



HPG Commissioned Report

The lives and livelihoods of Syrian refugees

A study of refugee perspectives and their institutional environment in Turkey and Jordan

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Acronyms

3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
AKP	Justice and Development Party
CBO	community-based organisation
DGMM	Director General of Migration Management (Turkey)
EU	European Union
IHH	Humanitarian Relief Foundation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMCC	Inter-ministerial Coordination Committee
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
JD	Jordanian Dinar
JORISS	Jordan Response Information System for the Syria Crisis
JRP	Jordan Response Plan
MOI	Ministry of Interior (Jordan)
MOPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (Jordan)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	non-governmental organisation
P4R	Program for Results
PKK	Kurdish Workers' Party
PYD	Democratic Unity Party
QIZ	Qualified Industrial Zone
RRP	Regional Response Plan
TL	Turkish Lira
TPR	temporary protection regulation
WFP	World Food Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNOCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

1 Introduction

More than 4.7 million refugees¹ have fled Syria, most of them to neighbouring countries including Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. With 10% of Syrian refugees² currently residing in camps, host governments and aid agencies have had to rethink conventional refugee assistance programmes designed for camp-based responses. For many refugees, help has had to come from their own initiatives and existing family, tribal and friendship networks. While Syrians continue to cross borders as the conflict rages on, for some refugees displacement has been a reality for more than five years. With no resolution to the conflict in sight, Syrian refugees face long-term displacement, calling for long-term sustainable programmes to support their livelihoods.

1.1 The study

This study aims to generate better understanding of the lives and livelihoods of Syrian refugees living outside refugee camps in Turkey and Jordan, with a view to finding ways to better support their livelihoods. In doing so, it aims to identify opportunities to support refugees' livelihoods through a better understanding of their perspectives and interactions with the many networks, institutions and individuals that shape their livelihoods.

There is increasing recognition that programming in the context of protracted displacement cannot be credible or effective unless it incorporates and reflects the perspectives of refugees. Yet efforts over many years to engage with recipients of assistance in more participatory ways have not succeeded in ensuring that assistance is planned and implemented in ways that accord with the lives and priorities of people affected by crisis. While forced displacement is increasingly urban and protracted, humanitarian agencies have found it difficult to adapt their procedures and

mechanisms to work effectively in non-camp settings, and the problems confronting refugees still tend to be addressed as short-term rather than long-term 'developmental' issues.

This study tackles some of these challenges by exploring the lives and livelihoods of refugees in two distinct research phases. In the first phase, the report recreates with refugees their 'displacement life history' in order to understand how their aims, strategies, actions and livelihoods have changed during their displacement, tackling these elements from the perspective of refugees. In the second phase, the report explores the networks and institutions, including host communities, government and local and international organisations, that refugees have engaged with, and the factors that shape this interaction and its outcomes for refugee livelihoods, tackling these from the perspective of the many actors shaping refugee livelihoods.

The study considers the following research questions:

- What are the different priorities of refugees in the course of protracted displacement, and what strategies do they use to meet them?
- How do these aims and strategies change during displacement? What kind of shocks have they experienced during their time in exile?
- How do they see the opportunities for their social and economic integration? To what extent are refugees able to participate in discussions and decision-making processes?
- What opportunities are there to support refugees through a deeper understanding of their perspectives, and the roles and perspectives of the people, networks and institutions that shape their lives in displacement?

Part 1 of the report focuses on the perspectives of Syrian refugees living in Istanbul, Turkey and Zarqa, Jordan. This first phase of research was undertaken with urban refugees in May 2016. It involved interviewing over 100 refugees in the two locations (56 in Turkey and 50 in Jordan). The interviews set out to map refugees' displacement life histories from

1 Estimate as at 4 September 2016: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

2 UNHCR estimates that 492,880 Syrian refugees were residing in camps in September 2016: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

the moment they became refugees – that is, from the time they crossed the Syrian border to the time of the interview. Rather than simply documenting refugees’ movements and life circumstances, the interviews aimed to understand refugees’ motivations, perceptions and strategies – why they sought asylum in the country they did, if and how they managed to meet basic subsistence needs, what their hopes and goals were, and how they tried to achieve them. Interviews also set out to uncover the many organisations and institutions, including informal institutions such as networks, that shaped refugees’ lives during displacement.

As the aim was to explore the lives of a wide range of refugees, purposeful, maximum variation sampling was employed, based on pre-established criteria (including age, gender, employment and marital status, vulnerability status and length of displacement). The research in Turkey included a wide range of refugees with different jobs, ages, marital statuses and duration of displacement. In Jordan, the sample was less diverse (comprised entirely of families, the majority of whom relied on assistance and did not work), probably reflecting the greater homogeneity in the demographics and life circumstances of the refugee population there.

In Turkey, all the interviewees originated from urban centres in Syria, most commonly Aleppo, Damascus, Homs, Idlib and Latakia. With the exception of a few interviewees who arrived at the start of the war or four or five years ago, refugees’ time in Istanbul ranged from a few months to three years. Interviews were conducted in Arabic with interpreters, who either provided direct translation for the researchers or conducted the interviews independently, provided researchers with notes and participated in verbal debriefings. Prior to the start of each interview the purpose of the study was explained to each participant and informed verbal consent obtained. The names of refugees quoted in this report have been changed to protect their identity.

In Jordan, the majority of respondents had arrived in 2012 and 2013, with a significant minority arriving in 2014. Only two respondents had arrived in 2015. Jordan’s entry policies have affected the demographics of the refugee population by keeping out young men travelling on their own, as well as Palestinian Syrian refugees. While men still represent almost half of the adult Syrian refugee population, these men are almost all with their wives, children, parents and

Table 1: Breakdown of interviewees in Istanbul

Men	31 (55%)
Women	25 (45%)
Single	21 (37.5%)
Married	35 (62.5%)

Table 2: Breakdown of interviewees in Zarqa

Men	25 (50%)
Women	25 (50%)
Single*	0 (0%)
Married**	47 (94%)
Widowed	3 (6%)

* One respondent had been a single male in Jordan for the majority of his displacement but had married within the month before the interview.

** Of which women married but with husbands in Syria or missing: 6 (12%).

other relatives. Although we tried to locate isolated single young men, refugees in Zarqa said that they did not know of any; the one male refugee who had arrived on his own explained that he had done so illegally because he would not have been granted entry otherwise.

Interviews were conducted with 50 refugees to explore their life histories from the time they were displaced from Syria to the present. Interviews were conducted in Arabic with interpreters providing translation for the researchers. The names of refugees quoted in this report have been changed to protect their identity. The authors worked with a local partner, who identified refugees based on the study’s targeting criteria. Targeting was refined at various points along the way to make the sample more diverse, and more ‘successful’ informants were also sought directly in Syrian stores and through networks related to vocational training in Zarqa. Interviews were conducted in refugees’ homes or stores, and two interviews were conducted by phone, one with a refugee who had migrated to Germany and one with a refugee who was unable to meet us during the day.

Part 2 explores the various institutions, networks and individuals shaping refugees’ livelihoods from the perspective of these actors, analysing their roles, functions and interactions in Turkey and Jordan. This section also examines national refugee policies, and explores approaches to supporting the lives and livelihoods of Syrian refugees. This phase of research was undertaken in Turkey and Jordan in July and

August 2016.³ It involved interviews in both Turkey and Jordan with:

- employers of Syrian refugees;
- academics;
- community-based organisations (CBOs);
- philanthropic organisations;
- Turkish, Jordanian and Syrian NGOs and civil society organisations (i.e. women's rights organisations, refugee rights organisations);
- international NGOs;
- government officials; and
- UN agencies.

1.2 The context in Turkey and Jordan

Successive Regional Response Plans (RRP) launched by the UN have set strategic objectives and funding appeals for the refugee response, both in Syria and the region. The size and scope of the responses outlined in the RRP's illustrate how the crisis has worsened: the first RRP, published in 2012 and twice revised, requested a total of \$487.9 million and 'initially planned for some 96,500 refugees to receive assistance over a period of six months' (OCHA, 2013). By 2016, the request had ballooned to \$5.78 billion to support 4.7m refugees and four million individuals in host communities and entities supporting the response: host governments, the UN, international and national NGOs. The 2016–17 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) was developed under the leadership of national authorities (namely Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey), in recognition of the role of national governments in responding to the crisis.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)'s financial tracking system, 2015 appeals for the Syria crisis were 56% funded (OCHA, 2016), marking a slight decline from the previous year and a significant drop-off from the first two years (2012 and 2013), when the appeal was funded at 70% and 72% respectively. People

seeking asylum in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey have faced a drastic reduction in the assistance they receive. One highly publicised example is the World Food Programme (WFP), which due to funding shortfalls sharply cut its support to refugees in Lebanon and Jordan in mid-2015 (Associated Press, 2015). In Jordan, nearly half of non-camp refugees stopped receiving food vouchers, and the value of the vouchers that were issued was reduced by 50%. In Jordan, lack of funding led the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to stop its support to the government delivery of healthcare services to Syrian refugees. This resulted in the government changing its refugee healthcare policy from allowing refugees to access Jordanian healthcare services on the same basis as nationals to giving refugees the same terms of access as uninsured Jordanians at a cost.

National governments and to some extent host communities have also borne the cost of the crisis. Turkey, which is host to 2.73m Syrian refugees, says it has spent \$10bn since the crisis began.⁴ The country has designed and financed 25 camps across ten provinces near the Syrian border, where roughly 10% of the Syrian refugee population lives, and is also managing the response for the other 90% of refugees living in cities and surrounding areas in the south, or in Ankara, Izmir and Istanbul. In Jordan, which is hosting around 650,000 Syrian refugees, refugees in principle have access to basic services such as health and education, though in practice levels of access are variable and, with 130,000 Syrian children in camp and urban schools, the education system is coming under significant strain (Whitman, 2015). Cash assistance from UNHCR and INGOs has been a crucial source of support: beginning with 6,000 families in 2013, by 2016 assistance was reaching 30,000 Syrian families or around 140,000 people a month, a quarter of the self-settled refugee population.

As the refugee crisis has dragged on, Syria's neighbours have progressively closed their borders to new arrivals. Jordan's western border was sealed in mid-2013,

3 Note that the research team's field research and interviews in Istanbul coincided with the attempted coup in July 2016. Interviews with some government officials and academics were not completed as a result. The Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), the Director General of Migration Management (DGMM) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security did not respond to HPG's requests for interviews.

4 DGMM is consolidating the data to clear up duplications. The number of refugees who have departed Turkey – including figures from the mass migration to Europe in mid-2015 – is not known. The most up-to-date statistics are on the DGMM website: http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/temporary-protection_915_1024_4748_icerik. For the \$10 billion figure see 'Turkey Outlines One-to-One Plan to Tackle Syrian Crisis', The Guardian, 7 March 2016.

followed by the north-eastern border in June 2016, trapping tens of thousands of refugees in a no-man's-land (Hargrave and Pantuliano, 2016). Partly as a result, there has been a huge decrease in the number of arrivals from Syria following spikes in 2012 and 2013. Lebanon – host to around a million Syrians – has introduced similar controls on its borders with Syria. At the time of writing, the border between Turkey and Syria is also effectively closed to refugees.⁵ It has become dangerous, expensive – and in some cases impossible – to reunite families stuck on opposite sides of the border (see Box 1).

Although the great majority of refugees are hosted in the region, hundreds of thousands have also made the gruelling and dangerous journey to Europe. The arrival of such large numbers into the heart of Europe – and the consequent political responses to the refugee influx – has stimulated efforts to encourage regional governments to contain refugee flows within their own neighbourhood. The ‘Supporting Syria and the Region Conference’ (also known as the London Conference) in February 2016, hosted by the UK, Germany, Kuwait, Norway and the UN, led to an announcement of \$6bn in funding to support the Syria crisis response in 2016, and \$6.1bn from 2017–20. The conference also ‘set itself ambitious goals on education and economic opportunities to transform the lives of refugees caught up in the Syrian crisis – and to support the countries hosting them’.⁶

The Jordan Compact announced at the London Conference called for ‘a new paradigm ... promoting economic development and opportunities in Jordan to the benefit of Jordanians and Syrian refugees’ (Government of Jordan, 2016). The Jordanian government has agreed a new policy to ease restrictions on Syrian refugees’ access to work permits, with an initial announced target of 200,000, enough to cover two-thirds of the adult registered refugee population of 294,253 (half of whom are female). Permits are available in carefully selected industries and roles where they do not compete with Jordanians, but rather with other migrants. The government also agreed to temporarily waive

5 Human Rights Watch has called repeatedly on the UN and UN member states to push Turkey to open its border to asylum-seekers, and has also documented abuses by border guards. See for example HRW press release at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/05/20/un-press-turkey-open-border>.

6 See <https://www.supportingsyria2016.com/about>.

Box 1: The Turkish border closure

Ahmed and his family fled from their home in Daraa in Syria to Jordan in 2012. In the beginning, the family received assistance and Ahmed could work. Over time, the government cracked down on refugees working and international agencies reduced assistance. As a result, Ahmed decided to move to Istanbul at the beginning of 2015. Meanwhile, three of his sons returned to Syria to fight with the opposition; his wife, three daughters and one son stayed in Jordan until he could find work and a place for them to stay. Ahmed, who is 59 years old, used to be an accountant. He found work in construction, for 50 Lira (\$17)⁷ a day – when work is available – and lives with six other people. With the border closure, he was unable to get a visa for his family or to return to them. Other Syrians and NGOs that he has contacted sympathise but have not helped him. ‘First I lost my home [in Daraa], and now I cannot return to my family because the Jordanian government refuses my request and Turkey requires a visa. It is very difficult, and when I think about all of this, I cannot sleep. My hope is to protect my family, my daughters in Jordan and my sons who also cannot leave Syria.’

the substantial fees for applying for work permits; although uptake was slow in the first grace period, permit application increased substantially between June and October 2016. By December 2016, 37,000 Syrians held working permits (with 5,000 of these dating to before the concessions), though this falls short of an interim target of 50,000 by the end of 2016 (UNHCR, 2016a). The Compact also included wording on ‘formalising existing businesses and creating avenues to register new “tax-generating” businesses, to allow private enterprise in refugee camps’. In exchange, the government is requesting better access to the European Union (EU) market. The Compact includes budget support and access to funds from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as technical assistance. The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC), the central government

7 At the time of writing (August 2016) 1 US dollar was worth 2.98 Turkish Lira, rounded to 3 Lira for calculations made in this report.

agency responsible for authorising NGO projects, has also loosened an unofficial ban on livelihoods programming for Syrians.

Turkey has also looked at the refugee crisis within its borders and in Europe as a political opportunity. A controversial deal with the EU provides for the repatriation of migrants and refugees back to Turkey. In return, Turkey has requested the liberalisation of visas to Europe for its nationals, accelerated talks regarding Ankara's admission to the EU, an increase in the resettlement of refugees residing in Turkey and increased financial support to the refugee response.

Turkey has also adapted its labour laws to offer work permits to Syrian refugees, and has announced plans to provide citizenship and residency ('Turquoise Cards') to 300,000 skilled Syrians. However, the criteria, procedures and implementation timeline for citizenship are all unknown, and the move has caused significant controversy, both with other political parties and with the wider public, the majority of whom appear to believe that the influx of refugees has led to job losses among Turkish citizens and pushed down wages (World Bank, 2015: 7). With the recent coup attempt and state of emergency, the situation is unlikely to become clear in the near future.



Syrian refugee Salma at work in a Syrian-owned food processing factory in Jordan.

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PART 1

The perspectives of Syrian refugees on their lives and livelihoods in Turkey and Jordan

As in every life, but particularly in the lives of refugees, moving from one's current situation towards one's goals is rarely a linear process; rather, it is a journey characterised by evolving circumstances (personal, political, policy-oriented) that present either barriers or opportunities. One of the aims of the first phase of this research was to gain insights into how and why people made the life choices they did while displaced, and why some refugees had different opportunities than others, and enjoyed more success than others. This part of the

report therefore represents the perspectives of refugees. This research also considers how refugees' aims and strategies change over the course of displacement, as well as concomitant issues such as employment, durable solutions and perceptions of and interactions with the host environment. As the lives of refugees are heavily affected by the policies and people in their country of asylum, key lines of inquiry for this study included the people, organisations and institutions refugees identify as shaping their lives in displacement.

2 Turkey: the perspectives of Syrian refugees on their lives and livelihoods in Istanbul

This section focuses on the perspectives of Syrian refugees in Istanbul, and on their livelihood goals and strategies. The range of experiences and priorities of refugees in Istanbul is striking – from the financially comfortable who own businesses, to those in low-paying jobs struggling to pay rent and send their children to school, to the extreme poor whose primary focus is simply survival. Following the introduction, three broad categories of livelihood outcomes are examined – integrated, struggling and survival. The section then examines relations with the Turkish, migration to Europe and integration.

2.1 Introduction

Turkey's policy and legal framework has evolved as the crisis in Syria developed and the number of refugees in Turkey grew (according to the recently established Director General of Migration Management (DGMM) there are 2.73m Syrian refugees in the country).⁸ Turkey is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, but has retained the original geographical restrictions of the convention: only those seeking asylum as a result of events in Europe are granted refugee status. Those fleeing persecution from other countries are considered 'conditional refugees', and are only accepted on the condition that they are transiting to a third country to be resettled. The scope and scale of the Syrian refugee crisis has resulted in Turkey introducing a new national legal status for Syrians seeking asylum in Turkey, including granting Syrians 'temporary protection' and the introduction of a time restriction in addition to a geographical one. In contrast to Jordan, which prevents unaccompanied men from entering.

Approximately 10% of Syrian refugees reside in camps or, as per the government's terminology, in 26 temporary accommodation centres across ten provinces in the south and south-east of the country close to the Syrian border.⁹ More refugees, approximately 2.52m, have settled amongst the host community in towns and cities. As of December 2016, Syrian refugees were concentrated in the provinces of Mersin, Adana, Hatay, Gaziantep and Sanliurfa in the south and south-east, and in Istanbul, Bursa and Izmir (from where many refugees leave for Europe) (UNHCR, 2016b). In terms of demographics, the male population is slightly larger (53.2%) than the female population (46.8%). The majority (55.2%) is over the age of 17.

Many interviewees said that they viewed Turkey as the most palatable country in the region culturally and socially. Some viewed Turkey as a stepping-stone to Europe, while for others it was simply the closest destination (from Aleppo, for example). Many refugees spent time near the Syrian border – from a month to a few years, either in camps or in the southern cities – before going to Istanbul. A few interviewees also went to the coast, hoping to continue on to Europe or to find work, before moving to Istanbul.

Refugees' priorities largely follow a pattern: 1. Safety, family unification; 2. Survival and meeting basic needs; 3. Better employment, and schooling for children; 4. Building respect or engagement with the community; and 5. Support to other refugees. Several factors are important in positive livelihood outcomes, including cultural and political networks and Turkish connections; support from family and friends; and – to a certain extent – length of time in Istanbul and individual initiative. Most refugees rely primarily on employment in low-paying jobs with little

⁸ See http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/syrian-nationals-benefiting-from-temporary-protection-in-turkey_917_1064_4773_icerik.

⁹ See http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/syrian-nationals-benefiting-from-temporary-protection-in-turkey_917_1064_4773_icerik.

protection, and support from family and friends. For some refugees the calculation to take or keep a job depends on family structure, living expenses and other priorities such as education. For others, it is simply based on the need to survive.

While acknowledging the benefits of being able to move within Turkey and to work, refugees face serious challenges in establishing livelihoods. Low wages combined with the high cost of living and uncertainty about the status of refugees were the most common grievances. Living expenses were not covered by typical jobs at restaurants or factories. Scientists, technicians, artisans and people with other professional backgrounds rarely found work commensurate with their skills and experience due to restrictions in Turkish law, or were paid low wages under the table. It is common for multiple members of a family to work – including children or young people who have forfeited school – and to borrow or receive money from close friends or family.¹⁰

2.2 The context in Istanbul

Official estimates from August 2016 suggest that there are almost 400,000 Syrian refugees in neighbourhoods across Istanbul,¹¹ a city of approximately 14.6m people. Whereas in the south-east of the country, where the majority of refugees are located, both international and national NGOs are providing a range of assistance and protection services, in Istanbul help from municipalities is ad hoc and humanitarian organisations are struggling to provide assistance. Despite different circumstances in their individual lives and journeys, the motivations of refugees who migrate to Istanbul are fairly universal: they seek safety, cultural familiarity and opportunities to sustain their livelihoods. Although little quantitative data exists, employment rates for Syrian refugees appear to be better in Istanbul than in other parts of the country, but the cost of living and rent is also higher.

10 Later sections of this report briefly discuss other strategies, such as smuggling cigarettes and guns, and smuggling people to Europe.

11 See statistics on migration on the website of the DGMM. The actual number is difficult to confirm, given the challenges of tracking departures and arrivals and problems in registration. However, discussions with the UN and NGOs indicate that the figure given here is a reasonable estimate.

2.3 Residency cards and work permits

A residency card or *kimlik* provides Syrian refugees with access to a set of services and temporary protection (Hoffmann and Samuk, 2016). Most importantly, it is required for access to the Turkish medical system. It is also the main form of ID for refugees who no longer have their Syrian passports. Individual refugees register at a police station to receive a *kimlik*. Not all of the refugees interviewed had *kimliks*, and the consensus was that obtaining one had become more difficult as the number of refugees in Istanbul had grown.¹² A common problem for arrivals from another city in Turkey is that they are told that they have to return to the previous city to unregister before applying for an Istanbul *kimlik* – a journey that is too expensive and risky for most. Others elected not to get a *kimlik*, saying that they feared it would interfere with their chance of migration to Europe, travelling outside Turkey or obtaining a residency permit.¹³

Refugees' varied experiences of obtaining a *kimlik* – the length of time required or whether a bribe was demanded – seemed to vary by municipality and by who was on duty at the police station where they went to register. Some refugees had recently received a *kimlik* for free after waiting for two weeks. Others paid in order to shorten the waiting time (one interviewee said that she had heard it would take a year without payment of a 'fee'), or because it was the only way a *kimlik* would be produced. The cost of a *kimlik* was quoted between 100 and 300 Lira per person (\$33–100) (with 200 Lira (\$67) as 'the standard').

Some refugee families the team spoke to had received *kimliks* without 99 in the number, which is required to access healthcare. Some families had managed an upgrade to a 99, but others were too nervous to try, in part because of a general lack of understanding

12 The government had recently implemented a security check as part of the process, though none of the refugees interviewed understood that this might partly explain the delays in issuing *kimliks*.

13 A residency permit is a separate document from a residency card. The permit is more expensive and more difficult to obtain, but affords more freedom of movement.

of basic procedures.¹⁴ This lack of understanding, knowledge and information was a common feature reported by refugees in various aspects of their lives. Refugees relied on hearsay, rumours and word of mouth to obtain information, rather than being able to get official information from either the government or humanitarian organisations.

Mohammed illustrates the importance of the *kimlik* as well as the challenges in securing one. He left the camp in Mardin with his wife and seven children (between the ages of five and 16) two months previously, when the level of aid was reduced and harassment increased. Ensuring that his children are in school has been his priority; in the camp, school would open for one day and then close for two or three days. When they left the camp, the authorities took away their *kimliks*. Mohammed took the only job he could find in Istanbul – at a bakery, where he works from 9 pm to 12.30 pm, and earns 1,200 Lira (\$400) a month. The family lives in an unfurnished apartment. NGOs and the municipality told him that they cannot give him assistance without a *kimlik*. His wife is pregnant and his children suffer from allergies and tuberculosis, but without the *kimlik* they do not have access to medical care. Mohammed cannot afford the time or expense involved in returning to Mardin to try to retrieve the original *kimliks*, nor does he think the authorities would give them back to him now when they took them away in the first place. Mohammed hopes that he can find a way to get the documentation, but he is not sure how.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security's regulation on work permits for Syrian refugees came into effect in January 2016. Refugees registered with the DGMM can access the work permit application process. The employer submits the application on behalf of the refugee – and must pay the minimum wage and social security benefits. The work permit is then tied to a specific job (Grisgraber and Hollingsworth, 2016). While there are different types of work permit, including a permit that enables a Syrian to open a business, current debates focus on work permits associated with specific jobs.

It is clear from the interviews that the residency cards and work permits have generated a large amount of confusion. For instance, Some refugees were unsure whether they needed to have a *kimlik* in order to be issued a work permit, or whether having one would hurt their chances of receiving a permit. A small number of refugees have benefited from the work permits; although the researchers recognise that this is a new policy and receptivity may change, the overall current perception is that they are out of reach for most.

2.4 Livelihood strategies

While many refugees interviewed articulated similar overarching goals, the specific experiences and priorities of refugees in Istanbul vary greatly. Although it is difficult to neatly categorise refugees' perspectives, the livelihood goals and strategies of interviewees fall into three broad groups:

- **Integrating:** Refugees in this category are more comfortable financially, with decent living conditions and less anxiety about the future. Common characteristics include strong networks or connections in Istanbul, often with the legal status to work in the city. The general aim is to gain respect, engage with the wider Syrian and Turkish communities, strengthen networks and increase employment opportunities.
- **Struggling:** This set of refugees enjoys at least some form of stability in Istanbul – for example, one or more members of the family has a job, albeit a low-paying one. While the main focus is generally obtaining better employment and investing in education, having limited resources requires a trade-off or calculation on priorities. Families usually live in a small apartment or share an apartment with other families, and single men live together.
- **Surviving:** For extremely poor refugees with little access to support networks or assistance, daily survival to meet basic subsistence needs is the goal. This often entails daily labour or some form of hand-to-mouth existence. Refugees within this group typically move frequently or stay with acquaintances or family.

2.4.1 Integrating: livelihood goals and strategies

Integration refers to both economic and social integration – two separate processes that are often mutually reinforcing. These refugees (they comprise a small category) are the most established, with the best

14 The team understood from later discussions with the UN and NGOs that the government had originally issued Syrians with a 98, but then switched to a 99. Some 98s can be changed to 99s easily, and others not, though it is not clear why, or whether this was related to the security check introduced into the issuing process. None of the refugees whom the team spoke to who had the 98 understood the procedure or the reason for the difference.

livelihood outcomes. In addition to some financial security, many have legal protection in the form of residency or work permits. With better jobs and fewer concerns about basic needs, refugees' priorities shift from finding better employment and ensuring their children are in school to earning respect and becoming more engaged in the wider community. Even so, most refugees in this category struggle with adjusting to life in Istanbul and share concerns about the government's policies.

The story of Reem, a Kurdish Syrian refugee, illustrates how refugees' goals can shift as they become more secure. Reem left Syria for Istanbul with her husband and children in March 2014. Her aim 'was to find peace and live with my children like any other family'. After working in construction and restaurants, her husband borrowed money from his brother in Erbil to start a business with a Kurdish Turkish friend, selling vegetables from a truck. While the hours are long, he now earns a comfortable living. 'It was very difficult at first [when we left Syria] but when my husband started to work, things got better. I also want to work and to be active and to see what options I have in the future.'

With the achievement of financial security, refugees appeared to increasingly strive for a sense of self-worth and respect within the community.¹⁵ In many instances, this also entailed an increased desire to support newly arrived refugees who were struggling. The head of a tour company, a Syrian who arrived from Damascus five years ago, explained how he helps Syrians renting an apartment, finding work or resolving problems. One Syrian owner of a chain of restaurants who has also been in Turkey for five years supports refugees through his business, distributing leftover food to Syrians and hiring refugees 'as they need the work'.

Refugees with the best livelihood outcomes appear to possess cultural or political networks, such as the Turkmen and the Kurdish, and affiliations with political parties. Such networks help refugees obtain necessary documentation, assistance and employment, or help with starting a business. Turkmen speak the language, and often have relatives in Turkey who ease the adjustment to Istanbul by assisting with legal status and livelihoods. Dina provides a useful example. She and her husband are Turkmen from Damascus. They arrived

in Istanbul in March 2012, and within six months they had the right to residence and to work. According to Dina, 'like many other Turkmen that left Syria and live legally [in Turkey] like us, we speak Turkish and have family that are Turkish citizens, which helped us a lot'. Her husband opened an office to facilitate and translate documentation (real estate and business), and she found work as a hospital assistant. Together they earn 7,000 Lira (\$2,333) a month. They are content in Istanbul, and do not plan to return to Syria.

Some religiously conservative families also have connections that help them settle in. While reluctant to speak openly about the support provided through political ties, the implication of the interview below is that wealthy families of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) have helped some families with similar political and religious views to find their feet in Istanbul.

Mahmoud and his extended family left Aleppo in 2014. Initially his father received assistance from the Syrian Nour Foundation and the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH, a Turkish NGO) in the form of food, medical aid and clothing. Over time, and with the financial support and connections of his religious network in Turkey, Mahmoud acquired a residence permit and opened up an import-export business that generates between 6,000 and 12,000 Lira (\$2,000 and \$4,000) a month. Mahmoud explained that, without a residence permit,¹⁶ starting his business would have been impossible. The permit entailed demonstrating that he had 7,000 Lira (\$2,333) in a Turkish bank account, and that he leaves Turkey and returns with the correct stamp in his passport. He also had to buy health insurance.

Imin illustrates how Syrian political connections can help in establishing livelihoods in Istanbul. In our interview, she was less nervous about her legal status or protection at work than many of the other refugees we spoke to for this study. Imin's contacts with the Free Syrian Army – from when she was an activist in Syria – helped her to get a job at a factory, earning 1,560 Lira (\$520) a month. With her job, she is paying off debt from her three years in Hatay (near the Syrian border). Her boss 'admires the Syrian revolution', and she is not worried about a work permit as the government

15 Ideas of 'respect' and 'socially respectable livelihoods' were referred to in several interviews – across categories – and concepts and understandings around both would be worthy of further research.

16 The residence permit is not the same as the resident card or *kimlik*. The residence permit is valid for one year of residency. A few Syrians mentioned using it to establish a business in the country, and to continue to travel.

‘doesn’t care’. Imin views the Turkish as sympathetic to the Syrians’ suffering, and feels that Istanbul is an open city. She continues to dedicate time to networking with Syrian and Turkish contacts, to ensure that jobs and accommodation will not be a problem in future.

For Kurdish refugees in Istanbul, interviews suggest that the main ingredient in financial security seems to be a strong connection with Kurdish-affiliated political organisations, as the following two examples illustrate. Said is Kurdish, from Kobane. He lost two sons fighting Islamic State in 2015, and another three sons are still involved in the conflict. After spending a month at the border at the beginning of 2015, a Kurdish political party helped his family move to Istanbul. While the family does not have *kimliks*, they receive significant assistance from Kurdish NGOs, including food and medical assistance and help with rent payments. Said wants to return to Syria to farm his land, but will wait until the Kurdish authorities say that it is feasible. In the meantime, he is happy that his daughters (aged 17 and 18) are learning a trade: both work for Kurdish bosses; one is a tailor and the other works at a hair salon. Rima, a Kurdish journalist, is also from Kobane. She arrived a year ago, and speaks Turkish. She stays with a Kurdish family for free, while helping Kurdish-affiliated organisations through her work in the media. The work is unpaid, so she was thinking about taking a job as a secretary. She would return to Syria but only if there were employment opportunities. Her experience in Istanbul has been positive, as ‘you can find lots of activity and diversity’.

Some refugees have obtained work permits or established themselves through their own initiative. Hani is one example. Hani arrived in 2011 from Damascus, where he was in the ceramics trade. He opened a small restaurant in Istanbul, which over time expanded to seven branches. He speaks Turkish and has many Turkish friends. He says that ‘success depends on people and how creative they are in work. Your dream becomes a reality if you not only dream, but work’. Another interviewee, Rifah, initially worked at various hair salons but the pay was meagre, and she opened her own salon in her apartment. However, the neighbours complained, and the police fined her 800 Lira (\$267) and closed it down. She subsequently opened a salon in commercial premises, using money her sister had given her to pay the rent. She has both Turkish and Syrian customers. She is not clear on the details, but she knows that the authorities will visit her salon and ask for certification (proof of

her training) and accurate documentation, and she has hired a Syrian lawyer who speaks Turkish to help her.

Opening a business is a major step forward in improving livelihood outcomes, but it does not mean that integration is a given. As Mohammed describes, maintaining a business and obtaining the required documentation requires significant effort. He has a residence permit and sells medical supplies from an office in a shopping centre.¹⁷ He said the procedures are difficult, time-consuming and expensive. Mohammed wants to integrate in Turkey, as it will be good for his children. He feels that, while the Turkish in general have been good to him and his family, they prefer to buy from Turkish businesses.

In addition to personal initiative and financial support from family members, cultivating connections with Turkish citizens is a key strategy for securing employment – both for those within existing cultural and political networks as well as more generally. Most, though not all, within the integrated category speak Turkish or at least have Turkish connections. Jamil’s story illustrates that expanding one’s own personal networks to include Turkish connections is possible without prior cultural or political networks, but requires a degree of luck. Jamil arrived in Istanbul in September 2013 to find a job, while his parents and siblings remained in a camp in Urfa. He worked in various jobs in Istanbul – construction, manufacturing – found through Syrian and Turkish acquaintances. Eventually he worked at a store, whose owner introduced him to his current boss. At the interview, the boss understood his situation and ‘accepted to give me the chance to work’. Jamil sells tea and coffee and other spices in a tourist area popular with Arabs. His boss came to rely heavily upon him, with plans to open a second shop, and ‘the boss and his company’ got him a work permit. If he lost his current job, he would want to go to Europe as it would be difficult to find what he has again. His advice: ‘It is about luck, and also a good understanding about work and how to network in Istanbul.’

Even with the appropriate documentation and some financial security, integration is a challenge. The possibility that a work permit will be revoked or that

¹⁷ Mohammed was required to leave (he went to Cyprus) and re-enter the country in order to have a valid stamp in his passport; open a bank account with a minimum of 6,000 Lira; and pay for an accountant to approve the finances. According to the level of purchase orders, he earns between 3,000 Lira and 8,000 Lira a month, and pays about 400 Lira in taxes and on the accountant.

government policy will change continues to weigh on most of those who have more positive livelihood outcomes. However, the strategies of refugees in this category have shifted to networking, improving businesses and cultivating respect or a greater role in the community.

2.4.2 Struggling: livelihood goals and strategies

The majority of interviewees were marginally insecure with moderate livelihood outcomes. Unlike the most vulnerable or those focused on survival, refugees in this category possessed some level of choice in regard to livelihoods. At the same time, securing employment, paying rent and investing in education was a continuous struggle. There is also a high level of insecurity associated with the government's policy on the status of refugees. While each category of interviewees shared harrowing experiences of the war in Syria, this group tended to express the most acute sense of loss with regard to lifestyle and the opportunities that they had forfeited in fleeing Syria. More specifically, this group found it difficult to confront the loss of employment, education and community in Syria, while also struggling with the implications of settling in Turkey. In general, the main goals of refugees in this category are to achieve more stable employment – including decent pay and using existing skills – and some form of legal status or protection.

Better jobs are viewed as the best route to better living conditions, schooling for children and reduced reliance on external support. Livelihood strategies often include working at low-paying jobs, regardless of a refugee's skill set, while searching for better or more secure work. The calculation in regard to employment tends to include wages and treatment, the number of other family members working (if any) and the ability to pay for rent and schooling for children. Some refugees rely on support from friends and family, with more limited support from NGOs and municipalities.

The majority of work for refugees in Istanbul is in factories and workshops – mostly textiles, plastic and furniture – and the service industry (mainly restaurants and bakeries). Wages for fulltime work in the former ranged from 500 Lira (\$167) to 1,800 Lira (\$600) a month; no pattern based on experience, gender or age was discerned. In restaurants, the range was from 40 Lira (\$13) a day to 1,500–1,800 Lira (\$500–\$600) a month. This may increase based on length of time in

the job, but mostly seems to be based on the rate set by the employer.

Skilled refugees, such as doctors, scientists, accountants, entrepreneurs, artisans, craftspeople and educators, struggled to find jobs to match their educational background and professional profile. Those that managed to find jobs related to their skill sets worked mostly for Syrian-owned companies or at Syrian schools. Generally, these jobs did not last long or the wages were considered too low. Three cases below provide examples.

Ali is a chemist who arrived in Turkey 18 months ago. It was not possible for him to find a job in his field, so he worked at a textile workshop. Friends from Homs initiated a study to understand the impact of weapons and chemicals related to the war on the agriculture and soil/fertiliser composition in Syria, and they hired him. His work relates to chemical analysis, which he is happy about, but he still lives his life day to day.

All I did was work and sleep when I worked at the sewing workshop. Now I work with friends, and life is better ... I am very lucky, very few people have my situation, rich friends who own their own company and can employ me ... Today I have money, a job and tomorrow I may not have that. The Turkish government could say goodbye and send us somewhere, I don't know. The Turkish are not our government ... Turkey will not give Syrians nationality; we are just here temporarily.

Following bad experiences, Najib gave up trying to find something within his skill set, and is now working at a restaurant.

In Syria, I was an engineer – servicing elevators – working for a Japanese company ... International companies in Turkey told me that I have to be a Turkish citizen to give me work. Despite this, I worked for one year at night for a small Turkish company, working from 7 pm to 5 am. I worked when it was not controlled. My boss didn't want to help me get a work permit, because the boss would have to pay for the permit and insurance ... Instead they gave me work at night and a low salary. I was paid 2,200 Lira [\$733] and Turkish people doing the same job earned 8,000 Lira [\$2,667]. I was so upset with the experience in working with

a Turkish company, I don't want to try with another.

Another refugee shared her struggle to obtain a professional certification as a doctor:

I need to change my [medical] degree to be certified in Istanbul and to speak the language. But I have not received help to do this ... It is very difficult without the work permit. I can't open my medical centre and I cannot work with many hospitals, who ask for a medical degree.

Most refugees found their jobs through Syrian – and to a lesser extent Turkish – friends, or by approaching businesses in person. One interviewee said that employers also advertised on Facebook or other forms of social media, or put up posters. Common frustrations include long hours, difficult work or labour and non-payment for days worked or overtime. Harassment is common.

With low wages and lack of protection, changing jobs is common as refugees hope to find more palatable work or are fired. Ahmed's experience is common. He and his sister arrived from Aleppo 11 months ago; aged 19, in Syria he had been studying mechanical engineering. His first job in Istanbul was arranged by a Syrian friend at a sewing workshop. He was paid 600 Lira (\$200) for 12 hours a day. He slept at the factory. When he got sick, he was fired. He then worked at another Turkish-owned sewing factory that he described as worse. After working for a week, he went to collect his payment but the guard yelled at him to get lost and he was not paid. Then he worked in a Syrian restaurant for two weeks, for 12 hours a day for 800 Lira (\$267) a month. With only one day off each month, he was unable to see his sister and quit. After going on a daily basis to the same area to ask for work, he found a job at a Syrian-owned plastics factory, where he worked 11 hours a day for 800 Lira (\$267). However, after two months he was not paid for his overtime and was fired when he took a day off. Finally, he found an opportunity for marketing time-shares with other Arabs. At the time of the interview, he had completed his training and was hopeful that this job would bring some security.

Tarek and Fares are examples of the many refugees working at jobs that entail long hours and low pay, which they perceive to be their only option to support their family. Tarek, who is 56, is the only one working

in his household. 'I never worked at a bakery before ... I found the job by chance. I went from shop to shop asking a lot of Turkish and Syrian places about a job but they said sorry [because I am old] ... I work 15 hours a day and do not see my family.' Fares is responsible for his wife, who is pregnant, two children, his father and his brother. He used to own restaurants in Syria, and now works at a restaurant from 12 pm until 12 am earning 1,500–1,800 Lira (\$500–\$600) a month. He wants his children to register in school and learn Turkish, but he cannot afford it. He 'feels isolated, working long hours with little pay and little support'. But he continues at his job, as he is 'scared and worried about the future, how it will be after the baby comes. I have a lot of things that make me feel unsafe and worried about the future ... My life does not change – the money comes and goes, life does not get better – rent is very expensive and we don't receive any support'.

The type of work and pay, the cost of transport and the ability to spend time with family were the most commonly cited reasons for not taking a job. Some refugees said that they preferred to continue to search for work, stay at home or dedicate time to other activities rather than undertake poorly paid jobs. As the two cases below illustrate, this was particularly the case in situations where at least one family member was already working.

Omar said that he was unsure how he could pay next month's rent. His wife stays at home with their autistic son. Another son works full-time as a courier, earning 900 Lira (\$300) a month, and a third son, who has diabetes, works intermittently. One daughter is in school. Omar, who used to own a restaurant in Latakia, said that work in Istanbul is difficult as he does not speak Turkish. He is closely connected to the Syrian opposition party, and so has chosen to spend his time at home or going to political rallies. He said that friends from the Gulf were supporting him, but he is reluctant to keep borrowing money. It is not clear if he pursued employment through his political connections, but he did ask for small amounts of money – for example to buy a phone card.

Hala's husband, a clothing designer, has changed jobs numerous times since arriving in Istanbul two years ago, due to the low pay or, in some cases, non-payment (and no recourse to enforce collection). He earns an average of 1,300 Lira (\$433) a month. Rent is 700 Lira (\$233) plus utilities. Hala said that her priority is her children, but only one is in school due to the cost involved (250

Lira (\$80) per month). She is embarrassed that it is difficult even to take the children out for a picnic. Hala was offered a job teaching Arabic, for 700 Lira (\$233) a month, but turned it down because she believed the pay was too low.

During interviews, several men over the age of 35 referred to themselves as old for labour-intensive jobs and said their boss would ask their children to work. Many of the refugees interviewed also expressed concern that their children were being taken out of school or university to work. However, with one exception (children selling candy on the street), young people who working were at least 15 or 16 years of age. Numerous studies identify child labour as a widespread problem in countries affected by the Syrian crisis (Save the Children and UNICEF, 2015), and in Istanbul specifically (Human Rights Watch, 2015). As described in more detail in Part 2, employers prefer to hire younger children to work in textile workshops and factories in particular: they can pay them less and they supposedly make more energetic workers.

Many livelihood strategies include support from family and friends, and to a lesser extent charity or NGOs.¹⁸ Common types of support are financial, information or connections and in-kind assistance. Refugees mentioned that support from friends and family was particularly important when first arriving in Istanbul, in the form of money, staying with family or friends or assistance in finding jobs. Several refugees also said that family members in Europe were providing financial support. Others mentioned borrowing from friends or close family, in Turkey, Europe or in the Gulf, but emphasised that it was difficult to keep borrowing from the same sources. Several refugees also received support from their municipality, specifically food (one interviewee mentioned receiving diapers, one mentioned coal and another a cash voucher for 75 Lira (\$25)). The frequency varied from every month to every three months. Others said that they had asked the municipality for assistance, but to no avail. A few said that they were wary of registering or did not have a *kimlik*, so were not qualified.

Some young Syrians were pursuing education to increase their employability, either in Turkey or elsewhere. According to these students, the government had recently relaxed the requirements

for Syrian refugees to enrol in classes.¹⁹ As a result, there has been an upsurge in the number of refugees at university. Many additional interviewees, who had left university or whose children had left university in Syria, expressed the wish to return to university, but said that it was not financially feasible. All three students said that they worked part-time, and shared an apartment with other students. Although aware of scholarships and support for refugees, none had been successful in obtaining assistance.

Two of the three students we interviewed expressed the hope that a Turkish diploma would provide more avenues to integration. The third hoped that it would facilitate immigration to Europe or Canada:

When I left Syria, I thought that when I finished my studies I would not stay here. But after I started interacting with the Turkish, I saw that there are a lot of opportunities so I understood that I can stay and work – life here is very good ... A lot of my friends are integrated.

A second student added:

I will be a better candidate to immigrate after I receive my diploma. I don't believe that the economy will continue to do well, given the current situation – so it will make employment difficult.

2.4.3 Surviving: livelihood goals and strategies.

This category of refugees is focused purely on survival. With the worst livelihood outcomes, these refugees are the poorest and the most in need of assistance. Typically, refugees in this group have access to services and networks and no savings, and work as (poorly paid) day labourers. Some but not all of these marginal cases are new arrivals – some have a specific vulnerability, such as disability – and some live hand-to-mouth months after arriving. While not among the wealthy in Syria, the loss of support from the Syrian state and of employment opportunities has left refugees in this category destitute and poor.

The main priorities for refugees in this category are unifying their family and meeting basic needs. Strategies and choices are limited. Daily labour, such

¹⁸ As mentioned in the introduction, the exception is healthcare, where the needs of most refugees interviewed had been met.

¹⁹ For an overview of the policies on access to university for Syrian refugees, see Hoffman and Sumak (2016).

as construction or cleaning, is common. Interviewees said that construction was one of the more difficult jobs in Istanbul, in terms of the physical toll as well as intermittent availability. It pays about 50–60 Lira (\$17–20) per day. Some refugees in this category live with their family or a number of families or – if men – with other men. Others live at their place of work or are forced to keep moving. Although some refugees have received support from friends, this tends to be on a small scale and mostly related to accommodation. Similar to refugees in the struggling category, formal assistance – through municipalities, Turkish or Syrian NGOs or multi-service centres²⁰ – is ad hoc. With a few exceptions, the refugees in this category had not received assistance. One staff member of an NGO in Istanbul said that each month a handful of families request help to return to the camps in the south. This is viewed as a last resort for people who cannot survive in Istanbul (HPG interview).

The two examples below illustrate what trying to survive in Istanbul can entail. Samira arrived in the city four months ago, with her husband and four children. Their accommodation is unsanitary and expensive (750 Lira (\$250) a month). Her children are not in school. The family has *kimliks*, but the assistance programmes that she heard about are far away. Her husband has been unable to find a job – despite going door-to-door asking for work, he was told that he needed to speak Turkish. His 13-year-old son and nine-year-old daughter sell candy in a busy area, earning 20–30 Lira (\$6.70–\$10) per day.

Amjad does not have a *kimlik*, as he does not have money to pay for one, and his priority is to send money to the family he left behind in Syria. He said that he does not know about assistance in Istanbul, apart from a box of food that the PDY provides every five months. He found a job with a municipality in his speciality – tile installation – that would have been well paid, but the director let him go after two days as he did not have a work permit or health insurance. Instead, he found a job with an Azerbaijani construction company, which also gave him a place to sleep (eight people to three rooms). The lack of communication was difficult, so

he found another job with Kurdish Syrians, whom he feels are more understanding of his situation – including when he cannot pay his rent. He cuts stone and carries stone and other products, working from 7.30 am to 6 pm. When work is available, he earns between 800 and 1,000 Lira (\$267–333) a month. His rent is 200 Lira (\$67); he lives on 200 Lira, and sends the rest to his family. However, he has not been able to pay his rent – or send funds to his family – for the last two months as work has not been available. ‘Life in Istanbul is not easy at all, I came to Istanbul with only 30 Lira [\$10]. It is difficult to live without a permit and help from the government. I know that life is not easy, but I have a large responsibility to care for my family. I don’t know what other decisions or choice I have’.

Some families have the added burden of managing disabilities from the war, with additional medical expenses and lost income. Ghenwa’s husband is in a wheelchair after being shot by the opposition. Ghenwa, her husband and two children fled to Turkey in 2014. She did not work before, but as her husband cannot work she started cleaning houses for Turkish people, earning between \$300–\$400 a month, which is not enough to pay the rent. The family are currently in their fourth apartment as a result. The *kimlik* provides the family with medical assistance, but not for her husband’s disability.

Palestinian refugees from Syria confront a particular set of challenges. While technically under the same temporary legal protection as Syrian refugees, registration with the police for the *kimlik* is haphazard – some recognising that Palestinians have the same rights, and others not. Fadwa, for instance, has a *kimlik*, but her children have Palestinian citizenship (because their father was Palestinian) and do not have *kimliks*. She brought them into the country illegally as Turkey does not allow entry to Palestinian refugees. Her priority is her children and for them to be in school. She is terrified that they will be taken away from her and sent back to Syria due to their nationality. ‘Life feels unstable and insecure, and I fear that my children will be discovered as illegal and that they might be sent back to Syria ... I am very worried about my children, and have a lot of bad dreams.’

20 Multi-service centres have been a widespread intervention to support urban Syrian refugees across the region. They are managed by both national and international NGOs, and provide a variety of services, including psychosocial support, legal advice, medical screening and referrals and language and vocational training. They also act as distribution points for cash and vouchers.

2.5 Gender and employment

Gender plays a role in decision-making about employment and the types of jobs men and women choose. Interviews highlighted the diversity of

women's employment: owners of a tourism business and a salon, a doctor, the director of a Syrian NGO and an on-line marketer, as well as women working from home and women not working.²¹ The research team heard repeatedly that the most common jobs for women are as secretaries, working at textile workshops or as teachers at Syrian schools.

Two refugee teachers at Syrian schools were interviewed for this study. The salary was 900–1,000 Lira (\$300–\$333), which appears to be standard. One salary is paid by the UN. Women working at textile factories were also interviewed. One, Nadhira, worked for 20 years in a textile workshop in Damascus. Her friend told her about a large Turkish workshop, where she now works from 8.30 am–7 pm for 800 Lira (\$267). Although Turkish employees are paid 1,500 Lira (\$500) for the same hours, she said that she is treated well, although she and her son, who works at the same factory, do not make enough money to cover all their basic needs. Her two eldest children are in Europe, and she hopes to join them.

Interviews with women highlighted how much gender was a factor in livelihoods strategies and outcomes. On-line marketing or sales, cooking and making crafts were cited as the most common work in the home. One woman who made jewellery at home told us that she had stopped because the work was too tiring and generated too little income (about 50–60 Lira (\$17–\$20) a week). A number of the women interviewed said that they did not work outside the home or did not work at all for cultural reasons. As one refugee explained, going out every day to work and coming home late at night raised questions in the conservative neighbourhoods where some Syrians have settled (due to lower rents). In this particular case, the refugee, living with her mother and sister, felt afraid of the intense scrutiny from neighbours about women living and working on their own. In some cases, the decision not to work outside the home was made by the husband – or, in his absence, the eldest son, while at times it was decided by the woman or assumed. The decision appeared to have little relation to the well-being or financial security of the family.

21 Childcare was not mentioned as an obstacle to employment – including for women-headed households. In some cases, children stayed with grandparents in camps in the south, and in others woman worked from home, hired a nanny or the husband stayed at home to watch the children.

Box 2: Early marriage

While more research is required, it appears that displacement may have increased the prevalence of early marriage. Some parents expressed anxiety about 'protecting their young daughters', given the lack of rule of law and the uncertain environment. From the perspective of some parents, marriage is a way to protect their daughters:

I want my daughters [aged 18 and 14] to marry. After their life will be stable. Daughters are a big responsibility. The boys are easy, but the daughters are a big responsibility ... The girls are at home. Sometimes I allow them to go visit their friends, but all the time they are at home.

Samira and her husband arranged the marriage of her 16-year-old daughter to a Syrian in Istanbul. 'I feel happy that my children are safer than in Syria. And happy that my daughter is married.'

Harassment in the workplace – and the expectation of 'favours' for employment – was an important theme during interviews, as these excerpts demonstrate:

I worked at a Libyan real estate company for a month, but the salary was low and I was harassed ... Because I am a single woman with children, it makes people think that they can exploit me and make illegal relations with me. I am very worried about my children, and have a lot of bad dreams.

They tried in many ways [to sexually harass me] but I resisted; I was scared about my young daughter.

I worked in real estate for about two weeks with a Syrian boss. He gave me only 300 Lira (\$100), but it should have been 600 Lira (\$200). I left the job because the Syrian boss was harassing me.

I am not looking for work now, as I am too worried about harassment. But I know that my family can only support me for another year or two.

A number of the women interviewed were raising children on their own because they were divorced or their husbands had been killed or imprisoned in Syria. Livelihood strategies for women-headed households varied, in regard to the type of employment, support from the broader community or a combination of both. For example, Fadwa said:

I worked in a Syrian private school for about two months (the salary was 1,200 Lira (\$400) a month), but I left it because my children came to Istanbul so I needed to stay at home with my children. Now I work at on-line marketing for a medical centre and my salary is 1,300 Lira (\$433). I learned about the job from my relatives that knew one of the doctors.

Businessmen give money specifically to women-headed households to help cover basic needs. One widow with four children said:

I am paid as a teacher 1,000 Lira (\$333) a month. Rent is 1,200 Lira (\$400) a month ... I receive help from the local government and from NGOs. Every month they give me a box of food with a voucher for 75 Lira (\$25). The rest [of the assistance] comes from Syrian people who help me, who give when they can. Syrian businessmen and some Turkish businessmen help us.

Two women noted that greater personal freedom was an unexpected bonus to life in Istanbul. According to Yasmine: 'as a woman, life in camp feels like I am in jail in Syria. There is no privacy, and a lot of harassment'. Another woman, Soha, said that 'I lost a lot of things in Syria, but with this life here – for me it is very good. I feel freedom and peace that I didn't feel before'.

2.6 Relations with the Turkish

Reflections on relations with the Turkish (bosses, colleagues and neighbours) featured prominently in the interviews. Pre-existing networks – cultural or political affiliations – tend to be a vehicle for better relations, while refugees trying to survive are more susceptible to predatory practices by Turkish landlords and bosses. Ultimately, relations between the Turkish and Syrians are complex and at times contradictory. One refugee said:

The landlord insults me and tells me to go back to my country. There is discrimination at

work, I am very tired of that. I cannot tell you everything or the full story. But at the same time, I find a lot of Turkish people understand and are respectful.

Relations with the host community from the Syrian refugee perspective can be grouped around three themes: at the workplace, with landlords and with neighbours.

As discussed throughout this report, the most common jobs offer little protection or capacity to negotiate with bosses. While some refugees mentioned problems with Turkish bosses, complaints about resentment from fellow Turkish workers were more pronounced:

The truth is that most people are good, the only problem is that Turkish workers felt that we are stealing their jobs.

Yes, I am happy with it [my job]. But sometimes the Turkish workers make fun of me – saying 'Don't throw away this food, we want to give it to poor Syrians.' Such situations happen, but I don't say anything ... In general, there are good [Turkish] people, and bad ones.

In addition to tension at the workplace, another frequent grievance was poor treatment by landlords. Common difficulties include finding a decent apartment to rent; inflated prices; disagreements about repairs; and lack of recourse if agreements or understandings are broken. For example, two of the students we interviewed did not tell their landlords that they were Syrian, pretending to be Arabs from another country, as finding an apartment or room as a Syrian proved impossible. Others said that landlords would not return deposits or guarantees, and that they had no legal grounds to contest this. Many refugees described damp basement apartments or apartments in need of significant repair, but which were more expensive than the market value.

Perspectives on relations with Turkish neighbours varied greatly, pointing to the broader challenges of social integration. One woman expressed her surprise and sadness at the level of racism in Turkey. Others said that they were yelled at in the street, for example 'Go home Syrians':

Our neighbours don't speak with us, and they are unfriendly. If I see one by accident, they turn their faces.

‘Many times, at the bank and in many places when they know you are Syrian, they change completely. It is the same with teachers in the university,’ said one student.

Other interviewees said that their Turkish neighbours were kind and helpful:

The neighbours gave us some food. I think that they heard about our problems with the landlord, and they sympathised with us.

The Turkish people are very easy and they want to understand us ... My children have helped a lot to initiate this relationship. They all speak at least some Turkish ... Some of the mothers of my children’s friends started to visit me, and invite me [to their home] as well.

It is very nice with the Turkish, they come every day to help my wife. They take her to places [like the municipality] so that she can get help in the area and get the monthly box of food.

One university student said that, once Turkish students started to get to know Syrian students, relations improved, and that the Turkish respect those that speak their language. Another student said that he had many Syrian friends who had integrated into Turkish society, some marrying Turkish women.²²

2.7 Integration and return

Although some refugees are prepared to settle in Turkey, nearly all intend to return to Syria eventually. Syrians fear that their integration could result in the loss of their culture and language, while for others a reluctance to settle can be understood as a way of avoiding the reality of prolonged displacement and loss.

In policy terms, integration of refugees is often categorised as *de jure* (formal integration through political or legal means) or *de facto* (more informal integration at individual or community levels). Refugees in Istanbul perceive key elements of integration as being economic and social. Some of

those interviewed believed that learning Turkish would be an acknowledgement of settling in Istanbul, or at least not returning to Syria in the near future. This was also cited as a reason by some refugees to send their children to Syrian schools.

One director of an educational NGO focused on Syrians told us that she was happy with her job in Istanbul, and enjoyed positive – though limited – relations with the Turkish. Her employer provides her with the legal status to work, and she is less concerned about the government’s policy towards refugees. However, she does not want to learn Turkish, as she views doing so as a step away from Syria and towards settlement in Istanbul. By contrast, others are committed to learning the language as a way to improve their livelihood options. Jamil said that, for now, he felt safe and financially stable in Istanbul because ‘I understand the language and this protected me. The Turkish respect you when you understand the language’. Omar, who works at a factory, said that he hoped his employer would start a small class to help him and other employees learn Turkish: ‘Lots of things [would help Syrians in Istanbul] like school to learn Turkish, training in many careers that can open the door for us, help us to access public services’.

We need a lot of help in education and training to find better jobs and work, in the language, in construction and in textiles [factory work] ... We know that the government has received a lot of money to help us, but we receive zero from the municipality.

Perspectives on integration are not static or necessarily exclusive. Some refugees who hoped to establish themselves in Istanbul have become frustrated with the lack of opportunities open to them, or by the treatment they have received from the host community, and prefer to leave Turkey. Jamil said that, if he lost his current job, he would try to get another in Istanbul while at the same time preparing to go to Europe. Another young man said that, whereas he had learned sufficient Turkish when first arriving in Istanbul, enabling him to make Turkish contacts and opening up job opportunities, as more refugees arrived competition for jobs grew and he reverted to his Syrian networks to find employment. Seeing the lack of opportunities and after negative experiences with Turkish bosses, he was more enthusiastic about going to Europe; the only reason he had not yet gone was financial.

²² One interviewee said that she thought that ‘the Syrian people here need to do a lot of lobbying of the government and the Turkish people to help the government make important decisions that will help Syrians. There is the need for better communication, including the media, and a more active and better understanding of the Turkish system’.

2.8 Migration to Europe

Refugees in Istanbul have diverse views on migrating to Europe, which can be broken down into five major themes: the level of satisfaction with opportunities in Istanbul; the cost involved; the dangers of going by sea; perceived differences in values between Syria and Europe; and feedback from family or friends who had recently migrated to Europe.

Generally, the question about migration to Europe was met with an emphatic ‘no’ or ‘yes’. Some refugees who hope to go are frustrated by their unclear legal status and by the lack of livelihoods opportunities in Istanbul – low-paying jobs and high rent, and little chance of professional advancement or education. For others, migration is viewed as a way of resolving problems of harassment. The main obstacle to migration is cost, quoted from €1,000–€4,000. The dangers associated with going to Europe by sea had also given some refugees pause, articulated in particular by a number of women who worried about the well-being of their children, and who said that they would only go legally. Half a dozen of those interviewed had registered with UNHCR in the hope they could attain resettlement: a few had been discouraged by the process, while the others were still waiting for an answer.

Many refugees said that they preferred to stay in Turkey for cultural or religious reasons, fearing the loss of Syrian identity if their children grew up in Europe. Some wanted to stay closer to Syria so that they could return home sooner:

Because of my family [in Syria], I cannot leave them, and I feel that I am close to my home and when the war ends, I can go back quickly. Also, I don't want to travel to Europe because of the different customs and traditions there.

Feedback from people who had recently migrated to Europe was mixed: some mentioned financial and physical security as well as opportunities to learn a language and receive an education, while others heard that it was a lot of waiting around with no guarantees for the future:

I am waiting for the opportunity [to go to Germany] – a low price and safe. My brother is there, the government gives him money and school and helps him in his career.

Box 3: Smuggling people, cigarettes and guns

Smuggling guns and cigarettes from Syria is big business, as is smuggling people to Europe. With the closed border between Syria and Turkey, smuggling weapons and cigarettes has become more difficult, but it is still happening and some of the same networks exist. Jamal, for instance, works as a manager at a restaurant as a cover; currently he lives below the restaurant with his wife and child. He was a fighter for the opposition, and now smuggles people to Europe, as well as guns and cigarettes from Syria. He makes good money, and says that the local police are not a problem as they are easily paid off. Jamal believes that the Turkish will ease restrictions on migration to Europe once the EU–Turkish deal and the issue of visa-free travel have been settled.

While the risks of illegal migration to Europe are well-documented, Nour's case demonstrates how vulnerable refugees are to smugglers. Nour's husband gave her \$2,800 so that she and their 14-year-old son could travel to Europe. He stayed in Syria, and the plan was for him to join them once they had received refugee status in Europe. Nour took a bus to Izmir when she learned it was cheaper to get to Greece from there. A man took her money, saying that he would arrange to take her and her son to Greece, but then disappeared (Nour thinks he was arrested). Her husband refused to take her calls, blaming her for the loss of the money. She worked in a small store in Izmir, moving from apartment to apartment. After a gang beat her up she left for Istanbul. She now stays with a family, and is looking for a job using Whatsapp and her Syrian contacts. As soon as she saves some money and it is possible to cross the border, she plans to return to Syria as ‘anything would be better than staying in Turkey’.

I hope we return to Syria very soon. The majority of my friends regretted [going to Europe] and now they have lot of problems. Life in Europe is not easy.

Several refugees described how relatives had already made the journey hoping to secure the necessary additional visas to enable family reunification in Europe. A few families sent minors believing that

this would speed up the reunification process. One interviewee's wife had given birth in Sweden days earlier, and he was waiting for a visa.

2.9 Conclusion

For the majority of Syrian refugees in Turkey, the overarching frustration is that the only available work is low-paid, unskilled and without protection. In addition to poor working conditions, interviews indicated pervasive harassment and mistreatment. Salaries are generally insufficient to pay for rent and living expenses, to support a family (in Turkey or in Syria) and to put children into school – so trade-offs about priorities are made. This is within a precarious context that makes the development of sustainable livelihood strategies a challenge – with the exception of those that are well-connected or have strong support networks. Some refugees in Istanbul are highly insecure and focused on survival, with few support mechanisms.

Most of the refugees we interviewed described being in a sort of limbo or holding pattern. Migration to

Europe is viewed either as an attractive alternative or an unpalatable option depending on the stories refugees hear about life there. Some are waiting for the outcome of formal resettlement processes or to join family members already in Europe. The costs and risks of the trip, whether by boat or land, were currently viewed (for the most part) as prohibitive. The evolving situation in Turkey and the livelihood options open to refugees are likely to determine the decision to migrate, integrate or keep muddling through.

Conflicted feelings about settling in Istanbul are pervasive, not only around government policies on employment and refugee status, but also in regard to fear of the loss of Syrian identity and the attitudes of Turks towards Syrians. The feedback from refugees about relations with the Turkish is mixed, though some major themes emerged – including resentment from colleagues in the workplace and growing discrimination. It is clear that social capital – strong support networks and Turkish connections – is a key ingredient in successful livelihood outcomes in Istanbul. This is examined in phase 2 of the research.

3 Jordan: the perspectives of Syrian refugees on their lives and livelihoods in Zarqa

This section focuses on the perspective of Syrian refugees in Zarqa, and their livelihood goals and strategies. It highlights the main constraints within which refugees choose their livelihoods strategies and within which aid agencies provide assistance. It concludes with a description of self-settled refugees living outside of camps. Our research identifies four major themes: refugees' rejection and avoidance of camps; pessimism about the possibility of obtaining work permits, as well as gloomy views about livelihoods prospects more generally; the way that risk and responsibility has been distributed within refugees' families; and the ways in which refugees' efforts to meet their basic needs have been both helped and hindered by the host community. To illustrate these themes, the story of Rifat and his family is narrated in four parts, starting in Box 4.

3.1 Introduction

Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and UNHCR operates in the country under a 1998 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the government.²³ The government has rejected the UNHCR terminology of 'refugee', referring instead to 'guests', which has no legal meaning. Syrians therefore exist within an ambiguous legal framework. As the crisis in Syria has evolved and the number of refugees in Jordan (now standing at over 650,000) has grown,²⁴ the government's stance has undergone several significant shifts, from initially rejecting encampment to establishing camps; from a liberal

Box 4: Part one of four: Rifat's journey: Zaatari to Munster

Rifat, a 22-year-old man from Deraa, arrived in Germany nine months ago after an arduous journey across the Mediterranean and two precarious years in Jordan. He left his mother and sister behind in Jordan, and is now wondering whether his European asylum will be sustainable. His family's displacement story sheds light on many of dilemmas refugees in Jordan face: why they want to get out of the camps, the risks they face working illegally, the priority they put on family unity in the face of forces that pull them apart, and the lure of secondary migration to the West.

Rifat's family were forced to flee their home in 2010 when the conflict reached their neighbourhood in Deraa. They were internally displaced in Syria for three years, at one point moving every ten days or so to a different location. Because of his age and gender, Rifat was frequently arrested and imprisoned. A diabetic since childhood, he did not have access to medication while in prison. Alarmed at the impact that repeated detention was having on his health, in 2013 his family moved to Jordan, at that time the only Arab country with open borders. Rifat's father remained in Syria, where he was killed in 2014, making Rifat the household head and guardian for his mother and young sister. When they reached Jordan, the family was immediately taken by the Jordanian authorities to Zaatar camp.

employment policy for Syrians to a strict one; and from permeable borders to virtually closed ones.

Approximately 21% of Syrian refugees are in six camps in the north: Zaatar, Azraq, the Emirati-Jordanian Camp, King Hussein Park and Cyber City (UNHCR, 2016c). Most refugees have settled amongst

²³ See the UNHCR website, Jordan Country Profile. Under the MoU's provisions, asylum, once granted, is not bound by time or by a refugee's geographical origin, and the principle of non-refoulement should be respected.

²⁴ UNHCR figures from June 2016. There are an additional 64,000 persons of concern from Iraq, Yemen, Sudan and other countries in Jordan.

the host community in towns and cities in central and northern Jordan. As of May 2016, Amman, Irbid, Mafraq and Zarqa were hosting – outside of the camps found in these provinces – 68% of registered refugees. Jordan's entry policies have had the effect of keeping out young men travelling on their own, as well as Palestinian Syrian refugees. While men still represent almost half of the adult Syrian refugee population, they are almost all with their wives, children, parents and other relatives. There is a fairly even gender balance, and 51% of the registered refugee population is younger than 17 (UNHCR, 2016d).

The analysis below looks at what refugees want and expect from their displacement in Jordan, in particular underlining the importance placed on family unity and being in a culturally familiar place: most refugees explained that they only considered moving to Arab countries where there would be close cultural similarity, and the cultural and linguistic similarity between Jordan and Syria has been a source of comfort in their displacement experience. For the majority of refugees, keeping the family together and finding safety – while less pressing than at the beginning of displacement – were also core priorities. Many parents also said that they wanted a better future for their children, and saw resettlement as an opportunity to provide one. There was also pressure from below: more than one mother remarked about her children that 'They forget we are refugees'. Children, fast integrating into Jordanian society, compared their lives to those of their classmates, not to the ordeal they had escaped and that others in Syria still live through. In turn, parents complained that they could not give their children the things they had had in their childhoods: trips to the park, visits to see relatives, or sweets.

3.2 The context in Zarqa

Zarqa, 25 kilometres east of the capital Amman, has a population of around 700,000, making it the third largest city in Jordan. As an important secondary city, it offers a variety of employment opportunities and a large market for products and services. It has the fourth largest urban refugee population in the country, with 7.4% of the registered total Syrian refugee population residing there. While aid workers described Zarqa to us as an attractive location for refugees because of its large industrial sector and work opportunities, and because it was less expensive than Amman, few refugees cited these as reasons why they had chosen to settle there.

Box 5: Reem's children

Reem, 42, has seven children, six in school and one a toddler. Her husband has migrated to Turkey, and has fallen out of contact with the family. They have received assistance in the form of WFP coupons, stationary from UNICEF and, recently, UNHCR cash assistance of JD150 (\$211). The cash covers Reem's rent, leaving nothing for other expenses. To get some income Reem sells part of the food package and signs the whole family up to NGO activities to get the transport fare. Reem has at times done a small amount of embroidery work for neighbours at very low prices, but she developed a back problem doing the work and stopped.

As difficult as her situation is, she feels very lucky to have arrived in Jordan with all her children safe. She is still in contact with some family members in Syria and knows from them that her home and her husband's store have been destroyed. She knows many people who have lost loved ones, including her sister whose husband has 'disappeared'. When they first arrived Reem and her family had only the clothes on their back and could not buy anything, whereas now they have a flat, furniture and school supplies. Reem feels that she is in a position to rebuild their lives, though she is still working out how to provide for her family as a single mother. But while she is more or less content, her children want more from life. They want to be treated like Jordanian children and get angry with her because they cannot afford the things their peers have.

The majority said their choice of Zarqa had been set in motion by the decisions of family members who had settled there ahead of them. Refugees also often ended up in Zarqa because a medical emergency had necessitated leaving Zaatari camp to seek treatment, after which they chose to stay. Others had landed there more-or-less by chance – one early arrival had been advised by a taxi driver to settle in Zarqa, and another had been invited by a Jordanian friend who offered her a month's free rent in a room in a Palestinian refugee camp. Almost all the refugees we spoke to were registered, and many received cash assistance which helped to cover basic needs. Those who did not receive cash assistance had more family members working in the informal economy. In general, neither assistance nor income was sufficient to cover all of a household's costs.

3.3 Camps: rejection and avoidance

Most refugees interviewed for this study had sought to leave Zaatari Camp as soon as possible. While a few had bypassed the camp or had arrived before it was established, most had been taken directly there by the Jordanian authorities upon crossing the border. Many had stayed in the camp only a few days before escaping, being smuggled out after paying large fees to smugglers or leaving by official means, which since 2014 has required being formally ‘bailed out’ by a Jordanian. For many Zaatari was always only a way-point on their journey to reunite with kin in Zarqa. Those who arrived with less groundwork laid, or who tried to make asylum in Zaatari work for their families for longer, ultimately found the lack of privacy, fears about the safety of children and women, poor sanitation and health services and generally rudimentary conditions untenable. ‘I started to cry to myself about the situation after the first three days. How could things come to this?’ said one man who had arrived in Zaatari when it was first established. Ahmed, a 43-year old single father in Zarqa, told us that it would be preferable to go straight back to Syria than to be deported to either Zaatari or Azraq, a camp located in a remote desert region, even if the conflict had not ended.

Refugees constantly make similar evaluations about camp life, as the penalty for working illegally is deportation to a camp, a punishment which is typically inflicted on a refugee’s wife and children too. In most cases refugees were threatened with deportation to Azraq. In some cases, people have reportedly been deported to Syria itself, but it is unclear whether this is done directly or is preceded by a spell in a camp, during which the refugee ‘voluntarily’ requests repatriation. Refugees detained by Ministry of Labour patrols had often been given verbal warnings that another infringement would trigger deportation to a camp. Sometimes refugees were made to sign written ‘acknowledgments’ that they had broken the law, and that they would not do it again on threat of deportation. In effect, the camps are held up by the authorities as sites of imprisonment. Refugees escape the camps even though by doing so they are also incurring a huge expense in the form of rent. Across Jordan rent is the major expense for self-settled families in towns and cities. On average Syrians pay 193JD (\$271) in rent (Achilli, 2015). While rents in Zarqa were on average lower, amounts up to 200JD

Box 6: Part two of four: Rifat’s journey: leaving Zaatari and arriving in Zarqa

Rifat’s family did not stay long in Zaatari. According to Rifat’s mother, Sohra, she was deeply concerned for Rifat’s physical health (due to his diabetes, exhaustion and the toll that jail and torture had taken on him) and his psychological wellbeing. Sohra was told that he would get improved treatment outside the camp, and that life would be better. The family went first to Mafraq city where they heard that there was free accommodation – as a charitable gesture from a wealthy Jordanian – for widows and girls. The family decided to temporarily split up so that Sohra and her daughter, then ten years old, could take one of the apartments. Rifat went to Amman where he found work in bakery. He was allowed to live on the bakery premises. After 18 months the wealthy Jordanian withdrew his charity, forcing Sohra to find alternative accommodation. Rifat suggested to his mother that they reunite in Zarqa, where he would find a new job. In Zarqa Sohra received cash assistance of 110JD (\$154) a month from UNHCR, just enough to cover the rent and utility bills.

(\$281) were not unheard of. Two families interviewed for this study said that they preferred to stay in Zarqa – and lose access to public services and UNHCR cash assistance – rather than return to Azraq.

Despite the dislike in which they are held, camps can also be a fallback option for refugees who cannot make ends meet in Zarqa. Asma, a young widowed mother, considered returning to the camp if she could not resolve her documentation problems before her daughter turned six and needed to begin school. Bilaal, a father of three young children, describes his lowest point in Zarqa being when he packed and made preparations to relocate his family back to Zaatari because he could not provide for them in the city, where they were living in unsanitary accommodation and facing constant harassment from Jordanian teenagers. Bilaal was able to avoid going back to the camp with the help of a Syrian neighbour who arranged a more acceptable room for the family. Bilaal negotiated a lower rate based on charity the landlady felt because he was a refugee, and later received cash assistance from UNHCR. In his eyes, a fortunate turn of events had rescued him from a return to Zaatari.

3.4 Livelihood strategies

The industry or sector in which refugees had worked in Syria seemed to have little bearing on what they did in Jordan. Refugees might have carried over some ‘soft’ business skills – presentation skills, negotiation skills or organisational skills – but they had not been able to transfer technical skills, largely because of the legal constraints on their employment. Likewise, when refugees were asked what they believed had enabled them to be more successful than their peers, they often reflected on their interpersonal skills. People who had been able to refine their products or services had done so through trial and error, which required a certain fortitude or perfectionism; others who had successfully researched and marketed home-based products commented that their sociability had been a key attribute. One man who had eventually secured a job at an NGO commented that it was his respectful and outgoing manner which had made him an attractive employee, as well as how connected he was in the community in which the NGO worked.

The predominant livelihood strategy is illegal work outside the home, in almost all cases undertaken by men. Syrians join an already substantial informal labour market, which includes hundreds of thousands of Egyptian migrant labourers working illegally (Sanchez, 2012). Informal sector jobs are to be found in the service industry, construction, skilled fields like carpentry and textile production and skilled and unskilled agricultural work. Black market jobs can be full-time, such as working as sales assistants in retail stores or shelf stackers in supermarkets, but often an income is drawn from various bits of ‘piecework’ in maintenance and construction, or infrequent shifts, for instance in bakeries, where refugees work when called on by employers to meet spikes in demand. In some cases refugees had gone stall to stall and shop to shop asking for a job, but generally work is found through social networks, either Jordanian or Syrian. Omar, who worked several informal sector jobs, claimed that referrals sometimes came with strings attached: if someone told him about a work opportunity he was often expected to do a job at a reduced rate in exchange.

Working in the black market leaves refugees without employment protection and at risk of arrest. Workers are often subject to exploitation, such as long hours, denial of leave or pay and very low wages. This is compounded by the fact that Syrians – like all

Box 7: Part three of four: Rifat’s final arrest and his decision to leave

Rifat found a job in a restaurant in Zarqa. He was arrested several times while working there, and forced to sign an ‘acknowledgement’ that he was working illegally. He worked at night in order to minimise encounters with labour patrols, but he was finally arrested and informed that he was going to be deported to Syria. Thanks to the intervention of a sympathetic Jordanian he was released. Following the incident, Rifat decided that it was impossible for him to stay in Jordan. Rent was very high and other basics were expensive, there were few jobs and no legal ways to work, and Syrians were paid very low wages in the black market. Yet he needed to provide for his mother and sister. Rifat says that, if there had been job opportunities in Jordan, he might have stayed. He felt the best way to protect his family would be to go to Germany – which he had heard was receptive to Syrian refugees – and then bring his family to join him. He bought a plane ticket to Istanbul and began his journey to Europe.

foreign black market workers – typically work only at night or weekends, when there are fewer Ministry of Labour patrols. Patrols appear to be efficient, and most men in the black market interviewed for this study had been stopped and often detained, or at least had to run from officials. Sometimes men are simply given warnings, or are made to sign a written acknowledgement promising not to work. Refugees were unanimous that officials could not be bribed, though one could draw on personal favours if they knew you or your family.

While the study turned up only a handful of families who had experienced deportation or the deportation of a friend or relative to Azraq – and in one case to Syria – all refugees working outside the home felt the risk of deportation acutely, and the threat of arrest and deportation loomed large in the stories Syrians told about their struggle to find an income. Given the likelihood of detection and the consequences – effective imprisonment in Azraq – refugees weigh the risks and benefits differently depending on the family member involved and the family situation at that point in time. Those receiving cash assistance were less likely to take the risk, while families with working-age men who did not receive cash assistance felt they had no option but to send men out to work. Families with

several men might prevent some from working because they consider the risk to be too high, but allow others to do so to see how they fare. Many refugees believed that teenagers were at less risk because they would be sent back to their mothers rather than to the camp. Unmarried adult men were considered to be at high risk of deportation.

Perhaps because of the daily stress of avoiding labour patrols and the pressure to provide for their family, as in other contexts men experienced a greater loss of purpose and status through displacement, and also appeared to be at greater risk of mental illness. Men themselves remarked on the fact that they felt depressed, and women also commented on the mental strain their husbands were under.²⁵ Men also frequently commented on how their social status had changed. Omar, like many of the men interviewed, had moved from being a manager in a family business to a menial worker. While – in his eyes – he now looked like a tired bearded man in worker's clothes, in Syria he had been 'a handsome man in nice clothes'. Now, he said, he was grateful for any construction work he could find, and did not care about his appearance, as his only concern was to provide for his wife and two children. Children also bear some of the burden of their family's financial strains. Daughters were sometimes married sooner – and younger – than the family would otherwise have chosen, and often against their wishes. While most families stressed that the education of their children was non-negotiable, in some families teenage sons had dropped out of school in order to work.

Few women have attempted to find formal employment and most consider working outside the home to be either culturally unacceptable or unfeasible given their childcare responsibilities, or both. At the same time, women were often engaged in home-based work, something they did with varying levels of comfort and success. For some women even home-based work was an unusual deviation from their role in the household in Syria, where they only undertook work directly related to childcare and domestic labour. Others took to it quickly and did not portray it as an unusual activity.

Home-based businesses are illegal (see ARDD, 2016), but the rate of detection is low. Most home-based enterprise revolves around food preparation and craftwork, typically on a small scale, for instance occasional pieces of embroidery or sewing work for neighbours. However, a few women did work on a scale that made a significant contribution to household finances: one interviewee, Yara, ran a successful hair salon from her home that brought in up to 200JD (\$281) a month, enough to cover her family's expenses for most months of the year. Contrary to expectations (cf. Haysom, 2013), women who had worked on farms and in small rural villages in Syria seemed to engage most actively in the urban economy, in part because they were accustomed to working and because their skill in preparing foodstuffs, particularly Syrian specialities, found a ready market. One family from rural Deraa brought with them a suite of skills, including beadwork, pickling, cheese fermentation and dessert preparation.

Through access to public services and cash, food and other transfers from aid agencies, refugees have, in general, been able to maintain a decent standard of living (especially relative to refugees' situations in chronically underfunded crises). Yet they are nonetheless in a fragile position: they are dependent on aid and over the last five years have built up little to no ability to withstand personal setbacks or fluctuations in assistance. In this phase of research, we found that refugees do not have resources or networks they could reliably fall back on in the event of an emergency. While they are receiving food coupons and many are receiving cash assistance that covers their rent, they struggled to afford any other expenses. Many said that they had great difficulty accessing health services, problems that may relate to the withdrawal of access to public clinics by the government in late 2014. Over a year later, those who did not meet the criteria to qualify for UNHCR's clinics were in no better position to afford private alternatives. Rather than becoming more resilient, refugees have fallen into increasingly deeper levels of debt, as well as taking decisions that have radically altered the possibilities open to future generations, such as withdrawing children from school and entering girls into marriage at a young age. The opening up of labour market through work permits may be one route for refugees to become more self-reliant and better able to sustain themselves and support their families. However, as the next section discusses this is not an avenue perceived by refugees themselves.

25 Due to the sensitive nature of the topic and ethical considerations, female interview participants were not asked whether displacement, and in particular the shift in men's role as breadwinners, had triggered domestic violence, though this has been observed in similar scenarios (see, for example, WRC (2009)).

3.5 Work permits

As noted above, the government has introduced a new policy to ease restrictions on Syrian refugees' access to work permits in selected industries and roles. The government also agreed to temporarily waive the fees for applying for permits. Despite optimism amongst aid actors, amongst refugees themselves there was confusion and pessimism about the introduction of work permits, notwithstanding the temporary fee waiver. Most had a clear sense of why the permits were either not useful in general, or not useful to them in particular. These concerns were largely shared by other foreign workers in Jordan. First, the permits tie a worker to a specific employer. If this employer is not able to provide full-time work for the licenced employee they cannot legally take another job or switch employers. The same applies if they are fired or quit. This was particularly undesirable in sectors such as construction, where work is seasonal and often piecemeal.²⁶

The low uptake during the temporary grace period is worrying because, without the fee waiver, the permits are expensive. The price differs depending on the sector, but 400JD (\$560) was widely perceived to be the average cost. The minimum wage in Jordan is 190JD (\$267), so this represents at least two months' salary. This fee is supposed to be borne by the employer, but in reality the employee is often made to pay. Before the fee waiver was introduced, more sympathetic employers might make co-payments or take deductions from the employee's salary over the course of the year rather than demanding a lump sum repayment. Not everyone understood that the permits were free, but even those who did still felt they would have to bear the cost, either now or in the future, when the fee waiver was removed. Refugees commented that, considering the low wages they were paid, it would be impossible, or at least uneconomical, to set aside money to renew a permit.

Nor do the permits provide full protection to workers. While they legalise labour and so take away the threat of arrest, foreign workers are still at a disadvantage when it comes to bargaining or protesting against ill-treatment as permits tie workers to one employer and one industry. In sectors where exploitation is rife

²⁶ As the scheme was being introduced, the government, with the support of aid partners, was working on more flexible arrangements to allow for situations where a sector, such as agriculture or construction, required more flexibility with regard to employers.

Box 8: Sami's supermarket job: the route to a work permit

Sami (32) owned his own supermarket in Deraa before fleeing to Jordan with his wife and three children in 2012. He lives with them and is also the breadwinner for his elderly mother, his brother and his teenage niece. Sami began working illegally, first in a restaurant and then in a large supermarket. The owner was protective of his black market workers, though he risked a 500JD (\$703) fine and the temporary closure of his shop if he was found employing Syrians. He told Sami, who had become a favoured employee, that he would apply for a work permit for him, but that Sami would have to cover the 400JD (\$562) application cost. Sami refused as it was unaffordable for him. So the owner offered him a compromise: he would pay the permit fee upfront and would write off 50% of the cost, while Sami would pay him back 200JD (\$281) in small instalments from his salary. Sami accepted.

Sami believes that his employer's motivations were based on retaining reliable and trusted workers. Sami believes he is popular with his boss and his co-workers, and he is experienced in the workings of the supermarket. By securing his work permit, the owner has tied Sami to his business and he cannot easily leave the job. For Sami, securing the permit has made a significant difference as he no longer fears the authorities. His permit expired a month ago but he has not made moves to renew it because he wants to find out if it falls under the categories for which there is a fee waiver.

this makes them a risky proposition. Omar, a young man with a wife and three children whose family had owned a successful chain of spice and nut stores in Damascus, but who had been forced to work illegally in supermarkets and on construction sites, explained that he saw no benefit in work permits because ultimately the employer would still have all the power in the relationship. As it provided so little protection, he did not see a great advantage over working illegally. The Jordanian government also requires that employers register foreign workers for social security. This both increases the cost to the employer of hiring a Syrian, and entails an automatic deduction from the employee's salary. Syrians see no benefit in this as most believe they will, one day, return to Syria, and will never be able to draw these benefits.

Other fears were more closely linked to refugees' perceptions of aid agencies. One concern was that, if they applied for a permit, they would have their UNHCR assistance taken away. This belief endured despite UNHCR sending an SMS to all refugees informing them that this was not the case. At least one refugee, who worked illegally in a second-hand clothes market and ran away from periodic police raids, said he was not interested in work permits because he could not afford to lose his assistance. Although he had received UNHCR's text message explaining that holding a work permit did not disqualify one for assistance, he believed that the message was a deliberate trap in the face of falling aid revenues. Many simply said that the work permits were 'all talk and no action' on the part of UNHCR. There was also confusion over which sectors and industries were eligible. Many believed that construction work was ineligible (and so they were ruled out), but others thought that the permits were only for heavy manual labour (and so they were ruled out). Some believed the permits were for highly specific tasks such as framing in workshops.

Since the legal regime regulating foreign labour in Jordan favours unskilled workers, skilled workers have sought to work under the radar or have found employers who apply for work permits under other auspices. One interviewee, Mahdi, a pathologist from Homs, found clandestine work in a private clinic. Since work permits have been opened up for Syrians the clinic has decided to take Mahdi on as a legal worker, but as there are no permits for skilled work they will apply for a cleaner's permit for him. Working for international NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) provides another route to legal 'employment'. Non-profit, civic organisations cannot legally employ refugees, but they take them on as 'interns' and 'organisers', who receive contracts and a monthly income. One refugee we spoke to had secured a job earning 200JD (\$281) a month with a local CBO.

3.6 Business partnerships

Refugees with more social and economic capital have been able to enter into business partnerships. The two refugees interviewed who were currently in partnerships had arrived in Jordan in the 1980s, and had effectively acquired Jordanian citizenship. This community fled the repression that accompanied the Muslim Brotherhood uprising of 1982. Many settled in Zarqa (Beck, 2015), where they gradually became

a business community in their own right, with a differentiated legal status to recent Syrian arrivals. They now form a bridge between Syrian refugees – with whom they are often related – and true economic integration in Jordan, allowing recent refugees to form partnerships and grow a stake in an enterprise.

Fathi (48) and his family came to Zarqa in late 2015, fleeing violence in Homs. Formerly the owner of a transport company, he brought with him some savings, but did not initially intend to invest them in a business. It was only after being persuaded by relatives and friends that there was a market for Syrian delicacies in Jordan that he decided it might be a good idea to open a store. His Jordanian business partner is also his son-in-law, who comes from a family who arrived in the 1980s exodus but has since been given citizenship. Fathi feels secure in this arrangement even though there is no formal contract with the son-in-law, who legally controls the business, because of their family connection. If he trusts him to look after his daughter, Fathi explains, then he must surely trust him to be an honest business partner.

Abdul-Hassan (44) had owned a pastry business in Syria before he fled the conflict with his family. Like Fathi, Abdul-Hassan was also persuaded to go into business by friends and relatives, and has also partnered with relatives from the 1980s influx. The deal he struck with his cousins was that they would pay to renovate the store, buy the equipment and meet other start-up costs for which Abdul-Hassan did not have capital. In return, Abdul-Hassan would run the store and turn over 50% of the profit. While he says he trusts his cousins, ultimately he would like to have his own shop and to accrue all the profit. Despite running a successful business – he makes 1,000–1,200JD (\$1,400–1,690) a month and is able to put money aside – he feels trapped in his situation.

Another option for the wealthiest Syrian refugees is to gain a residence permit through the 1973 Residence Law, which contains a provision for foreign entrepreneurs with commercial or industrial ventures (ILO, 2015). Currently, 'investor status' requires an investment to the value of 250,000JD (\$351,000). During the Iraqi refugee crisis of 2005–2006 several Iraqi businessmen took this route, and in the last few years some members of the Syrian business elite have moved their operations to Jordan and have, through a similar process, gained a residence permit through a business investment. One of our respondents started

out as a partner to a Jordanian owner in a sweet shop venture. Burhan (38) says he came to Jordan in 2012 with little but built up the 250,000JD investor fee in the intervening three years. Burhan, however, had 20 years of entrepreneurial experience behind him. He had set up four sweet shops before his current venture, two of them in Jordan, though both had failed due to difficulties in his partnership or poor timing.

3.7 Relations with Jordanians

Refugees in Zarqa live in the midst of Jordanian neighbourhoods, send their children to Jordanian schools and attend Jordanian clinics. Several reports have highlighted significant tensions between Syrians and Jordanians, particularly in northern cities (REACH, 2014; REACH, 2015, Mercy Corps, 2012). Some refugees interviewed said that they had encountered discrimination and verbal abuse, and that their children had been bullied at school. By far the most frequent and bitter complaint was about exploitation by Jordanian employers. Bilaal (37) fixes mobile phones at a Jordanian store for a living. In Syria he had a technical diploma in phone repair and owned his own store. Now he has to work for a Jordanian boss, as Syrians are not permitted to start businesses. While Bilaal went through formal channels to find the job – he responded to an advertisement on a Jordanian website for jobseekers – he does not have a work permit. He is critical of how Syrians are treated by Jordanians, citing examples of exploitation and discrimination. In his job he earns less than Jordanians doing the same work, and his Jordanian customers often refuse to pay him the full amount he quoted for repairs, knowing that he cannot complain because he is working illegally. Jordanian acquaintances often expect him to fix their phones for free.

Despite incidents of abuse or exploitation such as Bilaal's, on balance few refugees characterised their experience as wholly negative, and in most neighbourhoods Syrians regarded Jordanians as generally sympathetic to their situation. Many had received second-hand cushions and household items from their neighbours. One old woman commented 'We live amongst [Jordanian] Palestinians so they know what it's like to be a refugee'. Another woman explained that her Jordanian neighbours were as poor as her, and so they understood each other's situation. Waleed (44) had been given small amounts of food and clothing by his neighbours when he arrived, and said that he felt welcomed, was offered friendship and treated well by Jordanians.

Box 9: Nizar's mobile phone repair business

Nizar (26) has been in Jordan for three years. A professional soccer player in Damascus and a student, he started his search for work on his second day in Zarqa, and was offered a job by the owner of a mobile phone store. Moving on to larger stores he also repaired phones. He accrued experience and his wages rose from 2–3JD (\$2.8–\$4.2) a day to 5JD (\$7) and eventually 10JD (\$14). Nizar now lives in his own apartment and has recently married. He has also established a phone repair business that he co-owns with his employer. The business is small and Nizar is not formally registered as a co-owner. He has paid for the business equipment and has no legal protection for his investment. However, he says he trusts his employer, having worked for him for the last year.

Other refugees pointed to instances where Jordanian strangers had taken bold steps to help them. Sayid, a man in his thirties with four children, had sought medical help for his infant son outside Zaatari. The hospital in Zarqa denied them care until a Jordanian man who worked at the hospital, feeling sympathy for their situation, agreed to stand surety for their medical bills.

3.8 Integration, return and resettlement

When considering remaining in Jordan in the medium and long term, refugees often commented that they felt trapped and unable to better their lives or those of their families, increasing their desire either to go home and or to consider moving to countries that were deemed to be culturally alien. Some said they would go back to Syria if the situation in Jordan got more difficult, while others expressed the conviction that it would be possible, hopefully soon. These refugees had mostly come from parts of the country that had not been severely affected by the conflict. Other refugees, particularly from large urban centres, simply said that return was difficult because their house, and indeed entire neighbourhoods, had been reduced to rubble. Refugees like Bana (36) had made plans on several occasions to return because it was too hard to live in Jordan, only to be dissuaded by relatives still in Syria that doing so would endanger her children. While returning to Syria would not be

too complicated logistically, many have concluded that doing so will be unsafe for some time to come.

Likewise, many were hesitant to pursue resettlement out of fear that doing so would split up their family. For example, Omar was at first interested in resettlement and pleased to have made it through the first interview. In Jordan, he struggled to provide for his family, who were not receiving cash assistance, by working several illegal black market jobs, largely involving manual labour. While he missed his life in Syria he was not optimistic about being able to return, as he did not think Syria would be safe even after a peace settlement. However, when he was called for a second resettlement interview his mother had recently passed away and one of her dying requests had been for him to keep his extended family together. With this in mind he felt he had to terminate the resettlement process.

3.9 Conclusion

The wide-scale provision of food vouchers and cash grants in Jordan, as well as Syrians reporting good access to primary healthcare²⁷ and schooling for their children, means that few refugees we spoke to had resorted to the most harmful means of generating income (child labour, survival sex) or reducing costs (cutting meals, living in poorer accommodation). However, most families we interviewed in Jordan had some degree of shortfall between their income and their expenses. Families who do not qualify for a cash grant have to rely on irregular, low-wage illegal work in order to cover basic expenses such as rent. This resulted in acute anxiety about the availability of work, as well as fear of deportation back to camps. Families whose bills exceeded their cash assistance also worried about paying bills and went into debt. In general, Syrian refugees in Jordan did not understand why their applications for assistance were rejected, and perceived the system as unfair and arbitrary.

While children compared their lives to those of their Jordanian classmates, the older generation is often still preoccupied with what has been lost in Syria and full of anxiety over whether return will be possible. These comparisons make the exploitation that men endure

²⁷ Access to primary healthcare has been more restricted as refugees have been required to pay the same fees as Jordanians. UNHCR has developed a parallel healthcare system to support those unable to pay these fees.

Box 10: Part four of four: Rifat's journey: life in Munster

Rifat's journey to Germany was arduous. He travelled to Izmir from Istanbul and from there paid a smuggler to take him to Greece by boat, where he arrived on Samos Island. From Samos he took a ferry to Athens, and from there he walked to Macedonia and then Serbia. Across the Serbian border he took a bus to Belgrade, then walked to Hungary, took a taxi to Vienna and then a train to Munster in Germany. In Munster he was put in Rendesburg camp for two months, and then he moved to an apartment in Munster itself. He has applied for refugee status, but after nine months in Germany the claim is still being processed. He is very grateful to the German government for allowing him entry and for the support he receives. The municipality pays his rent, water and electricity bills, and he receives €324 a month to live on. The government is also providing him with schooling, language classes and instruction on 'how to interact with the public'. However, Rifat thinks that he has still failed to achieve his aims of safety, family unity and earning a living. He has been in the country for nine months and he has not found a job (he does not have legal status entitling him to work). In that time his mother in Jordan has become seriously ill. Rifat worries constantly that she will die, and in dying leave his teenage sister an orphan, alone in a country where she is a refugee. He does not want them to be smuggled into Europe, as he believes that, as women without male chaperones, they would be unsafe and might not manage the physical demands of the journey. While he believes that his asylum claim will eventually be approved, he is concerned that by then his mother will be dead. He feels constant guilt about his inability to bring his mother and sister to Germany, and is seriously considering returning to Jordan to look after them.

in the labour market, and the uncertainty of their situation, all the more painful. Refugees expressed an overriding feeling that they were 'stuck' in their situation in Jordan, and that the country offered them safety and stability, but no future. Some complained of a lack of agency or a sense that they had no option but to stay in Jordan and rely on assistance.

Parents were particularly concerned about what prolonged displacement meant to their children.

The majority of families faced costs associated with education, such as for transport, uniforms and supplies, though many received UNICEF assistance. Syrian families in Jordan felt that providing a good education for their children was challenging. Children struggled to cope with a different curriculum, and parents were concerned about the quality of the education provided in an overburdened school system. Parents interviewed during our visit in Jordan reported the severe bullying their children had experienced at school or on their way there. Some Syrian children in our study set were not in school, either because of learning difficulties or years lost through displacement. In general, however, parents' concerns about their children centred on tertiary education. Syrians cannot access Jordan's public university system, and private university education is

prohibitively expensive. Virtually none of the parents in our sample could currently send their children to university, or expected to be able to do so in the future. This fed into parents' concerns about downward social mobility and their inability to improve their family's situation in displacement.

The population is perhaps on the cusp of moving from a period of displacement where return seems more likely, to one where the crisis seems interminable. The Jordan Compact focuses on better access to education and opening up the possibility of formal employment, two issues of deep concern to Syrian refugees living in Jordan. However, there is also fear and uncertainty caused by Jordanian policies towards Syrian refugees working illegally in the informal sector.

4 Part 1 conclusion: the perspectives of Syrian refugees in Turkey and Jordan

Syrians who have sought refuge in Istanbul and Zarqa have been met with very different policy responses. In Turkey, the response has been primarily government-led, both in terms of coordination and implementation. In Jordan, coordination has been led by the government with international organisations and donor governments operationalising the response in close consultation with the government. However, the starkest policy difference relates to assistance. In Zarqa, refugees are provided with – and heavily reliant on – assistance, whereas in Istanbul most urban refugees receive little or nothing. Despite these differences, in both countries a majority of Syrian refugees we interviewed struggled to make ends meet and saw few opportunities to improve their lives; this feeling was reinforced by the reality that most refugees were restricted to low-paid jobs in the informal sector.

Refugees also face very different policies towards irregular employment. In Istanbul, most refugees work irregular jobs while the authorities turn a blind eye, allowing them some degree of autonomy and freedom. Turkey has recently allowed refugees to apply for work permits, though most refugees cannot overcome the financial and bureaucratic hurdles associated with acquiring a permit and are not sure that employers want to obtain work permits (given that they are the ones who have to apply) or what their incentive would be to do so. Refugees' main frustration in Turkey is that the only available work is low-paid, unskilled and does not match their existing skills and aspirations. As most are not able to work lawfully, this leaves them vulnerable to exploitation. Most salaries are not sufficient to meet all subsistence needs, so refugees must make trade-offs between priorities such as food, accommodation and education.

Analysis of Syrian refugees' livelihoods in Turkey suggests that there are three broad groups: those focused on survival (refugees who are extremely poor, have limited support networks and struggle to meet

basic subsistence needs); those who are struggling (refugees with some form of income or support, enough to meet most subsistence needs but not enough to live comfortably or with security); and those who are focused on integration (refugees who are financially stable and have strong forms of other capital – social, linguistic, educational). The diversity of the profiles and circumstances of refugees in Istanbul highlights the wide-ranging priorities, goals and aspirations of the refugees there. Providing tailored support to meet the varied needs of refugees in Istanbul – particularly those with added vulnerabilities – will be a key programming challenge moving forward, as will promoting decent work for refugees and social cohesion between them and the host population.

Most Syrian refugees in Jordan bypass and reject living in camps, opting instead to try to meet their needs in a city. The employment situation for refugees who end up in Zarqa is very different than for those who live in the sprawling urban environment of Istanbul. Syrian refugees in Jordan receive comparatively high levels of assistance compared to Syrian refugees in Turkey. This enables most to meet their very basic needs, though assistance and/or income are generally not able to cover all of a household's costs. While most refugees interviewed wanted to work, this is illegal without a permit, and the authorities are vigilant in catching those working illegally. While a large number of work permits have been designated for refugees (and the application fee has been temporarily waived), and steps are being taken by the government to resolve some of the challenges associated with the permits highlighted by refugees, refugees' reactions have been tepid and cautious: they do not believe that permits are likely to benefit them personally, and are concerned about the long-term implications (being tied to one employer, having to pay an application fee when their permit needs renewing). Refugees in Zarqa therefore make employment decisions by evaluating the perceived risks, benefits and trade-offs associated

with working illegally, trying to attain a work permit or not working at all and relying on assistance.

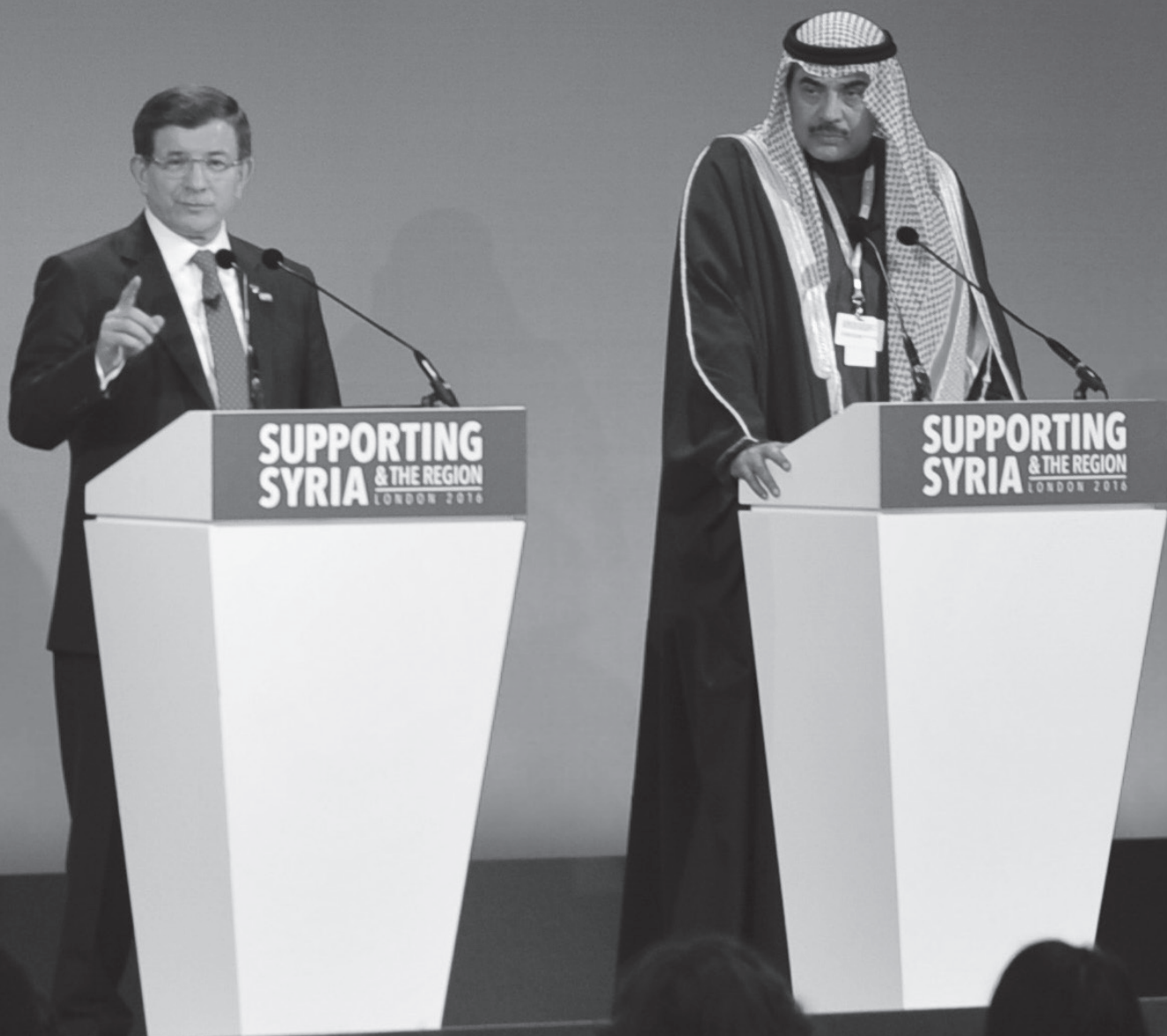
While Istanbul and Zarqa are, in many ways, very different, including in the capacity of the economy to absorb additional people into its workforce, parallels can be drawn between the situations of the Syrian refugees in both places. While there are undoubtedly limitations and barriers, Syrians in both cities have reasonable access to healthcare and basic education. They have had a mix of negative and positive experiences with Jordanians and Turks, and few see remaining in Turkey or Jordan as their desired long-term solution – most hope to return to Syria when it is safe to do so. Far from viewing policy changes (such as those related to assistance or work permits) as a stabilising force or panacea, they regard them with caution and scepticism, and the status quo as unstable. Refugees in both contexts perceive their livelihoods as fragile – in Turkey, because most are unable to work lawfully and are at risk of exploitation, and in Jordan because the introduction of work permits, which many refugees do not believe will benefit them personally, has caused some to fear losing the assistance on which they rely.

Beyond the structural constraints Syrian refugees face in Turkey and Jordan, some of their reluctance to settle in Turkey or Jordan can be understood as resistance to confronting protracted displacement, as well as a reaction to the loss of material resources, social and economic status, livelihoods and culture associated with the war. Resettlement was a desirable solution for some refugees, but it was also rejected by many, particularly in Jordan, due to issues related to family unity and a desire to stay in a country with cultural and geographic proximity to Syria. While refugees in Turkey were well aware of the financial

and safety risks associated with irregular movement to Europe, this was considered an option for some, who saw it as their only way out of an untenable situation.

While refugees' perceptions of their institutional landscapes in Istanbul and Zarqa differed, they nonetheless share similar goals and aspirations. Refugees in both contexts want safety, family reunification and to be able to meet their basic needs in a dignified way. They want a good education for their children and healthcare for their families, as well as constructive engagement with and respect from members of their host communities. They want support to be available for vulnerable people in the refugee community who need it most, and believe that policies should be developed and assistance delivered in a way that is equitable and transparent. They want a basis for their hope that they will not be living in instability and limbo for years to come.

There is a strong sense that adult Syrians in Turkey and Jordan had begun to resign themselves to the difficulties and indignities associated with being a refugee in protracted displacement, but they could not accept this for their children, and were motivated to improve their situation for the sake of their children's futures. As this is at the heart of what concerns and motivates many refugees, it is a key potential area from which to explore policy and programmatic interventions. While refugees did what they could in their individual capacity (whether by working in low-paid, exploitative jobs or starting a small home business), this was at times helped or hindered by both state policy and international humanitarian aid efforts. The next part of this report provides complementary analysis considering these policies and the institutional landscape from the perspective of non-refugee stakeholders in Turkey and Jordan.



Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu of Turkey and Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister of Kuwait, address the Supporting Syria and the Region press conference.
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PART 2

The institutional environment for Syrian refugees' lives and livelihoods in Turkey and Jordan

The first part of this report is based on the perspective of refugees: how they perceive their lives, their aspirations, the objectives, strategies and actions they take to sustain their families and fulfil those aspirations and how they perceive the outcomes of these actions. Through the perspective of refugees, we also aim to identify those actors (state institutions, state policies, government, employers, host communities, refugees' own networks, humanitarian organisations) that shape the lives and livelihoods of refugees, whether positively or negatively. The perspective of refugees is one that is not necessarily systematically gathered, analysed and used to inform the interventions of external actors. As such, this study purposely started with that perspective, before turning to those actors refugees themselves identified as shaping their lives and livelihoods. The study also deliberately adopted a broad interpretation

of what constitutes the 'institutional environment', ranging from formal authorities and institutions to the more informal rules, practices and attitudes that shape refugees' day- to-day experiences.

The study was conducted during a period when the policy environment was in flux. The issue of most relevance was what would come out of the London Compact and the opening up of opportunities to regularise work for Syrians. Given this potentially significant shift in policy, we wanted to know what had allowed actors in this context to move towards much greater support for refugee livelihoods, and what the limits of this support might be. We also explored the role of multilateral actors, which are typically development-oriented, and not usually involved in refugee crises.

5 The institutional environment for Syrian refugees in Turkey

This section explores the institutional environment for Syrian refugees in Turkey. It analyses institutions in the widest sense: those individuals and organisations that shape refugee livelihoods in Turkey and the factors that influence interactions between them and refugees. It begins with an analysis of the Turkish government's response to the Syrian refugee crisis, including the current political environment and the evolving policy framework. The Turkish economy and the informal sector is also briefly described as it relates to the quality of refugee employment. The challenges in supporting Syrian refugee livelihoods – as well as initiatives, innovations and gaps – are then explored in three areas: employment conditions; relations between the host community and refugees; and assistance for the most vulnerable.

5.1 Introduction

The livelihood challenges of Syrian refugees in Istanbul are three-fold. The first challenge is employment conditions, arguably the most important factor affecting livelihoods and the priority for many refugees – as seen in the previous section. Second, growing prejudice against Syrian refugees has created more hurdles to social and economic integration. Finally, the most vulnerable refugees – referred to as the survival category in Part 1 – confront major challenges in accessing assistance and services.

Institutions that support refugees are struggling to address these challenges, overwhelmed by the scale of need, a dearth of information on the profiles of refugees and a lack of leadership and coordination. The failure of the Turkish government to clearly articulate a vision and develop detailed planning on refugee-related issues – through public dialogue and strong engagement with the private sector, refugees and relevant actors – has contributed to growing tension, rather than facilitating integration. While the government's decision to provide work permits to Syrian refugees is a step forward, the number of permits issued remains low and problems of illegal and low-paid work persist.

5.2 The government's response: politics and an evolving policy framework

The Turkish government's strong leadership in response to the influx of Syrian refugees and the resultant humanitarian crisis has led to a non-camp, government-financed approach atypical of most refugee situations (World Bank, 2015). Another distinctive characteristic of the government's approach is the marginal role of international humanitarian organisations, particularly in Istanbul. While managing the provision of service delivery (primarily healthcare and education) for a Syrian refugee population of almost 3m, the government is also passing new laws and procedures on refugee employment designed to support refugees' livelihoods.

The Syrian crisis and negotiations on a refugee deal between Turkey and the EU have accelerated the evolution of the national normative framework on migration and refugees. However, the status of the agreement, reached in March 2016, remains unclear. While the EU hopes the deal will help stem flows of refugees and migrants to its own countries by supporting them in Turkey, the Turkish government is seeking to leverage the presence of refugees to secure international assistance and access EU benefits. In other words, support for Syrian refugees in Turkey is not motivated by a desire to meet normative responsibilities, but rather by political and economic self-interest.

In addition to Turkey's demands for visa-free travel to the EU, other factors have called the deal into question, including disputes over Turkey's anti-terror laws, the possible reinstatement of the death penalty, and concerns around civil liberties following the crackdown prompted by the failed coup in July 2016 (see Box 11, below). The implications for current restrictions on the movement of refugees between Turkey and the EU – and subsequent migration flows – are unclear. At the same time, the EU is moving ahead with a €3bn support package for Syrian refugees in Turkey under the Facility for Refugees and

its commitments under the March agreement. To date, the EU has provided just over €2bn in humanitarian and non-humanitarian assistance and almost €1.5bn for special measures, including socio-economic support for refugees and host communities (European Commission Press Release, 2016).

The domestic policy framework on refugees and migration is managed by the DGMM. The Law on Foreigners and International Protections²⁸ establishes various legal protections for refugees according to their nationality. Only those fleeing due to events in Europe are recognised as refugees under the law (reflecting the original geographical restrictions of the 1951 Refugee Convention). A second category comprises ‘conditional refugees’, who are allowed to stay temporarily in Turkey while waiting to be resettled in a third country. Thousands of Afghans, Iranians and Iraqis are designated as ‘conditional refugees’ and, while their stay is meant to be temporary, many have lived in Turkey for years due to slow third country resettlement processes. A third and final category – ‘temporary protection’ – was created in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. This gives Syrian refugees in Turkey specific rights not awarded to other refugees (freedom of movement, work permits, refugee protection, access to education and healthcare and social services). The fact that this category is explicitly temporary suggests that Turkey may scrap it once the war in Syria ends. Meanwhile, in addition to the legislation on work permits passed in January 2016 (see the section on the *kimlik* and work permits in Part 1), a new labour law in July 2016 extends work permits to foreign students (including Syrian refugee students), and Turquoise Cards (permanent residency cards for foreigners) to individuals considered able to contribute to the Turkish economy – particularly people with skills in science and technology. The law also establishes a new General Directorate of International Labour Force within the Ministry of Labour, with an initial staff of 145.

At the beginning of July 2016, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that Syrian refugees would receive citizenship ‘if they wanted it’ (Pitel, 2016). This generated a considerable backlash from the political opposition and the public. The issue of Syrian refugees is highly politicised in Turkey, with some opposition politicians accusing the president

28 See http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/the-law-on-foreigners-and-international-protection-in-10-languages_914_1017_1405_icerik.

Box 11: The failed coup

The attempted coup on 15 July 2016 took most people in Turkey and most international analysts by surprise. It ended with over 200 people dead and tens of thousands arrested. Thousands of Turks heeded Erdogan’s call to show their support on the streets on the night of the coup and in the days that followed. Following the coup the government declared a three-month state of emergency and began rounding up alleged participants. By the beginning of September 35,000 judges, police and military officers and journalists had been arrested and tens of thousands more dismissed (BBC, 2016). Fifteen universities and 1,000 secondary schools have been closed. Half of the estimated 80,000 state employees who have been dismissed are academics and teachers (Voice of America, 2016). Although immediately after the coup opposition parties endorsed the government’s actions, many international and Turkish observers are now deeply concerned that civil liberties and justice are at risk, arguing that the president is using the failed coup as an excuse, not only to purge the plotters, but also to silence critics of the government more generally (Bohn et al., 2016).

of pushing for citizenship as a means to increase his political base (giving refugees citizenship would potentially hand Erdogan hundreds of thousands of extra votes on the reasonable assumption that newly enfranchised refugees would support him). The Twitter hashtag ‘I don’t want Syrians in my country’ became a trending topic nationwide. Erdogan later clarified that citizenship could be a possibility for up to 300,000 skilled refugees, with an initial target of 30,000–40,000 (Agency France Press, 2016).

Turkish public opinion on Syrian refugees remains deeply divided. There is some sympathy for their situation: in a 2014 survey, 31% said that they had made a personal financial contribution to Syrian refugees (Erdogan, 2014), and Turks shared the global outrage at the images of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, who died attempting to cross to Greece with his family in September 2015. One NGO staff member told us that donations and volunteers had increased dramatically after the incident. Yet relations between Syrian refugees and the host community on the whole appear to be deteriorating. Some of

the academics and NGO staff interviewed for this study blamed the public's negative attitude on the government's poor management of the issue. The government has not explained shifts in policy to the Turkish population, adding to tensions around employment, health and language and uncertainties around de jure integration. Similar to previous statements, Erdogan's announcement on Syrian refugee citizenship was apparently made without consultation with ministries or the public, and without details on implementation, for example on the criteria for eligibility.

5.3 The economy and refugee employment

High employment costs and low skills contribute to a large informal sector in Turkey (OECD, 2016). According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, 32% of the Turkish labour force worked informally in 2015. The World Bank highlights the challenges with formal job creation in Turkey:

high taxes, informality, political instability, and access to finance are the top four obstacles to business in Turkey. Labor market rigidity and the high cost of labor are important constraints to job creation (World Bank Group, 2015).

The structural challenges within the Turkish labour market and economy have affected employment opportunities and the quality of jobs for refugees. As one Turkish academic noted, Turkey has welcomed cheap labour in specific sectors as a way to generate economic growth. On the one hand, this has enabled refugees to work and provided them with a form of self-reliance. On the other, irregular employment in the informal sector has meant that refugees are vulnerable to exploitation and confined to poorly paid jobs, predominantly in textiles, metalwork and construction.

5.3.1 Legal employment

The legislation on work permits introduced in January 2016 has been welcomed internationally and by businesses in Turkey. However, only 5,502 Syrians had reportedly received work permits between January and July 2016.²⁹ The legislation has been difficult to implement in practice for two main reasons: the lack of incentives for employers to hire Syrians

legally and weak enforcement measures against illegal employment; and the lack of outreach by the government to potential employers and employees.

Employers are responsible for applying for work permits for potential Syrian employees. A refugee must have a valid *kimlik*, and must have arrived in the city of employment at least six months previously. The employer submits an application online with supporting documentation. Once uploaded to the system, it takes about ten days to receive a response. If a background check or other information is required, the process can take up to two months. A fee of 192 Lira (\$65) is paid by the employer once the application is approved. However, the impression we gained from employers was that, rather than the application fee, it was the cost of monthly social benefits for Syrian refugees that was problematic. On the one hand, a work permit ties a Syrian refugee to a specific employer or company and a specific job – likely decreasing turnover and the cost of training (businesses in many sectors agree on the need for more unskilled labour in the current market). On the other hand, the work permit means paying Syrians the same as Turkish employees, including social security. Given that Syrians require language and skills training, some employers want the government to provide incentives to hire them. For example, the government could pay social security and taxes for refugees, while employers continue to pay the minimum wage. However, this would risk exacerbating resentment among Turkish workers or potential employees.

A lack of penalties for hiring refugees illegally is another impediment to greater uptake. Legislation on illegal employment exists, although information on the number of employers or employees that have been penalised is not readily available.³⁰ The impact of the

29 'Turkey Gives Working Permits to 38,000 Foreigners in 6 Months', Hurriyet Daily News, 8 July 2016), <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-gives-working-permits-to-38000-foreigners-in-six-months.aspx?pageID=238&nID=101366&NewsCatID=344>. No official statistics are available for 2016. Government statistics from 2015 state that 4,019 Syrians received work permits. Ministry of Labour and Social Security: <http://www.csgb.gov.tr/media/3209/yabanciizin2015.pdf>.

30 The penalties for hiring or working irregularly have changed to impose a higher fine on the refugee and lowering the fine for the employer. According to the Ministry of Labour, in 2015 the fine for hiring a foreign worker without a work permit for an employer was 8,381 Lira, reduced as of mid-August 2016 to 6,000 Lira. The penalty for a foreign worker without a permit in 2015 was 835 Lira, increasing nearly three-fold to 2,400 Lira.

penalties on enforcement is questionable, particularly for the smaller companies that have traditionally operated in the informal economy. Based on interviews and discussions, enforcement was generally viewed with scepticism. One employer in the textiles business told us that she was not nervous about employing refugees: ‘The government and police know very well that many people in textiles are Afghans and Syrians, and never ask if they are registered or social security is being paid. They do not care’. Likewise, the owner of a small bakery said that, when the municipality undertakes hygiene checks, they see that Syrians are working. The police called him to ask if he employed Syrians, and he said yes, but nothing has happened as the authorities turn a blind eye:

It is difficult to find good workers. Employing them legally is difficult. For instance, for a 1,300 Lira (\$440) wage I would need to pay more than 600 Lira (\$200) for social security ... Our sector prefers to employ migrants who work irregularly ... It is the state's fault because they make it difficult to hire them legally.

Despite initiatives to engage employers and refugees on the new law and procedures, outreach to businesses has been limited. Some employers are unaware of the procedures, or believe that employees themselves are responsible for obtaining permits. Others have found the process too complicated or unclear. According to a Turkish expert on migration:

One of my major criticisms of the Turkish policy is that correct information is not shared with people widely. That is why the wrong information is being shared very fast. At a conference, I said to DGMM that because you are failing to share the right information with the public, wrong information is filling in the gap. Their response was that they update their website. To which I responded, but people need to know your address and to know to check your website.

This lack of information, and the circulation of incorrect information, means that it is a challenge even for large companies or the UN to obtain accurate and up-to-date guidelines.

A number of interviewees stressed that the business sector – chambers of commerce, for example – hopes to be consulted on needs in the labour market and on measures to improve procedures to legally hire

Box 12: A management perspective

Managers in a large company were interviewed as part of this study. The company has 2,300 workers, including 30–40 Syrians employed formally (through the work permit scheme) as factory workers. The vast majority work in the factory on 8–9-hour shifts and earn an average salary of 1,600 Lira (\$542) a month. The company pays an additional 700 Lira (\$237) per employee per month in social security and taxes. The company prefers to hire men between the ages of 18 and 35, who ideally would work for the company for at least ten years. The majority of Syrians are hired through word of mouth. According to one senior manager:

Syrians want to work as registered labour and to get their wages from a bank ... The Syrians that worked with us for a year had to quit when their work permit ended. For a year the ministry gave no permission to work. Since January, we started with this whole process. Many companies do not do it because it is too much effort ... Separate entities – the Ministry of Labour, the Identity Directorate and the Police – all have separate systems, databases and processes. To make it easier for us, one institution needs to take the lead.

Syrians. Employers and business owners are significant ‘institutions’ that shape the livelihoods of refugees, and yet they are often marginalised in planning for refugees’ livelihood options in protracted crises. This represents a missed opportunity to engage an important actor within the labour market.

5.3.2 Professional certification

Initiatives are under way to certify and enable the hiring of refugees for more skilled jobs. For instance, new legislation being discussed in parliament at the time of the field visit aimed to ease the process and criteria for employing Syrian doctors in Turkey. Under the new rules, Syrian doctors can apply for employment with the Ministry of Health, followed by clearance from the Ministry of Labour and Social Services. The Ministry of Health will base appointments to hospitals on the need for doctors and Arabic speakers. Once appointed, doctors will receive the minimum wage of 3,400 Lira (\$1,152) a month, as well as Turkish-language training. This mechanism

will also apply to other medical personnel, except pharmacists and dentists. While there is a similar push to certify teachers, the way forward here is perhaps less clear given historical sensitivities around language in education; for instance, Kurdish is not allowed, and permitting Syrian teachers to use Arabic in the Turkish education system would be a sensitive issue.

5.3.3 Livelihoods programming and labour market interventions

In addition to work permits and professional certification, livelihoods programming and labour market interventions are two other possible forms of support for refugee livelihoods – each with their own advantages and challenges.

Livelihoods programming in Istanbul must contend with challenges of scale, leadership and coordination and funding. The scale of the refugee influx – close to 400,000 in Istanbul alone – is not conducive to what can be described as more traditional humanitarian livelihoods approaches, such as grants, micro-credit and one-off vocational training. In general, the international system has struggled with livelihoods programming in situations of prolonged displacement – in particular programming targeting urban refugees (Crawford et al., 2015).

More sophisticated approaches have emerged, including situating training within the macroeconomic environment (based on labour market assessments and value chain analysis), utilising market analysis, building on refugees' existing livelihood strategies and providing complementary psychosocial and other services. Such interventions would require strong leadership from the government, which has placed itself at the centre of the response; effective collaboration with humanitarian and development actors, civil society and refugees; and sufficient funding. There are shortcomings across all of these areas. In terms of leadership, the government, as with its Syrian refugee response more generally, seems to have taken an ad hoc, trial-and-error approach to supporting refugee livelihoods, and there is competition between key government agencies, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Interior and the Prime Minister's Office, over areas of responsibility, mandates and budgets. Meanwhile, the scramble for funds from Europe has resulted in a plethora of new, often small-scale, initiatives (for instance for the provision of services, training and

demonstrations of solidarity with Syrians), adding to the already numerous activities of the UN and NGOs, exacerbating the coordination challenge and crowding out smaller, grassroots organisations.

Government spending on refugees has been primarily for assistance and service delivery in healthcare, education and camp management, rather than livelihoods. While we could not verify this, it may well be that providing emergency aid to Syrian refugees is easier for the Turkish public to accept than seeing their government invest in the economic well-being of Syrians in a context of high domestic unemployment. How spending is directed will also have been a function of the 3RP response. Low investment in livelihoods is unsurprising as livelihoods programming generally receives less funding than other sectors, such as food and basic needs. The total appeal for the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan for 2016–17 was \$4.54bn, of which \$461m was for the livelihood component. According to the 3RP Midyear Report in June 2016, only \$30m was reserved for livelihoods, or 6.5%, and livelihoods was the only sector to receive less than 20% of the funding requested (3RP, 2016). In Turkey specifically, livelihoods received the least funding of all the various sectors, \$5m out of \$92m requested.

Several interviewees criticised the livelihoods activities being implemented by humanitarian organisations as short-term and failing to tackle wider issues, such as the mismatch between labour market demands and the skills Syrians possess, and there was strong support for a move towards labour market interventions. This is in line with a growing body of literature and policy research on protracted displacement (Crawford et al., 2015). Government officials and national and international organisations agree on the importance of identifying the educational background and professional profile of Syrian refugees, but the skills of refugees are for the most part unknown because the registration process only provides information on name, age and gender. In an effort to address this, the DGMM, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank and UNHCR have started mapping education levels and skills among refugees.³¹ The government has recognised that a significant portion of refugees are educated and can contribute to the economy, as the recent announcements on citizenship

31 Interviews for this study confirmed a wide range of educational backgrounds and skillsets among Syrian refugees in Istanbul.

and residency cards illustrate. However, there are limits to how far the government can go in opening up the labour market given domestic tension and the risk of displacing Turkish workers.

While labour market demands have yet to be fully studied and understood, the textile industry, tourism and agriculture are currently the most commonly cited sectors requiring labour inputs. However, these sectors are also largely associated with the informal economy, with its associated challenges of irregular work and exploitation, and targeting them for labour market interventions may risk pigeon-holing refugees in low-paying sectors offering few opportunities for advancement. The government, with the support of the World Bank and the ILO, is committed to reforming Turkey's labour market and addressing the challenges of the informal economy, but this will take time.

5.3.4 Improving working conditions in the informal sector

The majority of business owners, academics and officials interviewed agreed that policies that encourage businesses to formally hire Syrian refugees to meet labour demands would have the most positive impact on their livelihood outcomes. However, given the thriving informal sector in Istanbul and across the country, in the immediate and medium term most of the jobs available to Syrian refugees are likely to be irregular. As a result, measures to improve working conditions and more generally protect those working in the informal sector must be considered as a way to support refugee livelihoods.

While refugees struggle with a range of issues, including non-payment and under-payment, two of the main problems they face in the informal sector are child labour and harassment. HPG researchers visited a multiservice community centre based in an area well-known for its textile workshops. According to staff there, children as young as five or six were working six days a week, ten hours a day. This was supported by the owner of a textile workshop, who told us that 'Syrian kids come and work sometimes in the textile mill, like adults 11–12 hours. In the textile sector, people do not care if they are adults or children'. A collaboration between the government and social services aims to reduce the incidence of child labour among refugees through a one-off payment to families that take their children out of work and register them in schools. While an important acknowledgement of the problem, this is not likely to resolve the need for children's employment

Box 13: Turkish women and the informal sector

In 2004, 67% of Turkish women were employed in the informal sector. By 2012, that figure had dropped to 54% (Inan et al., 2015). As women have moved out of agricultural and informal sector jobs into the formal economy their employment status has improved. This improvement has been attributed to a number of factors, including higher levels of education and better access to social protection. Government policies in recent years have increased literacy levels among women and improved the enrolment of women across all levels of education. The government has also offered employment incentive schemes for women and expanded social insurance to cover domestic, agricultural and home-based workers.

in order to cover household expenses, and will not address the root cause of the problem.

Echoing what refugees themselves told us in the first phase of research, international and national NGOs reported that harassment of women in the workplace, in both the informal and the formal sector, and for refugees as well as Turkish women, is pervasive. 'For women, the problem is physical harassment,' explained one NGO staff member. 'They tell us very disgusting things happening in the workplace, from both workers and bosses. We are encouraging them to complain but they do not want to lose their jobs and so do not do it. As a Turkish citizen, I know it is difficult to make a formal complaint.' Data on harassment is limited, in part because of this reluctance to report incidents. According to a staff member of an international agency, making a complaint requires going to a police station, which very few women are willing to do.

More data is required to understand the scope and scale of the problem. Legal aid is a key element of supporting refugees – sharing options for recourse and informing refugees of their rights. The lack of legal recourse negatively influences the willingness of refugees to report abuses. Increasing the capacity of existing walk-in centres and hotlines to provide information and advocate for refugees perhaps offers a starting point. Case workers, agencies and non-profit organisations told the study that this type of support requires more planning, as well as more funding.

Working with companies in the informal sector to improve working conditions, and with the government to reinforce monitoring and enforcement of labour rights for both refugees and Turkish people working in the informal sector, would help improve the situation.

5.3.5 Vocational and language training

In a survey conducted last year, Turkish businesspeople stressed that the only way to integrate Syrian refugees into the Turkish economy is through legal regulation and language and vocational training (Erdogan, 2015). Institutions supporting refugees generally acknowledge that training is a priority, but there are significant problems to do with quality control, coordination and capacity.

The government employment agency ISKUR, which helps Turkish employees find jobs, also provides training for refugees with a work permit. While ISKUR is developing an Action Plan for Syrian Refugee Employment with the DGMM, which should expand its scope of work, without additional legislation it cannot cater to refugees in the informal sector. Interviewees also noted that coordination and quality control among the many pilots and training initiatives for Syrian refugees is weak. While the majority of training is in the south or close to the border, multiservice community centres and NGOs are conducting small-scale vocational and language training in Istanbul. To be effective, vocational training should be part of a broader labour market strategy, building on the existing skills and livelihood goals of refugees. An evaluation of current projects is required in order to understand the impact of training on livelihood outcomes, including success factors. Identifying the most appropriate skills and sectors for vocational training also requires more attention.

5.4 Relations between the Turkish and Syrian refugees

During the first phase of research, refugees told us how their interactions and relations with Turkish bosses, colleagues and neighbours – positive and negative – affected their lives and influenced their livelihood strategies. Many of the refugees who were struggling or focused on survival expressed concern about growing racism, and prejudice against Syrians was also a common theme during the second phase of research. One staff member at an NGO pointed to

an increase in racism, even among people who might previously have been sympathetic towards refugees. Another Turkish staff member at an NGO described differences in attitudes towards refugees in Istanbul based on class and neighbourhood:

For instance, in this district there are no problems [with Syrians] as it is multi-cultural and they are used to living with each other. Refugees live here, and Syrians are welcomed by the local community. In other neighbourhoods, Syrians live in a closed community and some areas they live within their own community like Chinatown in the US. Syrians do not want to live among the rich. The richer people think that Syrians are beggars and have low social status.

A survey in 2014 found that three-quarters of Turkish people believe that Syrians may ‘cause problems’ such as crime and prostitution, and 72% thought that Syrian refugees should be restricted to camps. While sympathetic to their plight, the majority hoped that refugees would return as soon as possible to Syria once the war ended, and that the government should not let more refugees in (Erdogan, 2014). The survey found some regional differences in public attitudes. For example, resentment and fear over jobs, accommodation and services are higher in the south or closer to the border.

Another recent survey, on the private sector’s perspectives on Syrian refugees (Erdogan, 2015), revealed that most business leaders have low expectations of Syrians’ contribution to the economy in the short term, at least without additional training. It is difficult to measure the direct impact of the perspectives of prospective employers on Syrian refugees’ employment and wages, though perceptions of refugees’ skills and work ethic appear to be a relevant factor in the types of jobs that refugees are recruited for, and their subsequent treatment in the workplace. One Turkish owner of a restaurant said that he selected Syrians that he had either seen in the neighbourhood – impressed by what he described as their moral demeanour or because they displayed similar values – or recruited through word of mouth. While he said that he did not discriminate against Syrians, he nonetheless held strong opinions which were commonly heard from Turkish employers:

I do not discriminate, I have no problems or fights or arguments ... Syrians are lazy, and we work so much. They are around smoking shisha

all day for hours. They are wearing shorts. We are teaching them the way that they should be. They are too free, not appropriate for the culture. They are lazy. They are only working because they have to buy food.

Refugee advocates and migration experts stress that livelihoods support to refugees requires building social and economic ties between them and the host community. This is ultimately a responsibility of government, and there are existing initiatives that could be built on, both by the government and by other institutions. The failure of the government to effectively communicate its plans has led to rumours and false information – and, as a result, increased tension over jobs and services. Consultative planning processes and widely disseminated actions on integration, citizenship and residency and refugee employment could help ease uncertainties and stress. A transparent government strategy that strengthens social bridges (creating relationships and other links between refugees and host communities as a way to support social integration) through sustained public engagement is key to improving relations. One such example is a forum hosted on WhatsApp where activists and case workers share information on the provision of services and advocacy efforts. Initiatives in support of refugees also aim to counter racism through social media, such as the Twitter campaign #SyriansAreOurBrothers. While thus far uncoordinated, these efforts could form the basis of a more comprehensive media strategy.

Shared activities between refugees and host communities – such as sports, schooling, religious worship, community groups and political activity – can facilitate integration. Woolcock and Narayan (2000) posit that, while the poor might be part of close-knit communities that help them to get by, they do not have the necessary ‘bridging’ social capital to get ahead that the non-poor have – excluding them from networks and institutions that can be important in securing better-paid jobs and accommodation. This could be applied to the context in Istanbul: refugees with social bridges to existing cultural or political networks and with Turkish connections generally have better livelihood outcomes. Support for creating such bridges among the ‘survival’ and ‘struggling’ categories of Syrians living in Istanbul could be a way to further social integration and open up livelihood opportunities. Innovative programming in building social bridges through women’s associations could be scaled up, for example. One INGO shared

its plans to support the livelihoods of Syrian women by facilitating projects with Turkish women’s organisations, providing economic opportunities and strengthening shared interests and social interaction between Turkish and Syrian women.

5.5 Assisting the most vulnerable

The second phase of research on institutional support echoed the interviews with refugees in phase one: some form of assistance is required that is not based on employment – at least not in the short term – for those with specific disabilities or with specific protection concerns, or for those who cannot meet their basic needs. Particularly for refugees focused on survival, the provision of services and assistance, with the exception of health, was inconsistent and there was limited support from municipalities, multiservice community centres and NGOs. At the same time, the registration process has not provided data on vulnerabilities in order to enable more efficient outreach and programming. Lack of data on the socio-economic status of households has made it more difficult to plan interventions and assess how many people require assistance. For the most part, accessing assistance relies on word of mouth and self-identification. As a result, while cooperation between aid organisations and the DGMM, relevant ministries and municipalities in Istanbul was said to be increasing, assistance is not reaching the most vulnerable.

Sustained assistance for the most vulnerable requires more systematic support. As the crisis moves into prolonged displacement, this is likely to entail integrating the most vulnerable Syrians into local and national social protection schemes. Conversely, the head of one INGO we spoke to argued for incorporating the poorest Turkish and other refugee groups into community centres currently serving Syrians. This is a model already applied by INGOs in other parts of Turkey:

There are nine million unemployed people in Turkey, so our country is not in a great situation either. There is no need to discriminate on the basis of nationality here as there are many Turkish citizens who live in great poverty and in a dire state so whatever is being done for them should be done for Syrians also, without discrimination. Syrians should benefit from disability benefits and pensions, as provided by the Family and Social Policies Ministry, including vocational training provided by

ISKUR. Moreover, there are many Iraqis, Afghanis and other refugees in Turkey too, and studies should be undertaken to address the problems faced by these groups.

While the Turkish social protection system needs improvement, it does provide an effective safety net. According to the World Bank, which is providing technical assistance to the government on social protection schemes, ‘the Government has developed

Box 14: The Syrian Nour Association

The Syrian Nour Association is a member of the Syrian Associations Platform, which brings together Syrian non-profit organisations providing assistance in Turkey. Membership is determined by strict criteria, to ensure that organisations do not have radical political or profit-seeking agendas. The Platform has a number of thematic commissions focused on humanitarian relief, health, education, the economy and the media.

The head of the Syrian Nour Association – a Syrian who studied medicine in Turkey – described the evolution of assistance efforts since the start of the war and the influx of refugees into Turkey. The Association first opened an unofficial health clinic manned by two doctors, and advocated with the government, NGOs and through the media to bring in unemployed Syrian doctors to support Syrian refugees who could not speak Turkish and thus could not easily access health services. The Association also opened a school for Syrian children. Despite concerns over the Association’s work – for instance that its school was educating the children of militants – and the fact that the concept of an NGO like the Syrian Nour Association running a health centre did not exist in Turkey, the Ministry of Health gave permission for NGOs to open health centres, and the government regularised the school and the Association’s legal status.

The Association has received significant funds from Syrian and Turkish businesses. Like other members of the Syrian Associations Platform, the organisation works with Turkish civil society as well as international organisations, although its relationship with the latter focuses on relief operations inside Syria rather than in Turkey.

an integrated social assistance system geared toward helping welfare recipients get out of poverty’ (World Bank Group, 2015). However, while approximately 3m Turkish people receive social assistance, the figure for those living in poverty is an estimated 16m. While programmes for the elderly, disabled and widows are well-established, ‘others, which involve cash and in-kind transfers, and constitute a larger component of social assistance, are irregular and largely at the discretion of local offices’ (Adaman et al., 2015). The current deficiencies in the social protection system would have to be addressed (as the World Bank is doing) in order to extend it to Syrian refugees. Different targeting criteria would also be required.

A \$319m ECHO-funded Emergency Social Safety Net cash programme, announced in September 2016 and implemented by WFP with the Turkish Red Cross, the Turkish Crisis Management Agency and the Turkish Ministry for Family and Social Policy, will increase levels of assistance to refugees, including those outside camps. However, reaching refugees without access to multi-service centres in Istanbul, and the need to improve current social protection mechanisms, may initially require running a parallel system, or integrating the cash grant into existing social protection mechanisms. Projects such as this also need to consider how to strengthen the role of municipalities in supporting vulnerable members of the community, whether Turkish or otherwise. Strategic and integrated planning (for example the graduation approach),³² a significant increase in capacity and more funding will all probably be required to meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees in Istanbul.

5.6 Conclusion

The majority of Syrian refugees in Istanbul are struggling, and most have mixed feelings about life in Turkey. Existing in a sort of limbo, unable to return to Syria or migrate to Europe, most refugees find it difficult to make ends meet. Meanwhile, the Turkish government is embroiled in the aftermath of the

³² The graduation approach was developed in Bangladesh by BRAC, a national NGO. It aims to provide social safety nets to vulnerable and poor individuals, as well as providing them with assets and mentoring to achieve specific livelihood goals. Graduation refers to a step-by-step programme, from the initial 100% external assistance to a sustainable source of income. UNHCR has advocated this approach in its livelihoods programmes.

attempted coup, renewed conflict with the Kurds and fighting with Islamic State, as well as dealing with a refugee agreement with Europe the outcomes of which are still unclear. Adding to the complexity is an uncertain economic outlook.

It is a testament to refugees' self-reliance that most have attained some level of stability – securing a job (albeit low-paying) and some form of accommodation. Turks should also be lauded for welcoming between two and three million refugees into their country under temporary protection that allows for freedom of movement and some freedom to work. Providing access to the Turkish healthcare system and issuing work permits for Syrian refugees are two positive steps; the successes and challenges involved hold important lessons for other refugee contexts.

Providing support to refugees to meet the demands of the labour market, building social capital and partnerships and finding ways to link poor refugees to national and local social protection systems would help improve livelihood outcomes. In the immediate term, increased capacity and financing for local support services is required to meet the basic needs of those refugees focused on survival, and to address widespread protection issues in the informal sector, notably child labour and harassment. Strategic institutional support for livelihoods also requires strengthened leadership, coordination and financial investment, to ensure that the legal framework governing refugees is implemented, that vocational training is based on refugees' skillsets and the needs of the labour market, and that assistance reaches those most in need.

6 The institutional environment for Syrian refugees in Jordan

The livelihoods challenges facing Syrian refugees in Zarqa are three-fold: working illegally in the informal sector due to the inability to find employers to sponsor their work permit; gender norms that influences women's perception of their livelihoods opportunities and risks; and the lack of a legal framework – or at least clarity on a legal framework – for home businesses, as well as legal protection for refugee business owners. This results in Syrian refugees being unable to cover their basic needs, leaving them dependent on aid and their own personal networks.

6.1 Introduction

Most actors (institutions, networks, organisations and individuals) that shaped the lives of refugees held surprisingly congruent views on the nature of the environment in which refugees establish their livelihoods, and the dilemmas facing refugees, the host community and the Jordanian government. Yet it has taken five years to align international and host state positions on encouraging refugees' self-sufficiency. The sections below explore how this debate has evolved.

6.2 The government

The institutional environment is characterised by a high degree of government control and centralisation; the government leads the discourse around refugees, and its policy decisions affect actors at every level. The government frames its current responsibilities in terms of its historic role as a refugee host, emphasising that Syrian refugees are received on the basis of solidarity, hospitality and indigenous norms, while also making clear that it cannot be expected to be a perpetual and ever-receptive host. Officials highlight the challenge that the refugee crisis poses for the government's ability to deliver services. In doing so, officials argue that government support can only continue if international funding increases. Arguments in favour of greater support are bolstered by the government's use of a higher figure (as opposed

to official UNHCR figures – around 600,000) for the number of refugees in the country – 1.3m – which it says reflects the true size of the Syrian population once refugees who have not registered with UNHCR are taken into account. The government has leveraged assistance from the international humanitarian system in ways that suit its domestic priorities, rather than simply accepting the terms on which the UN and INGOs would like to operate in country (Seeley, 2013). Jordan is also critical of Western governments, which consistently urge the expansion of refugees' rights in the Middle East and press for borders to remain open to refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict, while at the same time blocking flows to Europe (Hargrave and Pantuliano, 2016).

6.2.1 Evolution of the government's approach to the refugee response and refugee livelihoods

Past experience as a refugee host informs Jordan's attitudes towards Syrian refugees today. In particular, the government is adamant that there will be no repeat of the level of integration enjoyed by Palestinian refugees from 1948 (Lenner, 2016). Indeed, the level of integration has declined with each new influx. While 1948 refugees were awarded full citizenship rights, Palestinians fleeing the Six Day War in 1967 were given more limited rights. Iraqis fleeing in the mid-2000s were seemingly received on similar to terms to Syrians, but given their wealthier and more educated profile and smaller numbers they were in practice granted more stable residency rights and their informal employment was tolerated (Chatelard, 2011).

Syrians were initially received according to a bilateral treaty between the two countries that permitted reciprocal freedom of entry and movement, and allowed Syrians to work in Jordan (and vice versa). Although Syrians still required work permits under the treaty, this was weakly enforced, especially as migrant Syrian agricultural workers filled important seasonal labour gaps (Aljuni and Kwar, 2014). While in the first few months of the Syrian influx this situation continued, in 2013 the government began to crack

down on informal workers and insist, through threat of deportation to camps and fines for employers, that Syrians be subject to the same legal requirements as other foreign workers. Other measures included raising the minimum investment required by a non-Jordanian entrepreneur in order to register a business to 50,000 JD (\$70,000).

The government's main concern with allowing Syrians to work has been the impact this would have on its own people. Unemployment stood at 11% nationally in 2014, but was 22% in the northern governorates most affected by the crisis in Syria (see ILO, 2015), and Syrians have settled in areas of the country where poverty rates are highest. The refugee influx has put severe pressure on housing and led to spikes in rental prices in some areas. There also seems to have been a reluctance to allow Syrians to work in case this facilitates local integration. Strict policy constraints meant that agencies could not get government approval for livelihoods programming.

While the period between 2013 and 2015 was marked by the government's refusal to entertain the possibility of Syrians being given work rights or help to work, some progress was made on the issue before the London Conference. In fact, many of those interviewed for this research credit the groundwork laid through dialogue and policy as being crucial to the breakthrough announced at the conference as part of the Jordan Compact around livelihoods interventions and work permits. Individual ministries communicated to key central government actors involved in negotiations with the international community their concerns about the risks of community tension and wasted development opportunities – for both Syrians and Jordanians – of having large numbers of refugees unemployed for long periods. The mainstreaming of a 'resilience' agenda has seen greater emphasis on supporting the government in implementing a more progressive framework for hosting refugees, and the inclusion of the government in planning and fundraising for the response.³³

It is not clear why the Jordanian government suddenly agreed to change its approach at the London

Conference, other than the fact that the international community was prepared to offer more in exchange: more funding, more trade concessions and non-concessional World Bank loans.³⁴ In previous crises, the government has been adept at negotiating compensation for the burdens refugees place on the public health and education systems, water and other resources. Jordan has long emphasised that, while it would like to be a welcoming host, Jordanians were bearing a disproportionate share of the burden compared to countries outside the region, without commensurate international support. It appears now that negotiations over the management of the refugee crisis have moved towards a more open discussion of the costs and trade-offs of keeping refugees in countries neighbouring Syria, while the West seeks to stop irregular migration and severely limit legal Syrian migration to its territories.

6.3 International actors

The range of international actors involved in the Syrian refugee response in Jordan spans INGOs with a longstanding presence in the country, others that have set up or returned solely for the Syrian refugee crisis, and a large number of donors for whom the Syrian crisis at large is a foreign policy and foreign aid priority. Jordan is a key Western ally in the Middle East, and is also broadly allied to other Sunni powers. Major Western donors – the US, the UK, Germany and the European Commission – have presented a united front on issues of shared interest, such as stemming the flow of migrants and refugees to Europe and maintaining Jordan's stability. Western donors would prefer Syrians to see their medium-term future in Jordan, rather than in Europe, and there is strong political support for increased livelihoods opportunities for Syrians in Jordan. Middle Eastern countries have also been major donors to the refugee response. Kuwait has hosted two UN-backed international humanitarian pledging conferences, and has at times been one of the largest donors to the response. In 2013, Gulf donor and NGO contributions to the Syrian crisis totalled \$910.3m, just under \$140m of which went to the refugee response in Jordan (UNHCR, 2014). These donors do not appear to have pushed for Jordan to change its policies towards refugees.

33 As is often the case with the buzzword 'resilience', its meaning is not entirely clear or consistent. The 3RP defines resilience as an activity, whereas the Jordanian Response Plan defines it based on the type of beneficiary (so programming targeted at Jordanians is 'resilience programming', and programming for refugees is not).

34 This breaks with World Bank policy, as non-concessional loans have historically only been available to Low Income Countries. Aid actors have struggled to work out with the World Bank how its funding could support the work of NGOs and the UN.

Unusually, multilateral development organisations such as the World Bank are also heavily involved in the response, alongside other development actors including the ILO. This reflects a shift in policy over the last few years away from the view that protracted refugee crises were the sole responsibility of humanitarian agencies towards framing them as ‘development issues with humanitarian elements’ (see Harild, 2016). The involvement of these latter players – arguably more as a reactive response to government and donor pressure – has supported policy shifts and programmes that gear the refugee response towards long-term solutions that address the developmental needs of Syrian refugees, as well as host countries.

6.3.1 Evolution of the international approach to the refugee response and refugee livelihoods

For the first five years of the crisis, the international response was primarily humanitarian, which meant that assistance was designed to be short-term and focused on basic needs. However, along with multilateral institutions like the World Bank, the UN has slowly pushed a ‘resilience-based development’ approach (UNDP, 2014). UNDP defines resilience-based development as taking:

A longer-term perspective from the outset, focusing on strengthening the capacity of communities to cope with the crisis through immediate emergency interventions, by bolstering livelihoods, housing, infrastructure and basic services; recover from the socio-economic impact of the crisis by regaining productive assets; and sustain this recovery toward development through a functioning and peaceful socio-economic and political environment where development gains are protected (UNDP, 2014).

For the first two years of the crisis INGOs operated primarily within refugee camps in Jordan and were slow to step up programmes outside the camps, even after it became clear that the majority of refugees were self-settled, their needs were high and public systems outside the camps were overburdened, and despite UNHCR strenuously encouraging its partners to move into towns and cities (Healy and Tiller, 2013). Now, most major humanitarian INGOs have programmes for non-camp refugees or partner with the UN to widen their coverage of basic needs.

Moving into host communities has opened up secondary dilemmas. In particular, agencies have faced the task of working out how to support development needs over the course of protracted displacement without generating local resentment and within the policy constraints limiting livelihoods programming. Between 2011 and early 2016 what this meant at the programme level was that livelihoods work could not be done openly. INGOs say that livelihoods work was ‘taboo’ or a ‘swear word’; according to donors, livelihoods was ‘a closed conversation. You could not raise it with the government. To the point where humanitarians could not refer to livelihoods, but referred to “welfare”’. To get approval, programmes were subsumed under other activities – such as education – and limited to certain types of modalities, for example the transfer of materials and tools rather than grants or loans. These programmes were marked by uncertainty and discontinuity, as it was never clear if funding would be granted or renewed.

Through access to public services and cash, food and other transfers from aid agencies, refugees have, in general, been able to maintain a decent standard of living (especially relative to refugees’ situations in chronically underfunded crises). Yet they are nonetheless in a fragile position: they are dependent on aid and over the last five years have built up little to no ability to withstand personal setbacks or fluctuations in assistance. In our first phase of research we found that refugees did not have resources or networks they could reliably fall back on in the event of an emergency. While they were receiving food coupons and many were getting cash assistance that covered their rent, they struggled to afford any other expenses. Many said that they had great difficulty accessing health services, problems that may relate to the withdrawal of access to public clinics by the government in late 2014. Over a year later, those who did not meet the criteria to qualify for UNHCR care were in no better position to afford private alternatives. Rather than becoming more resilient, refugees have fallen into increasingly deeper levels of debt, as well as taking decisions that have radically altered the possibilities open to future generations, such as withdrawing children from school and entering girls into marriage at a young age. UN staff also told the researchers how the decline in the value of food vouchers had immediately led to a rise in child labour and early marriage.

In this situation, humanitarian advocacy around livelihoods was predominantly focused on securing

refugees the legal right to work, in accordance with the Refugee Convention. Prior to 2016, it was widely recognised that programming which did not develop refugees' self-sufficiency was unsustainable as funding was declining and refugees were consistently demonstrating a high level of reliance on aid, yet organisations felt that they were unable to manoeuvre around government constraints in a meaningful or large-scale way. Paradoxically, any resilience-oriented programming would also be the first to be cut as funding declined.

Until recently, most international actors would have described the odds of adopting a sound livelihoods approach to the refugee crisis as slim. Obstacles were present within the international effort, as well as a function of a restrictive policy environment. First, while humanitarians might have correctly diagnosed the acute development crisis facing refugees and the structural issues that underpinned it, they essentially lacked the authority and leverage to engineer change. While UN agencies and individual INGOs could lobby with some success on the protection issues facing refugees, they did not have the clout to engender a shift in Jordan's labour policy or its development strategy. While the limits of an approach which did not involve development actors was recognised early on in the crisis, it has taken several years for their role within the response to become operationally relevant – and it might never have done so without the political opening created by the European 'migrant crisis'.

While development actors have been operationally present in protracted displacement settings and involved in research and policy work around the refugee crisis, as well as running development projects for host communities, they have now become influential in shaping the design of the international response, negotiating with the government over policy decisions and providing the funding for refugee support. The World Bank has announced a \$300m 'Program for Results' (P4R) operation which aims to create 100,000 jobs for both Jordanians and Syrians in Jordan over the next five years. The P4R is intended to 'support the Government of Jordan's efforts to improve Jordan's investment climate, attract investors, reform the country's labour market and grant access to the Syrian labour force to contribute to Jordan's economic growth' (World Bank, 2016). The EU has agreed a trade concession that makes it easier to export goods manufactured

in Jordan to the EU market, on the assumption that this will stimulate international investment in Jordan and promote overall job growth for the benefit of both Syrian refugees and Jordanians. Major donors have stepped up their contribution to the region, with a greater focus on direct budget support tied to livelihoods and education, and applying advocacy to address macro-economic factors that encourage job growth through policy advice and incentives.

This shift may imply a reconceptualisation of roles. Development organisations are already looking at how they can absorb refugees into projects they run for the host community. Humanitarian organisations, for their part, are gearing themselves either to operate in a more development-oriented way, or to limit their activities to those that fall within a stricter humanitarian mandate, or which target refugees left out of these opportunities. UN agencies are thinking about how they can manage large caseloads with fluctuating levels of vulnerability for which their traditional targeting modes are not appropriate. 'We are not a case management type organisation,' one humanitarian agency told us, 'but we are trying to look at that for borderline cases. We are looking at how we can have more conditional assistance as a transition to self-sustaining activities.'

6.4 Moving towards a livelihoods approach

This section looks at how the government and international actors are preparing to move towards a livelihoods approach for Syrian refugees. It looks at how coordination between these actors works in theory and in practice, and then presents a review of the types of livelihood programming we already see in Jordan, or are likely to see in the near future. We look at the limitations of regularisation, bringing in the perspective of employers in Zarqa, as well as the secondary policy shifts that will need to take place for work permits to translate into decent jobs. Lastly, we consider the issue of residual vulnerability even as the refugee response moves towards a developmental approach.

6.4.1 Coordination mechanisms

A UN coordination structure links national and international actors and the Jordanian government in implementing the response to the Syrian crisis. This structure is led by the Jordanian government and

coordinated by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, with UNHCR and UNDP taking a lead on refugee and resilience components respectively.³⁵ Government line ministries take the lead role, at least nominally, in defining needs and response activities, facilitated by UN agencies' secretariats, which support coordination efforts in each of the Jordan's Response Plan's (JRP)'s 12 sectors. All funding and programmes must align with the JRP, a document drawn up through negotiation between international actors and the government, which also serves as the Jordan chapter of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Response Plan. The plan serves as a single coordinated platform for humanitarian and development assistance in Jordan, in which 'principles of resilience-based development will function as the glue for bringing humanitarian and development assistance under one coherent framework with inbuilt flexibility to ensure that humanitarian imperatives are met' (UN, n.d.). Separate from the UN-coordinated response, an independent international NGO Forum (JIF) of 48 agencies works to set common policies, programmatic positions and advocacy stances for INGOs.

In the day-to-day running of their operations and when seeking government approval or audience, UN agencies deal with their relevant line ministries, MOPIC and the Office of the Prime Minister. INGOs deal with MOPIC as well as the Hashemite Foundation, a quasi-government organisation with strong links to the royal establishment that acts as intermediary between civil society and the state. MOPIC used to be the primary gatekeeper for government project approvals, but there is now an intermediate step requiring INGOs to have projects approved by individual ministries prior to review through MOPIC and the Inter-ministerial Coordination Committee (IMCC). For example, an INGO submitting a project targeting education outcomes would submit first to the Ministry of Education for approval, whereas one disbursing cash assistance to needy refugees would submit to the Ministry of Social Development. INGOs are also required to sign MOUs with certain line ministries, depending on their area of operation. The prime minister, along with key ministries, then reviews the proposal in the IMCC, and gives final approval. Significant delays in project approval led, in part, to the introduction of the Jordan Response Information

System for the Syria Crisis (JORISS). Despite this new system, the average project approval time was 58 days in 2015. A key request from the JIF has been to consider any project not approved within 30 days to have received de facto consent. Local NGOs are also required to 'register' under a particular ministry. Most are under the Ministry of Social Development, which has registered 3,800 of the 5,000-odd local organisations in Jordan.

The policies and perspectives of the international response in Jordan should be well understood by government actors, and vice versa. Their programmes and priorities should also be aligned through the approval process that INGOs and UN agencies submit through ministries and MOPIC. However, we found that, in practice, there was a lack of congruence and understanding that this coordination structure did not bridge. Since the beginning of the crisis the policy environment has been fluid and, even within the government, not always well understood. This undoubtedly affects the responsiveness and cost, particularly in staff time, of humanitarian and development interventions. Policies have changed quickly and frequently, with the sudden withdrawal of free access to healthcare being the change that interviewees brought up as most disruptive to their programming and planning, as well as most damaging to refugees. One organisation felt that the burden it absorbed getting projects approved justified hiring a staff member simply to follow the paperwork through different ministries, answering questions and politely putting pressure on the bureaucracy (a strategy adopted by a number of NGOs). 'A lot of policies are not written, so you have to understand what the government is thinking. In a lot of cases approval is determined by the semantics you use. Secondly, it is a difficult process to navigate, one which sounds simple but is not ... Then policies keep changing ... You never have up to date information'. Even when projects were aligned with government priorities, this did not guarantee approval.

For their part, respondents from Jordanian ministries expressed the view that INGOs failed to appreciate their obligations towards Jordanian citizens. 'We always ask people to support our systems rather than create new ones', said one government official. Yet while the primary objective behind the JRP was to avoid the duplication of systems and to direct international funding to those government sectors absorbing the refugee influx, such as the education and health systems, officials complained that INGOs did not put forward

35 OCHA is not closely involved in the refugee response, dealing instead with the humanitarian response in Syria, cross-border issues and humanitarian issues on the border itself.

proposals that strengthened Jordanian structures, and that they were overly led by donor preferences – such as gender-based violence – more than refugee needs, and certainly more than Jordanian priorities. They complained that approval committees in ministries were presented with projects that appeared to propose the same activities again and again. In particular, officials complained about support for ‘soft’ assistance, instead of tangible inputs such as cash or in-kind goods, which was seen as ineffective and creating a culture where refugees attended lectures simply to receive the transport allowance. ‘Since 2011, the start of the Syrian crisis those NGOs were providing psychosocial support through lectures. Awareness-raising is important but it is five years later now.’ This was contrasted with priorities that had been repeatedly clearly communicated, such as for projects that addressed housing needs.

INGOs felt that the government limited their space to actively engage with host communities. According to government policy, when assistance includes cash grants or goods, 30–50% of all beneficiaries of a project must be Jordanian. To fulfil this quota, INGOs are presented with lists of Jordanian beneficiaries taken from the government’s poverty targeting system. This in itself does not present a problem except that, in the process, ministries communicate directly with beneficiaries and do not create an opening for INGO outreach. This limits entry points for introducing the organisation’s work and aims, or otherwise engaging with these host community beneficiaries: ‘We do not have the [licence] to work freely with the community. We have to work through the government and cannot take the lead ... For the Jordanian community we are a wall. We are on the other team’.

6.4.2 Livelihoods opportunities: the government’s role

The government’s current role in the refugee response covers registering refugees for Ministry of Interior (MOI) cards, which provide access to public services; expanding and improving service delivery in host communities with a large number of refugees; and providing a protective environment. The London Compact commits the government to broad goals around livelihoods and education, attached to the delivery of concessional loans and donor funding. In February 2016, soon after the London Conference, the government issued an announcement about the agreement that envisaged 50,000 jobs being formalised for Syrian refugees within a year, and 200,000 over several years. However, these numbers do not appear

to have been turned into formal targets. While in practice some ministries, such as Social Development, view the government’s position on Syrians working as being in limbo and do not feel authorised to begin facilitating Syrian livelihoods, others have already started to support work permits and livelihoods programming. According to actors working with the government, the work permit target has created a perceptible impetus within the Ministry of Labour to encourage refugees to register and support initiatives that will help increase the uptake of permits, such as registering refugees through existing corporation cooperatives (for instance agricultural cooperatives).

It is important to note that Syrians have always been eligible for work permits, but since the London Compact the government has made three important concessions: it has removed the requirement that applicants produce a passport and proof of legal entry into the country, instead allowing Syrians to use their MOI card as documentation; dropped the requirement that applicants produce a medical certificate costing 30–40 JD (\$42–\$56); and instituted a temporary fee waiver on the permits. The waiver was initially granted for three months then extended to the end of 2016, with discussions under way for a one- or two-year moratorium. In theory, this has removed what many saw as the two biggest obstacles to refugees being able to regularise their work: lack of documentation and the cost of the process (see ILO, 2015). Certain sectors are still entirely closed to non-Jordanian workers, including skilled professions like teaching, engineering, accounting and medical work, as well as blue-collar jobs including electrical work, decorating and maintenance, car repairs, driving, guards and hairdressing (ILO, 2015). It should be noted that many of the refugees we spoke to in the first phase of this research had skills in these closed sectors.

Increasing work opportunities is also not solely a question of creating or opening up jobs, but also of allowing entrepreneurs to establish their own businesses. Jordanian companies law does not impose extra requirements on non-Jordanians seeking to establish a business. According to businesses in Zarqa, prior to 2013 Syrians could establish businesses in Jordan provided they had a Jordanian partner, without any particularly onerous requirements. However, when the refugee influx peaked a requirement for a JD 50,000 (\$70,000) minimum investment, rather than JD 10,000 (\$14,000), was imposed. In June 2016 this requirement was revoked.

According to Jordanian law, the requirement that a Jordanian citizen should own 50% or 49% of a business's capital only applies in some sectors. However, when a non-Jordanian tries to register a business the matter is referred to the Foreign Investors Affairs Department in the Ministry of the Interior, which gives final approval on these applications. In practice, many applications are refused. Similarly, the legal framework for registering small and home-based businesses is unclear. While on paper there are certain forms to complete and steps to be followed, UNHCR's legal aid partner, ARRD-LA, found that the principal body responsible for the licensing and regulation of staff 'indicated that, while they have heard of the instruction [to register home businesses], they lack any practical insight into the application procedures and regulatory framework. When asked about the application form they indicated having no knowledge of it' (UNHCR, 2016e). ARRD-LA assumes this to be because very few people with small or home-based businesses actually seek to register them. This unfortunately makes it impossible to predict how the framework for registration would apply to Syrian refugees, or what the onus really is on INGOs providing support to would-be small-business owners (UNHCR, 2016e). Here too, the government has a role to play in clarifying and streamlining a complex regulatory environment.

Many actors we interviewed felt that the government's initial announcement that it could make 200,000 formal jobs available for Syrians would pose huge difficulties. There are only 294,253 working-age adults in the population and half of them are female; permits are limited to certain industries; and even full citizens without employment restrictions struggle to find jobs. These constraints make it difficult, if not impossible, for this target to be achieved unless two huge economic and social shifts occur creating the economic conditions for new jobs and softening gender norms that discourage women from working outside the home. Achieving both will be an immense challenge: low female labour force participation is a result of complex cultural norms in both Syria and Jordan and a longstanding issue, and economic reform and job growth have both been held back for decades by the political economy around jobs and the regulatory environment.

6.4.3 Livelihoods opportunities: international actors' plans and current approaches

Within the humanitarian community livelihoods programming is in limbo. While it is clear a shift has occurred, it is not obvious exactly what kinds

of projects will be approved, or how much traction efforts to support regulatory or policy reform will get. At present, organisations can still only officially run livelihoods projects for Jordanians, though the 2017–2019 JRP was being finalised at the time of research, and will, for the first time, contain a standalone section on livelihoods. Until these plans are presented and approved by MOPIC uncertainty will remain. However, INGOs and ministries are actively thinking about how to expand current projects or create new ones. Their plans include:

- Working with institutions. International actors recognise that the government currently lacks the administrative capacity to meet its work permit target for Syrians. Ambiguities in the legal framework around enterprises, home businesses and self-employment status remain. There are projects which support capacity-building within the government, such as joint visits by UNHCR and headquarters staff from the Ministry of Labour to labour directorates to 'better understand bottle necks and see how the MoL directives are implemented on the ground' (LWG, 2016a). Discussions are under way about establishing a UNHCR-supported Refugee Unit within the Ministry of Labour. Some donors indicate that they will be moving away from funding livelihoods programming through INGOs directly, and instead concentrate the bulk of their efforts on supporting projects that address the business environment in Jordan at a macro level.
- Getting existing employers and industries to hire Syrians. In order to secure a work permit a Syrian refugee requires a job and an employer who will submit the application. INGOs and UN agencies are in the process of, or are planning to, map skills in the refugee population and match them with job opportunities. Other organisations have been engaged in the slow and painstaking process of building relationships with employers in medium and large businesses in the Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs) and encouraging them to hire Syrians. QIZs are areas where investors have been given tax and other incentives to establish factories. The industries in these zones currently employ primarily migrant labour from Asia. In a major project, ILO has been working with agricultural cooperatives to apply for bulk numbers of work permits for Syrians. This has been a major success, and accounts for most of the new permits issued since the fee waiver. Other organisations

are considering trying to replicate this work outside of the agricultural sector, for instance in waste processing, and ILO is working with the construction industry. Similarly, one INGO is working to persuade factory owners in a QIZ to hire Syrians, with mixed results. Typically, factories do not have incentives to hire Syrians because they already have workers from Asia who are skilled in their industry, are able to live on-site and do not have dependents. Successes have come when factory owners have felt a moral impulse to help Syrian refugees by hiring them.

- Developing Syrian skills and enterprise. A popular programming modality is to offer skills and business training to refugees, often accompanied by grants for start-up expenses or materials and equipment. We came across several examples of this type of programme. The complexity of the programme, degrees of attention to business viability, level of post-training support and sensitivity to the gender dimensions of livelihoods work varied. Much of this programming was done when livelihoods assistance for Syrians was restricted, affecting the assistance offered (for example, organisations could not give Syrian refugees cash, but could give them sewing machines or similar equipment). Many organisations have also run similar programmes for Iraqi refugees and Jordanians. It is hard to generalise about the overall success of these projects as they differ in form and duration, and organisations use different measures of success in internal evaluations. Organisations recognise that graduates of vocational training and enterprise development projects are finding it difficult to market their goods. Anecdotally, many are able to raise enough from their home business to close the gap between expenses and income in their household, if not to eliminate it. Perhaps the biggest challenge facing this type of livelihoods work is the ambiguity around the legality of home-based enterprises.
- Syrian spin-offs for Jordanian employment. Another set of programmes involves skills transfers from Syrians to Jordanian apprentices. Syrians are paid a stipend or wage for the training and follow-up mentoring. These projects are based on the recognition that Syrians have skills relevant to the labour market that are scarce among Jordanians. These programmes – under which Syrians are paid to teach trade-oriented skills to Jordanians so they can do jobs which Syrians themselves are barred from doing – is designed to manage the

Box 15: Foreign workers in Jordan's labour market

As well as legal divisions between citizens and foreigners, the Jordanian labour market is characterised by informal segmentation between groups of migrant workers. Egyptians are typically hired for heavy labour such as construction. Egyptians have also dominated the agricultural sector through Egyptian labour brokers, though Syrians have in the past been an important seasonal agricultural labour force. Syrians are considered to be well trained in trades and crafts and to have aptitude as both cooks and servers in the food and beverage industry. In the Special Economic Zones, (mostly female) South Asian labour predominates. These workers are not accompanied by their families and live on-site. This makes it easier for employers to get them to work long and unsociable hours. Syrians, who have their families with them, are seen as akin to Jordanians – less productive and more expensive – and employers do not want to hire them as part of their migrant labour quota (see Lenner, 2016).

government's sensitivity about unemployment amongst Jordanians. Other projects encourage Syrians and Jordanians to form informal business partnerships and present proposals for start-up funds. In such partnerships the Syrian would not legally be an owner of the resulting business and would have little legal protection, but would informally be considered a partner. In practice, many refugees enter into similar arrangements already, given the restrictions on their ability to work and own businesses.

6.5 Work permits: obstacles and work-arounds

Several shortcomings to the concessions on work permits have already been identified. First, the realities of Syrian employment do not match the circumstances in which work permits will be available. Work permits do not grant the holder the right to work – they grant them the right to work in a specific job. As such, they are tied to one employer and one role within a company. Many Syrians will only be able to find

ad hoc work. Permits are also only open to certain sectors, while for many refugees, their skills and opportunities lie elsewhere. Work permits also do not solve the difficulties of would-be entrepreneurs, who face several obstacles in registering businesses in their own name, from difficulty obtaining licences for home-based businesses to the investment ‘fees’ required of foreign business owners. Second, legal employment for a male household head at or near the minimum wage will not be sufficient to meet the expenditure of a typical household. In order for legal work near the minimum wage to provide a liveable income there will need to be more than one breadwinner in a household, yet cultural customs discourage adult women from working outside the home. Even if there is high uptake of work permits for Syrians and many jobs are available for refugees who want to work, there will still be a residual population of vulnerable refugees who are not registered, are too traumatised, ill or disabled to find employment, or who have obligations to care for young or elderly family members inside the home. This is not a limitation of the work permit approach per se, but does draw attention to the fact that social protection mechanisms (such as humanitarian aid) will continue to be needed.

Employers in larger businesses do not necessarily have an incentive to regularise employees, as they have interest in being able to hire and fire quickly and without following legal process, and they may also want to avoid social security charges. Migrant labour, particularly from Egypt, is plentiful in Jordan and in industrial areas certain migrants are preferred for certain types of work, either because they already possess skills in, for example, making garments, or because they are expected to possess them.

Nonetheless, employers in Zarqa claim that Syrians are particularly desirable employees, and for this reason some have gone to extra lengths to regularise their employment and keep them in their business. Syrians are seen as skilled in trades such as electrical work and maintenance, as well having specialities in the food and beverage industry. They are also thought to need the work more, and so more reliable and loyal. In cases where employers had absorbed risk (hiring refugees illegally) or had gone to extra lengths to regularise them, these factors outweighed the costs. The employers we interviewed supported the move to waive fees for work permits and make it easier for Syrians to work formally, even if they had to pay more into social security. It also meant they

would no longer be fined – 300JD per worker – when they were found to be hiring Syrians without permits, even though this did not save them as much money as social security would cost them. They preferred to work within the law.

We found that employers were also often motivated by charitable impulses rather than economic rationales. For example, in Zarqa we spoke to a car mechanic who employed several Syrians – all of them under 18 – as errand boys and apprentices in his garage. These young refugees had approached him for work and he claimed he had taken them on even though it was at a net loss to him, out of solidarity with their plight. He ran a successful garage and felt he could afford charity. He planned to train them to be competent mechanics that work as full employees in his garage or start their own business. While these examples are heart-warming, typically such impulses are only translated into jobs when there is also a compelling economic case for hiring Syrians. For example, Syrian refugees in Zarqa have formed business partnerships and have been hired by Jordanians of Syrian origin, whose families fled Syria in the 1980s. This dynamic is explained both with recourse to kinship and solidarity, and because Syrians have specific skills with foodstuffs that employers wish to capitalise on.

There has so far been both success and unexpected hurdles as the commitments made in London have begun to be implemented. Many actors comment that new challenges and obstacles have emerged, including structural issues within the Jordanian labour market, such as the exploitative practices of the *kefala*³⁶ (sponsorship) work system, and the regulatory obstacles facing entrepreneurs, employees and employers. There are indications that these issues will be tackled either by directly addressing them (likely only in a minority of cases) or by working around them, for instance through the use of agricultural cooperatives to apply for work permits not attached to specific employers. Teaching refugees how to run a home business, as well as warning them about the illegality of unregistered businesses, is another option.

36 According to Migrant Rights, under the *kefala* system ‘a local citizen or local company (the *kafael*) must sponsor foreign workers in order for their work visas and residency to be valid. This means that an individual’s right to work and legal presence in the host country is dependent on his or her employer, rendering him or her vulnerable to exploitation’. See <https://www.migrant-rights.org/campaign/end-the-kafala-system>.

While both humanitarian and development actors and the government would like to realise the goals set out in the Jordan Compact, and many work in cooperation to achieve this, there are conflicts in their respective interests. First, international actors are more vocal about the need to change legal regulations and structural issues in the Jordanian economy, whereas the government prefers to emphasise changing trade arrangements and tax incentives to attract investment, rather than reforming ministries and policies. The prospects for livelihoods approaches are also at the mercy of limitations in the capacity of both the Jordanian bureaucracy and in the working practices of humanitarian organisations, which do not have a good track record with livelihoods programming in urban areas. Perhaps most crucially, the success of the work permits policy is dependent on economic growth and job creation based on attracting foreign investment, particularly in industrial zones. Ultimately, it is hard to predict how international business investors will respond.

6.6 Humanitarian and protection concerns and residual vulnerability

Despite the progress being made towards mainstreaming a more developmental approach to refugee livelihoods, there are still humanitarian issues and serious protection threats facing refugees. Jordan has effectively closed its border with Syria, creating a massive camp of displaced Syrians in the no man's land (known as the Berm) between the two countries. Some 75,000 refugees are trapped in this arid desert region, and aid agencies cannot effectively provide services and assistance.

Within Jordan, refugees' freedom of movement is curtailed by the requirement to live in camps or be formally 'bailed out', a process which most self-settled refugees have not undergone. Refugees working illegally – as they must do – can be deported to Azraq camp or even back to Syria, which contravenes the government's commitment to the principle of non-refoulement. Refugees without proper documentation cannot access public services, and usually cannot access international assistance either (Achilli, 2014; Chatty, 2016).

Finally, even in the most optimistic scenarios there will remain refugees who cannot work full-time, due to

mental or physical injury or because of their obligations to dependents, and refugees who do not possess the skills or *wasta*³⁷ to be hired in a formal job. These refugees will continue to live precarious lives and remain in need of assistance. The sick, elderly and care-givers will need welfare, and those at risk of exploitation in the informal labour market will need protection.

6.7 The local level: local government, CBOs and the host community

The following section briefly touches on three different institutions or groups who have a bearing on refugees' lives at the local level. These actors have little influence on the legal and policy framework that defines Syrians right to work and run businesses, yet they are crucial to refugees' ability to find work, and with respect to social cohesion and access to services. Given the brevity of the fieldwork and the complexity of these relationships – between refugees and local government, local government and host communities, CBOs and government – our analysis can only provide an overview. Institutions at the local level could play an important role in the refugee response, but are in practice very constrained in their ability to do so.

6.7.1 Local government

Local government is confronted most directly with the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan as over 80% of refugees have settled in town and cities, in some cases leading to swift and formidable population growth. Despite the direct responsibilities that we might expect local government to have in dealing with the impact of this influx on service provision and civic life more generally, its role in tackling the refugee crisis has been limited by the intense centralisation of decision-making in Jordan, the limited authority of local government and extreme funding constraints. While local government is responsible for urban planning, waste collection, road maintenance and lighting, markets and building permits, central government provides all basic services (water, electricity, gas, sewerage, primary education, healthcare, public transport and housing)

37 *Wasta* is an Arabic term that loosely translates as the quality of one's social connections in systems where patronage and nepotism may determine one's opportunities. The less *wasta* one has, the harder it will be to find a job.

(Hallaj et al., 2015). Municipalities report to a central ministry, and have very limited scope to make independent decisions or craft local policy to suit local needs. They also have no mechanisms to calculate, collect or use their own revenues.

There do not appear to be quick fixes, as ‘it is unlikely that these challenges will be met without a fundamental re-envisioning of the overall system of local governance in Jordan’ (Hallaj et al., 2015). The King of Jordan advocated greater decentralisation in speeches in 2005 and 2010, and some steps have been taken towards making this a reality, but observers are pessimistic about the prospects given how entrenched current governance arrangements are. Donors have recognised this problem for several years – local government has been the focus of USAID and EU capacity-building programmes, technical support from UNDP and World Bank funding – and there are ongoing projects to address capacity constraints and fund projects to be run by local governments. Yet the overarching limitations are hobbling efforts to increase the authority and role of urban administrations and bolster the response at this level.

International actors largely coordinate and fund Local Development Units to run projects designed to tackle the refugee crisis. LDUs were established in 1993 to strengthen public participation at the local level, but they have never fulfilled that role (Hallaj et al., 2015). Zarqa’s LDU is designing projects that attempt to address issues of social cohesion and radicalisation, but the municipality spends 85% of its budget on salaries, all its services must be provided with the remaining 15% and it is not authorised to raise its own revenues. The municipality as a whole also suffers from corruption and a lack of public trust. While the law governing municipalities ostensibly grants them some independence from the Ministry of Municipalities, local government staff told us that ‘in fact no one can spend 1JD without the approval of the Minister’. Local government actors in Zarqa also complain that, in the rush to fund local administrations, international donors can be more focused on disbursement than programme quality, especially as it takes time to design a good programme and establish a strong network of partners and expertise around it. Local government officials also expressed frustration that they could not get funding from international donors to address the housing shortages that the refugee crisis has hugely exacerbated.

6.7.2 CBOs and local charitable networks

CBOs are also constrained in the role that they can play in refugees’ lives. While Jordan has thousands of NGOs, many of them now several decades old, civil society is generally weak. Many prominent NGOs are directly linked to the royal family, and merely serve as intermediaries between the international aid system and the state. Others have a genuine presence in poor communities, but do not have an activist, advocacy or lobbying function (Ababsa, 2011). Islamic and women’s organisations are amongst the more organised and political.

Our sample of refugees had contacts with several Jordanian NGOs, from nationwide membership-based organisations such as the Jordanian Women’s Union to more local CBOs. These organisations primarily provided referral services and vocational training which, while valuable to some of the refugees we spoke to in Phase 1, was in itself insufficient to support the challenges refugees face and advance their livelihoods. CBOs also sometimes appeared to have a simplistic understanding of refugees’ livelihoods prospects, and were in any case forced to discontinue livelihoods work in 2013. Many, if not most, of the projects being run by CBOs that target Syrians have been initiated and funded by INGOs, which appear to take the lead on programme design.

We asked our informants about the informal networks refugees rely on in both phases of the research. We did not find examples of such mechanisms, though this does not mean that they do not exist. Other forms of informal giving and support were raised during interviews, such as Quran study groups, but upon further enquiry these turned out to be outreach workers for established INGOs. Research did turn up one notable outlier in the world of charitable organisations operating in Jordan: a charity based in Mafraq that had been established by local individuals. This charity claimed to have disbursed millions of dollars in donated equipment such as caravans for refugee camps, and in the provision of free accommodation to refugees living outside the camp in Mafraq. One of the refugees interviewed in Phase 1 had spent 18 months living rent-free in accommodation provided by the charity with her adolescent daughter. This charity received most of its donations from individuals in the Gulf, and much of the money is channelled through direct cash donations to beneficiaries. This charity appeared to be ‘lightly’

integrated with the formal humanitarian system, despite the volume of aid it said it disbursed.

6.7.3 Host community

At a local level perhaps the most discussed, most important and at the same time most ambiguous ‘institution’ is the host community. On an individual level, members of the host community are the landlords, employers, teachers and neighbours of refugees, with powers to open or close off opportunities for a stable home, to work, to learn and to operate businesses. At a group level, the host community can reinforce within itself a feeling of generosity or animosity towards refugees that may be at odds with individual interactions. For example, while refugees in our study mentioned few negative interactions with Jordanians in Zarqa, several Jordanian respondents confirmed that there is resentment of the refugees’ impact on the labour and housing markets.

Some worried that this resentment could boil over. One local government official said that he feared clashes ‘because the economic situation is very difficult now and it could be socially explosive’. CBO workers emphasised that the refugee crisis had made life harder for poor Jordanians: ‘Some people say it is a bad situation and now we are poorer than previously. The refugees make it worse. They came as huge numbers – Iraqis were small numbers ... Syrians accept less salaries than Jordanians that is why Jordanian people cannot find jobs now’. Employers also believed that economic growth was necessary to bring greater social cohesion: ‘Originally we are one country – Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine – we have the same tradition and we have relatives. That is why we are good-hearted. But for some people, because of the economic situation, the relationship is tense ... But if the economic situation was better, then no problem. This is about the government raising taxes and the people blame the refugees’. That said, it was widely recognised at all levels that many Jordanians were motivated to accept and help Syrian refugees based on their values: religious charity, kinship and Arab solidarity.

It appears difficult, if not impossible, to characterise the relationship with any finality. Attitudes vary over time, and are influenced by official pronouncements as well as other cues. It is undoubtedly a complex relationship and it is perhaps unhelpful to reduce the dynamic to clichés, repeated year on year, about ‘rising tensions’. Analysing interactions between the host community and

refugees over the course of a protracted displacement situation appears to need conceptual frames that can accommodate a more dynamic view.

6.8 Conclusion

For many years a range of actors have called for Syrian refugees in Jordan to be given the right to work. The recent concession by the government to grant Syrians access to work permits is seen as a large step in this direction. So too is the broader move by multilateral banks and institutions to put their weight behind a developmental approach to refugee self-sufficiency in the region. This policy change is new and still needs to be fully implemented. Its value will not be apparent for months or years to come. But pause should be taken to appreciate the opportunity it represents: the chance to secure a better policy and legal framework for refugees and better economic prospects for both host communities and refugees, as well as presenting to the rest of the world how host state, host community, refugee and international donor interests can be aligned. Already, Jordan provides a valuable example of how and why one country moved from a restrictive livelihoods environment to an enabling one. In years to come it could showcase illustrative examples of how to support urban livelihoods in a protracted displacement setting.

In order to set such a standard, work must begin on the secondary policy shifts that need to happen to translate work permits into decent jobs. A range of regulatory challenges face would-be refugee workers and entrepreneurs. Refugees share many of these challenges with Jordanians and other non-Jordanian workers. Working them out will require increasing the capacity within government ministries and evening out the differences in how policies on labour and business regulations are applied between local and central government and between locations. It will also require changes to legislative and regulatory frameworks, from simple clarifications of language to more profound reform of existing rules. While the Jordanian government is amenable to working on some of these issues, others demand significant changes to the regulatory system.

Second, opportunities in the formal sector do not match what Syrian refugees are able to offer the labour market, or what makes sense for families’ livelihoods strategies. Although formal employment offers many

benefits – such as a contract, and removing the threat of deportation to the camps – these often do not outweigh its downsides, such as forfeiting wages to social security, paying for permit renewals or being tied to one employer. Work permits are expensive and the fee waiver is temporary. If refugees do not think they will earn more in formal employment, or indeed be able to pursue the rights entailed in the contracts, then it will not make sense for them to formalise their situation. Employers too have several reasons to prefer to hire informal workers, or to prefer other migrant workers. This poses two challenges: altering the balance between the costs and benefits of formalisation through changing the work permit system, or finding ways to address the specific protection threats and needs of workers in the informal sector without shutting out their only source of income.

The difficulty the urban poor face in accessing services plays a role in refugee livelihoods. In turn, services and livelihoods are central to whether

host communities and refugees cohere or not.

Local government and local civil society could play important roles in addressing these challenges. Yet a highly centralised governance system places limits on the role that local government can take in supporting refugee livelihoods, local economic development and even urban service delivery. Likewise, CBOs and local organisation are limited in their capacity or authority. This makes it hard for them to act as channels between the discontented urban poor and policy-makers.

Lastly, there will be refugees who cannot make use of these new opportunities and who will remain at risk and in need of assistance. There will remain pressing humanitarian issues and protection concerns, such as the refusal of entry to refugees in the Berm and the shutting out of assistance of refugees who do not have correct documentation and the deportation of refugees to camps and even to Syria. Attention must not shift from their needs.

7 Part 2 conclusion: the institutional environment for Syrian refugees in Turkey and Jordan

The second phase of the study examined the actors and institutions that shape the lives and livelihoods of Syrian refugees in Turkey and Jordan. In both countries, the institutional environment for Syrian refugees, and for the organisations trying to support them during their displacement, is defined by the strong involvement of governments.

In Turkey, the government leads the coordination and implementation of refugee support, leaving limited space for intervention by other actors, including local civil society, business cooperatives, humanitarian agencies and development partners. The Turkish government's lack of communication and strategic information dissemination on policy changes has created a high level of uncertainty among refugees, as well as for Turkish nationals and charitable, humanitarian and development actors. Clarity on government plans, especially how it aims to implement its new policies on citizenship, would allow for better planning and reduce rumours from spiralling into strong anti-refugee narratives, safeguarding space for social acceptance and integration for Syrian refugees in Turkey. Turkey's inexperience in registering refugees means that there is a lack of data on the socio-economic profile of the Syrian refugee population. Better data on education levels, skills, former work and socio-economic indicators would help the government as well as aid factors design and plan interventions to support refugee livelihoods. Initiatives are in place to map the skills of refugees.

In Jordan, aid actors work in the context of a strong government with long experience of managing refugee inflows. The Jordanian government has positioned itself as a coordinator rather than implementer of the refugee response, with a strong view of what

it needs from the international community. In that space, formal coordination structures have facilitated dialogue to clarify the strategic direction for both humanitarian and resilience work, but have failed to facilitate approval of projects. Organisations have had to invest time in negotiating with ministries for the approval of specific projects, creating severe delays. As the government committed itself to supporting Syrian refugees with help from the international community, in particular World Bank concessional loans, other government decisions, such as those on healthcare and the closure of the border with Syria, highlight the need for humanitarian organisations to better link other advocacy issues with the incentives provided by development partners.

In both Turkey and Jordan, governments are balancing opening up more opportunities for refugees to work with the need to address national unemployment. The challenges refugees face in both Turkey and Jordan are linked to chronic issues in these countries' economies and labour markets – the risks of exploitation, low pay and harassment in the informal sector in particular. Addressing challenges to the livelihoods of both refugees and more destitute nationals in the two countries calls for the involvement of development partners and their expertise in improving the wider macro-economic environment. In both Turkey and Jordan, the ILO and the World Bank are deploying their expertise along these lines, reinforcing the need for a dual humanitarian–development approach.

Investments are also required to address challenges specific to refugees. Changes in policies, even if beneficial, especially in the long term, have left refugees confused and uncertain. Aid actors should focus on clarifying policies with governments (in

Turkey over citizenship and residency cards, in Jordan over the legality of refugee-owned businesses and home businesses), developing coordinated messaging for all those supporting refugees, and dissemination to refugees themselves. For some NGOs, this has required investing in less conventional categories of staff, such as labour market experts and lawyers.

Supporting livelihoods is not just a technical exercise, and helping refugees to build their social capital and social bridges with the host community remains a critical element of integration. In Turkey, those refugees best able to manage have relied on existing networks to support themselves during their displacement. Developing a dynamic community among refugees and across refugees and host communities requires facilitation, especially when

both communities are destitute and struggling to make a living.

Finally, changes in policy around work permits will continue to open up opportunities for Syrian refugees in Turkey and Jordan. However, ensuring that the skills of refugees are utilised and their aspirations fulfilled requires going beyond current approaches. Rather, it calls for a combination of advocacy with governments and labour unions on opening up other sectors of activity to work permits (as exemplified in Turkey with the reluctance of doctors' unions to allow Syrian doctors to enter the workforce), sectoral cooperatives and chambers of commerce, as well as creative solutions as a basis to negotiate with the government around reducing restrictions on Syrian refugees' right to work.



Alaa attends an art and handicraft workshop hosted by UN Women in Za'atari camp. This provides her with a channel to express herself – breaking the isolation of camp life and bolstering her physiological wellbeing.
© UN Women/Christopher Herwig

PART 3

8 Conclusion

The crisis in Syria has changed the approach to responding to refugee crises, perhaps temporarily, perhaps permanently. The response was designed regionally, based on national country plans where host states played an important role in defining the parameters of the response, and since 2015 it has included an additional resilience element, with a special focus on supporting host states and communities. The crisis has also seen the increasing involvement of development actors in support of refugees and host states. The World Bank's new Global Concessional Financing Facility to Address Refugee Shocks in Middle Income Countries³⁸ responds to a long-term demand by refugee analysts for a more coherent approach from both humanitarian and development actors in responding to the long-term needs of refugees in protracted displacement, more and more of whom are living among host communities rather than in camps. It is modelled on the involvement of the World Bank in Turkey and Jordan (and other countries that have been responding to the Syrian refugee crisis). The below summary of the findings and implications of this study all speak to these wider global policy issues.

8.1 Positive developments

The Syrian crisis has produced more than 4.7m refugees, adding to an already extensive global displacement crisis exceeding Second World War records. The majority of these refugees have fled to five countries in the region, and a minority have

travelled on to Europe. It is a crisis of huge proportions and severity; already protracted, it shows no sign of imminent resolution. The scale of the crisis has prompted new thinking and innovative approaches, in particular around urban humanitarian response for the estimated 90% of Syrian refugees who have chosen to live outside camps. Aid agencies have refined vulnerability assessments and mapping to improve targeting, and multi-service centres in urban settings and mobile outreach teams have supported better delivery of assistance and services. The extensive use of cash assistance has also created new opportunities to support refugees' lives and livelihoods in urban settings.

For Syrian refugees in Turkey and Jordan, changes in national policy frameworks and government responses have opened up new avenues to support their aspirations and goals by allowing them access to the labour market. The policy shift on legal employment for Syrian refugees, coupled with further support and goals for access to education for Syrian children in 2016, facilitated by the momentum created around the London Conference, has also opened up new opportunities.

8.2 Uncertainty in fast-changing policy environments

The perspectives of refugees in Phase 1 of the research revealed the high level of uncertainty Syrians have faced during their displacement. Even when positive, rapidly changing policies and national refugee frameworks meant that refugees were unsure of what policies entailed, how they applied to them and whether positive steps would be reversed. This lack

³⁸ For more information on this World Bank initiative, see <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/10/04/following-the-refugees-new-global-concessional-financing-facility>.

of clarity and certainty meant that refugees found it harder to make decisions and calculate the costs, benefits and risk of different livelihoods strategies. This contributed to a feeling among refugees that they were in limbo. The uncertainty regarding future changes to their status added to the stress and fear felt by refugees. For those Syrian refugees in Turkey who had not yet made the decision to leave Turkey and try for Europe, the possibility of building more sustainable livelihoods was a critical factor in their thinking. In Jordan, refugees were deeply reluctant to leave a culturally familiar setting, but could not see a future for their children in the region without better livelihood prospects for themselves and for the next generation. Phase 2 of the research highlighted that a lack of information and clarity also applied to organisations that engage with refugees, whether CBOs, national or international NGOs or UN agencies, making their planning, including on livelihoods, more challenging.

In Turkey, announcements by President Erdogan on refugees' right to work and citizenship were made without consultation within the government or with relevant actors, and as a result took time to implement and translate into policy action – leaving both refugees and aid actors in limbo. The information gap in Turkey has been filled by incorrect information, contributing to tensions with host communities. In Jordan, despite the government's formal integration into the humanitarian coordination structure, and despite a variety of other requirements designed to harmonise international and domestic plans and priorities, policies changed frequently and suddenly, rules and regulations were often unclear and inconsistently applied and international organisations struggled to predict which programming would get government approval. With the opening up of the labour market, aid actors are yet to understand exactly where the limitations on livelihoods programming will be drawn.

8.3 Work permits: a positive step, not a panacea

Much of the second phase of research in this study focused on legal employment and the implications of policy changes on work permits. The perspective of refugees interviewed in Phase 1 revealed the many issues with permits: being attached to one employer, uncertainty over renewing permits after one year

and limitations on the employment sectors the permits apply to. Work permits are not the same as offering refugees the right to work on an equal basis as nationals. The work permit system continues to limit and restrict refugees' engagement in the labour market and the economy. The work permit system has also opened up myriad implementation issues in both countries. In Turkey, further discussions on the possibility of extending Turquoise Cards or citizenship, as well as certification in the medical and educational sectors, offer some solutions to current limitations with the work permit system. In Jordan, while refugees are eager to develop small enterprises and INGOs are keen to run programmes to support them, ambiguous restrictions on business ownership for Syrian refugees appear to prevent such entrepreneurialism. With creative problem-solving, such as the ILO's use of agricultural cooperatives, some of these implementation issues can be worked around, but others are likely to remain intractable.

One significant limitation of the work permit system is its reliance on willing employers and available jobs for refugees. Current and planned interventions seem to focus on mapping refugees' skills and matching them to job opportunities and vocational training, but this is challenging given the general lack of knowledge of Syrian refugees' educational, vocational and professional profiles. Efforts are being made to fill the knowledge gap in order to better understand if and what vocational training may be required. Unless the incentives for hiring Syrians change, employers will remain unwilling to take on the expense and hassle of offering them formal jobs. Indeed, interviews with employers in the second phase of the research highlighted the lack of incentives for them to favour Syrians over other potential employees. The lack of enforcement around illegal employment in Turkey was a further disincentive for employers to legalise work for Syrian refugees.

Vocational training requires several ingredients for success, perhaps most importantly a good analysis of the local market for goods and services, in order to ensure that skills training is matched by market needs. The region can already showcase several sophisticated market-based interventions in the humanitarian sector, including labour market analysis, which have supported refugee livelihoods. Building on such success – and measuring it – will require good and regular evaluation. Developing common measures of success for such interventions at the outcome level and over

time (multi-year impact rather than end-of-intervention impact evaluations) would help disseminate effective interventions. The livelihoods literature and practice currently lacks such an evidence base. However, refugees in Turkey and Jordan have been able to develop viable businesses. This suggests the need to rethink the aim of vocational training, from transferring skills to giving people the ability to apply existing skills and acquire new ones. In evaluating current practices in Turkey and Jordan, it will also be important to understand what refugees seek from training, whether learning outcomes or other asset transfers.

With high unemployment and structural challenges in economies with large informal sectors, creating enough jobs to support Syrian refugees will require large macro-economic interventions. Alongside the ILO, the World Bank is becoming a more significant player in refugee livelihoods through supporting macro-level reforms. This is a welcome shift in a sector where refugee livelihoods have most often been addressed through micro-level household asset transfers and training funded through short-term humanitarian budgets. Advocacy on opening up legal access to full or majority business ownership, as well as ensuring protection for owners of home businesses, would help support job creation through refugee entrepreneurship.

Middle Eastern countries have come to the fore in the Syrian crisis as important donors to the refugee response, alongside major actors including the United States, Germany and the EU. These donors could play a greater role in the discussion around livelihoods for Syrian refugees in Jordan. Indeed, opening up routes for labour migration to the Gulf for Syrian refugees is an interesting and unexplored idea within the discussion, despite the key role such migration has played in the fortunes of many groups in the Middle East (including Jordanian Palestinians). While in the current political climate this may not be realistic, particularly on a large scale, if some countries show leadership and forethought, others may follow.

8.4 Addressing issues of informality and low pay

Focusing on work permits and legal employment risks failing to recognise and address the significant proportion of the Syrian refugee population who are currently working in informal and low-paid

jobs. In Jordan, where concessional loans and other support from international actors seems to be linked to targets on work permits (as well as improvements in other sectors, such as education), punitive raids and deportation back to camps for Syrian refugees working illegally may compel refugees and employers into legal work. The perspectives of refugees revealed that employment in the informal sector is unavoidable, as their skills often lie in sectors which are currently closed to foreigners, where foreigner quotas are already full or because the work on offer is ad hoc and unsuited to formalisation. Work currently being done to address the protection threats that migrant labourers face in the informal sector, including by ILO, could be expanded and made refugee-sensitive (in terms of ensuring that such work takes into account the particular situation of refugees and their vulnerabilities, as well as the legal framework linked to their status). The opening up of work permits may address parts of the problem, but realistically this will not do much to help the majority of refugees currently working in the informal sector.

Development actors such as the World Bank and the ILO are engaged at the macro level in trying to address issues related to the large informal economy in Turkey and Jordan (including reducing the size of the informal sector and increasing workers' protection). However, interventions focused on the provision of legal aid, improving work conditions and psychosocial and legal support for victims of harassment in the workplace, as well as the issue of child labour, should be scaled up. In Istanbul, multi-service centres are providing effective help, but not at the scale required. Support to mobile outreach teams would help ensure that refugees unable to travel to multi-service centres are reached with services and support.

8.5 The role of development actors and macro-level interventions

Macro-level work carried out by development actors and other international organisations is supporting reforms and work that will benefit a range of vulnerable groups in Turkey and Jordan, including lower socio-economic segments of the national population. However, efforts to evaluate the impact on Syrian refugees at the micro-level will still be needed to ensure that macro policy changes are refugee-

sensitive. As seen with the work permit system, macro-level solutions may create at the micro level dilemmas and challenges that may not support refugees' livelihoods, let alone their aspirations and goals.

There are similarities in the livelihood challenges facing Syrian refugees in Turkey and Jordan and those of undocumented migrants, migrant workers and other refugee populations. Any interventions addressing one group should consider how best to address others. Understanding the challenges poorer members of host communities and migrant workers face will shed light on some of the livelihoods challenges confronting Syrian refugees. This calls for the incorporation of Syrian refugees in existing interventions targeted towards these groups, and the integration of these populations within livelihoods support to Syrian refugees. This should be done in ways that do not undermine the special protection regime for refugees, while recognising that addressing the source of the problem will benefit both refugees and other groups.

8.6 The host community conundrum

The host community is an influential 'institution' for refugees: as friendly neighbours, exploitative or encouraging employers, landlords, support networks, teachers. Many factors shape relations between host communities and refugees in Turkey and Jordan, making it difficult to characterise the nature of the relationship. The study confirmed the changing nature of the relationship over time and in different locations, making any description both very localised and time-bound. Even so, addressing the concerns of the host community and programming in a way that is sensitive to their needs should be standard practice, not something agencies are forced to do by national governments. Integrating the creation of social bridges and ensuring togetherness rather than division through programming that is sensitive to host community concerns – especially around livelihoods and employment – is critical, regardless of the state of the host-refugee relationship. Listening to – and trying to address – the grievances of local populations is crucial. In Jordan, for instance, complaints from host communities around rental costs and house prices inflated by the influx of refugees seem to have fuelled tensions with refugees, yet have been left unaddressed both by the government and by aid actors.

8.7 A holistic approach: the need for assistance, humanitarian response and measures to tackle chronic issues

Supporting refugee livelihoods means supporting all sorts of livelihoods capabilities. Within the Syrian refugee populations in Jordan and Turkey there will continue to be a need for assistance and service delivery, for instance for households that cannot secure good working conditions, for the elderly or for those physically unable to work or draw on family support. Even if the Jordan Compact is successful in creating more jobs, the sick and infirm as well as their caregivers will continue to be dependent on assistance. The availability of jobs is also unlikely to alter the cultural expectations that compel women to take on the majority of childcare and domestic responsibilities, and which discourage them from working outside the home. Access to services, especially education and healthcare, should remain part of a holistic programme of livelihoods support. In an ideal world, a longer-term, sustainable approach to supporting those who cannot work would include integrating Syrian refugees into existing social protection systems, but this is a very sensitive issue for governments.

Tackling the distinct but chronic issues facing Turkey and Jordan's labour markets, as well as the livelihoods challenges confronting nationals, through a longer-term development approach (rather than emergency aid or humanitarian assistance) will help create a better environment, both for host communities and for Syrian refugees. However, while the protracted nature of displacement means that more developmental approaches are required to support Syrian refugees, assistance or some form of social protection will also be needed for households that cannot secure good working conditions, for the elderly and for those physically unable to work or who cannot draw on family support. The situation in the Berm at the Jordanian border has highlighted the importance of tackling the humanitarian challenges facing Syrians. In their advocacy and funding, donors and aid actors should consider both these humanitarian challenges and the wider, longer-term development work taking place.

The findings of the two case studies highlight how different each context is for Syrian refugees. It would be difficult to generalise the findings to other parts of Jordan or Turkey, let alone to other countries in the

region. In particular, varying levels of assistance and access to services in different localities means that refugees will develop different strategies to sustain themselves. In addition, the two populations of Syrian refugees in Jordan and Turkey have different characteristics, both in terms of the environment they came from in Syria and their socio-economic as well as educational backgrounds. These are elements that will change the livelihoods goals refugees set, the strategies they use to achieve them and the outcomes they experience. However, in broad terms there may be common themes and issues to look out for, including how refugees react to policy changes and the uncertainty this creates; the diversity of socio-economic status among the refugee population and the implications this has for livelihoods support; and the issue of host community–refugee relations. Rather than assuming that these findings will be replicated in other contexts where refugees – even specifically Syrian refugees – live, these findings can help establish lines of inquiry to identify the factors that shape refugee livelihoods.

8.8 Implications for funding and programming

Syrian refugees are initiating all sorts of activities to sustain themselves and their families during displacement. For many this has meant relying on existing networks. While engineering relationships and networks is a challenge, funding and programming to support the livelihoods of refugees can build social capital and help reduce isolation, for instance by supporting associative life (community organisations, civil society groups) among and across refugees and host communities.

The perspective of refugees is a valuable and important input into programme design, monitoring and evaluation, and helps identify the obstacles faced by refugees acting on their own initiative. Ensuring the full integration of refugee perspectives should allow for less supply-driven programming and more refugee-oriented support. One focus area will be to continue monitoring the reactions and attitudes of refugees regarding work permit schemes and the impact work permits have on livelihoods options. Fully integrating the refugee perspective on work and the impact work permits have on livelihoods outcomes legislation will also require more analysis of how refugees perceive

their rights and the environment for home-based businesses and entrepreneurship. Investing in aid agencies' capacity to navigate the maze of national laws on businesses would support their advocacy for refugees, and guide them in the initiatives they take. This legal capacity would also allow aid agencies to increase their ability to navigate refugees through the uncertainty of fast-changing policies.

While working in the informal sector does not necessarily imply exploitation and low pay, it does increase the risk of both. Staff and resources should be dedicated to reaching out to those working in the informal sector (not simply waiting for them to ask for help, but actively seeking to support refugees working in the informal sector) jointly with other organisations already advocating for and supporting interventions to safeguard workers' rights. Activities should include joint advocacy as well as providing legal aid and psychosocial support to refugees facing exploitation.

In Turkey, more information on the educational background, skills and socio-economic status of Syrian refugees would enable better-targeted support using a range of assistance (hopefully increasingly linked to existing social protection systems) within a graduation approach model from assistance towards self-reliance. In Jordan, a graduation approach could also be used to support refugee households with a safety net while they develop skills and opportunities to improve their livelihoods outcomes.

As development partners increasingly join the response (the World Bank, the ILO, UNDP), supporting coherent concurrent development and humanitarian work, especially monitoring and evaluating interventions based on how they have affected refugees at the micro level, including through gathering refugees' perspectives, will require investments in collaborative programming. Similarly, while progress is being made by governments and aid actors to better support the livelihoods of refugees in Turkey and Jordan, the resettlement of Syrian refugees in other regions, including Europe, should be expanded. European countries should contribute further to ensure the protection of Syrian refugees, including facilitating legal and safer routes to asylum. While the international community has been vocal on how Jordan and Turkey should respond to the Syrian refugee crisis, more should be done to improve the protection environment and living conditions of Syrian refugees in Europe.

This study was conducted in the context of larger, longer and more urban forced displacement. It also took place at a time when the international community is dedicating more energy to rethinking humanitarian assistance and addressing the challenges posed by refugee flows and migration. The World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016 aimed to generate commitments to reduce suffering and deliver better for people affected by crises, and multi-year funding – part of the Grand Bargain that emerged from the summit – will provide a better mechanism for responding to protracted displacement. However, the summit produced only modest outcomes in terms of addressing the global refugee crisis. Likewise, the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants, held in New York in September 2016, produced a commitment to greater responsibility-sharing and working towards a Global Compact on refugees by 2018, as well as a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. However, the framework simply reiterates existing approaches to addressing the challenges of forced displacement, including an emphasis on whole-of-society engagement and activities to support self-reliance.

The New York summit is testament to the extent to which the Syria crisis has forced a reaction among practitioners, policy-makers and decision-makers. The long-term policy implications of how the crisis has been handled at the local, national and international level will provide a wealth of lessons in the near future and, if these lessons are learned, may inform better responses to urban refugee displacement as well as out-of-camp protracted displacement. As policies in donor capitals and host states evolve, critical engagement by the humanitarian community will be essential in ensuring that the interests of refugees are placed at the centre of the discussion, and that success is defined by positive outcomes for refugees (rather than positive outcomes for host and donor states). Host governments have used the political and economic interests of donors and powerful countries to support their own political and economic goals. Evidence from this study suggests that this approach has not necessarily led to better outcomes for refugees. Humanitarian organisations must navigate these political and economic interests with strong humanitarian advocacy to ensure that they offer opportunities for refugees to fulfil their aspirations and livelihoods goals.

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