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PARTICIPATORY REFLECTION AND ACTION (PRA) REPORT

"FACTORS AFFECTING THE EDUCATIONAL SITUATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN JORDAN"

20 JANUARY 2013

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INTRODUCTION

The current situation of rapid changes, complex challenges, and armed conflicts across the Arab world has resulted in widespread migration both internally and across international borders. Many have been left in a state of dejection, displacement, and tremendous need. NGOs of all kinds thus have an ethical and humanitarian responsibility to minimize the social, economic, and psychological impact inflicted on these people.

Children and youth, women, the elderly, and other in-need groups such as the poor, illiterate, broken families, and refugees remain those most affected by conflict and the most vulnerable. If there are no available programs to meet the needs of these vulnerable populations and provide safety and livelihood opportunities, an environment is created for the emergence of exploitation, abuse, delinquency, and extremism, any of which increase the political and social instability of affected countries.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as adopted by the UN General Assembly, every human being below the age of eighteen should be given special protection and must be given the adequate means and opportunities necessary for his/her development physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and socially in a natural atmosphere of freedom and dignity where his/her best interests are of paramount consideration. The Convention also outlines principles that children have the right to education and to be enabled with equal opportunities to develop their sense of moral and social responsibility in order to become productive members of society. The interests of the child are the guiding principles for those responsible for his/her education and growth.

Given these mandates, NGOs both local and international have taken up the responsibility for cooperation and for dealing objectively with one of the issues of greatest public concern today—the issue of Syrian refugees—with the goal of both understanding their current social, economic, health, educational, and psychological condition, as well as developing recommendations, programs, and appropriate interventions to provide a reasonable level of support and protection to prevent the isolation or exploitation of these families.

A Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) study is based on a methodology of extensive community participation in all stages, where the outputs of the study are the results of fully participatory work between a large number of organizations, individuals, and institutions in the community. Information and outcomes of the study reflect the perspectives of the local community and the target group, both those who are directly and indirectly affected by the issues addressed by the study.

This report is the product of a collaboration between Questscope and UNICEF and is directed only to those who are involved in developing the capabilities of individuals and institutions dealing with refugees and victims of the current crisis in Syria. The information contained herein is intended for the sole purpose of developing programs for victims of the conflict and not for the purpose of publication or promotion. Any publication or dissemination to entities other than those directly involved in the research shall require prior approval.

THE PARTICIPATORY REFLECTION AND ACTION (PRA) METHODOLOGY

Across the development and aid industries, there has been a shift towards greater community involvement and integration in various stages of the development process. New models have challenged community members to interact with their needs and problems and to look inward for solutions already contained, solutions that will restore both their confidence and their faith in meeting needs. These tactics greatly increase the potential impact and efficiency of outside interventions. In general, outside groups can offer only limited inputs for limited periods, thus reaffirming the need to empower from within and utilize local resources to meet needs. In other words, the community itself should put forth the greatest effort to meet their own needs and solve internal problems, with appropriate, limited inputs that others can provide.

New models have aimed to maximize the quality of community development programs and thus to reach a greater depth of understanding of the complexities and interactions of communities. The Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) study is one of these new models that emerged, and it has proven a very successful application of the new development and research paradigm.

The PRA is way to learn from and with community members in order to understand the complexities and dimensions of a particular subject. It is not intended to collect accurate statistical information. The methodology relies on partnership and is enhanced by community knowledge and local expertise in the process of analyzing problems and finding the best solutions. Community members are deeply involved in analyzing and evaluating data, and in identifying opportunities to build solutions, programs, and projects based on research results.

The PRA is also characterized by its provision of objective data that is focused yet diverse and is able to be verified and compared quickly. The PRA takes into account all available local resources as complementary elements in the development process, connecting human resources and knowledge resources and utilizing the skills and capabilities of local organizations across a variety of sectors.

The most important feature of this particular PRA, which focuses on the educational situation of Syrian refugees in Jordan, is the participation of Jordanians and Syrians as one team in planning, implementing, and analyzing the study, and in realizing clearly the needs and problems of each community and the potential for constructive cooperation in proposing realistic ideas based in a clear understanding of the situation.

THE RESEARCH SAMPLE POPULATION

During the training component on fieldwork design, the teams decided upon the research sample. They aimed to cover different sub-groups within the broader target population.

Chart (1): Research Sample

Type of Interview	Interviewed	Interviews	Category
Group	760	548	Syrian Families
Group	94	63	Jordanian Families
Individual	129	129	Syrian Individuals
Individual	97	97	Jordanian Individuals
Individual	9	9	Commercial/Business owners
Specialized	8	8	NGOs
Specialized	16	16	Governmental Entities
	1113	870	

RESEARCH SITES

Mafraq Governorate

The Mafraq Governerate is the second largest governorate in Jordan in terms of physical area, at 26,541km^2. It has a population of 293,670 (4.7% of the population of Jordan). Its eastern border is with Iraq. Its northern border is with Syria, and its southern border with Saudi Arabia. Within the city of Mafraq is the Jaber border crossing, connecting Jordan and Syria. The crossing is approximately 20km from the city center. Mafraq has been one of the cities that, due to its proximity to the border, has hosted a great number of refugees.

Some of the most important tribes that inhabit the area are the Al-Adhamat, Al-Masa'eed, Al-Zbeed, and Al-Ghayath families, the Bani Khalid tribe, the Bani Hassan tribe, and the A'nza tribe. Many of these families have historical, territorial, and family connections in Syria, and thus a high number of refugee families chose to settle in Mafraq.

Many families from Syria also settled in the Bela'ma area, a rural area that falls under the administrative control of Marfaq Governorate. Its area is 2,152 acres, and has approximately 25,000 inhabitants. Most of the Jordanian residents of the area work in the army or with the government, with others working in agriculture and herding.

Amman Governorate

Amman, the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, is the largest city in the Kingdom in terms of area and population, with 2,200,000 inhabitants. The Municipality of Amman measures 1,680km^2. It is the commercial center of Jordan and the heart of the country's education and economic systems. Although Amman is far from the border, a significant number of Syrian families have come to Amman, particularly to the eastern part of the city, specifically the Hashemi al-Shamali, Hussein Camp, Mahatta, and Marka areas.

These areas are popular among arrivals from Syria because they are lower-income areas with lower rent prices. Seeing as most of the refugees are involved in trade and manual labor industries, a higher number of job opportunities were available in Amman as compared to more rural governorates.

Irbid Governorate

The Irbid Governorate is located in the northwestern tip of Jordan, in the Yarmouk River Basin and Jordan Valley. Parts of Irbid extend to the Golan Plateau that covers northern Jordan. To the north of Irbid is Syria. The Jordan River marks it Western border, and the Mafraq Governorate lies to its East. To the South are the Jarash, Balqa, and Ajloun Governorates. The estimated area of the Irbid Governorate is 1,575km^2, and it is the second largest governorate in terms of population, with 1,112,000 inhabitants (17.8% of the population of Jordan).

The governorate borders Syria, and its proximity to the Ramtha border, has made it a destination for a large number of Syrian refugees. Additionally, Irbid is the third most important commercial area in the Kingdom, making it an attractive point of refuge for Syrian families seeking job opportunities to meet livelihood needs.

Municipality of Ramtha

The municipality of Ramtha is located in the northernmost area of Jordan very close to the shared border with Syria, opposite to the Syrian city of Dara'a. It sits just 3km from the border. Ramtha's population is 96,698 according to 2010 statistics. Ramtha is part of the greater Plain of Houran and sits in the Yarmouk River Basin. Ramtha is 458km^2 in size. Economically, Ramtha is an important border access point with Syria and thus depends on mutual trade with Dara'a in a variety of goods. Ramtha's advantageous location has led to the city's economic revitalization in recent years.

The strong economic relations between the two border cities has led to the establishment of cross-border family and friendship relations over the past decades. These relationships have made Ramtha a popular point of refugee for Syrians coming across the border. Families have settled both in Ramtha city and its surrounding villages.

PRA FINDINGS

1. SOCIAL SITUATION OF REFUGEE FAMILIES

Syrians have been seeking refuge in Jordan since the beginnings of the unrest in March of 2011. Jordan was a natural choice for many fleeing the violence in Syria not only because of its proximity and open border, but also because of the kinship and tribal connections shared between the two countries. For example, generally speaking, it is common to find tribal ties between residents of Homs, Syria, and Mafraq, Jordan, and between those from Dara'a, Syria, and Ramtha, Jordan.

A sizeable portion of southern Syria forms the Plain of Houran, which also encompasses much of northern Jordan. Tribal ties have a longer history than the modern borders between Syria and Jordan, meaning that families are often spread across both sides of the border. Major tribes of this area include the Bani Khaled, Al-Aza'amat, Al-Masa'eed, Al-Sharafat, Al-Zubaid, Al-Ghayath, Bani Hassan, Al-Zubi, and Al-Rashdan tribes.

Ramtha, the Jordanian city closest to the border with Syria, has long been a major point of cross-border trade. As a result of this position and role, Ramtha has naturally been a place of converging relationships and professional and person ties; therefore, Ramtha has been one of the most common settlement areas for refugees coming from Syria.

Each refugee family came from Syria with a unique background and set of skills and needs. The characteristics of skills and needs, in general, dictated in which city families chose to settle. For example, Amman and Irbid are economic centers and therefore have attracted Syrian families from trade and commerce backgrounds seeking labor opportunities. Mafraq and Ramtha, in contrast, have attracted families with greater tribal connections to Jordan or those from agricultural and low-skill work backgrounds.

In general the families coming from Syria have been welcomed into host communities. Those who settled in Ramtha are concentrated in the Al-Rashdan, eastern, and southern neighborhoods. In Mafraq higher concentrations are found in the Al-Souq, Al-Hussein, and southern neighborhoods. In Amman we observed higher numbers of Syrians in eastern parts of the city, particularly the Hashemi Ash-Shamali, Al-Mahata, Marka, Jabal Al-Akhdar, Al-Nuzha, and Jabal Hussein areas. In Irbid, where Syrian refugee families tend to have fewer tribal or family connections with their Jordanian hosts, most Syrians have settled in commercial areas such as University street, the eastern end of the city, and the Tajara area.

According to our research teams, the Syrian refugee community generally agreed that it was a wiser decision for Syrians to settle in urban areas, as there is greater access to aid services, as compared to rural areas. During the fieldwork of this study, our research teams confirmed this idea, noting that while services are still available in rural areas, they are both more plentiful and of higher quality in urban areas. Most of the families who chose rural over urban areas did so because of strong ties to residents of the particular village. These rural refugees generally felt more welcomed than those in urban areas, due to their preexisting connections with the communities and the nature of village hospitality. One Jordanian villager told our research teams: "These are not Syrians. They are Houranis."

Refugee families in Mafraq and Amman had an average of 4-5 members, whereas those in Irbid and Ramtha generally had between 5-7 members. Families who fled to Jordan from the city of Dara'a brought with them higher numbers of children than those from other cities such as Homs. Across all families our teams noticed higher number of females than males, with most children under 18 and about half under 6 years old.

Some refugees fled Syria as smaller nuclear family units, while others crossed the border with larger, extended kinship groups. Larger kinship groups were more commonly found in Mafraq and Ramtha, where families generally agreed that living with extended networks of relatives provides both psychological and financial security, since both experiences and resources can be shared. In contrast to those in Mafraq and Ramtha, refugees in Amman and Irbid most often arrived as nuclear families. Amman and Irbid are both large commercial areas and offer more job opportunities than smaller cities, and thus attracted nuclear families who did not have the extended family resources upon which to rely. Almost all families noted that the cost of living is much higher in Jordan than in Syria.

There are two kinds of entry points used by families crossing from Syria into Jordan—legally/officially by entering at border checkpoints, or illegally/unofficially by entering at unsupervised points along the border. Most of the Syrian families that entered Jordan unofficially have since registered with the UNHCR either upon arrival or at registration points in Amman and in the North (NB: this study was conducted before the opening of the Za'atri camp in Mafraq Governorate). Most of these families were housed in reception sites in the North until family members or friends in Jordan bailed them out.

In the earlier stages of the conflict in Syria, thousands of families crossed into Jordan through the road borders in the north, and most of these families ended up in Amman. In general, these families that crossed the border through official checkpoints remain unregistered with UNHCR for a number of reasons. Some fear negative stigmas of being classified as a refugee. Others erroneously think that UNHCR registration will prevent them from returning to Syria at will. A significant number also think that Syrian security forces could potentially ascertain their information. This widespread hesitance towards registration is reflected in the official UNHCR figures from the summer of 2012, which indicated that only one third or slightly more of the Syrian refugees were registered and held UN cards.

Irrespective of status with the UNHCR or location, Syrian families are insistent that their stay is temporary, and all are anxious to go back home as soon as possible. Adults and heads of families crave the stability and belonging, while many of the youth think that they may soon leave Jordan to join the Free Syria Army. The perception of temporariness has led many families, who otherwise value their children's education, not to enroll their children in school. And while shelter and food remain the most urgent and absorbing priorities for Syrian families, most that our researchers spoke with were open to and interested the educational opportunities for their children here in Jordan.

The constant anticipation of imminent return, coupled with the inherent psychological effects of the displacement and migration process have resulted in widespread social isolation among the Syrian refugee community. Relations with host communities, while not explicitly negative, are very limited. Rarely do Syrian families make visits or relationships with their neighbors, unless there was a preexisting relationship before the conflict or a perceived benefit for the family. Our teams noticed that, in many cases, Syrians are also hesitant to form relationships within their own community here in Jordan, partially due to mistrust and fear of information leaks.

Traditions and customs are similar between Syrians and Jordanians, most notably in families that have cross-border tribal or other relations. More urbanized families from Syria who have settled in cities like Amman and Irbid share, though to a lesser degree, many customs of their host communities. Overall, Syrian families' adjustment to Jordanian society and community has not been easy, though their resilience, acquired from their experiences at home, and their practical mentality have facilitated their transition here.

In Mafraq and Ramtha particularly, Syrian families tend to sleep and wake much later than the Jordanian residents, a pattern which has resulted in some minor noise and sleeping disturbances for Jordanian families. For those Syrian families who have not been able to secure a job, the large majority of their time is spent at home, and often times this physical isolation exacerbates feelings of social isolation in the host community. Among those Syrians in Amman and Irbid, many have secured jobs and therefore have daily schedules that resemble those of other community residents.

In line with cultural norms of Syrian society, the women manage most of the domestic affairs in refugee households in Jordan. Men have retained the nominal authority in the home and tend to seek jobs outside the home in the host community. Gender roles were observably more progressive in Syrian refugees families with higher levels of education and income. Syrian men who have been unable to find work or are unable to work spend the majority of their time at home with their families, mostly watching television and catching up on the news from home. As mentioned, these behavioral patterns have resulted in a late-night lifestyle, which has been a minor nuisance for some Jordanian families. Refugee men who have found work in urban areas—with higher employment success in Amman and Irbid—tend to work for longer hours and lower wages than Jordanian men. Some Syrian men in Mafraq, Ramtha, and Irbid have engaged in work-for-aid schemes with charities that seek Syrian volunteers for outreach and program activities.

Charities' employment of Syrians, while having clear benefits, also poses some challenges. Many Syrians in Ramtha, for example, came from the sister city of Dera'a, across the border, and knew each other in Syria before fleeing to Jordan. These preexisting networks of friendship and communication have resulted in some inequalities in aid distribution, as employees may first communicate with those known to them about the time and place of these distributions.

The children in the Syrian families share the lifestyle of the parents—the females often help around the house and play, and the males spend much of their time idly, watching television and catching up on events inside Syria. While this isolated lifestyle has a social effect similar to the effect on their parents, the amount of free time that children has opens up the space for organizations to substantially constructively engage children in educational activities.

In Amman and Irbid, children have more activity options, though not all are constructive. Our research teams encountered a significant number of working male children in these two cities, with dramatically lower numbers in Ramtha and Mafraq, where work and activity opportunities are both scarce. Some children commute daily for work from more rural areas to cities such as Irbid. It is not uncommon that aid organizations give services to Syrian families under the assumption that no family members are working; therefore, some families prefer that their children, if working, work far away from home so as to minimize the risk of someone reporting the child's work status to aid organizations.

It is worth mentioning that very few females reported to be working, though many sources suggested that there was a growing concern among both Syrians and Jordanians about organized prostitution. Such concerns were more frequently heard in Irbid and Ramtha.

Almost all Syrian families have a strong desire to return to Syria, and therefore are unwilling to marry their children into Jordanian families. Others expressed their frustration with the frequency of Arabs from outside Jordan who come to the region with interest in taking Syrian brides. In Mafraq only, inter-nationality marriage has been used a clear strategy to ensure stable futures for Syrian girls.

2. ECONOMIC SITUATION OF REFUGEE FAMILIES

Approximately 80% of the Syrians interviewed in this assessment are living in serious economic hardship. They rely on cash assistance and in-kind support from charities, aid agencies, remittances from family abroad, and individual donors (often from GCC countries). In-kind assistance includes food packages—sugar, rice, oil, beans, pasta, canned items—mattresses, blankets, pillows, small rugs, and other basic furnishings. In general, international donors and donations were more present in Mafraq and Ramtha than in Irbid and Amman. Individual donors, including Arabs from the Gulf Region, primarily donate through established, if small, charities that have access to and knowledge of Syrians in their communities. In some of the more severe cases, families have sold their personal belongings, including women's jewelry, to pay for the most basic necessities.

Income from cash assistance ranges from 100 to 150 Jordanian dinars per month, though the income is considerably irregular. Rent and utilities generally consume the vast majority of families' limited incomes, followed by medical and food expenses. In this priority structure, dictated by the most urgent needs, education remains at the bottom of the hierarchy of needs and therefore the lowest expenditure.

Income insecurity remains one of the most pressing problems for Syrian refugees in Jordan. In Ramtha and Mafraq, job opportunities are quite limited and almost entirely confined to low-skill sectors such as construction and herding. Nearly all of the Syrian women our teams met in Mafraq and Ramtha were unemployed, as they take care of domestic affairs. Some, however, were considering seeking outside employment to supplement family income, and many Syrian women in Irbid and Amman have sewing and beading skills that they hope to use.

Irbid and Amman offer greater and more diverse job prospects than Mafraq and Ramtha, and have thus attracted more of the highly educated and higher-skilled Syrians who have sought refuge in Jordan. In general, we found much higher number of working Syrians in these cities. Remuneration for working Syrians ranges from 5-8 dinars per day for men, and 1-3 dinars per day for minors. It is also important to note that, in all sites, some families who have members capable and eligible for work have refused to seek employment because of feared exploitation by Jordanian employers and because of others Syrians' experience with fraud and abuse in the labor market.

In Irbid particularly, many local merchants and business owners are originally from Syria, and therefore prefer to employ Syrians who have recently settled in the city. Many of these employers view job provision as a critical service and form of solidarity to the refugee community. There are also a significant number of Syrians who brought much of their capital and enterprises to Jordan in the early days of the conflict, before the refugee crisis. Many among this group have reestablished their Syrian ventures in Jordan with Jordanian business partners, and now have begun to hire Syrians. The number of ventures that fall under this model is very limited and has not made a significant impact on the problem of unemployment in the refugee community.

While Irbid and Amman offer better job prospects, the cost of living in these cities is significantly higher than the costs in Mafraq, Ramtha, and rural areas. Moreover, the aid services in larger cities are more widespread and irregular due the dispersed nature of refugees in those cities.

The high, and increasing, cost of living in Jordan remains the most serious economic issue for Syrian refugees. All families that our teams interviewed commented that prices in Jordan are three to four times higher than in Syria. Many have had to use significant portions, if not the entirety, of their savings, to make ends meet in Jordan. The growing gap between families' income and expenditures has been exacerbated by the high cost of utilities, and particularly by inflated rent prices. Across all four research sites, average rent was between 150-250 JDs per month. Rent price inflation is in large part due to landlords' false perception that donors are paying for Syrians' apartment rentals. These exploitative prices have been a tremendous burden for Syrian families, only 5% of whom, of those we encountered, receive housing compensation from aid agencies.

Low income Syrian families can not afford even small items which were once common treats, such as fruits, sweets, or toys for their children. Despite the lack of income, very few families take loans; they fear they will default on their payments, or that their loan status here will inhibit them from returning to Syria. Moreover, most of the Syrian families, particularly in Ramtha and Mafraq, come from traditional backgrounds and are not very familiar with formal bank loans.

We can estimate the average cost for a mid-sized Syrian family (4-5) to live comfortably at approximately 500 dinars per month. Very few families reach this level of income, and many families in Mafraq and Ramtha have resorted to selling their food aid packages as a way to make extra money. Some have even opened small shops that sell basic goods that have come from aid packages. Others have sought to delay rent payments until they can find additional sources of income.

The Syrian refugee diet consists mainly of low-cost items such as wheat, rice, pasta, and beans. Meat, eggs, and fruits are rare luxuries given the high price. The lack of diversity in family diets has clear health implications, particularly for children.

Another way to increase family income is to send children to work. This trend was much more common in Irbid and Amman—which, as said, have greater job opportunities. In Irbid, 80% of the interviewed families had at least one child working or seeking work. Numbers in Amman were slightly lower, but based on the interviews conducted there, we can estimate that at least 4000 Syrian children are currently engaged in or at-risk of child labor in Amman.

Children are most commonly engaged in light manual labor, as porters or assistants in markets, small grocery stores, and coffee shops. As mentioned earlier, many children who live in Mafraq have sought work in nearby cities, mainly Irbid, for both lack of opportunity in Mafraq and worries about someone exposing their employment status, which then jeopardizes family eligibility for aid services.

Children who commute to work not only work long hours—in some cases, up to ten hours per day—but they are exposed to numerous physical and security risks. Some children return home well into the evening, and others complained of physical pain and exhaustion. Working children above 16, almost as a general rule, have very little interest in pursuing their education further. Several parents with whom we spoke fear the long-term implications of the opportunity structures and attitudes of the youth. They argued that extremism and crime could have room to grow.

A small number of vulnerable Syrians have resorted to prostitution as a source of supplementary income. Several Syrian and Jordanian families reported the presence of prostitution in Irbid, and in most cases the girls—and their families—had been previously involved in this business in Syria, which was seriously damaged by the current conflict. Their business has shifted to Jordan. A small number of interview subjects asserted that organized Syrian prostitution rings have tried to recruit both Syrian refugee girls and resident Jordanians in certain communities. The tribal nature of Mafraq and Ramtha has limited the scope and viability of prostitution in those towns. Those who discussed prostitution with our teams commented that those families who have engaged in organized prostitution have much more stable incomes and are observably better-off than other refugee families.

Syrian refugee families lack basic furniture items; most have a few simple mattresses and other basic, donated furnishings. Refrigeration units are uncommon, thus increasing food costs. Most families do own televisions with satellite, as well as a laptop and mobile phones. These devices are critical for families to keep abreast of events in Syria and maintain contact with family. In most cases, these high-tech items were brought from Syria or purchased in Jordan.

Syrians who have sought refuge in rural areas enjoy lower living costs than in urban areas. Rent is often free, as villages have often donated space in homes or other buildings to accommodate Syrians. In general, living conditions are better for those Syrians in rural areas.

It is important to note that many of the Jordanian families that were included in this assessment affirmed that they have experienced some strong negative consequences as a result of the influx of refugees into their communities. The most frequently voiced concerns included the rise of rent prices, a rise in unemployment among Jordanians, increased numbers of beggars and mendicants, water scarcity, decreased aid for vulnerable Jordanians, price increases for basic items, and increased traffic.

3. EDUCATION SITUATION OF REFUGEE FAMILIES

Education is intrinsically linked to the economic and social situation of refugee families. Education ranks lower than stable income, food, medical care, and shelter on families' priority of needs; in this structure, Syrian children's education is inextricable from other services and needs. There are four major reasons why many Syrian refugee families have not enrolled their children in formal school. The main reasons are as follows:

1) Families are attempting to save money in any way possible to pay for housing, food, and medical expenses
2) Transportation to and from school is prohibitively costly
3) Perceived imminent return to Syria has dissuaded families from engaging their children in the Jordanian school system
4) Decreased motivation among the older youth to continue school or pursue higher education

While children's education has not been a major or actionable priority for many refugee families, it nonetheless remains important at a conceptual level for most of the families our teams interviewed. Across all research sites, refugee families had an average of 2-3 school-aged children. Many expressed that education serves as a mechanism for social integration for their children. Parents are looking for educational alternatives for the younger children—mainly those under 16. At the same time they are looking for ways to cover the cost incurred by sending their children to school.

At the time of this research, approximately 16% of the refugees in Irbid, Amman, and Ramtha were school-aged children, but the percentage has likely increased over the past months.

The education situation for Syrian refugee children was similar in Amman, Irbid, Mafraq, and Ramtha, with some important distinctions. One of the primary factors that dictate Syrians' education status and situation is their place of origin in Syria. For example, children from Homs more regularly attend school, whereas families from Dara'a and rural areas have traditionally placed less value on formal education and thus do not have the same motivation as those from Homs. Irrespective of place of origin or current family emphasis on education, all Syrian refugee children face the same difficulties in Jordan in terms of finding and taking full advantage of education options.

Additional factors that affect Syrian children's education situation here in Jordan include the time at which they left Syria, the amount of time they were out of school in Syria, the number of times they were displaced within Syria, and the level of violence they and their families experienced. Some children have been out of school for more than a year, and others for just a few months. In most cases, however, school documents were lost in the migration process, further complicating children's integration into the school system in Jordan.

Syrian children below 15 are the primary stakeholders in the educational situation in Jordan. In Syria, as compulsory education ends at age 15, those 16 and older are less interested in pursuing education. In Ramtha, the lack of interest among the older youth was most clear. In Irbid and Amman, the lucrativeness and prevalence of labor opportunities is slowly stifling younger children's interest in education. As the economic situation worsens for refugees, children increasingly become family breadwinners. While there was widespread interest among children for summer and extracurricular camps, the meals and transportation stipends were serious motivators that make it difficult to understand actual motivation levels among the beneficiaries.

Of the out-of-school children below 16 years old, nearly all had already dropped out in Syria before migrating to Jordan. This cohort of youth is quite small as a percentage of the total school-aged Syrian refugee population now in Jordan. For youth above 16 years old, most are not in school as they and their families would prefer vocational/technical education to formal education. University attendance and job prospects are both very limited in Syria, and thus many families see greater utility in vocational and technical training. Moreover, youth motivation to pursue education in Jordan is consistently dampened by their desire and conviction to quickly return to Syria. In Mafraq and Ramtha, these youth over 16, who see greater utility in vocational training, remain unemployed, whereas in Irbid and Amman, the majority has found employment in unskilled positions.

The situation for female school-age youth depends heavily on the views and values of the girls' families. In general, families from Homs value girls' education just as they do boys' education, while other more traditional families see little reason to send girls to school after they have attained basic literacy skills. As early marriage is common for girls in Syria, literacy is valued more so as a mechanism for reading and understanding the Qur'an. The most conservative families our teams encountered viewed girls' education as entirely unimportant.

Most of the Syrian parents from Dara'a and its surrounding rural areas only attended a few years of primary education, enough to attain basic literacy skills. Some parents that our teams met, mainly in Irbid, had university education. Most of the university-education refugees were from

Homs. Irrespective of parents' education level, most agreed that educating children is important, regardless of their circumstances.

3.1 Main determinants of educational status

- The conflict in Syria, as well as conditions in Jordan, have left many families with very tight budgets, and many families find education and its adjacent costs to be prohibitively expensive. In this scheme, children are drawn towards child labor. Children in Amman and Irbid, specifically, are more likely to become sources of income for their families.
- Syrian children in Jordan have to tackle the problem of curriculum differences between their schools at home and their new schools in Jordan. Our research teams heard from many Syrian children that the Jordanian curriculum is harder, particularly in the subjects of mathematics, English, and Arabic. For example, English is not taught in Syria as early as it is in Jordan, and Arabic language classes in Syria are focused on national issues and identity, where in Jordan language classes are closely tied to religious instruction. For these reasons, informal education remains a viable and accessible option for Syrian children.
- Syrian students who attended summer extracurricular camps reported peer abuse in the forms of mockery, insults, and even physical violence. Such problems exacerbate the difficulty of Syrians' integration into Jordanian society.
- School distance and transportation costs are two of the main prohibitive factors for families who would otherwise send their children to formal school.
- Some families who are hesitant with register with UNHCR will not send their children to formal school, fearing that registration in school will require registering their children with the UN. Additionally, families often mistrust other Syrians who may be present at the school, as loyalties and connection of other refugees cannot be definitively known.
- Lack of awareness of the education system and education opportunities in Jordan prevented some families from sending their children to summer camps or to formal school.
- In the flight from Syria, families often left behind important documents which verify the level of schooling of their children. As this lack of documentation prevented Syrian children's enrollment in Jordanian school, the Ministry of Education altered their rules and have begun to accept any documents that prove children's identity. The Ministry has provided evening classes to determine Syrians' educational level and subsequently place them in the appropriate grade.
- The perception of imminent return to Syria has dissuaded some families from sending their children to school

4. HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SITUATION OF REFUGEE FAMILIES

Witnessing various forms and degrees of violence and armed conflict has left a tremendous impact on the children of Syria. These psychological wounds will require specific attention to heal. Families that previously lived in comfort and stability are living in a situation where many of their basic needs and rights are left unmet. Based on the interviews and visits, it is noted that many individuals have trouble sleeping and, more generally, adjusting to their lifestyle in Jordan. All of the research staff noticed that many Syrians prefer to remain quiet at home and avoid mingling outside.

When talking about home, friends, their neighborhoods, their streets, and their schools, individuals were often brought to tears, clearly expressing both loneliness and homesickness. There are numerous signs to indicate that Syrian families are suffering from esteem issues, as many feel they are a burden on the local Jordanian community.

Educational and other services provided to Syrians should not neglect the widespread psychological and psychosocial issues affecting the refugee community. Services should work to increase access to psychosocial services through referrals to the appropriate agencies.

The intense experiences of many Syrians before their arrival in Jordan—witnessing violence, enduring beatings, torture, and detention—have caused a number of psychological and emotional disorders, as well aggressive behavior particularly among the children. Some of the children have clear signs of post-traumatic stress and other ongoing phobias, as evidenced by their reactions to passing soldiers, flying planes, firecrackers, and loud noises. Parents expressed that their children often hide, scream, cry, or otherwise withdraw when they face certain situations that remind them of past trauma. Some parents have also noticed signs of depression and/or excessive clinginess in their children.

Additionally, many of the children suffer from nightmares, bad dreams, or insomnia, and their feelings are clearly expressed in the way they speak, draw, play, and relate with other children. These signs—which also included intense mood swings—were noted by leaders of the summer camps in which refugee children were enrolled. Many children have exhibited aggressive behaviors as a result and/or expression of their experiences before coming to Jordan or their exposure to news stories and TV programming about the conflict in Syria.

It is noted that many Syrian families, especially in Amman, have been deeply psychologically impacted by the conflict and are very conscious about their current state and dependence on others to fulfill basic needs of food and shelter. The shocks and traumas to which families have been subjected have left deep and negative memories. Sources of strength for children, fathers and mothers, are at their weakest, thus magnifying the trauma among children.

Some of the men and women that were interviewed had been arrested and/or tortured in Syria, and they spoke about some of the types of psychological and physical torture they endured. Some were denied sleep and food and were put in solitary confinement. Some had been beaten, and many had endured foot-whipping, burning, and bondage. Many of these torture victims, and men in particular, display involuntary muscle movements, and others speak with a stutter.

Many of the Syrians that our teams interviewed live with a constant sense of pressure and chronic anxiety. Um Hussein—a Syrian refugee mother in Mafraq—expressed the pain she feels when her children ask her for a meal with dessert and fruits. She is unable to meet their needs, pained because of inability to provide and worries about the situation of her children.

Another refugee from Mafraq, Abu Mu'ayyad, expressed that he cannot take his children with him to the market because he cannot meet their needs when they ask him for toys or candies. He cannot afford such things, but cannot bear to deny his children's request if they go with him.

Many families feel frustrated with their inability to pay rent, feeling pressure worried that the landlord could evict them at any time. Across all four research sites, it was evident that refugee families are under constant psychological pressure and stress, at risk of developing high blood pressure, other stress/anxiety-induced problems, and depression.

The economic, educational, and social situation of refugee families not only has affected their mental health, but their physical health as well. For example, because of the lack of proper ventilation, lighting, and materials in homes, many Syrian families are subjected to risk of developing asthma and other respiratory illnesses. Some of the residences of Syrian families are not fit for occupancy at all, as they were intended as storage rooms and are not structurally sound. This was particularly the case in Mafraq.

Unstable housing has added to the pressures of many families and has the potential to cause further social and emotional problems. Additionally, families noted that crowded or unsafe housing makes it impossible for couples to have any private time. In general, there were up to three families sharing individual apartments or houses, with each family occupying a private bedroom and all families sharing other living space, bathrooms, and kitchens.

It is very obvious that there are malnourishment problems among the refugee community. Many of the children are noticeably pale and skinny. Most of the Syrian families rely exclusively on the food parcels they receive, so their diet lacks meat, fruits, and other protein and vitamin-rich items.

The areas with high concentrations of Syrian refugees, in general, already had strained healthcare systems before the refugee crisis, and the influx of refugees has added even more pressure to the underfunded and understaffed government hospitals and health centers. According to the Mafraq Municipality Council, in addition to stresses added to the healthcare system, solid waste disposal has increased to 25 tons per day.

Some agencies have volunteered to open clinics to meet the needs of higher numbers of patients and to relieve some of the burden of government hospitals. Additionally, there is increased demand on water and drainage systems. Water sources currently utilized are insufficient. Even before the arrival of the Syrians, water scarcity was a problem. Lack of water or low-quality water gives room for diseases to spread among the population.

There is a high demand for quality housing and, in some cases, Jordanian families have given up a part of their house for rental to Syrian families.

Some of the most common chronic diseases among the elderly people interviewed were heart disease, arthritis, diabetes, high-blood pressure, and asthma. There are other diseases that we observed, particularly highly contagious eye infections.

A lot of families, in Amman particularly, are unaware of the health services provided by local societies and NGOs, though many have indeed been helping the refugee community in significant ways. Governmental agencies have been providing equal–quality care to Jordanians and Syrians alike. Many of the Syrian families, especially those who entered illegally and who have still not yet registered with the UN, have had problems finding and accessing adequate health services.

Many families remain afraid of registering at the UN, as they think their registration will in some way prevent them from returning to Syria in the future. Moreover, they do not like the term "refugee," as they feel it is pejorative, and others are under the assumption that registration information will in some way make its way into the hands of Syrian security forces.

The psychological experience of many Syrian children, coupled with the difficulties that come with migration and settling in a new place, have left them fearful with a sense of defeat. Many of the youth expressed concern about the uncertainty of their timeframe here in Jordan. As a result, some youth have developed negative and aggressive behavior, often directed at their peers,

whereas other have internalized their feelings and are isolated and depressed. Many are still unable to integrate naturally with others in their local and school communities. Some parents expressed their worry that their children's psychological fragility may translate into bad academic and social experiences in schools, and thus were hesitant to enroll their children.

CONCLUSIONS

The table constructed below conveys the presence or absence of particular factors affecting the educational situation of Syrian refugee children across the various research sites, each of which, with the exception of Amman, is divided into urban and rural areas.

Table 1

Factors Affecting the Education Situation of Syrian Refugee Children in Amman, Irbid, Mafraq, and Ramtha	**Mafraq**		**Ramtha**		**Irbid**		**Amman**
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Perceived imminent return to Syria	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Social isolation/anxiety	**X**		**X**		**X**	**X**	**X**
Low Income (Hierarchy of Priorities)	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Children in Labor Market					**X**		**X**
Overcrowded schools	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Violent/abusive school environment	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Prohibitive distance from home to school	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Curriculum differences and difficulties	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Unfamiliarity with teaching methods	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Lack of awareness of education opportunities for Syrians	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Insufficient documentation for school enrollment	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Cost of education fees and materials	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
General lack of desire to continue education	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
De-emphasis on female education	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Fear of harassment/security risks (for females)	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Behavioral and other disorders	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**

As mentioned, the unstable social situation, difficult economic conditions, and health and psychological concerns have led many families to push education down the hierarchy of priorities

since their arrival in Jordan. Syrian families' general isolation from their host communities, coupled with their general wariness of those not known to them, desire to stay at home, and sense of displacement have all contributed to a reshuffling of needs and a restructuring of daily life. Immediate family needs consume the most attention and energy.

Continued economic difficulty, caused by the high cost of living, increasing prices, and exploitative practices, have driven many families to send their children to work, even at a great distance from home. Again, in such a situation, education is relegated to the realm of potentiality and unlikelihood.

Curriculum differences, school violence, fears of abuse and mockery, and associated costs continue to lower the participation and consistency of Syrians in the education system in Jordan. Syrians will require remedial classes and alternative options if they are to participate or see success in the Jordanian education system.

Lastly, anxiety, phobias, and social and behavioral difficulties are commonplace among Syrian refugee children. Psychosocial difficulties clearly affect children's ability to engage with peers and with learning in general, and for this reason it is critical that both formal and informal education programs contain strong referral components for children and families alike to assure that needs are met and students can effectively function in educational and social settings, as they could before the conflict in Syria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Advocate to identify the children who have inadequate documentation and ensure that they have not been hindered from enrollment in the formal education system.
2. As a high number of Syrian children in Jordan are not registered with UNHCR, agencies should ensure that unregistered children are identified and encouraged to enroll in school, regardless of their registration status.
3. Considering the recurring reluctance of Syrian families to enroll their daughters in school, for various reasons, organizations should prioritize informal education opportunities that specifically target girls.
4. Informal education opportunities are a significant intervention to draw children back into formal educational opportunities and provide for their educational advancement.
5. For children that do not succeed in formal education (underperformance, lack of attendance, etc.), informal education activities (including but not limited to tutoring), are important as a means to provide children the support needed to enable continued and future attendance and success in formal schools.
6. Informal education activities should provide a mechanism through which to make referrals for children and their families' psychological support—at the appropriate level—up to tertiary, specialized services.
7. All informal, supportive, educational interventions should incorporate Syrian volunteers in a significant way in planning, organizing, and supporting these initiatives. Syrian volunteers should play a key role in liaising between service providers and the Syrian community.
8. As the provision of aid (food and non-food items) to Syrians has been, at times, erratic and unequally distributed, more equitable and transparent delivery systems are needed as well as improved communication channels to all Syrians so that they are aware of how and where to access services.
9. Provision of educational and other support should elicit feedback from Syrians so as to become more responsive to their needs.