

United Nations (UN) and Partners  
Humanitarian Response for Syrian Refugees in Jordan

**INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE  
(IATF)  
FOOD SECURITY SECTOR  
GENDER ANALYSIS**

***OFFICIAL WORKING DRAFT***  
**REPORT**

**NOVEMBER, 2016**

**Official Working Draft Food Security Sector Gender Analysis Report**  
November, 2016

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## Acknowledgements

This report is the work of the Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) Food Security Sector Gender Focal Points with the technical support of Senior GenCap Adviser, Simon Opolot, who guided the design and implementation of the study and data analysis. The team would like to thank Food Security Sector partners – in particular REACH and WFP - for supporting and participating in processes and activities that generated primary and secondary data for the gender analysis. Lastly, special appreciation of Chris Turton (OIC Food Security Sector Chair - WFP); Mohammad Kilani (Co-Chair Food Security Sector – Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization) and the Sector Gender Focal Points Network (SGFPN) Co-chairs – Yukiko Koyama (UNHCR) and Katia Urteaga Villanueva (UNICEF) for their leadership oversight during the gender analysis process.

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## Abbreviations

<b>CFSME</b>	Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise
<b>FSS</b>	Food Security Sector
<b>FSOM</b>	Food Security Outcome Monitoring
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

## Executive Summary

The protracted Syria Crisis, now nearing the end of its sixth year, has forced millions of Syrians to seek refuge in the neighboring countries of Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and beyond. Since 2011, approximately 655,833 Syrians (as of November 2016) are living in Jordan, placing further strains on Jordan's already weak economy and public services.

As the crisis becomes increasingly protracted, social and economic factors are continually changing and influencing the overall food security and resilience of refugees. The majority of displaced families have used any savings or sold any assets they may have had when fleeing Syria. With limited stable livelihood opportunities in Jordan, Syrian refugees face obstacles to developing long-term resilience and self-sufficiency. This depletion of resources means that since the onset of the crisis, vulnerable Syrian refugees have faced high levels of food insecurity and have become dependent upon emergency food assistance to survive.

This gender analysis was conducted to assess the gender dimensions of the food security needs and challenges of Syrian refugees in Jordan. Refugee population demographics were analysed together with patterns of food security, food consumption, coping strategies and alternative sources of income for females and males.

The 2016 CFSME found that levels of food security have improved since 2015. Both male and female headed households (regardless of marital status) saw improved food security, driven largely by increased food consumption levels. While female headed households were found to be slightly more food secure, they are also more likely to adopt livelihood and consumption based coping strategies, suggesting they are still struggling to access enough resources to buy food.<sup>1</sup> Similar levels of food security among male and female headed households suggest targeting criteria – which prioritizes assistance to female headed households – is effectively addressing inequalities in the food security of male and female headed households.

In addition to improved overall food security, fewer refugees cited WFP food vouchers as their main source of income. Forty percent of interviewed households reported skilled and unskilled labor as their primary source of income, slightly higher than the proportion of households reporting WFP food assistance and cash from aid organisations (36 percent). This is a significant change from 2014, when humanitarian assistance was the main source of income for 80 percent of households, and is reflective of a diversification of income sources as the crisis continues.

Despite this promising trend, it is clear WFP assistance still represents a crucial source of income for refugees. Overall, families receiving higher levels of WFP assistance per household member are more likely to be food secure, and focus group discussions indicate that it is a major factor in ensuring sustained access to food for both male and female headed households. Further, for both Syrian men and women, work opportunities (skilled and unskilled) remain short-term and informal, and thus do not currently represent a viable long-term source of food security or economic resilience for the majority of households. For female headed households in particular, skilled or unskilled labour represents the main source of income for just 18 percent, compared with 45 percent of male headed households. This reflects a broader trend of significantly lower workforce participation by women in relation to men; by the end of 2016, around 37,000 work permits were issued to Syrians, of which only 4 percent had been issued to women.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Livelihood-based coping strategies are the longer-term household measures deployed by households to cope with a lack of food or lack of money to buy food, such as borrowing money, reducing essential non-food expenditure, and begging.

<sup>2</sup> Jordan Livelihoods Working Group, Minutes of Meeting, January 15 2017, [https://gallery.mailchimp.com/21ac4d661afc676782cbf14bc/files/f5d0f282-d602-4d8e-a715-1e11f04dfe11/FINAL\\_LWG\\_Meeting\\_Minutes\\_15012017\\_.pdf](https://gallery.mailchimp.com/21ac4d661afc676782cbf14bc/files/f5d0f282-d602-4d8e-a715-1e11f04dfe11/FINAL_LWG_Meeting_Minutes_15012017_.pdf)

The following recommendations are presented for gender-sensitive delivery of humanitarian assistance in the food security sector:

- 1) In the medium term (1-3 years) maintain stable levels of food assistance for the most vulnerable refugee households in host communities and in camps (where WFP assistance remains the primary source of income for refugees)
- 2) Continue to use gender as a targeting criteria for prioritizing assistance to female headed households. In addition, continue to conduct periodic reviews of targeting criteria to assess how changes in context and ongoing livelihoods initiatives may impact vulnerability levels among male and female headed households.
- 3) Develop sustainable livelihood opportunities that are accessible to male and female-headed households, so as to increase their self-reliance and reduce the need for humanitarian assistance.
- 4) Expand gender based research and analysis to further understand the influence of gender dynamics on longer-term food security, particularly in relation to fluctuating levels of assistance and access to livelihoods opportunities.

## 1. Introduction

The Syria Crisis, now entering its seventh year, caused a vast influx of Syrian families seeking refuge in Jordan. According to UNHCR, there are currently 655,833 registered Syrian refugees in Jordan.<sup>3</sup> The growing presence of Syrian refugees has placed significant strains on Jordan's already limited resources. The Food Security Sector provides assistance to vulnerable Syrian refugees living in Jordan's host communities, camps and transit centers. The most common modality of food assistance is vouchers, with a smaller proportion of in-kind food. WFP also provides emergency in-kind food assistance to refugees stranded at the Jordanian-Syrian border, known as the berm.

Food security consists of four main dimensions: availability, access, utilization and stability/vulnerability.<sup>4</sup> Women, girls, boys and men have different and complementary roles in ensuring food security. This also applies to securing nutritional well-being for all members of the household and the community. As such, humanitarian food security services for Syrian refugees in Jordan should be geared towards ensuring that all people (women, girls, boys and men), at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Overall levels of food security levels among Syrian refugees have increased in 2016. Food consumption and dietary diversity also improved since 2015, though remained below 2014 levels. This improvement in food security since 2015 is largely attributable to higher levels of food assistance. Despite increased levels of food security, economic vulnerability remains high - many Syrian households have high levels of debt, low savings, and must resort to coping strategies.

For the past three years, WFP and REACH carry out a Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise (CFSME). Data is collected from all governorates in Jordan, as well as Za'atari and Azraq camps. The objectives of the 2016 CFSME were to:

1. Recognise current needs and vulnerabilities of Syrian refugee households across Jordan in camp and non-camp settings;
2. Identify trends in needs and vulnerabilities by triangulating findings with CFSME 2014 and CFSME 2015;
3. Assess the impact of WFP's targeting approach and fluctuating levels of assistance on the food security of Syrian refugees;

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<sup>3</sup> As of 7 November, 2016: <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>

<sup>4</sup> IASC Gender Handbook, 2006

#### 4. Provide programmatic recommendations for the short, medium and long term.<sup>5</sup>

For the 2016 CFSME, 3,253 households (20,067 individuals) were interviewed. Sixteen focus group discussions among females and males were also carried out across governorates and in camps, to expand on and explain the trends in the quantitative data collected in the household survey.

The CFSME provides an important basis for Gender Analysis of the FSS, as it provides detailed data on how access to food and food services varies between male and female headed households (both single and married). The CFSME also examines which coping strategies families adopt to meet their food needs, and involvement in livelihood activities among men and women. Based on its findings, the CFSME includes recommendations for appropriate food sector interventions.

Without an end to the conflict in sight, creating the basis for food security of Syrian refugees in Jordan is crucial. Food assistance provides an important base of support for vulnerable refugee households, and it can reduce the impact of existing inequalities between male and female headed households. To design and implement gender-responsive food security interventions for Syrian refugees, it is important to know (i) refugee population demographics; (ii) levels of food security across different households (both male and female headed, of different marital statuses), (iii) commonly adopted coping strategies among male and female headed households and (iv) access to livelihoods and education for women, men, girls and boys.

## 2. Taxonomy of Food Security Sector Services

Food security services delivered to Syrian refugees include:

Sub-Sector	Activity	Category
Food and Nutrition	Food Assistance	School feeding
		Bread distribution
		Food vouchers
		Cash for Food
		Food parcels/in kind food donations (weekly/monthly)
		Seasonal Food Support
		Combined food and non-food items
		Hot meals
		Nutrition supplements
		Welcome meals (in camps)
Non-food items	Non-standard food items	Non-standard food
Training	Cash for Training	Agricultural inputs/awareness/training

## 3. Purpose of the Gender Analysis

The purpose of the gender analysis is to assess the gender dimensions of the food security needs and challenges of Syrian refugees in Jordan. In addition, the gender analysis seeks to propose solutions to redress inequality. The gender analysis also provides gender related data/information from the 2016 CFSME to inform the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of interventions in the Food Security sector.

<sup>5</sup> World Food Programme and REACH, *Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise 2016 (CFSME)*, [http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach\\_jor\\_report\\_wfp\\_cfsme\\_2016\\_september\\_2016.pdf](http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach_jor_report_wfp_cfsme_2016_september_2016.pdf)

## 4. Objectives of the Gender Analysis

The Food Security Sector gender analysis is based on the 2016 CFSME (WFP/REACH). The specific objectives of the gender analysis were to assess:

1. Refugee population demographics;
2. Levels of food security and food consumption across different households (male and female headed);
3. Commonly adopted coping strategies among male and female headed households;
4. Access to livelihoods and education for women, men, girls and boys.

## 5. Methodology

The Gender Analysis is based on the findings of the CFSME 2016. In total REACH surveyed 5,252 cases, representing 3,253 households and comprising 20,067 individuals, between April and May 2016 for this monitoring exercise. In addition, sixteen focus group discussions amongst male and females were conducted to further explain trends in quantitative data.<sup>6</sup>

## 6. Findings

### 6.1 Refugee Population Demographics

By the end of 2016, 655,675<sup>7</sup> registered Syrian refugees were living in Jordan, an increase from 633,466<sup>8</sup> at the end of 2015. Approximately 22 percent of Syrian refugees live in camps, while 78 percent live in host communities<sup>9</sup>. For Syrian refugees living in host communities, the average household size in 2016 was 6.4 members (compared to an average of 4.5 members in 2014.)<sup>10</sup> Of the households interviewed by for the CFSME 2016, 19 percent were female headed and 81 percent were male headed (in host communities).

The table below represents the breakdown of marital status by head of household:

Marital Status, Head of HH	Sex, Head of HH	
	Female	Male
Divorced/Separated	13.6%	0.3%
Engaged	0.5%	0.0%
Married	53.9%	96.7%
Single	2.7%	2.2%
Widowed	29.3%	0.8%

### 6.2 Food Security and Food Consumption

CFSME 2016 results found that overall food security levels of Syrian refugees living in host communities have increased since last year, with 28 percent of households now food secure (compared with 15 percent in 2015). This improvement is mainly due to a stabilisation in food assistance, indicating that refugees are still largely in need of assistance. Food security continues to remain below the 2014 level, when 50 percent of households were food secure.

Food security in the camps has also improved since last year. In the more recently opened Azraq camp, refugees are consuming a more diverse diet and using fewer coping strategies to ensure access to food than in 2015.<sup>11</sup> In Za'atari refugee camp, 30 percent of households are now food secure, compared to 20 percent in 2015.

<sup>6</sup> For further information on methodology, please refer to *CFSME 2016* pp. 18 – 20

<sup>7</sup> Refugee population figure as of December 19, 2016 (<https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>)

<sup>8</sup> Refugee population figure as of December 17, 2015 (<https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>)

<sup>9</sup> As of January 2017 (<https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>)

<sup>10</sup> WFP and REACH, *CFSME 2016*

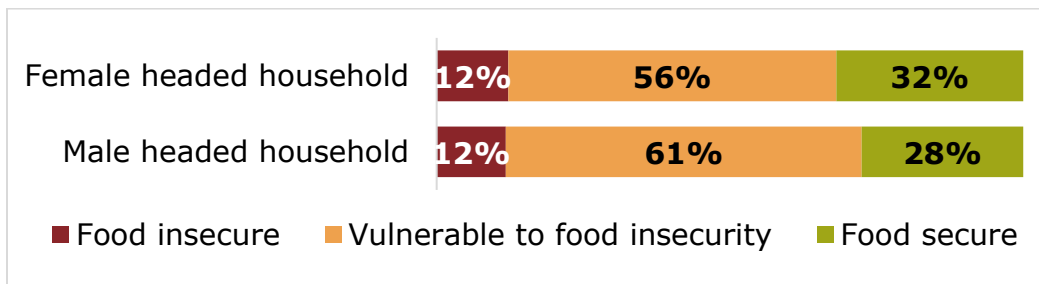
<sup>11</sup> This does not include Syrian refugees from the berm living in the fenced off area of Azraq Camp (Village 5).



### 6.3 Food Security and Sex of Head of Household

A slightly higher percentage of female headed households are food secure (32 percent) compared to households headed by males (28 percent). Regression analysis suggests that households headed by females are slightly more likely to have poor food consumption scores. Furthermore, a significantly higher percentage of male headed households have at least one household member in employment (69 percent) than female headed households (37 percent), which could become an important factor going forward given the current drive to increase access to livelihood opportunities and enhance economic resilience.

**Figure 1: Food security by head of household gender, refugees in host communities**



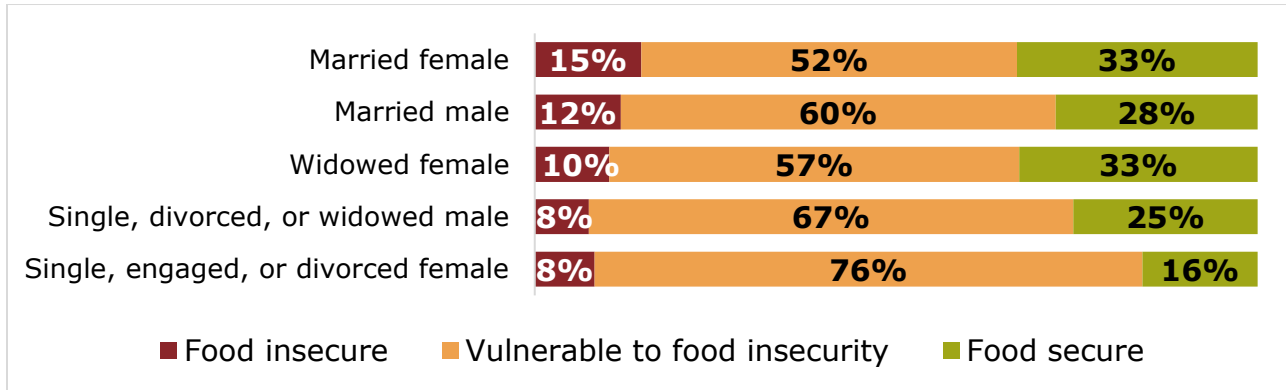
Although female headed households have a slightly higher level of food security than male headed households, it is clear that the relationship between head of household gender and food security is complex and dynamic. Ongoing monitoring of multiple indicators with regards to head of household gender is necessary to understand how vulnerability shifts in light of future contextual changes.

### 6.4 Food Security and Marital Status of Head of Household

In addition to gender, food security status also varies based on the head of households' marital status. Overall, all groups have experienced increased levels of food security since 2015. The group that has seen the biggest improvement in food security is households headed by widowed females. In 2015, 25 percent were food insecure and only 11 percent food secure, compared with 10 percent food insecure and 33 percent food secure in 2016. This is likely due to the fact that these households are often prioritized for humanitarian assistance because they are less able to find alternative income sources.

Households headed by married males and married females are both the most food secure and most food insecure. This is likely due to the fact that they are most able to secure income sources beyond humanitarian assistance, although when they are unable to do this, they may be lacking sufficient resources to maintain high levels of food consumption. On the other hand, households headed by males and females who are not married (whether they be single, engaged, divorced or widowed) are generally less food insecure, but also less food secure (with the exception of widowed females). For example, only 16 percent of households headed females who are single, engaged, or divorced are food secure, but then only 8 percent are food insecure. Similar to households headed by widowed females, these households tend to be prioritised for humanitarian assistance because they are less able to find alternative income sources. Indeed, 37 percent have at least one household member in employment, compared with 85 percent of households headed by single, divorced, or widowed males.

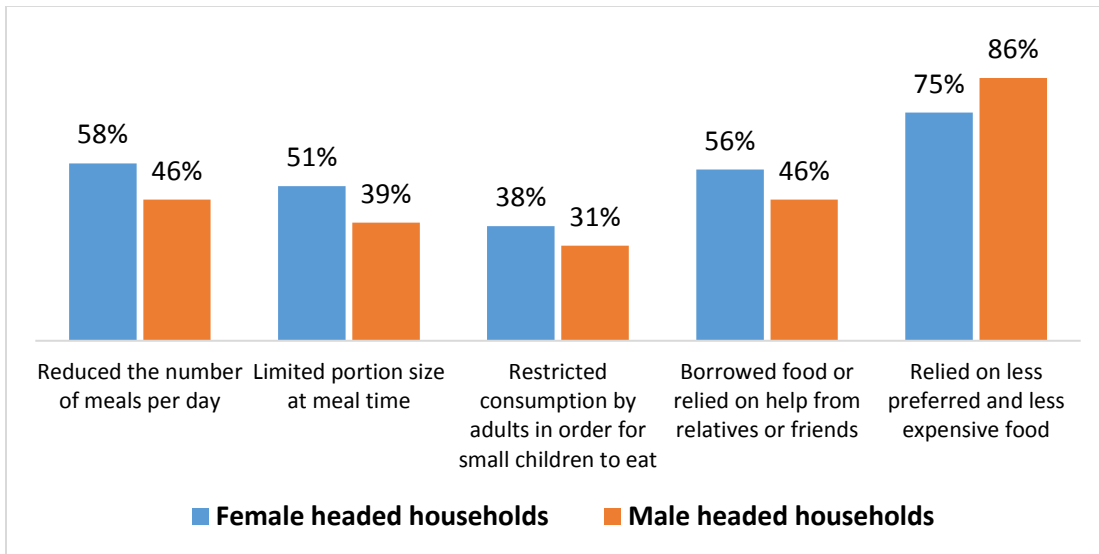
**Figure 2: Food security by head of household marital status, refugees living in host communities**



**6.5 Female and Male Coping Strategies – Host Communities**

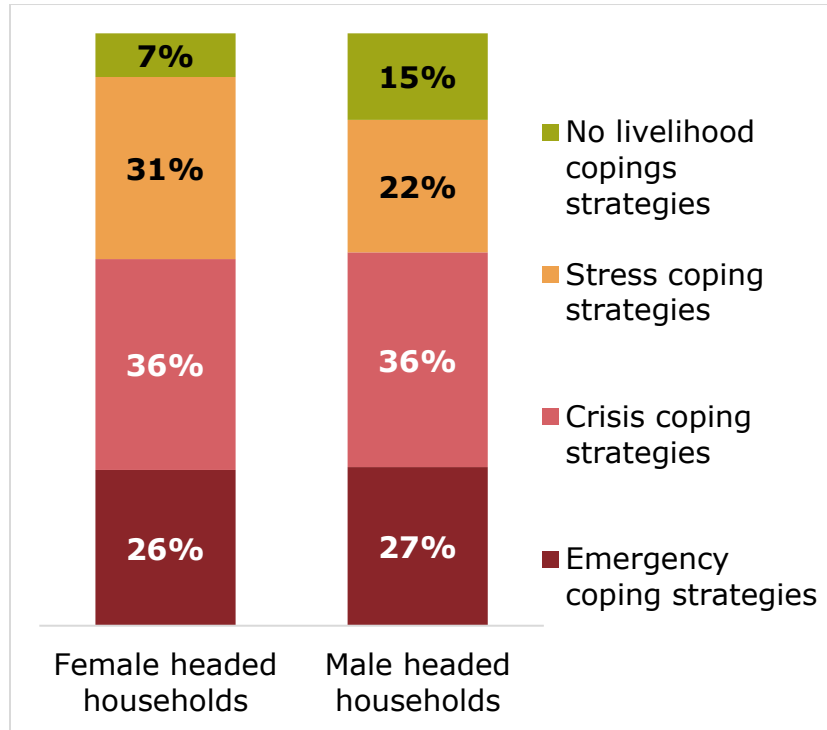
Female headed households are more likely to resort to consumption-based coping strategies to cope with a lack of food (see Figure 3). For example, female headed households are more likely to reduce their number of meals per day (58 percent), rely on borrowed food or money from friends/relatives (56 percent) and limit their portion size at meal times (51 percent) than male headed households. Female headed households in host communities also adopt these strategies more frequently than male headed households.

**Figure 3: Use of consumption-based coping strategies by sex of head of household, refugees in host communities**



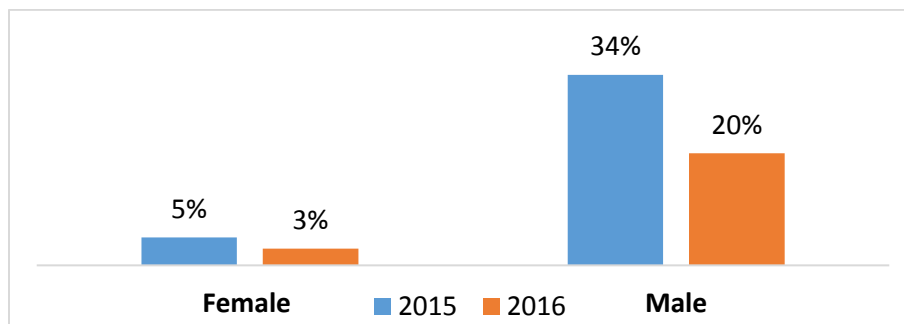
Female headed households are also slightly more likely to resort to livelihoods coping strategies to cope with a lack of food (see Figure 4). The CFSME 2016 found that 93 percent of female headed households are adopting livelihood coping strategies, compared with 85 percent of male headed households. This suggests female headed households still struggle to access enough resources to buy food.

**Figure 4: Livelihood coping strategies by sex of head of household, refugees in host communities**



Overall, fewer male and female headed households are sending members to work in high risk, socially degrading, exploitative or temporary jobs in 2016 (see Figure 5). Only 3 percent of female headed households and 20 percent of male headed households reported using this coping strategy in 2016.

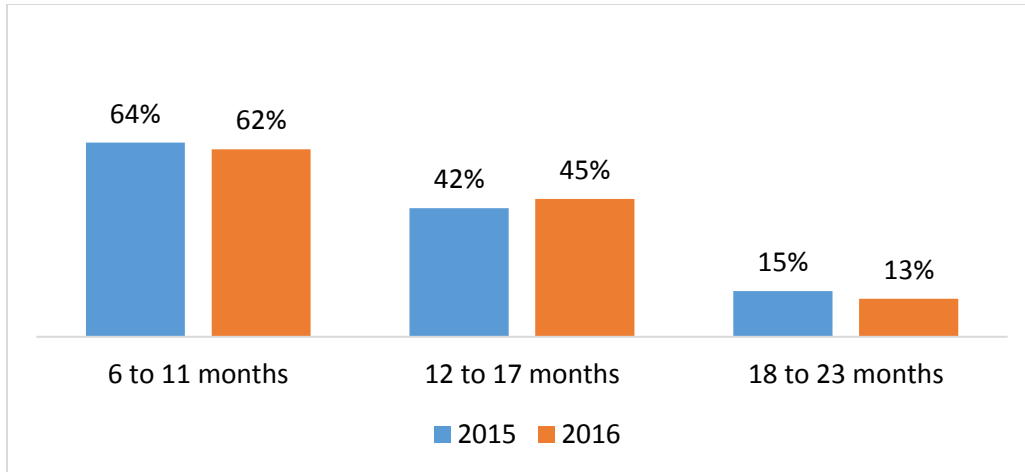
**Figure 5: Households sending members to work in high risk, socially degrading, exploitative or illegal temporary jobs as a coping strategy, refugees in host communities**



### 6.6 Infant Feeding

As was the case in 2015, a higher percentage of male infants receive breast milk than female infants. For example, 70 percent of male infants aged between 6 and 11 months old received breast milk, compared with 64 percent of females. The difference between genders is closing though—in 2015, 77 percent of males aged between 6 and 11 months were receiving breast milk, compared with 61 percent of females.

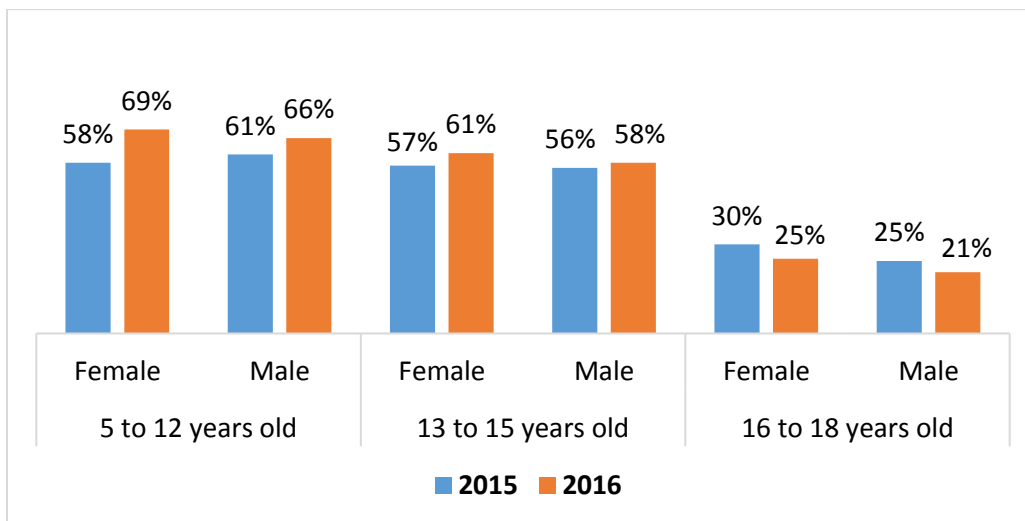
**Figure 6: Children receiving breast milk, refugees in host communities**



### 6.7 Food Security and Education

More school-aged children are attending school in 2016 than in 2015, even though household expenditure on education has not increased. This may in part be due to the fact that with increased food assistance levels, fewer households are forced to send children to work. Over two thirds of females (69 percent) and males (66 percent) aged between 5 and 12 are in education, compared with less than half of females (43 percent) and males (40 percent) aged 13 to 18. However, fewer females and males aged 16 to 18 are attending school compared to 2015.

**Figure 7: Reported school attendance among females and males, refugees in host communities**



### 6.8 Sources of Income and Reliance on Food Assistance

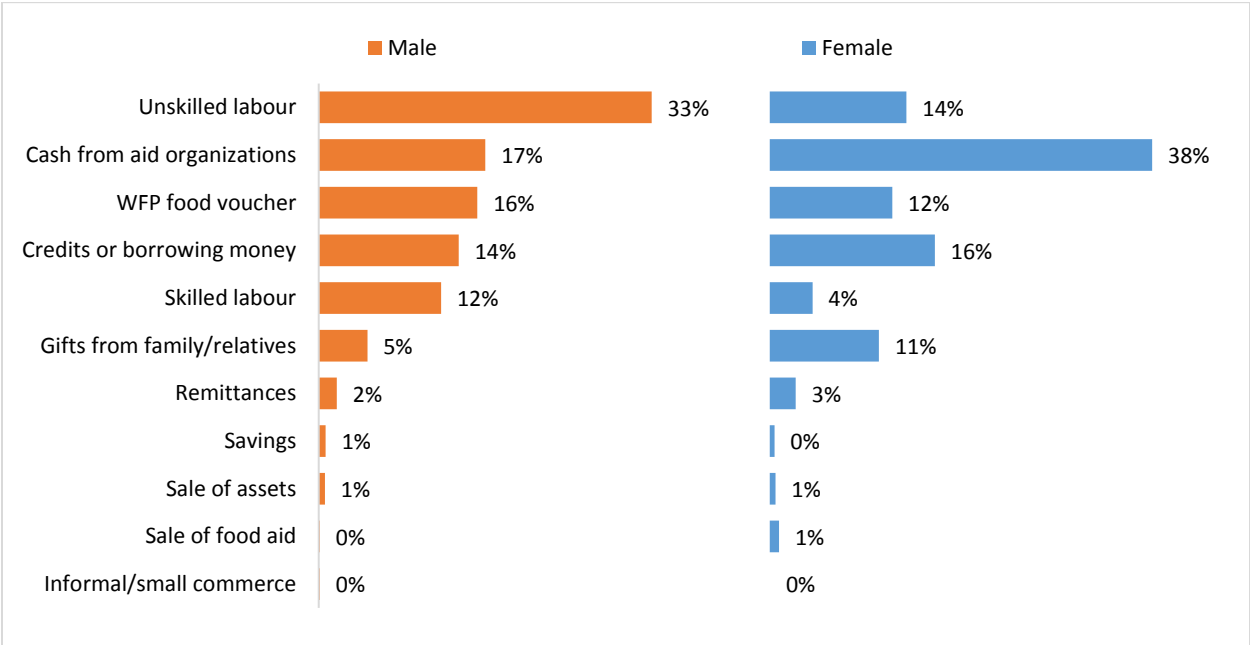
According to the 2016 CFSME, WFP food assistance represents the primary source of income for 15 percent of households - 7 percentage points lower than in 2015 (despite WFP voucher assistance increasing for many households). In Azraq and Za'atari refugee camps, WFP food vouchers are still the main source of income for the majority of households (70 percent and 69 percent respectively). Although this is lower than the 2015 levels, it reflects the stability of assistance in the camps over time relative to host communities and thus there is less of a need to find additional income sources.

WFP food assistance still represents a crucial source of income for many households. Overall, families receiving higher levels of WFP assistance per household member are more likely to be food secure, and focus group discussions indicate that it is a major factor in ensuring sustained access to food. WFP assistance thus represents a core source of income that households can rely on every month, to some extent allowing them to plan ahead and make spending decisions.

High levels of debt and low savings among households persist, as households have used or sold any assets they may have had when fleeing Syria. Debt levels are higher in male headed households, with an average debt level of JOD 744 compared with JOD 594 in female headed households. Furthermore, 8.7 percent of female headed households have savings, compared to 3.6 percent of male headed households. Given such high levels of debts and low savings, additional income sources can serve to supplement WFP assistance, rather than act as a substitute for it, as was the case in 2015. This enables households to reduce their usage of livelihood coping strategies and start to pay off debts while maintaining sufficient access to food.

Main sources of income vary among male and female headed households (see Figure 8). As Figure 8 indicates, a higher number of male headed households receive income from skilled and unskilled labor - 12 and 33 percent respectively. Among female headed households, only 4 and 14 percent of female headed households receive income from skilled and unskilled labour, respectively. Female headed homes are more reliant on cash from aid organisations, credits/borrowing money, or gifts from relatives as their primary sources of income.

**Figure 8: Main sources of income by sex of head of household, refugees in host communities**



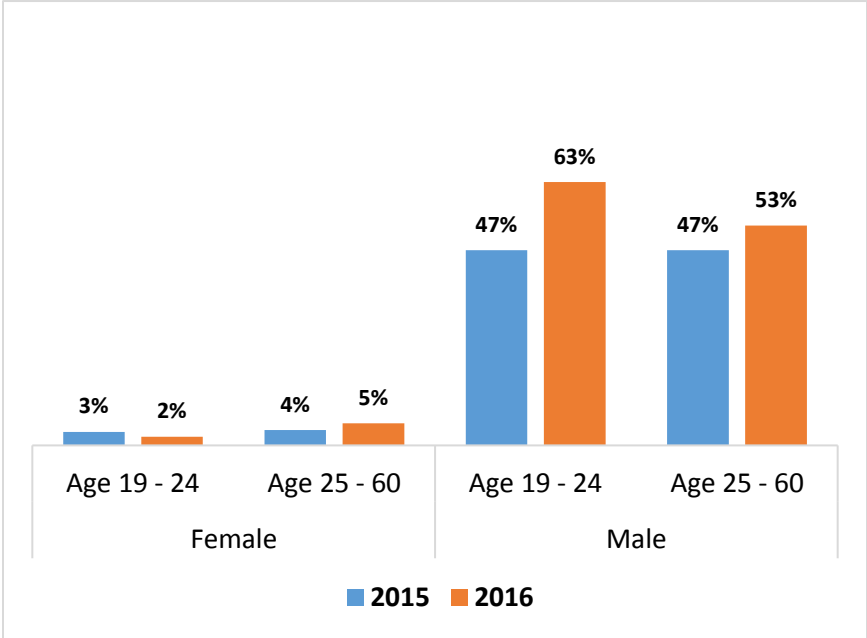
**6.9 Access to Work**

In early 2016, the Jordanian government relaxed restrictions on access to legal work permits for Syrian refugees. The 2016 CFSME found that skilled and unskilled labour represents the primary source of income for 40 percent of refugee households in host communities. This is an increase since 2015 (33 percent) and significantly higher than in 2014 (7 percent). While this finding alone does not suggest that more Syrians gaining access to livelihoods opportunities, there has been an increase in the percentage of working age adults in work to meet food and other basic needs.

Though a higher number of refugees are working, participation of males and females in employment differs substantially. Nearly two thirds (63 percent) of males aged 19 to 24 and more than half (53 percent) of males aged

25 to 60 are in some form of employment. On the other hand, only 2 percent of females aged 19-24 and 5 percent of females aged 25-60 are employed (see Figure 9). Furthermore, a significantly higher percentage of male headed households have at least one household member in employment (69 percent) than female headed households (37 percent).

**Figure 9: Employment by gender and age, refugees in host communities**



Access to work permits and increased participation in the labor market is a positive step toward increasing Syrian refugees’ long term food security and resilience. However, it is important to note that the majority of this work remains informal, which can result in low pay and a lack of long-term job security. This offers refugees limited certainty around future income and may impede the development of economic resilience.

Furthermore, given the lack of formal work opportunities accessible to women, it may be more difficult for them to transition away from humanitarian assistance toward independent livelihoods. By the end of 2016, around 37,000 work permits were issued to Syrians, of which only 4 percent were for women. Furthermore, the majority of work opportunities available to Syrians are in labor intensive activities such as agriculture, construction and manufacturing – areas which are less accessible to women.

## 7 Conclusions

Overall, the food security levels of both male and female Syrian refugees living in Jordan have improved since 2015. This is primarily due to a stabilisation in humanitarian assistance levels, although increased access to livelihoods opportunities has also likely played a role.

Female headed households are more likely than male headed households to adopt consumption-based and livelihood-based coping strategies when faced with a lack of food, indicating that they face challenges in accessing resources. For this reason, these households are prioritised for receiving humanitarian assistance through targeting mechanisms, an approach which to some extent appears to have been successful in levelling disparities in food security between male and female headed households. In host communities, for example, 32 percent of female headed households are food secure, compared with 28 percent of male headed households.

This approach is unlikely, however, to serve as a sustainable solution in the long run, particularly as the Syrian refugee response in Jordan shifts its focus to livelihoods and resilience based interventions. Although access to work (both formal and informal) appears to have improved – 40 percent of households report skilled or unskilled labour as the primary source of income – a clear gender imbalance remains. Only 2 percent of females aged 19 to 24 and 5 percent of females aged 25 to 60 are working, compared with 64 percent of males aged 19 to 24 and 53 percent of males aged 25 to 60. This disparity is also reflected at the household level; 69 percent of male headed households have at least one member in some form of work, compared to 37 percent of female headed households.

While the food security outcomes of male and female headed households indicate a certain degree of gender parity, these findings suggest it may not remain the case in the future. Assistance levels are not expected to remain at the current level in the medium to long term, therefore future interventions promoting livelihoods opportunities as a means to ensuring food security may inadvertently support male headed households to a greater extent than female headed households. It is therefore imperative that future livelihoods-based interventions consider these dynamics in order to minimise the prevalence of gender-based food security imbalances.

## 8 Recommendations

- 1) In the medium term (1-3 years) maintain stable levels of food assistance for the most vulnerable refugee households in host communities and in camps (where WFP assistance remains the primary source of income for refugees)
- 2) Continue to use gender as a targeting criteria for prioritizing assistance to female headed households. In addition, continue to conduct periodic reviews of targeting criteria to assess how changes in context and ongoing livelihoods initiatives may impact vulnerability levels among male and female headed households.
- 3) Develop sustainable livelihood opportunities that are accessible to male and female-headed households, so as to increase their self-reliance and reduce the need for humanitarian assistance.
- 4) Expand gender based research and analysis to further understand the influence of gender dynamics on longer-term food security, particularly in relation to fluctuating levels of assistance and access to livelihoods opportunities.