

Progress and challenges in implementing the commitments made in the Brussels Conference 2020 by the Government of Jordan and the International Community

## Education



### What has been committed:

- The Government of Jordan (GoJ) pledged to provide free certified education for all children to achieve the ambition of all Syrian children.
- The GoJ committed to increase Syrian enrollment in formal education at all levels, with a target of 130,000 students.
- The International Community committed to provide predictable, multi-year financial and technical support to address the needs of the Ministry of Education (MoE).
- The GoJ pledged to increase access to quality education opportunities and improve the safety of the learning environment.
- The GoJ committed to providing universal education to increase inclusion for children with disabilities and improve access to educational services in public and private schools.
- In addition, the GoJ pledged to expand youth engagement in education, employment, and training.

### Progress:

- The GoJ extended its waiver of documentation requirements for Syrian school children wishing to enroll in Jordan's public school system during the 2019-2020 school year.
- In response to COVID-19, the MoE acted swiftly to strengthen distance learning after the closure of schools, including expanding online platforms and televising lessons on local channels, and rolled out the Education During Emergency Plan for 2021-2023 for the safe reopening of schools during the pandemic.
- The MoE organized its first Policy and Planning Coordination Committee in December 2020 with partners of the education sector to coordinate and plan actions around the five core functions of the ESP.
- The MoE released the 10 Year Strategy for Inclusive Education in 2020 to support its commitment to include children with disabilities in education policy and practice.



### Challenges:

- Double-shift schools have unintentionally created inequalities in educational opportunities as Syrian students attending afternoon sessions receive fewer teaching hours than the national average, which has negatively impacted the learning outcomes of refugees.
- Students in refugee camps receive even fewer teaching hours than their counterparts enrolled in afternoon sessions in host communities, often with less qualified teachers as a result of the precarious nature of teacher contracts in camps.
- Vulnerable students have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 related school closures given the barriers they face to distance learning, such as poor Internet connectivity, lack of suitable electronic devices, an absence of study space and/or no learning support at home, threatening to push them further behind in their studies.
- Children with disabilities make up approximately 10% of all school age children, but almost 80% do not receive any form of education.
- Approximately 40% of Syrian refugees remain outside of the formal system and despite non-formal education opportunities that include drop-out and catch-up programs, reentry opportunities remain complex and limited.
- Syrian refugee youth face obstacles in continuing their education as only 25% are enrolled in secondary school, which is 47% lower than Jordanian children. In addition, higher education opportunities are limited with only 8% enrollment for Syrian youth.

### What we recommend:

- Increase contact hours for afternoon sessions in double-shift schools, while accelerating the transition to integrated or single-shift schools. Raise enrollment places in single-shift schools, strengthen data collection on existing enrollment, and improve school transport to reduce disparities.
- Increase contact hours in camp schools and adapt curriculum and methods to better address the additional needs of students living in camps.
- Strengthen teaching quality by improving training, replacing day and service contracts with annual contracts, especially for teachers working in double-shift and camp schools, and promote teaching as a profession.
- Improve school retention rates by mainstreaming social and emotional learning content and psychosocial support into national curriculum.
- Ensure remedial strategies are responsive to the needs of students adversely impacted by school closures to prevent dropout. Address inequalities exacerbated by barriers to accessing online learning and build the capacity of teachers in delivering quality remedial classes.
- Allow unbiased enrollment for children regardless of nationality, documentation, or status and extend the documentation waiver for the enrollment of Syrian school children beyond the current academic year.
- Enhance non-formal education pathways to support the reintegration of out of school children and offer homeschooling programs to allow graduated students from dropout programs to continue their education.
- Provide programming to support secondary education to Syrian refugee youth with market-appropriate TVET training and improve pathways to higher education alongside partnerships with universities and institutions.



## What has been committed:

- The GoJ has pledged to continue to reform the labor market to remove barriers to accessing work in the formal labor force and provide job opportunities for Syrian refugees without competing with Jordanian jobs. The GoJ has committed to providing approximately 200,000 job opportunities to Syrian refugees.
- In 2020, the GoJ further committed to introduce 70,000 “flexible” work permits by the end of 2021, including 25,000 throughout 2020.
- The International Community pledged to increase livelihood support and skill-matching programs for Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan.
- The International Community and the GoJ committed to increasing efforts to improve women’s empowerment, economic inclusion, and participation in the labor market.
- The GoJ pledged to increase economic participation and employment, as well as opportunities and employment for youth.
- The GoJ pledged to remove barriers on Syrian refugees establishing and formalizing businesses.
- The GoJ committed to promote improved access to “decent work” and job creation for Syrian refugees and Jordanians.
- The EU committed to revising preferential rules of origin (RoO) and providing support to Jordan to benefit from the scheme to open access to EU markets.

## Progress:

- Despite COVID-19, the GoJ issued 38,756 work permits to Syrian refugees throughout 2020 to total 215,668 work permits since 2016.
- The Ministry of Labor (MoL) issued instructions to implement the Cabinet decision extending the grace period for Syrian refugees exempting them from work permit fees until December 2021. The GoJ also exempted Syrian refugees from fines for not canceling work permits.
- The GoJ issued a draft by-law for public comment specifying acceptable working conditions and other provisions in the agriculture sector. However, the by-law has yet to be passed into law.
- The GoJ put in place measures to help businesses and workers to maintain employment and economic protection throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The GoJ stated that it would register 50,000 Syrian refugees under its national social security system.



## Challenges:

- Many occupations and sectors remain “closed” to non-Jordanians, including Syrian refugees, exacerbating the challenge of informality in Jordan’s labor market. Informality often translates to lower wages and longer working hours, as well as the increased risk of exploitation and exposure to unsafe work environments.
- A weak inspection and enforcement regime further contributes to the erosion of decent work standards in Jordan and the inspections that do exist more often aim to identify undocumented workers rather than unsafe work environments. Evidence also shows that work permits do not guarantee decent work standards for Syrian refugees.
- More than one-third of refugees reported losing their livelihoods in the last several months due to COVID-19. The unemployment rate for Syrian refugees stood at 65.1% for Q2 in 2020.
- Poverty has also increased among refugees by 18% since March 2020 as they report challenges meeting basic needs. 66% say they are unable to afford sufficient food and 60% have been forced to borrow money.
- Syrian refugees are only permitted to operate HBBs in three sectors outside of camps, namely food processing, handicrafts, and tailoring. As refugees they face additional obstacles related to landlord approvals, rent contracts, valid passports, and property taxes.
- Deep structural constraints contribute to Jordan’s low labor force participation rate of 39%, one of the lowest in the world. This impacts both Jordanian and refugee populations. Among women, the rate drops to 14%. In addition, youth face barriers to employment with a mismatch between TVET and actual labor market demand.
- Women’s labor force participation was disproportionately impacted during 2020 as they were expected to take on additional household management responsibilities and child and elder care. In addition, only 6.8% of work permits issued in 2020 were for women.

## What we recommend:

- Review nationality quota policies and open sectors of the economy in which Syrian refugees are currently prevented from working, including high growth and professional sectors, based on a formula that minimizes disruption to Jordanian workers.
- Monitor the implementation of flexible work permit reforms and their impact on refugee livelihoods, and expand the list of non-governmental bodies with the authority to sponsor flexible work permits.
- Put decent work at the heart of livelihood engagements, including instituting a more robust regime encompassing workplace inspections, enforcement of an effective complaints mechanism, and improved access to legal support services.
- Ensure that refugees are included in national response plans for compensation schemes and economic recovery packages throughout the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath.
- As much as possible, limit long-term camp closures during the pandemic to enable camp residents to access employment outside of the camp in the same way that non-camp residents can, and mitigate the decline in cash for work opportunities in camps to support access to livelihoods.
- Remove regulatory barriers to HBBs to better facilitate refugees’ ability to formalize their business and provide legal assistance if necessary.
- Increase incentives for national TVET providers to contribute in actively supporting Jordanian and Syrian youth employment. Support private employers in allowing youth to receive on-the-job training to gain employment.

## What has been committed:

- The GoJ committed to expanding registration and regularization of status for Syrian refugees to achieve comprehensive registration.
- The GoJ and the International Community are both committed to voluntary, dignified, safe and sustainable returns to Syria, in accordance with international human rights law, and pledge to build on their existing close working relationship on protection issues.
- The GoJ has committed to maximizing the use of cash support as an efficient and effective modality for social protection.
- The GoJ has pledged to reduce the vulnerability and insecurity of Syrian refugees through programming that addresses basic needs, negative coping strategies, and food insecurity.
- The GoJ has committed to reducing gender-based violence and prioritizing women's empowerment.

## Progress:

- The Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced that all Asylum Seeker Certificates (ASC) and MOI cards – regardless of their expiry date – will continue to be valid until the end of June 2021 to accommodate the backlog of ASC and MOI renewals during COVID-19 related closures, ensuring that refugees can access services in Jordan irrespective of whether or not they have expired refugee documentation.
- In response to COVID-19, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) pushed forward national plans to digitize some aspects of Jordan's court procedures, including in civil cases.
- A national online case management system was established to handle cases of SGBV and child protection respectively.



## Challenges:

- Thousands of Syrian refugees have been unable to regularize their status as a result of the end of the rectification of status process in April 2019, which has left them unable to access essential services, register life events, and obtain work permits for almost two years.
- There are several thousand undocumented or under documented refugees in Jordan, including those who fled Syria without their identity documents and Syrian children born in Jordan whose parents cannot register their births because they do not have a marriage certificate.
- COVID-19 adversely affected resettlement numbers as only 1,557 individuals departed to a third country in 2020 against a target of 5,500 individuals.
- Freedom of movement for camp residents was severely curtailed in 2020 due to camp-wide lockdowns in response to COVID-19, which lasted significantly longer than Jordan's nationwide lockdown. This exacerbated existing movement restrictions facing camp residents who must first obtain leave or work permits to leave the camp.
- The movement of refugees residing in Azraq V5 remains fully restricted, while clearance rates for V5 residents were drastically reduced throughout 2020.
- The socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 has increased reliance on negative coping mechanisms, compounded by limited livelihood options and access to social protection, despite modest increases in cash assistance supporting Syrian refugees.
- Children have been adversely impacted by the pandemic as an estimated 8 out of 10 families have been forced to adopt negative coping mechanisms that include child labor.
- Women and girls are at increased risk of SGBV as a result of movement restrictions and school closures with the pandemic. They have also faced heightened barriers for reporting and receiving services as a result of the absence of privacy at home.
- There remains a lack of funding and progress on the protection needs of persons with disabilities and elderly people, which has been exacerbated by the shift to online modalities and pressure on the capacity of relevant ministries.

## What we recommend:

- Re-establish a rectification of status process for Syrian refugees that is not time bound and enables all Syrian refugees to regularize their legal status, including for current camp residents wishing to formally relocate outside their current location.
- Prioritize due process for V5 residents leading to a gradual decrease in population size.
- Increase the number of refugees resettled in third countries, as well as those entering complementary pathways, such as family reunification and employment.
- Establish a national legal aid system that offers free legal services for vulnerable populations, including refugees of all nationalities.
- Adequately fund SGBV services and strengthen coordination with SGBV service providers and across sectors, namely with cash and livelihoods, in order to disseminate key messages on SGBV risks associated with COVID-19.
- Support economic recovery efforts and income-generating opportunities for families to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on children in light of the increase in child labor and child marriage.
- Raise awareness of the specific protection needs of persons with disabilities among stakeholders in education and health centers.
- Ensure all protection gained for Syrian refugees is extended to all refugees in Jordan.



## What has been committed:



- The GoJ has committed to creating health policy that provides universal and affordable access to healthcare, as well as expanding access to the use of primary and secondary public healthcare.
- The GoJ aimed to expand the umbrella of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) throughout 2020 to reach 80% of Jordan's population and 100% by 2025.
- The GoJ has aimed to create health policy that expands access to affordable healthcare and increase access and use of health systems. The GoJ has sought to increase quality of care and access to both primary and secondary public healthcare.
- The GoJ has committed to include refugees in all aspects of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including in the national vaccination campaign. The Department of Health has stated that the protocols for treatment of Syrians will be the same as for Jordanians throughout the crisis.

## Progress:

- In response to COVID-19, the GoJ provided assurances that refugees will continue to have access to national health services on par with Jordanian nationals, including access to treatment for COVID-19 infections and for the national vaccination rollout. 168 refugees received a vaccine for COVID-19 as of the end of January 2021.
- The National Rehabilitation Strategic Plan 2020-2024 was created to ensure rehabilitation as a fundamental health service for people with health conditions and disabilities.
- Syrian refugees continue to be exempted from fees for maternity and child health services, including vaccines, at Ministry of Health (MoH) maternity and childhood centers.
- Health programming adapted to provide essential health services for refugees and Jordanians inside and outside camps during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially with regards to non-communicable diseases and basic reproductive health services through direct service delivery and consultations when the situation allowed in camps, or by remote service delivery.



## Challenges:



- Despite the return of healthcare subsidies in 2019, secondary and tertiary medical services are still only partially covered for Syrian refugees.
- Maternity lab exams and family planning are not fully covered for Syrian refugee women.
- Patients that have emergency health issues that are neither lifesaving nor obstetric are left out of healthcare coverage, which results in the postponement of treatment and the possibility of long-lasting disabling conditions.
- Mental health has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis due to the unprecedented psychological pressure brought on by the pandemic and its response, which has resulted in increased stress on a variety of fronts, ranging from health to protection to socioeconomic concerns.

## What we recommend:

- Ensure access to affordable and quality health services beyond primary care to include secondary and tertiary services for refugee communities and vulnerable Jordanians, especially in light of the pandemic. Strengthen the delivery of services that include emergency obstetrics and neonatal care, post-operative care, mental health treatment, among others.
- Continue to raise awareness about costs and availability of services for refugees and ensure these are applied locally.
- Strengthen a network of primary health clinics for vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees that deliver reproductive and mental health services both in urban areas and in camps.
- Ensure rehabilitation services remain available throughout the COVID-19 response along the continuum of care from primary to tertiary services for all communities.
- Prioritize mental health and psychosocial support as a collective focus amongst implementing partners, donors, and government officials throughout the COVID-19 context and its aftermath to improve overall physical and mental health.
- Continue to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine to all communities in Jordan and provide information sessions to ensure all vulnerable groups are knowledgeable of the vaccine and how to access vaccination centers, timelines, etc.



*The success of these commitments in the aforementioned sectors is a joint effort between the Government of Jordan and the International Community. For these policies and programs to succeed, it is critical to collaborate in ensuring that assistance is tailored and that the empowerment and resilience of vulnerable communities is central to all efforts. Actors should work towards bridging the humanitarian and development divide and consider how to maintain commitments to the Grand Bargain and the Global Compact on Refugees. This includes investments in the localization agenda, namely through support to national stakeholders in strengthening national capacities and ensuring ownership at the community level. In addition, these commitments must continue to support and empower vulnerable groups and include gender-sensitive programming to address the increased risks and barriers women and girls have faced, particularly in the face of COVID-19, with regards to SGBV, education, and labor force participation.*

