

SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS:

Rapid Assessment

Amman, Jordan

July 2012



A Syrian refugee child receives a meal from the U.N. World Food Programme at his temporary home in the Jordanian city of Al Ramtha, near the Syrian border. Photo Credit: Reuters/ Ali Jarekji, courtesy the Thomson Reuters Foundation – AlertNet

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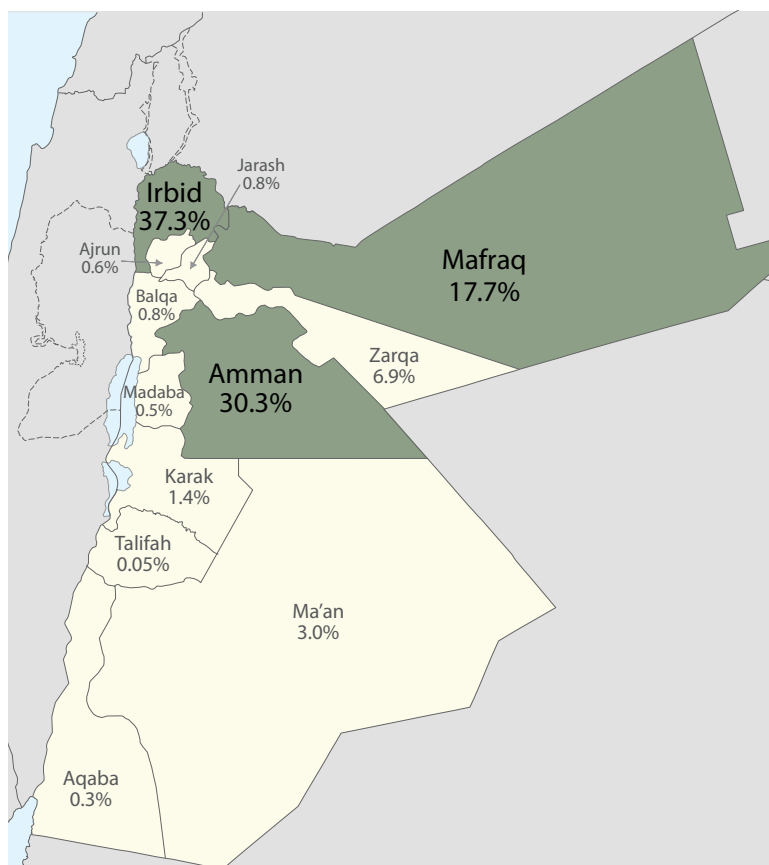
Executive Summary

In response to the Syrian refugee crisis unfolding in Jordan, CHF International's office of humanitarian assistance conducted a rapid needs assessment in the Northern Governorates of Irbid, AL Mafraq, and Amman, focused on understanding the shelter needs and overall livelihood security of Syrian refugees residing in CHF's current area of operation. Utilizing a combination of survey instruments and focus group discussions, the assessment targeted Syrian refugees and host-family representatives in districts known to be accommodating large concentrations of displaced. A total of 68 individuals completed survey questionnaires; while a further 67 individuals participated in one of the five focus group discussions held across the target area. The surveys were designed to capture data on the general demographic profile of respondents, and focused on 3 principle themes—shelter arrangements, livelihood security, and education. Recognizing that the survey results derive from a limited sample population, the findings put forward in this assessment should be considered illustrative of the needs in the target area, and not used to extrapolate findings beyond the scope of the present study. A comprehensive and more broadly representative survey would provide the basis for such conclusions.

Where shelter is concerned, survey findings indicate that the overwhelming majority of Syrians are renting accommodation or sheltering with host families, and despite concerns over the high-cost of living in Jordan and increasing rents, most survey respondents expect to remain displaced for the foreseeable future. Respondents were equally concerned about the employment prospects in Jordan, noting that there are few job opportunities in the rural districts, and wages for Syrian workers have slipped below standard market rates for skilled and unskilled labour alike. For those who are able to find regular employment, respondents agreed that current wages would be insufficient to cover monthly expenses for an average sized household. Finally, survey results indicated that the majority of school aged children had experienced some degree of disruption to their studies, and though most had yet to resume classes, there is clear intent among respondents to enroll their children in the local school system ahead of the next semester, beginning in September.

Recognizing that the data collected for this rapid assessment is broad in scope and comes from a limited number of respondents, the survey findings lead CHF to make the following recommendations as it designs humanitarian assistance programs. Where the displaced are sheltered by host-families, assistance activities should focus on improving the sustainability of existing housing arrangements. Ninety-one percent of refugees ranked shelter assistance as a priority need, while the overwhelming majority respondents were unsure when they would be able to return home. Through modest renovations and small scale structural improvements, targeted shelter support should be used to incentivize longer-term solutions for the displaced, easing the burden on host families, while reducing the likelihood of follow-on migration. Where livelihood security is concerned, survey results clearly indicated that income-earning opportunities are a priority need among the displaced, illustrated in part by the 58% of survey respondents reporting no regular household income. As such, cash-transfer initiatives are strongly recommended, and should target refugees not presently sheltered by host families. Where assistance activities require labour inputs such as shelter renovations, cash-for-work should be prioritized as the primary means of compensating beneficiaries. Finally, whereas 85.7% of respondents indicated that their school aged children had fallen behind in their studies, it is recommended that remedial education services be available for students in need additional support prior to enrolling in the local school system. Additionally, informal education programming should be designed so as to effectively identify and enroll newly displaced children into the formal education system as quickly as possible.

Distribution of Registered Syrians in Jordan as of 7 June 2012



Source: UNHCR

Introduction

Since the outset of the conflict in March 2011, increasing number of Syrians displaced by the fighting have sought asylum in Jordan. While the rate of displacement has varied over the last year, the last three months have seen a notable spike in the number of Syrians registered by UNHCR, effectively highlighting the scale of the humanitarian need among the refugee community in Jordan. In response to the worsening crisis, CHF mobilized its humanitarian response unit to conduct a rapid needs assessment targeting Syrian refugees and host communities in the Northern Governorates of Jordan. The principle objective of the assessment was to develop a more precise understanding of the shelter needs and overall livelihood security of Syrian refugees residing in CHF's current area of operation, and to enhance the country program's ability to provide relevant assistance where gaps remain. Once the analysis is complete, the assessment findings and recommendations will be circulated to members of the sector-specific working groups responsible for coordinating response activities in Jordan, and a copy of the final report will be made available online through relevant coordination portals such as UNHCR's Syria Regional Response page.¹

Methodology

The field assessment was conducted using a mixed-method approach, utilizing unique survey instruments designed for refugee and host-family respondents, complemented by a series of focus group discussions targeting the same sample profiles. Questionnaires and focus group prompts aimed to capture data related to basic needs of the respondents as well as sector-specific information related to shelter and accommodation arrangements, livelihood security, and education status of school-aged children. The survey instruments and discussion guidelines were designed in English, and subsequently translated into and administered in Arabic. A total of 68 surveys were completed by participants, across the 3 target governorates, of which 48 respondents identified as refugees and 20 identified as host-family representatives. Five distinct focus group discussions were convened during the assessment, providing an opportunity to 67 individuals to elaborate further on the themes reflected in the survey instruments. Approximately 36% (n=24) of participants were female, while 82% (n=55) identified as refugees. On average, 13 individuals attended each focus group events.

Given the time constraints, the assessment was restricted to the governorates hosting the largest concentration of refugees, namely Irbid, Al Mafraq and Amman, and sampling was conducted on a non-random basis, relying on CHF partners in the community

to identify survey participants. Efforts were taken to ensure female respondents were equitably represented in the survey, however, in select locations few women participated in the exercise—most notably in host-family survey.

The surveys were administrated by CHF's local partner network concurrently in all three target governorates over a two-day period in June 2012. The focus group discussions were moderated by CHF project staff and conducted in local community centers. The data from the surveys was processed by CHF staff and entered into a master database. The proceedings from each focus group discussions were recorded by the moderator. The analysis of the survey results and focus group discussions was conducted by staff from the humanitarian assistance unit at CHF headquarters, using excel.

1. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

Survey Respondent Details				
Governorate	Location	Refugees		
		Male	Female	Total
Irbid	Al Ramthra	16	1	17
Al Mafraq	Al Mafraq	12	4	16
Amman	Al Quaismeh	9	6	15
TOTAL				48

Survey Respondent Details				
Governorate	Location	Hosts		
		Male	Female	Total
Irbid	Al Ramthra	5	0	5
Al Mafraq	Al Mafraq	15	0	15
Amman	Al Quaismeh	0	0	0
TOTAL				20

Focus Group Discussion Details						
Governorate	Location	Participants	# women	%women	# refugees	% refugees
Irbid	Al Ramthra	18	1	6%	17	94%
Amman	Al Quaismeh	15	13	87%	15	100%
Al Mafraq	Al Mafraq #1	14	3	21%	7	50%
Al Mafraq	Al Mafraq #2	10	4	40%	8	80%
Al Mafraq	Al Mafraq #3	10	3	30%	8	80%
Total		67	24	36%	55	82%

Findings

Demographic details

Survey respondents were asked a number of basic demographic questions related to the profile of the respondent, household composition, and home of origin within Syria. In total, 48 refugees completed surveys for this assessment, of which 23% of respondents were female. A further 67 individuals participated in focus group discussions, the 82% of which identified as refugees. There was marginally better gender parity in the focus group discussions, where 36% of participants were female. Of the total sample of refugee respondents, 46 identified as the head of their household, while 44 (91%) reported their domestic status as married and three respondents were widowed. Average household size among the respondent population was approximately six individuals, while the average number of children under 18 years was approximately three per family. Two thirds of respondents identify Homs as their point of origin, while 27% fled from Daraa, which is just over ten kilometers from the Jordanian border.

The demographic profile of host family respondents was considerably more homogenous. All respondents were male and identified as married. Average family size among host respondents was approximately 7 individuals, while the average number of children under 18 was approximately three per family as well. Host family respondents all identified Irbid or Al Mafraq as their home of recorded, which given the tendency of hosting arrangements to be established between family relations, highlights the connection between those communities located near the Syrian-Jordanian border.

While nearly all refugee respondents report having been registered by UNHCR, the majority of refugees were unclear what assistance and/or services were available for their families other than basic health care services. It was noted that in AL-Mafraq, a number of recently-arrived focus group participants had difficulty securing an interview date for processing their asylum application. When asked if they had received any form of assistance since arriving in Jordan, many survey respondents indicated that they had benefitted from charitable distributions of food and household items provided by local organizations, though the frequency and nature of that support seemed to vary considerably by household and governorate. Considering the comparatively high cost of living in Jordan relative to the cost of living in Syria, respondents appear to prioritize income related needs above other basic services, ranking rental support and the need for employment opportunities above food assistance or other basic services.

Shelter

The survey findings corroborated the fact that the majority of Syrian refugees shelter in Jordan are currently renting accommodation for their families, while in select locations—namely Al Mafraq governorate—refugees with family ties in the region are likely to shelter with host families. While 91.6% of respondents listed shelter assistance as a critical need, it was noted that the majority of refugees indicated paying some form of rent for their accommodation, including those presently sheltering with host-families. In fact, 85% host respondents reported collecting rent from refugee households sheltering on their property. The range of actual monthly rents reported varied considerably, but on average a refugee family can expect to pay approximately JD150 to rent a two bedroom flat for one month. Focus group discussions confirmed that rents have gone up considerably in the last 6 months on account of increased demand for accommodation, and in a number of locations, current costs reflect a two-fold increase on average rates in the region. The survey noted that refugee families are remaining on average 4.3 months in a given residence, and 45% of respondents had relocated at least once since arriving in Jordan, indicating a degree of mobility within the refugee population. Stated reasons for changing residence include difficulties with the host family, high cost of rent, and pursuit of accommodation more suitable to household requirements. Similarly, host families report that on average, a refugee family would shelter at their residence for approximately 3.4 months before moving on, and the majority of respondents confirm that they have accommodated a number of families since the crisis began. When asked to describe their current arrangements, hosts report an average of 8 refugees presently accommodated at their residence, the majority of which are sheltered in a building other than the main structure on the property.

With regards to the adequacy of current shelter arrangements, the survey found that the majority of respondents felt their present accommodation was sufficient for their household. Only 18.7% respondents expressed concern over the adequacy of their current shelters, reporting that their residence was of insufficient size relative to the size of their household, was in disrepair, or was perceived to be an unhealthy environment. When asked if their properties could be improved or otherwise expanded to accommodate additional refugees, 45% hosts felt that this could be feasible, primarily through general maintenance to the structure itself, though some suggested that an additional room could be added to their property.

Finally, while there is a clear intent to return home, the overwhelming majority of refugee respondents state that they will not do so until the conflict in Syria has ended and security returns to the country. Focus group discussions around the obstacles to return highlighted the fact that the homes of many respondents have been destroyed or heavily damaged, as such, many

indicate that they will likely return in a phased manner—beginning with the men to ensure it is safe and to begin rebuilding, followed by the remainder of their families. In this sense, respondents were clearly expecting to remain displaced for the foreseeable future and were unclear how they would continue to cover household costs as their displacement continues into the winter period.

Livelihoods

Where livelihoods are concerned, the high cost of living in Jordan and inadequate employment opportunities in the local marketplace has put refugee and host families under increasing pressure to find durable means to cover the expense of prolonged displacement. It is estimated that an average sized family could expect to spend JD320 a month to cover household expenses, excluding rent. The majority of survey respondents, however, report that they have been unable to find work (58%), or rely on charity as their principle source of income (31%). Those who are able find to work, an unskilled laborer can expect to earn on average JD4 for a day's work, while a skilled laborer would likely earn JD7 -10.² When asked to comment on current wages, the consensus among survey respondents was that a man would not be able to provide for his household while earning such a low wage, and focus group participants in all three governorates report that wages for Syrian refugees had fallen below standard market rates in their localities. Furthermore, where work opportunities do exist, they are largely found in the larger towns, rather than the rural districts where many refugees have settled. When asked to comment on household assets, 95% of survey respondents report no remaining household savings, while focus group participants expressed concern over covering household expenses over the short-term, having no contingencies in place if their displacement continues into the New Year.

In fact, most refugees report near total reliance on the charity of others in order to cover the expenses of their displacement. All survey respondents indicate that they have received food assistance from local charities, while 77% had received household/Non-food items. Interestingly, 68.7% report having benefitted from cash assistance, though the value and frequency of cash transfers varied considerably, ranging from one-time distributions of JD20 to larger sums sufficient to cover household expenses for two months or more. That said, considering the lack of income from general employment, and ad hoc distribution of household supplies reported by survey participants, it is unclear how households have and will continue to cover fixed costs like rent. Survey participants did not report utilizing credit to cover household costs, and in the case of host families, fully 90% of respondents suggested that their charity did not include sharing food or cash resources with refugee households. In this sense, the survey has highlighted a clear need for a comprehensive examination of present livelihood strategies among Syrian refugees, with a particular emphasis on assessing the sustainability of current coping mechanisms.

Education

Recognizing that the refugee children have experienced considerable disruptions to their education, both within Syria and during their subsequent displacement to Jordan, the survey sought to assess the general educational status of refugee children within the sample population. Approximately 58% of survey respondents indicated that they had school aged children in their households, of which only one child was reported to be enrolled in the Jordanian school system. Of this group, fully 85.7% of respondents report that their school aged children had fallen behind in their studies. When asked to elaborate, the majority of focus group participants reported that they had arrived in Jordan following the enrollment deadline for the current semester. There was consensus among participants that following the end of summer vacation, their children would be enrolled for the beginning of the next school semester. The focus groups also noted that there is little opportunity for children in need of remedial education, despite some children having missed nearly two academic years of instruction. While there reports from Al Mafraq that the local schools would be providing summer tutoring to refugee children intending to enroll in the fall semester, it was noted that out of all three governorates only one survey participant had reported receiving remedial education for a child that had fallen behind in her studies. Additionally, recognizing the child protection concerns associated with displacement and disrupted education cycles, it should be noted that participants from one focus group in Al Mafraq had identified at least one instance of school-aged children being put to work to assist with their household's livelihood. Considering that child-labour is of serious concern in Jordan, this finding highlights the need for increased vigilance in the case of refugee households struggling to make ends meet, who may be compelled to put their children to work at the expense of their continued education.

2. In Mafraq, the focus group discussion noted that the labour market for skilled labour is a bit more nuanced, noting that Syrians are largely more competitive than their Jordanian counterparts, however, where professions require official certification (i.e. doctors or other medical professionals), refugees are at a disadvantage as most are not in possession of the requisite documentation.



*Syrian refugee children play near their temporary home in the Jordanian city of Al Ramtha, near the Syrian border.
Photo Credit: Reuters/ Ali Jarekji, courtesy the Thomson Reuters Foundation – AlertNet*

Recommendations

- 1. Host-family Shelter Support**—Considering that a large proportion of Syrians have taken shelter with Jordanian families, and that there appears to be a degree of mobility within the displaced population, efforts should be made to improve the availability and sustainability of host family accommodation for refugees. Host-family shelter options could be increased through a number of incentives, ranging from general maintenance to improve the suitability of existing accommodations to small-scale renovations such as adding additional rooms to a home. Interventions should result in notable improvement in the adequacy of shelter relative to the size of the hosted family, and actively promote arrangements that assure residency for the mid-term.
- 2. Income Generation**—Recognizing the high cost of living in Jordan relative to the cost of living in Syrian, and the priority given by refugees to employment and income related needs over other basic services, it is recommended that humanitarian interventions emphasize improving the livelihood security of the displaced, especially for households without host-family support. Cash-for-work initiatives would provide a much needed infusion of cash resources for especially vulnerable houses, and could be linked to other assistance activities, such construction works associated with host-family shelter renovations. Where communities are struggling to cope with the burden of a large refugee population, income generating opportunities could consider including vulnerable participants from the host population, or otherwise target the initiative to enhance the community's ability sustain support to the displaced.
- 3. Remedial/informal Education**—Survey findings clearly highlight the need for targeted remedial education support for Syrian children who have fallen behind in their studies. While the majority of survey respondents intend to enroll their children in classes this fall, most children will require tutoring support to ensure they can continue their studies at the appropriate level. It is recommended that class-based tutoring opportunities be provided in rural districts, especially in those communities hosting large concentrations of school-aged refugee children. Additionally, it is recommended that remedial education services be available beyond the beginning of the semester, in anticipation of new refugee arrivals through the end of the year and beyond. To this end, the humanitarian community and school district will be better positioned to identify education needs in the refugee community and to better integrate displaced children into the local school system. Furthermore, by providing targeted education support at an earlier point in displacement, it is possible to reduce a child's vulnerability to exploitation in the labour market.

Appendix

Survey Instrument—Refugees

1. Date		2. Reporter	
3. Government		4. Location	
5. Gender	M / F	6. Marriage	M / S / W
7. Head of Household		8. HH size	Y/ N
9. # of children <18		10. Date of birth	

1. A. Where were you living in Syria? _____ B. Why did you move to Jordan? _____
2. Currently, what are your three biggest needs?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
3. A. Do you plan to return home? Y / N B. When? _____
4. What obstacles do you expect to find when you return home?

5. Are you registered with UNHCR? Y/N
6. What types of assistance does registration entitle you to? _____
7. A. Do you pay rent? Y/N B. How much per month—JD ____/month
8. How long have you lived in this location— ____ months
9. Has your household lived elsewhere prior to arriving at this current location? Y/N
10. If so, why did you move— _____
11. A. How long do you expect to stay— ____ months B. Why? _____
12. Is this shelter adequate for your family? Y/N
13. If no, why not— _____
14. Are there school-aged children in your household? Y/N
15. A. Are they presently attending classes? Y/N B. If no, why _____
16. Have your children fallen behind in their studies? Y/N
17. If Yes, why— _____
18. Have your children received remedial education? Y/N
19. How much do you spend on essential household items per month—JD ____/month
20. Do you have savings? Y/N
21. If yes, estimate how many months it will cover household costs—JD ____ months
22. Does your household earn a regular income? Y/N
23. If yes, from what sources: a. Casual labour b. Family c. Charity d. Profession e. Business

24. Is your income sufficient to cover household costs? Y/N
25. What types of assistance have you received (circle all that apply)
- a. Food b. Household items c. Cash d. Shelter support e. Health care f. Education
26. If cash, how frequently and how much per disbursement—\$____/month

Survey Instrument—Hosts

1. Date		2. Reporter	
3. Government		4. Location	
5. Gender	M / F	6. Marriage	M / S / W
7. Head of Household		8. HH size	9. # of children <18
			10. Date of birth

1. How many Syrian people do you currently host—____#
2. Where do they stay? a. Main building b. Separate building c. Unfinished/other structure
3. Do you collect rent? Y/N
4. How much per month—JD____/month
5. How long have you hosted refugees—____months
6. Have you hosted other families over the last 12 months? Y/N
7. If so, why did they leave—_____
8. How long do you expect to continue hosting—____months
9. Why?—_____
10. Can your property be improved to make the space more comfortable? Y/N
11. If yes, How—_____
12. Can your property be expanded to accommodate more people? Y/N
13. If yes, how—_____
14. Do you share food with your guests? Y/N
15. Do you share money with your guests? Y/N
16. How much do you spend on essential household items per month? JD____/month
17. Do you have savings? Y/N
18. If yes, estimate how many months it will cover household costs—____months
19. Does your household earn a regular income? Y/N
20. If yes, from what sources: a. Casual labour b. Family c. Charity d. Profession e. Business
21. Is your income sufficient to cover household costs? Y/N

Focus Group Discussion Guidelines

1. Date		2. Reporter	
3. Government		4. Location	
5. Total # of participants		6. Total # of women	
		7. Total # of refugees	

Main themes

- Have you registered with UNHCR—why/not?
- What assistance are you entitled to?
- What are your top three needs?

Shelter—Why are some refugees sheltering with host families, while others rent accommodation? How sustainable is the current situation, is it likely to change over the next 6 months? What steps can be taken to incentivize host arrangements?

- Is your shelter adequate for your family?
- Average price people pay for shelter?
- How long can people continue to pay?
- Hosting arrangements—is the do guests contribute to the household? In what way?
- Hosting durability—how long are people staying? Have people had to seek out new options?
- Instances of host family homes renovated or expanded to accommodate hosts? If yes, in what way. If no, is this an viable option?
- If your host could no longer accommodate your family, what would you do?

Livelihoods—How are these communities getting by—refugees and hosts alike? How are they covering household costs,? Are they employed? We want to better understand how these individuals are making ends meet and how this will change over the next 6 months. Prompting questions, in order of priority:

- Average day wages: skilled, unskilled?
- Have wages gone down over the last 12 months?
- Can a man earn enough to cover his household expenses on a casual labour salary?
- How much do you spend on household costs in a month?
- How you covering the costs of your household? How will you cover your costs come winter?
(Prompt for answers from refugees and hosts separately.)
- What employment opportunities are there in this area? Is there enough work for everyone?

Education

- How many Syrian children in your community are NOT enrolled in school? Why aren't they attending classes?
- Have the children fallen behind in classes, what has been done help them catch up?