



International  
Labour  
Organization

# ILO Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan and Lebanon

Updated March 2014

## Context

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Since 2012, the flow of refugees from Syria to neighbouring countries has continued unabated. According to UNHCR registration data, more than two million Syrians have fled their country. The crisis is one of **the largest and uncertain humanitarian emergencies of its kind for many years**. Its effects are also increasingly spilling over into the economic and social spheres – leading to stalled **economic activity, loss of income, and shrinking access to quality public services**.

Jordan – with its population of 6.4 million – now counts an expanding Syrian refugee population of 595,000. Al Zaatari camp – which hosts around 101,000 Syrian refugees – is often referred to as Jordan's fourth largest city. In Lebanon, the refugee influx has expanded dramatically. By February 2014, UNHCR estimates counted 921,000 refugees (including an estimate of 60,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria), equivalent to around 21 per cent of the Lebanese population.<sup>1</sup>

Against this backdrop, the Regional United Nations Development Group for Arab States (R/UNDG-AS) launched a strategy that looks beyond the immediate humanitarian assistance and provides a regional resilience-based development response to address the short, medium, and long-term impact on neighbouring countries, including Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. Within this framework, the ILO has developed its own response to the crisis in Jordan and Lebanon with a focus on employment and livelihoods issues.

## Impact of the crisis on the labour market

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The refugee receiving countries of Jordan and Lebanon were already experiencing difficult economic conditions before the neighbouring Syrian crisis led to a **dramatic increase of labour supply, putting considerable pressure on their fragile labour markets**. In Lebanon, the influx of refugees have exacerbated the already difficult living conditions of hosting communities through increasing job competition, reducing wages, inflating prices, and placing an additional strain on available services. In Jordan it is estimated that the potentially active Syrian refugee labour force in Jordan make up about 8.4 percent of the total active force in the four Governorates that are host to the highest numbers of refugees. Direct competition with vulnerable Jordanian workers, and in particular the working poor for low paying unskilled jobs, is likely to thus take place.<sup>2</sup> While the socio-economic and labour market situations of both countries differ in many ways, the refugee factor has the following consequences:

- 1. Rising unemployment, with a considerable impact on youth and unskilled workers.** Labour market conditions in Lebanon and Jordan before the Syrian crisis were already dire. In Lebanon, high unemployment rates coexisted with mismatches in the labour market and a high prevalence of low quality and low productivity jobs. Unemployment rates are expected to have doubled to above 20 per cent, mostly among unskilled youths. The Jordanian economy has been

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter-agency information sharing portal

<sup>2</sup> *Needs Assessment Review of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Jordan, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and the United Nations, November 2013*

growing but creating low quality jobs that mainly attracted migrant workers and unemployment rates have remained high.

**2. Competition, pressure on wages and deteriorating working conditions, with an increase in informal employment.** In both countries, there is considerable pressure on the job market – with refugees accepting much lower wages and worse conditions of employment than the local population (including migrant labourers) and with self-employed competing with nationals in certain sectors. This contributes to a higher demand for informal workers. According to the rapid labour market assessment conducted by the ILO in Lebanon<sup>3</sup>, almost all of the Syrian workers are employed in unprotected and potentially exploitative conditions in the informal economy or as informal workers in formal enterprises. Data shows that no females and only 5 per cent of males have a work contract.

**3. Worst forms of child labour among refugees are on the rise, with evidence of forced labour emerging.** A considerable proportion of refugees are children (some estimates say as high as 50 per cent, with less than half enrolled in education). Many refugee children are working – typically in hazardous conditions in the agricultural and urban informal sector and in such as street peddling or begging, with an estimated 30,000 child labourers in Jordan vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.



[Click here to access movie](#)

**4. Depletion of livelihoods in the host community economies:** In addition to tighter labour market conditions and potentially lower earnings, households are facing higher expenditures as the costs of goods and services are rising. In Lebanon, an additional 170,000 people have been pushed into poverty over and above the 1 million already living below the poverty line. The livelihoods status and living conditions of Palestinian refugees from Syria is also of particular concern given the restrictions imposed on their employment and the additional burden on already over-crowded camps. In Jordan, there is evidence of increasing competition between Syrian refugees and host communities for scarce resources and jobs, and social crowding, particularly in disadvantaged and vulnerable governorates. This polarizes the two communities and aggravates poverty and vulnerabilities, as well as localized disparities.

**5. Weak labour market governance** and capacity of Governments to adequately respond to the situation. With its overwhelming and unprecedented dimension, the crisis further underscores some of the existing institutional deficits of labour market structures. This results in fragmented policy responses, which are also undermined by the lack of adequate law enforcement mechanisms.

## **The ILO Strategy and Comparative Advantage**

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The international response to the ongoing Syria crisis has overwhelmingly focussed on the humanitarian aspects, catering to the most immediate needs of refugees and their host communities. **The ILO strategy is development-focussed in its support of refugees and host communities; it aims to preserve social and economic stability at the national level.**

<sup>3</sup> [ILO \(2014\), Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their Employment Profile.](#)

The ILO strategy builds on its core mandate in the promotion of employment, social dialogue, social protection and international labour standards. The multi-faceted nature of this crisis cuts across many of the ILO interventions in Jordan and Lebanon and new initiatives **complement existing country programmes**, which already focus on expanding decent work opportunities, addressing child labour, extending social protection and enhancing employment for youth.

ILO will focus on following objectives, which are translated into country specific interventions:

- 1. Contribute to building the resilience of host communities by enhancing access to employment opportunities and livelihoods**
- 2. Strengthen institutional capacity and coordination to combat unacceptable forms of work, with a focus on child labour**
- 3. Support policy development to ensure an employment rich national response, embedded in the principles of Decent Work**

ILO interventions are part of the United Nations response and aligned with the *Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP6)*, the *Jordan National Resilience Plan* and the *Roadmap for Stabilization in Lebanon*. The ILO strategy is premised on the following approaches:

- Investment in the capacity and ownership of local actors in the identification of and support to economic development and income generation projects in crisis affected areas, which can benefit both host communities and the refugees.
- Implementation of projects in selected sectors and governorates (including refugee camps and Palestinian camps), which lead to tangible employment and Decent Work outcomes in the short term and have a potential for up scaling or can be handed over to national/local entities for long-term gains.
- Support better regulation of the presence of Syrian workers in the labour market by introducing job placement mechanisms and promoting measures preventing unacceptable working conditions (in terms of wages, OSH, etc.), including through negotiated social monitoring among host and refugee communities and an enhanced capacity of labour inspection.
- Link national and humanitarian response to Syrian child labour by ensuring a stronger coherence and more effective coordination with the National Framework to combat Child Labour in Jordan and the National Action Plan on the elimination of worst forms of child labour in Lebanon.
- Provision of policy development support to the Government and national/international partners on active labour market programmes including entrepreneurship development and identification of employment opportunities available in national labour markets including those created by the “aid economy”. This policy dialogue component should also ensure linkages and complementarity with existing development plans, such as the National Employment Strategy in Jordan.

### Component 1: Impact assessments and employment coordination

- ILO leads the Task force on employment and livelihoods under the Host community Platform and facilitated inputs towards the National Resilience Plan
- Led the livelihoods and employment chapter of the United Nations Needs Assessment of the impact of the refugee crisis (Dec 2014)
- **Ongoing:** Quantitative survey on the implications of the influx of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian Labour Market
  - *Sample: 2,800 Syrian and Jordanian households (800 of which from the camps).*
  - *Scope: Impact of the Syrian crisis on the Jordanian labour market (including market capacity to provide employment and the impact of Syrians on the private/informal sector / competing with Jordanians and migrant workers) Occupational and employment profile of the Syrian refugees in Jordan*

### Component 2: Enhancing access to employment opportunities and livelihoods in host communities (Northern governorates with focus on Irbid and Mafraq)

- Value chain development in olive sector in Irbid and Tomato sector in Mafraq supported
- Business environment assessments carried out to support public private dialogue forums
- Organisational capacity building for employment services completed and Local Employment Committees established
- Local capacity built to support business start-up and expansion. Based on the recommendations of a training needs assessment, twenty trainers were trained in the Get-Ahead programme to facilitate women access to self-employment. 150 female entrepreneurs benefited from the programme thus far.
- **Upcoming:** Value chain analysis of the waste management sector in collaboration with UNDP



Local residents of Irbid receive training on olive tree pruning, part of ILO's efforts to help local communities enhance their production of olives. (February 13, 2014).

### Component 3: Addressing worst forms of Child Labour and unacceptable forms of work

- Two rapid assessments on Child Labour conducted (agriculture and urban informal sector) in host communities.
- Establishment of a Technical Sub-Committee on Syrian Child Labour under the auspices of the National Committee on Child Labour
- Awareness campaign on Child labour (movie film on child labour, producing brochures/leaflet targeting employers)

- Support Labour Inspectorate at the Ministry of Labour to extend referral process to Syrian working children and review the inspection strategy. Labour inspectors trained to deal with illegal/undeclared work
- **Ongoing:** Child labour assessment in Zaatari camp with UNICEF and Save the Children International

## Status of ILO response, March 2013 -> LEBANON

### Component 1: Impact assessments

- Labour market assessment profiling Syrian refugees and their impact on the labour market conducted
- Participation in the joint World Bank-UN economic and social impact assessment of the Syrian conflict
- **Upcoming:** Labour Force and Living Conditions Survey expected to be initiated in May 2014
  - Socio-demographic characteristics of the household members
  - Education (including vocational training) of household members
  - Labour force status of household members
  - Characteristics of employed and non-employed household members
  - Living conditions: Health insurance, access to/assistance for health services, disability of household members, housing characteristics and conditions, fixed capital assets of the household, access to basic services and income of household members (sources and amounts).

### Wages

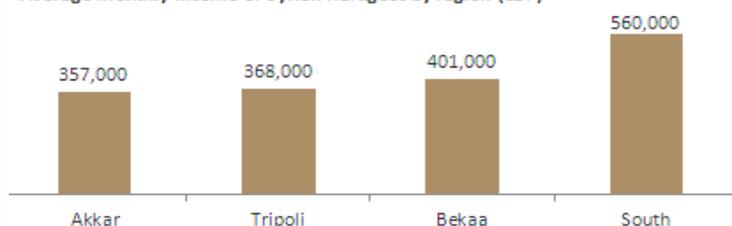
Working Syrian refugees have an average monthly income of 418,000 LBP;

57% of workers earn less than 450,000 LBP.

Women earn around 40% less than males (248,000 LBP).

1500 LBP = 1 US\$

Average Monthly Income of Syrian Refugees by region (LBP)



Source: ILO (2014), [Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their Employment Profile](#)

### Component 2: Enhancing access to employment opportunities and livelihoods in host communities (North Lebanon)

- Upcoming: Launch of a \$ 1 million local economic development project targeting rural communities in North Lebanon (May 2014)

### Component 3: Addressing worst forms of Child Labour and unacceptable forms of work

- Assessment of working street children completed
- Launch of the National Action Plan on the elimination of worst forms of Child labour

## Consolidating and expanding the response in 2014

The ILO response framework in 2014 and 2015 builds on the initial achievements and the results of various labour market surveys. The key components of this response programme in Lebanon and Jordan are outlined in the two tables annexed to this document.

The overall resources framework of this plan for 2014 and beyond is US\$10.6 million for Jordan and US\$12.2 million for Lebanon. Part of the funding has already been secured and the ILO is approaching donors to raise additional resources on the basis of the following specific proposals:

<b>Title</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Implementing partners</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Economic Governance and Self-Reliance of Syrian Refugees in Za'atari Camp and surrounding host communities.	Jordan	2 years	UNHCR, UNWOMEN	US\$ 2,2 million
Local economic development for the enhancement of livelihoods and employment opportunities for Jordanian host communities affected by the Syrian Refugee Crisis	Jordan	3 years	UNDP, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Interior, Governorates of Irbid and Mafraq	US\$ 5 million
Addressing child labour among Syrian refugees in Jordan	Jordan	2 years	Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Interior, UNICEF	US\$ 2 million
Addressing the Worst forms of Child Labour among Syrian refugees in host communities in Lebanon	Lebanon	2 years	Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Social Affairs, UNICEF	US\$ 3.5 million



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## Jordan - Framework for ILO interventions with Syrian Refugees and host communities for 2014-2015

Outcomes	Components	Budget
Comprehensive local economic development initiative contributes to growth and job creation in targeted areas of high refugee concentration <i>Focus on Irbid, Mafraq and Amman</i>	Supply and demand side constraints to decent jobs in particular sectors (tentatively tourism, agro business, solid waste) are successfully addressed based on participatory value chain analysis.	US\$5.6 million
	Public-private dialogue contributes to improved business environment based on the findings of a survey and dialogue forums.	
	Public employment services, NGOs, and private recruitment agencies have an enhanced capacity to provide job-matching services for vulnerable populations.	
	Enterprises have improved business management capacity with greater access to business development services, possibly through a voucher system.	
Refugees in Zaatari camp benefit from improved labour and economic governance, and enhanced skills. (with UNHCR)	One-stop-shop employment services in the camp for counselling of jobseekers, improved job matching, referral to training programme and social service support and skills gap analysis)	US\$2.2 million
	Business development services and strengthening of market linkages with host communities contribute to new start-ups and improved profitability of the existing individual businesses.	
	Cooperatives, business associations, self-help groups and social enterprises are being set up and strengthened within existing local committees, after promotional campaigns and capacity building.	
	Young refugees benefit from improved skills for (a) urban management of the camp, (b) other employment opportunities in the camp, (c) reconstruction when back in Syria.	
The incidence of child labour and its worst forms in particular, among the Syrian refugees is reduced and young Syrians have an improved access to vocational training/skills development and decent work.	Awareness-raising strategy for different target groups on growing incidence and risks related to child labour, based on two ILO assessments on child labour in agriculture and the urban informal sector.	US\$2 million
	Strengthen capacity of Community-Based Child Protection Committees, to identify, refer and rehabilitate Syrian child labourers as part of integrated child labour monitoring system	
	Capacity building of Syrian and Jordanian teachers on addressing causes and consequences of drop-out and establishing and developing capacity of informal Syrian education centres	
	Develop and strengthen linkages between the referral mechanism of the national child labour monitoring system and the child protection pathways of the humanitarian response organizations.	
Labour Inspectorate strengthened to address and refer labour violations in relation to refugees, including child labour.	Technical advice and capacity building for integrated labour inspection, procedures and checklist in relation to illegal/undeclared work	US\$ 400.000
	Occupational Safety and Health is improved after review and technical support by NGOs and labour inspection, based on sector specific checklists and WISE.	
Labour market solutions conducive to the resilience of communities and the protection of refugees	Engage Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education to open access of Syrian refugees to labour market and vocational training for immediate reconstruction needs of Syria, based on (a) identification of skills required, (b) good practices related to access of refugees to the labour market (with UNHCR).	US\$400.000
	The public-private dialogue pilot serves as a basis for replication in other governorates, with the Ministry of Interior.	

## Lebanon - Framework for ILO interventions with Syrian Refugees and host communities for 2014-2015

Outcomes	Components	Budget (USD)
Sustainable Local Economic Development is promoted in at least one rural area in the North Lebanon targeting specific productive sectors	Participatory value chain analyses in agro-pastoral sector in targeted regions, with a specific focus on host communities implemented.	\$3 million
	Mapping of capacities of Local organisations (Cooperative and groups including women's associations etc.) executed and capacity development needs identified	(\$1 million secured from internal ILO resources)
	Local economic development interventions in host communities and projects designed and implemented.	
	Local organisations (Cooperative and groups including women's associations etc.) have better capacities to identify socio-economic interventions benefiting labour market integration of youths of Lebanon including refugees	
Measures and concrete actions improve the protection of most vulnerable workers among host communities	Employment opportunities identified including in the "Aid-Economy" and in other markets throughout Lebanon through a labour opportunity mapping analysis. This will include exploring local private sector capacity for local procurement in the bidding opened by humanitarian organizations for food and non food items	
Business expansion strategies for entrepreneurs developed	Emergency employment service mechanisms for both Lebanese and refugees, through considering partnering with, IRC, UNHCR's and NGOs' livelihoods centres established;	0.9 million
	In collaboration with other ILO projects and partners interventions, demonstrative projects on Skills, Child Labour and protection of workers working conditions are implemented	
Increase income generation, employment and market creation opportunities in Palestinian camps	"Work Improvement in Small Enterprises" (WISE) implemented.	\$ 3.5 million
The incidence of child labour and the WFCL in particular, among the Syrian refugees is reduced	Implement income generating initiatives to improve the livelihoods of both Palestinian refugees coming from Syria and Palestinian refugees in the Ain-el Helwe and NBC camps through self- employment programmes and shelter rehabilitation as well as skills development.	
Policy development and national response strengthened through Labour Market data and analysis	Support the implementation of the national action plan for the elimination of worst forms of Child labour: Promoting Legislation and Law Enforcement; Developing economic opportunities for parents and youths of working age; Integration of children into the educational system; Capacity building and development in child labour issues; Capacity building for local community and community leaders	\$4.5 million (funded by EU) \$320.000 (funded by US)
	Specific actions to address worst forms of child labour and forced labour among the Syrian refugees population with a focus on the agriculture sector are implemented	
Policy development and national response strengthened through Labour Market data and analysis	Support the implementation of the Labour Force and Living Conditions Survey that will also gauge the impact of Syrian refugees in Lebanon	\$4.5 million (funded by EU) \$320.000 (funded by US)
	Conduct the National statistical survey on the magnitude of Child Labour	