ISWG Meeting Note

September 2025

Inter-Sector Working Group **Jordan**

ISWG Meeting Note and Action Points

Date / Time / Venue	**Tuesday, 3 September 2025, 10:00 - 11:30, UNHCR office**
Attendees	Inter-Sector Coordinator, Sector Coordinators, Leads/Co-Leads of the Shelter, WASH, Food Security Basic Needs, Education Sectors, Health, Protection, Sexual Reproductive Health sub-sectors, field colleagues from Irbid, Zaatari and Azraq camps. In addition to participants from UN Women, UNDP and JIF, ILO, UNHCR, WFP

Summary of Recommendations and Outcomes

- IACU to initiate bilateral discussion with sectors chairs to assess need for revising/updating 2026 sector-level strategy to reflect evolving refugee return trends and regional developments.
- IACU will support in arranging n for a Joint meeting WASH and shelter to be planned to discuss footprint reduction in the camps and to be flowed by a meeting with the camps Lead
- Sector leads to Initiate 2026 planning following the JOSH meeting, ensuring adequate time for consultation, alignment, and evidence-based decision-making.
- To mainstream gender and protection across all programming phases using sector-specific tip sheets and globally recognized tools.

Agenda:

- Operational Update on Refugee Returns
- UNHCR Cash Assistance Pilot for Voluntary Returns
- Gender and Protection Mainstreaming Updates
- Presentation of Preliminary Findings from Gender Analysis
- Sector Updates
- AOB – 2026 Planning and Strategic Direction

Operational Updates

1.Operational Update on Refugee Returns as of December 08, 2025:

OVERALL RETURNS FIGURES until 13 September 2025:

- The total number of UNHCR registered refugees returning to Syria since the fall of the Assad Government (8 December 2024-13 September 2025) is 152,445 individuals, with over 9,000 returnees so far in September.
- Over 148,000 refugees returned since the start of 2025. Women and girls represent 49% of overall returnees; 51% are children.
- Since 20 January 2025, UNHCR Jordan has been facilitating free bus transportation through a private transport company, covering ticket costs and a 50kg luggage allowance, for Syrian refugees who have decided to voluntarily return to Syria from Jordan. Movements facilitated by UNHCR and IOM.

2. UNHCR Cash Assistance Pilot for Voluntary Return:

- Launched on 1st of September 2025, providing 70 JOD per family member.
- Targeting 10,000 refugees in Zaatari and Azraq camps only.
- Assistance is unconditional and based on refugee feedback.
- Pilot contingent on donor contributions; lessons learned will be tracked.

3. Discussion on Footprint Reduction and Planning Implications

During the meeting, some members requested more information on the footprint reduction plan, stressing the need for timely updates to support agency- and sector-level planning, particularly in light of refugee returns and decreasing camp populations.

At the WASH and Shelter sector level, partners had previously discussed setting a threshold for triggering a joint discussion on decreasing camp populations. The agreed threshold was a 30% departure rate of Syrian refugees from camps. Current data indicates a 25% departure rate, and given the potentially rapid pace of returns, participants recommended initiating this discussion ahead of reaching the 30% threshold. Key considerations include possible service consolidation and re-planning at sector and agency levels.

IACU will support the organization of:

1. Joint Meeting (Shelter & WASH Sectors): To receive an update on the overall footprint reduction plan and to brainstorm potential impacts on services and planning needs.
2. Follow-up Meeting (with Camp Coordination): To deepen the discussion, coordinate next steps, and ensure alignment.
3. Reporting Back: The outcomes will be consolidated and presented at the October ISWG meeting.

4. Gender and Protection Mainstreaming:

- Workshops for sectors were conducted; tools and tip sheets updated and will be reshared.
- Field-level trainings planned in Irbid (24 September), Azraq (16 October), and Zaatari (4 November).
- Future training for government officials (MoPIC and line ministries).
- Toolbox and tip sheets to be shared with sectors for integration into strategic planning.

5. Presentation of Gender Analysis Findings:

The assessment was Conducted by ISGAT members (UN Women, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO, CARE).

UN Women presented findings from a comprehensive gender analysis conducted across 8 governorates and 2 refugee camps (Zaatari & Azraq), covering 1,482 refugees with equal gender representation., highlighting several challenges faced by refugee women, particularly those in **women-led households**:

Key Challenges Identified

- Refugee women face social stigma, limited access to resources, and heightened insecurity, especially when male family members return to Syria.
- Women-led households represent 16.2% overall and up to 25% in camps yet often lack formal recognition and support.
- Women perform 4.2 times more unpaid work than men, with only 4.4% engaged in income-generating activities.
- Household hierarchies restrict women's autonomy, with men retaining authority over mobility, marriage, and employment decisions.
- Gender-based violence is normalized; informal support systems are overburdened.
- Gender-based violence (GBV) is pervasive, with intimate partner violence widely reported.
- Women rely heavily on informal networks due to inadequate formal services
- 74% satisfaction with healthcare access among out-of-camp refugees 67% satisfaction with healthcare access among in-camp refugees About 50% satisfied with proximity of schools (out-of-camp refugees)

Key Recommendations

- Promote inclusive livelihoods by removing barriers and recognizing women-led households as strategic actors.
- Transform gender norms, engaging men and boys as allies.
- Enhance participation and representation in governance and community mechanisms.
- Expand access to safe and inclusive education and reinforce GBV prevention and response systems.
- Strengthen support for informal networks and invest in gender mainstreaming across all sectors.
- Implement gender-responsive social cohesion initiatives grounded in evidence and regional best practices.

6. Sector Updates:

- **WASH:** Installation of 1,000 new latrines in Azraq; summer water supply increased.
- **Health:** Budget cuts totaling 49M JOD; advocacy paper in development.
- **Protection:** Launch of KIOSK system for refugee document renewal.
- **Food Security:** Winter planning underway; verification exercise results to be shared.
- **Shelter:** Coordination with government on funding gaps and returnee trends.

7. AOB – 2026 Planning and Strategic Direction:

- Sector leads to Initiate 2026 planning following the JOSH meeting, ensuring adequate time for consultation, alignment, and evidence-based decision-making.
- IACU to initiate bilateral discussion with sectors chairs to assess need for revising/updating 2026 sector-level strategy to reflect evolving refugee return trends and regional developments
  - Planning to align with return trends, regional dynamics, and funding realities.
- Gender and protection mainstreaming tools to be integrated from early stages.

Discussion Highlights:

Discussion Highlights – Summary of Key Points

- **UNHCR Cash Assistance Pilot:** Questions focused on the selection criteria for the 10,000 targeted refugees and the use of feedback mechanisms. Sustainability and donor dependency were flagged as concerns if the pilot proves successful.

Footprint reduction Planning: The group discussed the need to discuss the footprint **reduction** plan, stressing the need for timely updates to support agency- and sector-level planning, particularly in light of refugee returns and decreasing camp populations.

- It was noted that the **trigger threshold for consolidation** is set at **30% departure from camps**; the current departure rate stands at approximately **25%**, indicating that while the threshold has not yet been reached, planning should begin.
- **Internal restructuring** was highlighted, particularly in **Zaatari's District 8**, where service adjustments may be required.

- A **joint coordination meeting** will be organized with **field colleagues**, **Camp Coordination**, **WASH**, and **Shelter sectors** to align on foot printing data, restructuring plans, and service continuity.
- **Gender & Protection Mainstreaming:** While tools were appreciated, participants requested sector-specific adaptations.
- **Gender Analysis Findings:** Strong interest was expressed in the low participation of refugee women in income-generating activities. Participants discussed strategies for engaging men and boys and scaling up GBV services.

Action Points

1. **Camp FOOTPRINT Meeting:** Organize joint technical meeting with field colleagues and relevant sectors.
2. **Gender Mainstreaming Tools**: Distribute toolbox and tip sheets to sectors; offer technical support for integration.
3. **Gender Analysis Dissemination**: Present findings to sectors and partners; develop sector-specific action plans.
4. IACU will initiate bilateral discussions with sector chairs to assess the need for revising/updating the 2026 sector-level strategy following the JOSH meeting, ensuring alignment with evolving refugee return trends and regional developments.
5. **Reporting Encouragement**: Sector leads to encourage partners to improve activity reporting for better analysis and advocacy.

Next ISWG meeting: The next meeting will take place on **October,15,2025.**