



النهضة العربية للديمقراطية والتنمية
Arab Renaissance for Democracy & Development

Refugees



Perceptions and Experiences of Youth in the Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jordan

A Rapid Needs Assessment



February
2020



ARDD

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Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD)

Founded in 2008 in Amman-Jordan, Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) is a Civil Society Organization seeking to foster transformative change towards an empowered, resilient and just society in Jordan and the Arab World. ARDD supports marginalized individuals and communities—including refugees and migrants—in acquiring and enjoying their social, political and economic rights, through legal aid, psychosocial support, media and grassroots mobilization, and research and advocacy to raise stakeholders' awareness locally, regionally and internationally about the challenges that vulnerable persons face in Jordan and the Arab Region.

Executive Summary

Palestinian refugees have been living in exile for 71 years that span across four generations after having been expelled from their original homeland following the creation of the State of Israel. Nearly half of the Jordanian population is comprised of individuals that are of Palestinian origin who took refuge in the country following Al Nakba in 1948 and Al Naksa in 1967. Palestinian refugees include both those that are and those that are not registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the Agency whose core mandate is to provide relief, education and humanitarian services to Palestinian refugees. The total number of registered Palestinian refugees in Jordan is 2,242,579 while the number of those registered in camps is 412,054, as per UNRWA. There are ten official camps and three unofficial camps where refugees reside. Recently, more Palestinian refugees arrived to Jordan from Syria (PRS) and as per 2018 data, 17,719 are registered with UNRWA. These Palestinian refugees from Syria arrived in dire needs of shelter, food and non-food assistance and are assessed by UNRWA today as extremely vulnerable with difficult socio-economic conditions.

The most recent survey about the socioeconomic conditions of Palestinian refugees was conducted in 2011. It showed that up to 96% of the population outside camps and 85% of those residing in camps hold the Jordanian citizenship. Almost all of those who don't have citizenship hold a temporary Jordanian passport with no national identification number, and they are mostly refugees from Gaza. The survey clearly revealed that the socio-economic status of the Palestinian refugee population inside camps is worse off than those outside camps nearly on all indicators. Views and opinions of Palestinian refugees concerning the 2011 survey data were solicited by the Department of Palestinian Affairs in all refugee camps in 2016. The results indicated that although infrastructure was considered to have been improved, the main problems such as overcrowding, bad environmental conditions, health, unemployment, exploitation, lack of women's access to work opportunities because of cultural norms, and poverty still prevail. Furthermore, the participants criticized the insufficient inclusion of slums outside camps where refugees reside in such surveys.

This needs assessment is commissioned by ARDD with the intention of identifying the evolving needs in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan in the current context of economic slowdown and the reduced UNRWA funding as well as the latter's potential impact on the services in the camps and the well-being of young camp dwellers. ARDD recognizes that the well-being of Palestinian refugees is not limited to their socio-economic or physical conditions, which is especially true for those living in the camps. Even for younger refugees who did not witness conflict, but were born and raised in these camps, the dire living conditions have damaging effects on mental health. This assessment seeks to provide evidence for ARDD's programs on the needs of young men and women in the camps, and accordingly, to identify potential initiatives under several areas including youth enablement, economic development, legal aid, forced migration and gender justice. The aim is, therefore, to inform future interventions by ARDD and other relevant stakeholders who set-out to support the camps, and to enable them to respond to those needs and address current or expected future gaps towards positive change and risk mitigation.

The specific objective of this assessment is to provide updated insights about the socio-economic conditions and needs of Palestinian refugee youth in the refugee camps in Jordan. This is achieved by exploring perceptions and experiences of young Palestinian refugee men and women, complemented with information and perceptions of workers in selected Camp-based organizations. The assessment aimed to answer two key questions related to the youth's perceptions and experiences of trends in socio-economic conditions and the implications on their psychological well-being, taking gender differences into account, and to explore what kind of interventions are needed to support Palestinian refugee youth that could contribute to positive change and mitigate potential risks.

The findings of this needs' assessment show that many of the problematic issues from the 2011 data and the 2016 discussions remain and include the following points:

- *Statelessness of Palestinian refugees from Gaza (ex- Gazans) remains a problem*
- *The lack of job opportunities, even among the educate, remains a major issue in all camps especially for young men*
- *There are prevalent perceptions that there is a problem in quality of and access to in basic higher education in all the camps and child labour is an issue*
- *In some camps, bullying by school children, especially verbal, is common in schools and the community and is almost normalized*
- *There are perceptions of insufficiency of health services, especially emergency and tertiary services*
- *There are insufficient solid waste collection services, and the quality of streets and sanitation in some camps and overcrowding constitute a health hazard*
- *There is a lack of social and cultural outlets for youth especially women*
- *There are also perceptions of inequalities and differences within and among the camps*
- *The conservative social culture is a major challenge for women which restricts their movement to varying degrees and accordingly impacts access to work and education.*
- *The impact of the socio-economic conditions on psychological well-being include: feelings of emptiness, a dark outlook, hopelessness and frustration, a sense of stigma, a sense of insecurity about the future, hopelessness for change and psychological implications of bullying.*

The findings also reveal a general concern in all the camps about the impact of reduced UNRWA services on access to education and healthcare as the refugees cannot afford costs. This relates to their concerns about poverty, education and negative health outcomes.

Thus, ARDD calls for building on existing initiatives and developing new ones to contribute to bettering the refugees' current conditions and opening the door for sustainable improvements that allow them to pursue their potential. Recommendations include: 1. Income generating initiatives that follow a local economic approach and emphasize skills training and collective solutions; 2. Studying the potential of supporting cooperatives for social protection; 3. Investing in environmentally-friendly and clean energy to create jobs and save costs; 4. Investing in safe child cares services to create jobs and support women's work; 5. Providing centers for psychological support, cultural activities; 6. Providing legal preventive and response services to overcome legal barriers related to civil, labour and criminal law; 7. Addressing gender-based violence and; 8. Supporting advocacy efforts for granting ex-Gazans civil rights

Background & Desk Review

Palestinian refugees have been living in exile for 71 years that span across four generations after having been expelled from their original homeland following the creation of the State of Israel. Nearly half of the Jordanian population is comprised of individuals that are of Palestinian origin who took refuge in the country following Al Nakba in 1948 and Al Naksa in 1967. Palestinian refu-

gees include both those that are and those that are not registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the Agency whose core mandate is to provide relief, education and humanitarian services to Palestinian refugees. The definition of a 'Palestine refugee,' as per UNRWA, is any person whose 'normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.' Nevertheless, UNRWA provides services to 1967 refugees as well.¹

The total number of registered Palestinian refugees in Jordan is 2,242,579, while the number of those registered in camps is 412,054 as per UNRWA data in 2018/2019.² There are 10 official camps³ and 3 unofficial camps⁴ where registered refugees reside (See Annex1), although it is not unusual to find unregistered Palestinian refugees in the camps or refugees from other nationalities with poor socioeconomic status. The camps resemble urban neighborhoods or rural villages that have transformed into little towns since their establishment.⁵ The camp boundaries are porous and there has been movement in and out of the camps over the years. Recently, more Palestinian refugees arrived to Jordan from Syria (PRS) and as per 2018 data, 17,719 of these PRS are registered with UNRWA. The number is expected to increase to 18,500 by end of 2019. Despite the opening of the Syrian-Jordanian border in late 2018, it is not anticipated that these PRS they will return.⁶ Interestingly, PRS arriving in Jordan sought refuge mostly in host communities; around 200 were hosted in Cyber City, a government facility in Ramtha⁷ as per 2014 data, and they were moved to King Abdalla II Park where 509 are now staying.⁸ Following a policy of non-entry to Palestinians adopted by the Jordanian government in 2013, Palestinian refugees escaping Syria have not been allowed to access Jordan, thus reducing the numbers in Jordan and rendering those who stay and those who enter at utmost vulnerability.⁹

Legal Status of Palestinian Refugees

Palestinian refugees in Jordan have varying citizenship/legal status depending on the year of entry into Jordan and their location of origin. As per 2011 statistics, up to 96% of the population outside camps and 85% of those residing in camps hold the Jordanian citizenship. Almost all of those who don't have citizenship hold a temporary Jordanian passport with no national identification number¹⁰ and they are mostly ex-Gazans.¹¹ Government statistics estimate that the number of Palestinian Gazans in Jordan is around 140,000, the majority of whom are 'double refugees' – or those who have endured multiple cycles of displacement – and are not originally from Gaza.¹² In rare instances, there are Palestinian refugees with permanent or temporary residence permits or no right to stay in the country at all. The significance of the legal status is the resulting statelessness

- 1 Zhang, H., & Tiltne, A.A., (2013) *Progress, challenges, diversity: Insights into the socio-economic conditions of Palestinian refugees in Jordan*, Fafo.
- 2 https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/unrwa_in_figures_2019_ara_v1_april_2019_final_0.pdf
- 3 The 10 official camps are: Wihdat, Baqaa, Hussein, Talbiyeh, Zarqa, Hitteen, Irbid, Souf, Jarash, Azmi AlMufti. Unofficial camps are: Madaba, AlSukhneh and Prince Hasan (See Annex 1 for more details)
- 4 Unofficial camps started as gatherings or concentrations of Palestinian refugees. They are not officially recognized by UNRWA although services are provided.
- 5 Boco, R., (2010) UNRWA and the Palestinian Refugees, a History without History, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 &3. UNHCR
- 6 UNRWA (2019) *Syria Regional Crisis, Emergency Appeal*, available at: https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/2019_syria_ea_final.pdf
- 7 <https://www.unrwa.org/prs-jordan>
- 8 UNRWA (2019) *Syria Regional Crisis, Emergency Appeal*
- 9 <https://www.unrwa.org/prs-jordan>
- 10 Zhang, H., & Tiltne, A.A., (2013) *Progress, challenges, diversity: Insights into the socio-economic conditions of Palestinian refugees in Jordan*, Fafo.
- 11 Al Abed, O., (undated) 'Palestinian Refugees in Jordan'.
- 12 Ramah, S. (2015), *Palestinians and Jordanian Citizenship*, MEMO Publishers

and its impact on the socio-economic status of refugees.¹³ Although Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship face some forms of subtle discrimination and exclusion,¹⁴ those without a National ID number have no access to public sector jobs or professional practice; nor to services such as public health, public university education or welfare, and have limited property rights. As per 2011 data, 94% of those in Jerash Camp and 24% of those in Hitteen camp have no citizenship.¹⁵

Camps Management and Services

The Jordanian authorities have a role in managing the refugee camps. The Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA), established in 1988, is responsible for this alongside UNRWA. Its duties include support to UNRWA and NGOs, monitoring refugees, rehabilitation of physical infrastructure and registration of commercial ventures. The DPA works through Camp Service Committees that consist of 7-13 appointed members, who are not necessarily camp dwellers, and monitors their membership and budgets.¹⁶ UNRWA's mandate is service provision primarily for 1948 refugees who are registered with it. However, it also provides services to 1967 refugees who may have a document from the Government of Jordan's Department of Palestinian Affairs as proof of displacement.¹⁷ UNRWA provides schools, health clinics, relief distribution and social centers inside camps, in addition to garbage collection, maintaining and rehabilitating shelters, and setting housing regulations.¹⁸ Although this has strained its capacity to respond, UNRWA also provides Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) with relief, social protection, health and educational services.

Camps and the Palestinian Identity and Right of Return

Both UNRWA and the Palestinian refugee camps have a role in the imagery of Palestinian nationalism. They are considered as transitional and represent the Palestinian refugees' right of return¹⁹ which has been recognized by International law as per Security Council Resolution (SCR) 194. Palestinian refugees in the camps thus have arguably carried the plight of the Palestinian cause and the responsibility of maintaining the Palestinian character and identity, which has required them to maintain their transitory and marginalized status.²⁰

Over time, the plight of Palestinian refugees has seemed more permanent than temporary. The complexity of fulfilment of the right of return is a consequence of Israel's refusal to take responsibility for Al Nakba and the refugee question,²¹ and is directly related to the desire to maintain a 'Jewish identity' for the Israeli State. Therefore, approaches to permanent solutions have often con-

- 13 Zhang, H., & Tiltne, A.A., (2013) *Progress, challenges, diversity: Insights into the socio-economic conditions of Palestinian refugees in Jordan*, Fafo.
- 14 Salih, Ruba (2020) *The Political Cultures of Palestinian Refugees: Right to Rights and Right to Return*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Forthcoming) & Al Abed, O., (undated) 'Palestinian Refugees in Jordan'.
- 15 Zhang, H., & Tiltne, A.A., (2013) *Progress, challenges, diversity: Insights into the socio-economic conditions of Palestinian refugees in Jordan*, Fafo.
- 16 Al Hussein, J., (2011) The Evolution of the Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jordan. Between Logics of Exclusion and Integration, Institut Francais du Proche Orient (IFPO)
- 17 Zhang, H., & Tiltne, A.A., (2013) *Progress, challenges, diversity: Insights into the socio-economic conditions of Palestinian refugees in Jordan*, Fafo.
- 18 Al Hussein, J., (2011) The Evolution of the Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jordan. Between Logics of Exclusion and Integration, Institut Francais du Proche Orient (IFPO)
- 19 Boco, R., (2010) UNRWA and the Palestinian Refugees, a History without History, Refugee Survey Quarterly, Vol. 28, No. 2 & 3. UNHCR
- 20 Salih, R., (2020) *The Political Cultures of Palestinian Refugees: Right to Rights and Right to Return*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Forthcoming)
- 21 Salih, R., (2020) *The Political Cultures of Palestinian Refugees: Right to Rights and Right to Return*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Forthcoming)

sidered this group of refugees as unique, requiring a unique solution,²² and thus politically contentious. Indeed, the peace negotiations leading to the Oslo Agreement in the 1990s failed to include the right of return of refugees,²³ and to lead to an independent Palestinian State. In fact, recent political developments indicate that the right of return is under more threat now than it has ever been. The reduction of funding from the United States to UNRWA, from US\$ 350 million in 2017 to US\$ 60 million in 2018, has jeopardized its operations and its ability to continue providing its services, and risked regression in socio-economic circumstances for refugees.²⁴ In addition, developments such as the recent statements by US officials about UNRWA at the UN Security Council,²⁵ the US' declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and the looming "deal of the century" are more than insidious attempts towards stripping refugees of their status and their Right of Return.²⁶

Yet, despite the multitude of grim factors that have been aforementioned, the average Palestinian refugee – including those who have never been comprehensively included in political processes that determine their future²⁷ – insist on returning to their country and refuse any discussions of an alternate land.²⁸

Socio Economic Conditions of Palestinian Refugees

2011 Survey Data

The most recent survey²⁹ about Palestinian refugees was conducted in 2011. It provides a comprehensive picture of the diverse socio-economic conditions of Palestinian refugees both inside and outside the camps. The survey shows that the socio-economic status of the Palestinian refugee population inside camps is worse off than those outside camps nearly on all indicators. Concerning demographics, the camps have a younger population and the camp dwellers marry earlier than refugees outside the camps and girls in general marry earlier than boys. Households inside camps are larger, more often comprise of more than two generations and are characterized by a heavier dependency burden. As such, despite reduction over time, overcrowding remains a problem. The small size of houses is a consequence of the compact camp size and regulations which, until 2013, were restrictive to vertical expansion. There is also substantial variation among the camps in terms of overcrowding whereby Talbiyeh, Wehdat and Jerash Camps are the worst, while Prince Hassan and Sukhneh Camps are the least crowded. Crowding is less of a problem for the economically better off households than for the comparatively poorer households.

In terms of housing and physical infrastructure, the space and quality of housing and its external environment are lower inside camps than outside. Further the level of satisfaction with them and their improvement over time – or lack thereof – is also lower in the camps. Corrugated metal plates (zinco) and other temporary building materials are still used for roofs inside camps, and many camp households report major cracks in their walls. Ultimately, negative conditions of in-camp dwellings are prevalent with little improvement since the 1990s. Humidity and dampness are the

- 22 Rempel, T.M., (2006) 'Who are the Palestinian Refugees?', *Forced Migration Review*, 26: 5-7
- 23 Boco, R., (2010) 'UNRWA and the Palestinian Refugees, a History without History', *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 &3. UNHCR
- 24 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322667315_Amid_US_funding_cuts_UNRWA_appeals_for_health_and_dignity_of_Palestinian_refugees
- 25 <http://jordantimes.com/news/region/us-calls-dismantling-un-palestinian-refugee-agency>
- 26 <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/opinion/2019/5/7/1->
- 27 Abu-lyun, J., and Murad, N.L., (2006) The Politics of Palestinian Refugee Participation, *Forced Migration Review*, 26: pp.47-48
- 28 Ramah, S. (2015), *Palestinians and Jordanian Citizenship*, MEMO Publishers
- 29 Zhang, H., & Tiltne, A.A., (2013) Progress, challenges, diversity: Insights into the socio-economic conditions of Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Fafo. Available at: https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/insights_into_the_socio-economic_conditions_of_palestinian_refugees_in_jordan.pdf

most reported conditions, as well as lack of sunlight and ventilation, insufficient insulation resulting in a “too cold” and “too hot” environment in winter and summer respectively, and exposure to noise. The prevalence of these problems is positively associated with the level of income of the household. Typical characteristics of refugee camps include the density of building structures, the sometimes-narrow alleyways leading to the entrance of dwellings and unpaved or poorly paved streets. Most dwellings in the camps are connected to the sewage network; however, in practice these systems are not always functional. There is also variation among camps, and the vast majority of camp dwellings that lack sewage system connection are located in Jerash and Sukhneh camps and are connected to a percolation pit or septic tank. Most camp dwellers rely on tap water as a primary source of drinking water, while the remaining use filtered water or purchase bottled water.

House ownership inside the camps records higher percentages than outside camps. However, ownership is better understood as a right to use, as refugees in the camps are not entitled to and have no deeds to the land on which their houses are built. Such land is either government owned or rented with a long-term lease. Rents are also significantly lower inside than outside camps.

In terms of the sense of safety, camp dwellers feel safe mostly at home, while when considering the surroundings, more people feel that safety has deteriorated in past years while less believe it has improved. Neighborhood safety is perceived considerably higher during the daytime than at night, especially for women and children. Crime, violence and substance (drugs and alcohol) abuse are perceived as problems by camp dwellers more than their counterparts outside of camps.

Regarding social services, health outcomes are worse in camps in terms of perceived health and chronic diseases impacting employability and there is a positive association between better health outcomes and higher education levels. In terms of health insurance, registration with UNRWA has no significant impact on being insured neither inside nor outside the camps and insurance is more related to employment status. There is reliance mostly on the Civil Insurance Scheme – which also covers the poor and children less than 6 years of age, including those of Ex-Gazans – and the Royal Medical Services to a lesser extent. Ex-Gazans have the lowest rates of insurance access; therefore, most of Jerash camp dwellers have no insurance. Use of health services is higher inside the camps, due to availability of UNRWA services and likely due to worse health conditions. There is higher use of UNRWA services – at a rate that is almost equivalent to that of the use of government hospitals – and less use of all other services (public clinics, military or private services) than outside camps.

In terms of education, despite overall improvement since the 1990s, the lack of formal schooling remains a problem among the older generations, and there are significant percentages of refugees who have not completed basic or secondary schooling and few – concentrated among the younger crowd – are able to acquire community college degrees or a university education. The percentage of camp dwellers who completed post-secondary education is lower than outside-camp dwellers in all age groups, and higher among women than among men with the exception of Talbiyeh camp. The highest access to education for both men and women is in Madaba camp while the lowest is in Zarqa camp. Access to post-secondary education is highest among the richest income quintile group although there remain high percentages among those who only completed basic education. The trend in university education acquisition, however, has improved when compared to the 1990s or to the older generation. Inequality in access to higher education is explained by the type of basic education that refugees attend, with those who go to private schools having higher post-secondary educational attainment.

Regarding labour force participation and employment, the youth’s economic participation is higher in the camps than outside due to less time spent on education, but they also suffer from higher rates of unemployment. The youth suffer 8 times the unemployment rate of people above the age of 35. The absolute poverty rates under the national poverty line are also high in the camps despite some variation among them.

Perceptions of Palestinian Refugees of Camps in 2016

The views and opinions of Palestinian refugees concerning the 2011 survey data were solicited by the Department of Palestinian Affairs in all refugee camps in 2016.³⁰ The key issues that emerged were the following:

- Exclusion of slums (outside camps) where refugees - who have no access to services - reside in Karak, Sahab or the Jordan Valley, which leads to an underestimation of the total number of refugees;
- Overcrowding remains an issue despite the reduction in average family size and the relocation of young married couple outside their families' homes. This is due to the limited camp area as those who move out are replaced by those who move in; Jerash camp is the most crowded as vertical expansion there is not as common, and due to poverty levels and restricted access to loans;
- Infrastructure was considered to have improved, especially in Jerash camp after a SDC project. However improvements are still needed as some dwellings remain not connected to the sewage network and some are still made of or have roofs of temporary material (zinco).
- The environment remains highly noisy and the garbage accumulates and is not collected regularly causing health hazards.
- The health services provided by UNRWA are only primary with not enough capacity to meet demand and no specialists. They were perceived to have worsened over time. Expensive medication such as those required for chronic or terminal diseases is also not available and the health centers are not well equipped. Maternity and post-natal care services were considered satisfactory. The participants requested full health insurance as most have no money yet need to resort to public or private healthcare services.
- Education was a contentious issue. The quality of education was perceived to be bad, impacting the percentages of students who complete their basic education. Schools are not always close to locations of residents and the two-shift system discourages parents from sending their children to school neither in the early morning nor late in the evening. Inequality in education enrollment and school drop-outs post the age of 15 was perceived to be a consequence of the need to work and generate income. In urban areas, such as Hitteen and Irbid, the availability of commercial zones tempts students to drop out of schools and work and in rural areas such as Talbiya and Jerash, and working in livestock attracts boys and girls alike. Over crowdedness in classrooms, with around 50 students per classroom, was another cause for concern, especially after the Palestinian refugees from Syria started sharing some of the classes and after the financial difficulties that UNRWA faced. The lack of jobs was considered to discourage students from continuing their tertiary education as those who are educated are unable to find jobs and are frustrated. Pre-school was preferred for children of an older age (5 years) or considered unnecessary altogether.
- Unemployment was considered a problem for both males and females, educated and uneducated. Reasons included insufficient jobs in the camps, and some of the camps' long distance from development locations and factories such as Jerash camp. Most available jobs are vocational and do not require academic education. The desire to work in the government and the military was expressed. Another important point is the perception that people do not work so that they can continue to receive welfare, especially with the threat of reduced welfare, as wages are very low. The arrival of Syrian refugees who are skilled and accept low-

30 DPA (2016) Report on the Project "Utilizing the Latest Palestinian Refugees' Statistics"

er wages was considered a factor in reduced job opportunities. Jerash camp residents were exceptionally disadvantaged, as they have no national ID number, cannot access government jobs, and have low opportunities, or are far from locations of jobs with high transport costs. They are exploited and accept low wages.

- Women's access to work opportunities is low due to social norms in the camps and negative attitudes towards women's work, despite the reduced care responsibilities as a result of the smaller family size. Accordingly, women work from home or are self-employed, but are unable to market their products. The identified barriers include: location of work as the preferred location is inside the camps or in the public sector; the male-female mixed work environment; the long hours and preference for morning shifts only; the low wages and lack of adherence by the private sector to the labour law; the lack of available jobs, the culture of shame and male dominance.
- Knowledge and awareness of the labour law was cited as another factor in the perceived rising unemployment. Workers who get exploited with extra hours, low wages or additional tasks with no extra pay are driven to leave work without getting their rights.³¹ The increased rates of female education have led to an increased rate of unemployment.
- Poverty was considered primarily an issue of poor income (from welfare or work) as refugees have less access to capital assets. They perceive poverty in the camps as abject and Jerash was considered the poorest. The costs of education are burdens on the household income which leads to drop-outs and the income is not enough to meet health care costs. Access to UNRWA welfare was considered low and the value was low.³²

Additional Vulnerabilities

It is important to pay attention to people with disabilities including children who have accessibility, protection and integration needs. Official statistics on disability in Jordan are limited, but it is estimated that 15% of all Palestinian refugees are disabled, although with the higher percentages expected to be in Gaza and Syria due to the impact of conflict. As per 2018 data, 11 health centers and 11 schools were rehabilitated for accessibility in Jordan.³³

Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) arrived in dire need of shelter, food and non-food assistance³⁴ and are assessed today as extremely vulnerable by UNRWA with difficult socio-economic conditions. In fact, 31% of PRS are members of female-headed households which increases their vulnerability.³⁵ Additionally, some face high insecurity due their precarious legal status. Access to employment, services, civil registration and legal processes remains restricted.³⁶ Increased gender-based violence and other serious problems are additional risks.³⁷ The identified needs include: emergency and regular cash assistance and winterization support; access to health, education and environmental services (WASH and garbage collection) and; vocational training for employment support. Despite UNRWA's services, not all children are enrolled in school nor receive psychosocial services and much of the population lacks access to health services. In addition, secondary and tertiary health services are not available to them. Furthermore, prevention and protection responses are needed, including increased referrals to legal services.

31 They are made to sign concession contracts

32 DPA (2016) Report on the Project "Utilizing the Latest Palestinian Refugees' Statistics"

33 UNRWA (2018), Disability Inclusion Annual Report- figure is based on the World Health Organization and World Bank (2011), World Report on Disability

34 <https://www.unrwa.org/prs-jordan>

35 UNRWA's cash assistance is equal to US\$9.8/person/month for those suffering vulnerabilities while it is US\$40/person/month for those suffering vulnerability and protection risks

36 UNRWA (2019) Syria Regional Crisis, Emergency Appeal

37 <https://www.unrwa.org/prs-jordan>

Psychological and Mental Well-Being

The well-being of Palestinian refugees is not limited to their socio-economic or physical conditions. It is evident that violence, conflict and displacement jeopardize the mental health of refugees and their sense of identity. For Palestinian refugees living in camps, including younger refugees who did not witness conflict but were born and raised in the camps, the stressful life, high poverty and over-crowdedness have damaging effect on mental health.³⁸

UNRWA has integrated mental and psychosocial support in its health services in some of the camps only when funding was available,³⁹ therefore gaps remain. A study that analyzed associations between depressive symptoms and perceived health, the hopefulness about the right of return, gender, and poverty showed that 43% of participants had moderate to severe depressive symptoms. It also showed that an association existed for both perceived health and hope about the right of return, although the former was the only factor explaining variance in depressive symptoms.⁴⁰ Another study on the barriers to mental health treatment in Baqa'a camp showed that mental health issues were prevalent among refugee camps in Jordan. There are no available figures on this – but estimates by health professionals have fluctuated between 20%, 50% and 75%. It is also expected that mental illnesses are underdiagnosed. Such illnesses include depression, anxiety and psychosomatic illnesses and do not include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), common among recent refugees. Vulnerable groups included teenagers who realize they have fewer rights than other Jordanian children and women of child-bearing age who are raising children while living in poverty and frequently being subjected to gender-based violence. Underfunding was the most significant barrier, followed by gender – with women being the disadvantaged group – then stigma and religion, and finally culture. In addition to increasing funds, the study recommended adopting a holistic social and healthcare model that allows communication and collaboration of healthcare professionals and religious leaders as well as launching anti-stigma campaigns that are culturally and religiously sensitive.⁴¹

Methodology

The assessment aims to answer the following two key questions and sub-questions:

Q1: What are the perceptions and experiences of Palestinian refugee youth in camps in relation to trends in their socio-economic conditions and the implication on their psychological well-being? What are the gender differences?

Q2: What kind of interventions are needed to support Palestinian refugee youth, so as to lead to more positive changes and mitigate potential risks?

The assessment employs a qualitative methodology, which is the most suited to respond to questions about perceptions and experiences. The data collection strategy included semi-structured individual and group interviews. The field work took place in June 2019 and included a sample of the refugee camps. A two-stage sampling process was used:

- 38 Hankir, A., &McKell, C., (2018) 'Barriers to Treatment of Mental Health Problems for Palestinian People in Refugee Camps in Jordan: a cross-sectional study', School of Medicine, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK
- 39 <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/unrwa-starts-offering-mental-healthcare-palestinian-refugees>
- 40 Alduraiddi, H. and Waters, C. M. (2018), Depression, Perceived Health, and Right-of-Return Hopefulness of Palestinian Refugees. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 50: pp. 163-171. doi:[10.1111/jnu.12363](https://doi.org/10.1111/jnu.12363)
- 41 Hankir, A., &McKell, C., (2018) 'Barriers to Treatment of Mental Health Problems for Palestinian People in Refugee Camps in Jordan: a cross-sectional study', School of Medicine, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK

- A *priori* generic purposive was used for selection of the refugee camps to ensure variety in the camps. As such the sample ensured inclusion of refugee camps of 1948 and 1967; those hosting Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS), those hosting stateless refugees namely ex-Gazans or holders of passports with no ID numbers. It ensured geographic diversity and included one unofficial camp. Accordingly, the following four camps were selected: Wehdat-Amman, Gaza or Jerash camp, King Abdulla II Park and Shukhneh camp in Zarqa (See table 1 in Annex1). Additionally, Baqaa camp in Balqa and Souf in Jerash were added to the list.
- The second stage of sampling was planned to be Community-Based Organizations and youth using convenience sampling, with priority given to those that work with youth and with women – 2-3 organizations in each camp were supposed to be selected. However, due to time limitations, accessibility was possible to only one organization that facilitated the focus groups. The researcher thus met with three organizations, Women Programme Centers in Souf, Baqaa and Wehdat and with 2 groups, one of young men and one of young women in each camp, with varying numbers ranging from 3 to 15 . In Al-Sukhne and in Wehdat camps, it was not possible to meet with young men. In King Abdulla II Park, it was not possible to have group meetings – therefore, short interviews with individual members of the community took place.
- In addition, meetings were conducted with directors of Camp Service Committees in Baqaa, Al Sukhne, Jerash and Souf camps.

The collected data was analyzed thematically based on the topics of interest. Confidentiality has been ensured in the note taking and report writing. The names of the research participants were not included in the report nor in the records. No digital transmission of any audio material has taken place.

The limitation of the assessment is the inability to reach sample saturation due to the small sample size and limited time. It was also not possible to ensure the variety requested in the sample of community organizations and youth. This means that certain views may not have been reflected and as such it is not possible to use the findings to systematically compare across camps. The choice of language is based on the researcher's interpretation of what was being said and are not direct quotations unless indicated in italics.

Findings

The below findings are a synthesis of the issues and challenges discussed in meetings with the youth, Women Programme Centers and Camp Service Committees (CSCs). The findings show that many of the problematic issues remain from the 2011 data and the 2016 discussions and includes perceptions of additional issues of power dynamics and inequalities. The presentation of issues in Kind Abdulla II Park Camp is in a separate section due to the specific conditions of that camp.

Legal Status of Ex-Gazans

Statelessness of Palestinian refugees from Gaza (ex- Gazans) who are concentrated in Jerash camp but are also present in some of the other camps such as al-Sukhne, Baqaa and Wehdat remains a problem. In Jerash camp, there is also the issue of Egyptian document holders who, unlike other Gaza refugees, are considered as foreigners and not Palestinians. They are not granted a temporary two-year passport and they sponsor their own residency. The ex-Gazan young men especially expressed their frustration as an ID number is required in all aspects of life: education, health care, work and property ownership. Ex-Gazans are mostly from Beer Seba' and are double refugees – in other words, they have endured multiple cycles of displacement. Two milestones appear to have impacted their lives: the disengagement of Jordan from the West Bank and imposition of work permits which were never needed before, following the Syrian crisis. There is ongoing work by the Camp Service Committees (CSCs) with the parliamentary committee on Palestine to grant them civil rights. Young women in Jerash camp may seek marriage to a Jordanian citizen to solve their citizenship problem.

Lack of Jobs and Unemployment

The *lack of job opportunities even among the educated was the major issue expressed in all camps especially for young men*, although with variations depending on the geographic location. Educated men and women often don't find work in their specializations and may remain unemployed or take any job to make ends meet. At times, employers require work experience which the youth do not have. Transport costs, tough working conditions, small markets, lack of access to capital, and debt are barriers in several camps. Informal work on street carts is restricted in some camps either by the authorities or by the more powerful camp dwellers. Women face further/specific restrictions elaborated in the sections below. There were perceptions in Baqaa and al-Sukhne that some of the youth lack the culture of work or are subject to the culture of shame. Unemployment is considered to lead to psychological and social problems as elaborated in the following sections.

In Wehdat camp, the perception is that job opportunities are available. However, these are for medium or lower end jobs such as opening up shops or selling on street carts. Child labour among boys is prevalent, especially the older child in the family, who often work following school as requested by their fathers. Job opportunities in the camp offer low wages and long hours which may prevent them from continuing their education. Working on a street cart involves paying off informal fees or "itawat" imposed by young gangsters which can go up to 150 JOD 150 per month. The police generally do not interfere unless someone complains. Fathers are either "jobless," retired, or work as public employees, car mechanics or construction workers. The options outside the camp are more varied; however, there are not many available jobs. Projects need capital to start which is not available. Proper vocational education is available in academies but is expensive and societies offer low quality training. Essentially, traditional, short-term forms of training on embroidery, tailoring or other similar skills for women will not systematically solve the unemployment problem. Further, the Vocational Training Corporation is far and its reputation is not great.

In Baqaa camp, unemployment is perceived to be one of the major challenges. Job opportunities are not available, the local market is saturated and street carts are monopolized by a few families who collect "itawat," similarly to Wehdat camp. The street carts are also often removed by the authorities because they are unorganized, and their locations are not appropriate, as they physically block other shops. Unemployment among men is perceived to be the reason for other social problems including drug use and sexual harassment. The culture of shame, lack of capital or lack of skills were additional problems in addition to debt which is widespread and is driving young people to drugs and deterring them from marriage. Young women believe they are mobile enough to search for work outside the camp or they work from home.

In Souf camp, there are significant levels of highly educated youth who are unable to find work in Jerash due to lack of job opportunities beyond public jobs, which are limited in number. Transportation to Irbid is problematic while employers in Amman do not hire employees from Jerash due to distance. There are also perceptions that nepotism plays an important role in employment including by large businesses. Discrimination based on location and origin compounds the lack of economic opportunities with impact on the youth's outlook on life. Debt is also considered a major economic issue in the camp and opening up a business is challenged by low marketing capacity due to low purchasing power within the camp. Street carts are not technically allowed, and they are regulated by the governorate – street carts that do exist are also monopolized by some groups who control the prices – and it is worth exploring that a regulated open market would solve this problem. Women perceive that work is valuable for them and it is connected with income and productivity, financial independence, impact, self-achievement, and increased respect.

Jerash camp has its specificity due to the statelessness of its dwellers, which results in further restricting job opportunities unless a work permit is acquired. The youth perceive the most viable option to be work inside the camp in small enterprises or in any job (plumbers, mechanics, design), although these often do not provide sufficient income and are sometimes unsuited for their level

of education. At times, young men seek to work on street carts but those have been forbidden by the authorities because of crowdedness. Some young women work from home as teachers. Still, there are university graduates and youth with vocational skills whose potential remains untapped and there are those with no school education who are difficult to absorb in jobs. Another limitation is lack of capital to start a business with no Islamic loans available to borrow from, which is the only form of loan that many in Jerash camp are open to. The older generation, the fathers, mostly work as daily construction workers. At times, families send their children to work in farming which is seasonal and requires public transportation. At times children, boys and girls, leave their schools to go work without protection or insurance. In Jerash, the youth referred to Jerusalem College that grants diplomas and possibilities for bridging, provides practical training and access to jobs and offers installment payments and scholarships that can possibly absorb the youth. However, they indicated that its conditions are too tough to meet for them.

For al-Sukhne camp, the closest governorate is Zarqa. However, the perception is that there are no available jobs and the closest are in factories in Dhleil that mostly employ women. However, the harsh working conditions and long hours along with the conservative culture discourages young women from working there. Women receive beauty, tailoring, soap-making courses in the Women Programmes Center and by the Camp Services Committee (CSC). However, they do not seem to result in income generation as they are not varied enough and the market is small. For example, several beauty salons in the camp were opened up by women as a consequence. Another challenge is that al-Sukhne used to be touristic and it is agricultural therefore no factories open up there. There is a perception that women are often the breadwinners of the family earning meagre income from farming activities.

Education Issues

There are prevalent perceptions that there is *a problem in basic and higher education in terms of quality and access respectively* in all the camps. In terms of basic education, in Wehdat, Jerash, Baqaa and Sukhne camps, the quality is perceived be low with no elements of critical thinking in the curriculums. Classrooms are overcrowded, teachers have low qualifications and are not equipped to deal with students, especially those with different learning capacities. In Wehdat and Sukhne, there was also mention of cases of physical and verbal violence by teachers in UNRWA and public schools respectively and in Wehdat in all schools there is a problem of hygiene in latrines which causes many health problems. It was indicated in Jerash that this results in many students, especially boys, not passing the Jordanian high school exam, Tawjihi. At times the cost of basic education especially outside the camps and the desire to work and bring in income lead to school drop-outs among students even girls in Jerash and Baqaa camps. Drop-outs among girls are often also a consequence of early marriage.

In terms of access to higher education, special places are guarded for Palestinian camp dwellers in universities. However, they are few and students need high scores to get this funding. Jerash dwellers have to compete with all camps and perceive that they have less chances of getting in because of their status. The cost of higher education is also considered a problem and UNRWA has scholarships for distinguished students only.

In Wehdat, Souf, Jerash and Al-Sukhne camp, *bullying by school children, especially verbal, is common in schools and in the community and almost normalized*. This is prevalent among young boys, but even among girls, though the latter are *"more easily controlled by their parents"* as expressed in Wehdat. Bullying does not appear to be connected with socio-economic status as posited in Jerash. It is perceived to be a consequence of upbringing, personality and age on one hand and the lack of qualification and knowledge of proper disciplinary methods by teachers especially following the prevention of beating in public schools.

Health Services Issues

There are prevalent *perceptions of insufficiency of health services especially emergency and tertiary services* which are problematic and nearly non-existent. The perception of public hospital services in Baqaa, Jerash and Souf is poor. In Baqaa camp, there is only one public hospital which lacks in hygiene, medical staff qualifications, work ethic and quality medical services. There were examples of emergency case patients left untreated for hours and of harmful medical practice that at times led to worsening of cases or even death. This is perceived to be a major problem both by males and females. There was a perception of de facto discrimination or at least nepotism in access to hospitals due to the delay in granting care. Private clinics were also perceived to be exploiting patients. Jerash camp dwellers who have either a temporary passport or Egyptian documents do not have health insurance and therefore need to pay for public hospitals in the same way as the “able-to-pay Jordanians.” UNRWA used to fund hospital care (up to perhaps half the cases as explained) but this stopped approximately five years ago. Public health insurance is provided to children under 6 years but the elderly ex-Gazans are not covered.

In general, the *health services provided by UNRWA are considered to be somewhat satisfactory*. However, in Wehdat, there were complaints of over crowdedness, long waiting hours, doctors not being always present, medicines not always available, and inadequate bed side manner. People now go to Bashir public hospital for alternative services. This has been increasing with rumors that UNRWA may close down. Health insurance is available for some through public employment or poor families’ insurance. People who have insurance rely on military insurance or they pay for their own services. Some complaints about availability of medicines, vaccines and staff were also expressed in Jerash and Souf.

Physical Environment and Infrastructure Issues

Insufficient solid waste collection services and the consequent accumulation of waste in most camps is perceived as a major problem, which coupled with the over-crowdedness, results in environmental and health problems. The lack of waste collection workers, especially after recent reductions by UNRWA, was mentioned in all camps as resulting in deteriorated services with the exception of al-Sukhne camp, where waste collection workers are provided by the Camp Services Committee (CSC) not by UNRWA. In Wehdat, Baqaa, Jerash and al-Souf camps there were cleaning initiatives organized by young men, but the problem remained. This is partly attributed to the public’s attitudes and behaviour in waste disposal, littering and lack of environmental consciousness. In Wihdat camp, the problem is accentuated by the presence of cats, rats and insects causing diseases. In Baqaa camp, garbage collection is considered one of the 3 most significant challenges. It is worth mentioning that it was not considered culturally appropriate for young women to participate in such cleaning initiatives in any of the camps.

Overcrowding and substandard quality of dwelling units: The quality of dwelling units was sub-standard especially in Jerash camp which has “zinco” roofs and in some locations in al-Sukhne,⁴² Wehdat and other camps. In Jerash camp, some dwellings are barely livable – in winter, the roofs leak and houses are flooded and in summer there is humidity which causes health issues. Overcrowding in neighborhoods, narrow streets and the lack of privacy is experienced in some or all locations in all camps. In Wehdat, young women explained the implications of this on further restricting their behavior and movement as they indicated there are specific alleys that “*can only accommodate one walking person.*” There are more problematic implications as well, such as the inability of civil defense and emergency cars to reach the needy in times of crisis. In Jerash camp, some families had to move to the outskirts of the camp due to its small size.

42 A Project by the Italian Cooperation significantly improved the dwellings in al-Sukhne camp, by building rooms for each dwelling unit.

Infrastructure services problems, namely quality of streets and sanitation in some camps: In Jerash camp, the infrastructure is nearly non-existent, the water is not available and people need pumps to access it. There is constant street flooding whenever it rains, despite attempts for improvement by the CSC. Sanitation is also an issue and the perception is that there is no one to turn to. Al-Sukhne camp also suffers from poor infrastructure. It relies on cesspools and an example was given of three years before when contaminated cesspool water leaked into the debilitated water supply network. In Wehdat camp as well, sanitation, street flooding, and the quality of streets are problematic and *“children are at risk to fall into street ditches.”* Despite requests, no action was taken by UNRWA or the CSC or the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) and they keep shifting accountability even though the boundaries are clear. In Souf camp, the quality of infrastructure is perceived to be sufficient. There is a view that this is not in the same condition everywhere and that at the core of the camp there are neglected areas.

Social and Cultural Activities

Social and cultural activities are available through local societies that are present in the camps as well as the clubs run by the Ministry of Youth: one club per camp that generally serves males. Availability of these services varies among camps (See annex IV and refer to DPA for full list⁴³). There were perceptions expressed in several camps about some societies operating for prestige only, with their leadership monopolizing their organizations and offering their services based on nepotism (Jerash, Wehdat, Souf, Baqaa) although with exceptions.

In Wehdat, there are no outlets for young men to make good use of their spare time with the exception of the club. The club offers snooker and billiards which is not preferred by parents for perceived gambling practices. The club is also perceived not to be open for anyone in the camp beyond the members. Organizing any activity there is bureaucratic and the resources are available but not used for the benefit of the community. For young women, there are no activities that they know of except for the Women Programme Center. Young women entertain themselves at home, as they jokingly said *“by doing chores or taking care of their siblings.”* When asked whether they want sports or cultural services, the response was that it would be met with sarcasm by the men and the families would likely not allow them to participate. The Women Programme Centre is considered the only safe space for girls as no males are allowed. There are no art, music, or other cultural outlets.

In Souf and Jerash camps, similarly there is only one club for men with similar monopoly issues, therefore more cultural and sports activities are needed. For women in Souf, Jerash and al-Sukhne, there is only the Women Programmes Center. In Souf, it is an active space that both young men and women use and volunteer with. In Jerash and al-Sukhne it offers many activities and courses for women and in Jerash it was mentioned that it helps women generate income by marketing their products. There are no clubs or cultural outlets for young women despite their desire and demand. In al-Sukhne camp, due to the conservative culture, girls expressed their need for a “safe space” to gather around, discuss issues, learn new skills. It should be only for women, in which case, it would not be a problem for them to participate. Sports, arts, a library are examples of pertinent activities.

43 <http://dpa.gov.jo/page.php?55-55>

Inequalities and Vulnerability Issues

Based on the discussions the following perceptions of inequalities and marginalization appear in the camps:

Power dynamics and domination by particular groups. There are perceptions that a few powerful families control the local economy in one of the camps and that it is saturated in terms of formal businesses. Street carts are off-limits, as the same families place informal fees “itawat” on regular camp dwellers as mentioned above. The latter were seen too powerful and dangerous. Domination by leaders of clubs as mentioned earlier and by charities is another issue. There are perceptions across camps and by different stakeholders that some charities and societies are led for prestige primarily and that each one services its own “clients.” Consequently, the distribution of aid would be based on nepotism and often it goes to the same people every time as mentioned in Wehdat, Souf and Jerash. Divisions that mirror the political divisions are also present as mentioned in Wehdat camp affecting distribution or use of services. The same power dynamics at times appear to affect attempts to create new initiatives that serve the communities in the camps and examples were given. This is explained either by the fear of competition over power and prestige or the desire to keep the camps in a marginalized status for political reasons.

In terms of inequalities and vulnerability within camps, some camps are seen to accommodate wealthier families or have locations that are underprivileged in terms of dwellings or services such as Wehdat and Souf while others, especially the more precarious ones, are perceived to be more equal. The general perception is that Jerash and al-Sukhne camp dwellers are poor – and that they are all one class and there are no significant variations among the population. As someone in al-Sukhne put it, “*if they have any money they would move out of al-Sukhne camp.*” In al-Sukhne, families are large; there is a perception that the main bread-earners are women, who also handle a large burden of care for the elderly and people with disabilities. In Jerash, rents of 60 JOD are considered a burden and the main heating source is gas or kerosene which is an indication of poverty. However, there are also perceptions in Jerash camp that some families have money but don’t show it evidenced by the fact that they own their houses while others rent.

In Wehdat camp, one in ten is estimated to be well-off while the others are not. There are large capital owners who belong to the camp and do not wish to leave, and those who suffer from abject poverty. There are proper flats and there are cave-like houses which are not reached by aid at all. There are those with PhDs and those who are illiterate. There are streets that are well paved (by GAM) and others that are in bad condition. Resources in the camp are available but are not properly distributed, even public resources and aid.

In Baqaa camp, although vulnerability is generally seen to be a problem for the whole Ein-el-Basha district, there are differences within the areas in the camp, locations that are far from the market (called crisis/forgotten areas) have no services and people live on aid. People with physical disabilities are also at a disadvantage in the camp and there are significant numbers of them. Children were highlighted as a group that requires specific attention with prevalence of child labour and violence, as well as the elderly who have no outlets to spend their time. In Souf camp, the perception is that there are several classes and some families are poor and rely on aid. There are also specific locations with concentration of problems like disability, early marriage and family breakdown such as Ein Azzeitoun, Qaraaneh.

There are also perceptions of differences among the camps. The camps are different in terms of their geographic location, their duration of existence, their size, and the services available in them among other characteristics. There is a perception in remote camps that those that are closer to Amman, such as Wehdat or Baqaa, are better off as they have more access to work opportunities than those in Jerash governorate or in Hashmiyye district (al-Sukhne). Some in Jerash camp perceive it to be the worst because of statelessness and lack of social rights such as access to education and health care, and because of isolation and being far from services.

Stigmatization of young men and women living in the camp is another issue that increases their marginalization. This was considered among the largest challenges for young men in Baqaa camp which is increased by their association with violence and drug use that are prevalent in the camp. In Souf and al-Sukhne, stigmatization both because of being Palestinians and camp dwellers is sensed when they interact with some people outside the camp which they see as unfair. The stigmatization was however not exercised by everyone and there are a lot of people who treat them fairly. It should be noted that the youth in al-Sukhne were aware that stigmatization at times extends to the whole governorate of Zarqa not only the camp. There were experiences that showed stigmatization extends to political parties as well. There was also a perception of some subtle institutional discrimination against camps in terms of the services provided and initiatives granted.

Gender Equality Perceptions and Implications of Discrimination

In general, young women in the camps perceive that there is no gender equality or equal opportunities and that men/boys are privileged. Despite variations they all experience restrictions on their behavior and mobility justified by the dominant social culture and shame – “*al3eib*” – requirements. The restrictions can deprive them of work and at times educational opportunities. Early marriage of girls appears to be prevalent in the camps either willingly or forced.

Opinions about gender equality varied among both young men and women with some expressing full support to gender equality while others support equality in some aspects of life while maintaining the validity of stereotyped roles. A clash appears to be happening between daughters and their families as the former are more progressive expressed in Wehdat and Jerash camps. Girls in Baqaa and Wehdat camps indicated that the largest challenge for them was the conservative social culture.

In Wehdat camp, the patriarchal culture is dominant and seems to be more severe than other locations, which was referred to as the “*si assayed culture*.” However, young women are aware and perceive it as problematic. All aspects of their lives are affected ranging from how they dress to their continuation of school. Shame is seen to be associated with women whatever they do while everything is allowed for men. There is a perception that women live as servants and are treated by the husbands as such during the day then used for marital duties at night and that girls are deprived of their dreams. Marital relationships appear to lack in respect by men of women “*Men do not walk side by side with women, like the slave and the master*.” There are also more positive experiences where families allow their daughters to learn, work and not wear hijab if they choose to as long as they dress conservatively.

In Baqaa camp, the conservative traditions and shaming of girls is prevalent in many aspects of life – although it varies among families. There appears to be a sense of empowerment among some girls in that they can affect social development and change mentalities as people get accustomed to new ideas. They gave an example about the resistance they faced initially from males when organizing mixed events which received their acceptance later.

In Souf Camp, there was consensus among young women that customs and traditions are barriers to them and used in favour of males. They perceive that men are privileged in terms of their rights

when compared to women. However, the perceptions about gender equality among them are not homogenous. Some women see it as necessary and hold challenging views, fully backing gender equality that is justified by their family upbringing, while others believe in equality that is limited to particular aspects of life. Others support stereotypical roles of men and women and oppose equality because the girls *"were made for their homes and should be pampered"* despite sensing the lack of fairness that some girls experience such as when they *"excel in education yet are deprived of it."* Other opinions accept inequality in society as an unchangeable fact of life because of traditions. Among young men, the opinions varied in a similar way. Some say they are with equality, but with exceptions as women are *'emotional and unable to be in decision making positions'* and *"men should not cook,"* while another view was for full equality.

In Jerash camp, the women perceive that there is no gender equality and that women do not have the same rights as men. They believe this is backward thinking and is unfair and that there should be equality as both women and men work. Some women seem to misunderstand inequality as they assume it means participating in jobs requiring physical strength and, in that sense, would not support it. They however mentioned practical examples of discrimination in inheritance, as many families deprive the females from her right of inheritance as they claim the male is more entitled. Men's control is seen by some to be an issue of authority while others see it as an issue of protection and concern.

In ***al-Sukhne camp,*** there was a perception by young women that gender equality is a western concept and that men and women have different biology and capabilities therefore they don't believe in inequalities. Further probing showed that they believe in women's capabilities in decision-making positions and that they should have rights. Most agreed with the view that supports equality and expressed frustration that women are deprived of opportunities while boys are granted all and that society pushes women to a single future of marriage, chores and childcare. A debate about the legitimacy of the need to protect girls for their reputation took place where some saw this as necessary while others preferred independence. Older women tended to hold more traditional views about the role of women in the family and are more selective when it comes to equality.

Restriction on the freedom and mobility of girls was perceived in all the camps. This was with variations among camps and among girls as to the extent and impact of that on their lives and the level of rejection of this issue. In Wehdat camp, women usually go out accompanied inside and outside the camp especially younger ones, while older women move alone. In Baqaa camp, restrictions on women's freedom and mobility was triggered not only by conservative societal norms but by the families' perceived need to protect the girls from sexual harassment risks inside the camp. Movement outside of the camp was thus preferred and less restricted than inside the camp. The lack of work opportunities and unemployment among men compounded by the spread of drug use among them is believed to be a trigger of such harassment or likely attacks. In Souf camp, despite variations where some girls are given more liberties than others by their families, there remains some limitations, such as going out at night or working in mining. In Jerash, some women can move within the camp and some outside of the camp as well but others are more restricted and would be confined to their homes once they mature until they marry. There is a sense of suffocation among the latter. In Sukhne camp, there are restrictions on women's mobility for fear of girls' mixing with boys, even visiting a female friend is not preferred for that reason. Sexual harassment is not common because all people know each other.

In terms of access to education and work, some families encourage their daughters to get educated as a form of insurance and to work as long as it is in segregated environments as mentioned in Wehdat and Jerash camps. Others are pushed to a care role *"they tell you girls eventually end up at home."* In Wehdat camp, extreme conservatism appears to be more prevalent than other camps whereby some women are not allowed to go to school beyond 10th grade, work is seen as *"3eib"* (shameful), and girls are sometimes forced out of higher education to marry. In Sukhne as well, there are limitations on women's work outside the camp and women's higher education. In Baqaa

camp, as a result of the culture it becomes “3eib” (shameful) for women to be employed or to volunteer. As the young women expressed, the woman’s desire to self-achieve is denied; the value of her work is considered to be only monetary manifested either in offering women to stay at home and receive male financial support or discouraging her voluntary work. The young women were upset by this culture and believed it to restrict their work opportunities.

Early marriage is still prevalent in the camps. In Jerash camp, young girls marry at 13 or 15 years, which is either a consequence of bad school performance or because of traditional marriages. Early marriage is also prevalent in Souf, Baqaa and Wehdat camp, with girls not marrying beyond 17 in Wehdat camp considered “spinsters.” In Wehdat and Baqaa, it is often at the girls’ wishes as they would have romantic unrealistic ideas about marriage and they drop out of school, while at other times it is imposed by parents or fathers, although many mothers nowadays want a different future for their daughters as expressed in Wehdat camp. Early divorce is also common in Baqaa camp.

It is worthy to note that to the extent that the data allows such a comparison, the expressed concerns of young men and women differ. Work opportunities, crime and violence, nepotism and discrimination were expressed more often by young men while young women were concerned about the gender discriminatory culture and paid more attention to education, domestic violence and, to a lower extent, work opportunities. Health and solid waste collection services were of interest to both. From the discussions, there appears to be a need for more clarity on the concept of gender equality, its references and implications.

Social Relationships and Safety in the Community

Household Relationships and Domestic Violence

There were perceptions, especially among women in Wehdat, Baqaa and Souf camps, that domestic violence was prevalent. In Wehdat, the over-crowdedness makes it more visible and it is believed to be widespread leading to injuries, and witnessed by children who are likely traumatized. It is perceived to be connected to strength and masculinity in the minds of men and *“if they don’t practice it they believe they are not men enough,”* an idea believed to be at times perpetuated by the males’ mothers. Domestic violence in Baqaa camp is perceived to be a consequence of the increased desire for mobility by women and an increased desire for control by men. Sexual harassment is considered a problem in Wehdat and Baqaa camp, and at times women in Wehdat experience it when receiving welfare/aid, but they are afraid to report it. Violence against children including child labour was mentioned in Baqaa and a coordination committee was established by the CSC to address the problem in all the camps. The perception of the young women is that it is normalized. In Souf camp, young women link violence to economic hardship, lack of dialogue and communication, marital betrayal and bullying. Young men’s perception is that domestic violence is not an issue. They attribute this to community solidarity and informal methods where men have to answer to the community male elders who contribute to solutions more effectively than courts. Beyond the Family Protection Directorate, services for victims of violence appear to be limited or lacking and provision would need to consider that they could be viewed to turn women against men.

Concerning divorce, marital or family problems, there were either no clear perceptions expressed or the issue did not come up. It was mentioned in Jerash camp that social media is weakening relationships within the family leading to distance, intolerance and rebellion. which in the opinions of respondents leads to increased divorce rates. There appears to be an increase in divorce in Baqaa camp especially among younger girls who marry early and divorce quicker. Extended family relationships are perceived by young men to be problematic and they attribute the problems to ignorance and economic hardships.

Community Relationships and Violence and Crime

In general in the camps, the perception is that the relations between neighbors are not as solid as they used to be and there is much less visitation and interaction. However, community initiatives by youth and solidarity appears to still exist. Relationships between the camp dwellers and communities outside of it were present in the form of family relationships, some friendships and work/volunteering. There also appears to be coordination among young men in the different camps. In Wehdat camp, relationships are perceived to be close between neighbours, as people know each other and interfere to solve problems when they occur. However social solidarity is perceived to be getting less with economic hardships. Solidarity community initiatives "*Gam'iyyeh*" may only be organized among families but not neighbours, and there are some donations to the mosque but not to services.

In Baqaa camp, there were community initiatives organized by young women volunteers in the Women Programme Center in which the neighbors got involved and by the young men who organized cleaning activities. Additionally, neighbors stand together in times of crisis and one example was shared about a family whose house burnt down and the neighbors helped compensate most supplies and furniture. When comparing the life inside and outside the camps, the women's perception was that it was less noisy than the camp, while the young men perceived it to be much better with less problems, more order, less severe unemployment and less social scrutiny too. The young men expressed desire to leave the camp.

In Jerash, weaker social relationships between neighbors are attributed to the fact that many old neighbors have moved out of the camp or because of economic hardship. Visitation between them is rare and occurs only on occasion. The perception is that people outside the camps are more aware, more open, less conservative on matters of education, work and marriage and that they progress with time while camps remain closed and stick to traditions. The openness outside the camps is believed to create a reaction on males in the camp to be more restrictive toward the females.

In Souf camp, similarly, economic hardships explain the reduced neighborly relations in addition to the desire to avoid problems; the increase in wealth by some, social media and the increase in the form of nuclear family. Solidarity, however, appears to still exist through examples of community initiatives. Young men perceive that the traditions outside of the camp are less strict than inside.

Finally, in al-Sukhne camp, young women perceive that the camp is safe, that there is solidarity because people know each other and accept each other more than outside the camp evidenced by children playing outside till late at night. Community initiatives are not implemented despite discussions on social media. The perception is that people living outside are better off, in terms of infrastructure and hygiene (due to the reliance on cesspools in the camp).

Violence, Crime and Safety

The spread of drugs appears to be a problem in Baqaa, Wehdat, Al-Sukhne and Souf camp to varying degrees. The spread of drugs and more severe crimes are among the major challenges the young males in Baqaa camp face which impact their mobility and freedom of movement as their families fear for their safety. The young women mentioned experiences of thefts by men which were reported to the police, who responded but did not necessarily resolve the case which appears to be partially an issue of lack of gender sensitivity and a culture of placing a shared responsibility on women. There are perceptions that the rule of law is not enough as powerful drug dealers can get away with their crimes. In Wehdat camp, crimes appear to be among families, weapons are widespread and there is wide trading and use of drugs. Some locations within the camp are labeled “*Al-Batniyya*” due to the concentration of drug sale. The perception is that often the police cannot get to the drug dealers as they do not know the alleys and usually by the time the police gets there it is too late.

Political Participation

All camp dwellers who are Jordanian citizens can be members in political parties and can vote in national parliamentary and decentralization elections. Local participation is more restricted as there are no local municipalities and the Camp Services Committees which undertake the municipal role in the camps along with UNRWA, are appointed and not elected. The relationship between the CSC and the young residents may be determined by the level of activity of CSC or the youth. Stateless refugees, however, have no outlets for participation. Regarding interest in news and recent developments such as the deal of the century and the UNRWA funding reduction, there appears to be general awareness about recent events among the youth with varying levels of depth, interest, and strength of opinion.

The general sensation was negative and there were feelings of exclusion, disregard of the history of displacement and destitution, and a sense that illegitimate players are attempting to decide the future of Palestine, “*as if Palestine is the property to divide up among them as they wish.*” They also have varied desires regarding the future including wanting food on the table, a decent life and future, leaving the camp, escaping poverty and stigma, as well as the right of return. In general, there is little or no outlet for self-expression with restrictions in social media and in participation in protests. Stateless refugees were the most concerned as any new developments impact their lives immediately, especially with rumors about their possible relocation which generates feelings of insecurity and helplessness. There was a general concern in all the camps about the impact of reduced UNRWA services on access to education and health services as they cannot afford costs, and consequently, concerns about poverty, illiteracy and negative health outcomes.

The King Abdullah II Park Camp Needs

The King Abdullah Park Camp is one of four camps established following the Syrian crisis. It is therefore quite different from the above camps in terms of history, the type of services available and legal rights of residents. It resembles Syrian refugee camps more than it does the 13 Palestinian refugee camps. Residents are mostly Palestinian refugees from Yarmouk camp in Syria. There are also a few Syrians and Jordanian women with national ID numbers who were separated from their Palestinian husbands in Syria. Residents of Cybercity were moved to this camp.

Services: Both UNRWA and UNHCR are present in the camp and provide cash assistance and other services to both groups. UNRWA provides 83 JOD per person every three months. ACTED provides the water and sanitation services and hires the men of the camp on a rotational basis in cleaning jobs. UNHCR built the toilets and kitchens. UNICEF offers buses that takes the children to and from the Ramtha public school and there is one health care center under UNRWA. The camp dwellers shop at Sameh Mall (A Jordanian Convenience Store) and there is a local supermarket that does not meet all needs. They are allowed to leave for one week every 3 weeks, or every other week for those who have a work permit and a job. It is worth noting that the camp is surrounded by agricultural land. The issues that emerged in this camp include:

- The residents had **legal issues related to documentation**, which appear to have been corrected and addressed by the authorities.
- The camp residents, males and females, have **nothing to do with their time**, which could lead to depression and other problems. Psychosocial services used to be available through NHF but what exists now is referral of individual services to IMC outside the camp. Such services are needed especially for women as there may be cases of domestic violence.
- **Lack of jobs and opportunities** for employment is a problem and most dwellers are **reliant on aid for their livelihood**. Most residents are Palestinians from Syria and they are not entitled to a work permit like Syrian refugees or other Palestinians in Jordan. Services were previously more available such as a tailoring center and English language courses offered by NGOs but they closed down likely due to lack of funding. The women expressed interest in having such training programmes back especially those that bring income. Some men expressed their interest in vocational skills and training to learn something and make use of their time. Others preferred only support with income generating activities and employment and were not willing to learn a skill they did not learn before.
- Education for children is available through the Ramtha public school. There was an indication of the **low quality of the school** and the need for tutors to be able to pass Tawjihi. There was one volunteer in the camp who was tutoring children.
- Those who were asked expressed satisfaction with the health services through the health care center.

- **Children** play outside the dwelling units however have **no indoor activities**. There used to be entertainment programmes and festivals but not anymore. The women recommended sports, arts, cultural and educational activities for children.
- **Lack of sufficient sanitation services as kitchens and latrines are collective and separate from the housing units**. There was however a sense of safety due to the availability of security and as observed the camp's layout which did not have any hidden alleys.
- There are internet services in the camp and it appears people have access to phones.
- There are **variations among the camp dwellers** explained by timing of arrival: those who arrived later are poorer due to lack of funding. There are widows and divorced women who are heading households and who would need support.

Psychological Well-being

The following issues can be extracted from the above as impact of the socio-economic conditions on psychological well-being:

- **Emptiness** due to lack of productivity and lack of activities, which could be leading some to drug use and other problems such as sexual harassment by men. Emptiness in King Abdalla II Park Camp was highest as it is a closed camp with no potential to get a work permit
- **Dark outlook, hopelessness and frustration** with life in the camp and inability to use one's skills productively. The desire or dream to leave the camp one day was expressed several times.
- **Stigma and discrimination** as a camp dweller, which is more pronounced for stateless ex-Gazans.
- **Sense of insecurity about the future:** especially in Jerash and in the informal camp of al-Sukhne, there was uncertainty about whether the land will remain for the use of the dwellers
- **Sarcasm** about life's hardships and the hopelessness for change
- Psychological **implications of bullying** – such as sense of self-confidence or shame, impacting young children especially boys.

Recommendations for Initiatives

Any initiative should seek to build on existing initiatives to maximize use of resources while ensuring that the benefit reaches the largest number of people. Piloting is recommended to be preceded by information/mapping of the available type and level of skills, specialization and level of education, and interest among young people in the camp.

Recommendations include the following for further discussion, elaboration and selection:

- *Initiatives that generate income and creates jobs are a priority.* It is recommended to pilot initiatives that capitalize on the local economy and turn problems/needs into opportunities especially in isolated camps such as al-Sukhne and Jerash. *Cash for work approaches* through grants that utilize existing skills combined with quality certified training would help both on a temporary and permanent basis. Examples include improvement of homes beyond beautification with insulation for example and concrete roofs where these are lacking. It is recommended to use *collective approaches through cooperatives and collective businesses* with initiatives that bring together young men and women with similar or complimentary skills and help them work together to create medium size businesses as opposed to micro or small. By use of economies of scale, this could help in reducing costs. As such training on business/cooperative management would also be needed. Emphasis should be placed on product variety across initiatives, innovation, quality and marketing support including exploring potential supply chains for connecting services and products to activities/business outside the camp or even digitally. Examples include business incubators to support innovation in building material and techniques, IT businesses for young men and women, or for private tutoring or childcare services especially in larger camps where there is purchasing power. Other options are opening up regulated open markets for camps that have none which could be an issue to lobby for with the authorities. Lastly another approach for overcoming the lack of work experience problem could be by subsidizing employment of young men and women in establishments for a couple of years. Studying the potential of the cooperatives and mutual associations for *providing health insurance for members* is recommended.
- Investing in a sustainable environment by creating a *recycling industry* for solving the solid waste collection issue through a cooperative or collective business combined with environmental awareness activities on how to deal with solid waste and its potential benefits and risks. *Considering clean energy to save costs* such as solar panels to heat the houses.
- Reducing poverty by helping households *plant home gardens* for subsistence purposes especially in agricultural areas such as in Al-Sukhne and in the Park Camp. Considering roof gardens in crowded camps for the same purpose.
- Investing in *local safe childcare services* that could employ women while allowing others to work and supporting them to be sustainable businesses. This should involve women with relevant educational background (teaching, psychology, etc.) and provide further training and guidance.
- Addressing the mentioned psychological well-being issues by providing spaces for *psychosocial services* for men and women separately, creating venting spaces along with educational and cultural spaces by providing courses in art, music and other creative skills, mobile movie theater, etc. which could be combined with the above. Utilizing such spaces for awareness on the dangers of drug use, about the meaning of marriage and danger of early marriage for young girls and their parents and creating discussions and reflections about concepts of gender and masculinity. Providing safe spaces for children to play indoors in Park camp or outdoors when possible.
- Addressing legal barriers and obstacles by providing *legal preventive and response services* for support and protection in all the camps to deal with various issues facing men, women and children (boys and girls) related to civil, labour and criminal law and gender-based violence and support to advocacy efforts for granting ex-Gazans civil rights. Such services can be combined with other services and provided through safe spaces with maximum confidentiality.

Annexes

Annex I: Palestinian Camps in Jordan Basic Data

Camp Name and Area in Dunums at time of establishment	Formality	Year of Establishment	Location	Population as per UNRWA 2017	No. of Services/capita	Average area of Dwelling (m2)	Specificity (2011 data)
1948							
Madaba 586	Unofficial	1956	Madaba	5500 HH: 813 HH on aid: 37.5%-305 (200 NAF, 105 UNRWA)	1 school/1 375 1 nursery 1 preschool/2750 1 health care center/2750 (not UNRWA) 1 private clinic No police station	90 m2 Average family size 6.77	
Zarqa 182,589	Official	1949	Zarqa	18,549 HH: 3862 HH on aid: 11.5% - 446 (250 UNRWA, 196 NAF)	1 school/3092 (UNRWA ⁴⁴) 1 pre-school 1 Health care center/9,274 (UNRWA) 1 private clinic/9,274	100 Average family size: 4.8	
Irbid 234,322	Official	1950	Irbid	28,690 HH: 6650 HH on aid: 38% 2,542 (210 charities, 1,747 UNRWA, 585 NAF)	1 school/7,173 (UNRWA) No pre-school 1 Health care centers/5,738 (1 UNRWA) 1 private clinic/1,913	64 Average family size: 4.3	In Main City, Lowest Mean Income per Capita, less satisfaction with work opportunities and social services (North)
Hussein (445,241 Dunums)	Official	1952	Amman	29,560 HH: 5811 HH on aid: 18%-1,050 (400 UNRWA, 650 charities)	1 School per 4,927 (UNRWA) No pre-school 1 Private Clinic per 1739 Health clinics: 1 public + charity+ UNRWA, no. not available)	100 Average family size: 5.09	

44 UNRWA schools are up to Grade 10.

Wihdat 479,164	Official	1955	Amman	58,311 HH: 12,630 HH on aid: 4.7%- 605 (440 charities, 165 UNRWA)	1 school/3,644 (UNRWA) 1 nursery/29,156 1 pre-school/19,437 1 health care center/14,578 (2 UNRWA and 2 other) 1 private clinic /2,777	100 Average family size: 4.6	In main city among the most crowded and second highest in poverty
1967							
Sukhneh 68,745	Unofficial	1969	Zarqa	6,300 HH:680 HH on aid: 38.5%-262 (115 NAF; 72 UNRWA; 75 Charities)	1 school/3,150 No pre-school 1 health care center/6300 (UNRWA) No info on private clinics No police station	100 m2 Average family size: 9.26	Low crowdedness, highest unemployment for men, among lowest in access to sewage
Talbiyeh 133,433	Official	1968	Amman	7,286 HH: 1,313 HH on aid: 18.7% 246 (50 charities, 66 UNRWA, 130 NAF)	1 school/1457 (UNRWA, Public) 1 nursery 1 preschool/3643 1 health care center/2428 (UNRWA and o2 other) 1 private clinic /3643 One UNRWA school is fully rehabilitated for accessibility (ICIP PAE standards and guidelines)	46 Average family size: 5.5	Outside main city/ Highest inequality / environmental hazard Contrary to trend: women are less educated than men
Prince Hassan / Nasr 96,126	Unofficial	1967	Amman	10,000 HH: 1,190 HH on aid: 19.7% : 234 (152 charities, 82 UNRWA)	1 UNRWA School/2500 No pre-school 2 private clinics/5000 No UNRWA health centers No police station	95 m2 Average family size: 8.4	
Souf 536	Official	1967	Jarash	20,097 HH: 4,625 HH on aid: 23.7% -1,098 (300 charities, 330 UNRWA, 468 NAF)	1 school/3350 (2 public) 1 preschool/5,024 1 nursery/ 10,049 1 health care center/10,049 (1 UNRWA) 1 private clinic/10,049 Police point not station	NA Average family size 4.35	

Azmi Al-Mufti / Husn 758,199	Official	1968	Irbid	25,776 HH: 5939 HH on aid: 18.5% - 1,100 (150 charities, 420 UNRWA, 530 (NAF	school/4294 (including 1 (public pre-school/4294 1 health care center/12,883 1 ((1 UNRWA private clinic/3,681 1	100 Average family size 4.34	Highest unemployment for women, highest medical insurance, large army present
Jarash 531,402	Official	1968	Jarash	30,379 HH: 6593 HH on aid: 12.4% - 819 (109 NAF; 540 UNRWA, 170 chari- (ties	school / 6,076 (1 public 1 (school preschool/ 7,595 1 nursery/30,379 1 health care center/7,595 (1 1 (UNRWA private clinic/10,126 1	NA Average family size: 4.6	Hosts Ex-Gazan stateless refugees with curtailed rights, high poverty, infrastructure issues
Hitteen – Marka/ Schneller 894,632	Official	1968	Zarqa	54,876 HH: 12,053 HH on aid: 18.5% - 2,230 (874 charities, 586 UNRWA, 770 (NAF	school/7,839 1 pre-school/3,658 1 nursery/27,438 1 private clinic/7,939 1 health care center/10,975 1 ((2 UNRWA	m2 100 Average family size: 4.55	
Baq'a 1,485	Official	1968	Balqa	122,579 HH: 27,389 HH on aid: 13.20% 3614 (600 charities, 1214 UNRWA, 1800 (NAF	school/6,129 (16 UNRWA, 1 (4 public nursery/15,322 1 preschool/13,620 1 health care center/30,645 1 ((2 UNRWA Police point not station	100 Average family size: 4.48	Largest in size
King Abdulla Park	Post 2012	Hosting Syrian Refu- gees	Amman	PRS ⁴⁵ 509			

Table 1: Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jordan- Basic Data. Source: Department of Palestinian Affairs, available at: <http://dpa.gov.jo>



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