

Introduction

In mid-August of 2012, 39,600 displaced Syrians fleeing from the conflict had registered in Jordan. Za'atari refugee camp was opened on July 30th 2012 to provide a place to stay and basic services to the increasing numbers of Syrians. More than 5,000 lived in Za'atari in mid- August. Being in the camp can be difficult for Syrians who often already had very stressful experiences such as losing people close to them, being in dangerous situations and seeing violence and destruction. It is important to not only consider basic needs such as food, water and having a place to live but also look for ways to improve the well-being and comfort of people in the camp.

Who is International Medical Corps (IMC)?

IMC is a non-profit organization that has worked in over 40 countries affected by conflict or disasters. IMC has been in Jordan since 2007 and works closely with the Jordan Health Aid Society (JHAS) as a partner. Services include health care (including mental health) and social programs for Iraqi refugees and Jordanians who have little resources. More recently, programs serve displaced Syrians in Irbid, Amman, Mafraq and Zarqa. IMC is now offering services to meet needs of youth and families in Za'atari camp. For more information, see: www.InternationalMedicalCorps.org

Why was this assessment done?

IMC conducted this assessment to better understand the problems that affect well-being among camp residents and the things that people are already doing or that could be done to make improvements. Findings of this assessment will help IMC and other agencies to better meet the needs of Syrians in the camp

How was the assessment done?

A team of IMC staff collected information about Syrians in Za'atari in several different ways:

- Documents with information about the Syria crisis such as the number of people who come across the border and to the camp.
- Meetings between IMC and other agencies in the camp to better understand what services are being provided and planned.
- Observations of the IMC assessment team and interviews with 75 Syrians in Za'atari camp (38 men and 37 women) and 16 staff from different agencies working in the camp (e.g. health, food, protection) or working with displaced Syrians (mental health).

The questions for this assessment came from international guidelines (e.g. World Health Organization) but IMC made some changes to make questions useful for Za'atari. IMC asked men and women about the common problems of camp residents, what people were doing to deal with problems and what suggestions they had to improve Za'atari camp.

What should be done based on this assessment to improve well-being?

The assessment showed that people in the camp were suffering from the camp environment (e.g. heat, dust, no electricity, unclean toilets), worry about friends and family in Syria, having nothing to do in the camp, safety concerns, and not being able to take care of their appearance (e.g. getting a haircut, clothes). The most common activities that helped men deal with stress were praying, seeking out time alone, talking and spending time with family and friends, going out, walking, and working. Most men were doing these activities in the camp except for talking with family and friends (due to being separated) and working. Preferred activities that usually helped women were household chores, talking to family and friends, praying, walking, going to work, going out, sleeping, crying and smoking. However, none of the women reported being able to do chores, walk, go out, or work in the camp. Suggestions from people to improve the camp included electricity and lights, play areas and activities for children, having more and clean bathrooms and showers, fans, better medical care, distribution of items closer to tents, paving roads, changing tents to caravans, being able to work, education for children, better food and cold water, clothes, small stoves to make tea and coffee, hats/sunblock, financial help, moving the camp and meeting spaces for camp residents.

From the assessment, the following recommendations can be made:

Make the camp a better, safer and more comfortable place

- **Improve camp orientation:** Camp residents have difficulties finding their tents, toilet and water facilities and service areas. Use colored flags or signs, give out a map of the camp, provide updated information to let camp residents know about current services, activities and plans.



- **Protect against the weather:** Heat, sun and dust make residents uncomfortable and cause health problems (e.g. dehydration, sunburn). Provide air-conditioned larger community tents and containers where possible as well as sunscreen and hats.
- **Help people to better reach services:** Some persons (e.g. older people, people who are sick or feel unwell) have difficulty walking to services or standing in line. Provide transportation for camp residents who cannot reach services (e.g. small cars) and set up several points to distribute items closer to tents and make announcement (e.g. via loud speaker)
- **Let people get information about Syria.** Camp residents worry about the situation in Syria and loved ones but cannot get the latest information. Provide TVs, radios, and Internet access stations.
- **Make the camp a safe place.** Many women feel unsafe in the camp at night (when there are no lights) and when using shower facilities. Camp guards are only at the entrance and on the main road. Involve trusted camp residents in safeguarding the camp and include female in addition to male guards.
- **Help people improve personal care and hygiene.** Many residents have only few items of clothing and holes in them, some women have no hygiene items (e.g. sanitary pads), bathrooms are not clean, and there is no place to get a haircut. Provide self-care items and include residents in providing services (e.g. hair salon), cleaning, and hygiene education sessions.
- **Protect camp residents from visitors.** Camp visitors such as journalists are sometimes disrespectful (e.g. taking pictures without asking, driving fast). Give an orientation and handout about camp rules (which include suggestions from residents) to people who visit the camp and to camp staff.
- **Let people do household tasks such as cooking.** Women in the camp report that they cannot cook or do housework. Provide community kitchen space and cooking supplies, give people small stoves to make tea and coffee and let them buy what they need (e.g. small supermarket).

Help people do something useful with their time and support each other

- **Help Syrians connect with friends and family.** Most Syrians are very worried about family and friends in Syria and other places and want to talk to them. Provide phones, phone credit, phone stations, internet/skype and stations to charge phones.
- **Help camp residents help each other.** Men and women like to talk and spend time with others, including neighbors, and family but there is no space to meet as a group (e.g. no houses, coffee shops). Provide spaces to gather and socialize (e.g. providing coffee and tea, ensuring safety, cleanliness and protection from weather) and organize fun activities (e.g. sports events in the evenings, cooking together in groups).
- **Get youth to learn and help others.** Many young people in Za'atari are bored and worried about not being able to go to school. Some male youth may disturb others in the camp and get into fights while female youth can become isolated in their tents. Get youth to learn new skills and let them take on tasks in the camp that help others.
- **Let camp resident help in setting up the camp.** Many camp residents report having no control over what is happening to them, being bored and wanting to do something useful in their free time. Get camp residents to make decisions about the camp and to help in construction and camp activities.
- **Make it easier to pray.** Camp residents reported that no facilities for washing and praying exist and there is no call to prayer. Designate a space for washing and worship (separate for males and females) and engage religious leaders in the camp for calls to prayer (e.g. using a megaphone)



Improve camp services to support people suffering from stress

- **Help camp staff to better respond to people in distress.** Many Syrians suffer from stress such as fear and worry, some are angry and report not knowing how to get basic needs met. Train camp staff in supporting and respecting people who are under stress, connecting them to services and taking care of their own well being.
- **Make sure that people who suffer from extreme stress or who are at risk of harm get needed services.** Some people are feeling so much distress that they cannot continue with their day to day activities, have difficult family problems, feel very unsafe, or do things that can be harmful (e.g. taking drugs, using violence). Provide social and mental health services in the camp and help camp staff communicate and refer people to such services.

We want to thank all the Syrians in Za'atari who have shared problems in the camp and possible solutions with us.

IMC plans to work with residents in the camp and with other agencies to help address some of the recommendations.

Who should I contact if I have questions about IMC or this assessment?

If you would like a copy of the entire more detailed assessment report (in English), have questions about this assessment or about services and activities provided by IMC, please contact: Ahmad Bawaneh, abawaneh@InternationalMedicalCorps.org. The Za'atari Camp IMC Office is located in the Jordan Health Aid Society Clinic (JHAS).

