

2017

SITUATION ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN IN JORDAN

SUMMARY

September 2017

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FOREWORD

The National Council for Family Affairs and UNICEF are pleased to issue this joint situation analysis of children in Jordan. This report is based on a collaborative process among government ministries, civil society, donors and UN agencies who we would like to thank for their support, cooperation and insight.

With a key focus on assessing the progress towards realizing children's rights in Jordan, this report analyzes the current situation of all children in the country, including refugee and other vulnerable populations. The report contributes data and analysis to a field where there is often a lack of evidence – putting children at the forefront of development and humanitarian challenges facing the Kingdom.

Jordan has made important progress on the rights of children and their well-being. There has been a steady decline in infant, child and maternal mortality, almost universal access to primary education, and a 95 percent vaccination rate nationwide.

However, progress has been uneven and Jordan faces increasing challenges that complicate its positive trajectory. The onset of the Syrian refugee crisis six years ago has significantly strained Jordan's national systems including education and health; about two-thirds of the population is under 30 years old and need opportunities for their futures, as well as a social safety net, while population growth is putting increasing pressure on already-scarce water resources. As a result, poor children, refugee children without adequate documentation, children with disabilities, children from marginalized ethnic minorities, and children living in informal settlements remain particularly vulnerable – a finding consistent with our past situation analyses.

In this report, we continue to see that some of the most vulnerable children in Jordan are deprived of multiple rights. Child poverty remains an ongoing concern, with a steadily increasing number of poor households, relying on a patchwork of social security programmes. Poor children are more likely to be out of school, to experience child labour or early marriage, and have lower health outcomes. Access to education, while increasing, could be improved for refugee children, children with disabilities, children under 5 years old, and youth in their final years of secondary education.



The report also flags the high prevalence of violence against children in schools and homes, and the urgent need for strengthening legislation and protection mechanisms that involve service providers, communities and caregivers.

All sectors need to invest in strengthening national systems so that Jordan can weather future storms and ensure that all children living in Jordan can have a good quality of life. Resilient government services, companies, civil society and communities all start with well-educated, healthy and protected children. We strongly believe that defining a national pathway towards ending child poverty, better and stronger data on children's situations, and a continuum of care and support services for children and women, including those with disabilities, are essential to the realization of the rights of all children in the country, and will form the backbone of achieving Jordan's Vision 2025 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The information and insights generated by this research aims at informing policies and programmes of the government and other stakeholders. We hope that it will inspire all of us, the government, UN, development partners and the civil society to combine their efforts for more substantive and comprehensive interventions and results for every child.

Mohammed Meqdady

Acting Secretary General
National Council for Family Affairs

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CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN JORDAN

There were 3.8 million children under 18 in Jordan (over 40 per cent of the population) in 2015. Of these, almost 30 per cent were non-Jordanian, many of whom were refugees from neighbouring countries. Children in Jordan have specific rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), to which Jordan is a signatory, and the country's 2016 Constitution. These include the rights to survival, education and development, protection and participation. A Childhood Law is currently being developed to ensure that these rights are upheld comprehensively.



Children's Rights in Jordan

Compounding financial crises; political turmoil in the region (post-Arab spring); disruption in gas supplies from Egypt; and the Syria crisis have had a serious impact on the economy. Until 2008, Jordan's economic outlook was sound, with real annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth averaging 7.7 per cent. Since the global economic crisis in 2008, the growth has not recovered to the pre-crisis level (World Bank, 2016a). Jordan's income derives largely from remittances (20 per cent of GDP) from migrants working mainly in the Arabian Gulf, and a growing free enterprise economy with much foreign investment in manufacturing (especially textiles), information and communications technology (ICT) and other sectors (Devereaux, 2015).

Jordan has made important strides in the 27 years since it signed the UNCRC. Funds allocated to general public services have increased substantially since 2012, particularly for the education and health sectors. Achievements in the past 27 years include:

- Under five mortality has fallen by over a third.
- Jordan has almost achieved its target of universal access to primary education, with 97 per cent of children in school.
- Jordan has maintained gender parity in education since 1979.
- There is nearly universal access to improved water (97 per cent) and sanitation facilities (99 per cent).



There were

**3.8
MILLION**

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(over 40 per cent of the
population) in 2015

However, not all children have benefitted equally from these gains. Girls continue to face particular protection concerns, including early marriage. Boys, meanwhile, are more likely to drop out of school to work to support their families. Other children that face particular vulnerabilities in Jordan include:



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- Children from poor socioeconomic backgrounds
- Refugee children, particularly those without registration
- Children with disabilities
- Children who live in informal settlements and mobile communities, including those from marginalized ethnic communities and Syrian refugees.
- Additionally, as of mid-2017, at least 15,000 children were residing near Rukban at Jordan's north-eastern border.

Jordan faces a wide range of challenges that make it difficult for children to reach their full potential. It hosts among the highest numbers of registered refugees in the world, including (as of May 2017) 2,175,491 Palestinians, 660,315 Syrians and 63,024 Iraqis. The Syrian refugee population, of whom more than half are children, has risen sharply in recent years. The Syria crisis served to compound on-going financial crises, worsened by political turmoil in the region, which were already affecting the country's economic outlook.

In this context, the February 2016 Jordan Compact, an agreement between Jordan and the international community, aims to build the country's resilience within the context of the Syria crisis to attract new investment and create jobs for both Jordanians and Syrian refugees while guaranteeing a quality education for every child.

The proportion of youth in Jordan – almost a third of the population now – is expected to rise in the coming years. As more youth enter adulthood, they will become change-makers and decision-makers, and guide Jordan towards its future. Investing in youth now and in the coming years will create a cadre of young adults with the skills and ideas to positively contribute to their societies. Government, private sector, non-governmental organizations and society as a whole must work to remove the mounting barriers standing in the way of all children realizing their full potential.



POVERTY



The proportion of Jordanians living in absolute poverty increased from 13.3 per cent in 2006 to 14.4 per cent in 2010. Although the poverty rate in rural areas is higher, the majority of poor households (80 per cent) live in the densely populated governorates of Amman, Irbid and Zarqa in the centre and north of the country. While the poverty rates are low compared to rates in the region, 33 per cent of the population in Jordan (18.6 per cent transient poor and 14.4 per cent officially poor) experience poverty during at least one quarter of the year (World Bank, 2016a). The poorest households tend to be exposed to the risk of transient, seasonal poverty and government procedures to secure jobs.

About 86 per cent of Syrian refugees are living below Jordan's poverty line. More than 60 per cent belong to households that bring in a small income with a large number of dependents reflecting a 'severe' dependency ratio. More than 80 per cent of Syrian refugees are using crisis or emergency coping mechanisms such as decreasing food intake, sending family members including children to beg, or resorting to high risk, illegal and socially degrading jobs (UNHCR, 2015).

Analysis of the prevalence of poverty for Jordanians over the lifecycle indicates that Jordanian children and adolescents experience poverty more than other age groups. Even among adults (above 18 years old), the prevalence of poverty peaks among working-age adults aged 36-45 years – typically the time when adults are raising their children and incurring additional costs – before falling significantly among the elderly. Large households are more at risk of being poor than smaller households. The poverty rate in households with up to six members remains below average, but for large households (seven members or more) it exceeds 20 per cent.

The evidence required to monitor the situation of children in Jordan needs

improvement, including through increasing the overall availability and quality of data on children. There is inadequate administrative data to inform policy planning and implementation of social services for children. There is little demand to monitor and evaluate the impact of public policies and programmes on children. For instance, the last poverty analysis was done in 2010, making it difficult to design resilience programmes that target all vulnerable children irrespective of nationality, ability and status.



More than
80%

of Syrian refugees are using crisis or emergency coping mechanisms such as sending family members including children to beg

SOCIAL PROTECTION



Jordan has established a set of social protection programmes ranging from subsidies to a cash transfer scheme, tax exemptions and social services. This includes the National Aid Fund (NAF), which operates six programmes targeting Jordanian households with children without parental care, convicts, people with disabilities, missing persons, divorced women, and female-headed households. Cash benefits are also provided by the Zakat Fund, which is funded by endowments and administrated by the Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places, and reached about one per cent of the poor (Zureiqat and Abu Shama, 2015).

The coverage and targeting of these programmes is a concern. NAF covered only 7.4 per cent of the population in 2010 while poverty prevalence was 14.4 per cent. In 2013, more than a third of NAF resources went to beneficiaries who were above the poverty line before receiving assistance.

A parallel system of cash transfers has been developed to respond to the needs of Syrian refugees. Social transfers provided to Syrian refugees by UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) include a variety of cash and voucher assistance schemes. There are three main types of UN social assistance benefits available to Syrian refugees living in Jordan: UNHCR cash assistance (about 32,000 households receiving around 130 JOD/month), the UNICEF Child Cash Grant (55,000 children with grants of 20 JOD per child per month, up to a maximum of four children), and World Food Programme vouchers for food assistance to 430,000 individuals. The Government requires 30 per cent of beneficiaries of these programmes (Hagen-Zanker et al, 2017) to be Jordanian citizens. As the Syrian crisis is now in its seventh year, these programmes, initiated as humanitarian assistance, are now facing funding shortfalls, highlighting the need to move towards a development approach in supporting refugees.

One innovative idea is a scalable safety net that expands and contracts during and after a crisis, such as unconditional food, voucher-based or cash transfers (e.g. the voucher programmes in Palestine and Jordan), which are co-funded by the government and development partners sectors (Devereaux, 2015).



7.4%

of the population covered by NAF

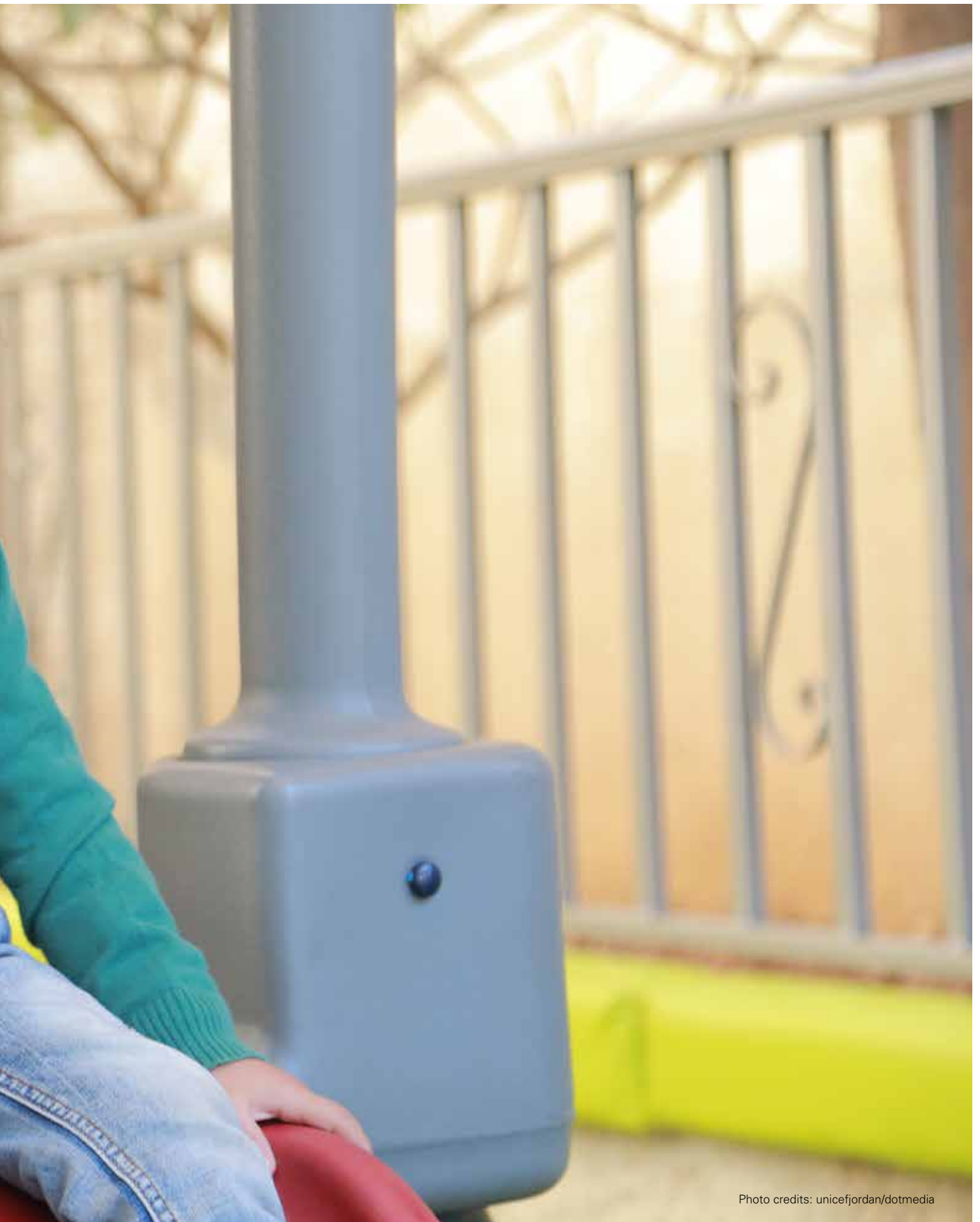
Recommendations

- Agree on a specific definition of child poverty at the national level, to improve outcomes in social protection and child rights
- Implement a national pathway to end child poverty by a) introducing routine measurement of child poverty; and b) reducing child poverty through policy change and programmatic interventions.
- Invest in improving data needed to analyze poverty on a routine basis to track Jordan's progress towards achieving Goal 1 of the Sustainable Development Goals to eradicate extreme poverty.
- Develop a National Social Protection Strategy with a special focus on children.
- Establish a minimum social protection floor to including minimum income security for all children, with the international community supporting the inclusion of non-Jordanians.
- Improve the targeting of national social protection programmes to meet the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable children in Jordan.



HEALTH AND NUTRITION

The health of Jordan's population has improved considerably over the last decade, with child and maternal mortality reduced and vaccination rates covering 95 per cent of all children. However, maternal and child mortality rates reflect important socioeconomic inequities, with poorer mothers and children at greater risk. Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and heart diseases are also on the rise, with long-term implications for the health of children.



Health and Nutrition



Mortality of children under 5 is nearly

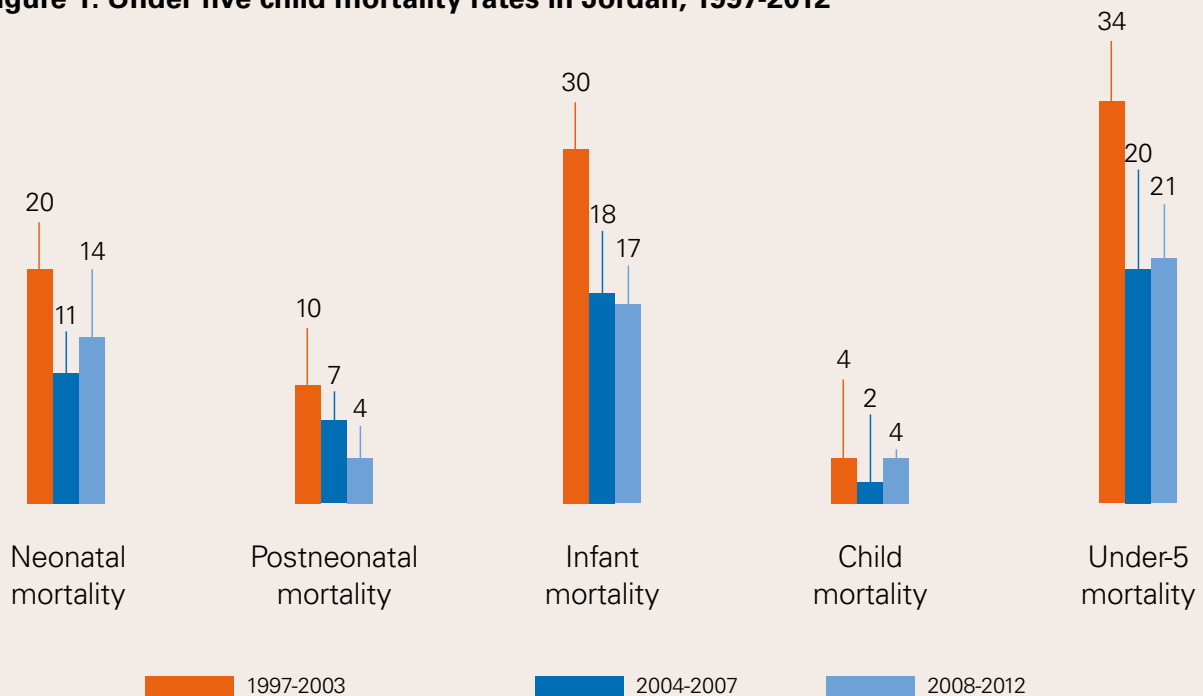
THREE TIMES HIGHER

among children in the poorest households

Under five mortality and infant mortality fell substantially between 1997 and 2012, but not enough to meet the targets of the Millennium Development Goals. Neonatal mortality currently makes up more than 70 per cent of deaths of children under five. Over 30 per cent of all neonatal deaths are preventable and 44.3 per cent are possibly preventable with optimal care. Neonatal deaths are underreported in Jordan, primarily because of a weak reporting system and legislation under which families are responsible for registering births and deaths rather than health facilities and institutions.

Other main causes of mortality among children under 5 include diarrhoea and lower and upper respiratory infections, followed by infectious diseases and injuries. Mortality of children under 5 is nearly three times higher among children in the poorest households (29 deaths per 1,000 live births) than the wealthiest households (11 deaths per 1,000 live births). By governorate, neonatal mortality rates range from 26 deaths per 1,000 live births in Ajloun to 7.4 per 1,000 in Ma'an (UNICEF and John Snow Inc., 2013). Palestinian children living in camps have an under-five mortality rate of 33 per 1,000 compared to 20 per 1,000 outside camps (Department of Statistics and ICF International, 2013).

Figure 1: Under five child mortality rates in Jordan, 1997-2012



Source: Jordan, Department of Statistics and ICF International, 2013

Over 30 per cent of all neonatal deaths are preventable and 44.3 per cent are possibly preventable with optimal care

Maternal mortality rates fell from 77 to 19 per 100,000 live births between 2000 and 2008 (Ministry of Health, 2008). For Palestinian refugees, the maternal mortality ratio was 36.9 per 100,000 live births in 2015 (Ministry of Health, 2015). Young age, large family size, living in the southern region, attending peripheral hospitals, less educational attainment, and lower monthly family income are all associated with higher risks of maternal death. Antenatal care coverage is 94 per cent for Jordanians, 85 per cent for refugees in Azraq refugee camp and 71 per cent for residents of Za'atari refugee camp, but only 54 per cent for refugees in host communities (Department of Statistics and ICF International, 2013). In 2012, 98.2 per cent of women delivered at a health facility (UNICEF and University of Toronto, 2015) but only 22.8 per cent of women receive the standard of two postnatal care visits recommended by the World Health Organization.



1. World Health Organization figures place the maternal mortality rate at a much higher 63 for 2010, although it must be noted that Jordan does not officially confirm this figure.

Health and Nutrition

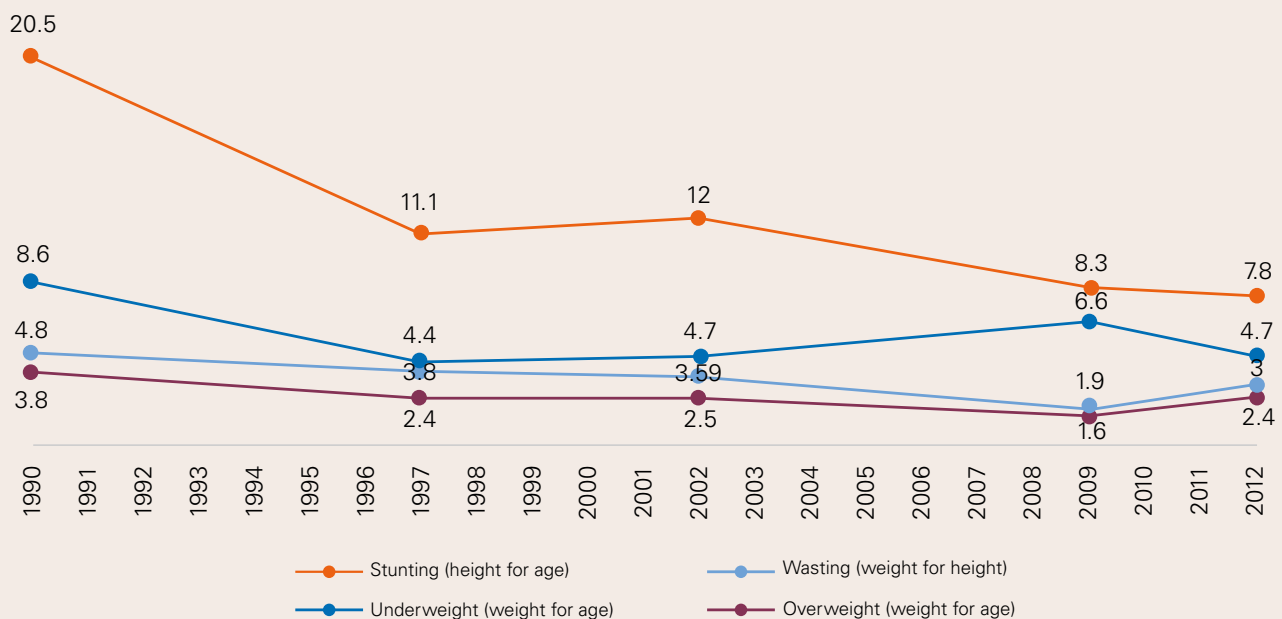
Nutrition

Stunting fell from 12 per cent in 2002 to 8 per cent in 2012 but rates have stagnated for the past five years (Department of Statistics and ICF International, 2013) as some groups lack access to quality food, knowledge on care practices and adequate hygiene. While over two-thirds of Jordanian women initiate breastfeeding within one day of giving birth, both exclusive breastfeeding and early initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth have decreased since 2002: the latter fell from 39.7 to 18.6 per cent (World Health Organization, 2016).

Micronutrient deficiencies are prevalent among both Jordanian and Syrian refugee women and children. This is due to poor diets with low nutrient content, inadequate access to health care, and poor water and sanitation

Micronutrient deficiencies are prevalent among both Jordanian and Syrian refugee women and children. This is due to poor diets with low nutrient content, inadequate access to health care, and poor water and sanitation. Seventeen per cent of Jordanian children 12-59 months are anaemic, 13.7 per cent are iron deficient and 4.8 per cent have iron deficiency anaemia (Ministry of Health et al, 2011). In the poorest quintile, 40.5 per cent of children have anaemia compared to 26.3 per cent in the wealthiest (World Health Organization, 2016). Anaemia prevalence among registered Syrian refugee children aged 6-59 months was reported as 48.4 per cent inside Za'atari camp and 26.1 per cent outside the camp. For younger children (6 months to 2 years old), anaemia rates are 64 per cent, indicating a serious nutrition concern for this age group. Anaemia among non-pregnant Syrian women of reproductive age in the camp and in host communities was 44.8 per cent and 31.1 per cent.

Figure 2: Newborn and Child Nutrition Indicators for Jordan from 1990-2012



Source: Joint Malnutrition Estimates from UNICEF/WHO/World Bank, 2014



National prevalence of smoking among adult males is very high, at

49.6%

Like many middle-income countries, Jordan is also facing a growing burden of non-communicable diseases related to lifestyle choices. Smoking and high consumption of salt, sodium, sugar and unhealthy fats remain important concerns among both adolescent girls and older women in Jordan. National prevalence of smoking among adult males is very high, at 49.6 per cent (The High Health Council, 2015). An increasing number of children and adolescents in Jordan are overweight or obese. This can lead to later development of type II diabetes, early-onset metabolic syndrome and coronary artery diseases (Gupta et al, 2012). Four per cent of children are overweight. The cost of treatment of for most non-communicable diseases can be difficult for families to meet, particularly those living in poverty, and strains the national health system.

Children with disabilities



1.3%

of children have severe functional difficulties

According to the 2015 Census, 1.3 per cent of children aged 5-17 have severe functional difficulties while 6.1 per cent of children have simple to severe functional difficulties (Jordan, Department of Statistics, 2015). Nearly eight per cent of children in Za'atari have at least one disability as compared to three per cent of registered Syrian children living in host communities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most parents of children living with disabilities have limited information on community resources, which delays detection and care seeking, leading to developmental delays and the deterioration of their abilities, according to interviews conducted with a disability specialist at Handicap International in October 2016 for this report. While the National Disability Strategy identifies the need for strengthening early detection across the country, especially for children, early detection and active case finding is neither implemented nor regulated in Jordan's health and education systems. A continuum of care and support services for children and adults with disabilities is largely missing or irregular in its implementation.

Health and Nutrition



The overall immunization rate in Jordan is

95%

including 91 per cent for Syrians

Immunization

The overall immunization rate² in Jordan is 95 per cent including 91 per cent for Syrians (UNICEF, 2015). Syrian children whose mothers are illiterate had significantly lower coverage (67 per cent). Jordan self-procures vaccines and provides free immunization for all children regardless of their nationality, but the country needs external support to introduce pneumococcal vaccines. The Government continues to struggle to source vaccines at low cost from local representatives of global vaccine companies.

The Health Care System

Most of the health care services in Jordan is provided through the Ministry of Health (MOH) system, though private providers are playing an increasing role in the country. UN agencies such as UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UNRWA supplement government health system - providing primary health care services to vulnerable populations, and NGOs also operate about 44 charitable clinics through the country (High Health Council, 2013). From November 2014, user fees were applied to all Syrian refugees accessing services at government facilities (except for immunization and tuberculosis treatment). In 2015, antenatal care, postnatal care and family planning became free of charge, but the costs of high-risk pregnancies, deliveries and care for sick newborns who require intensive care and/or in-patient services are not included (World Health Organization, 2016).



2. Children who had ever received any type of vaccination (6-34 months for Jordanians, 6-59 months for Syrians)

The Government is committed to sustaining and improving public health despite the global economic downturn and the refugee influx

The Government is committed to sustaining and improving public health despite the global economic downturn and the refugee influx. It is prioritizing achieving Universal Health Coverage by 2030 – a significant target for Sustainable Development Goal 3 on health - by improving health equity and strengthening and building a resilient health system. It has also enacted a policy to provide free healthcare for Jordanian households living in poverty pockets (World Health Organization, 2006). As a result of this policy, only five per cent of households in poverty pockets are uninsured compared to 22 per cent of impoverished households living outside of poverty pockets (UNDP and MOPIC, 2012). However, the poorest households in Jordan continue to bear disproportionately high out of pocket costs for health care and public insurance premiums (World Health Organization, 2016).

While poor, uninsured households were the most likely to obtain health services from MOH facilities, the percentage of the total cost of care offset by government subsidy was estimated to be 75.6 per cent among the poorest households compared to 80.4 per cent among the richest, when they choose to access MOH facilities (Halasa et al, 2010).

Retaining skilled healthcare staff has become a barrier to accessing healthcare, with low salaries, lack of centralized deployment of healthcare professionals, lack of professional development opportunities, and insufficient specialist staff, including neonatologists, neonatal intensive care nurses and breastfeeding counselling nurses (High Health Council, 2013). Meanwhile, health information systems in the country require strengthening and harmonization.

Recommendations

- Improve the health information system, and particularly reporting of neonatal births, to better understand the problem and reduce the prevalence.
- Benefit from the UNRAW-HQA (صحة الام والطفل) mobile application to provide health awareness information for mother and child in the public health system.
- Strengthen the system for early detection of childhood disability.
- Modernize the vaccine procurement system.
- Raise awareness of maternal and child dietary diversity and breastfeeding at community level to improve nutrition.
- Consider how to further reduce the out-of-pocket fees paid by the poorest households.
- Establish a unified and comprehensive health insurance system (Universal Health Coverage) to prevent vulnerable households from catastrophic health spending in case of a serious health issue.
- Establish free prevention and care initiatives to address the rise in non-communicable diseases.
- Enact performance-based recruitment, incentives and promotions for health workers.
- Apply best practices from the Health Care Accreditation Council (HCAC) to optimize the quality of services provided in the public health sector.

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

In Jordan, an estimated 97 per cent of the population has access to an improved water source, while 99 per cent has access to an improved sanitation facility.³ However, the consistency and affordability of this access, and the environmental conditions in which children live, vary considerably across the country. Access to piped water systems has decreased across the country, from 99.8 to 87.4 per cent in urban areas, and from 85.9 to 79.7 per cent in rural areas, between 2000 and 2015, as population growth outpaced the growth in the network. This has led to an increased dependence on costly trucked water with higher risks of waterborne illnesses. (UNICEF and WHO, 2015). In terms of the SDGs, the proportion of households with drinking water which is classified as “safely managed” has decreased from an estimated 94.2 per cent in 2000 to 93.3 per cent in 2015. Conversely, the proportion of households with a sanitation system which safely manages the wastewater has increased from 76.7 to 77.3 per cent.





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Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Jordan is the second most water scarce countries in the world; Jordan's annual renewable water resources are less than 100 m³ per person, significantly below the threshold of 500 m³ per person which defines severe water scarcity. Compounding this severe scarcity is water loss – about half of the pumped water across the country is estimated to be 'non-revenue water' - lost to inefficiencies in the system, including leaks and illegal connections. While the non-revenue water rate decreased from 52 per cent in 2000 to 44 per cent in 2011, it rose again to 52 per cent in 2014. Amman, Zarqa, Balqa and Irbid account for 75 per cent of the non-revenue water loss estimates. (Ministry of Water and Irrigation, 2016)

To mitigate against the limited water resources and the high rates of loss, the Government has implemented a strict water-rationing programme, supplying water to households at various intervals, ranging from once a week in the main cities, to less than twice a month in other areas (Ministry of Water and Irrigation, 2016). To manage this restricted supply, most households have large water storage facilities or supplement the supply by purchasing water from private vendors.

A UNICEF/REACH assessment reported that 25 per cent of households in informal tented settlements do not have access to any type of sanitation facility, and as a result, open defecation rates are reported to be high (REACH and UNICEF, 2014). Furthermore, 56 per cent of households in these settlements reported purchasing water from private vendors, with only about 8 per cent reporting access to a municipal connection. Sixty per cent indicated that they have to borrow water and a further 34 per cent indicated that they borrow money to pay for water. Families living in such settlements have limited funds and face extreme challenges in purchasing water storage facilities, and as a result, incur very high costs for water deliveries, which may not be from approved drinking water sources, with associated water quality concerns.



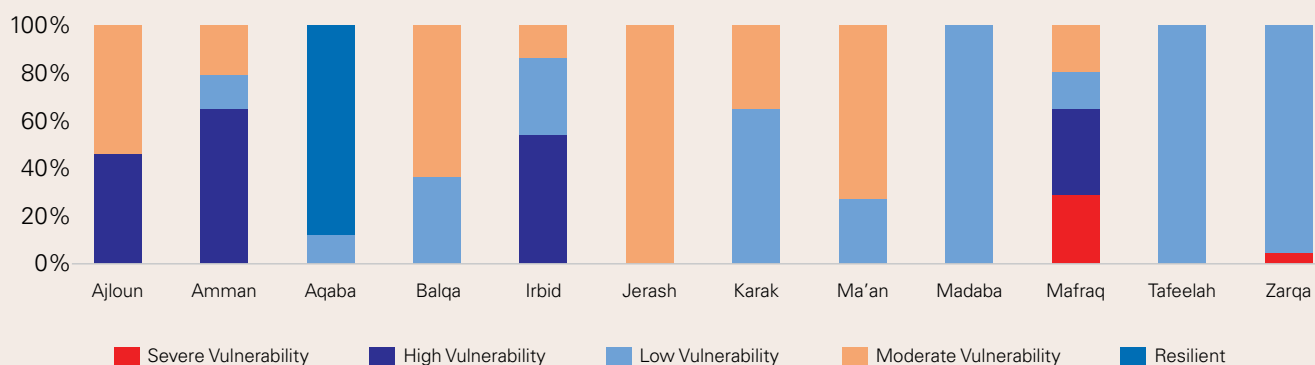
25%

of households in informal tented settlements do not have access to any type of sanitation facility

For the approximately 123,000 Syrian refugees living in camps, the level of access varies significantly across the camps with water distributed to tapstands in Azraq and King Abdullah Park camps, and public and private tanks in Za'atari camp. While water is distributed free of charge, many households have purchased their own water tanks, and organize the filling of these tanks outside of the agreed schedule. Water storage practice at the household level is another significant challenge encountered in the camps. All of the water distributed in the camps by UNICEF is chlorinated, at a higher level than the refugees are accustomed to. As the chlorinated water tastes different, many families open up the top of their water containers to reduce the level of chlorine, and as a result, potentially expose the water to contamination and reduce the level of protection against outbreaks of waterborne illnesses, including Hepatitis A.

- An improved drinking water source is one that is protected from outside contamination by nature of its construction. Improved sanitation includes sanitation facilities that hygienically separate human excreta from human contact.

The Government heavily subsidizes the cost of water in an effort to try to ensure access to water for the most vulnerable households, with tariffs

Figure 3: Water Vulnerability Classification per Governorate

Note: Includes only those collecting water from the network; unconnected households, not reflected here are extremely vulnerable.

based on block usage, instead of an actual metered amount (Ministry of Water and Irrigation, 2016). While the tariff structure is very helpful for vulnerable families, it does not instill a public sense of water being a valuable and limited resource.

Key hygiene norms, including handwashing, are well-practiced in Jordan, but gaps remain in access to basic hygiene items for vulnerable households. While basic messages on hygiene and water conservation are disseminated in schools, there remains significant potential to expand the curriculum and mode of teaching. Importantly, the National Water Strategy 2016-2025 states that the Government will “Develop a comprehensive WASH [water and sanitation] package for hygiene improvement in all schools to promote hygiene and health awareness amongst children.” (Ministry of Water and Irrigation, 2016)

As the population of Jordan continues to increase, and the country expands its agricultural, industrial, commercial and tourist infrastructure, the water situation in Jordan will become even more of a critical challenge. The National Water Strategy 2016-2025 has outlined possible options to address the chronic water shortages. These include major technological innovations including additional desalination plants, as well as large-scale infrastructure projects including the Red Sea to Dead Sea pipeline and various reuse schemes, mostly at very high financial and energy costs. Although new water resources will be required, and networks extended as the urban areas expand, significant resources (water and energy) can be saved through extensive rehabilitation of existing water systems to reduce losses, and through alternative technologies for water reuse and conservation. On this basis, there is enormous potential to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of rehabilitation, conservation and reuse schemes.

Recommendations

- Review the current tariff system to ensure a pro-poor structure which incentivises water conservation.
- Rehabilitate existing water and wastewater systems to reduce leakage and inefficiencies.
- Implement alternative technologies for water reuse and conservation, and sanitation systems for low density settlements.
- Promote healthy hygiene practices amongst children in schools.





EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

In Jordan, early childhood development opportunities occur primarily in homes, with less than three per cent of children aged 0-3 attending any form of formal childcare, such as nurseries or daycare centres. Meanwhile, only 13 percent of children aged 4 to 5 years old access Kindergarten 1 (KG1); and 59 per cent of those aged 5 to 6 years old attend Kindergarten 2 (KG2), with variations in enrolment percentages in different areas in the country (El Kogali and Kraft, 2015).

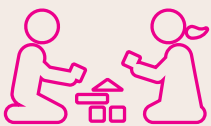
Early Childhood Development



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In 2014, parents reported that the three main reasons for not sending their children to kindergarten were that mothers care for their children at home (49.7 per cent), the high cost of enrolment (16.1 per cent), and the lack of kindergartens close to home (8.5 per cent) (National Council for Family Affairs, 2015). While still low, the enrolment rate in KG2 has shown a 10-point increase from a 49 per cent KG2 enrolment in the year 2000. The Government has launched a plan to universalise KG2, making it compulsory for children, in the next eight years.

Seventy three percent of children aged 36-59 months are developmentally on track as measured by the early childhood development index (Ministry of Education, National Committee for Human Resource Development and UNICEF, 2014). Low family income can adversely affect the ability of parents to nurture and positively care for their children, by constraining both money and time available for their children. Consultations conducted for this report show that this is exacerbated by inadequate legislative and policy frameworks, such as the lack of flexible work arrangements to support working parents. While the labour law requires all employers with at least 20 married women who have at least 10 children among them, in their workforce to provide childcare services, the services often either do not exist or do not meet quality standards (National Committee for Human Resources Development, 2016).



73%

of children aged 36 - 59 months are developmentally on track as measured by the early childhood development index



As the vast majority of young children are cared for at home, UNICEF's Better Parenting Programme has allowed 200,000 parents and caregivers to learn and share with their peers, and improve care practices at home since its inception in the year 2000.

Recommendations

- Ensure that childcare facilities are established in all work institutions as per the law and encourage the expansion of nurseries in communities.
- Expand the Better Parenting Programme to reach all parents in Jordan, especially high-risk parents such as parents under 18 and step-parents.
- Support early detection of children with developmental delays/difficulties to facilitate their timely access to health, education, rehabilitation, and other social services to support their optimal health and development.
- Ensure that the aspiration to make KG2 – the pre-primary year of kindergarten – compulsory is met and expand spaces at pre-school.
- Amend the education law to make KG2 part of the compulsory stage of education.
- Raise awareness of the developmental benefits of kindergarten for children of pre-school age, and consider how to support children from low-income families to enter pre-school.

EDUCATION





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Education



96.6%

of all children in Jordan are enrolled in primary education

For the 2016-2017 academic year, there were 126,127 Syrian refugee children (51 per cent girls) enrolled in public schools in camps and host communities

Access to education

For Jordanian children up to 15 years old, basic education (Grades 1-10) is free and compulsory. However, non-Jordanian students, regardless of their legal status, are requested to pay for primary and secondary school. The international community currently provides funds to the Ministry of Education to cover formal education costs for Syrian refugee children.

In 2014, 96.6 per cent of all children in Jordan were enrolled in primary education (96.4 per cent of boys and 96.9 per cent of girls). Secondary education (Grades 11-12) is neither free nor compulsory, and enrolment in 2014 was 81.3 per cent (83.6 per cent for girls and 79.3 per cent for boys) (UNESCO, 2015). Children from poor socio-economic backgrounds, children involved in child labour and children with disabilities are at a higher risk of being out of school (UNICEF, 2014a). Children with multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities are at greater risk of either dropping out or being out of education altogether.

For the 2016-2017 academic year, there were 126,127 Syrian refugee children (51 per cent girls) enrolled in public schools in camps and host communities (this is equivalent to just over half of the 211,922 registered Syrian refugee children of school going age as of May 2017). Syrian families report that the main reasons for not enrolling their children in school are the inability to afford related costs (33 per cent); lack of space in the nearest schools (17 per cent); and child labour (14 per cent) (UNICEF, 2016a). In the 2016-2017 academic year, the Ministry of Education enacted a time-bound waiver that allowed children to enrol in school without official documentation.



Photo credits: unicefjordan/dotmedia

UNRWA provided elementary and preparatory education (Grades 1-10) to 119,747 children through 172 schools in 95 school buildings in 2015. UNRWA also runs two vocational and technical training centres. The Jordan Field Implementation Plan 2014 – 2015, which defines the plans and activities for UNRWA Jordan highlights the improvement of the learning environment in schools as a strategic priority

Only one in ten children from the marginalized minorities of Bani Murra and Turkman groups (the Dom communities) aged 12-18 who participated in UNICEF focus group discussions in mid-2016 were enrolled in school. Barriers to education for the communities include the need to work to support their families; early marriage; migration related to evictions and seasonal labour; and discrimination from teachers and other students based on their ethnicity (UNICEF, 2016b).

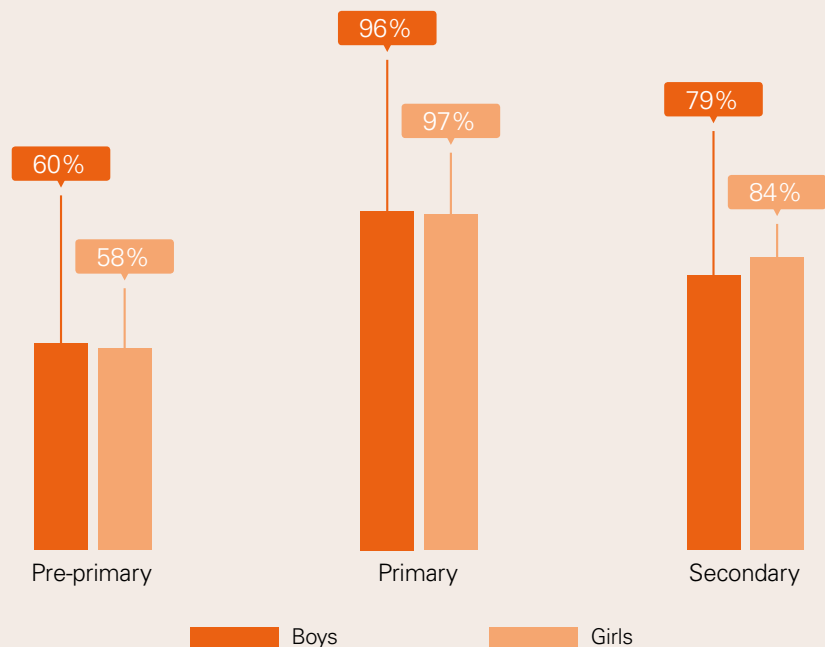
In 2015-2016, 16,950 children with disabilities were enrolled in public schools. Teachers have identified needs for increased teacher training for working with children with disabilities; better-equipped classrooms; special classes exclusively for children with disabilities; and the provision of wheelchairs. The Ministry of Education lacks the necessary financial and technical resources to comprehensively implement inclusive education. However, an action plan has been developed to prioritize inclusive education from the 2017-2018 school year.



16,950

children with disabilities were enrolled in public schools

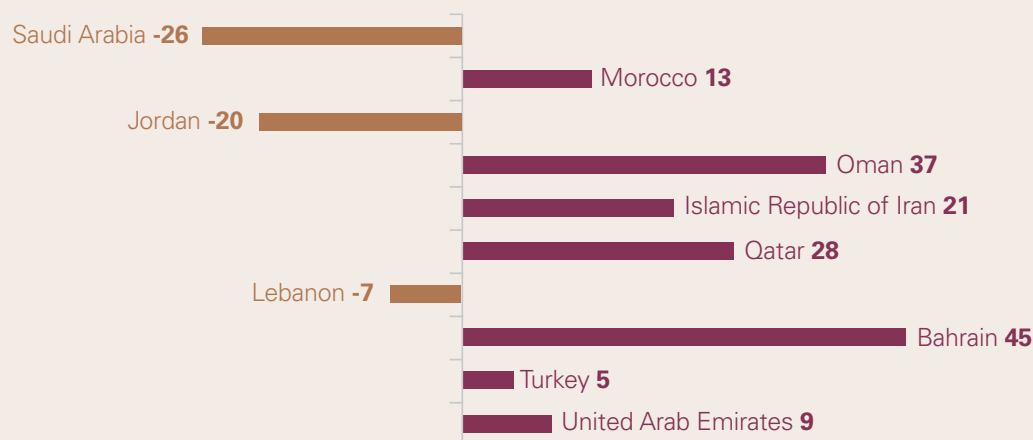
Figure 4: Gross enrolment rates by education level in Jordan, 2014-2015 for pre-primary/KG2)



Barriers to education for the communities include the need to work to support their families; early marriage; migration related to evictions and seasonal labour; and discrimination from teachers and other students based on their ethnicity

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2017

Education

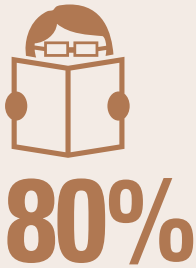
Figure 5: Change in average scores, grade 8 math, 2011-2015

While there is gender parity in primary education, more female students are enrolled in secondary school than male students. Boys are more likely to drop out of school due to poor academic achievements, violence, bullying and labour. Boys are also more likely to repeat grades and less likely to finish primary school (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2012). Lagging boys' performance may be tied to teacher quality, availability of male teachers, violence in schools, availability of quality school environments and student-teacher ratio. Meanwhile, girls are more likely to be kept at home due to protection concerns and household responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings or ailing parents. Girls are also far more likely to be married at an early age. In some communities, 10 per cent of girls are married before turning 18 (UNICEF, 2014b).

Non-formal education is certified by the Ministry of Education and available for children and adolescents aged 13-20. Those targeted include working children, drop-outs, children having difficulties integrating into the formal education environment, young people without strong support networks at home or in the community, and other out-of-school children. Between 2015 and 2017, the Drop Out programme (for children and adolescents above 12 years who have never enrolled or have been out of school for more than 3 years) reached 2,500 vulnerable youth of all nationalities, including Syrians and Jordanians in host communities and camps. Meanwhile, the Catch Up Programme, rolled out by the Ministry of Education in November 2016 offers second chance learning opportunities to younger children aged 9-12 who have been out of school for more than three years. Over 1,600 children are enrolled in the Catch Up Programme as of May 2017.

As of December 2016, more than 66,000⁴ children in Jordan (including Jordanians and refugees) aged 5 to 17 were enrolled in some form of informal education. Informal education, not certified by the Ministry of Education, is offered by 28 different organizations and the quality of services varies from one organization to another. The service has vastly expanded since the start of the Syrian refugee crisis, and has allowed children to access some form of learning while they wait to enrol in formal education.

4. Gender breakdown: 49 per cent male, 51 per cent female



of students in Grades 2 and 3 are reading without comprehension

Around a quarter of children in Jordan attend private schools. Private schools follow the Ministry of Education curriculum but generally are better equipped and have smaller class sizes where children to have more contact time with teacher, thereby leading to better learning outcomes. This has the effect of widening inequity between children from wealthy and poor families.

Quality of Education

Learning outcomes in Jordan are poor throughout basic and secondary education and urgently require major improvements. For instance, 80 per cent of students in Grades 2 and 3 are reading without comprehension (National Committee for Human Resources Development, 2016). Jordanian students are consistently performing poorly in international standardized tests. In the 2015 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in Grades 4 and 8 mathematics, Jordanian students placed 44 out of 48 countries/territories in Grade 4 mathematics and third to last out of 36 countries in Grade 8 mathematics. In science, Grade 8 students were sixth to last out of 37 countries/territories. Jordan dropped by 20 points in mathematics and 23 points in science among students aged 9-10 from 2011 to 2015 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

The Ministry of Education's limited operating budget and the increased pressure on the education system caused by the Syrian crisis have strained their capacity to improve the quality of education. This has often prevented or delayed school construction or renovations, resulting in large classroom sizes, increasing unruliness and violence in schools.

The education system is in stasis, with an outdated curriculum and pedagogy, poor learning environments, a lack of integration of information and communication technology, and inadequate pre- and in-service teacher training. This stasis is reflected in declining performances in international assessments, as well as in the Tawjihi, or secondary school leaving examination. Only a quarter of those who enter the last year of secondary education pass the exam and there are few alternatives for those who do not pass (Jordan Times, 31 Aug 2016). Many students choose not to sit the exam. The pass rate for those who sit the Tawjihi is higher for students in private (65.1 per cent) than public (51.4 per cent) schools, and lower in Aqaba, Jerash, Ma'an, Madaba and Zarqa, in rural areas and in boys' schools⁵. Reasons for high failures rates include the declining quality of the education system (Al-Monitor, 2015) (especially in small rural schools) both in terms of content and soft skills such as time management.

Less than three per cent of youth participate in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) (United Nations Development Programme, 2014). TVET is provided at the secondary and tertiary levels by both public and private institutions. Students with the lowest grades are directed to the vocational stream, negatively stigmatizing vocational education despite the growing needs of the job market. TVET will need to be revamped to support young people's preparedness for the labour market and be perceived as a desirable option for those who do not pursue academia.

5. Public school in Jordan is gender-segregated starting at the latest by Grade 3. All boys sitting the Tawjihi exams from public schools are attending boys-only schools.

Education

The Education System

Key concerns in governance of the education sector include the centralized planning and decision-making structures and lack of coordination and communication among education actors (National Committee for Human Resources Development, 2016). Decisions made at the central level are often slow to cascade down to schools, resulting in ineffective implementation of education programmes and plans. While the Ministry of Education has begun devolving responsibilities to field directorates and schools (National Committee for Human Resources Development, 2016), consultations conducted for this report show that has been difficult to translate into reality, as officials often do not fully agree with the decentralization. The current school inspection system is weak and inspection units are often under-resourced to adequately carry out their job functions.

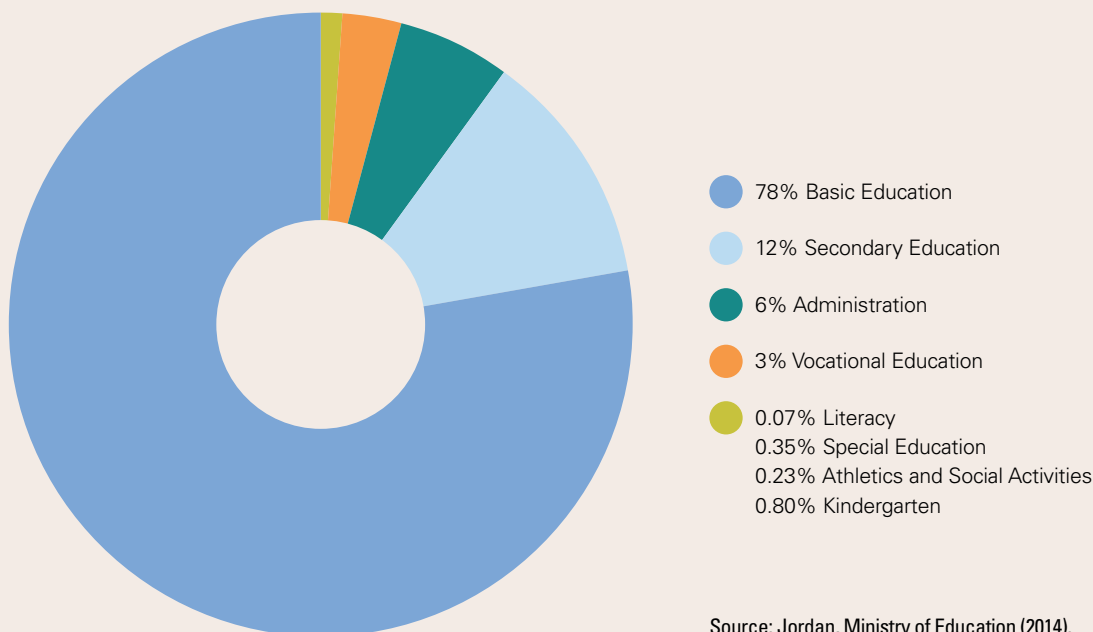


Only
7%

of expenditure was on capital expenses and there were insufficient national budgetary allocations for adequate investment in new schools and equipment

Jordan dedicated 3.5 per cent of GDP to pre-tertiary education in 2013, comparable to international averages, though lower than average per pupil in other upper-middle income countries. Education made up 13.3 per cent of the national budget in 2013 (World Bank, 2016a). Only seven per cent of expenditure was on capital expenses (Ministry of Education, 2015), and there were insufficient national budgetary allocations for adequate investment in new schools and equipment. Construction and rehabilitation is supplemented by international donors. Consultations conducted for this report note that centralized funding decisions mean insufficient resources are invested in operating and maintaining facilities, including WASH facilities.

Figure 6: Ministry of Education budget breakdown, 2014/15 school year



Source: Jordan, Ministry of Education (2014).



The Government of Jordan's Human Resources Development Strategy (2016-2025) proposes constructing new schools in overcrowded areas and expanding existing schools while rationalizing underutilized ones, with a specific focus on children with disabilities and Syrian refugees. Modernized basic and secondary curriculums would be taught using updated child-centred teaching methods and information and communication technology, and evaluated through improved assessments. The Government is now developing a costed implementation plan to strengthen the quality of education.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the cost of education does not prevent vulnerable children including refugee children from studying.
- Ensure that Dom children receive the support they need to access and complete their education.
- Ensure that funding is available to improve the quality of education in Jordan.
- Prioritize teacher training and professional development, including pre-service training, in-service training, and teacher certification.
- Where appropriate, decentralize funding decisions to the school level so that more is invested in maintaining and improving facilities.
- Modernize the education system to equip children with the skills they will need to succeed in the modern economy.

CHILD PROTECTION

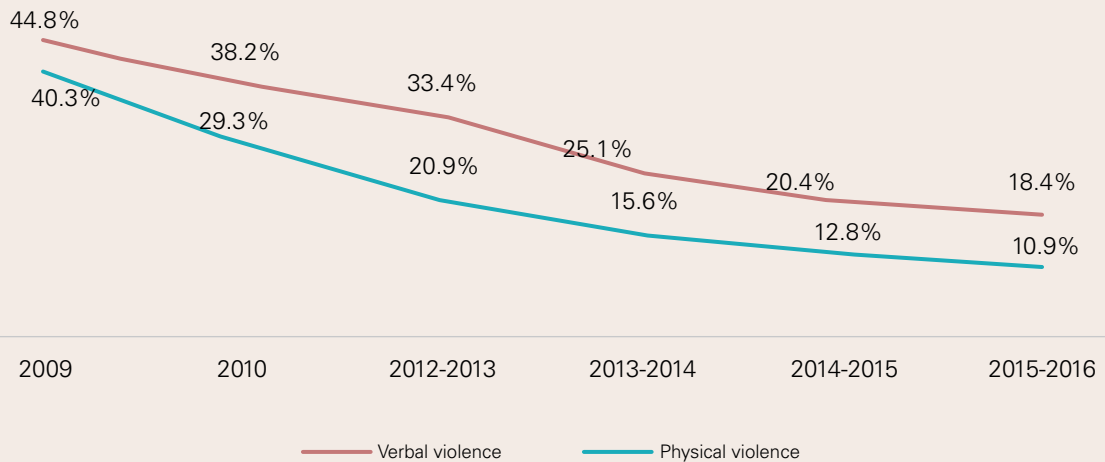
Protecting children from harm is an important cornerstone of the Government's policies in a variety of sectors. While there is a legal framework in place such as a minimum age for employment or marriage, the enforcement of these regulations can be complicated by social/cultural norms and economic realities. Bullying and violence in schools is a key underlying child protection issue that affects children's ability to feel safe and limits their right to education. Children with disabilities, unaccompanied or separated children, children without parental care, children from marginalized minority communities and children living and/or working on the streets face particular inequities. Refugee children and children from the poorest families also face significant child protection concerns.





Child Protection

Figure 7: Percentages of verbal and physical violence in total schools from 2009-2016



Source: Ma'an Campaign data

Violence against children

Although corporal punishment is illegal in schools, alternative care settings and penal institutions, the use of violence in these settings – and in homes – continues to be widely accepted socially and culturally. The rate of physical and verbal punishment in schools has fallen in recent years. However, 11 per cent of children in public schools, including Syrians in schools in host communities, still report that they have been subjected to physical violence by teachers and over 18 per cent report verbal violence by teachers in the 2015-2016 academic year, according to UNICEF's Ma'an Anti-Violence Campaign's online survey of violence in schools.

In 2012, children in the lowest wealth quintile were more likely to be subjected to psychological and physical punishment at home (70.5 per cent) than children in the wealthiest quintile (51.6 per cent) (Department of Statistics and ICF International, 2013). Domestic violence remains widely accepted, with male-dominated exercise of power and disciplinary actions. Consultations conducted for this report also noted that violence perpetrated by the father may be replicated by older, male children against their siblings.

6. Physical punishment in any form is prohibited in schools through the Discipline Instructions in Public and Private Schools No. 1 of 2007.

Automated Procedures for Handling Family Violence Cases have been piloted to provide technical support to all ministries, institutions and stakeholders that handle family violence cases

The National Framework for Family Protection against Violence was launched in 2007. Upon evaluation there were key gaps remaining in the prevention of violence, including the need for a more equal response across governorates and a focus on responding to (in addition to prevention of) violence. The second edition of the National Framework for Family Protection Against Violence was produced in 2016. An automated tracking system for Handling Family Violence Cases have been piloted to provide technical support to all ministries, institutions and stakeholders that handle family violence cases. The goal of these procedures is to ensure an integrated response and ensure the best interest of the survivor; to develop periodic reports on service providers; and to identify gaps in the system. The National Council for Family Affairs has conducted a survey on protection services for children and their families in Jordan and is working to implement recommendations based on the findings, including on how to improve the legal frameworks and operational procedures to reach all children and families in need of services.

The amendment of the Domestic Violence Law was a critical achievement; however some important amendments to the Penal Code are still pending. While data around the prevalence of so-called “honour” crimes is not systemically collected, these so-called “honour” crimes against girls and women by their male relatives remain among the most extreme forms of domestic violence. Articles 340, 97, and 98 of the Penal Code contain mitigating circumstances that permit reduced sentences for perpetrators of so-called “honour crimes” (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Terms such as rape, sexual assault, and molestation are not defined in the Penal Code. Meanwhile, Article 62 of the Penal Code continues to permit parents to discipline children “in accordance with local customs,” which serves as a loophole for the use of corporal punishment by parents against children.

A 2013 study among Syrian refugees living in urban settings in Jordan found that sexual violence is significantly under-reported because of stigma and fear of retaliation by family and community members. Verbal harassment is common, resulting in a high number of female refugees not being allowed to leave their shelters unaccompanied. One-fifth of households reported that Syrian women and girls in urban settings never leave their shelter (UN Women, 2013).

Child Labour

According to the 2016 National Child Labour Survey, 75,982 children are engaged in economic activities, of whom 44,917 are engaged in hazardous forms of labour.⁷ Poverty and lack of livelihood opportunities for the family are the main reasons why children work. Of the 3,300 refugee children aged seven to 17 in Za’atari refugee camp believed to be involved in income-earning activities in 2014, 94 per cent were boys, and most worked as porters transporting water or other goods (UNICEF 2014a). Three out of four children reported health problems linked to working and nearly 80 per cent suffered from fatigue.

7. Hazardous labour is one of the worst forms of child labour. According to the ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (article 3(d)), hazardous work is “work which, by its nature of the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.”

Child Protection

**3.7%**

of 13-17 year old girls are married, including two per cent of Jordanian girls and 13 per cent of Syrian girls in this age group

Child marriage

According to the 2015 census, 3.7 per cent of 13-17 year old girls are married, including two per cent of Jordanian girls and 13 per cent of Syrian girls in this age group. The Syrian crisis has exacerbated the prevalence of early marriage and heightened the potential for exploitation of girls. Among Syrian refugees, 36 per cent of all registered marriages involved a minor in 2016 according to unpublished data provided to UNICEF by the Sharia courts. Early marriage could be reduced by making education compulsory to the age of 18 as well as increasing the enforcement of guidelines requiring judicial approval only after a thorough evaluation of the child's best interest. The Jordanian legislature issued new instructions in July 2017 to improve the usage of these guidelines.

Children's online protection

Children across Jordan are increasingly engaging with the Internet both as consumers and generators of content, bringing both benefits and risks. While online sexual exploitation of children occurs in Jordan, there is limited data to indicate the scope of the problem given the absence of government capacity to identify, document, and support survivors of online sexual exploitation. The newly established Unit to Combat Sexual Violence Against Children through the Internet at the Family Protection Department started its operation in January 2017 and have documented eight cases of exploitation of children. The 2015 Cyber Crime Law penalizes anyone who intentionally uses an information system or network to prepare,



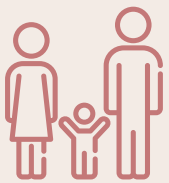
In 2015, 1,738 children living and/or working in the streets were arrested, including 1,034 boys and 704 girls. During the same year, 1,200 of these children entered the Centre for Rehabilitation of Child Beggars



store, process, display, print, publish or promote pornographic activities or influences children under 18 or those who are psychologically or mentally disabled, or direct or incite such persons to commit such a crime.

Children deprived of parental care

As a result of the shift to foster and alternative care solutions for children deprived of parental care, in 2016, 821 children (44 per cent girls) were living in residential care, down from 856 children (47 per cent girls) in 2015 and 905 children in 2014. The number of children in residential care is expected to continue to decrease as foster care programming expands. Forty-eight children (47 per cent girls) were in formal foster care in 2016. Meanwhile, there are 4,848 unaccompanied and separated Syrian children currently registered in Jordan, and an additional 168 from Iraq that have been reunited with their families or placed in alternative care (UNHCR, June 2016).



4,848

unaccompanied and separated Syrian children currently registered in Jordan that have been reunited with their families or placed in alternative care

Children in street situations

In 2015 1,738 children living and/or working in the streets were arrested, including 1,034 boys and 704 girls. During the same year, 1,200 of these children were placed under a court order in the Centre for Rehabilitation of Beggars. A key reason for these arrests is enforcement of Article 389 of the Penal Code, which criminalizes begging. The reasons why children may be working or begging on the streets in Jordan include poverty, family size and parental illiteracy. (Ministry of Social Development, forthcoming)

Child Protection



Children in contact with the law

The 2014 Juvenile Law raised the minimum age of criminal responsibility from seven to twelve and adopted a rehabilitative approach to justice for children. Measures envisaged include the establishment of a specialized police for young people in all governorates, a child-centred prosecution and judiciary system and an alternative sentencing system to detention including community service, rehabilitation courses and psychosocial support, among others. The restorative approach ensures that the child understands the effect of his/her action on others and works towards restoring this wrong to the victim and the society at large. This approach has been proven to reduce recidivism and help children become more responsible. However, in 2015, out of 4,102 children in conflict with the law in Jordan, only 342 were diverted. As the provisions in the Juvenile Law continue to be rolled out, it is expected that the number of children diverted will increase. However, diversion or alternative settlement programmes require increased specialized training and capacity building for actors in the juvenile justice sector. Tools need to be developed to support introduction of the restorative approach to working with youth and adolescents including the development of quality social inquiry reports by behaviour monitors responsible for observing children in conflict with the law and making recommendations to courts.



in 2015, out of

4,102

children in conflict with the law in Jordan, only 342 were diverted



Despite constitutional guarantees, not all children in contact with the law are able to access representation: a 2012 study of all trials found that 83 per cent of defendants were unrepresented during the investigation and pre-trial stage, and 68 per cent were unrepresented in court (Justice Centre for Legal Aid, 2017). Access to free legal aid is critical to ensure the protection of juveniles in contact with the law. Meanwhile, for those who have been detained, there is no consistent access to quality rehabilitation or aftercare programmes.

Adolescents and youth at risk of association with groups that promote the use of violence

Although Jordan remains relatively secure despite the ongoing conflicts in neighbouring countries, including Syria and Iraq, the rise of violent extremism in the region poses a risk for youth in Jordan. The Government of Jordan is concerned about the lure of non-state armed groups that have support both inside and outside the Kingdom. In 2015, the number of Jordanian fighters in Syria was estimated to be from 2,000 to 2,500 (Soufan Group, 2015). Initial studies indicate diverse drivers of association of Jordanian youth to groups promoting the use of violence – with social, economic and political marginalization of young people cited as important push factors (Mercy Corps, 2015). Among Syrians, males aged 12-24, especially those out of education and away from traditional support networks, may be vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups. Factors that may put Syrians youth at-risk include the lack of education and economic opportunities; violence, trauma and loss; and lack of psychological support mechanisms (Alert Centre, 2016).

In a high-level debate on The Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace convened by Jordan, Crown Prince Al-Hussein bin Abdullah II of Jordan said, “Swift measures should be taken to stop feeding the fires of terrorism with the blood of our youth, who are the primary target of recruitment, both voluntary and forced, by armies and extremist groups.” (United Nations, April 2015). Jordan has been an active participant in a number of international efforts seeking to stem the influence of these groups, while taking steps at the national level to establish and strengthen national strategies and institutions to prevent extremism and violence. It is critical that the rights of children, including those accused of posing a security threat, are protected and that the rehabilitation of these children is prioritized.

Child Protection



99%

of births in Jordan
are registered

Jordan has not yet enacted a comprehensive “Children’s Rights Bill” to enshrine all the rights and principles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Birth registration

Birth registration is a first step towards protecting children and ensuring that they can get the services they need to survive and thrive. Data shows that 99 per cent of births in Jordan are registered (Department of Statistics and ICF International, 2013). However, an unknown number of Syrian refugee children in Jordan lack birth registration. Some of these children were born in Jordan and the parents have not yet registered the birth, but most were born in Syria and were not registered by parents prior to fleeing the country. Refugees with missing marriage registration or other identity documents face more difficulties in registering the birth of their children in Jordan.

The enabling environment for child protection

Jordan has not yet enacted a comprehensive “Children’s Rights Bill” to enshrine all the rights and principles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Child protection-related legislative provisions are dispersed across several pieces of legislation, including the Personal Status Law, the Penal Code, the Juvenile Law, the Law on Criminal Procedures, the Cyber Crime Law, the Family Protection Law, and the Law on Domestic Violence (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2014).

Quality standards for services of different shelters (juveniles, protection from family violence, beggars, children without appropriate parental care





and the elderly) were developed in 2014-2015. Additionally, the National Council for Family Affairs has developed Accreditation and Quality Assurance Standards for Shelter Home Services to help shelter homes improve and professionalize their services.

An enabling environment for child protection in Jordan means timely and appropriate response to cases of abuse and a shift in approach towards putting the rights of survivors of violence at the centre of the process. A multi-faceted approach would be necessary to engrain child protection norms and outcomes into a broader system of protection: organizations engaging in child protection work need improved capacity and efforts to ensure staff retention; interventions need strengthening; and there is a need for a more robust referral network amongst service providers. A survivor-centred approach means that strong professional capacity is supported by recognized best practices for interventions and monitoring systems.

Recommendations

- Address the ongoing prevalence of violence against children and gender-based violence in the home, schools, communities and places of care through awareness raising, implementation of legislation and prevention programmes.
- Ensure the proper response to cases of violence against women and children through the roll-out of the National Framework for Family Protection and Case Management process including the national family violence tracking system.
- Institutionalize the application of the 2014 accreditation and quality control standards for services for cases of family violence, as well as the application of 2016 standards for national care homes.
- Combat child labour by addressing poverty and the lack of opportunities for livelihoods among vulnerable families, and providing services for children who have been affected.
- Update the Jordan National Framework to Combat Child Labour.
- Fully implement the Juvenile Law and ensure diversion, settlements and alternatives to detention are used for juvenile offenders.
- Address the growing problem of child marriage among girls in Jordan, including Syrian girls, through engagement with the Sharia courts, awareness raising with girls and parents, greater support for girls' education until the age of 18, and livelihoods opportunities for families.
- Expand the foster care programme to guarantee that children deprived of parental care are cared for in a family setting.
- Establish the Child Law and a corresponding action plan to protect children to ensure that existing gaps related to child rights are addressed.
- Revise the Penal Code to protect victims and to bring national legislation into line with Jordan's international human rights commitments.
- Build the capacity of the child protection system to respond to child protection issues in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of the victims.

YOUTH

In Jordan, over 63 per cent of the population is under the age of 30. Of this group of young people, 47 per cent are female and 32 per cent are between the ages of 15-24. The proportion of the population under 5 years old is already declining, as this large population of young demographic grows older and begins to enter the workforce. This demographic transition presents a unique economic opportunity for Jordan, as more individuals enter the workforce and the ratio of working-age adults-to-dependants increases. (Department of Statistics and ICF International, 2013)





Youth

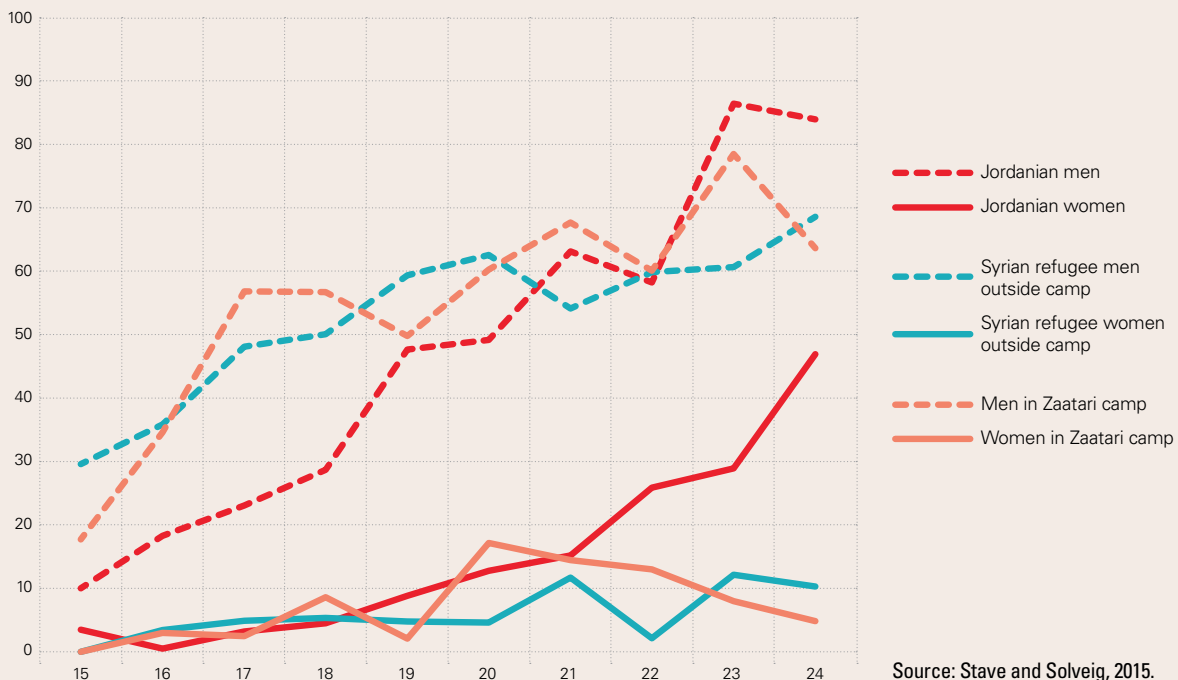
The need to generate an income often forces young refugees to drop out of school, head households, engage in exploitative labour or enter into early marriage

To realize the benefits of a larger-than-normal number of working-age adults, it is imperative to invest in these young people now, to ensure that as they transition into adulthood, they are equipped with the necessary skills and mindset to lead the economy and society. There are challenges to doing this. Youth in Jordan are often educated and connected to the global community. However, the great potential they see in the world and in themselves is often at odds with the political and economic realities they face as they enter their adult years.

Syrian youth face even more challenging prospects. The need to generate an income often forces young refugees to drop out of school, head households, engage in exploitative labour or enter into early marriage. Opportunities for higher education and work remain constrained. There is a lack of physical security in camps, daily discrimination in host communities, grief stemming from family separation and loss, and lingering trauma from events experienced in Syria that threaten mental health and psychosocial development, with few opportunities for the trauma to be sustainably managed or transformed.

Another vulnerable group is youth with disabilities: six per cent of youth aged 10-24 have at least one disability (Department of Statistics and ICF International, 2013), and face difficulties in accessing services and programmes. Most government programmes do not currently have specific plans for the inclusion of youth with disabilities.

Figure 8: Youth (aged 15-24) labour force participation, by age, sex, and community





53.2%

of 15-29 year olds
are employed in the
informal economy

Companies have signalled that young graduates do not possess the skills needed by the private sector because of an education system that focuses on rote learning rather than problem solving and communications skills

Youth unemployment is a significant issue in Jordan, with rates that are markedly higher than global averages. In 2016, youth unemployment rates were 42.6 per cent and 33 per cent among 15-19 and 20-24 year olds respectively (Department of Statistics, April 2016). The lowest rates (13.4 per cent) of unemployment are amongst those with less than primary education and the highest (27.8 per cent) for those with tertiary education. The 15-24 year old female unemployment rate was 56.9 per cent that year; almost four times the global average, while the unemployment rate among 15-24 year old males was 31.5 per cent (World Bank, 2017). Syrian refugee women are particularly unlikely to be working (see figure 8). Not being able to find jobs leads many youth to seek work in the informal economy: 53.2 per cent of 15-29 year olds are employed in the informal economy, which is characterized by low wages, long working hours, poor working conditions and non-binding temporary or verbal contracts. One of the key barriers to young people getting jobs is perceived to be *wasta* (nepotism or structural barriers based on one's family networks) (Al Aref, 2014).

Meanwhile, companies have signalled that young graduates do not possess the skills needed by the private sector because of an education system that focuses on rote learning rather than problem solving and communications skills. This mismatch between the skills possessed by young graduates and labour market needs reportedly affects 52.4 per cent of young workers aged 15 to 29 (Barcucci and Mryyan, 2014). A few grassroots organizations are focussing on preparing youth for work and providing information on employment opportunities, and the Government is also seeking to create jobs and to match young job seekers with private sector employment opportunities. In addition, several organizations, primarily in Amman and Irbid, are seeking to encourage entrepreneurship among youth to diversify livelihood opportunities (Wamda Research Lab, 2015). However, these initiatives are so far not on a scale that will solve the country's youth employment crisis.

Youth

Many Jordanian youth do not see themselves as stakeholders in their state or society and most Jordanians under the age of 30 do not vote because they believe the legislature is incompetent and ineffective

Youth civic and political participation is important to ensure that youth are involved in decision-making for themselves and their communities. Many Jordanian youth do not see themselves as stakeholders in their state or society and most Jordanians under the age of 30 do not vote because they believe the legislature is incompetent and ineffective (Yom and Sammour, 2017). Young people in Jordan also believe that political mobility is determined by factors outside their control such as tribal connections, high political will, inherited wealth and family status within society. Youth movements that appeared in advance of the 2016 elections have made little progress as decisions are usually determined by tribal identity rather than political platforms.

There are limited opportunities for civic engagement in Jordan. Only eight per cent of male youth and four per cent of female youth are members of civic groups, much lower figures than in other countries in the region (see the graph below). Neither economic status nor degree of political repressiveness determines youth civic activity, but household socioeconomic status is positively correlated with civic engagement (Mercy Corps, 2012). Youth who are engaged in such activities are generally seeking skill-building opportunities, and increasing the recognition of participation and employability prospects could increase their appeal.

Figure 9: Percentage of youth who are members of civic groups, by gender and country



Source: Mercy Corps, 2012



41%

of youth in Jordan believe that the media in the country does not report objective news

More than two-fifths of 15-24 year olds in Jordan have used the Internet for at least five years (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2016). Around 41 per cent of youth in Jordan believe that the media in the country does not report objective news. While 40 per cent state that Jordanian news websites are not accurate or credible, about 72 per cent of youth reported that they rely on the Internet to keep up to date with news and current events. Political self-expression has been limited by the expanded Anti-Terror Law of 2014 which inhibits free speech, especially after hundreds of journalists, students and bloggers were arrested because their criticisms and ideas 'disturbed public order' (Yom and Sammour, 2017). In a survey of 18-29 year olds, 80 per cent agreed that they should be careful about expressing themselves freely, and 51 per cent are worried about the Government checking what they do online (UNESCO and EU, 2015).

According to consultations conducted for this report, barriers to civic and political participation of youth include limited opportunities and poor awareness of the opportunities that do exist; disconnect between engagement opportunities and their daily lives; and fear of increased insecurity, as calls for change in neighbouring countries have resulted in wide-spread violence and conflict. Social norms hinder the participation of the most marginalized, including young women, refugees, young people living with disabilities, young people in conflict with the law. The majority of youth, 55 per cent, believe that laws are not applied to all people equally (National Youth Survey).



Youth

The Government is seeking to enhance the livelihoods of youth by making youth-focused reform efforts part of its Vision 2025 national development strategy

Almost two-thirds of Jordanian youth consider themselves happy, though they are concerned about their future. The main reasons for their happiness are reportedly family (29 per cent), friends/relationships (22 per cent), and good health (15 per cent). Unhappiness results from the rising cost of living (17 per cent), discontent (13 per cent), their educational environment (13 per cent), and family material difficulties (12 per cent) (UNESCO and EU, 2015). Unfortunately, breakdowns of these statistics by gender, disability and governorates are absent in current studies.

While Jordanian youth self-report that they are accepting of others (UNESCO and EU, 2015), Syrian youth face challenges integrating into society, as they are seen as competition for scarce resources and opportunities. Physical violence perpetrated by Jordanian students has been noted by more than half of Syrian youth. In addition, both Jordanian and Syrian students acknowledge that their teachers' negative attitude towards Syrian students and their inability to resolve problems in the classroom can lead to violence at and outside school (Generations for Peace, 2015). To avoid tension, Syrian women frequently opt to isolate themselves at home and take their children out of school.

The Government is seeking to enhance the livelihoods of youth by making youth-focused reform efforts part of its Vision 2025 national development strategy. It is working to expand its network of 80 youth centres and other facilities to provide young people with opportunities to engage in productive, creative and athletic activities outside classroom settings, and to foster social understanding and cohesion between populations. The Government's Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis includes some funding to develop safe, violent-free learning environments in host communities, and refugee camp, but the efforts are more concentrated on infrastructure building for adults rather than fostering livelihoods through cultural and sports exchange for Syrian youth.





The Ministry of Youth was established as its own governing body in 1984 to culturally, socially, and economically support all young people equally through sports, livelihoods, and creating direct channels of communication between youth and the Ministry. The Ministry has limited capacity and knowledge to support youth development. Its small budget (of which 42 per cent goes towards administration and support services) limits its ability to respond to the needs of youth.

The Ministry of Youth's new National Youth Strategy for 2017-2026 will aim to systematically address youth issues in Jordan within the wider regional context. It will address health; education; violent extremism; participation and active citizenship; and economic empowerment with cross-sectoral themes of gender and equality and a special focus on specific groups at risk and marginalized youth.

Recommendations

- Invest in equipping young people with the necessary skills and mindset to lead the economy and society as they transition into adulthood.
- Ensure government programmes incorporate specific plans to integrate vulnerable young people, including those with disabilities and refugee youth. Address discrimination against vulnerable groups of youth.
- Improve the quality of education to better prepare youth for the workforce, including through a focus on problem-solving and communications skills rather than rote learning.
- Strengthen partnership between public and private sectors to expanding or developing school-to-work transition programmes and internship programmes, updating and incentivizing the use of job-search portals and, on the supply side, creating jobs.
- Ensure opportunities are available for youth to voice their opinions on policy gaps and highlight gaps in service provision for their specific needs.
- Develop enhanced platforms for youth, especially female youth, to connect with each other.
- Ensure that young people, including young women and vulnerable groups, are fully involved in putting the National Youth Strategy into practice.
- Expand opportunities for youth participation.

WAY FORWARD





Eight years on from the start of the Arab Spring and seven years into the conflict in Syria, Jordan has maintained relative stability in a highly volatile region. While it is impossible to forecast the next five years with any certainty, Jordan will no doubt confront further regional political and economic shifts, as well as refugee ebbs and flows.

It is critical that all stakeholders from all sectors invest in building the resilience required to allow Jordan to strengthen its national systems so it can weather future storms and ensure that all children living in Jordan can have a good quality of life. Resilient government services, companies and communities all start with well-educated, healthy and protected children.

There is no better investment that Jordan can make than in the health, welfare and development of the next generation, including early childhood development to ensure a nurturing and stimulating start to life. As children move into classrooms, they must have a supportive and challenging school environment, to equip them everyday with marketable life skills that stay with them when they graduate, and help them manoeuvre into the working world.

For children to realize their guaranteed rights, a comprehensive set of child-friendly laws and policies must underpin robust government systems and an independent civil society. Strong systems have, at their core, innovative and sustainable human, technical and financial capacity and flexibility, that will grow and change to progressively realize the rights of every child in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

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