



# Identifying Barriers and Opportunities to Labor Mobility Pathways

*For Syrian Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon*

Preliminary Findings & Draft Recommendations

May 2022



# Background & Methodology

- This study examined the intersectional systemic challenges that prevent Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon from accessing global labor mobility pathways..
- Qualitative and quantitative methodologies were applied.
- Identified four categories of barriers:
  1. Engagement & Outreach
  2. International Recruitment
  3. Skilled Visa Processing
  4. Exit and Departure
- Developed recommendations for implementing NGOs, INGOs, host and third country governments, and donors.
- Labor mobility as a complementary pathway to resettlement has the potential to be a transformative and scalable solution for refugees; this research underscores that actors must ensure its visibility and accessibility at the host country level.



*Pictured: Refugee Nurses from Jordan and Lebanon after arriving to the United Kingdom via the Displaced Talent Mobility Pilot in 2022. The nurses are currently working at HCA Healthcare.*

# In Brief: Labor Mobility as a Solution for Refugees

- Labor mobility pathways can enable Syrian refugees to legally enter and remain in a third country via temporary or permanent residency that may lead to citizenship, along with protections from refoulement.
- Traditional schemes were not designed with refugee circumstances in mind, but recent international efforts have worked to unlock labor mobility as a scalable **complementary pathway to resettlement**. Established programs include:
  - Australia - The Skilled Refugee Pilot
  - Canada - Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot
  - United Kingdom - Displaced Talent Mobility Pilot
- Pathways can enable educated refugees as well as lower skilled workers to access legal employment via migration.
- Proven impact towards refugee self reliance and benefits to host as well as third country communities.



*Pictured: A refugee chef from Lebanon who accessed the EMPP pathway to Canada after receiving a job offer at Paramount Fine Foods.*

# 1 – Select Barriers to Engagement & Outreach

A woman wearing a pink hijab and a dark blue top is looking towards a whiteboard. The whiteboard has a chart with a bar graph and a pie chart, and the word "TASKS" is written in large letters. She is holding a black marker and appears to be writing on the board.

*“When we moved to Lebanon, we started researching and going through YouTube videos. We found out about the pathways available but the details were vague and unclear. We previously thought that illegal methods were the only ones available.”*

***Refugee Respondent in Lebanon***

# 1 – Select Barriers to Engagement & Outreach

- **Information Access.**
  - The study revealed that there is very limited awareness among Syrian refugee communities in Jordan and Lebanon of existing labor mobility pathways accessible to them.
  - Assumptions regarding eligibility for most pathways are largely incorrect.
  - Lack of understanding of extended access of benefits to immediate family members, which dissuades interest in moving forward.
- **Lack of Outreach.**
  - Most respondents felt there is not enough outreach conducted to share information about existing pathways nor outlets to ask questions.
  - Limited number of implementing organizations in both Jordan and Lebanon to spread standard and clear messaging hinders outreach as well as the reality that most existing labor mobility pilots launched recently and have often evolving guidelines.
- **Distrust & Fear.**
  - There are concerns in refugee communities that labor mobility pathways are a scam and dangerous.
  - Some respondents doubted the interest of employers in recruiting anyone from a refugee background.

*A key finding is that many respondents said they were less likely to consider irregular migration routes after learning that labor mobility pathways are a safe and viable option.*

## 2 – Select Barriers to International Recruitment



*“The problems of power outages and the internet are great challenges for me. I tried to get over them as much as possible...I went through two interviews and I had a very weak internet connection so the interviewers were annoyed a lot. I became stressed back then.”*

*Refugee Respondent in Lebanon*

## 2 – Select Barriers to International Recruitment

- **Lack of Career Guidance & Support.**
  - The study found that refugees who seek international career guidance in order to engage in recruitment processes face difficulties accessing it in Jordan and Lebanon.
  - The majority of refugees were too intimidated to apply for opportunities without any level of support and there is a lack of awareness of platforms to access guidance.
- **Challenging Environments.**
  - Many respondents faced internet disturbances during interviews with international recruiters; over half also reported that they not have access to working computers which can make CV building, testing, and interviews challenging.
- **Need for Relevant Vocational Training.**
  - Many respondents seek access to vocational trainings that are aligned with in-demand positions in third countries; Implementing key informants were unaware of educational institutions they could refer them to for upskilling in relevant trades.
- **Gendered Barriers.**
  - Many refugee women are unwilling to access labor mobility pathways alone; some also indicated a lack of willingness to leave elderly parents behind and/or discomfort in working with environments with largely men.

### 3 – Select Barriers to Skilled Visa Processing



- Structural
- Geotechnical
- Environmental

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*“It is very common that we come across a number of candidates who are perfect fits for positions and who we expect the employers will be keen to hire, but we cannot put them forward because we are certain they will not pass the language exam.”*

*Implementing Key Informant*

# 3 – Select Barriers to Skilled Visa Processing

- **Language Skills & Testing Registration.**
  - Implementing key informants revealed that most refugees identified with skills for an opportunity are disqualified for not meeting third country language requirements.
  - Registration for exams required for visas is also challenging without valid IDs; special permissions must be obtained to move forward.
- **Mobility Protection in Host Country.**
  - Lack of legal status in the host country does not allow for safe mobility of refugees while meeting requirements for the visa application, including document collection and biometrics/health obligations.
- **Applications & Processing Times.**
  - Most respondents could not complete their visa applications without support.
  - Long visa processing times also cause emotional stress on the refugee applicants and potential risk with the employer that needs to fill a position quickly.
  - Delays sometimes attributed to administrative errors due to third country representatives.

## 4 – Select Barriers to Exit & Departure

*“Not having a bank account nor access to reliable income is incredibly all-consuming; there is no way someone can consider anything else when they are consumed with feeding their families and themselves,”*

**Key Informant**



## 4 – Select Barriers to Exit & Departure

- **Exorbitant Exit Fines.**
  - Respondents in Lebanon, in particular, reported facing high fees of several thousand dollars while attempting to exit the country and most faced issues paying them off.
- **Unpredictable Procedures.**
  - Confusing exit procedures cause refugees' increased anxiety, potential legal issues, delays to departure and expensive solutions.
- **Lack of Financing Options.**
  - Limited outlets to access critical funding for exit.
  - Most expenses relating to labor mobility are paid for by the employers, but refugees must source the cost for certain expenses and are unable to; no financing options available to them.

# Select Draft Recommendations



# Select Draft Recommendations at a Policy Level

- **Third Countries.**
  - Expand existing pilots and develop additional programs to increase labor mobility opportunities globally.
  - Commit to visa determinations within a six-month timeframe or less.
  - Broaden dependent visa eligibility criteria to encourage more female applicants.
- **Governments of Jordan and Lebanon.**
  - Enable and promote temporary professional opportunities for refugees including remote employment.
  - Remove exit fees for refugees migrating through labor mobility pathways.
- **UNHCR.**
  - Lobby the governments of Jordan and Lebanon to recognize the positive aspects and mutual benefits presented by refugee labor mobility schemes
  - Sensitize the governments of Jordan and Lebanon on the need to provide clearer exit guidelines and ensure safe mobility where necessary for refugees traveling on complementary pathways.

# Select Draft Recommendations at an Operational Level

- **NGOs and INGOs in Jordan and Lebanon.**
  - Raise awareness among refugee communities about existing labor mobility pathways and selection criteria
  - Provide access to internet vouchers and loaned computers.
  - Invest in capacity building programming where curriculum responds to up-to-date labor market demands.
- **Third Countries.**
  - Ensure embassy staff are fully trained in processing procedures relating to refugee labor mobility visa applications.
  - Provide clear visa processing time expectations.
  - Develop a strategy to protect and warn refugees against potential scamming schemes.
  - Ensure eligibility criteria for existing labor mobility pathways are clearly defined and accessible.
- **UNHCR.**
  - Advocate for language qualification testing providers to adopt flexible policies on identification documents for refugees and to reduce exam fees.
  - In collaboration with NGOs and other INGOs, explore and provide a loan access solution,
- **International Donors.**
  - Consider labor mobility as a recognized humanitarian intervention and durable solution pathway that is eligible under future funding guidelines.

# Thank you

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