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INTERSECTING RISKS AND RIGHTS: CHILD PROTECTION AND LEGAL PROTECTION NEEDS IN JORDAN

Needs Assessment Report 2026

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Executive summary

The assessment examines child protection and legal protection concerns affecting vulnerable refugee and host community populations in Amman, Ma'an, Mafraq and Zarqa, drawing on household surveys, FGDs and statistics from current interventions. Findings indicate persistent and interlinked risks driven by economic hardship, limited access to civil documentation, psychosocial distress, and negative coping mechanisms. Children face heightened exposure to violence, exploitation, and barriers to education and essential services, particularly in households lacking legal awareness or valid documentation. Legal protection gaps further compound protection risks and restrict access to basic rights and services. The assessment underscores the need for integrated child protection and legal assistance interventions that strengthen prevention, case management, and community-based protection mechanisms, while reinforcing coordination with national systems and service providers.

Key Findings at a Glance (Infographic – 1)



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NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT | 2026

An evidence-based assessment of the intersecting child protection and legal protection challenges affecting vulnerable refugee and host community populations across four governorates in Jordan.



Year of Publication
2026



In Collaboration with
Terre des Hommes Italy
(TdH Italy)

WHERE WE WORK

The assessment covers 4 governorates in Jordan representing diverse urban and peri-urban contexts.

Mafraq
Amman
Zarqa
Ma'an



METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods approach was used to ensure robust and contextually grounded findings.



HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS

Quantitative data collected from households to understand socio-economic conditions, protection risks, and access to services.



FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs)

Qualitative insights gathered from community members, caregivers, youth, service providers, and key informants.



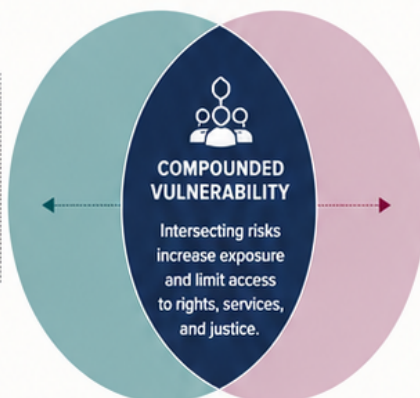
ANALYSIS OF FIELD DATA

Review of data generated through ongoing interventions and case management systems.

INTERSECTING RISKS: CHILD PROTECTION MEETS LEGAL PROTECTION

CHILD PROTECTION RISKS

- Violence (physical, emotional, sexual)
- Neglect and inadequate care
- Child labour and exploitation
- School dropout and barriers to education
- Psychosocial distress and mental health concerns



LEGAL PROTECTION BARRIERS

- Limited access to civil documentation
- Low legal awareness
- Administrative and procedural barriers
- Limited access to justice and legal aid services
- Discrimination and social exclusion

These intersecting risks disproportionately affect children in vulnerable households, particularly those lacking valid documentation or facing economic hardship.

KEY FINDINGS



Economic hardship is a primary driver of both child protection risks and legal vulnerabilities.



Limited access to civil documentation remains a major barrier to rights, services, and protection.



Psychosocial distress is widespread among children and caregivers, often leading to negative coping mechanisms.



Children face heightened risks of violence, exploitation, neglect, and barriers to education and essential services.



Legal protection gaps restrict access to justice and entitlements, deepening vulnerability and exclusion.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PROGRAMMING



INTEGRATED APPROACH

Strengthen integrated child protection and legal assistance programming that addresses intersecting risks and barriers.



PREVENTION & EARLY RESPONSE

Invest in prevention, early identification, and risk mitigation strategies at the community and household levels.



CASE MANAGEMENT

Enhance case management systems that are child-centered, rights-based, and accessible to all.



COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION

Strengthen community mechanisms and local networks to promote protection, inclusion, and referral.



COORDINATION & SYSTEMS

Reinforce coordination with national systems and service providers to improve access to services and justice.



ABOUT THIS REPORT

This needs assessment provides evidence to inform more coordinated, inclusive, and sustainable responses that place the rights and well-being of children and vulnerable populations at the center of humanitarian and development efforts in Jordan.

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
AGD	Age, Gender, and Diversity
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPJD	Family Protection and Juvenile Department
KII	Key Informant Interview
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
NFIs	Non-food items
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PSS	Psychosocial support
PWSN	Person with specific needs
SADD	Sex, Age, and Diversity Disaggregation
SDR	Secondary Data Review
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
S-PSS	Structured psychosocial support

Introduction

Jordan's child protection environment is shaped by the intersection of protracted displacement, deepening socioeconomic vulnerability, and uneven access to legal and social protection mechanisms. Fourteen years after the onset of the Syrian crisis, refugee and vulnerable host community households continue to face growing economic pressures, declining coping capacities, and increasing barriers to accessing services and rights. Within this context, children are exposed to overlapping protection risks that include violence, child labour, school dropout, psychosocial distress, family separation, discrimination, and legal insecurity. These risks are not experienced in isolation, but are closely linked to poverty, displacement-related precarity, limited service accessibility, weak social protection coverage, and gaps between formal legal protections and their implementation in practice.

This assessment examines child protection and legal protection needs among vulnerable refugee and host community populations in Amman, Mafrq, Ma'an, and Zarqa Governorates. Conducted by Terre des Hommes Italia (TDH IT) and the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD), the assessment explores the prevalence, drivers, and interconnected nature of protection risks affecting children and caregivers, with particular attention to violence, psychosocial well-being, education-related vulnerabilities, legal documentation, and access to protection and support services. The assessment draws on quantitative and qualitative data, operational evidence, and secondary sources to provide localized and evidence-based analysis of protection risks, service gaps, and barriers affecting vulnerable households.

Child protection in Jordan is governed by an evolving legal and institutional framework that combines national legislation, sectoral policies, and international commitments. At the national level, the protection of children is grounded in the Constitution and further elaborated through laws and procedures related to child rights, juvenile justice, child labour, civil documentation, family relations, and protection from violence. Over the past years, Jordan has undertaken important legislative and institutional efforts to strengthen child rights protections and align national systems with broader child protection principles, including the best interests of the child, protection from abuse and exploitation, and access to education, health care, and legal identity. These protections are operationalized through a multi-actor child protection system involving several state institutions with distinct but interconnected mandates. Key actors include the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), which plays a central role in child protection case management and social protection responses; the Family Protection and Juvenile Department (FPJD), responsible for addressing violence, abuse, and family-related protection concerns; the juvenile justice system and relevant judicial bodies, which oversee children in conflict with the law and children in need of legal safeguards; and the Civil Status and Passports Department, which is central to birth registration and legal identity documentation. In practice, the system also relies on coordination with education and health authorities, UN agencies, municipalities, and civil society organizations to ensure referral, response, and follow-up.

Within this broader framework, national child protection strategies and operational mechanisms have increasingly emphasized prevention, case management, inter-agency coordination, and the strengthening of referral pathways. Particular attention has been directed toward addressing violence against children, child labour, family separation, psychosocial distress, and barriers to legal identity and service access. However, while Jordan possesses a relatively developed legal and institutional protection framework, the findings of this assessment indicate that significant gaps persist between normative protections and their effective realization in practice.

These gaps are not solely legal in nature, but also administrative, economic, institutional, and informational. Families may formally be entitled to protection and services, yet continue to face barriers linked to documentation, legal awareness, transportation costs, limited service literacy, weak accessibility, inconsistent implementation, and delayed referral or follow-up mechanisms. As a result, access to protection is often fragmented and uneven, particularly for refugee households, children with disabilities, female-headed households, adolescents, and families living in underserved urban, peri-urban, and hard-to-reach areas.

The assessment findings suggest that child protection vulnerabilities in Jordan are increasingly shaped not only by direct exposure to violence or deprivation, but by the interaction between economic hardship, psychosocial strain, legal insecurity, and unequal access to institutional protection mechanisms. In this sense, legal documentation functions not merely as an administrative requirement, but as a gateway to education, health care, social protection, and access to justice. Similarly, risks such as child labour, school dropout, and early marriage emerge not only as individual protection concerns, but also as negative coping strategies linked to poverty, social exclusion, and weak access to support systems. This report therefore approaches child protection and legal protection as deeply interconnected dimensions of vulnerability. It argues that strengthening protection outcomes requires not only the existence of laws, policies, and services, but also more accessible, coordinated, and child-centered implementation systems capable of translating formal rights into effective protection in practice.

Context

Fourteen years after the onset of the Syrian crisis, Jordan continues to face a protracted humanitarian and protection context shaped by large-scale displacement, economic fragility, and increasing pressure on public services and social protection systems. Jordan remains one of the world's largest refugee-hosting countries per capita, hosting hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees alongside refugees from Palestine, Iraq, Yemen, and Sudan. While the Government of Jordan and the international community have sustained significant humanitarian and development efforts over the past decade, structural vulnerabilities affecting both refugee and host community populations have deepened in recent years due to economic decline, rising living costs, reduced livelihood opportunities, and shrinking humanitarian assistance.

These pressures have significantly weakened household coping capacities and intensified socioeconomic insecurity, particularly among vulnerable refugee households and low-income Jordanians living in underserved urban, peri-urban, and hard-to-reach areas. The deterioration of economic conditions has increasingly translated into protection concerns affecting children and caregivers, including child labour, school dropout, early marriage, psychosocial distress, family violence, and reduced access to essential services. In this context, child protection risks are closely linked to broader patterns of poverty, social exclusion, debt, and limited access to sustainable livelihoods.

Throughout 2024 and 2025, worsening economic conditions have continued to push vulnerable households toward negative coping strategies in order to meet basic needs. According to recent socio-economic assessments, refugee households increasingly rely on stress, crisis, and emergency coping mechanisms, including spending savings, accumulating debt, reducing expenditures on education and health, withdrawing children from school, and engaging children in labour or other forms of harmful work. These dynamics reflect not only declining household resilience, but also the gradual erosion of protective family and community environments.¹ Economic vulnerability therefore functions not only as a livelihoods concern, but as a central driver of child protection risks.

¹ *Socio-Economic Update on Refugees in Jordan – Q4 2024, UNHCR*

The deterioration of household economic conditions has had particularly severe implications for children. Child labour has increased significantly in recent years, particularly among Syrian refugee households and families residing in marginalized urban and rural areas. Children are increasingly engaged in informal and hazardous work sectors, including agriculture, street-based labour, small-scale commerce, and daily wage labour, often at the expense of education, safety, and psychosocial well-being. Existing evidence indicates that working children face heightened exposure to exploitation, abuse, school absenteeism, and long-term developmental harm.² At the same time, early marriage, child begging, and family separation continue to emerge as negative coping strategies linked to economic hardship, social insecurity, and limited access to support mechanisms.

These protection concerns are further compounded by unequal access to education, health care, psychosocial support, and specialized services. While Jordan has made important progress in expanding access to public services for refugee and vulnerable populations, significant disparities persist across geographic locations and social groups. Refugee children, children with disabilities, adolescents, and children living in hard-to-reach areas continue to face barriers related to transportation costs, overcrowded services, discrimination, limited accessibility, and insufficient specialized support. In practice, these barriers contribute to school absenteeism, reduced service utilization, social isolation, and heightened psychosocial distress, particularly among children already exposed to displacement-related trauma and economic insecurity.³

The protection environment is also shaped by important legal and administrative challenges that directly affect children's access to rights and services. Despite the existence of legal frameworks governing birth registration, civil documentation, child protection, and access to education and health care, many vulnerable families continue to face obstacles related to legal identity, documentation renewal, residency status, and administrative procedures. These barriers disproportionately affect refugee households, children born in irregular legal circumstances, children of mixed nationality families, and highly marginalized populations. Lack of documentation or inaccuracies in official records can significantly restrict access to education, health care, humanitarian assistance, legal remedies, and social protection mechanisms, increasing the risk of exclusion and exploitation.

At the institutional level, Jordan possesses a relatively developed child protection and legal protection framework supported by national institutions, sectoral coordination mechanisms, and collaboration with international and civil society actors. National child protection strategies have increasingly emphasized prevention, case management, referral systems, psychosocial support, and inter-agency coordination. However, important implementation gaps persist due to resource constraints, uneven service coverage, administrative complexity, limited institutional capacity, and varying levels of awareness among affected populations. As a result, the practical realization of rights and protections often remains inconsistent across locations and population groups. These challenges are particularly pronounced for refugee children, children with disabilities, female-headed households, and adolescents, who experience overlapping and compounded vulnerabilities. Exposure to violence, discrimination, economic insecurity, psychosocial distress, and limited access to services often reinforce one another, creating cycles of exclusion that weaken household resilience and protective environments over time. In many cases, families are not only constrained by lack of resources, but also by limited awareness of available services, weak referral pathways, fear of stigma or retaliation, and difficulties navigating complex institutional and legal systems.⁴

² *Vulnerability Assessment Framework: Socio-Economic Survey on Refugees in Host Communities 2024*, UNHCR

³ *Jordan Multi-year Strategy 2023–2025*, UNHCR

⁴ *Legal Guide to Child's Rights in Jordan, 2024*, NRC

Against this backdrop, child protection and legal protection cannot be understood as separate or isolated sectors. Rather, the findings of this assessment suggest that vulnerabilities affecting children in Jordan are produced through the interaction between socioeconomic pressure, legal insecurity, service fragmentation, psychosocial strain, and uneven implementation of existing protection mechanisms. Understanding these interconnected dynamics is essential for designing integrated and sustainable responses capable of addressing both immediate protection risks and the broader structural conditions that undermine children's safety, well-being, and access to rights.

Methodology

Objectives

This needs assessment aims to identify and analyse key child protection and legal protection needs affecting vulnerable refugee and host community populations in selected areas of Jordan. It examines the prevalence and drivers of protection risks and barriers to legal services and civil documentation. Findings will inform evidence-based programme design, prioritization, and coordination.

Data collection methods and analysis

The need assessment has been conducted through a mixed approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The quantitative component saw the administration of a structured survey to 237 households with at least one child aged 0-17, randomly selected from TDH-IT and ARDD databases, with the objective of collecting data on specific child protection risks, psychosocial well-being, parenting practices, and legal protection. This tool allowed to collect primary measurable data, useful to assess trends and needs. Household surveys have been collected in Zarqa (34%), Ma'an (20%), Mafraq (29%), and Amman (17%).

The qualitative component included five FGDs with a total of 59 caregivers and community members (69% refugees and 31% Jordanians) to identify specific child and legal protection needs in the communities. Data have been triangulated with secondary data from existing reports and analysis and confronted with the experiences of ongoing similar projects in the country.

Data have been collected between December 2025 and February 2026. To ensure data quality and reliability, the staff in charge of data collection was trained on how to use the questionnaire and interact with beneficiaries, paying particular attention to the principles of confidentiality, impartiality, and protection of sensitive data. Gender balance was also ensured among the staff conducting the assessment. To ensure ethical standards and accountability, all participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any time. Verbal informed consent was obtained prior to each FGD. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly respected. The collected data were consolidated and analysed thematically by the MEAL team to inform the findings and recommendations presented in this report.

Limitations

The findings of this needs assessment should be interpreted in light of few limitations. Reliance on self-reported information may have introduced recall or social desirability bias, particularly for sensitive child protection and legal issues. Some findings are based on self-reported information and may therefore reflect personal perceptions and subjective assessments of needs and risks, rather than objectively verifiable conditions. Finally, evolving socio-economic and policy conditions in Jordan may affect the relevance of findings over time.

Findings of the Need Assessment

Household demographics and composition

The household interviews reached 237 vulnerable households across Zarqa (34%), Ma'an (20%), Mafraq (29%), and Amman (17%). The sample primarily comprised refugee households (70%), predominantly Syrian, alongside Jordanian vulnerable host-community households (30%), reflecting the assessment's focus on both refugee and host-community vulnerability.

Mothers were most frequently identified as the primary caregiver for children (55.7%), followed by fathers (42.2%). A small proportion of respondents reported that caregiving responsibilities were assumed by relatives (1.7%) or grandparents (0.4%). The majority of households (80.6%) reported the presence of both parents; however, 19.4% indicated that one or both parents were absent. Among these households, the most commonly cited reasons for parental absence were divorce or separation (47.8%), father's death (26.1%), mother's death (13.1%), and cases where the father had travelled or was otherwise absent (13%). Households in which women assume the dual role of primary caregiver and breadwinner face heightened socioeconomic vulnerability, including limited access to formal employment, lower wages, and increased caregiving burdens, all of which negatively affect household resilience and children's well-being.

Economic situation and priority needs

The findings indicate that economic vulnerability constitutes one of the primary structural drivers of child protection risks among both refugee and vulnerable host community households. Across the assessed locations, deteriorating economic conditions were consistently linked to reduced household resilience, increased psychosocial stress, and growing reliance on negative coping strategies affecting children's well-being, education, and protection outcomes.

The vast majority of surveyed households (89.4%) reported experiencing significant financial hardship. Among them, 41.4% described their economic situation as poor, 30.8% as very poor, and 17.3% as precarious, while only 10.6% reported having a relatively stable economic situation. Although both refugee and Jordanian households reported high levels of economic vulnerability, the findings reveal deeper levels of extreme deprivation among refugee households, which were disproportionately represented within the "very poor" category. This suggests that while economic hardship is increasingly widespread across communities, displacement-related vulnerabilities continue to intensify financial insecurity and reduce coping capacities among refugee families.

The geographical distribution of economic vulnerability further highlights important territorial disparities. Zarqa and Mafraq recorded the highest proportions of households reporting poor economic conditions, while Amman showed the highest concentration of households classified as very poor. These findings suggest that vulnerability is not limited to traditionally underserved areas, but is also increasingly affecting urban households facing rising living costs, insecure employment, and limited access to affordable services and housing.

Figure 1: Economic situation of the household by nationality

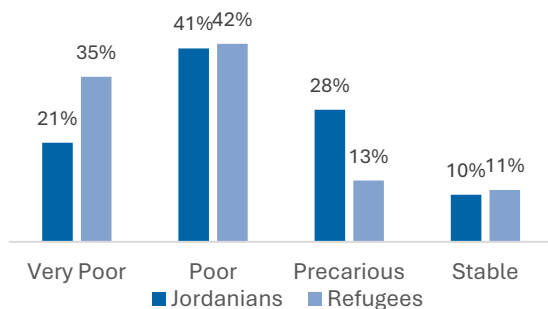
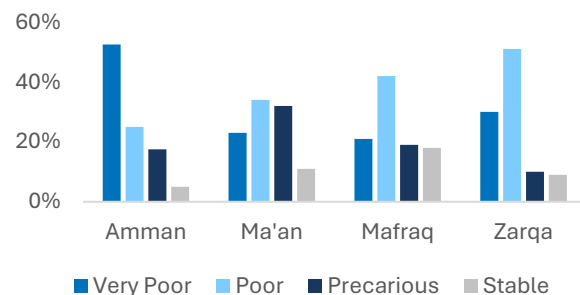


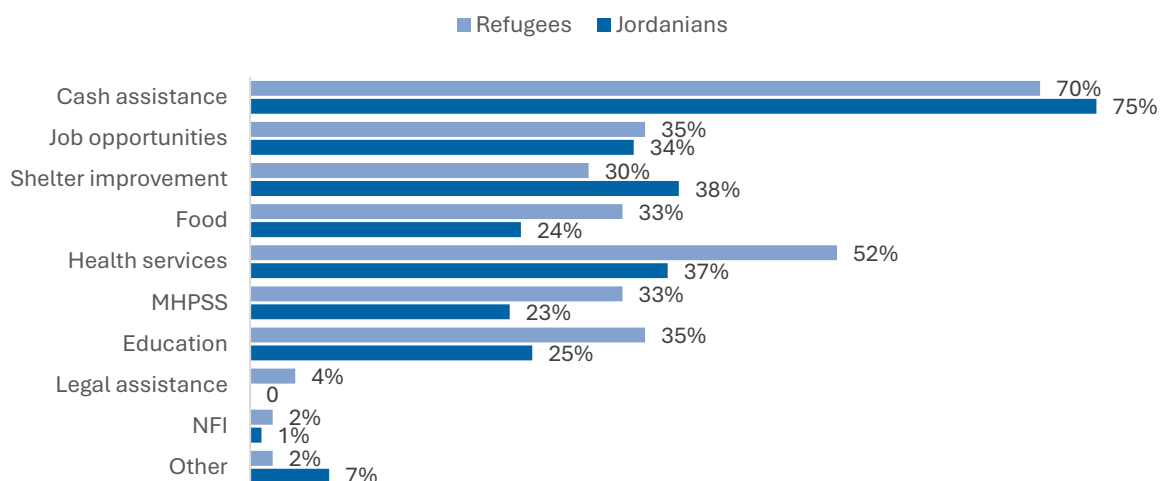
Figure 2: Economic situation of the household by Governorate



Importantly, the findings demonstrate that economic vulnerability extends beyond income deprivation and directly shapes household protection environments. Financial insecurity was repeatedly associated with increased exposure to child labour, school dropout, psychosocial distress, family tensions, and reduced access to education, health care, and specialized support services. In this context, economic hardship functions not only as a livelihoods concern, but as a multidimensional protection issue affecting children's safety, development, and access to rights.

Household priority needs further reflect the centrality of economic insecurity in shaping protection risks and service access. Cash assistance emerged as the most frequently reported priority need among both refugee and Jordanian households, reported by 70% of refugees and 75% of Jordanians. The prominence of cash assistance indicates that many households are struggling to meet basic needs and increasingly rely on flexible forms of support to manage debt, rent, food costs, transportation, health expenditures, and other essential expenses. Similarly, the high prioritization of livelihood opportunities among both groups reflects growing pressure on households to secure sustainable income sources amid declining economic conditions and limited formal employment opportunities. At the same time, the findings reveal important differences in the nature of vulnerabilities affecting refugee and host community populations. Refugee households reported significantly higher needs related to health services, psychosocial support, education, and food assistance, reflecting the cumulative effects of displacement, legal insecurity, and reduced access to stable livelihoods and social protection mechanisms. In contrast, Jordanian households more frequently prioritized shelter-related needs, suggesting increasing housing-related pressures among low-income host communities. Legal assistance was identified almost exclusively by refugee households, highlighting the particular importance of documentation, residency, and legal protection challenges within displacement contexts.

Figure 3: Top Priority Household Needs (Select up to Three)



Economic vulnerability in Jordan is increasingly producing interconnected forms of protection risk that cannot be addressed through isolated sectoral responses. The interaction between poverty, debt, legal insecurity, psychosocial strain, and limited access to services contributes to the gradual erosion of protective household and community environments. As economic pressures intensify, families are increasingly compelled to adopt coping mechanisms that negatively affect children's well-being, education, and long-term development. These dynamics underscore the need for integrated responses that combine economic support with child protection, legal assistance, psychosocial support, and access to essential services.

Child protection risks and child well-being

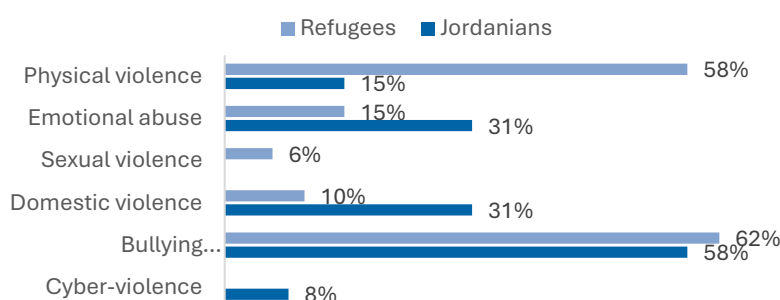
The findings indicate a significant deterioration of protective environments affecting children across both refugee and vulnerable host community households. Exposure to violence, material deprivation, child labour, psychosocial strain, disability-related exclusion, and family instability emerged as interconnected and mutually reinforcing dimensions of vulnerability rather than isolated protection concerns. Across assessed locations, children's well-being was found to be closely shaped by the interaction between economic hardship, displacement-related insecurity, weakened household coping capacities, and unequal access to protection and support systems.

Overall, 38.4% of households reported that at least one child had experienced or witnessed violence during the previous three to six months. The most commonly reported forms of violence included bullying in schools or community settings (58.2%) and physical violence (51.6%), followed by emotional violence (17.6%), domestic violence (13.2%), sexual violence (5.5%), and online violence or cyberbullying (1.1%). These findings suggest that exposure to violence is not an isolated phenomenon, but reflects broader weakening of protective environments within households, schools, and communities.

The nature and patterns of violence also reveal important inequalities in children's experiences of vulnerability. Refugee children were reported to face heightened exposure to bullying, harassment, and physical violence within schools and public spaces, often linked to discrimination, social exclusion, overcrowded living conditions, and perceived socioeconomic vulnerability. Respondents reported that Syrian children are frequently targeted because of their refugee status, accent, or assumptions regarding their right to remain in Jordan, particularly following political developments related to Syria. These experiences contribute to heightened feelings of insecurity, marginalization, and prolonged psychosocial distress among refugee children.

At the same time, higher reporting of emotional and domestic violence among Jordanian households may reflect greater awareness of non-physical forms of abuse or greater willingness to disclose family-related violence. Sexual violence is likely to remain significantly underreported across all groups due to stigma, fear of retaliation, and limited safe disclosure mechanisms. Taken together, these findings indicate that violence against children remains both widespread and multidimensional, while existing protective and reporting mechanisms continue to face important social and institutional limitations.

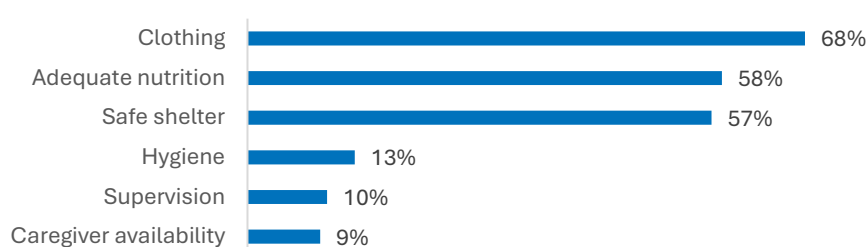
Figure 4: Types of violence against children



The findings further demonstrate that material deprivation continues to undermine children's well-being and increase exposure to protection risks. Significant proportions of households reported that children lacked adequate clothing (68%), nutrition (58%), and safe shelter (57%), while smaller but still concerning percentages identified gaps related to hygiene, supervision, and caregiver availability. These forms of deprivation affect children not only materially, but also socially and psychologically, contributing to exclusion, reduced school participation, restricted mobility, and increased vulnerability to exploitation and harmful coping strategies.

Inadequate living conditions were found to disproportionately affect children already facing structural vulnerabilities, particularly girls, children with disabilities, and children living in overcrowded or underserved areas. Lack of safe shelter, appropriate supervision, and access to basic necessities increases exposure to harassment, neglect, and psychosocial distress, while simultaneously weakening families' ability to provide stable and protective environments. Material deprivation therefore functions not simply as an indicator of poverty, but as a broader protection concern with direct implications for children's safety, dignity, and long-term development.

Figure 5: Children lacking adequate basic needs



Child labour emerged as one of the clearest manifestations of the erosion of household coping capacities under economic pressure. Overall, 13.9% of surveyed households reported that at least one child was engaged in labour, with major disparities between refugee and Jordanian households (19% and 3% respectively). Children were reported to work primarily in daily labour, agriculture, small-scale commerce, coffee shops, and other informal or low-paid sectors, often under unsafe or exploitative conditions. Many children were reported to work long hours, while 42.4% of working children were engaged in harmful or hazardous labour. The findings indicate that child labour is functioning primarily as a household survival strategy rather than an isolated economic activity. Economic hardship, debt, unemployment, and declining household income are increasingly pushing families to rely on children's labour to contribute to household survival. In this context, child labour reflects the intersection between economic vulnerability and weakened protection systems, where immediate financial pressures override long-term developmental and educational considerations.

The consequences for children are severe. In nearly 88% of reported cases, caregivers indicated that child labour negatively affected school attendance and educational outcomes. Children engaged in labour were also reported to face increased exposure to physical risks, exploitation, emotional distress, and social exclusion. Child labour was particularly prevalent among Syrian children living in marginalized urban areas and informal settlements in governorates such as Mafraq, Zarqa, and Ma'an, where access to sustainable livelihoods and protective services remains limited. While adolescent boys were most frequently affected, the findings also identified cases involving younger children, suggesting increasingly early entry into labour as a coping mechanism.

Although less frequently reported, early and forced marriage remains a significant protection concern due to its severe and long-term consequences for girls' safety, education, psychosocial well-being, and autonomy. A small but highly concerning proportion of households reported that a child was currently married or at risk of early marriage. The findings suggest that early marriage continues to function as a negative coping strategy linked to economic insecurity, social pressure, and attempts to reduce perceived protection risks or household burdens. Girls with disabilities were identified as facing particular vulnerability due to compounded discrimination, dependency, and reduced access to support mechanisms.

The findings also reveal significant levels of disability-related vulnerability among children. More than one-third of surveyed households reported having at least one child with a disability or chronic condition, including neurodevelopmental disorders, sensory impairments, chronic illnesses, intellectual disabilities, and physical disabilities. Caregivers consistently identified major gaps in access to specialized medical care, rehabilitation, psychosocial support, inclusive education, and long-term follow-up services. Children with disabilities experience multiple and overlapping forms of exclusion that extend beyond health-related concerns. Limited accessibility, insufficient specialized services, discrimination, and weak inclusion within schools and communities contribute to social isolation and increased dependence on caregivers, while placing additional economic and emotional burdens on households already facing financial hardship. In many cases, caregivers reported being unable to secure consistent treatment, transportation, or educational support due to cost and service limitations, particularly outside major urban centres. Disability-related vulnerability therefore emerges as both a protection concern and a reflection of broader structural inequalities affecting access to services and inclusion. During FGDs, caregivers also report bullying and discrimination, in particular at school – where they identify limited teacher capacity to provide inclusive education.

These dynamics intersect with broader economic and social pressures affecting household stability, including unemployment, displacement, psychosocial stress, and weakened family support systems. Family separation can significantly increase children's exposure to emotional distress, neglect, economic insecurity, and reduced supervision, while also increasing caregiving burdens on women and extended family members. Across locations, participants in FGDs consistently described child vulnerability as cumulative rather than isolated. Caregivers rarely understood child protection concerns as individual incidents; instead, they emphasized how economic hardship, family stress, social exclusion, service gaps, and legal insecurity reinforce one another and progressively weaken protective environments for children.

Violence, deprivation, child labour, disability-related exclusion, psychosocial strain, and family instability reinforce one another within contexts of economic hardship and unequal access to services and protection mechanisms. The evidence indicates that vulnerabilities affecting children cannot be adequately understood or addressed through isolated sectoral interventions, but require integrated approaches that simultaneously address economic pressures, legal and institutional barriers, psychosocial needs, and access to inclusive and protective services.

Education and protection linkages

Access to education remains deeply interconnected with broader child protection outcomes and functions as a critical indicator of household stability, social inclusion, and access to protective environments. While schools can serve as important spaces for learning, socialization, psychosocial support, and early identification of protection concerns, the assessment findings indicate that many children continue to face significant barriers to enrolment, attendance, participation, and safe learning. Educational exclusion in this context is not only an education-sector concern, but also a manifestation of broader economic, legal, social, and protection-related vulnerabilities affecting children and caregivers.

Although the majority of surveyed households reported that children were enrolled in school, important gaps persist. While 64.1% of households indicated that all children were enrolled in formal education, 24.5% reported that only some children were enrolled, and 11.4% stated that none of the children in the household were attending school. Attendance patterns reflected similar challenges: although regular attendance was reported by most households, a significant proportion of caregivers described irregular attendance or complete school absence. This data suggests access to education remains fragile for many vulnerable families and is increasingly affected by economic pressure and structural barriers.

Figure 6: Children enrollment in formal education

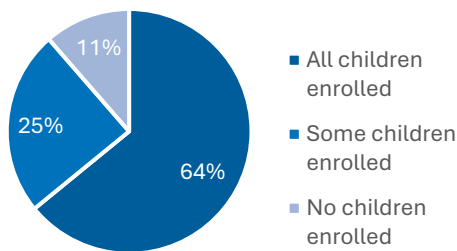


Figure 7: School attendance

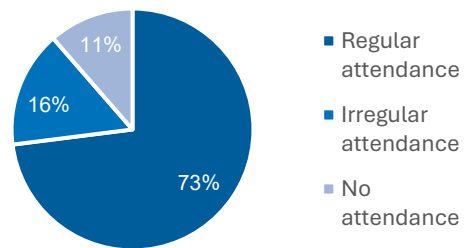
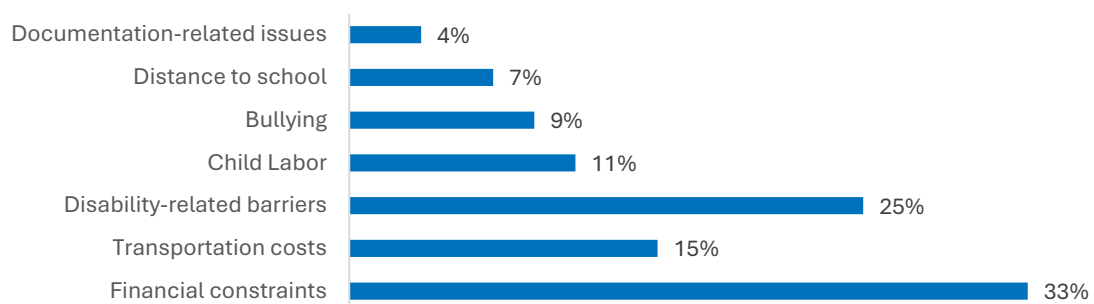


Figure 8: Reported reasons of non-enrollment



The findings indicate that barriers to education are cumulative and closely linked to households' broader protection conditions. Financial constraints emerged as the most commonly reported obstacle to school enrolment and attendance, followed by transportation costs, disability-related barriers, child labour, bullying, distance to schools, and documentation-related challenges. These barriers do not operate independently; rather, they reinforce one another and contribute to progressive exclusion from education, particularly among children already facing multiple forms of vulnerability.

Economic hardship was found to play a particularly central role in shaping educational access and continuity. Rising transportation costs, inability to afford school-related expenses, and pressure on children to contribute economically to household survival increasingly undermine school participation. The findings further suggest that child labour and educational exclusion are closely interconnected, with economic vulnerability simultaneously pushing children out of school and increasing their exposure to exploitative or hazardous work. In this sense, school dropout functions not only as an educational outcome, but also as part of a broader deterioration of protective environments affecting vulnerable households.

The assessment also highlights important inequalities in educational access and participation across population groups. Refugee children continue to face barriers linked to discrimination, legal insecurity, social stigma, and economic precarity, all of which negatively affect enrolment, attendance, and educational continuity. Girls were reported to face additional constraints related to mobility restrictions, caregiving responsibilities, safety concerns, and harmful gender norms, particularly where schools are distant or transportation is unaffordable. Children with disabilities experience especially severe barriers due to limited inclusive infrastructure, insufficient specialized support, lack of adapted learning environments, and weak institutional capacity to respond to diverse educational needs.

The data further suggest that educational vulnerability extends beyond physical access to schools and includes significant challenges related to learning, participation, and psychosocial well-being. Caregivers frequently reported concentration difficulties and literacy-related challenges among children, alongside behavioural difficulties and language barriers.

Figure 9: Types of Learning Difficulties Identified

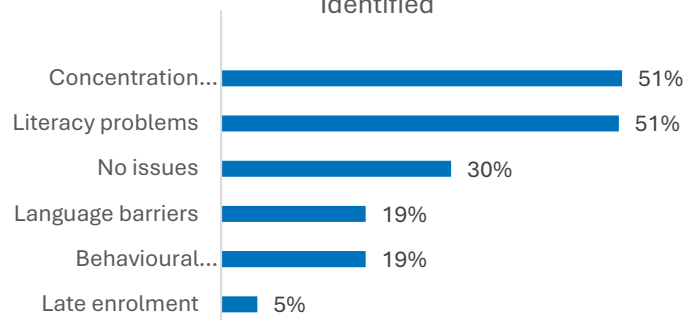
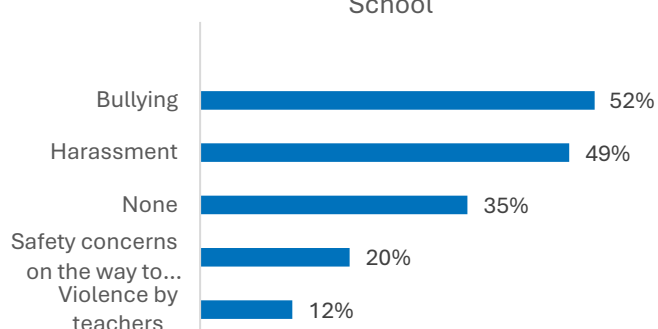


Figure 10: Protection Risks Experienced at School



Many children are attending school while simultaneously struggling to meaningfully participate in learning processes due to stress, interrupted education, displacement-related experiences, psychosocial distress, or inadequate educational support.

The prevalence of concentration difficulties, emotional instability, and behavioural concerns also points to the strong interconnection between education and psychosocial well-being. Exposure to violence, economic insecurity, displacement, and family stress significantly affect children's ability to focus, engage socially, and sustain educational progress. In many cases, schools are not fully equipped to respond to these overlapping educational and psychosocial needs, particularly in overcrowded or under-resourced settings.

Importantly, the findings also demonstrate that schools themselves are not always experienced as safe or protective environments. Bullying and harassment emerged as the most commonly reported school-based protection risks, alongside safety concerns during travel to school and incidents of violence perpetrated by teachers. Refugee children, children with disabilities, and socially marginalized children were reported to face heightened exposure to bullying, discrimination, and exclusion within educational settings. These dynamics not only undermine educational outcomes, but also contribute to social isolation, fear, reduced attendance, and psychosocial distress.

Schools occupy a dual role within the protection environment. While access to education can strengthen resilience, social inclusion, and protective support for children, schools may also reproduce broader social inequalities and protection risks when violence, discrimination, exclusion, and insufficient support mechanisms remain unaddressed. Educational exclusion and unsafe learning environments therefore function both as symptoms and drivers of broader protection vulnerability.

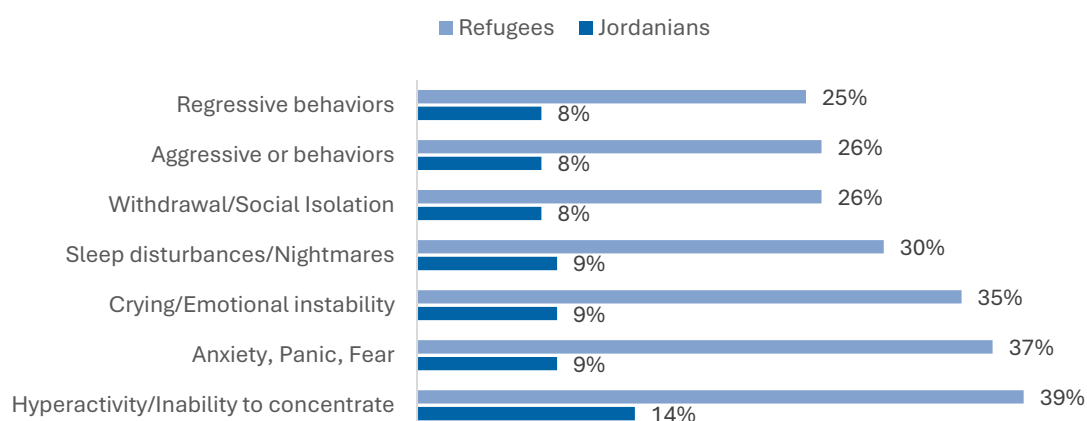
The assessment indicates that strengthening educational access alone is insufficient without simultaneously addressing the economic, psychosocial, legal, and protection-related barriers that undermine children's ability to safely and meaningfully participate in education. Effective responses require integrated approaches that combine educational support with child protection, psychosocial services, inclusive programming for children with disabilities, transportation support, anti-bullying interventions, and stronger school-based protection mechanisms capable of reinforcing schools as genuinely safe and inclusive environments for all children.

Psychosocial concerns and MHPSS needs

Psychosocial distress among children has emerged as a significant and cross-cutting protection concern affecting both refugee and vulnerable host community households. Caregiver reports suggest that emotional and behavioural difficulties are not isolated experiences but reflect prolonged exposure to economic hardship, displacement-related uncertainty, family stress, violence, disrupted routines, and reduced access to supportive environments. In this context, children's psychosocial well-being appears closely connected to broader household conditions and serves as an important indicator of cumulative vulnerability and weakening protective environments.

Across all reported indicators, refugee children experienced substantially higher levels of psychosocial and behavioural concerns compared to Jordanian children. The most frequently reported concerns included hyperactivity and difficulty concentrating, anxiety and fear, emotional instability and frequent crying, sleep disturbances, social withdrawal, aggressive behaviours, and regressive responses such as increased dependency or bedwetting. While these findings are based on caregiver perceptions rather than clinical assessment, the consistency of reported patterns points to significant psychosocial strain affecting children's daily functioning, relationships, learning, and overall well-being.

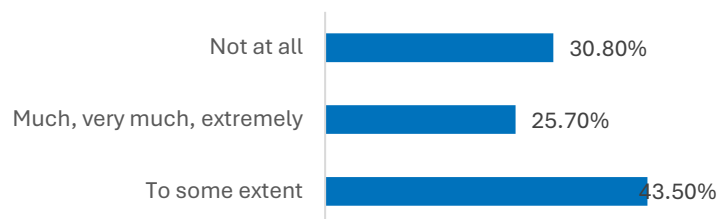
Figure 11: Child psychosocial and behavioral concerns



The distribution of reported concerns suggests that many children are experiencing persistent states of stress rather than isolated emotional reactions. Difficulties concentrating, emotional instability, withdrawal, and behavioural changes may reflect children's attempts to adapt to environments characterized by uncertainty, reduced predictability, financial pressure, and diminished opportunities for social participation and recovery. Rather than representing individual-level problems alone, these patterns indicate broader disruptions in children's ability to experience safety, routine, social connection, and developmental continuity.

The disparity between refugee and Jordanian children is particularly significant. Refugee children were consistently reported to experience higher levels of distress across all measured indicators, suggesting the cumulative effect of displacement-related experiences combined with current socioeconomic pressures. Exposure to prolonged uncertainty, changing legal and social conditions, discrimination, interrupted education, economic hardship, and reduced access to stable support systems appears to intensify emotional and behavioural vulnerability. Importantly, these findings do not suggest that refugee status itself produces psychosocial distress, but rather that prolonged exposure to overlapping stressors contributes to unequal psychosocial outcomes.

Figure 12: Caregivers' Perceptions of Children's Exposure to Stressors



(Findings are based on caregiver self-report; multiple indicators may be reported for the same child and are indicative of perceived distress and support needs rather than clinical diagnosis.)

Caregiver perceptions further reinforce this interpretation. More than two-thirds of households reported that children were affected by stressors linked to past experiences, displacement, or current living conditions, with a substantial proportion describing children as being affected to a considerable or severe extent. These findings suggest that psychosocial strain is not confined to specific incidents but is increasingly embedded within children's everyday environments and experiences.

At the same time, the findings highlight substantial unmet demand for psychosocial support services. More than three-quarters of caregivers reported that their child would benefit from psychosocial support. This high level of reported need suggests growing recognition among caregivers that emotional well-being and social functioning are central to children's development and protection. However, it may also reflect limitations in the availability, accessibility, continuity, or awareness of existing psychosocial support mechanisms.

Importantly, psychosocial needs cannot be understood separately from children's broader protection environment. Emotional distress appears closely connected to educational challenges, family stress, reduced social participation, exposure to violence, and economic insecurity. Concentration difficulties and behavioural concerns reported in this section align closely with barriers identified in the education findings, while anxiety, withdrawal, and emotional instability are likely reinforced by household stress and reduced access to protective social environments. These findings suggest that psychosocial support should not be treated as a stand-alone intervention, but integrated across child protection, education, family strengthening, and community-based support systems.

Psychosocial distress among children should be understood as both an outcome and an indicator of broader protection pressures. Emotional and behavioural concerns reflect the cumulative effects of economic hardship, displacement, educational disruption, family stress, and reduced access to supportive environments. Strengthening psychosocial well-being therefore requires integrated approaches that address not only emotional support needs, but also the wider structural conditions shaping children's everyday experiences and long-term protection outcomes.

Socialization and Community Safety

Children's opportunities to participate safely in social, recreational, and community life remain significantly constrained across assessed locations. Limited access to recreational activities, concerns related to safety in public spaces, and restricted mobility emerged as important dimensions of vulnerability affecting children's psychosocial well-being, social development, and overall protection environment. These constraints appear particularly acute among households already experiencing economic hardship, displacement-related pressures, and reduced access to services.

Overall, children's participation in recreational and social activities was limited. Only a small proportion of households reported that children participated regularly in recreational activities, while the majority indicated either occasional participation or complete absence of participation. Although recreational participation is often perceived as secondary to more immediate humanitarian concerns, the findings suggest that access to safe social and recreational environments constitutes an important protective factor that supports children's emotional well-being, social inclusion, and resilience.

The barriers identified by caregivers demonstrate that restricted participation is largely driven by structural rather than individual factors. Cost emerged as the most frequently reported barrier, followed by the lack of available or accessible activities and transportation-related constraints. Safety concerns also represented an important obstacle for some households. Together, these findings indicate that opportunities for social participation are increasingly shaped by households' economic circumstances and unequal access to infrastructure and services.

Importantly, reduced participation in recreational and community activities should not be understood merely as reduced leisure opportunities. For many vulnerable children, social and recreational spaces represent opportunities to build relationships, develop social skills, restore routine, and access supportive adult supervision outside the household. Limited participation may therefore contribute to greater social isolation, reduced psychosocial recovery, and weaker protective networks—particularly for children already exposed to violence, educational disruption, or displacement-related stress.

The findings further reveal important concerns regarding children's perceptions of safety across everyday environments. Approximately one-third of households reported that children felt unsafe in at least one environment. Reported concerns were concentrated overwhelmingly in public and transit spaces, particularly streets and routes to school, followed by playgrounds and, to a lesser extent, online environments.

These patterns suggest that children's exposure to risk extends beyond formal institutional settings and increasingly affects ordinary spaces of movement, interaction, and social participation. Perceptions of insecurity within streets and routes to school may reduce children's mobility, limit participation in educational and recreational activities, and contribute to heightened caregiver restrictions, particularly for girls and younger children.

The data also point to important geographic and social inequalities in access to safe environments. Syrian refugee children living in underserved areas—particularly in parts of Mafraq and Zarqa—were reported to face additional barriers related to limited infrastructure, poor lighting, inadequate public spaces, and lack of accessible recreational facilities. In these contexts, physical environments themselves become factors shaping children's exposure to risk and limiting opportunities for social engagement and recovery.

The interaction between insecurity and reduced participation appears especially significant for girls, adolescents, and children with disabilities. Safety concerns, mobility restrictions, social norms, and accessibility barriers often disproportionately limit these groups' ability to participate in community life and access supportive peer environments. As a result, reduced social participation may reinforce existing patterns of exclusion and further constrain children's psychosocial and developmental opportunities.

At the same time, the emergence of online environments as a reported area of concern highlights evolving dimensions of child protection within increasingly digital social contexts. Although reported less frequently than concerns related to physical spaces, perceptions of online insecurity point to growing awareness among caregivers regarding exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, and unmonitored digital engagement. This suggests the need to increasingly consider digital environments within broader child protection approaches.

Figure 13: Children's participation in recreational activities

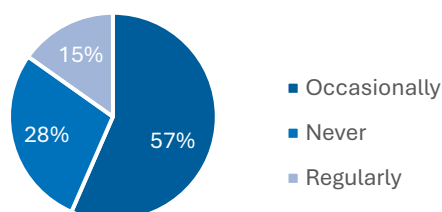
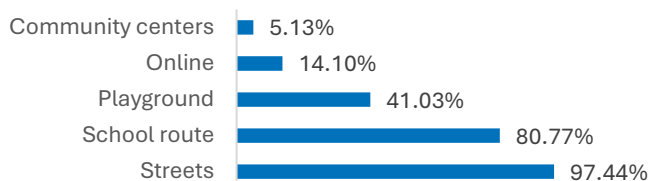


Figure 14: Locations where children feel unsafe



Legal status, documentation, and child protection needs

Legal status and access to documentation function as foundational determinants of children's access to rights, services, and protection outcomes. While legal protection is often approached as a specialized or procedural issue, the assessment demonstrates that documentation and legal status are closely intertwined with children's access to education, health care, social protection, family stability, and protection mechanisms. In this sense, legal insecurity should be understood not as an administrative concern alone, but as a structural dimension of vulnerability with direct implications for children's well-being and inclusion.

Overall, most households reported that children possessed some form of valid legal documentation. However, a meaningful proportion indicated that some or all children lacked essential documentation. Although this percentage appears limited in quantitative terms, the implications of documentation gaps are disproportionately significant. Access to legal identity often determines children's ability to enrol in school, obtain health care, access assistance, benefit from protection services, and navigate institutional systems.

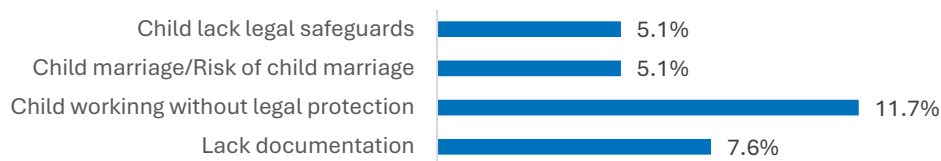
Where documentation gaps were identified, the most commonly reported issues related to birth certificates and family book or civil documentation, followed by refugee-related documentation and other legal records. These findings suggest that legal vulnerability is frequently concentrated around foundational identity and civil status documentation that enables access to multiple rights simultaneously.

Importantly, the findings indicate that legal exclusion often operates cumulatively. Documentation gaps rarely remain isolated legal problems; rather, they create cascading barriers that affect children's educational continuity, access to health services, eligibility for assistance, freedom of movement, and ability to benefit from formal protection mechanisms. Even where outright denial of services was not widespread, caregivers reported practical delays, administrative complications, and reduced access linked to documentation-related barriers.

The assessment also highlights important intersections between legal vulnerability and broader child protection concerns. A notable proportion of households reported situations involving children engaged in labour without legal protection or below legal working age, and among these households many also reported associated legal challenges. These findings suggest that child labour is not only a socioeconomic coping strategy but may also expose children to legal insecurity, reduced institutional oversight, and increased vulnerability to exploitation.

Awareness regarding legal safeguards related to early marriage was relatively high across the sample. However, a proportion of caregivers remained unaware of existing legal requirements and protective mechanisms, while some households reported children who were married, engaged, or at risk of early marriage without adequate legal safeguards. These findings suggest that legal protection depends not only on the existence of regulatory frameworks, but also on households' ability to understand, navigate, and effectively access those protections.

Figure 15: Children legal needs



Overall, reported legal support needs concentrated primarily around documentation and civil status matters, followed by issues affecting education access, custody and guardianship arrangements, birth registration, and violence or abuse-related concerns. These patterns reinforce the broader finding that legal needs affecting children extend far beyond judicial processes and frequently emerge at the intersection of family life, access to services, and child protection concerns.

During FGDs, respondents highlighted several priorities in relation to legal needs, including:

- Issuance and renewal of civil documentation including birth certificates, Ministry of Interior (MOI) cards, and refugee documentation;
- **Correction of errors in official documents**, such as discrepancies in names, dates of birth, or family composition;
- **Marriage registration**, particularly among Syrian refugee families;
- **Legal protection** and safe reporting mechanisms for cases of abuse and violence, with caregivers emphasizing the need for confidential, survivor-centered legal support;
- Support related to **residency status** and associated.

Operational evidence from ARDD's legal programming strongly reinforces these findings and illustrates how legal vulnerability translates into concrete protection needs. Patterns observed through service delivery confirm that documentation-related concerns remain among the most persistent barriers affecting children's access to rights and services. At the same time, substantial proportions of legal cases related to juvenile matters, family law, and protection concerns demonstrate that legal issues affecting children are rarely isolated and often intersect with psychosocial, educational, economic, and safeguarding needs.

ARDD service data further highlights the importance of integrated referral systems. High levels of referral to specialized child protection, health, family protection, and support services suggest that legal needs frequently require coordinated responses across multiple sectors rather than isolated legal assistance. This data reinforce the broader analytical conclusion emerging throughout the report: protection outcomes depend not only on legal entitlements, but also on households' practical ability to access and activate protection systems.

From the current study it emerges that legal vulnerability disproportionately affects refugee households and children living within contexts of displacement-related uncertainty and administrative complexity. Documentation barriers, residency concerns, and reduced familiarity with legal procedures may further increase vulnerability and contribute to unequal access to rights and services.

In addition to procedural and documentation-related challenges, the findings point to some gaps in legal awareness among caregivers, which further constrains access to rights and services. Limited understanding of legal rights, administrative procedures, and available legal remedies reduces families' ability to navigate complex systems, address documentation issues, and seek protection in cases of abuse or exploitation. This gap is particularly evident in relation to civil registration processes, reporting mechanisms for violence, and legal requirements related to marriage and child protection. As a result, legal barriers are not only institutional but also informational, reinforcing patterns of exclusion and underutilization of available legal and protection services.

The assessment demonstrates that legal documentation and legal support should be understood as integral components of child protection rather than parallel service areas. Strengthening protection outcomes therefore requires moving beyond procedural assistance toward more integrated approaches that combine legal aid, documentation support, case management, legal awareness, referral systems, and accessible pathways for children and caregivers to claim and exercise their rights in practice

Parenting confidence, caregiver stress, and demand for parenting support

Caregiver well-being and parenting capacity constitute critical but often underrecognized dimensions of child protection. Across assessed households, caregivers reported high levels of stress alongside moderate confidence in their ability to respond to children's emotional, behavioural, and developmental needs. These findings suggest that child protection outcomes are closely linked not only to children's direct exposure to risk, but also to the ability of caregivers to maintain stable, responsive, and protective family environments under conditions of prolonged socioeconomic and psychosocial pressure.

Overall, caregivers reported moderate confidence across key parenting domains. The largest proportion of respondents indicated feeling confident only to a limited extent in understanding children's emotional needs, communicating effectively during difficult moments, managing behavioural challenges, and supporting children following distressing experiences. While approximately half of respondents reported higher levels of confidence across these areas, a consistent minority reported no confidence at all, indicating the presence of households experiencing more severe caregiving strain and reduced coping capacity.

The findings suggest that parenting confidence should not be understood as an individual skill deficit, but rather as closely shaped by broader household and structural conditions. Caregivers facing persistent financial pressure, uncertainty regarding livelihoods, displacement-related challenges, limited social support, and reduced access to services may struggle to sustain consistent caregiving practices even where strong motivation and commitment exist. Lower confidence therefore appears to reflect accumulated stress and constrained household capacity rather than lack of parental concern or engagement.

Caregiver stress emerged as a particularly significant finding across the assessment. More than half of respondents reported feeling stressed frequently or continuously, while only a very small proportion reported rarely experiencing stress. These findings point to a sustained rather than episodic burden affecting caregivers' emotional resources, decision-making capacity, and ability to respond effectively to children's needs.

Importantly, caregiver stress appears closely connected to several of the protection concerns identified throughout the assessment. Economic hardship, child labour, educational challenges, family instability, psychosocial distress among children, and reduced access to services all contribute to increased pressure within households. These dynamics may reduce caregivers' ability to provide emotional support, maintain routines, supervise children effectively, or adopt positive coping and disciplinary strategies. In this sense, caregiver well-being should be understood as an integral component of protective environments rather than a separate household concern.

The assessment also identified important inequalities in caregiving experiences. Stress and lower parenting confidence were reported to be particularly pronounced among female-headed households, especially Syrian women, who frequently assume simultaneous responsibilities related to caregiving, income generation, household management, and navigating service systems. These intersecting pressures may substantially limit opportunities for rest, social support, and sustained engagement with children's developmental and emotional needs.

At the same time, the findings reveal significant demand for caregiver-focused support. An overwhelming majority of respondents expressed interest in participating in parenting-related sessions addressing topics such as positive parenting, communication, stress management, and child development. This high level of reported interest suggests that caregivers themselves recognize the importance of strengthening family relationships and parenting capacities and perceive unmet needs for accessible and supportive interventions.

Importantly, demand for parenting support should not be interpreted as demand for corrective parenting approaches. Rather, the findings suggest that caregivers are seeking practical tools, emotional support, and opportunities to strengthen their ability to respond to children under difficult circumstances. Parenting interventions therefore have the potential to function not only as awareness activities but also as preventive protection mechanisms capable of strengthening family resilience and reducing exposure to child protection risks.

Awareness and access to child support services

The effectiveness of child protection responses depends not only on the availability of services, but also on households' ability to identify, access, trust, and navigate existing support systems. Across assessed locations, awareness of child-focused services remained limited, while actual patterns of service utilization suggest important barriers related to information, accessibility, trust, and referral effectiveness. These findings point to broader challenges in transforming existing protection infrastructure into accessible and usable support mechanisms for vulnerable families.

Overall, awareness of available child support services was low. Less than one-third of households reported being aware of organizations providing support for children, while the majority indicated no awareness of available services. Importantly, even among households reporting awareness, responses often remained general and non-specific, with caregivers referring broadly to "organizations" or "associations" rather than identifying concrete providers, eligibility criteria, or available forms of assistance.

This pattern suggests that limited awareness should not be understood solely as lack of information, but as a broader challenge of service literacy. Families may possess general knowledge that support exists while lacking the practical understanding necessary to navigate systems, identify appropriate entry points, understand referral processes, or determine eligibility and available pathways for assistance. In practice, this gap significantly reduces the likelihood that households access support at an early stage before protection concerns escalate.

Patterns of service utilization further reinforce this interpretation. Although only a minority of households reported having previously sought support for a child, those who did overwhelmingly relied on non-governmental and community-based actors as their primary entry points. NGOs emerged as the most frequently reported source of support, followed by community centres, school counsellors, and UN-supported services, while government services were reported least frequently.

These findings suggest that service utilization is shaped not only by availability but also by perceptions of accessibility, trust, responsiveness, and familiarity. Community-based and non-governmental actors appear to play an important intermediary role in translating formal protection systems into accessible support for families. At the same time, the limited reported use of government services may reflect broader challenges related to institutional accessibility, awareness, administrative complexity, perceptions of service relevance, or limited local presence.

Schools also emerge as an important protection entry point within communities. Although educational institutions were discussed earlier primarily as learning environments, the findings suggest that school counsellors and school-based actors increasingly function as informal referral and support mechanisms for children and caregivers. This reinforces the importance of strengthening school–protection linkages and ensuring that educational environments are adequately connected to child protection systems.

Importantly, the data indicate that barriers to support extend beyond awareness alone. Households appear to face a combination of practical and relational obstacles that influence help-seeking behaviour, including transportation costs, competing livelihood priorities, uncertainty regarding available services, concerns related to confidentiality, and limited confidence that services will respond effectively to their needs. For households already experiencing economic hardship and psychosocial strain, navigating fragmented systems may represent an additional burden that discourages engagement.

These challenges appear particularly significant for refugee households, children with disabilities, female-headed households, and families living in underserved areas, where physical distance from services, limited accessibility, and more complex administrative requirements may further restrict access. In such contexts, service availability alone does not guarantee protection outcomes if pathways to access remain difficult to navigate.

One of the central protection challenges lies not only in expanding services, but in strengthening the relationship between households and protection systems. Improving child protection outcomes therefore requires moving beyond service provision toward approaches that strengthen service literacy, simplify referral pathways, reinforce community outreach, improve accessibility, and increase trust and continuity across institutions. More integrated and user-centred protection systems may ultimately be as important as increasing service availability itself in ensuring that vulnerable children and families receive timely and effective support.

Recommendations

Based on findings from the household survey and FGDs, the assessment underscores the need for integrated, child-centered and family-focused interventions that simultaneously address immediate protection risks and the structural drivers of vulnerability, including poverty, legal insecurity, psychosocial distress, and social exclusion. The following recommendations are proposed:

Strengthen Child Protection and Case Management Services: Scale up comprehensive child protection and case management interventions for children exposed to violence, child labour, school dropout, neglect, and psychosocial distress. Services should prioritize refugee children, children with disabilities, and adolescents, who face heightened and overlapping risks. Interventions should include early identification, individualized case planning, referral and follow-up, and close coordination with education, health, MHPSS, and legal actors to ensure continuity of care and timely responses.

Address Child Labour Through Prevention and Response: Implement child labour prevention and response interventions in the highest-prevalence governorates, combining family economic support, legal support, case management and community awareness. Interventions must address both the economic drivers and the structural conditions enabling child labour, and should be linked to remedial education and reintegration support to enable working children to return to school.

Scale Up Psychosocial Support and Parenting Interventions: Expand access to age-appropriate psychosocial support for children, adolescents, and caregivers, combining structured child-focused PSS with caregiver and family-based interventions. Group-based sessions should be complemented by individual psychosocial support for children presenting higher levels of distress, with clear referral pathways to specialized mental health services where available. Positive parenting and family strengthening programs should be scaled up to address caregiver stress, improve parenting practices, promote non-violent discipline, and strengthen family resilience, particularly in households facing prolonged economic and psychosocial pressure.

Strengthen Legal Protection and Documentation Support: Enhance access to child-friendly legal aid and documentation support, with a focus on birth registration, civil documentation, education-related paperwork, and correction of documentation errors. Legal services should be closely integrated with child protection and GBV case management to support safe, confidential reporting of abuse and exploitation. Strengthened coordination with relevant authorities and service providers is essential to ensure timely, protective, and rights-based responses.

Address Barriers to Service Access and Service Literacy: Increase community awareness and service literacy regarding available child protection, MHPSS, and legal services, including clear and user-friendly referral pathways. Interventions should aim to reduce stigma associated with seeking protection support, strengthen trust in service providers, and address practical barriers such as transportation costs, inflexible service hours, and physical accessibility for persons with disabilities. Legal literacy and awareness have to be strengthened through targeted legal awareness and outreach initiatives to improve caregivers' understanding of their rights, available services, and administrative procedures. Interventions should include community-based awareness sessions, simplified communication materials, and integration of legal information into existing child protection and community programs. Improving legal literacy will enable families to better navigate systems, access services, and seek protection when needed.

Enhance Inclusive and Safe Learning Environments: Strengthen school-protection linkages by addressing key barriers to school enrolment, attendance, and retention, including transportation challenges, disability-related access constraints, and bullying or discrimination. Capacity-building for teachers and school staff on child protection, inclusive education, psychosocial support, and positive discipline is essential to ensure schools function as safe and protective environments for all children.

Strengthen Child-Sensitive Justice and Diversion Mechanisms: Enhance the role of juvenile judges and Sharia public prosecutors in applying child protection safeguards as provided under national legislation, including the prioritization of the best interests of the child and the use of non-custodial measures. This includes supporting capacity-building, development of practical guidelines, and strengthened coordination with social services to ensure timely referral, case management, and follow-up. Particular emphasis should be placed on expanding diversion programs and non-custodial measures, as well as developing structured aftercare (reintegration) programs for children in conflict with the law. These efforts aim to strengthen rehabilitation outcomes, and ensure continuity of protection beyond judicial processes.

Conclusions

This needs assessment highlights a **concerning protection environment for children** in both refugee and vulnerable host community households across Amman, Mafraq, Ma'an, and Zarqa. Economic hardship, limited access to services, and systemic barriers continue to erode protective family and community structures, increasing children's exposure to violence, child labor, psychosocial distress, and educational exclusion. Children with disabilities, adolescents, and girls are particularly affected by intersecting vulnerabilities. Quantitative findings are strongly corroborated by qualitative evidence from FGDs, underscoring the cumulative impact of poverty, stress, discrimination, and service gaps on children's well-being and development. While legal and institutional frameworks exist in Jordan, challenges related to implementation, access, and awareness persist, preventing many families from fully realizing children's rights.

Addressing these needs requires **coordinated, multi-sectoral, and community-based responses** that integrate child protection, psychosocial support, education, and legal assistance. Targeted, inclusive, and sustainable interventions are essential to strengthen protective environments, reduce reliance on negative coping strategies, and promote the safety, dignity, and well-being of children and their caregivers.

In addition, the findings highlight that key protection challenges are not only driven by the absence of services or legal provisions, but also by gaps in accessibility, awareness, and effective implementation. Even where legal frameworks and services exist, many families face difficulties in navigating systems, understanding their rights, and accessing timely and appropriate support. This underscores the importance of strengthening not only service availability, but also system accessibility, legal awareness, and coordination among service providers to ensure that existing frameworks translate into tangible protection outcomes for children.

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