ISWG Meeting Note

May 2025

Inter-Sector Working Group **Jordan**

ISWG Meeting Note and Action Points

Date / Time / Venue	**Thursday, 29 May 2025, 11:00 - 12:30, UNICE office**
Attendees	Inter-Sector Coordinator, Sector Coordinators, Leads/Co-Leads of the Shelter, WASH, Food Security Basic Needs, Education, Health, Economic Empowerment and Protection sectors, in addition to the UNHCR Deputy representative , Senior Protection and Senior Gender Advisor, UN Women Gender expert and UNHCR.

Summary of Recommendations and Outcomes

The meeting began with a warm acknowledgment by the ISWG Chair, who extended appreciation for the continued commitment and efforts of sector leads and partners. Emphasis was placed on ensuring that all feedback from partners is reflected in the final version of the ISWG prioritization presentation. The Chair emphasized the importance of prioritizing lifesaving activities, and continuing essential services. Additionally, the Chair advocated for sustained funding to ensure these services remain operational, thereby preventing a regression into a humanitarian crisis for refugees choosing to remain in Jordan. The sustainability of deprioritized services was also highlighted.

Agenda:

- **Operational Updates**
- **Review of the ISWG Prioritization Exercise**
- **AOB**

Operational Updates

Update on Emirates Jordan Camp (EJC) Closure

The Head of UNHCR's Technical Unit provided a detailed briefing on the closure of the Emirates Jordan Camp (EJC). Initial discussions around the camp's closure emerged in early 2025, prompting negotiations to delay the timeline and allow for contingency planning. Despite initial resistance and a granted grace period, official notification was received in early May confirming the closure between 13 and 31 June. In response, a small planning committee was established to prepare for the relocation of residents to Azraq Camp and to facilitate voluntary returns for those wishing to go back to Syria. Due to government sensitivities, the planning and relocation processes were carried out discreetly. An intention survey was conducted to inform planning assumptions, with an estimated 70–75% of residents expected to opt for return to Syria, while the remainder would relocate to Azraq. While both Azraq and Zaatari were considered, the authorities opted to begin with

Azraq, with families responsible for costs if selecting alternative locations. Over the preceding months, coordinated efforts among UNHCR, UNICEF, NRCS, and other partners prepared for the reception of approximately 350 families in Azraq. The first relocation, involving 20 families, began on 21 May. As of 28 May, around 625 individuals had been relocated. Counseling services were provided to ensure informed decisions, and support for transport and luggage was offered in collaboration with authorities. A private donor also contributed additional support for voluntary return, helping to preserve the principle of voluntariness. Despite logistical challenges and occasional setbacks, the process remained largely on track. Confidential feedback and issues encountered were relayed discreetly to the authorities. Given the sensitivity of the operation, UNHCR's role remained limited but focused on ensuring protection standards were upheld. At the time of the meeting, another movement involving approximately 700 individuals was underway, and UNHCR was preparing its own support package for voluntary return. One concern raised was that the luggage allowance offered by the private donor exceeded that of UNHCR, making it a preferred option among refugees. UNHCR committed to reviewing and potentially adjusting its luggage policy accordingly.

The UNHCR Deputy Representative acknowledged the challenges of the relocation and return process, while recognizing that a gradual and pragmatic solution was taking shape. During a recent visit to Village 2 in Azraq, relocated families expressed a general sense of acceptance, with many demonstrating resilience and hope for a stable future. He noted the importance of the quiet partnership with WFP and UNICEF in the early stages of planning, which was instrumental in identifying solutions within the boundaries set by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), which had requested confidentiality. The efforts of UNHCR's technical team and coordinator were commended for enabling effective cross-agency communication. A particular concern raised by refugees was the ability to complete their academic exams, including university-level exams. Thanks to coordinated efforts, a grace period was established to accommodate this need. Feedback from relatives returning post-exams suggested a trend of returnees deferring their movement until education obligations were completed. These preferences were respected to avoid unnecessary relocation or disruption.

The ISWG Chair addressed a key question on whether a buffer period was indeed in place to allow students to sit for final exams. The representative from the Ministry of Education emphasized the critical importance of education and expressed the Ministry's willingness to accommodate students' needs, including the flexible scheduling of exams. Plans for student transportation were also discussed, including the provision of buses to ensure safe and timely access to exam venues. Additionally, updates were provided on cash assistance in the camps and the need to address challenges related to remittances from overseas. The discussion touched on ongoing efforts to collaborate with the private sector to support relocation and reintegration initiatives.

REVIEW OF THE ISWG PRIORITIZATION EXERCISE

The ISWG Chair presented the outcomes of the ISWG Prioritization Exercise, commending the dedication of all sector coordinators and partners for their intensive work, especially during the final stages of consolidation. The Chair recommended introducing the prioritization schema upfront to provide a coherent overview without implying a rigid ranking of activities.

The group agreed on a categorization approach, grouping activities into three main levels:

- **Life-Saving Activities: Immediate, essential services critical to survival, including WASH, food, shelter, and health services within camps.**
- **Continuing Activities: Services that, while not immediately life-saving, are vital to wellbeing and protection, and must be sustained wherever possible.**

- **Deprioritized Activities: Services that may be scaled down or suspended but will require advocacy and collaboration with development actors or alternative partners to address over time.**

The Chair clarified the approach taken in both geographic and functional prioritization, emphasizing distinctions between needs in camps and host communities. A discussion on urgency versus importance highlighted the need to balance immediate humanitarian needs with longer-term priorities. Protection was recognized as a cross-cutting concern and reaffirmed as a life-saving activity that must remain integral across all sectors.

Next Steps

The group agreed to conduct a final review of the presentation, ensuring it reflects collective feedback and sector-specific priorities. An interactive approach was encouraged during any external presentation to allow flexibility and immediate adjustments as needed. Continued collaboration and sectoral engagement will be essential to refine messaging and support informed decision-making by the JoSH Committee.

CONCLUSIONS

The meeting concluded with recognition of the unified effort demonstrated by all participating sectors. By presenting clear, structured, and evidence-based recommendations, the ISWG aims to strengthen the credibility of the coordination platform and enhance donor confidence. A commitment was made to continue delivering holistic, coherent services that meet essential needs despite significant funding challenges.

Final revisions to the prioritization presentation will be made before submission to the JoSH.

The date of the next ISWG meeting remains to be determined.