellbeing.
- **Risk identification and mitigation:** Design programming with special attention on identification of risks, concerns and negative coping mechanisms for women and children. Ensure women and children's access to material and financial support and other meaningful actions to address and minimize specific risks, such as forced marriages and survival sex.

Health:

- **Do not devote resources to primary healthcare providers:** There seems to be no need for additional providers of basic primary healthcare to Syrian refugees. The Ministry of Health has the capacity and coverage to provide these services to the host community and refugees that have arrived in these locations.
- **Streamline registration:** Advocate for improved systems for registration of Syrian refugees in urban locations in Jordan to minimize the timeframe for renewing registration status. This seems to be happening with recent changes to the UNHCR registration process.
- **Health information dissemination to refugees:** Disseminate information on:
 - The rights of access to healthcare and prescription services that come with UNHCR registration;
 - The availability of mental health services through Ministry of Health facilities and the procedures for accessing them; and
 - The steps and procedures required to renew registration status to minimize periods without access to healthcare.
- **Registration information dissemination to healthcare providers:** Provide information to healthcare providers regarding the validity of temporary registration cards to access services during the renewal process.
- **Assessment on Disability:** Conduct an assessment of the magnitude and causes of disabilities among Syrian refugees and of services available to them.
- **Assessment on Reproductive Health:** Conduct an in-depth reproductive health services assessment to identify potential gaps in equipment and services.
- **Information network for complex cases:** Establish an information network for complex medical cases. The purpose of this network would be to link refugees with complex medical cases to private donors or national or international NGOs who may be able to provide support.

Trauma among Men and Male Youth:

- **Psychosocial counseling:** Set up and/or support counseling (groups and/or individual) sessions for male survivors of trauma (non –sexual).
- **Meeting space:** Provide meeting spaces for men for purposes of self-expression, support groups, community organization and networking and information exchange.

Access to Education:

- **Remedial education and activities:** Provide remedial education in a safe learning environment to help refugee students succeed in school. Remedial education should be aligned with Jordanian curriculum. Students would also benefit from activities including sports, arts and crafts, coloring books, painting, reading materials and puzzles, and English courses.
- **Information and advocacy:** Conduct information campaigns and advocacy to ensure parents know their rights and have accurate information on school policies and registration procedures. This could involve work with local PTAs or school management committees if appropriate to engage in wide reaching information campaigns; this may require advocacy on inclusion of refugees in PTAs or school management committees. Advocacy and information campaigns could also include a focus on the benefits of girls' education.
- **Teacher capacity:** Provide capacity building of teachers to promote refugee students' recovery from exposure to violence and displacement, through for example, the IRC's Healing Classrooms approach.
- **Social cohesion:** Organize social cohesion and cultural exchange activities for Syrian/Jordanian children. This could include social exchange activities among Syrian and Jordanian women (and men if possible), in particular neighbors, to support the building of relationships and tolerance among children.
- **Economic assistance:** Provide economic assistance to support school attendance. This could be linked with conditional cash transfers to parents or needs-based scholarships.
- **Girls' safety:** Conduct interventions around girls' safety, depending on context-specific risks. This could include establishment of a buddy system for walking to school where safe routes can be identified, girls' clubs where girls can discuss the issues that affect them and receive life skills to facilitate positive coping strategies, and a female mentors program for educational and emotional support.
- **Recreational facilities:** Explore opportunities to support local actors in the identification, funding and development of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. In Tafileh, for example, the government has designated a piece of government land for use as a youth center and/or playground. Local volunteers to build and staff this facility are already identified, but the town requires construction materials and playground equipment, as well as training for volunteers on engaging with refugee youth.

Child Protection:

- **Safe spaces:** Provide safe spaces where children can receive psychosocial and educational support through structured and age-appropriate group and individual activities. These spaces provide children a protective and conducive environment to play, socialize, express themselves and receive tailored support. It furthermore provides an entry point for regaining education, for identifying children with specific needs and for working with affected caregivers and communities.
- **Case management:** Develop case management system for vulnerable children in need of individual assistance, including unaccompanied and separated children. This includes the development of a referral system and an information management system.
- **Registration problems and assistance:** Develop a mechanism for reporting registration-related problems and other protection concerns regarding children to the UNHCR for assistance.
- **Awareness-raising:** Conduct awareness-raising in the community on child protection concerns, including family separation, recruitment and labor.
- **Livelihoods support:** Provide livelihoods support to vulnerable families to mitigate need for sending children to work and other negative coping mechanisms.

Youth:

- **Resilience and Action for Youth groups:** Establish Resilience and Action for Youth groups for Syrian and Jordanian male and female youth as soon as possible. These will support peaceful co-existence between refugee and host communities through a participatory youth-focused process of open dialogue, skills development in dispute resolution and social entrepreneurship.
- **Social activities:** Organize recreational, social and developmental activities for youth as soon as possible. These can be based out of the safe spaces for children.

Livelihoods:

- **Small business grants:** Provide small business grants (with supervision to ensure against dependency and abuse) for men and women. Microloans and other options should be discussed with the Ministry of Planning.
- **Cash for work:** Support public works projects (cash for work) to improve local infrastructure such as waste water recycling for irrigation. These should include Jordanian and Syrian men and youth to foster a sense of joint ownership and contribution.
- **Youth volunteers:** Identify and organize volunteer opportunities for Syrian youth.
- **Work permit grants:** Provide grants to the most vulnerable households in support of work permits.
- **Social integration:** Provide or support trainings in social integration (functioning in Jordanian society).
- **Syrian women and employment/livelihoods:** Undertake further study of cultural norms surrounding work and livelihood opportunities for Syrian refugee women.

4. Background

Since violence erupted in Syria, over one million refugees have fled to Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey and Iraq.² As of March 14th, 347,423 persons had arrived in Jordan representing over 6% of Jordan's population. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered over 291,213 refugees within Jordan, with 56,210 awaiting registration.³ Including non-registered refugees, the UNHCR estimates that as many as 420,000 Syrian refugees are currently residing in Jordan, with approximately 80% residing outside of the camp setting.⁴ To date, 53% of those registered are women (29% of reproductive age) and 33.5% of registered refugees in urban settings are single female headed households.⁵ The predicted trend of increased arrivals has so far been proven correct and even surpassed, with almost 60,000 asylum seekers taking refuge in Zaatari camp alone since February 1, and almost 30,000 of those arrivals taking place between February 13th and the 20th.⁶ This is combined with the understanding that an estimated 60% of Syrian refugees are living outside of the camp setting, with many not yet able or choosing not to register.⁷ These rates only continue to escalate, confirming not only the deepening of the crisis but the need to ensure adequate provision of services.⁸

Since March 2012, the IRC has conducted several assessments in the north focused on GBV, health and economic needs of refugees, which has informed a large scale emergency response program based in northern Jordan for Syrian refugees focusing on: (i) direct provision of primary health care, reproductive health care, case management and psychosocial support services; (ii) capacity building of international organizations, Jordanian institutions and organizations on clinical care of sexual assault survivors and case management accompanied by (iii) the establishment of standard operating procedures in the camp and urban settings for GBV survivors (iv) case management and monitoring support mechanisms on the "bailout" system, (v) distribution of winter dignity kits for women and girls and cash assistance programming for vulnerable women and girls in the host community and (vi) most recently, as of January 2013, case management of unaccompanied minors in Zaatari camp, King Abdullah Park, and Cyber City, as well as a second refugee camp to be opened soon.⁹

Although there has been a heavy focus from international organizations on Zaatari refugee camp, coordinated response and assistance in the urban settings remains weak, particularly in the south and central parts of Jordan where very few interventions exist. As coordination around urban refugees has scaled up in the north, discussions with UNHCR, UNICEF and ECHO pointed towards a need to better understand the unmet needs of Syrian Refugees in the southern and central governorates.

From January 20 - 25, 2013, the IRC conducted a multi-team assessment in Aqaba, Ma'an, Karak and Tafileh. In each site, the IRC assessment team met with key informants from the refugee and Jordanian community, service providers and government officials and conducted focus group discussions with women, men, adolescents and children. The assessment focused on the five main sectors of health including reproductive health, protection including protection monitoring, information dissemination, access to justice, GBV, child protection and livelihoods, in order to assess access to services, gaps and needs as voiced by the refugees themselves. The assessment aimed to understand where refugees are congregating in the south and central governorates, their living conditions and protection concerns, health issues they are facing and their plans for staying or moving on, to be utilized in the development of future interventions.

² UNHCR, Interagency Regional Refugee Response for Syrian Refugees: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, 16 Feb – 4 March, 2013. Prepared by the UNHCR Regional Data Analysis Group. For more information, visit the Syria Regional Refugee Response web portal at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees>

³ See <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees>. Accessed February 28, 2013.

⁴ Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Sub-Working Group Jordan, "Findings from the Inter-Agency Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Assessment in the Za'atari Refugee Camp", (2013).

⁵ Id.

⁶ UN Weekly Inter-agency Situational Report - Jordan, Syrian Refugee Response update 13 - 20 February 2013.

⁷ UNHCR, Interagency Regional Refugee Response for Syrian Refugees: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, 19-25 Feb, 2013.

⁸ <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>

⁹ See UNHCR, Interagency Regional Refugee Response for Syrian Refugees: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, 19-25 Feb, 2013.

5. Assessment Methodology

The assessment was informed by a review of secondary sources, including IRC and UNHCR data and a range of assessments and reports from other agencies.¹⁰ The secondary review sought to contribute to a fuller understanding of the needs surrounding technical sectors to be covered in the assessment, available services and existing gaps.

The assessment was conducted in four main urban locations in south and central Jordan (Aqaba, Ma'an, Karak and Tafileh). The assessment team consisted of Camilo Valderrama (Senior Technical Advisor for Health), Rebecca Gang (Technical Advisor for Protection and Rule of Law), and Maram Aridah, Operations Manager for the Jordan country program, who received training in order to conduct the GBV element. The male assessor covering health issues conducted interviews and focus group discussions primarily with adult men and male youth using a male translator; the female assessor (native speaker) working on GBV issues conducted interviews solely with women and only in spaces where privacy could be assured; and the female assessor working on general protection issues targeted a cross section of the population using a female translator.

The assessment team conducted key informant semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with refugees (men, women, male and female youth, and children). Interview questions and guidance notes were developed and discussed jointly by team members in advance, with additional input gained from IRC technical staff in other units. Notes from the interviews and focus groups were recorded in English during simultaneous translation, due to time and financial constraints.

Interviews and focus group discussions were set up through contacts received primarily from the UNHCR. These included a Jordanian refugee focal point, a Syrian refugee focal point, Jordanian youth leaders, and governorate and municipal officials. Participants were therefore not selected randomly, but were recommended and facilitated by these actors. This likely introduced an element of bias into the focus groups, but information was triangulated to reduce this. For example, between 80-90% of refugees who participated in this study were registered or were awaiting registration renewal, which likely impacted their experiences and perceptions. In addition, while assessors focused primarily on areas of technical expertise, issues pertaining to other sectors that arose during interviews were flagged and discussed at daily debrief sessions to ensure triangulation and that observations were informed by a cross-sectoral perspective. Participants in every interview and focus group discussion were assured confidentiality and given a full explanation of the IRC, its work in Jordan and the purpose of the assessment. Assessors felt that participants were able to express the majority of what they wanted to express and gave a reasonably representative picture of what the Syrian refugee community is facing in south and central Jordan. This is backed up by similar findings between this and assessments conducted by other organizations. Planned home visits were cancelled due to concerns of assessment fatigue.

Key informant interviews using semi-structured questions: Key informant interviews were conducted by the three technical assessors, at times one-on-one with informants and at times as a group, depending on the circumstances. Key informants included: governorate officials; municipal actors involved in refugee response; Jordanian youth leaders; local leaders of the Jordanian community; members of the Jordanian volunteer response; Syrian community leaders (recent refugees and long-term settled); and national NGOs. A total of 25 key informant interviews were conducted across the 4 sites.

Focus group discussions with Syrian refugees: While questionnaires were developed and in place, interview approaches were relatively informal due to limited time and capacity, as well as the strong demand by refugees to speak out on their own terms. Preparatory discussion between technical advisors, guidance notes and daily

¹⁰ These include: IFRC/JRC Assessment, "Syrian Refugees living in the Community in Jordan," (Sept 2012); Mercy Corps, "Assessment of Host Community-Refugee Tensions in Mafraq, Jordan," (Oct 2012); Un Ponte Per, "Comprehensive Assessment on Syrian Refugees Residing in the Community in Northern Jordan," (August 2012); and a range of materials from UNHCR (Syria Regional Refugee Response web portal at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees>) and the ACAPS Syria Needs Assessment Project (SNAP), at <http://www.acaps.org/en/news/snap/2>).

debriefings worked to ensure that interviewers were able to cover all required fields. Technical assessors split up to maximize time in the field, as well as to ensure coverage of different sectors, with one assessor each covering primary and reproductive health, GBV and case management, and general protection, child protection, legal needs and livelihoods.

Each assessor conducted an average of two focus group discussions in each site. The intention was to have a maximum of 10 participants in each group, although this number was almost always higher due to the degree of interest among refugees in each site. Particularly articulate participants in the focus group discussions were also often interviewed separately as key informants. A total of 14 focus groups were held across 3 sites, with a total of 58 men, 13 male youth, 134 women, 5 female youth and 15 children. No focus groups were conducted in Tafileh, due to the small size of the refugee population and the contact's fear of assessment fatigue among the refugees.

5.1 Limitations of Assessment Methodology

This assessment sought to produce a snapshot of conditions Syrian refugees face in urban and peri-urban areas of south and central Jordan. An in-depth assessment of all issues identified herein is required to inform future programming, across all sectors. The scope of the assessment was therefore to gain an understanding of the experiences and perceptions of Syrian refugees, the Jordanians, settled Syrians and local agencies who are working to assist them, and governorate actors involved in refugee response regarding access to services, gaps and prevalent needs in the sectors identified above. Qualitative analysis was used to identify key trends among specific population groups across sites. Assessors did not seek to collect quantitative data due to constraints in time and staff capacity. Any figures that are reported on costs and income were informally gathered and cannot therefore be used to extrapolate quantitative trends.

Independent selection of participants was hindered by the need to arrange informants and focus groups through pre-identified contacts. Although this afforded a great degree of access to refugees, it is likely that in some cases refugees were counseled on what and what not to say. Participants certainly spoke more freely when they could be sure that they were alone with assessors; the tone and content of discussions noticeably shifted when these actors were present. Likewise, cultural sensitivities and security concerns had an impact on what people were willing to say, with refugees at times seeming to silence each other regarding sensitive topics or strongly denying patterns reported by other refugees. Assessors observed a lack of willingness to discuss, for example, the prevalence and patterns of sexual violence in Syria and in displacement, the full range of coping mechanisms and sources of income, the incidence of child labor and other protection concerns.

6. Displacement Profiles

Refugee experiences, conditions and protection concerns do not vary a great deal between sites. Where differences were noted, these are identified by topic within the detailed findings. This section seeks to provide an overview of site specific displacement patterns and findings are therefore listed separately. Note that in all sites, refugees reported arrival dates of between one year and within the last week, noting a sharp increase in arrivals (particularly from Damascus and surrounding areas) since October 2012. All refugees likewise reported that they chose specific sites primarily to connect with relatives and neighbors, both recently arrived and long-term settled. Many refugees also had additional reasons for choosing specific sites, which are listed below.

6.1 Aqaba

Aqaba (population approximately 120,000), the capital of Aqaba governorate, is the southernmost point in Jordan and its only coastal city. It is known throughout the region as a tourism destination, as well as for its

seaport. Given Aqaba's proximity to the borders of Egypt and Israel, as well as its status as a Special Economic Zone, it is subject to heightened security restrictions and policing.

- **Families/Individuals:** 320 registered Syrian refugee families, 1,200 individuals (January 2013)
- **Place(s) of origin in Syria:** Dera'a
- **Movement pattern:** 50% came directly, 50% had come from another city or through Zaatari. 100% stated intention to stay in Aqaba
- **Average monthly rent + utilities (Jordanian Dinar):** 200-250 (unfurnished) or 300-350 (furnished) + 40-50
- **Average monthly earnings (Jordanian Dinar):** 100 – 150 per person
- **Why Aqaba:** Many thought it would be easier to find work in Aqaba due to its tourism industry and commercial opportunities, or that the conditions would be less difficult due to the warmer weather.
- **Additional observations:** Refugees have been shocked at the high cost of housing, essential items and services in Aqaba, more so than refugees in other parts of the country. Refugees have also found it particularly difficult to find employment in Aqaba, both formal and informal. Due to security restrictions in the area, authorities seem to pay closer attention and exhibit less tolerance for illegal employment in Aqaba than in other areas of the country.

6.2 Ma'an

Ma'an (population approximately 50,000) is the capital of Ma'an governorate in southern Jordan. Ma'an is known for being one of Jordan's most conservative cities, with a history of periodic intertribal violence. Refugees in Ma'an governorate live primarily in Ma'an city (75%), as well as in Shoubak and Petra (25%).

- **Families/Individuals:** 580-600 registered families, 3,000 individuals (January 2013)
- **Place(s) of origin in Syria:** Homs
- **Movement pattern:** Majority came directly from Homs, while a few stayed with family for a short while in Karak before moving to Ma'an. 100% stated their intention to remain in Ma'an, and the majority have settled into a part of the city known for its prevalence of Syrians.
- **Average monthly rent + utilities (Jordanian Dinar):** 100-180 + 30
- **Average monthly earnings (Jordanian Dinar):** 200 per person
- **Why Ma'an:** The majority of refugees in Ma'an sought out already established relatives or other connections. Others reported that they chose Ma'an for its proximity to the border, while others thought they would be able to secure employment with a Syrian construction company working on a local dam project. The project is currently stalled, however.
- **Additional observations:** Ma'an has a well established migrant Syrian community, as well as a highly functional Municipal Development Unit. Key actors in these structures have worked together to set up a well organized and data driven refugee response committee. Still, housing conditions, in particular, are difficult in Ma'an city. Conditions are reportedly better in Shoubak and Petra due to a lower concentration of refugees, which allows locals to provide a greater level of support per family.

6.3 Karak

Karak (population approximately 70,000) is the capital of Karak Governorate in central Jordan. It is divided into two halves: the north has grown up around Karak's ancient crusader castle, while the south is more recently developed.

- **Families/Individuals:** 600-700 families (estimated); 400-450 in south Karak, 300 in north Karak (January 2013)

- **Place(s) of origin in Syria:** Homs, Idlib
- **Movement pattern:** Not assessed
- **Average monthly rent + utilities (Jordanian Dinar):** 100-150 (unfurnished) + 40-50. Expenses in total were stated to be 400-450/mo, including food, transport, and medicines.
- **Average monthly earnings:** 100 per person
- **Why Karak:** The majority of refugees in Karak sought out already established relatives or other connections; others chose Karak for its lower cost of living..

6.4 Tafileh

Tafileh (population of approximately 40,000) is the capital of Tafileh Governorate in southern Jordan. Tafileh has the reputation of being among the poorest and least developed areas of Jordan, despite being the site of a technical university. It is predominantly an agricultural area.

- **Families/Individuals:** 80-100 families; 320 individuals
- **Place(s) of origin in Syria:** Not assessed
- **Movement pattern:** Refugees in Tafleieh came directly from Syria or through Zaatari. Many have or plan to leave for other places in Jordan due to lack of educational opportunities, health services and impoverished conditions. Others are staying due to the low cost of living.
- **Average monthly rent + utilities (Jordanian Dinar):** 35/month (locals reportedly often give discounted rates due to lower concentration of refugees in Tafleieh). Approximately half of the refugee population in Tafleieh is living rent-free with other Syrian or Jordanian families.
- **Average monthly earnings:** 100 per person maximum
- **Why Tafleieh:** While many came to seek out relatives or other connections, the majority were drawn by the lower cost of living as compared to other parts of Jordan. Refugees in Tafleieh have come largely from rural, farming areas in Syria and were thus drawn by the possibility of securing employment in the agricultural or animal husbandry sectors.

7. Detailed Findings: Priority Needs

Refugees in all sites described the following as their priority needs¹¹:

- 1. Shelter**
 - a. Rent support
 - b. Repairs and maintenance
- 2. Access to Healthcare**
 - a. Primary, secondary, reproductive
 - b. Emergency treatment
 - c. Medicines (for acute and chronic treatment)
- 3. Cash assistance**
 - a. Household items (basic appliances, cookware, cleaning products, soap), feminine hygiene and undergarments, clothes, fresh foods, milk for babies, school supplies
 - b. Regular/monthly payments
 - c. Phone credit or service for calling family displaced in other countries

¹¹ Similar patterns are found in above-referenced assessments by Mercy Corps, IFRC and Un Ponte Per.

Note:

- Total food scarcity is only identified as a problem in Tafileh, where the lower concentration of refugees means that local authorities have received less food for distribution. However, lack of fresh foods (fruits, vegetables, meat) and a shortage of baby formula is a problem in all sites.¹²
- Healthcare and cash assistance vary between 2nd and 3rd priority across assessment sites, with rent identified as the top concern in all sites except Tafileh. In Tafileh, costs are less and lower concentration of refugees means they are getting more support from the host community. Tafileh sites food security as top priority.
- Access to employment and income generation opportunities is cited as a 4th level priority by men, women and youth.

8. Detailed Findings: Sector Specific Concerns

8.1 Shelter

- Refugees across urban centers in the south are becoming increasingly concerned about how they will continue to pay rent as the crisis continues and savings brought over from Syria dwindle. To conserve resources, a majority of refugee families have rented older apartments which are often in need of significant repairs. Refugees frequently mentioned leaking roofs, broken or missing windows, inoperable sanitation systems and unsanitary conditions. Utilities do not function as advertised, or are being cut off for lack of payment.
- Multiple families living in shared quarters has been a common survival strategy for Syrian refugees from the beginning of this crisis. Overcrowded living conditions appear to have worsened as resources run out. Many families report that they are living in increasingly crowded conditions as resources run out; a common coping mechanism is for multiple families to move into shared accommodation. The assessment team heard reports of 10-15 people living in 1 room, as well as 3 to 4 families in 2 rooms.
- Among female headed households, as many as five families are reported to be sharing rented accommodations. This raises a host of other protection concerns faced by women and girls including lack of privacy in crowded accommodation and safety of apartment blocks and neighborhoods.
- While no child headed households were identified as part of this assessment, many refugee families did describe households with large numbers of children. These were either particularly large families (average family size was described to be between four and six people), or more commonly, households that have taken on additional separated and unaccompanied children.
- As demand for housing is increasing across south and central Jordan, Jordanian and Syrian informants report inflation of rent prices even as wage levels are decreasing. This is an increasing source of tension between refugees and poorer Jordanians, who are likewise being priced out of the market.

8.2 Protection Concerns – Information

Information that is available:

- Jordanian youth leaders in each assessment site were aware of public information materials provided by the UNHCR and described these as flyers explaining the rights of refugees, available services, and how to access the UNHCR. Refugees themselves did not mention these materials, and many seemed uncertain of the extent of their rights as refugees or how to access attendant services. Refugees did understand, however, that access to services (primarily health) was dependant on having active UNHCR registration status.

¹² Shortages of baby formula have been reported by refugees since the beginning of this crisis. It may indicate other concerns, if mothers are having difficulty producing milk or breastfeeding.

- In Aqaba, Yarmouk FM (105.7) is offering an information and call-in service for refugees. The program is one hour, broadcast twice a week. Sponsors include UNESCO Amman and Un Ponte Per, and the Facebook address is www.facebook.com/saa.suriya. The assessment team learned about this service from a flyer in a youth leader's office in Aqaba, and did not assess the extent to which refugees in the area were aware of this service.

Information networks:

- Community-based information networks varied in quality and legitimacy across assessment sites. Refugees have a varying degree of trust for the information they receive and the individuals who deliver these messages. In Aqaba, information was coordinated through the UNHCR focal point, a Jordanian man who is politically active in the area. In Ma'an, the network is facilitated by a charismatic Syrian community leader who has been living in the area for more than 20 years. In Tafileh, information is being coordinated through two Syrian refugee men who maintain contact with the office of a youth leader, but this network did not seem up to date or particularly accurate. In Karak, refugees complained no one was responsible for ensuring transmission of information throughout the refugee community and that attempts to organize a community group had been thwarted by Jordanian intelligence officials.
- Youth leaders in each site perform the vital task of maintaining and updating databases on refugees in their districts. While these databases appear to contain an essential baseline of data, they are not uniform across districts in information collected or processes for regular updates. Likewise, some are available in hard copy while others are maintained in electronic format. The database in Ma'an is by far the most sophisticated due to the diligence of the Refugee Committee in cooperation with the District Development Unit.

Information that is NOT available:

- There is an overall **lack of clarity about who is receiving aid and why**, specifically: which families are being prioritized, an explanation of vulnerability criteria, why recent arrivals are getting less than those who came before, where aid is coming from (private vs. international or government donors), how to ensure access to distribution, or how to identify one's self as particularly vulnerable. This lack of information is fueling anger, insecurity, mistrust, and fears of corruption among refugee families. Across assessment sites, refugees stressed that whatever aid was made available in future be well-monitored to avoid inequitable or discriminatory distribution. Lack of information is further generating tension between those who are trying to help, both Jordanian support networks and settled Syrians, and intended beneficiaries.
- Refugees express **confusion over what services are available for free and what services should cost** when payment is required. Refugees lack clarification on why services that were free in Syria require a fee in Jordan, and why services that are free or discounted for Jordanians are available at a higher rate for Syrians (e.g., public schools charge a small fee for out-of-state users). Lack of understanding is generating a sense among Syrians that they are being taken advantage of. Areas in which refugees express this concern include access to healthcare and prescriptions, and in education (particularly university-level).
- There is a **lack of understanding about whether Syrian refugees are allowed to work in Jordan**. Many refugees express concern that they will be deported or sent to Zaatari camp if they are caught working illegally. Others lack understanding of how to secure a work permit, while more commonly refugees state that the fee for securing a work permit (300 JoD) is prohibitive.
- Refugees have a **general lack of understanding regarding their legal rights**, particularly relative to housing, employment (compensation), and access to justice. Many have faced violations of contract law in housing and employment and express an inability to access the police or courts because they think they do not have the right to do so, or out of fear of arrest/deportation.

- Lack of knowledge and/or trust in the functioning of the **UNHCR registration system** has created space for the functioning of opportunists and scam operators. Refugees report being the subject of scams by Jordanians and other refugees who offer to speed up or secure access to registration for a fee. This resonates with Syrians due to the prevalence of institutional corruption in Syria, where bureaucratic services are often only available for a ‘facilitation fee’.
- The assessment team did not see, nor was it made aware of, public information materials that are **accessible to children** (child-friendly language or pictures) or materials that include information about services for children, particular risks for children, or other such concerns.
- Several refugee women expressed a **desire to contact family members** displaced to other countries, but were unaware of how to do so and/or unable to afford the cost.

RECOMMENDATIONS – INFORMATION:

- **Protection monitoring:** In coordination with existing data collection activities, engage in systematic protection monitoring to identify numbers, location, needs and specific vulnerabilities of the refugee community for transmission to UNHCR and relevant service providers. Particular attention must be paid to families/individuals with heightened vulnerability, including female headed households and those with daughters and no income source, the elderly, disabled, working children and others identified as particularly vulnerable.
- **Data collection:** Provide training and support to community leaders, youth leaders and other stakeholders to systematize data collection methods and mechanisms. Support development of cross-networked electronic databases.
- **Service mapping and referrals:** Map service providers across south and central Jordan. Support development of referral pathways and monitoring systems covering all segments of the population.
- **Information dissemination:** Disseminate information on legal rights and legal/administrative processes, civil and social rights, available services, how to access, what to expect, and whether there is any system in place for prioritizing particular vulnerabilities. This could include publication of UNHCR mobile unit dates and sites.
- **Public information materials:** Develop information and rights awareness materials specifically targeting children. Include materials that are accessible to children as well as materials targeting parents

8.3 Protection Concerns – Legal Status

UNHCR:

- The majority of refugees assessed (80-90%) report having had access to initial registration with the UNHCR. However, across all sites, refugees express major concerns regarding delays in renewing registration (ranging from 2 to 9 months) and in the resulting gaps in access to services while waiting for renewal appointments. The only site where concerns about renewal did not seem to be an issue was in Tafileh, where just over half of families have avoided registration due to fear, lack of information, or lack of access, and where services are generally less available.
- Refugees report that some had been able to access UNHCR mobile units in Aqaba, but refugees in Karak, Ma'an and Tafileh are required to travel to Amman for renewal. Refugees are frustrated by the fact that all family members are required to attend renewal appointments, as this creates great financial burden for families and is particularly difficult on families with young children, elderly and disabled members. Refugees further report that the conditions while waiting at UNHCR facilities can be difficult and often undignified.

- Community leaders in each location describe several families that have not registered out of fear of the authorities (Syrian and Jordanian) and are in hiding, rendering them unable to access services and distribution. Refugees have heard reports of Syrians returning across the border and being held and tortured if they are found with UNHCR paperwork.

Government of Jordan ID cards (Ministry of Interior):

- Identification cards are now required for all Syrian refugees on an individual basis. There is a general sense amongst the refugees that they can “get in trouble” with the police for not having an ID card, although few described specific outcomes. Approximately 90% of people interviewed report having state ID cards, but most are unsure as to their purpose. Most report that the ID cards are solely for identification and that this facilitates freedom of movement outside urban centers and during movement between different parts of the country. Some refugees report a fear of being detained or deported if they are not in possession of ID cards. District officials in Aqaba state that these ID cards facilitate access to state services, but this does not seem to be the case.
- A majority of women refugees were able to produce their ID cards during the assessment, signifying that women are permitted to safeguard their own identity documents.

Essential identity documents:

- The majority of refugees who participated in this assessment report to be in possession of their passports. Participants estimate that between 5% and 10% of refugees had had their passports or other identity documents confiscated due to illegal entry. Those without passports have not reported problems in securing registration or access to standard services; many in this group have receipts proving that their identity documents are in the possession of the authorities (following the successful advocacy of the UNHCR on this point).
- Possession of legal identity documentation is particularly important for the purposes of birth registration. To register a new birth and receive a birth certificate, parents must be able to show a legal ID, an ID receipt or UNHCR registration as well as their marriage certificate (or ‘family booklet’). Civil Status Department authorities will rely on the family booklet alone if the father is present and not able to show ID. If the wife is alone and has the family booklet, she must present two witnesses to prove her identity. Parents with no proof of marriage or women alone without proof of marriage and/or identity may be required to follow lengthy legal and administrative procedures to secure a birth certificate. For those

RECOMMENDATIONS – LEGAL STATUS:

- **Access to UNHCR:** Facilitate regular bus transport to Amman for UNHCR registration renewal and/or coordinate regular UNHCR mobile visits to Aqaba, Karak, Ma’an, and possibly Tafleeh, with dates that can be publicized.
- **Registration status and access to health:** Advocate for extension of access to health services during renewal appointment period and/or fast tracking of refugees with urgent health needs (e.g., expectant mothers, the chronically ill or elderly).
- **State ID card:** Advocate for clarification on the purpose and function of the state ID card and disseminate this information as part of broader information dissemination activities.
- **Access to civil documentation:** Provide legal counseling and assistance to refugees on issues of civil documentation. Provide technical and organizational development support to national NGOs engaged in civil documentation activities.

without access to any documentation even this route may not be available.¹³

8.4 Protection Concerns – Access to Justice

General:

- Overall, men and women report similar concerns regarding access to justice, although women's ability to access justice services in cases of domestic or gender-based violence was not assessed. Complaints regarding exploitative and abusive housing practices were heard from men and women refugees, as were reports of the inaccessibility of the Jordanian justice system. Complaints regarding employment related disputes were heard from men directly, with women identifying the cases of their male relatives.
- Many refugees state that they are afraid to report disputes or rights violations to the police for fear that they will be arrested or deported. While there have not been any recorded or rumored arrests or deportations, this fear seems to be prevalent among the refugee population and particularly men. Men and women describe being turned away by police and district authorities if they try to report disputes with or rights violations by Jordanians or other Syrians.
- Local authorities in Aqaba and Ma'an state that they try to mediate disputes involving Syrian refugees in accordance with the state policy that they are "guests" as opposed to refugees. This is argued to save Syrian refugees the trouble and expense of going through the justice system, but refugees rather experience this as a denial of access to justice. At the same time, male and female refugees report that when a dispute does arise with a Jordanian (most commonly a landlord or employer), the other party often threatens to refer the case to the police. The fear of state authorities and of the risk of deportation among many Syrians is so great that this type of threat usually results in a resolution that further violates the rights of the refugee disputant.

Housing:

- Although most refugees (male and female) report that they have secured rental accommodation through formal contracts, many describe landlords who freely violate these contracts with the understanding that refugee tenants do not know their rights or will not seek recourse. Refugees report housing-related violations including, for example, charging rent beyond the contractual price, contracting for apartments that turn out to be uninhabitable or without appliances, sanitation and other services detailed in the contract, and renting the same apartment to multiple families.
 - In one case, where refugees tried to move out of an apartment where the landlord was charging triple the advertised rent to three families who were sharing, the landlord brought a summons showing that he had filed a claim against them in the district court for contract violation. He agreed to drop the case if they paid him the full value of rent for one year.
 - In another, a landlord refused to refund a month's rent paid for an apartment that turned out to be uninhabitable. The woman heading this household went to the police to determine her legal rights but was sent away. Her family is now staying for free with another refugee family, but they have received notice of eviction because they are two months late with rent.
- Evictions for lack of payment are legal, but the threat of eviction is being abused. Refugee men and women report that landlords are quick to threaten eviction, and in some cases are placing high levels of interest on rental debt. Reports have also been heard of police confiscating identity documents as collateral on rental debt.

Employment:

¹³ Thanks to the ARDD-Legal Aid Organization of Jordan for providing insight on this point.

- Refugees across the assessment sites report that adult men, male youth and children are working for extremely low wages and/or not getting paid for labor performed. As in the housing cases, refugees report no access to justice and little understanding of their rights under the law. Further, there is concern among authorities that pursuing cases of child labor will do further damage to especially vulnerable families.
- In Aqaba, Syrian men reported that upon entry into the governorate, they were forced by Jordanian intelligence police to sign a document stating that they could stay only if they promised not to work. Women were not obligated to sign. Others did not have this experience, but reported that this document was instead about the prohibition of working without a permit. This seems to be something specific to Aqaba, and likely related to its status as a tourism and Special Economic Zone.

RECOMMENDATIONS – ACCESS TO JUSTICE

- **Legal aid and empowerment:** Provide legal counseling and assistance to Syrian refugees, particularly in the areas of housing, employment, debt recovery and other civil disputes, including family and personal status issues. This should be done through a legal empowerment model, building refugees' skills and capacity to self-advocate while offering representation in more complex cases. Provide technical and organizational development support to national NGOs engaged in legal aid activities.
- **Access for minors:** Provide legal assistance in cases involving refugee minors.
- **Legal awareness:** Provide training and support to leaders and designated volunteers from the Syrian refugee community on legal and administrative rights and processes.

8.5 Protection Concerns – Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, Women-Specific Needs

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence:

- Cultural norms often limit women from accessing medical or mental health services related to rape, sexual violence or domestic violence. Identifying oneself as a survivor can bring great shame upon a family; women are encouraged to keep silent or risk loss of reputation or further violence (or even death) from their own family members seeking to restore family honor. At the same time, women report that a more conservative social atmosphere in Jordan has forced women to restrict their own movements or face verbal harassment from local men.
- In all sites, refugees and Jordanian and Syrian community leaders report that local and foreign men have been offering to marry young Syrian women for cheap dowry, or offering cash, NFIs and other forms of assistance in exchange for sex. In some cases, private donors have begun giving cash or NFIs to families and then threaten to cease assistance if a woman or girl in the household does not provide him with sexual services going forward. Cases were reported of families seeking out marriages for their daughters or offering their sexual services to local/foreign men, or unaccompanied/ separated women seeking out marriages or sex work as a way to provide for themselves and their children.
 - In Karak, at least 7 girls between the ages of 14 and 18 have been married off to Jordanian men. These marriages are reported to be violently abusive. In one case, a girl's father was forced to work as a servant for the husband and was also subject to abuse.
 - In Aqaba, one teenage girl told of a friend whose father is paralyzed and the household lacks a source of income. The friend said she was going to "go out and earn no matter what she had to do." This girl was quickly silenced by the older women in the group, who denied the story and said that Syrian girls/women are too honorable to engage in such activity.

- A Jordanian informant in Aqaba reported that there are stories of abuse that Syrians are not willing to report themselves. These include:
 - The extent of rape, sexual abuse, gang rape and other forms of torture being experienced by women/girls in Syria;
 - The extent of mental trauma among female survivors and male family members who were forced to witness the rape of family members;
 - The extent of young girls selling themselves for income and other assistance; and
 - The number of foreign men coming to buy sex from Syrian women and girls.

Women's needs (cash assistance):

- Some female youth report having only one set of clothes, so when they wash their clothes they have to wait inside their rooms until they dry. This was a source of inconvenience for these young women, but also a source of shame and embarrassment, compromising their dignity.
- Refugee women and female youth report a lack of feminine hygiene products and undergarments. They stress, however, that it is too embarrassing to accept these items as NFIs, so cash assistance would let them purchase what they need with dignity.
- Lack of economic means for the family places women and girls particularly at risk of sexual exploitation and other forms of violence in order to provide for their and their families' basic needs. Adolescent girls often mentioned they would accept marriage proposals to unknown men in order to decrease the economic burden they place on their parents.

RECOMMENDATIONS – WOMEN'S PROTECTION

- **Case management:** Establish specialized case management services for GBV, including sexual exploitation and abuse, which require immediate care and protection and through timely and comprehensive services. Specialized services should be provided within a larger set of health, legal or more generalized case management or psychosocial support services to enable women, men and child survivors to meet these needs as well as more safely and easily access survivor services.
- **Specialized psychological and psychosocial counseling:** Provide specialized psychological and psychosocial counseling to GBV survivors to address their experiences of significant distress and trauma due to exposure to severe levels of violence in Syria, during population movement and in Jordan. Such experiences warrant the need for specialized psychosocial support programs that help survivors cope and recover, and that promote psychosocial wellbeing.
- **Risk identification and mitigation:** Design programming with special attention on identification of risks, concerns and negative coping mechanisms for women and children. Ensure women and children's access to material and financial support and other meaningful actions to address and minimize specific risks, such as forced marriages and survival sex.

8.6 Health – General Issues, Health Information, Reproductive Health and Site-Specific Facilities

General:

- The main health issues identified by urban refugees in all locations were:
 - Lack of access to free basic health services in government facilities for refugees who are not registered with the UNHCR or are waiting registration renewal;

- Lack of access to free services for chronic and acute conditions requiring specialized exams or hospital treatment for registered and non-registered refugees alike; and
- Lack of access to more advanced medical care a problem of the Jordanian health care system as a whole, and reported to have a negative impact on many Jordanians as well.
- Participants describe quality of care as varying from low to acceptable. Some refugees mentioned that many doctors prescribe standard antibiotics without examinations, while others felt they received adequate treatment when they accessed the clinics.
- According to many refugees, some clinics lack many basic medicines, which must be purchased in private pharmacies. Specialized medicines for chronic conditions are generally not available and have to be purchased in private pharmacies, or on the black market in Amman.
- Dental care services are lacking, which is particularly a problem for children.

Health Information:

- Information on the main health problems of Syrian refugees in south and central Jordan is not available through the Ministry of Health's information system. Health departments visited consolidate the number of consultations, laboratory exams and other procedures with the attendant costs and send them to the Ministry of Health for reimbursement.
- Health problems identified by focus groups to be most common among refugees include acute respiratory infection, bronchitis, asthma and diarrhea in all locations, as well as chronic diseases in two locations. Injuries and disabilities were also identified as key problems in two localities. Mental health problems, including depression and chronic mental distress from direct observation of violent events against relatives or friends, were mentioned in all locations.
- The Health Information System does not register causes of deaths among refugees. Information of mortality provided by refugees included 1 recent death in Aqaba of an unregistered 65 year old woman who did not have money for hospital services, arrived late and died of a "cardiac problem". In Ma'an four deaths were reported within the last year: one man with cancer, two children in a car accident, and one man from a stroke.

Reproductive Health:

- Expiration of registration is particularly difficult for pregnant women, as no basic or reproductive healthcare is available for pre-natal care or during birth for unregistered refugees. According to men and women in the focus groups, pregnant women without active registration are reportedly becoming stressed and anxious as normal deliveries without complications are estimated to cost between 500 to 1,000 JDs. In some instances, women/families that cannot pay the full fees have had their passports confiscated by hospitals until fees are fully paid.
- Although reproductive health services are available to registered refugee women, refugee women and female youth in the focus groups report that specialized clinical services are not available for refugee women who have suffered some form of sexual violence before or after becoming displaced. In addition, women and female youth report that when consulting for reproductive tract infections in general, gynecological exams are often not being conducted and in some cases, health professionals have refused to conduct them.

Site Specific Facilities:

- **Aqaba:** No public hospital exists in Aqaba. There is a military hospital which registered refugees can access for free, and non-registered refugees can access for a fee. A private Islamic hospital that was providing free health services to refugees earlier on in the conflict is no longer able to support these costs. Aqaba has a Ministry of Health network of 3 comprehensive and 7 primary health centers.

Services provided in these facilities include curative, preventive and reproductive health services. Registered refugees have open access to these centers. However, according to information coming from a women's focus group, some of these have been found closed two days a week and after 2 pm.

- **Ma'an:** Ma'an governorate has a Ministry of Health network of 1 hospital, 5 comprehensive health centers and 19 primary health centers to which registered refugees have access. There is also said to be a national NGO that operates mobile clinics in the area, but this could not be confirmed. Refugees mentioned that chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension are of common occurrence. Back pain and mental problems related to the stress and uncertainty of the situation people are living with were also mentioned.
- **Karak:** Karak governorate has a network of 2 hospitals, 35 health centers and 7 comprehensive health centers to which registered refugees have access. Normal deliveries and cesarean sections take place either in Karak public health hospital or in the military hospital and are free of charge for registered refugees. The Islamic Center, a national NGO, provides free reproductive health services including family planning to registered and non registered refugees. As in Ma'an, chronic diseases including diabetes and hypertension were described as health problems of common occurrence, as were stress-related back pain and mental health issues. Refugees also reported several cases of hepatitis arising in the last few months in refugee households.
- **Tafleh:** no direct health assessment was conducted.

RECOMMENDATIONS – HEALTH

- **Do not devote resources to primary healthcare providers:** There seems to be no need for additional providers of basic primary healthcare to Syrian refugees. The Ministry of Health has the capacity and coverage to provide these services to the host community and refugees that have arrived in these locations.
- **Streamline registration:** Advocate for improved systems for registration of Syrian refugees in urban locations in Jordan to minimize the timeframe for renewing registration status. This seems to be happening with recent changes to the UNHCR registration process.
- **Health information dissemination to refugees:** Disseminate information on:
 - The rights of access to healthcare and prescription services that come with UNHCR registration;
 - The availability of mental health services through Ministry of Health facilities and the procedures for accessing them; and
 - The steps and procedures required to renew registration status to minimize periods without access to healthcare.
- **Registration information dissemination to healthcare providers:** Provide information to healthcare providers regarding the validity of temporary registration cards to access services during the renewal process.
- **Assessment on Disability:** Conduct an assessment of the magnitude and causes of disabilities among Syrian refugees and of services available to them.
- **Assessment on Reproductive Health:** Conduct an in-depth reproductive health services assessment to identify potential gaps in equipment and services.
- **Information network for complex cases:** Establish an information network for complex medical cases. The purpose of this network would be to link refugees with complex medical cases to private donors or national or international NGOs who may be able to provide support.

8.7 Trauma among Men and Male Youth

- Men and male youth have experienced and/or witnessed extensive amounts of violence. Male participants from across assessment sites describe witnessing acts including the beheading of a brother, repeated involvement in pulling out injured and dead children and adults after bombing raids, as well as being physically restrained and forced to witness rapes and sexual assaults against their female family members. Further, several external reports describe men and male youth being targeted by the Syrian government for rape and sexual violence while in government detention, something that was not possible to confirm through the methodology engaged in this study.
- According to one informant, the ongoing emotional and mental discomfort of having witnessed and/or experienced such violence “feels like having a two-sided blade in your mouth – you can’t swallow it and you can’t take it out.” These reactions are reportedly worse among men without access to employment, as they have nothing to occupy their thoughts or time. Men report feelings of anger as a result of being told to go home by host community members, of being the target of insults by Jordanians in the streets, and of hearing such insults against their wives. Men also report feelings of fear that anyone could be secret police, which is particularly stressful for those working illegally.
- Key informants report that mental instability is growing among men in particular, who are displaying increasingly violent behavior toward their families, themselves and each other. Male and female participants express that trauma among men has caused many fathers to lose the ability to relate to their children – once attendant fathers are now withdrawn and neglectful.
- Men who participated in the focus groups vocally expressed appreciation for the opportunity to talk about the source of their stress, their anger and frustration. Following a focus group in Karak, one man stated: “I feel better having spoken my frustrations out loud and feeling like someone was listening to me.”

RECOMMENDATIONS – TRAUMA AMONG MEN AND MALE YOUTH

- **Psychosocial counseling:** Set up and/or support counseling (groups and/or individual) sessions for male survivors of trauma (non –sexual).
- **Meeting space:** Provide meeting spaces for men for purposes of self-expression, support groups, community organization, and networking and information exchange.

8.8 Education

- Syrian students are entitled to enroll in public schools and are not required to submit documents from Syrian educational authorities to do so. It seems that the majority of Syrian children are enrolled and attending public school. Refugee families report that the Ministry of Education has been largely helpful, that it has been easy to register, and that the authorities often waive fees for books and other supplies.
 - In Aqaba, schools are reported to be overcrowded due to the influx of Syrian students, however, and have now begun dividing the school day into two shifts.
 - School attendance in Tafileh seems to be lower than in other areas among Syrian refugees. This may be due to some confusion within the local Department of Education, which was reported to have denied enrollment to Syrian students. Local authorities were told that Syrian students were supposed to be enrolled in a special school for refugee children that had not yet been established. Assessors were not able to confirm whether this misunderstanding has in fact blocked students from school attendance.

- Students without documents are tested to determine their appropriate grade level. While several parents report that their children were demoted to a lower grade than they were in Syria, students state that they are in the grade they should be or that demotion has given them a chance to catch up for semesters missed in Syria. Both children and parents report that the curriculum in Jordan is much more difficult than in Syria, in material covered as well as pedagogical style. Children describe the teaching style as very strict, involving corporal punishment and frequent testing; children find this very stressful and highly pressured. They were pleased with a summer school program offered by UNICEF in 2011 that provided remedial tutoring, activities and sports, but this did not take place in 2012.
- Many children (15 and under) are experiencing bullying (physical and verbal) from Jordanian students, as well as sometimes from teachers and principals. Others, however, report kindness, and that students, teachers and other faculty are going out of their way to be sensitive to Syrian students. Most children are isolated in their classrooms, with 1 or 2 in a class of 30 to 40. Children often do not tell their parents about bullying at school as they know their parents are already under too much stress, and children feel there is nowhere for them to turn for support.
- Children describe an overwhelming lack of activities, arts and crafts materials, books and other reading materials, sports, space to play, outside space, and opportunities to be with other Syrian kids. They are also seeking opportunities to study English. Without these activities they feel bored, lonely, angry and stressed.
- Several Jordanian teachers encountered in the assessment state that they would be willing to volunteer to support the needs of Syrian youth. Many refugee women were teachers in Syria and would also likely be willing to volunteer their skills and time. In Talifeh, the Youth Coordinator stated that said he had young educators looking for work experience, and would welcome training in how to deal with the specific needs of refugee children.
- Children tell of other children who are not in school because their parents cannot afford school supplies or new clothing, because children have disabilities that cannot be managed in the public schools (e.g., deaf, blind, mobility-limited), or because schools are located too far from where refugees are living. This is considered a particular security risk for girl children, many of whom have been taken out of school by their fathers.

RECOMMENDATIONS – ACCESS TO EDUCATION

- **Remedial education and activities:** Provide remedial education in a safe learning environment to help refugee students succeed in school. Remedial education should be aligned with Jordanian curriculum. Students would also benefit from activities including sports, arts and crafts, coloring books, painting, reading materials and puzzles, and English courses.
- **Information and advocacy:** Conduct information campaigns and advocacy to ensure parents know their rights and have accurate information on school policies and registration procedures. This could involve work with local PTAs or school management committees if appropriate to engage in wide reaching information campaigns; this may require advocacy on inclusion of refugees in PTAs or school management committees. Advocacy and information campaigns could also include a focus on the benefits of girls' education.
- **Teacher capacity:** Provide capacity building of teachers to promote refugee students' recovery from exposure to violence and displacement, through for example, the IRC's Healing Classrooms approach.
- **Social cohesion:** Organize social cohesion and cultural exchange activities for Syrian/Jordanian children. This could include social exchange activities among Syrian and Jordanian women (and men if possible), in particular neighbors, to support the building of relationships and tolerance among children.
- **Economic assistance:** Provide economic assistance to support school attendance. This could be linked with conditional cash transfers to parents or needs-based scholarships.
- **Girls' safety:** Conduct interventions around girls' safety, depending on context-specific risks. This could include establishment of a buddy system for walking to school where safe routes can be identified, girls' clubs where girls can discuss the issues that affect them and receive life skills to facilitate positive coping strategies, and a female mentors program for educational and emotional support.
- **Recreational facilities:** Explore opportunities to support local actors in the identification, funding and development of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. In Tafileh, for example, the government has designated a piece of government land for use as a youth center and/or playground. Local volunteers to build and staff this facility are already identified, but the town requires construction materials and playground equipment, as well as training for volunteers on engaging with refugee youth.

8.9 Child Protection

Working children:

- Although most Jordanian and Syrian adult informants assert that few to no children have been taken out of school to work, the children who participated in this assessment readily state that there are many children they know or know of who have been sent to work. They describe children between the ages of 12 and 15 who are working in shops, coffee and tea stalls, hotels and bakeries, and that many have not been paid for labor performed or are paid very little.¹⁴
- Child labor is against Jordanian law and there are state officers who actively monitor for the presence of children in the labor market. Jordanian authorities express concern over how to deal with this issue, however. The biggest concern is what to do about the issue of working children as there are no services or resources available to address this problem within the refugee population. State actors are concerned that removing children from illegal labor without the capacity for follow-up or preventative

¹⁴ These findings were mirrored in an IRC needs assessment on Syrian refugees in Domiz Camp and Dohuk, Iraq. See IRC Country Program, "Child Protection Needs Assessment in Domiz Camp and Dohuk," (Jan 2013).

services will cause further protection problems for the child and his/her family. Authorities are aware that this is a problem, but are uncertain how to combat the issue of working children without access to adequate funds and in the absence of a policy environment that supports long-term planning for the refugee population.

Trauma in children:

- High levels of trauma-related behaviors are being seen in children below 15. Parents and children report changes in behavior, including: depression, tics, aggression, violence, destructive tendencies, insomnia, nightmares, self-abuse, suicidal tendencies, fear reactions (screaming or crying in reaction to airplanes, loud noises, guns fired during elections, street noises), loss of ability to speak, and catatonia.
- The issues surrounding recruitment of children to engage in armed conflict were not assessed.

Children with special needs:

- There are scattered reports of deaf and blind children, as well as children with complex medical conditions in the general refugee population in the south. It seems that many of these children are not attending school, but this was not directly assessed.
- Children being unable to access services on the basis of a disability was identified as a concern by refugee families in Karak in particular.

Unaccompanied and separated children:

- The assessment team did not encounter significant evidence of unaccompanied and separated children. Children missing one or both parents (in Syrian and Jordanian society, an orphan is defined as a child without a father) seem to be absorbed by other family members. In some cases, guardianship is causing difficulties with regard to UNHCR registration, where case files are not accurately linked and guardians are thus unable to access cash assistance in the child's name. In some cases, children have been sent ahead with extended family while their parents remain in Syria.
- During the assessment, one case of an unaccompanied child (15 year old male) was identified as staying in the apartment of an unrelated family. The youth was described to be experiencing severe trauma but was without access to care. On hearing this story, a member of the Jordanian volunteer

RECOMMENDATIONS – CHILD PROTECTION

- **Safe spaces:** Provide safe spaces where children can receive psychosocial and educational support through structured and age-appropriate group and individual activities. These spaces provide children a protective and conducive environment to play, socialize, express themselves and receive tailored support. It furthermore provides an entry point for regaining education, for identifying children with specific needs and for working with affected caregivers and communities.
- **Case management:** Develop case management system for vulnerable children in need of individual assistance, including unaccompanied and separated children. This includes the development of a referral system and an information management system.
- **Registration problems and assistance:** Develop a mechanism for reporting registration-related problems and other protection concerns regarding children to the UNHCR for assistance.
- **Awareness-raising:** Conduct awareness-raising in the community on child protection concerns, including family separation, recruitment and labor.
- **Livelihoods support:** Provide livelihoods support to vulnerable families to mitigate need for sending children to work and other negative coping mechanisms.

committee voiced his commitment to finding employment for this child as a means of providing some support.

8.10 Youth

- The concern most commonly stated by refugee youth and their parents is the fact that their higher education has been interrupted, followed closely by their lack of social and developmental opportunities in Jordan. Parents state that youth without access to education or other activities are “going down a bad road;” former “A” students are becoming destructive and/or listless. Participants did not report particular trouble between Jordanian and Syrian youth beyond “what is normal for teenagers.” Many refugees report high numbers of male youth being taken out of school or not enrolled in school upon arrival so they can find work to support the household.

RECOMMENDATIONS – YOUTH

- **Resilience and Action for Youth groups:** Establish Resilience and Action for Youth groups for Syrian and Jordanian male and female youth as soon as possible. These will support peaceful co-existence between refugee and host communities through a participatory youth-focused process of open dialogue, skills development in dispute resolution and social entrepreneurship.
- **Social activities:** Organize recreational, social and developmental activities for youth as soon as possible. These can be based out of the safe spaces for children.

8.11 Livelihoods

Men:

- Access to employment is of primary concern to the majority of refugee families. Syrians (like other foreigners) are allowed to work if they are holding a valid work permit. Under the law, Jordanian employers are required to secure work permits for their employees, at the cost of the employer. Work permits are good for one year, and they specify the type of work on the permit. If one changes the type of work, a new permit is required. Permits can be procured in district level offices of the Ministry of Labor.
- Under Jordanian labor law, the repercussion for working without a permit is deportation. However, given current conditions in Syria, the Government of Jordan has suspended deportation for Syrian refugees as it has for other asylum seekers in the past given their commitment to the principle of non-refoulement. This is not considered a waiver of the work permit requirement, but only means that Syrians cannot be deported for working illegally. There have been no reports of arrest or deportation of Syrians for illegal employment, and Syrian and Jordanian key informants report that the police are lenient when they do encounter Syrians working illegally. This has not assuaged the fears of Syrian refugees, however; the fear of deportation for working illegally remains high across all sites and is a great source of stress.
- No case of an employer securing a work permit on behalf of a Syrian refugee employee was reported. Syrian refugees universally report that it is their obligation to secure the work permit. The majority of participants report that the fee for a permit is 300 JDs (including a 30 JD health clearance fee), although responses ranged up to 500 JDs.
- The majority of adult male refugees state that they cannot find work, and estimate that the unemployment rate among refugees is approximately 70%. This is understood to be largely due to the

economic crisis in Jordan, as Jordanians themselves are currently facing high rates of unemployment. Jobs that used to pay 400 JoD for 1 person before the crisis are now being divided among 4 men for 100 JoD each, while jobs that would earn a Jordanian 300 JoD are being offered to Syrians for 100. Syrians' willingness to work for considerably less than their Jordanian counterparts is becoming an increasing source of tension; at the same time, tension is growing between Syrians and other foreign workers who were previously favored for more marginal positions and are now being pushed out to accommodate Syrians.

- Employment that is available is irregular and informal. Refugees report finding work as laborers, house painters, construction workers, shop workers (e.g., sweets, bakeries, others), and mechanics. In Tafileh, refugees have found work in farming and animal husbandry, as many were from rural areas in Syria. Demand on informal labor opportunities is decreasing wages across south and central Jordan, at the same time that increasing demand on rental accommodation is causing inflation in the housing market. Skilled workers (i.e., doctors, nurses, engineers) cannot work in their fields for payment or as volunteers.

Women:

- The majority of Syrian refugee women are not working outside the home; it seems that external employment for these women is not currently acceptable due perhaps to social restrictions, security concerns, weakness of the job market or lack of childcare. As most Syrian women were employed in professions in Syria, lack of employment and related social interaction is exacerbating depression and trauma among many women.
- A handful of women report working as cleaners in homes or offices, while more have found ways to establish home-based income generation by taking in washing or tailoring, and engaging in food production (e.g., selling peeled garlic or chopped vegetables, preparing meals that can be heated at home, making grape leaves, etc).

RECOMMENDATIONS – LIVELIHOODS

- **Small business grants:** Provide small business grants (with supervision to ensure against dependency and abuse) for men and women. Microloans and other options should be discussed with the Ministry of Planning.
- **Cash for work:** Support public works projects (cash for work) to improve local infrastructure such as waste water recycling for irrigation. These should include Jordanian and Syrian men and youth to foster a sense of joint ownership and contribution.
- **Youth volunteers:** Identify and organize volunteer opportunities for Syrian youth.
- **Work permit grants:** Provide grants to the most vulnerable households in support of work permits.
- **Social integration:** Provide or support trainings in social integration (functioning in Jordanian society).
- **Syrian women and employment/livelihoods:** Undertake further study of cultural norms surrounding work and livelihood opportunities for Syrian refugee women.

9. Coping Mechanisms and Vulnerabilities

9.1 Coping Mechanisms

- Above all, Syrian refugees in Jordan describe the generosity of the Jordanian Government and the Jordanian people in volunteering their time and resources, donating money, goods and even their homes to those in need. Syrians also acknowledge, however, that Jordanians are also feeling the pinch of an economic crisis and as more refugees stream over the border, helping individual families becomes increasingly difficult. Syrians therefore notice that as needs grow over time, there is a decreasing level of support from local communities.
- Many refugee families report having brought savings from Syria, but that these resources are dwindling and that the value of Syrian Lira that remains is crashing on the exchange market. Refugees have been surprised at the duration of the conflict and were not prepared for coping for an extended period; at the same time, refugees report being shocked by prices in Jordan, which are considerably higher than in Syria with wage rates considerably lower. Further, while refugees who came in 2011 or earlier on in 2012 were reportedly better prepared financially and psychologically, those arriving now are the poorest of the poor and are coming under emergency conditions with little to no personal property or currency.
- Families are sharing accommodations, and living in increasingly crowded conditions. Jordanians with extra space are donating property or rooms and Syrians who can afford rent are inviting in those who can't. It is felt that this level of support will not be sustainable for much longer.
- Landlords are giving rent on credit, and in some cases donating furniture or food.
- Women report bringing gold and other valuables to be sold off as needed. Many of these resources were stolen in transit.
- Gas stations were donating fuel in the beginning of the crisis, but less so now.
- Women visit among each other for emotional support, but cannot share resources. "We are just sharing each others' pain."
- Refugees tell of a recent increase in begging, stealing, and hoarding.
- Families are selling food packages and restricting their diets (in quantity and diversity) to save for rent. There are reports of women and female youth fainting due to starvation on behalf of children or due to a lack of iron in their diets.
- Taking groceries on credit.
- Children and youth are being taken out of school to work.
- Local leaders and other community actors are dealing with the police and other officials on behalf of Syrians who are too afraid to interact with authorities.
- There are also rumors of survival sex, forced marriage and early marriage, but these cannot be confirmed due to social restrictions.

9.2 Particular Vulnerabilities

- The most common vulnerability identified by participants was the high rate of widows and female headed households consisting of separated or unaccompanied women and their children. There are a few reports of men coming and going to check on their families and return to Syria to fight, to protect property or to work in Syria or other parts of Jordan, however these women also have to fend for themselves to a great extent. Families with daughters but no access to income were identified as particularly at-risk.
- Participants report that the majority of female headed households are being supported through donations by Jordanian and/or Syrian networks. Participants also described families with male earners taking on the support needs of female headed households without access to income.

- The elderly, disabled, those injured and/or paralyzed due to war wounds and the chronically or acutely ill were also identified as particularly vulnerable. For the most part, these people were described as being under the care of their families, neighbors or other concerned refugee families. As time goes on and resources become increasingly scarce, however, participants expressed fear that families and concerned community members would no longer be able to cope with the burden of care. Some elderly women report that they had already separated themselves from their children's households to mitigate existing pressure. Further, many of these individuals require specialized care that their families or neighbors are not able to provide, such as those related to healthcare and mobility.
- Acutely poor families also experience heightened vulnerability, many of whom are living in dire conditions. Acutely poor families describe living in tent-like or temporary structures on the outskirts of urban areas in poor quality shelter, without roofs or windows, sanitation facilities, or access to services.

10. Conclusion and the IRC's Program Response Framework

Given the scale, complexity, and increasingly protracted nature of the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan and the surrounding region, urgent action is required to ensure delivery of essential services and protection of refugees' rights and needs. As this assessment shows, Syrian refugees' needs are interwoven – illustrating the links between, for example, health and legal status, psychosocial care and success in school or work, information dissemination and social tension. A comprehensive approach to humanitarian intervention is therefore required to address the needs of the refugee – and by extension host – community in a holistic fashion.

The IRC has acknowledged the need to respond in a way that reflects the multifaceted nature of the Syrian refugee crisis through the development of a Syria Program Response Framework. The Framework was developed to provide an over-arching coherence to the IRC's response across the region, and includes programming objectives on social protection, health, education, livelihoods and immediate relief needs. The Framework outlines short- and medium-term outcomes for affected populations towards which the IRC's programs will work, as well as programmatic approaches the IRC will employ to achieve these outcomes, and how they might vary across different contexts and countries. This assessment is part of the IRC's efforts to build up knowledge of a particular context, through which to inform its programmatic responses – here, the needs and conditions of Syrian refugees in urban and off-camp environments in south and central Jordan.