

RESETTLEMENT AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN JORDAN



CEA(R)

Comisión Española
de Ayuda al Refugiado

This report has been drawn up by the advocacy area of the Spanish Commission for Refugees (CEAR) in the context of the “**Observatory on the right to asylum, forced migrations and borders**” project funded by the Extremadura Agency for International Development Cooperation (AEXCID).

During the research and in order to make a diagnosis of the current situation for asylum applicants and refugees in Jordan, the CEAR team held meetings and interviews with UNHCR-Jordan, the MENA regional office, *Alianza por la Solidaridad* (“Alliance for Solidarity”), the Arab Women’s Organization (AWO), Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD), CARE in Azraq, the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate in the camps in Azraq and Zaatari, the Durable Solutions Platform (DSP), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Azraq, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in Azraq, the Spanish Embassy in Jordan, the AECID Technical Cooperation Office, the Institute for Family Health (IFH) in Zaatari, the Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the IOM, UN Women in Azraq, Oxfam in Zaatari and UNRWA.

Front page photo: CEAR (Refugee camp in Zaatari, 2019)

All the photos in this report are by CEAR, taken as part of the observation mission.

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The Spanish Commission for Refugees (CEAR) is a non-profit organisation founded in 1979 that is engaged in voluntary, humanitarian, independent and joint action. Our aim is to work together with citizens to defend the right to asylum. Our mission is to champion and promote human rights and comprehensive development for asylum applicants, refugees, stateless people and migrants in vulnerable situations or at risk of social exclusion. Our work takes a comprehensive approach based on temporary accommodation; legal, psychological and social assistance; training and employment; and social advocacy and participation.

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List of Acronyms

CEAR: Spanish Commission for Refugees (Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado)

IOM: International Organization for Migration

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Palestine Refugees in the Near East

1. Introduction

Jordan is the second country in the world after Lebanon that has taken in the most refugees per capita within its territory since the conflict in Syria began¹. Unlike in Lebanon, Syrians and people of other nationalities seeking refuge in Jordan in recent years have been received and accommodated within a social and political context more willing to foster policies of inclusion, despite the significant socio-economic impact that the increase in arrivals has had. Nevertheless, Jordan's resources are not enough to meet the need to protect the thousands of refugees in the country.

In this context, in line with its aims to defend human rights and the right to asylum, in July 2019 the Spanish Commission for Refugees (CEAR) carried out a research mission within the context of the "Observatory on the right to asylum, forced migrations and borders" in order to analyse the current situation of asylum applicants and refugees in Jordan, paying special attention to how the programmes for resettlement from the country are working. The work was carried out by direct observation in the field, visits to refugee families, camps and settlements, as well as interviews with different key players in the matter of asylum in Jordan.

2. Main statistics

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of refugees and asylum applicants in the country at the end of October 2019 came to 745,110. Over 654,500 of these come from Syria, 67,266 are Iraqis, 14,730 Yemenis² and 6,116 Sudanese³. Out of the total, about 49% are female and 23% are minors⁴, although it should be noted that among minority nationalities there are predominantly single men and the percentage of children is considerably lower⁵. On top of these numbers, there are more than 2,200,000 refugees from Syria who have been settled in the country for decades⁶, registered and aided by the United Nations Refugee Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

These data make Jordan **the second country with the most refugees** in proportion to the size of its population⁷ and the one **where most Palestinians have found refuge**⁸. On top of a population of about 7.5 million people at the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011⁹, the demographic increase of about one million two hundred thousand people (about 13.2% of the population¹⁰) has had a considerable impact on the economy, which depends for its energy on very limited natural resources and a fiscal structure that was already fragile even before the conflict began¹¹. This situation has mainly had an impact on the supply of basic services to the population as a whole.

1 UNHCR (2019): *Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2018*, pp. 17 & 21: <https://bit.ly/3an7bL6>.

2 It should be stressed that some studies carried out on this population reveal that the percentage of Yemenis registered with UNHCR out of the total community in Jordan is very low (JOHNSTON, R., BASLAN, D. and KVITTINGEN, A. (2019): *Realizing the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Jordan from countries other than Syria with a focus on Yemenis and Sudanese*, p. 17: <https://bit.ly/381qk57>)

3 UNHCR (2019): "Jordan" – Fact Sheet October 2019: <https://bit.ly/2Ogs7Km>.

4 UNHCR (2019): "Registered Persons Of Concern Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Jordan" – July 2019: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/70649.pdf>.

5 JOHNSTON, R., BASLAN, D. and KVITTINGEN, A. (2019): *Realizing the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Jordan from countries other than Syria with a focus on Yemenis and Sudanese*, p. 8: <https://bit.ly/381qk57>.

6 UNRWA Spain (2019): "Campos de refugiados en Jordania" ("Refugee camps in Jordan"): <https://unrwa.es/refugiados/campos/jordania/>.

7 UNHCR (2019): *Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2018*, p. 21: <https://bit.ly/3an7bL6>.

8 UNRWA (2019): "Jordan": <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>.

9 World Bank (2019): "Data: Jordan": <https://data.worldbank.org/country/jordan>.

10 Jordan Response Platform (2018): *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2018-2020*, p. 8: <http://cort.as/-KZwB>.

11 Idem, p. 41.

3. International protection in Jordan

Jordan, like most countries in the Near East, has not signed the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Statute of Refugees, nor its 1967 Protocol. However, article 21(1)¹² of the Constitution approved in 1952 provides for **political asylum**, though it does not set out eligibility criteria or conditions for it. The 1973 “**Law on Residence and Foreigners’ Affairs**”, aimed at the country’s foreign population regardless of their legal status, also refers to political asylum. Even so, it does not define the concept of “refugee”, despite including it in some of its articles and giving the Interior Ministry the power to authorise procedures as regards granting travel documents for refugees in Jordan, among other powers¹³.

This vague legal framework led to the signing in **1998** of the **Memorandum of Understanding** between the Government of Jordan and UNHCR¹⁴, by which the former accepted the definition of refugees provided for in the 1951 Geneva Convention and agreed to observe the principle of “non-refoulement”, authorising UNHCR to exercise its mandate within Jordanian territory. This memorandum became the legal context applicable to people applying in the country for international protection.

Based on this, UNHCR registers asylum applicants within the country and determines the status of refugee, after which it should be viable to adopt a durable solution for the person concerned (voluntary repatriation or resettlement in a third country)¹⁵ within six months¹⁶. Registration is carried out with **biometric technology** using an iris scanner¹⁷. This method is also used in the camps to pay for goods and services instead of cash or bank cards.



It is important to point out that although people of Syrian origin with a UNHCR identification card¹⁸ cannot be deported from the country, they do not automatically obtain rights to residence, employment or health care¹⁹. To do so, they must acquire a “**service card**” from the Interior Ministry (normally valid for one year and renewable) by means of a simple administrative process at no cost. This card allows them to move freely around the country (although people in camps managed by UNHCR must request authorisation to leave them), apply for a work permit and a driving licence, and to access health care and education. It should be noted that in September 2018, the Government together

¹² The Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (1952): <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/3ae6b53310.pdf>.

¹³ Jordan Law No. 24 of 1973 on Residence and Foreigners’ Affairs (1973): Article 10: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b4ed4c.html>.

¹⁴ Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the H.K. of Jordan and the UNHCR (1998): <http://cort.as/-KMVe>.

¹⁵ Local integration in Jordan is not provided for as a durable viable solution.

¹⁶ Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the H.K. of Jordan and the UNHCR (1998), Art. 5: <http://cort.as/-KMVe>.

¹⁷ The UNHCR Office in Jordan is the first in the world to introduce it.

¹⁸ As of 2014, when the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Jordan and UNHCR was amended, the identification document issued by UNHCR lasts for one year (before, in keeping with the Memorandum, it was valid for six months) (MALKAWI (2014): “Gov’t, UNHCR sign amendments to cooperation memo”, *The Jordan Times*, 31 March 2014; <http://cort.as/-KMT2>). The amendment document is not publicly available.

¹⁹ Before, they did not have the right to education either. However, in 2016 a policy was adopted to improve access for undocumented people to basic services, approving a temporary exemption of the requirement for the “service card” (issued by the Interior Ministry based on the UNHCR identification card) for refugees’ children in the country in order to access education. It began to be implemented in 2017 (KRAFFT, C. and ABDI, Z. (2018): “Who are the Syrian refugees in Jordan?”, *Economic Research Forum*: <https://theforum.erf.org/2018/05/02/syrian-refugees-jordan/>).

with UNHCR carried out a campaign for status regularisation free of charge for Syrian refugees in the country with no documents²⁰, such as those who had left the camps without authorisation or those who had entered the country in an irregular way, and all who had not been previously registered by UNHCR²¹. About 24,000 people benefited from this campaign. They were registered with UNHCR and obtained a “service card” from the Interior Ministry²².

The vast majority of Syrian refugees are currently formally registered with UNHCR and the Government of Jordan (more than 95% have the “service card” from the Interior Ministry)²³. Refugees of other nationalities, on the other hand, do not have the possibility of obtaining said “service card”²⁴. Their stay in the country is regulated by the Law on Residence and Foreigners’ Affairs, by which they cannot stay in Jordan for more than six months without being granted a one-year residence permit, which most cannot afford, or else pay daily fines. After this deadline, the certificate of registration with UNHCR protects them in principle from being returned, but does not stop many Iraqis and people of other nationalities from having to pay big fines due to their illegal residency²⁵.

As for most of the Palestinian refugees who were already in Jordan, “they enjoy full citizenship in the country, except for the 140,000 from Gaza, who may have temporary passports that do not entail citizenship and they do not have the right to vote or work in the Government”²⁶ (many can obtain Jordanian nationality after proving they were resident in the country between 1949 and 1954)²⁷, and except for Palestinians coming from Syria, assisted by UNRWA.

It is important to note that within the country there is **no public legal aid free of charge** available to asylum applicants and refugees. For a decade now, the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) has been working as a partner to UNHCR in the sphere of legal aid for these people. Their services are free, like those of many other NGOs within or outside the camps.

3.1. Accommodation and inclusion for refugees and international protection applicants

Most refugees in Jordan registered with UNHCR are found in the north of the country (Irbid and Mafraq governates) on the border with Syria, and in the central region (governates of Amman, Zarqa and Balqa). Minority nationalities such as Iraqis, Yemenis, Sudanese or Somalians, many of whom have been in the country for decades, mainly reside in Amman.

Although most live in urban and rural areas (83.6%), it is important to note that Jordan has several refugee camps in its territory, some of which are among the biggest in the world. From 2012 to 2014, the Government of Jordan authorised the construction of **three big camps for Syrian refugees: Zaatari, the Emirati Jordanian Camp and Azraq, in which over 123,000 people live**. The Zaatari and Azraq camps are managed jointly by UNHCR and the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate, a government body

²⁰ Without the identification card provided by UNHCR, without the “service card”, or without both.

²¹ KRAFFT, C. and ABDI, Z. (2018): “Who are the Syrian refugees in Jordan?”, *Economic Research Forum*: <https://theforum.erf.org/2018/05/02/syrian-refugees-jordan/>.

²² Interview with UNHCR-Jordan (Amman, 23 July 2019)..

²³ CARE International in Jordan (2018): *Eight years into exile: How urban Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan are coping and meeting challenges, eight years into the Syria crisis*, p. 10: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/66468.pdf>.

²⁴ In their case, the certificate of registration with UNHCR is accepted by the authorities as sufficient identification, giving access to basic services (JOHNSTON, R., BAS-LAN, D. and KVITTINGEN, A. (2019): *Realizing the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Jordan from countries other than Syria with a focus on Yemenis and Sudanese*, p. 17: <https://bit.ly/381qk57>).

²⁵ CARE International in Jordan (2018): *Eight years into exile: How urban Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan are coping and meeting challenges, eight years into the Syria crisis*, p. 22: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/66468.pdf>.

²⁶ UNRWA Spain (2019): “*Campos de refugiados en Jordania*” (“Refugee camps in Jordan”): <https://unrwa.es/refugiados/campos/jordania/>.

²⁷ UNRWA (2019): “Jordanian nationality”: <https://www.unrwa.org/content/jordanian-nationality>.

created in 2014. On the other hand, the Emirati Jordanian Camp, which was set up in 2013 with aid funding from the United Arab Emirates, remains outside of UNHCR's management or administration.

In addition to these, there are **10 official Palestinian refugee camps** that already existed in the country and three other unofficial camps assisted by UNRWA, which by the end of December 2016 housed 370,000 people (about 18% of all Palestinian refugees in the country)²⁸.

Zaatari, set up in 2012 in the Governate of Mafraq (in the north of the country) is the one accommodating the most refugees: about 76,100 Syrian nationals in an area of 5.3 km². In this emblematic refugee camp, 55.7% of the population are minors and 29% of households are headed by women²⁹.

For its part, Azraq was inaugurated in 2014 in the Governate of Zarqa (central region) after a year of planning based on the lessons learned from the Zaatari refugee camp. Azraq, divided into four "villages", accommodates a total of 35,976 Syrians over 1.7 km², with a capacity for 12,000 to 130,000 people³⁰. Children account for 60% of those currently residing in the camp, including 122 who are unaccompanied³¹. DOut of the 12,650 children of school age in the camp, some 9,840 are schooled, while 630 take part in informal education, and about 2,000 (approximately 16%) do not go to school³². It is also important to know that one in four families are headed by women³³.

The people living in the camps need support for accommodation, access to water, food, health care, education and protection services, all of which are provided by UNHCR and different NGOs. In the camps, people live in semi-permanent structures for which they do not pay rent. As a result, in general with the help of humanitarian organisations they can cover their basic needs in terms of monthly spending, which is lower than that of families living



28 UNRWA (2019): "Jordan": <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>.

29 UNHCR (2019): "Jordan - Zaatari Refugee Camp" - Fact Sheet September 2019:<https://bit.ly/34ZHg9D>.

30 UNHCR (2019): "Jordan: Azraq Refugee Camp" - Fact Sheet September 2019:<https://bit.ly/2rGXyWF>.

31 Idem.

32 Idem.

33 Idem.



outside the camps³⁴. In addition, health care is provided by UNHCR and partner organisations working in the camps, while education is given by schools set up in the camps themselves with backing from the United Nations Children's Fund and the Jordanian Ministry of Education. There are 45 schools in the three camps³⁵, running in two shifts separated by gender: the mornings for boys and the afternoons for girls, or vice versa.

Although the rise in energy tariffs in the Zaatari and Azraq camps has put pressure on the humanitarian organisations responsible for providing basic services for the refugee population³⁶, it could be said that the efforts to ensure minimum levels of accommodation and protection have enabled basic needs to be mostly covered for the Syrian refugees living in them.

On the other hand, the services offered in the Palestinian camps in Jordan, just as in the Palestinian camps in neighbouring countries, are being seriously affected by the **decrease in UNRWA funds** and the rise in population following the displacement caused by the Syrian conflict (some 10,000 Palestinians coming from Syria have sought refuge and assistance from UNRWA in Jordan)³⁷. Furthermore, many people of Palestinian origin "live near these camps in very similar socioeconomic conditions"³⁸.

Refugees residing in urban and rural areas, where they compete for housing with the local population, mostly live in **housing of poor quality**, and in urban areas with greater population density their conditions are cramped³⁹. Two thirds of Syrian refugees live in districts with mostly Jordanian neighbours, where the neighbourhood relationships between the locals and refugees

34 Those living outside the camps have seen the inflation on income double from 2012 to 2016, compared to before the conflict in Syria. Jordan Response Platform (2018): *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2018-2020*, p. 30: <https://jordankmportal.com/resources/jordan-response-plan-2018-2020>.

35 Ibidem, p. 18.

36 Ibidem, p. 20.

37 UNRWA (2019): "Jordan": <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan..>

38 UNRWA Spain (2019): "Campos de refugiados en Jordania" ("Refugee camps in Jordan"): <https://unrwa.es/refugiados/campos/jordania/>.

39 Jordan Response Platform (2018): *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2018-2020*, p. 31: <http://cort.as/-KZwB>.

are mostly positive according to both of them⁴⁰. Even so, there is some apprehension among the local population as regards the rising employment rate, falling salaries and the perception that the Syrian refugee population benefits from the humanitarian aid the country receives, unlike the Jordanian population, which finds itself in a more underprivileged position since it cannot access such aid⁴¹.

Most of the means of living for Syrian families come from earnings from work, whether it is formal or informal⁴². In order to improve access to the job market for Syrian refugees in the country, the Government of Jordan has adopted a series of measures in recent years, including a reduction in the requisites to obtain a **work permit** and authorisation to set up businesses⁴³ and to freely change their sector or employer. The work permit issued by the Interior Ministry is valid for one year (renewable) and is free of charge. It only gives access to sectors open to the foreign population, who are excluded from the public sector, health care, education, engineering and other technical professions⁴⁴. Except for agricultural and construction sectors (for which a work permit may be obtained with support from cooperatives or trade unions), for other sectors in which they are permitted to work it is necessary to have an **offer from a Jordanian employer**.

In March 2019, out of the 306,209 Syrian refugees of working age in the country, 132,704 men and 6,313 women had a work permit⁴⁵. However, not all of them were actively working. The main sectors where these people find work are in agriculture, construction and manufacturing⁴⁶. It should be noted that **people residing in the camps are also allowed to work outside them**; in fact, there are unemployment offices and centres within the camps themselves. In mid-2019, some 13,035 people in Zataari had a work permit (19% women)⁴⁷, and almost 3,560 in Azraq⁴⁸. These people can leave the camps for up to one month to get a job anywhere in the country, but they have to renew the permit monthly. Nevertheless, getting a work permit is still a complicated task for many refugees, especially those whose nationality is not Syrian, which often leads them to do irregular work⁴⁹, exposed to numerous vulnerabilities related to abuse and exploitation.

It is important to note that Jordan is the **country with the third lowest participation in the labour force in the world**, with only 39% of its population economically active⁵⁰. Besides, women's participation comes to 14%, the third lowest in the Arabic world⁵¹. Curiously, within the active population the employment rate is almost identical between the Jordanian and Syrian refugee populations, for both men (47% among Jordanians and 47% Syrians) and women (11% among Jordanians and 9% Syrians)⁵². However, it is quite a lot lower among Iraqis (21% among men and 6% among women)⁵³.

40 CARE International in Jordan (2018): *Eight years into exile: How urban Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan are coping and meeting challenges, eight years into the Syria crisis*, p. 87: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/66468.pdf>.

41 LOCKHART, D. and BARKER, K. (2018): "Syrian Refugees and Social Cohesion in Jordan", *WANA Institute*: <http://cort.as/-Knm6>; WANA Institute, Mercy Corps (2019): "Measuring the Impact of Refugee Labour Inclusion on the Host State Economy": <https://bit.ly/2TAtMxb>.

42 CARE International in Jordan (2018): *Eight years into exile: How urban Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan are coping and meeting challenges, eight years into the Syria crisis*, p. 8: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/66468.pdf>.

43 Only 5% of Syrian refugees working in the country are self-employed (TILTNES, Å., ZHANG, H. and PEDERSEN, J. (2019): *The living conditions of the Syrian refugees in Jordan. Results from the 2017-2018 survey of Syrian refugees inside and outside camps*, p. 12: <http://cort.as/-KX72>).

44 UNHCR (2019): "Economic inclusion of Syrian refugee – Jordan, March 2019": <http://cort.as/-KZtE>.

45 Idem.

46 WANA Institute, Mercy Corps (2019): "Measuring the Impact of Refugee Labour Inclusion on the Host State Economy": <http://cort.as/-KnK6>.

47 UNHCR (2019): "Jordan – Zaatari Refugee Camp" – Fact Sheet September 2019: <https://bit.ly/34ZHg9D>.

48 UNHCR (2019): "Jordan: Azraq Refugee Camp" – Fact Sheet September 2019: <https://bit.ly/2rGXyWF>.

49 IPSOS Group SA (2018): *Unpacking gender realities in displacement: the status of Syrian refugee women in Jordan*, UN Women, p. 17: <http://cort.as/-Kd7t>.

50 ILOSTAT (2019): "Labour force participation rate by sex and age -- ILO modelled estimates, July 2018 (%)": <http://cort.as/-Ka9o>.

51 Idem.

52 CARE International in Jordan (2018): *Eight years into exile: How urban Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan are coping and meeting challenges, eight years into the Syria crisis*, p. 14: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/66468.pdf>.

53 Idem.



In spite of the similarities in employment rates, it should be noted that **job insecurity** is very high for refugees, above all for those living in urban and rural areas, who often do not have a work contract and do not receive a regular wage. The difficulties in saving and the increase in debt in recent years have also brought great pressure on employment opportunities, with competition between the local and refugee populations, especially in the north of the country⁵⁴.

Even though the conditions and rate of employability improved in 2018 compared to the previous year, **about 89% of Syrian refugees were living below the poverty line**⁵⁵. The needs of people of Iraqi origin are even more drastic. During that year, 70% of Syrian families were living in a situation of food insecurity or vulnerability⁵⁶, too. Negative mechanisms of income were still present such as begging, child labour, debt⁵⁷, and others⁵⁸.

54 UNHCR, UNDP, ILO (2015): *Finding a future. Enhancing sustainable livelihoods for Syrian refugees in Jordan: Perspectives and policies for Jordan's resilience, stability and development*, p. 4: <http://cort.as/-KXHh>.

55 Jordan Response Platform (2018): *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2018-2020*, p. 34: <http://cort.as/-KZwB>.

56 Jordan Response Platform (2019): *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2019*, p. 21: <http://cort.as/-KaMx>.

57 Two thirds of Syrian families are in economic debt, mostly with relatives or friends also in Jordan..

58 TILTNES, Å., ZHANG, H. and PEDERSEN, J. (2019): *The living conditions of the Syrian refugees in Jordan. Results from the 2017-2018 survey of Syrian refugees inside and outside camps*, p. 9: <http://cort.as/-KX72>.

Among the **main difficulties** faced by the Syrian population in urban and rural areas, there is their **access to health care and education**. In the first years of the Syrian conflict, health care for them was widely subsidised⁵⁹. However, in early 2018 the Government of Jordan introduced changes in health care policy, by which Syrian nationals had to pay 80% of the general fees paid by the foreign population in the country (two to five times more than they had been paying until then)⁶⁰, including international protection applicants and refugees of other nationalities. In addition to this situation, the cost of medicine and other care is higher than for medical visits⁶¹, so that more than two thirds of the refugees resident in urban and rural areas were left without access to primary care services and medicine since they could not afford them⁶². Faced with pressure from the international community at the Brussels Conference in March 2019, one month later the Government of Jordan re-established the previous scheme of subsidising access to health care for Syrian nationals. Nevertheless, people of minority nationalities still face serious difficulties in accessing the health care system. Some of them are given free assistance by UNHCR.

Furthermore, it should be noted that there are numerous challenges in sexual and reproductive health services in general as regards availability and access⁶³. Registration of births can be complicated for women married unofficially or before 18 years of age, who must formalise their marriage before the birth is registered⁶⁴.

As for education, it should be highlighted that only 54% of Syrian children receive schooling, compared to 80% of Iraqis and 85% of Jordanians⁶⁵ (the percentage of youths in higher studies is also greater amongst the Iraqi population than among Syrians, and even more than among the Jordanian population itself⁶⁶). Even so, it is important to point out that in 2017 the Ministry of Education agreed to provide free school certificates for all children who finish their studies, regardless of their nationality or legal status in the country⁶⁷. Today, all refugees obtain certificates for free.

For its part, **Jordanian society faces similar socioeconomic difficulties** to those suffered by refugees in the country (in fact, the rate of debt is significantly higher among the local population than among refugees⁶⁸). This is leading to the perception that the presence of refugees in communities has had a negative impact on daily life⁶⁹, despite the good existing relations. The scarcity of economic and natural resources⁷⁰ has been aggravated by the increase in population, especially in the north of the country, with the arrival of over a million people from Syria. The resulting rise in demand for public services has increased the country's financial vulnerability, which has also been affected by the temporary closure

59 Until November 2014, health care for Syrian refugees was completely free. As of that date, a system of shared payment was set up by which Syrian refugees had to pay the same fees as Jordanian nationals with no health insurance.

60 Médecins Sans Frontières (2018): "Syrians' access to medical care at risk": <http://cort.as/-KcQJ>.

61 TILTNES, Å., ZHANG, H. and PEDERSEN, J. (2019): *The living conditions of the Syrian refugees in Jordan. Results from the 2017-2018 survey of Syrian refugees inside and outside camps*, p. 10: <http://cort.as/-KX72>.

62 Jordan Response Platform (2018): *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2018-2020*, p. 25: <https://jordankmportal.com/resources/jordan-response-plan-2018-2020>.

63 Idem.

64 CARE International in Jordan (2018): *Eight years into exile: How urban Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan are coping and meeting challenges, eight years into the Syria crisis*, p. 10: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/66468.pdf>.

65 Idem, p. 14.

66 CARE International in Jordan (2018): *Eight years into exile: How urban Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan are coping and meeting challenges, eight years into the Syria crisis*, p. 14: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/66468.pdf>.

67 Jordan Partnership Paper, Brussels II Conference (*Supporting the future of Syria and the region*), from 24 to 25 April 2018, p. 4: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/34144/jordan-partnership-paper.pdf>.

68 CARE International in Jordan (2018): *Eight years into exile: How urban Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan are coping and meeting challenges, eight years into the Syria crisis*, p. 22: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/66468.pdf>.

69 Idem, p. 92.

70 Jordan is the second country in the world in terms of water scarcity and since the beginning of the Syrian conflict the demand for this natural resource has risen by 40% in the north of the country (Jordan Response Platform (2018): *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2018-2020*, p. 36: <https://jordankmportal.com/resources/jordan-response-plan-2018-2020>).

of commercial routes connecting Jordan with Libya, Turkey and the main European markets through Syria, which had also been Jordan's main agricultural market⁷¹. As a result, **the cost of living has risen** for the population as a whole, giving rise to social tensions⁷². Furthermore, among some social and political sectors **the perception that Syrian refugees are an economic burden for the country** has intensified, and is feeding on a discourse about them that is putting stability and social cohesion in some towns and communities at risk, especially in the poorest ones that are accommodating a greater number of refugees⁷³. However, such discourses overlook the positive impact that the presence of refugees has had on the Jordanian economy in terms of growth in investment⁷⁴.

At the same time, it is worth emphasising that there are 25 "Community Support Committees" throughout the country, managed by Jordanian representatives and refugees from different nationalities with backing from UNHCR⁷⁵. These committees, which were set up as of 2013, offer activities for women, children and young people, people with functional diversity and elderly people. They act as a community response to the needs of the refugee population living in urban environments, while at the same time building bridges and reducing tensions between this population and Jordanians⁷⁶.

4. People in a vulnerable situation

According to data from 2018, **76% of the Syrian population** in Jordan were in a **highly or severely vulnerable situation** that year (three per cent higher than the previous year)⁷⁷. A high percentage of them are found in the Governate of Mafraq, where the socioeconomic conditions are more precarious. It is worth noting that there is a lack of data available about the refugee population from other nations than Syria, which makes it difficult to analyse, assess and consequently assist them in their situation and needs.

One of the most vulnerable groups is **children**. They face different obstacles in access to education, partly due to the two shifts in schools⁷⁸, physical and verbal bullying in them by their Jordanian colleagues, the economic difficulties in paying private school fees where applicable⁷⁹, and other costs such as school materials and transport in the case of state schools. Moreover, 5% of Syrian children up to 17 years of age, and particularly boys, work. By far most of them do so in dangerous conditions, mainly in the services and construction sectors⁸⁰. There is no data available about minors from other nationalities. However, some studies indicate there is a high incidence of school bullying (violence, attacks, verbal bullying and ostracism) towards children from Sudan and Yemen⁸¹. This situation overwhelmingly contributes to them dropping out of school.

71 ASHOUBAKI, W. and HARRIS, M. (2018): "The impact of Syrian refugees on Jordan: A framework for analysis", *Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 11, N. 2, pp. 159 and 169: <http://cort.as/-KW0q>.

72 Jordan Response Platform (2018): *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2018-2020*, p. 20: <http://cort.as/-KZwB>.

73 UNHCR, UNDP, ILO (2015): *Finding a future. Enhancing sustainable livelihoods for Syrian refugees in Jordan: Perspectives and policies for Jordan's resilience, stability and development*, p. 9: <http://cort.as/-KXHh>.

74 *Idem*, p. 10.

75 UNHCR (2019): "Jordan: Community Support Committees (CSCs)": <http://cort.as/-NUNm>.

76 *Idem*.

77 UNHCR (2019): *Vulnerability Assessment Framework. Population Study 2019*, page 7: <http://cort.as/-KcuZ>.

78 Throughout the country, 209 schools have set up an afternoon shift for Syrian refugee children. The lack of enough teaching staff adequately trained to attend to the specific needs of the students is currently a significant challenge.

79 Only 4% of Syrian refugee children go to private schools (TILTNES, Å., ZHANG, H. and PEDERSEN, J. (2019): *The living conditions of the Syrian refugees in Jordan. Results from the 2017-2018 survey of Syrian refugees inside and outside camps*, p. 11: <http://cort.as/-KX72>.

80 UNHCR (2019): *Vulnerability Assessment Framework. Population Study 2019*, p. 10: <http://cort.as/-KcuZ>.

81 JOHNSTON, R., BASLAN, D. y A. KVITTINGEN (2019): *Realizing the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Jordan from countries other than Syria with a focus on Yemenis and Sudanese*, page 33: <https://bit.ly/381qk57>.



In addition, it should be pointed out that Syrian, Iraqi and even Jordanian women and girls are exposed to numerous situations of vulnerability in the country, ranging from child marriage⁸², (particularly among Syrian and also Yemeni girls) to difficulties in accessing reproductive health and family planning, as well as abuse and violence in public, family and work environments⁸³. Added to this, one of the reasons why many Syrian families prefer to avoid life in the camps is the violence towards women and children⁸⁴. Nevertheless, in both the Zaatari and Azraq camps there are organisations that offer training for women and girls to avoid situations of bullying and abuse, as well as providing support and resources for those who have been victims

However, it is estimated that the percentage of women victims of violence in Jordan who report their cases is under 3%⁸⁵. This is largely due to the fear of reprisals and the personal and family stigma that may burden those who report it, as a result of deeply rooted cultural values shared among Jordan and Syrian society. The main types of **sexual and gender violence** suffered by women and girls in the country are psychological abuse and physical aggression⁸⁶.

82 "Syrian refugee women marry much earlier now than what women used to do in pre-war Syria." (TILTNES, Å., ZHANG, H. and PEDERSEN, J. (2019): *The living conditions of Syrian refugees in Jordan. Results from the 2017-2018 survey of Syrian refugees inside and outside camps*, p. 7: <http://cort.as/-KX72>).

83 CARE International in Jordan (2018): *Eight years in to exile: How urban Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan are coping and meeting challenges, eight years into the Syria crisis*, p. 11: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/66468.pdf>.

84 IPSOS Group SA (2018): *Unpacking gender realities in displacement: the status of Syrian refugee women in Jordan*, UN Women, p.28: <http://cort.as/-Kd7t>.

85 Jordan Response Platform (2018): *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2018-2020*, p. 28: <https://jordankmportal.com/resources/jordan-response-plan-2018-2020..>

86 Jordan GBVIMS Task Force (2019): *Annual Report 2018*, page 4: <http://cort.as/-Kd-C>.

Furthermore, women find difficulties in accessing the labour market, so they often **work informally** cleaning houses, repairing clothes, caring for children and cooking for neighbours and friends⁸⁷. Those who work as home helps are especially vulnerable to sexual harassment, which is also common in the streets⁸⁸, but the law does not prohibit all types of sexual violence⁸⁹.

In spite of this, it is important to point out that many men and boys also face different kinds of violence and sexual abuse in a great variety of contexts, and they do not normally report it out of shame⁹⁰. As a result, they suffer from depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress, and they are not usually identified as people at whom assistance programmes should be aimed⁹¹.

It is also important to note that very many primary care health centres have **psychosocial support and mental health services** that both the Jordanian and refugee population can use, although access to them varies geographically. According to the sources interviewed, the specialist assistance for some groups in an especially vulnerable situation is often **better in the refugee camps**, where UNHCR coordinates with international partner organisations and NGOs to offer immediate services for women who are victims (or at risk) of sexual and gender violence, people with functional diversity, the elderly and people with mental health problems. In Zaatari, for example, there are classes adapted for children with functional diversity and specific resources for them; there are four clinics with services for women who are victims of violence, and sexual reproduction assistance is provided 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There are also two centres for women's empowerment and resilience managed by UN Women, where services are provided in many sectors⁹². These types of services are more widespread outside the camps.

It is also worth noting that **over 20% of Syrian refugees have some kind of functional diversity**⁹³. Once again, the Mafraq Governate is proportionally the one with the



87 IPSOS Group SA (2018): *Unpacking gender realities in displacement: the status of Syrian refugee women in Jordan*, UN Women, page 17: <http://cort.as/-Kd7t>.

88 Idem, p. 9.

89 Sexual harassment in the workplace, sexual insinuations or language that is offensive and generally related to gender, among other kinds of behaviour, are not punished by law (Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (2018): *Silent Women*, p.4: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/67519.pdf>).

90 Jordan GBV IMS Task Force (2019): *Annual Report 2018*, pp. 3 and 5: <http://cort.as/-Kd-C>.

91 VIDAL, M. (2019): "In Jordan, Some Refugee Fathers Find a Place to Be Vulnerable", News Deeply, 26 March 2019: <https://bit.ly/32OW7ny>.

92 UNHCR (2019): "Jordan – Zaatari Refugee Camp" - Fact Sheet September 2019: <https://bit.ly/34ZHg9D>.

93 UNHCR (2019): *Vulnerability Assessment Framework. Population Study 2019*, page 8: <http://cort.as/-KcuZ>.

greatest recorded number of people with functional diversity per family. These people, however, have limited access to basic services⁹⁴.

Lastly, but not least in importance, it should be made clear that there is a situation of **discrimination** being experienced by thousands of **people of African origin** (Sudanese, mostly from Darfur, and Somalians) who are refugees in Jordan⁹⁵. These people receive less assistance from the humanitarian aid organisations⁹⁶ and are excluded from many of the public policies in support of refugees launched in the country, aimed almost exclusively at people of Syrian nationality⁹⁷. Together with this, there is the fact that these people's opportunities for inclusion are drastically lower due to the racial discrimination prevalent in the labour market, where it is practically impossible for them to work legally, so that they end up being exploited in the underground economy. Furthermore, these people have many more difficulties in being chosen for resettlement programmes⁹⁸.

5. Durable solutions / safe and legal pathways

Within the context of the limited opportunities available in Jordan to develop a means of living, and confronted with a high level of poverty and humanitarian aid flows becoming insufficient to deal with the population's basic needs⁹⁹, thousands of Syrian refugees in the country have opted to continue their migratory journey towards Europe, while others have decided to go back to Syria¹⁰⁰. Family separation continues to have a very heavy impact on people of Syrian origin and is often a decisive factor in refugees' decision to resettle or return. In this context, but in situations that are more complex due to a greater difficulty in accessing basic services and aid, as well as due to racism and exploitation, some young Sudanese also consider returning¹⁰¹.

According to UNHCR, "Local integration [in Jordan] is currently not a durable solution opportunity available to refugees. Resettlement is available for a very small portion of the refugee population."¹⁰² As a result, almost 32% of the refugees of Syrian origin in the country at the start of 2018 returned voluntarily to Syria that year (4% in 2017)¹⁰³, compared to 3% of Iraqis who returned to Iraq¹⁰⁴.

In November 2018, the **border between Jordan and Syria was reopened** via the Jaber-Nasib crossing after remaining closed for three years. One month later, in March 2019, the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign

94 Idem, p. 34.

95 VIDAL, M. (2019): "After fleeing conflict at home, African refugees battle racism in Jordan", *Equal Times*, 22 March 2019: <http://cort.as/-KdXj>. In December 2015, about 800 Sudanese people that were taking part in a protest in front of the UNHCR Office because they felt discriminated against, were arrested and deported to Sudan (many of them were registered as refugees or asylum applicants).

96 This is the true situation due to the organisations' scarcity of resources and the need to prioritise the distribution of aid. This prioritisation is not implemented according to the situation of vulnerability but mainly according to nationality. In fact, the "current humanitarian framework in Jordan has been developed to respond almost exclusively to the Syrian refugee crisis." (JOHNSTON, R., BASLAN, D. and KVITTINGEN, A. (2019): *Realizing the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Jordan from countries other than Syria with a focus on Yemenis and Sudanese*, p. 3: <https://bit.ly/381qk57>).

97 VIDAL, M. (2019): "After fleeing conflict at home, African refugees battle racism in Jordan", *Equal Times*, 22 March 2019: <http://cort.as/-KdXj>.

98 BASLAN, D. and LEGHTAS, I. (2018): "We Need to Help Jordan's Other Refugees", *Refugees Deeply*, 11 October 2018: <https://bit.ly/2RviSZK>.

99 Despite this, it is worth emphasising that the international aid received by Jordan is substantial compared to the aid received by other countries (AL-KHALIDI, S. (2019): "Jordan's PM appeals for more aid as most Syrian refugees set to stay", *Reuters*, 20 February 2019: <http://cort.as/-KdTn>).

100 UNHCR, UNDP, ILO (2015): *Finding a future. Enhancing Sustainable Livelihoods for Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Perspectives and Policies for Jordan's Resilience, Stability and Development*, pp. 7-8: <http://cort.as/-KXHh>.

101 JOHNSTON, R., BASLAN, D. and KVITTINGEN, A. (2019): *Realizing the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Jordan from countries other than Syria with a focus on Yemenis and Sudanese*, p.12: <https://bit.ly/381qk57>.

102 UNHCR (2019): "Global Focus: Jordan – Resettlement": <http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/22178>.

103 Some Syrian families has stated that some relatives who returned to Syria in 2018 did so due to "problems, pressure, a lack of opportunity, or expulsion from Jordan [...]" (CARE International in Jordan (2018): *Eight years into exile: How urban Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan are coping and meeting challenges, eight years into the Syria crisis*, p. 75: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/66468.pdf>).

104 Idem, pp. 76 and 78.

Affairs stated that about 13,000 people had spontaneously returned to Syria from Jordan¹⁰⁵. This number was to reach 150,000 in September 2019¹⁰⁶, although the Government recognises that many refugees in the country do not wish to return yet due to the lack of security in Syria¹⁰⁷. In fact, in December 2018, the Jordanian authorities organised the first **voluntary return journey** to Syria, which over 100 refugees and their families took up, but approximately half of them changed their mind at the last moment¹⁰⁸. The Government of Jordan is aware that the current situation of the country as a refuge may last some time, given the **fragile context of security in Syria**, which is holding back the repatriation of their nationals. This is why it has decided to commit to a change of focus, moving from humanitarian aid to a more durable strategy such as development cooperation.

Furthermore, many people state that they do not have a place to which to return, since their homes and properties have been destroyed, and that they fear being arrested, persecuted or forcibly recruited by the Syrian regime for the armed conflict¹⁰⁹. In spite of this, nearly half of the Syrians think about returning, but most of them in the long term, unlike people of Iraqi origin, who are more inclined towards resettlement. This is the most secure and viable lasting solution for many refugees in the country.

From 2011 to 30 September 2019, there were **51,318 people of different nationalities who had been resettled from Jordan** to third countries¹¹⁰. In that same period, **Spain resettled 536 people from the country**: 13 in 2014, 92 in 2015, and 414 from January to September 2019, all of Syrian nationality¹¹¹.

It is worth noting the decrease seen at the crossing from 2016, when 19,000 people were resettled from Jordan, to 2017, when barely 5,000 people were resettled, mainly in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada¹¹². The main reason for this decrease is the changes in various countries' resettlement policy requirements in 2017, including the United States. In 2018, the UNHCR Office in Jordan processed 4,709 applications for resettlement from the country, which allowed for 3,503 Syrians to be accommodated in a third country that same year¹¹³. However, these figures are very low compared to the total number of Syrian nationals who are refugees in the country.

In Jordan, as in Libya and other countries in the region, UNHCR combines the selection for resettlement with the decision upon people's refugee status in what is called the "combined process", in cases of Syrian people or families. People who are not of Syrian nationality must go through the procedure to determine their status as refugees before being referred to the resettlement programme.

The starting point for launching a "combined process" is a situation of vulnerability for a person or family, previously identified by staff in the camp, whether such staff are from UNHCR or partner NGOs who report potential cases to them. People in a situation of vulnerability considered to be eligible for resettlement are those who have survived violence and torture, those at risk of violence and exploitation (especially children and LGBTIQ+¹¹⁴ people), and those with medical needs or some kind of functional

105 By April, the number had already risen to 16,700 people according to UNHCR (NAHHAS, R. (2019): "Syrian refugees in Jordan unlikely to return home anytime soon", *The Arab Weekly*, 16 June 2019: <http://cort.as/-Kyxz>), reaching 20,000 people halfway through the year (TURNBULL, E. (2019): "20,000 Syrians have returned home since border reopening – UNHCR", *The Jordan Times*, 5 July 2019: <https://bit.ly/2qewP3h>).

106 ALDROUBI, M. (2019): "Jordan says more than 150,000 Syrian refugees have returned home", *The National*, 18 September 2019: <http://cort.as/-Ru2U>.

107 Idem; AL SHARIF, O. (2019): "Jordan's Syrian refugees are not going home any time soon", *Al-Monitor*, 13 March 2019: <http://cort.as/-KdQX>.

108 NAHHAS, R. (2019): "Syrian refugees in Jordan unlikely to return home anytime soon", *The Arab Weekly*, 16 June 2019: <http://cort.as/-Kyxz>.

109 CARE International in Jordan (2018): *Eight years into exile: How urban Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan are coping and meeting challenges, eight years into the Syria crisis*, p. 77: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/66468.pdf>.

110 UNHCR Resettlement Data Finder: <https://rsq.unhcr.org/en/#1Vjy>.

111 Idem.

112 Idem.

113 Jordan Response Platform (2019): *Jordan Response Plan for the Syrian Crisis 2019*, p. 42: <http://cort.as/-KaMx>.

114 Lesbian and gay people, transsexuals, bisexuals, transgender, intersexual and other forms of sexual-affective diversity.

diversity. UNHCR gives lower priority to people who have been soldiers or members of paramilitary groups, informants (except those who gave information under torture or threats) and people that have worked in detention centres or security apparatus. Nevertheless, there is the possibility of declaring somebody with such a profile as “strictly priority”, for example for reasons related to health or protection. In such cases, the classic procedure for determining refugee status is applied, and if the doubtful or questionable aspects are cleared up, the case goes back to the Resettlement Unit and the “combined process” continues. In any case, every person or family referred is documented for the process and registered in a database that will subsequently be evaluated by the Protection Unit.

To finish the selection of cases, UNHCR also evaluates the willingness of the person or family and their suitability for resettlement. Lastly, it verifies individually via an in-depth interview that the person is a refugee and that there are no reasons for exclusion according to the 1951 Convention. This last interview now includes preparation of the Resettlement Registration Form that is then sent to the country that the organisation decides is the most suitable for resettlement, taking into account the criteria established by each country¹¹⁵.

The total duration of the process varies from case to case, depending mainly on the time the country in question takes to evaluate aspects concerning health and security in the case report on the family or person. The evaluation procedure also differs among countries. Some carry out selection missions in which they can interview the candidates, whereas others evaluate the cases based on the written case report sent by UNHCR or via their embassy in the country. The Government of Spain alternates the two former methods, which is the best way according to UNHCR

In the event that a candidate person or family is not accepted by the country, UNHCR may select another country for resettlement. This is not the case when the person or family rejects the country chosen for them, in which case they are left out of the resettlement process and may not opt for it in future, either. There is also the circumstance of cases whose evaluation phase takes a long time due to political matters in the destination country, unrelated to resettlement. It may take months or even years, with many families being kept waiting and uncertain, without being able to be reassigned by UNHCR until the country makes a decision. In mid-July 2019, this was the situation with cases pending approval by the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain and other countries¹¹⁶.

Once the case has been accepted by the country assigned, the process for leaving is begun by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which takes charge of the logistics for the journey and prepares the people or families before they travel. This preparation is carried out via cultural orientation sessions of three to six days, using information and materials sent by the destination countries. It is very important to emphasise that both UNHCR and the IOM complain of a need for general improvement in the process and the orientation materials, which enable the refugees to clear up their queries before travelling to the country. These queries are generally related to access to education, employment and housing; the existing community aid and support; the type of protection offered by the country; access to citizenship and the possibilities of family reunification. As indicated by the IOM, the orientation sessions prior to resettlement go “far beyond simply sharing information about the receiving country; it prepares refugees by helping them to develop the skills and attitudes (...)”¹¹⁷, which are necessary for the inclusion process to be successful. However, in many cases, the fear arising from the lack of information (or

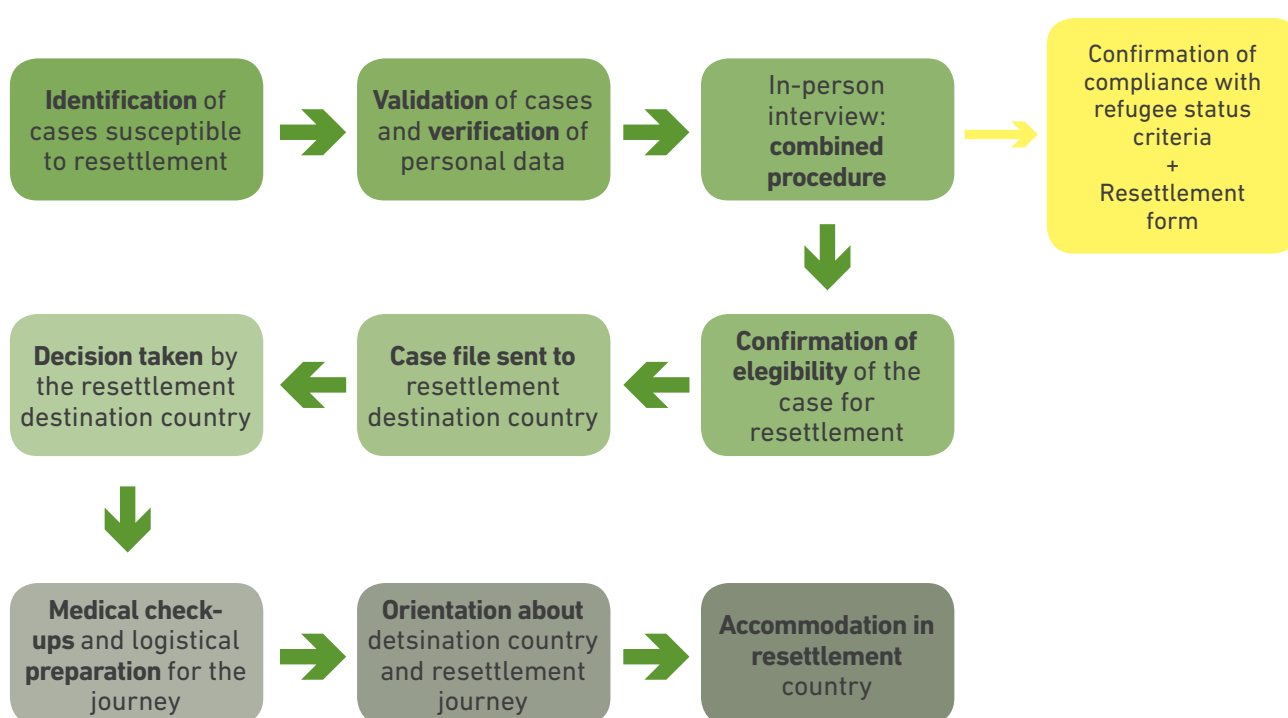
¹¹⁵ In the context of Europe, there are requirements that considerably reduce the possibilities of resettlement for many families, such as a limit on the number of family members. In addition, having family members in other Member States is a significant obstacle for candidates' eligibility, since it excludes them from the process in a country different from the one in which their family members are.

¹¹⁶ Interview with UNHCR-Jordan (Amman, 23 July 2019).

¹¹⁷ IOM (2018): *IOM Resettlement 2018*, p. 36: <http://cort.as/-NbPs>.

inaccurate information received from compatriots in the destination country) leads many families to reject the opportunity for resettlement due to uncertainty about the future of their family and children. In the case of Spain as a destination country, the lack of information offered to the people selected for resettlement regarding some legal aspects in the country such as the differences between the status of refugees and subsidiary protection (especially taking into account that the type of protection normally obtained by people who arrive in Spain via resettlement is subsidiary protection), or the procedure and requirements to obtain citizenship, is leading many families to reject resettlement¹¹⁸. Hence, subscribing to the words of the IOM, we reaffirm that "Orientation must address the real concerns of participants, and emphasize cultural adaptation, inter-generational communication, gender roles, changing family dynamics and other challenges¹¹⁹.

Graph 1. Resettlement process from Jordan



Source: the authors.

Some people from distant places who have sought refuge in Jordan have found a reason to do so in the belief that resettlement from that country to a third state through UNHCR is a more viable option than from others. That is the perception of Sudanese asylum applicants and refugees in Jordan, comparing this country with others like Kenya, Uganda and Egypt¹²⁰. But there are also those who completely reject the idea of resettlement, especially among the Syrian refugee population, because they consider that Jordan is a sufficiently safe country to stay and that they would encounter big differences in ways of thinking, traditions and religion if they are resettled in third countries¹²¹. Even so, there are those who do not rule out resettlement programmes since they view them as a means of family regrouping.

118 Interview with UNHCR-Jordan (Amman, 23 July 2019).

119 IOM (2018): *IOM Resettlement 2018*, p. 36: <http://cort.as/-NbPs..>

120 JOHNSTON, R., BASLAN, D. and KVITTINGEN, A. (2019): *Realizing the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Jordan from countries other than Syria with a focus on Yemenis and Sudanese*, p. 7: <https://bit.ly/381qk57>.

121 CARE International in Jordan (2018): *Eight years into exile: How urban Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan are coping and meeting challenges, eight years into the Syria crisis*, pp. 82 & 85: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/66468.pdf>.

On the other hand, it is worth underlining the existence of other alternative **safe and legal pathways** to the classic resettlement programmes. One example of these could be the community sponsorship pilot programme launched in the Basque country (Spain) in March 2019 with support from Cáritas and the Jesuits, with cooperation from the regional government and UNHCR¹²². Through this, six Syrian refugee families in Jordan have been accommodated in towns in the Basque country thanks to a collaboration agreement with various dioceses in the region¹²³. However, although the project marks the first step for possible future implementation of sponsorship programmes in Spain, it cannot be considered a complementary pathway in the strictest sense, since the people received through it are counted within the annual quota of the state programme for resettlement.

Another example of complementary pathway is seen in the New Zealand project Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship¹²⁴, which supports labour mobility for refugees to third countries. The success of the pilot project launched in 2018, albeit small (covering 15 people), enabled more vacancies to be assigned for Jordan in 2019 in addition to those for resettlement¹²⁵. Another initiative involving job mobility is the United States' project Talent Beyond Boundaries¹²⁶, by which refugees in both Jordan and Lebanon are put in touch with employers in Canada and Australia by being registered in a "Talent Catalog". The platform has over 10,000 refugees registered and about 200 job offers in different sectors. UNHCR offers its support for this initiative by reviewing the cases and helping with the administrative procedures necessary for the refugees to be able to leave Jordan and take up a job offer.

Together with these programmes, there are also others that foster mobility for education and studies in countries such as Germany, France, the United States, Japan and the Czech Republic¹²⁷. All of them may provide inspiration to the Government of Spain and other European governments to explore new complementary pathways to safe and legal access to the European Union for many refugees trapped in transit countries such as Jordan, where resources are extremely limited and minimum standards of accommodation cannot be guaranteed.

122 UNHCR-Spain (2019): "*Arranca en España el primer programa de patrocinio comunitario con seis familias refugiadas sirias*" ("The first community sponsorship programme is launched in Spain with six Syrian refugee families"): <https://bit.ly/35nwZ7C>.

123 Idem.

124 "I Welcome Pledge": <https://www.iwelcome.org.nz/>.

125 UNHCR (2019): "Global Focus: Jordan – Resettlement": <http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/22178>.

126 "Talent Beyond Boundaries": [https://talentbeyondboundaries.org/..](https://talentbeyondboundaries.org/)

127 Interview with UNHCR-Jordan (Zaatari, 21 July 2019).

6. Conclusions

- Jordan is the second country in the world with the greatest number of refugees accommodated in its territory in proportion to the size of its population. Most of them are Syrian nationals and have been displaced since 2011 after the conflict began. At the same time, Jordan is the country in the region hosting the most Palestinian refugees, many of them having lived in the country for decades now, and many in camps assisted by UNRWA. This situation calls for sufficient resources, which the country does not have, in order to be able to ensure adequate protection and accommodation in all cases. In spite of support from international organisations and civil society, the vast majority of asylum applicants and refugees are living with a very high level of vulnerability.
- Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention and it does not have a national system of asylum, even though its Law on Foreigners provides for political asylum. The legal framework applicable to people seeking refuge in the country is mainly found in the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with UNHCR in 1998. The latter organisation is in charge of determining a person's refugee status, offering international protection to asylum applicants and refugees, with collaboration from the Government of Jordan in providing services, and it seeks durable solutions for people it defines as refugees.
- More than three quarters of the refugee population in the country (83%) live in urban and rural areas, normally in low quality housing and precarious conditions, very dependent on humanitarian aid and informal jobs in which they are exposed to exploitation and abuse, especially people of African origin, who habitually suffer racial discrimination. The rest are accommodated in one of the three camps set up in the country after the outbreak of the Syrian conflict: in the *Zaatari* camp (for years the biggest in the world), the *Azraq* camp and the *Emirati Refugee Camp*. The *Zaatari* camp alone accommodates almost two thirds of all the refugees residing in camps. The refugees may work outside with a work permit, but the employment rate is very low. Moreover, the jobs are mostly obtained by men.
- Girls and young women, as well as people with functional diversity, are the groups in the most vulnerable situation within the refugee population. Girls and young ladies often face situations of psychological abuse and aggressions, as well as child marriage. Boys experience situations of bullying and violence daily at school and within the family. Access to health care and education for minors are two of the great difficulties encountered by refugee families in the country, as well as a lack of specific resources for people with some kind of functional diversity.
- Local long-term integration is not truly viable for the Government of Jordan, and voluntary return to Syria is not recommended by international organisations such as UNHCR. As the latter organisation and others point out, the situation in Syria is unstable and there is not enough information about the safety of people who have voluntarily decided to return there.

- Resettlement in third countries is the only option for many refugees and one of the safe and legal pathways that has allowed a small number of Syrians and nationals from other countries (such as Iraq) to be able to find a safe refuge where they may begin their lives again. Out of about 51,000 people resettled from Jordan from 2011 to 2019, Spain has taken a few more than 500 to its territory. Most of them are Syrian nationals, but recently vacancies have opened up in the resettlement programme for Iraqi nationals.
- One of the main reasons for which many candidates for resettlement in Spain drop out of the process is because of the kind of subsidiary protection, not asylum, that Spain offers to resettled people of Syrian origin, and which lengthens the process of obtaining a passport by ten years that would enable them to visit relatives scattered in other countries. Furthermore, a lack of accurate information about certain legal aspects in Spain (such as the content of the protection received, access to citizenship or the right to family reunification programmes), together with the fear of having to be accommodated in group accommodation centres together with unknown people and having to use shared spaces such as bathrooms or toilets, all represent a big impediment which they mention, stating their preference to be accommodated in individual homes due to the difficulties of coexistence because of culture shock. The reasons for such resistance are mainly matters related to gender, such as considering women as participants in the job market to sustain the family.
- In this context, it is essential to see an increase in vacancies for resettlement, a commitment to a progressive programme with an obligatory quota, an improvement in the type of protection offered (asylum status instead of subsidiary protection), and in the information about accommodation, services and the inclusion process in Spain. As regards the latter point, CEAR proposes that the NGOs that take part in accommodating refugees once they are in Spain should be included in the selection missions carried out by the Spanish Government, in order to ensure the quality of the information given to refugees who are candidates for resettlement in all phases of the procedure.
- In addition to resettlement, there are other complementary pathways that the Government of Spain can set up to comply with its responsibility to refugees and people in need of protection in the transit countries. These could include a humanitarian visa in line with the legislative initiative approved by the European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs in December 2018, and activating the possibility provided for in Article 38 of the Spanish Law on Asylum for people in need of international protection so that they may apply for it in Spanish embassies and consulates abroad.



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