



Deema is a Jordanian from Russaifa who said that training she received on employability skills helped her on the path to employment.
Photo: Aisha Shtiwi/Oxfam

FOSTERING COOPERATION, NOT COMPETITION

How Syrian and Jordanian women could create new, sustainable livelihoods opportunities together

Competition for work in Jordan is often viewed as a cause of tension between refugee and host communities, but the crisis response could provide Syrian and Jordanian women the opportunity to come together as business partners rather than competitors.

1 INTRODUCTION

'In Syria, we never worked. But now we must, as many of our sons and husbands are injured. Once I worked, I felt like I had accomplished something, so I kept doing it.'

– Fatehieh, a 42-year-old Syrian refugee woman living in Ramtha in the north of Jordan, near the border with Syria¹

Eight years into the Syrian refugee crisis, the response in Jordan has slowly shifted away from the provision of humanitarian aid towards a longer-term and more sustainable integration of refugee communities into the host economy. As such, the goal of the government and aid agencies alike has been to enable refugees and vulnerable Jordanians to earn an income.

Translating this self-reliance vision into a reality has been less than straightforward in light of Jordan's pre-existing challenges. Sluggish economic growth accompanied by consistently high unemployment rates for both men and women are major stumbling blocks. The level of women's economic participation is particularly troubling. Prior to the Syrian crisis, worrying statistics on women's economic participation in Jordan pointed to the deep-rooted set of cultural and practical barriers that need to be addressed. There is a delicate path to be taken between transforming the crisis response into a 'development opportunity' for Syrian and Jordanian women, and transforming these deeply embedded restrictive gender norms.²

Of those surveyed by UNHCR in July in Jordan, only 5% of Syrian refugees expressed intentions to return to Syria in the coming year, with 91% conveying that they had no intentions to return over this period.³ It is therefore essential that programmes to support refugees and vulnerable host communities in finding work opportunities are scaled up and focused around what communities need and want. To do this, collective action is required from government, donors and aid agencies.

This short report explores the question of how both refugee and host community women can further engage in Jordan's labour market, informed by insights gleaned from focus group discussions with women in the municipalities of Mazar Shamali, Ramtha, Russaifa and Bala'ama in northern and central Jordan, as well as interviews with Jordanian government officials at all levels. Community-based organization leaders, together with development specialists and practitioners from NGO and INGO circles, were also consulted (see **Box 1**).

By providing a picture of the challenges and opportunities identified by Syrian and Jordanian women in these communities, the MADAD-funded LEADERS Consortium – consisting of ACTED, the Danish Refugee Council, CARE, Oxfam and Save the Children – hopes to assist in shaping future women's economic empowerment programmes and host

government policies. If harnessed, the potential of Syrian and Jordanian women could prompt growth, competitiveness and inclusive development in Jordan.

Box 1: Research methodology

The new research presented in this report was conducted by the LEADERS consortium in late 2017 and based on a combination of qualitative methods including key informant interviews conducted with government ministries, economic experts, and civil society organisations (CSOs) including members of the LEADERS Consortium. In addition, focus group discussions were held in four communities (Mazar Shamali, Ramtha, Russaifa and Bala'ama) where LEADERS programmes were operating. These focus groups included Syrian and Jordanian women from the ages of 18 to 55. Jordanian women participants ranged from those with technical experience to university education, while the majority of Syrian women participants hailed from agricultural backgrounds with limited secondary studies. Men were not included in the focus groups as the purpose was to specifically reflect women's opinions and experiences on livelihood programming. The research was designed to assess women's perceptions of work options that are available to them in Jordan and to understand women's aspirations for work.

2 THE CURRENT STATE OF EMPLOYMENT IN JORDAN

Job creation in Jordan is slow. Nearly 50,000 jobs are created each year, not enough to keep up with the estimated 60,000 Jordanian entrants to the labour market annually.⁴ This data excludes the non-Jordanian job seekers, many of whom are more likely to take up the low-wage and low-quality jobs that are created. There is a further mismatch between the jobs that exist and the education and qualifications of job seekers.⁵ Women face added challenges to finding work: women's participation in the national labour force in Jordan is among the lowest in the world at just 14%.⁶ Despite relatively high education levels among Jordanian women, the number of women that even attempt to look for work is extremely low. Of those actively seeking work, many are unsuccessful in securing an opportunity – in 2017, the unemployment rate among women in Jordan stood at 27.5%.⁷

Figure 1: Women and work in Jordan



Source: See references in main text.

There are a number of reasons, both structural and social, behind women's limited access to employment. As numerous studies have found, while most women say they want the chance to work, many are unable to do so because of societal and practical constraints.

Inefficiencies in public investment result in a lack of safe, reliable and accessible public transportation or childcare options, creating practical obstacles to women's employment prospects. Meanwhile, social norms around care roles and '*women's work*' mean women often prefer or feel they have no other choice but to work closer to home and in gender stereotypical roles such as sewing, cleaning and catering.

For Syrian refugees, the sectors in which they can legally work are limited to agriculture, construction, manufacturing (wholesale/retail trade), domestic labour or home help, and food processing and hospitality services. Of these (five) sectors, only two (agriculture and construction) allow non-employer-specific work permits – limiting options for all refugees, but particularly affecting women given the existing constraints and social norms surrounding employment and job types.⁸ It therefore comes as little surprise that only approximately 4% of work permits for Syrian refugees have gone to women.⁹

In addition to dedicated support that might alleviate these challenges, Jordan needs substantially increased investment so that it can both maintain wage levels and promote growth that is inclusive of refugees and women. The Government of Jordan has made significant efforts to enhance the business environment in Jordan to attract foreign investment, jumping 15 places in the World Bank Group's *'Ease of Doing Business'* index of 2018.¹⁰ However, these measures have largely favoured large-scale investors, especially in the industrial zones, and have failed to include Syrian refugee small business owners. Further, Jordanian women continue to face higher levels of financial exclusion than men. Data from 2014 shows that only 15% of women had a bank account, compared to 33% of men.¹¹

In a promising step, the government recently stated that it would 'consider expanding the sectors and occupations open to Syrian refugees, mainly at the technical level, with a particular focus on women's participation, in a way that does not create competition with Jordanians.'¹² This opening up of job sectors (or sub-sectors) is critical to enabling women to engage beyond gender stereotypical fields, as long as attention is also paid to overcoming the other structural obstacles they face.

3 BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S WORK IN JORDAN

While the refugee crisis has exacerbated financial pressures at the household level, both Syrian and Jordanian women face many of the same pre-existing barriers to contributing to household income. These include social obligations to take responsibility for childcare and household management, and cultural restrictions on movement that are compounded by insufficient access to safe, affordable and reliable transport. In addition, there is a lack of appropriate opportunities for women, as prevailing norms mean that vocational work tends to be seen as work solely performed by men. Syrian women and men face additional barriers, as they are confined to the sectors and occupations that are legally open to them.

Figure 2: Barriers to work for Syrian and Jordanian women



The products and services offered by the home-based business sector (where Syrian women are mainly active) are limited in number and range. Diversification is a challenge, particularly as humanitarian and development agencies must negotiate the complex social and policy environment in order to provide relevant training to women. In the absence of diverse training support within a clear legal framework, these

small Syrian home-based businesses will likely continue to operate informally and to contribute the same products and services to an already flooded market.

It is essential that both Syrian and Jordanian women are able to provide services and deliver goods that are responsive and relevant to local market demand. In 2015, only 782 jobs were created for women in the crafts and textiles domain, including sewing, reflecting a low demand for this skill set in the market.¹³ Preparing women for jobs that do not exist in the broader economy is counterproductive.

Despite the perception of increased business competition from refugees, Jordanian women reported feeling little animosity towards Syrian women.¹⁴ Syrian women in Bala'ama reported feeling safe and welcome in their communities, suggesting positive interactions between Jordanian and Syrian women there. Other examples of social cohesion are seen in increased social networks between communities.¹⁵

There are some challenges that are unique to refugees. For instance, while informal work is prevalent in Jordan, it is risky for refugees to work without a permit in a climate where labour inspections are almost exclusively carried out to ensure that foreign workers carry permits. Aside from providing some level of security, work permits confer little benefit to Syrian refugees, who are usually neither enrolled into social security nor in receipt of any significant healthcare coverage.¹⁶ One Syrian woman from Bala'ama echoed this view, stating, 'No, I don't need [a work permit]. I need a guarantee that my son won't [have to] pay when his babies are being delivered at the hospital.' Of Syrian refugees recently surveyed by CARE, 90% reported needing access to cheaper health services, drastically affecting family planning.¹⁷

Navigating government restrictions on support to Syrian-owned home-based businesses is challenging for NGOs, despite the urgent need to broaden the scope for relevant income-earning opportunities. Syrian women in Jordan can only register their business under local laws if this is in partnership with a Jordanian. Maryam, a 48-year-old Syrian woman in Ramtha, said, 'We can partner with Jordanians in business but we need to be able to trust them and to build a partnership.'¹⁸ While Syrian women were not entirely averse to the idea of such partnership, it appeared to be met with some reserve and caution.¹⁹ The balance of power in this arrangement is weighted in favour of Jordanians, who are aware that their involvement is necessary for the business to run formally. This leaves Syrians dependent on and even beholden to their Jordanian partners, and therefore exposed to potential exploitation of their vulnerable legal rights to the business.

Box 2: Perceptions of safety in the community

Syrian women reported that they do not always feel comfortable enough to move around host communities or to freely expand their social networks. Ibtisam, a Syrian woman from Mazar Shamali, said, 'Because it's a foreign country, I have to be accountable for all my behaviour, such as going out and meeting new people. I am less affected by this because my husband stays at home [i.e. is known to the community to be present as a protector], but without him, I would be susceptible to this scrutiny.' This was a view shared by other focus group participants, particularly those who were the sole providers for their families. Approximately 4 in 10 Syrian refugees live in female-headed households.²⁰ Such households reported being subjected to harassment because they did not have a male companion or guardian. Nuha, a Syrian woman from Russaifa, said, 'We feel that males here hit on us and harass us more than they would with Jordanian women because we do not have a man present to protect us and we cannot complain to police or to the authorities.' Syrian women said that on many occasions they lack protection, both socially and legally, which restricts their agency and access to economic opportunities.

Syrian women who sell products produced at home reported harassment from male customers, especially if their husbands are not in Jordan.²¹ One mitigating factor was when their Jordanian neighbours generated foot traffic to the business, which brought a level of protection from harassment. This demonstrates the value of fostering strong social relationships between Syrians and Jordanians at the local community level in enhancing women's economic participation. Social cohesion has a direct bearing on economic inclusion. Harassment and abuse in public places instils an anxiety in women that reduces their mobility, making it essential for communities to tackle the issue locally.²² It should be noted that not all women reported widespread harassment in their communities. 'I feel safe here, it's just like home, I feel our daughters are safe' said Yasmin, a 20-year-old Syrian woman living in Bala'ama.²³

For many of the Syrian women we spoke with, their only experience of working back in Syria was in close proximity to their homes, for example on nearby farms or in neighbouring communities that they knew well. Despite their limited experience and skills, Syrian women expressed the desire to search for alternative work options. Livelihood programming in Jordan can bolster these aspirations, enabling the productivity of women across all communities in Jordan by enhancing their confidence to move beyond their homes and immediate neighbourhood for work. Such initiatives should find support within communities, which will also serve to provide a level of safety for women.

Women's work opportunities are also constrained by their care and domestic responsibilities, since social norms dictate that women are the primary caretakers in their households. Many Syrian women interviewed were married at a young age in either Syria or Jordan, meaning that family responsibilities started early in life. These responsibilities make it more difficult for women than men to be away from home for long

periods. Ayda, a 50-year-old Syrian woman living in Ramtha, told Oxfam, 'What I would really wish is that there is a business with flexible hours where I can work but [also] take care of my kids.'²⁴ This sentiment was echoed by several Jordanian, as well as Syrian women in the focus groups.

Women need work opportunities beyond the home that harness their potential, but such opportunities need to take into account the current reality of women's other commitments by offering flexible or shorter working hours. Many women will also only be able to take up opportunities if there is adequate public transport available and childcare. Current gaps in these services mean many women are only able to work close to home or not at all.

Box 3: Balancing work and home life

The heavy and unequal responsibility for care constrains women's access to decent productive work. Provision of care services, like childcare or healthcare, would provide women with more support, time and greater choice around employment²⁵. Rasha Obeidat from Irbid, Jordan, told Oxfam, 'If good quality nurseries were established in our area, I would be comfortable and relaxed about leaving my children in the nursery. I would join the workforce, or work at any place at ease'.

One recent project supported by the European Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) responded to the lack of appropriate childcare support by training women in childcare and early childhood education. This enabled them to either start their own nurseries or support existing nurseries to improve their facilities and services. In this way, some women could find new employment in childcare, while supporting other mothers to work outside the home. The aid and development community should design multi-faceted livelihood programmes, which support the practical needs and strategic interests of women. Further, the government must seek to replicate successful models that can deliver on its existing childcare policies for employers.



Rasha Obeidat from Irbid, Jordan, told Oxfam that she would be more likely to join the workforce if quality nurseries were available. Photo: Rajiv Raman/Oxfam.

4 OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS TOGETHER

Many Syrian and Jordanian women expressed the view that times are changing and that society is increasingly open to working women. Some held that this was due in part to the increased demands on household budgets,²⁶ with recent price hikes adding to the pressure on those who were already struggling to meet the cost of living.²⁷ For many families, putting food on the table now requires a combined income.

Given the common challenges that Syrian and Jordanian women face, a joint approach could be taken in which both communities work together. The Government of Jordan recently renewed its commitment to promoting decent work opportunities for Syrians and Jordanians, specifically committing to the creation of 'a clear framework for the set-up of joint ventures between Syrians and Jordanians, especially focusing on women and youth, making sure that the rights of both parties are upheld, ownership clarified and access to finance facilitated'.²⁸ This does not amount to providing protection from exploitation for Syrian business owners who ought to be able to register their businesses on their own without needing a Jordanian partner. Nevertheless, it is a step in the right direction, in that it moves towards enabling Syrians to formally register their small businesses.

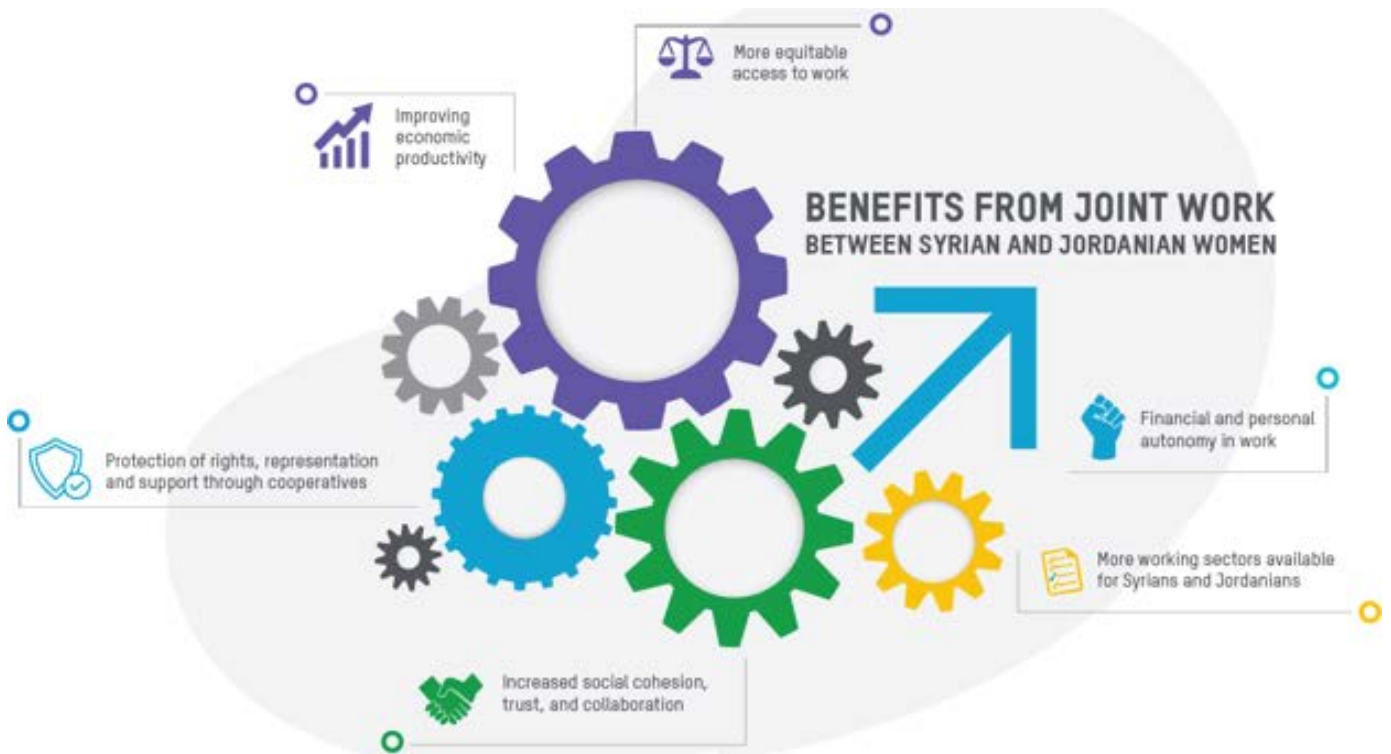
A renewed government commitment presents an ideal opportunity to support joint ventures in the form of cooperatives between Syrian and Jordanian women. Cooperative activities involve the voluntary pooling of resources and labour for mutual benefit, and cover a variety of sectors including agriculture, housing and lending. Cooperatives law currently requires that a cooperative must have at least 15 founding members, who must be Jordanian.²⁹ This policy should now be revisited for inclusion of Syrian women and men. The vast majority of women already engaged in cooperatives in Jordan note that they provide a unique opportunity to work and overcome poverty.³⁰

Participants of a survey on cooperatives in Jordan noted that women members have a positive impact on operations, and that women's participation contributes to increased production (through their technical skills) and healthy operations (through their soft skills in communication, flexibility and negotiation), ultimately benefiting the overall outputs.³¹ These promising findings show a potential appetite for women's increased engagement in cooperatives. The cooperative structure could provide assistance not only as an employment agent, but ultimately could play a positive role in providing services for the community.

Acceptance, trust and collaboration are some of the additional benefits that could ensue from joint work between Syrian and Jordanian women. Overall, women from the focus groups felt there was enough goodwill

between communities for this approach to be successful. However, success relies on the prevailing assumption that women from different communities with varying cultural and educational backgrounds would not struggle to cooperate and work together. Community-driven approaches need to be backed by development drivers (actors) who can firm up goodwill with formalization, improved market access, and commitments to long-term funding and other support.

Figure 3: The benefits of joint work between Syrian and Jordanian women



This holistic collaborative approach may have the additional benefit of heading off any potential community tensions between Syrian and Jordanian women: when the two engage in joint work initiatives as cooperatives, they are no longer in immediate and direct economic competition with one another. While those with greater resources in either the Jordanian or Syrian communities are better positioned to take up such opportunities, it is important to include the most disadvantaged women from both groups in these joint initiatives.

Collaboration between Syrian and Jordanian women must play to the strengths of each party and capitalize on their joint assets or access to job opportunities. This dual action plan is not a one-size-fits-all approach that can be launched across the board. Rather, it should be adapted at the community level to the specific local conditions, including employment levels, gaps in the market and particular demographics of host communities. It must also recognize the pre-existing defining characteristics of Jordan’s economy, including the high number of informal, low-revenue small businesses with low market demand that have difficulty in accessing credit. Specifically, women’s cooperatives must balance the demand for services with the limited occupations and

sectors currently deemed appropriate for women and permitted for Syrian refugee workers. They must be able to hold their own and find their specialized competitive edge within highly crowded markets.

For cooperatives to continue to hold any relative value or appeal as a socio-economic pact between Jordanians and Syrians, clearly defined terms of agreement for each side must be established and anchored in explicit mutual motivation to participate. These joint paths of engagement with the economy should then be monitored and measured for their relative benefits and success. This evidence can serve as a recruitment tool to encourage other women to get involved and gain wider support in local communities.

5 THE NEED FOR SUSTAINED AND DIVERSE SUPPORT

Targeted training in support of both Syrian and Jordanian women could build on available skill sets that correspond to local market opportunities. Hanin, a Jordanian woman from Ramtha, said, 'I did not receive entrepreneurship training, but I noticed a need among my neighbours [for sewing services] and started my own sewing business at home. I am very interested in future training.'³² Women in Jordan seem enthusiastic about starting and expanding their businesses, as well as developing their skills. Several participants in focus groups indicated a desire to participate in more diversified training, including entrepreneurship and childcare among other suggested areas.

Box 4: A lose-lose situation – when women's skills go to waste

Syrian women from communities across Jordan bring diverse skill sets to the table. Firnas, a 35-year-old who worked as an English teacher in Syria, saw a need in the local market in Bala'ama for English language tutoring of Jordanian students. Despite being in a position to fill this niche market opportunity, Firnas was unable to overcome the challenges posed by the complex web of social and cultural pressures. She explains, 'I can't give private classes to girls as Jordanians only want private classes for boys, but I cannot teach classes to boys. It's too complicated to have a male guardian stay with me while I give classes, so I don't do it'. As this example highlights, it is important to provide women with training courses and skills development, but also support to overcome the significant cultural and social barriers they face. Incorporating an element of social support that recognizes the cultural constraints for female workers will be essential to any intervention.

However, while both Jordanian and Syrian women recognized the value of participating in various training courses offered by NGOs, they lamented their lack of tangible progress towards earning an income. Najat, a Syrian woman from Mazar Shamali, told LEADERS, 'In Irbid, I took a 20-day tailoring and sewing class. They give you a machine after the training. The issue is promotion: even with the machine, I don't know who to work for.'³³

Many women noted that they entered training sessions with pre-existing skills, but often were not asked what these were. Hanan, a Syrian woman from Bala'ama, said, 'I would love to participate in future trainings, but I want to learn new topics', suggesting that the training sessions offered by NGOs can be redundant, with many different organizations offering the same skill trainings.³⁴ Most training programmes do not diversify the skills that women offer to the local labour market. Rather than expanding

job opportunities for women, this may in fact have the reverse effect by increasing competition within a small range of products and services, effectively shrinking the pool of viable opportunities. Vocational, entrepreneurial or soft skills training must be linked to market demand and support women to become more competitive in the existing and emerging labour markets.

Providing follow-up support after training courses is essential to nurturing joint approaches. Maysaa, a Jordanian woman from Mazar Shamali, received training on advanced sewing machines at a local cultural centre. She explained, 'It was free and they [the NGO] paid for transportation. There was no follow-up after training. I tried to get it but they did not have any follow-up services.'³⁵ This appeared to be a pattern amongst women participating in livelihood programmes, who were critical of the lack of long-term planning associated with training sessions. For training programmes to achieve their goal, they must include a period of follow-up to ensure sustainability. Since performance indicators are based on and limited to the duration of the training, they are not development-oriented, as they do not accurately measure economic self-sufficiency. The success of a programme should be indicated by long-term outcomes or outputs, rather than the number of participants.

Box 5: Mentoring to support a business mindset

Providing training in isolation is not enough. The benefits of training can only be sustained through job placements, on-the-job-training, and ongoing mentoring and coaching which integrates and counteracts (where appropriate) cultural restrictions, supporting women in the process of confronting these norms. Women have already started work to support such initiatives. Wafaa, a Jordanian woman, runs a local NGO that she personally founded in 2016, encouraging women to set up home-based businesses. She said, 'I go to their homes and help women start businesses at home, so they don't need to fight society's rules alone.'

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the many cultural, social and economic barriers they face, women in Jordan have shown a clear desire to be legitimate economic actors in their own right, develop their skills and earn an income. Through the experience of the LEADERS Consortium and our work with communities throughout north and central Jordan, we have seen that capacity building in training programmes must be preceded by effective and relevant skills mapping in order to better serve the needs of women in their communities. It is essential to understand local economies and labour markets so that we can support women in developing relevant skills and businesses that are viable and in demand. Syrian and Jordanian women also require ongoing support in order to benefit from skills training and development. Through fostering a cooperative approach that creates ties and establishes social networks between the refugee and host communities, this ongoing support could be provided by the women's cooperatives themselves. Dedicated efforts must be taken to support the approach, given that female-only cooperatives account for less than 10% of cooperatives nationwide.³⁶

The Syrian crisis has undoubtedly created new social dynamics within Jordan. Jordan – at both a government and community level – can leverage the crisis response as an opportunity to transform gender norms. The Government of Jordan, UN and European Commission recently committed to continuing 'reforms to enhance the economic empowerment of women'.³⁷ For the reform process to have a better chance of success and lasting impact, it should draw upon the experiences and voices of both Syrian and Jordanian women.

As the conflict in Syria continues, it remains unsafe for Syrian refugees to return home. By directing more dedicated investments into empowering women, Syrian women will be better able to work and help provide for their families in Jordan. Should there come a time when it is safe to return, women with business skills, strong social networks and resources in Jordan would be better equipped for this, and – armed with transferable skills (maybe even supplanted Syrian networks) and a well-honed resilience – could contribute to rebuilding Syria's economic and civic life.

Based upon our collective programming experience, the LEADERS Consortium urges key stakeholders to consider the following recommendations when shaping livelihoods programming for Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians.

Donors to Jordan should:

Adapt funding timelines and requirements to a development context

Donors should provide multi-year funding (three to five years) for development projects that can create macroeconomic change and take a holistic approach to improving women's economic participation, one which fortifies social cohesion and builds trust and engagement between Syrian refugee and Jordanian host communities. Further, ensure specific actions are taken by the Government of Jordanian to increase refugees' access to legal, dignified work as part of future funding agreements.

The Government of Jordan at all levels should:

Revise the law preventing non-Jordanians from founding cooperatives

Under Article 2 of *Cooperatives Regulation* (Law 36 of 2016), the founding members of a cooperative must number at least 15 individuals, and they must be Jordanian. This should be amended to allow Syrian refugees, many of whom come from agricultural backgrounds, to be founding members of cooperatives along with Jordanians. Collaborative approaches in business models can be leveraged to support Jordanian and Syrian women to organize cooperatives and collective action groups. These can be formed under an appropriate umbrella organization that can advocate for women's economic empowerment and challenge harmful social norms.

Develop a clear, targeted and inclusive country-wide strategy for the economic empowerment of Syrian and Jordanian women over the longer term

In order to effectively harness aid resources, funds must be deployed under an inclusive and consistent country-wide strategy, with proper coordination between relevant ministry lines. To ensure the meaningful involvement of communities in guiding its formulation and implementation, this strategy and its roll-out should be informed by the experiences of women in cooperatives. This community-driven approach will be required to ensure that Jordan is able to effectively open up sectors and occupations where Syrian women are likely to engage, as well as addressing structural obstacles, such as lack of transportation and childcare options. A piecemeal approach may have some incremental success, but may prove counterproductive by failing to diversify career opportunities for women.

Commit to progress on engaging women in livelihoods

Gender benchmarking of the Jordan Compact commitments will focus attention on the need to engage both Syrian and Jordanian women in livelihoods programming. Specific indicators measuring progress should focus on workplace standards and the agency of those engaged. Women

must be encouraged to have the autonomy and self-belief to make changes in their own lives, including having the agency and power to organize and influence decision-making.

Simplify and clarify the small business registration processes

This should include: streamlining the business registration process for Syrian refugees in particular but in general for all those in Jordan wanting to register a business as well; reducing onerous requirements; and building the capacity of relevant agencies to be responsive to the needs and concerns of refugees. The Government of Jordan should explore options to extend the *Home-based Business Regulations* from August 2017 for Jordanians to Syrian refugees, so that they too can register their businesses.

Increase Syrian labour market access

In order to better integrate Syrian women into the labour market, skilled Syrian labour must be allowed in all sectors, including those targeted for growth in national strategies such as *Jordan 2025*.³⁸ Further, the Government of Jordan should ease hiring quotas and sector-specific restrictions that prevent NGOs and the private sector from hiring qualified Syrian refugees, both women and men.

Promote and implement a legal and policy environment which supports women's economic empowerment

Policies to invest in strong public services in childcare, healthcare and social protection are critical. In addition, a government-led public campaign, with the support of civil society and the private sector can work to change attitudes and beliefs towards women's labour market participation. Raising public awareness must go hand in hand with policy reform.

Humanitarian and development agencies should:

Ensure that training is responsive to labour market demand in local economies

Linking training to practical needs or gaps in the market must be part of the approach to facilitating women's economic access. Structured, evidence-based programmes, preceded by assessments of market demand and followed up with consistent evaluation and work-placement measures, should be standard. Additionally, there should be adequate planning in place to cater for the inclusion of women in rural areas, who often feel neglected by programme development and implementation.

Promote women’s collective organizations and voice and agency in economic decision-making, markets, the community and at home.

Aid agencies, civil society, government and donors should ensure Jordanian and Syrian women’s right to organize, and that women’s collective enterprises and representative organizations are involved in the policy-making and rule-setting processes that impact on their work and their lives.

NOTES

All links last accessed in October 2018 unless otherwise specified.

- 1 Focus group discussion with Syrian women in Ramtha. 13 November 2017.
- 2 The Jordan Compact, agreed between governments attending the 'Supporting Syria and the Region' conference in London in early 2016, set out a plan for international cooperation to support Jordan in meeting the needs of vulnerable communities affected by the Syria crisis. While recognizing the important role that Jordan has played in hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees and acknowledging the negative impact on the country, the Compact aims to facilitate the response to the crisis as a 'development opportunity' – including through leveraging greater international financial support and trade concessions. EU, Government of Jordan (2016) *The Jordan Compact*. Supporting Syria and the Region Conference, London, 4 February 2016.
- 3 UNHCR. (2018). *Jordan: July 2018 - Intention Survey Overview*. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/65004.pdf>
- 4 ILO. (2015). *Jordan Decent Work Country Programme 2012-2015 Report*. <http://inform.gov.jo/en-us/By-Date/Report-Details/ArticleId/38/Jordan-Decent-Work-Country-Programme-2012-2015>
- 5 S. Razzaz. (2017). *A Challenging Market Becomes More Challenging: Jordanian Workers, Migrant Workers and Refugees in the Jordanian Labour Market*. International Labour Organization. http://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_556931/lang--en/index.htm p. 13
- 6 ILO. (2018). *Labour force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+ - modelled ILO estimate)*. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?year_high_desc=false
- 7 Government of Jordan. (2017). *Unemployment Rate during the fourth Quarter of 2017*. Department of Statistics. <http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/18-5-unemployment-rate-during-the-fourth-quarter-of-2017/>
- 8 The work permit system requires a sponsor to apply for a permit based on a contract for one year. This system is incompatible with most agricultural jobs as they are short term in nature (either daily or seasonal). In response, the Government of Jordan agreed to agricultural cooperatives being able to sponsor work permits for Syrians. Now workers are not restricted to working for a single farmer, but are able to work for various employers. This is more conducive to the business needs of farmers, and allowing workers to avoid potentially exploitative relationships with sponsors. From S. Razzaz. (2017). *A Challenging Market Becomes More Challenging: Jordanian Workers, Migrant Workers and Refugees in the Jordanian Labour Market*. International Labour Organization. http://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_556931/lang--en/index.htm p. 56
- 9 Total number of work permits issued from January 1 2016 to August 31 2018 was 112,686: 107,922 (96%) for men and 4,764 (4%) for women. Government of Jordan. (2018). *Syrian Refugee Department -- Monthly Progress Report*. Ministry of Labour.
- 10 *The Jordan Times*. (2017, November 2). *Jordan gains 15 places in "doing business" world report*. <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-gains-15-places-doing-business-world-report>
- 11 World Bank. (2018). *Financial Inclusion Data/Global Findex Jordan*. <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/financialinclusion/country/jordan>
- 12 Government of Jordan, EU, UN. (2018). *Jordan partnership paper*. Conference Document. Supporting the future of Syria and the region. Brussels II Conference 24-25 April 2018.
- 13 Government of Jordan. (2015). *Job Creation Survey*. Department of Statistics.
- 14 Focus group discussion with Jordanian women in Bala'ama. 9 November 2017.
- 15 Focus group discussion with Syrian women in Bala'ama. 9 November 2017.
- 16 Amidst broader cost-cutting measures, the Government of Jordan announced that it would be requiring Syrian refugees to pay 'foreigner rates' in all state health facilities. Previously Syrian refugees were treated like Jordanians who did not have health insurance, and were able to access health services at subsidized rates. The

introduction of the new policy has immediately increased the pressure on ordinary Syrian refugee families who were already struggling to make ends meet.

- 17 CARE International in Jordan. (2018). *8 Years into Exile: Report Summary*. [https://www.care-international.org/files/files/publications/reports-issue-briefs/2018 CARE Needs Assessment Summary web final.pdf](https://www.care-international.org/files/files/publications/reports-issue-briefs/2018_CARE_Needs_Assessment_Summary_web_final.pdf)
- 18 Focus group discussion with Syrian women in Ramtha. 13 November 2017.
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On behalf of the Consortium:

LEADERS

For Sustainable Livelihoods

The LEADERS Consortium in Jordan – consisting of ACTED, the Danish Refugee Council, CARE, Oxfam and Save the Children – aims to contribute to the economic self-reliance, resilience and social stability of Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan.

Consortium members:

