



Understanding Livelihoods Solutions under Protracted Forced Displacement

The Case of Refugees from Homs in Jordan



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UNDERSTANDING LIVELIHOODS SOLUTIONS UNDER PROTRACTED FORCED DISPLACEMENT

THE CASE OF REFUGEES FROM HOMS IN JORDAN



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The livelihood and food security projects implemented between 2017 and 2019 in Jordan covered all Sustainable Livelihoods Framework assets with different support levels. The human asset holds the first place in terms of support, with around 95 per cent of the projects targeting this aspect. This reflects the general focus on capacity-building using the cash-for-training modality.



According to the interviewed organizations, service providers do not have a significant role in designing projects interventions and activities, as their role is limited to implementing activities with beneficiaries.



The Government of Jordan has created an enabling environment for refugees' access to the job market by facilitating their access to formal work permits that grant them freedom of movement and temporary economic inclusion.



In the wider context, in terms of solving national-level challenges in a protracted crisis, interviews showed that implemented projects contributed to partial and context-based solutions, depending on the size of the budget and the expertise of main implementers. Institutional empowerment of local community organizations was listed as a main output.



Jordanian farmers interviewed appreciated the programming nature of agriculture livelihoods targeting them and Syrian refugees. Cash-for-work or cash-for-training, which aimed to protect natural resources and improve water use efficiency, reforestation, land reclamation and agricultural roads rehabilitation, among others, have benefited them in terms of reducing cost, improving skills, and protecting biodiversity.



Food security and livelihoods projects are hypothetically consistent with the Jordanian context. The main intervention modalities (cash-for-work and cash-for-training) need to be revisited to assess their contribution to addressing national needs under a protracted crisis.



Farmers who participated in the focus group discussions said that skills development livelihood interventions targeting refugees did not properly help them in gaining a skilled agriculture job (pruning, fertilization planning, pest management). Low-skilled agriculture activities continued to be the main service of most of the Syrian refugee labour force.



Jordanian farmers have recommended expanding agriculture livelihood activities and tailoring them to address value chain challenges to help create permanent or temporary employment for refugees and Jordanians in the agriculture sector.



Most refugees interviewed believe that agriculture is the most important sector for them to secure their livelihoods, while other economic sectors, such as industry, trade, construction and business entrepreneurship, were not as important to them.



There is no evidence to show that skills development through cash-for-training is contributing or will contribute to the development of specific value chains in Jordan.



Many of the surveyed participants wished to participate in the following programmes/interventions: cash-for-work programmes; professional and technical training; empowerment of Syrian women; support of small and micro enterprises; and soft loan provision to the most vulnerable families.



To prepare the ground for livelihood solutions benefiting Syrian refugees and their host communities in Jordan, and Syrians who decide to voluntary return with safety and dignity to Homs governorate when conditions become favourable, agriculture and non-agriculture livelihood programming are advised with specific strategic objectives.



Despite the few who wish to return to Homs, most refugees do not want to return at the moment because of unstable security conditions, lack of sustainable livelihood assets, fear of the unknown, and the loss of relatives and neighbours.

Key Messages

Executive Summary

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The study aims to understand the characteristics of the food security and livelihoods programmes targeting Homs refugees and their host communities under the protracted nature of displacement in Jordan, and to examine their contribution to improving sustainable livelihoods of the target population. The study will showcase the context, objectives and activities of the implemented projects during the period 2017-2019 in Jordan, where 16 per cent of Syrian refugees originate from Homs. In addition, the study will highlight the interventions' response to the needs of the target beneficiaries in terms of facilitating skilled employment, improving food security and promoting sustainable livelihoods under a protracted crisis. It also examined the main barriers for refugees' voluntary return.

The analysis of the study will enable us to identify the main challenges encountered and proposed tailored recommendations for future programming supporting sustainable livelihoods for both refugees and host communities. The study is part of an initiative that prepared a post-conflict agriculture livelihoods restoration strategy

for Homs Governorate and studied livelihoods interventions implemented for Homs refugee population in Lebanon, where 24 per cent of Syrian refugees originate from that governorate. The overall objective of the initiative is to understand how livelihoods programming and interventions in a protracted regional forced migration crisis are addressing local needs and equipping host communities and refugees, based on their profile and the context of their place of origin, with various livelihoods assets to improve the efficiency and resilience of main targeted value chains and agriculture systems. The initiative reinforces the multi-dimensional approaches of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) to help develop durable solution strategies for regional migration crises. The Jordanian Government has implemented an inclusive approach to facilitate the access of refugees to the labour market, while preventing protection risks. A total of 176,920 work permits¹ were issued between January 2016

1 MOL, 2020. Syrian Refugee Unit Work Permit Progress Report December 2019. *Monthly Progress Report*. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/73629.pdf>.

and December 2019. Out of these, 67,607 permits (38.2 per cent) were issued by agriculture cooperatives for Syrian refugees working in the agriculture sector, while 31,069 flexible work permits (17.5 per cent) were issued by the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions for Syrian refugees working in the construction sector. The remaining permits were distributed among the other economic sectors, mainly processing industries, retail and home services.

The methodology used for this study consisted of a mixed-methods approach for data collection and analysis of primary and secondary data. It associated quantitative (survey) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions) data collection tools, which provide equal emphasis on both data forms, while triangulating results and increasing reliability and consistency of the findings.

Secondary data were collected from the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) in addition to assessments and project documents. The primary data, constituting of surveys, key informants and focus groups, were conducted through face-to-face interviews, except for four key informant interviews (KIIs) that were undertaken virtually due to COVID-19 lockdown measures. The primary and secondary reviews were analysed using the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) and the value chain approach. Both tools are widely used to understand the dynamics of refugees' livelihoods programming in a protracted crisis.²

Due to the dominance of work permits issued in the agriculture sector and the relevance of agriculture livelihoods to Homs refugees who mostly come from agricultural areas, the study tried to undertake an in-depth analysis in this sector, while keeping a general livelihoods focus due to the large non-agriculture livelihoods implemented by main actors in Jordan. The primary data consisted of 21 KIIs, eight focus group discussions (FGDs) with Jordanian farmers and Syrian refugees from Homs who benefited from food security and livelihoods interventions, and a survey conducted with 80 Syrian refugees whose main profession in Homs was agriculture and who have also participated in food security and livelihoods interventions. The studied areas have the highest concentration of Syrian refugees in

Jordan coming from Homs, including Amman, Al Mafraq, Zarqa and Irbid, based on the latest data shared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The field survey areas were selected in consultation with the agricultural cooperatives that participated in the implementation of food security and livelihood projects under the JRP in the targeted governorates, and in coordination with agricultural directorates and some of the UNHCR field offices.

The study results showed that food security and livelihoods interventions targeting Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan between 2017-2019 covered most of the SLF assets (physical, social, natural, financial and human) with various levels of support. Few projects worked on the policies, institutions and processes level. As for the value chain approach, the interventions tend to be scattered at different phases of the value chain, with the largest support dedicated to the upstream side in various agriculture systems.

Human assets: Projects focused on capacity building and skills development to improve human assets. This covered a broad spectrum of topics, mainly including training in life skills (communication, conflict resolution, leadership, etc.) and specialized vocational training under various productive agriculture, industrial and technical occupations, such as vegetable production, water conservation, hydroponics fodder business, carpentry, furniture, jewellery, mosaic, sewing, mobile phone maintenance, etc. The projects also covered entrepreneurial skills (cost and profit analysis, marketing mechanisms, financial project management for civil society organizations, basic accounting, etc.) and enhancing access to information and communications technologies (ICT). Findings show that capacity building improved the skills of both refugees and Jordanians, but did not facilitate their access to temporary or permanent jobs. The direct impact was the benefit gained from the financial contribution, which covered gaps in accessing their basics needs, particularly food.

Financial assets: Most programmes attempted to increase financial assets by engaging refugees and host communities in cash for work or cash for training activities. Refugees and Jordanian participants

2 Nutz, N., 2017: A Guide to Market-based Livelihoods for Refugees. ILO and UNHCR. The Seep Network. 2017. Minimum Economic Recovery Standards. Third edition.

were receiving around 12-15 JOD/day from cash for work activities, and an average of 7 JOD/day from their participation in trainings and capacity-building activities. Under both, the contribution to the social security was also covered. In some interventions, in-kind food assistance and transportation were provided. The paid training period ranged from several days to several weeks, depending on the topic and nature of interventions. The access to grants was facilitated for a low number of refugees who aimed to formally set up their small businesses. The access to loans was also limited. The analysis of findings showed that the nature of financial assets did not help refugees in accessing the labour market and reducing their financial dependency on humanitarian aid. The interventions have mainly helped refugees in improving their knowledge in different topics and fulfil household food gaps during the project period.

Physical assets: Physical assets in the form of tools and equipment were provided to participants in training courses or cash for work activities. The distributed tools included kitchen utensils, shaving tools, sewing machines, tools for handcrafts and others. Most of these tools had a family use scale and might, to a certain extent, cover the needs of the closest relatives. Coupled with lack of access to grants and loans, tools were insufficient to help refugees or host communities in starting and running new businesses, particularly food processing projects that require start-up cost to access quality raw material. As for agriculture physical assets (irrigation canals, agriculture roads, etc.), positive impacts were highlighted by the host community regarding the direct benefits reflected in accessing markets and irrigation water.

Natural assets: Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities were engaged in cash for work interventions to maintain and protect natural resources, water bodies, irrigation canals and reforestation sites, in addition to land reclamation interventions that have increased arable land. Both type of interventions (protection of natural assets and their expansion) contributed directly to improving the environmental and agriculture context in the targeted regions. The scale of interventions, however, requires additional assessment to understand the overall economic impacts.

Social assets: Most interventions involved joint activities aimed at promoting social cohesion between

Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities. This has drastically reduced or eliminated the tension that was created when refugees first moved to Jordan. Social cohesion and setting the ground for win-win situations were instrumental in avoiding protection risks for refugees.

Policies, institutions and processes: Only a few of the projects overviewed provided support to different ministries, public institutions and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and improved working conditions. The work permits, considered to be the major output of policies and processes, formalized access to the labour market by adhering to the national systems and empowering local structures (like agriculture cooperatives) to better play their role in mitigating the negative impacts of the Syrian conflict and creating an inclusive enabling environment.

Value chain: The value chain approach was not considered as a main market system approach to promote employment and the efficiency of production in agriculture and livelihoods projects targeting Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities under a protracted situation. Although some projects targeted specific value chains (eggplant, grapes, apples, etc.), food security and livelihoods interventions did not help significantly in pushing or pulling these value chains. Tailored programming to support value chain actors based on core challenges should be prioritized in any future livelihoods programming.

Only a few of the interviewed refugees wish to return to Homs Governorate. It was evident that most of them do not want to return now because of the unstable security situation, lack of livelihood opportunities and fear of the unknown, and due to the loss of relatives and neighbours. Very few refugees do not wish to return at all, even if the conditions improve, because the Syrian conflict has destroyed everything they own in Syria, or because their houses got demolished, looted and stolen, or populated by others. The same applies to the agriculture land back home and their core agriculture livelihood assets, such as water wells and pumps, primary and secondary irrigation canals, agriculture machineries, etc.

To prepare the ground for livelihood solutions benefiting Syrian refugees and their host communities in Jordan, as well as Syrians who decide to voluntarily return with safety and dignity to Homs Governorate when the

enabling conditions become favourable, agriculture and non-agriculture livelihoods programming are advised to incorporate the following strategic objectives:

- **Accelerating the transition from humanitarian assistance to context-based economic development programming:** There is a growing acknowledgement that the current humanitarian funding and nature of programming focusing mainly on skills development are either insufficient or unsustainable under such a protracted nature of crisis. Programming should consider more development-oriented approaches to improve the resilience of Syrian refugees and host communities and to decrease their dependency on humanitarian assistance over time. The positive legal framework adopted through the work permits supports this transition. Incorporating this legal framework within the nature of programming is essential to tackle core upstream and downstream challenges in major targeted sectors;
- **Improving structured coordination mechanisms:** The coordination between the food security and livelihoods working groups under the JRP should be more structured to combine and complement the efforts through a phased-out approach. The JRP platform presents a positive enabling environment to pursue inclusive coordination and distribution of efforts, while avoiding programme duplications in the same region. This is a pre-requisite to accelerate the transition from humanitarian assistance to development-oriented programming;
- **Increasing access to credit:** There is insufficient financing available for Syrian refugees to establish small and micro enterprises. Microfinance institutions should be supported to facilitate tailor-made access to credit through necessary guarantee mechanisms that could be installed as collaterals by various donors;
- **Creating incentives for businesses to formalize employment through a social-preference tax reduction:** Many businesses prefer not to formally declare Syrian employment to avoid tax payments and the difficulty of processing paperwork. The Government of Jordan might install a social-preference tax reduction for businesses employing vulnerable Syrians and Jordanians in remote areas. This encourages businesses to report on employment and get a preferential tax rate that could cover their duties to the Ministry of Labour. This should be done while respecting an

acceptable percentage distribution of employment between Syrian refugees and Jordanians;

- **Supporting job matching institutions and initiatives:** Skills development must be complemented by job placement services to help matching and addressing market demands in a structured bottom-up approach. Digital transformation, such as creating e-platforms to link trained refugees with businesses, plays an important role in this aspect and should be promoted. These trained participants should understand the downstream needs and be exposed to the available choices that have the highest potential for temporary or permanent employment;
- **Emphasizing on-the-job coaching as a pre-requisite for success:** Skills development and new businesses are best supported when on-the-job training is offered through professional coaches to ensure market bottlenecks are addressed in an efficient manner. Supporting the initiation of clusters is important to build the social capital and enhance knowledge sharing. This guarantees the success of market-oriented entrepreneurial activities within an enabling policy environment;
- **Conducting economic impact assessments:** Economic impact assessments and cost benefit analysis should be conducted for the large budget projects to identify lessons learned and understand the return on investment in food security and livelihoods programming implemented under protracted displacement;
- **Enhancing gender-sensitive programming:** Social and cultural restrictions affecting women's participation in livelihoods opportunities, whether among Syrian refugees or Jordanian communities, should be addressed. Enabling mechanisms in terms of facilitating safe access to the trainings and providing childcare services are highly encouraged;
- **Prioritizing a sector-based approach relevant to the country of origin:** It is important in any future livelihoods programming to prioritize a list of common market-based needs between the place of origin and the host country. This facilitates livelihoods solutions and helps refugees to take part in livelihood restoration plans when they decide to voluntarily return home with safety and dignity.



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Abbreviations

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ACC	Amman Chamber of Commerce
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
AEA	Agricultural Engineers Association
CARE	CARE International in Jordan
EMCA	East Mafraq Cooperative Association
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRC	International Rescue Committee

JCI	Jordan Chamber of Industry
JHCO	Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization
JOHUD	Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development
JORISS	Jordan Response Information System for the Syria Crisis
JRF	Jordan River Foundation
JRP	Jordan Response Plan
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MOPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
MPWH	Ministry of Public Works and Housing
NAJMAH	National Alliance against Hunger and Malnutrition
NARC	National Agricultural Research Center
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHF	Noor Al Hussein Foundation
SLF	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VC	Value Chain
VTC	Vocational Training Corporation
WFP	World Food Programme

Introduction

Ten years into the conflict, the Syrian refugees' protracted displacement has exacerbated the Jordanians' socioeconomic challenges. Since 2011, Jordan has been hosting more than 1.3 million Syrians,³ with 90 per cent residing in the northern and middle governorates (mainly in Amman), and 10 per cent living in camps. Out of that total, 661,390 refugees are registered with UNHCR (as of 31 October 2020),⁴ out of whom 108,194 originate from Homs.⁵

Despite local and international efforts to mitigate the effects of the conflict on Syrian refugees and host communities, the consequences have severely affected food security and livelihoods of both

communities. The protracted forced displacement has increased pressures on services, price inflation and unemployment, and consequently deepened the vulnerabilities of both Syrian refugees and host communities. Seventy-eight per cent of the Syrian refugees live below the Jordanian poverty line, with a mean per capita monthly expenditure of 85.5 JOD. Sixty-two per cent of Syrians are identified as being vulnerable to debt, most of which is incurred to cover rent, health expenditures and food, indicating that debt is usually accumulated to meet basic needs.⁶ The COVID-19 pandemic has further stressed the ongoing weak resilience of refugees to shocks. In a recent assessment, it was estimated that 35 per cent

3 Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2019. Jordan Response Plan for the Syrian Crisis. MOPIC, 2019.

4 See <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>.

5 UNHCR, 2020. Jordan Country Office.

6 Brown. H., Giordano. N., Maughan. C., and Wadeson. A., 2019. Vulnerability assessment framework – population study 2019. UNHCR, ACF, and ILO.

of pre-COVID-19 employed Syrians have lost their jobs, compared to 17 per cent of Jordanians.⁷

“Understanding Livelihoods Solutions Under Protracted Forced Displacement: The Case of Refugees from Homs in Jordan” is a case study that is part of a project on “Guiding the restoration of conflict-sensitive agriculture livelihoods for Syrian refugees”. The same study, focusing mainly on agriculture livelihoods, was conducted in Lebanon during April – June 2020. Both studies, along with the sectorial livelihoods restoration plan prepared for Homs Governorate, will help to better understand livelihoods solutions in a regional protracted refugee crisis. Policy recommendations proposed under the Jordan study will guide future agriculture and livelihood interventions to benefit host communities and Syrian refugees. This is a pilot case study that could be replicated with other refugee populations to tailor livelihood solutions under protracted crises.

The specific objective of this study is to understand the characteristics of food security and livelihoods programmes targeting Homs refugees and their host communities in Jordan and to examine their contribution to sustainable livelihoods of the target population. The study will showcase the context, objectives and activities of the implemented projects during the period 2017-2019 in Jordan. It will also highlight the interventions’ response in relation to facilitating skilled employment, improving food security and promoting sustainable livelihoods, as well as the contribution of skilled Homs refugees’ labour supply to local economic and value chain development. The study will also highlight the livelihoods barriers for refugees’ voluntary return to Homs.

The study answers the following questions:

- What are the nature and type of food security and livelihood activities, their objectives and their relevance to Syrian refugees and host communities?
- What is the role of livelihood interventions in facilitating skilled employment,

reducing food insecurity and improving income-generating opportunities?

- How did agriculture livelihoods programming, as the largest sector in terms of work permits, promote sustainable livelihoods for both refugees and host communities while addressing main encountered challenges?
- What are the variations in Homs farmers’ livelihoods between the pre-conflict period and during their stay in Jordan?
- What are the livelihoods barriers for voluntary return, and how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the perception of refugees of their voluntary return?
- How do refugees perceive livelihoods barriers for voluntary return to Homs across the five livelihoods assets (physical, social, natural, financial and human), in addition to the processes and institutional challenges?
- What are the observations of the Jordanian host community regarding the integration of livelihoods interventions targeting Homs refugees into local economic development plans and their complementarity with the priorities for context-based development?
- What are the policy recommendations for future livelihood programming that might prepare the ground for sustainable local economic development benefiting both the Jordanian host community and Syrian refugees in the long-term?

⁷ ILO 2020. Impact of COVID-19 on Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan and Lebanon.

01

Methodology



A. Objectives and approach

The specific objective of the study is to understand the characteristics of food security and livelihoods programmes targeting Homs refugees and their host communities in Jordan, and to examine their contribution to improving the livelihoods of target populations. Accordingly, the study revealed the context, objectives and activities of the implemented projects during the period 2017-2019 in Jordan. The study also highlighted the interventions' response in terms of facilitating skilled employment, decreasing food insecurity and promoting sustainable livelihoods. The analysis of the study helped to identify challenges encountered and lessons learned, and to propose recommendations for future projects supporting

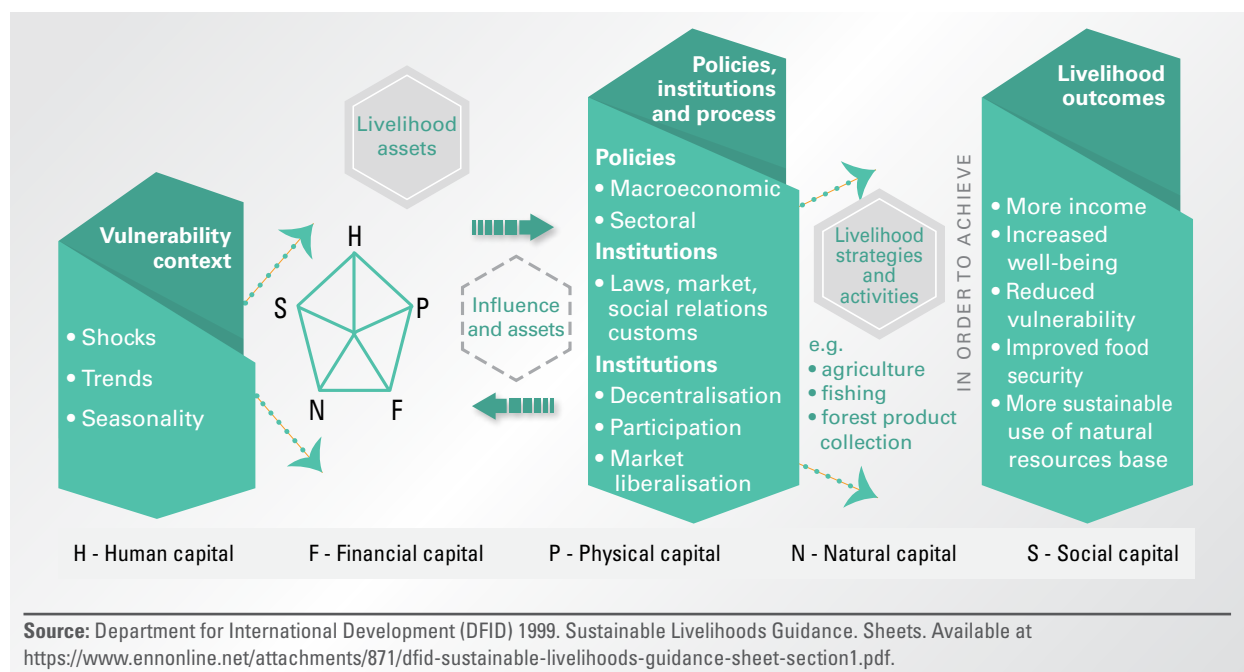
sustainable livelihoods targeting both refugees and host communities under a protracted crisis. The methodology used for this study comprises of a mixed-method approach for data collection and analysis of primary and secondary data. This method associates quantitative (survey) and qualitative (key informant interviews and focus groups) data collections tools. With equal emphasis on both data forms, the adopted methodology allowed for results triangulation and increased reliability and consistency of the findings. The findings of the study were validated with the main stakeholders implementing food security and livelihood interventions through a virtual consultation meeting held in January 2021.

B. Secondary data

The secondary review data was gathered from available studies, assessments, evaluation reports, projects documents and web portals, including the Jordan Response Plan web page. The different food security and livelihood projects

and interventions targeting refugees and host communities in Jordan during 2017-2019 were rendered in an analytical framework to check their integration into the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) in terms of reducing the

Figure 1. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework



vulnerability context, their level of contribution to the improvement of livelihoods' assets, and the setting of an enabling environment through transforming structures and processes (figure 1). The resulting list of food security and livelihood projects was validated by governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions involved in both the food security and livelihoods working groups. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework was adopted due to the protracted nature of the crisis, which requires a structured and phased out mechanism from a humanitarian nature to tailored development and more sustainable solutions. The livelihood assets are the ones that people require to influence policies, institutions

and processes that can implement livelihood strategies and activities in order to achieve positive livelihood outcomes, including more income, better well-being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security and more sustainable use of natural resource base.

Furthermore, the listed projects were studied from a market-driven value chain perspective to comprehend which value chains have been covered, which nodes of the value chain have been targeted, and how the different stakeholders worked together across these value chains to improve food security and increase employment for Syrian refugees and host communities.

C. Primary data

The primary data collection relied on combined quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve the study's objectives. Tools used were (a) Key informant interviews (KIIs) with the main stakeholders engaged in food security and livelihood programming; (b) Focus group discussions with both Syrian refugees from Homs and Jordanian farmers; (c) Surveys amongst Homs refugees; and (d) Field observations. The primary data was collected at locations in Jordan where large food security, agriculture and livelihoods projects have been implemented during 2017-2019, some of which were still ongoing in 2020. Additionally, the study focused on the governorates of Amman, Zarqa, Irbid and Mafrq, all of which have a high concentration of Homs refugees, according to UNHCR recent data. Although the Azraq refugee camp houses around 8 per cent of all Homs refugees in Jordan, it was not covered by the study due to security restrictions. The following sections describe the design, organization and tools used for each method.

1. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

The key informant interviews were conducted with 21 stakeholders implementing the largest food security and livelihoods programmes in Jordan. The interviews were distributed as follows:

- **Public organizations:** Ministry of Agriculture; National Agriculture Research Center; Ministry of Labour; Ministry of Planning

and International Cooperation; and the Vocational Training Corporation;

- **United Nations organizations:** World Food Programme; Food and Agriculture Organization; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Development Programme; and the International Labour Organization;
- **International non-governmental organizations:** Caritas Jordan; CARE Jordan; Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development; and the International Rescue Committee;
- **Local/national non-governmental organizations:** Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development; Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization; National Alliance against Hunger and Malnutrition; Noor Al Hussein Foundation; Jordanian River Foundation; Kharja Charity Association; and East Mafrq Cooperative.

The interviews were guided by a semi-structured questionnaire that highlighted the perception of key national and international stakeholders of the integration of livelihoods interventions targeting Syrian refugees, particularly Homs refugees, into local economic development. The questionnaire also explored the interventions' complementarity with context-based priorities and the needs of their beneficiaries, their contribution to economic and value chain development, their role in promoting

sustainability, and the challenges and lessons learned from the interventions and policy recommendations that can inform any future livelihood programming.

Seventeen of the key informant interviews were conducted face to face, while the other four were done virtually via phone due to COVID-19 lockdown measures.

2. Focus Group Discussions

A total of eight focus group discussions were conducted between July and August 2020, four of which were with Homs refugees, and the other four with host community members (table 1).

Semi-structured questionnaires facilitated both focus group discussions. The discussions with Syrian refugees aimed at understanding the impact of the food security and livelihood projects on improving their access to food, income and long-term employment, as well as their livelihood assets. The discussions also focused on the relevance of targeted value chains to the agricultural context in Syria for all agriculture-related projects and helped assimilate refugees' perceptions of challenges that hinder their voluntary return to Syria, including livelihood and institutional challenges.

The focus group discussions with Jordanian farmers were intended to understand their perceptions of the interventions' contribution to local economic development, projects' outcomes, challenges and

recommendations, projects complementarities with the priorities for context-based agriculture development, and how the agriculture skills of the Homs refugees were developing local value chains. The farmers' case study was prioritized based on the dominance of work permits issued in the agriculture sector. It was important to find out if agriculture livelihoods interventions, coupled with an enabling regulatory environment, helped to develop value chains in a protracted crisis context.

Each of the focus group discussions included a minimum of five participants. The selection of the location and the participants was coordinated with stakeholders and institutions working in the food security and livelihood sectors in the governorates. A senior consultant, accompanied by a note taker, moderated the discussions.

3. Survey among Homs refugees

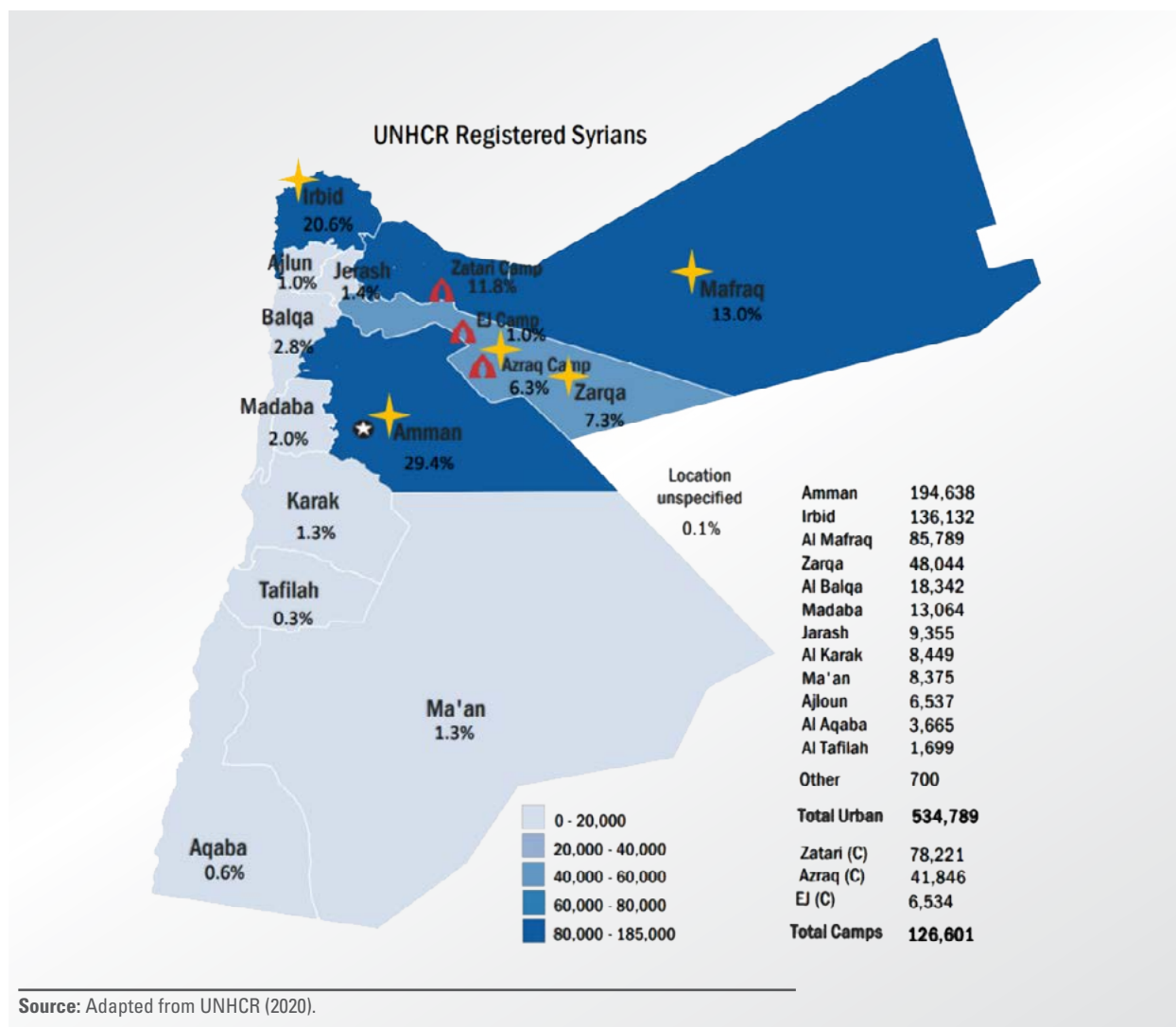
Based on UNHCR data, there are 661,390⁸ registered Syrian refugees in Jordan (as of 31 October 2020). Those coming from Homs (16.2 per cent) represent the second highest number of Syrian refugees in Jordan after those originating from Dar'a (39.9 per cent). The Jordanian governorates/camps with the highest concentration of Syrian refugees originating from Homs (105,998) are Amman (33 per cent); Al Mafraq (28 per cent); Zarqa (10 per cent); Azraq camp (9 per cent); and Irbid (8 per cent) (figure 2).

Table 1. Focus group discussions: Locations, dates and number of participants

Location	Syrian refugees		Jordanian farmers	
	Date/2020	No. of participants	Date/2020	No. of participants
Amman (Refugee Ahmed Terman's shelter/Jordanian Farmers Union)	18 August	6	24 August	6
Zarqa (Al Erfan Charity Association)	12 August	6	12 August	6
Irbid (Pomegranate Cooperative Association)	13 August	7	13 August	6
Mafraq (East Mafraq Cooperative)	30 July	6	10 August	5
Total number of participants		25		23

8 Registered Syrians in Jordan, 31 October 2020. Available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>.

Figure 2. UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees' distribution in Jordan, and areas with the highest concentration of Syrian refugees coming from Homs (areas of interest for this study)



The survey sampling followed a mix of quota and purposive sampling methods to select Homs refugees who participated in food security and livelihood projects in the areas mentioned above. The field team surveyed 80 respondents who were considered representative due to data saturation and the movement restrictions imposed by COVID-19 containment measures. The survey sample was distributed in coordination with local implementers on the ground who helped the study team in reaching refugees who had participated in food security and livelihood activities during 2017-2019 in the different governorates. The survey questionnaire

collected data on the socioeconomic profile of respondents, the impact of the projects' activities they participated in, the technical and institutional challenges they faced in the agriculture sector in Syria, and their perception of livelihood and institutional barriers for voluntary return to Syria.

4. Field observations

Field observations were taken from all site visits during primary data collection.

D. Data analysis and results

Data analysis techniques for the survey, key informant interviews and focus group discussions included:

- Classification and tabulation of information of the secondary review results;
- Content analysis of the outcomes of the key informant interviews and focus group discussions;
- Analysis of survey outcomes;
- Assessment of project objectives and

impact based on triangulation of primary and secondary review data;

- Documentation of results.

The primary and secondary review data analysis helped propose policy recommendations for any future livelihood programming that will help prepare the ground for sustainable local economic development benefiting both Syrians and Jordanians in the long-term.

E. Confidentiality and protection measures

All the data collected for this study was subject to strict privacy and confidentiality. Hence, the following measures were applied by the study team:

- Maintaining and adhering to the objectives of this study;
- Preserving the confidentiality of the data by sharing it only with ESCWA, unless a written consent is provided by ESCWA which says otherwise;

- Disclosing to the study team only the necessary data for efficient study outcomes;
- Maintaining the same above measures after the study is completed.

02

Analysis of Agriculture and Livelihoods Programming



A. Description and analysis of main programmes and interventions

Nine years into the Syrian conflict, Jordan is still hosting more than 1.3 million Syrian refugees (of whom 661,390 were registered with UNHCR as of October 2020), with 90 per cent living among host communities in the northern and middle governorates, and the remaining 10 per cent living in camps. Despite the economic pressures and the scarcity of resources in Jordan, the Kingdom has maintained its commitment to and solidarity with the Syrian refugees, providing them with safety, protection, health, education, livelihoods and public services. The Government of Jordan has created an enabling environment for refugees' access to the job market by facilitating their access to formal work permits that grant them the freedom of movement and temporary economic inclusion. With the protracted nature of the Syrian refugee crisis, however, the Government is facing challenges in improving its economy, maintaining security and providing the same quality of services to both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians.

Hence, to mitigate the impact of the conflict, the Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis (JRPSC) was created in 2014 to coordinate, guide and provide oversight to the design, implementation and monitoring of the Jordan Response Plan. The JRPSC is chaired by the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation and supported by a dedicated secretariat. Under each planning and coordination framework, the JRPSC brings together high-level representatives of the Government, the donor community, United Nations organizations and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). Food security and livelihoods sectors under the Jordan Response Plan are coordinated through the food security and livelihoods working groups, which are an important forum for information sharing, issuing sector-based common advocacy messaging, offering quick analysis and responses to policy changes, as well as providing a platform to discuss key socioeconomic developments within the sectors. The working group participants represent a range of food security and livelihood actors, including the Government of Jordan; United Nations organizations; international and national non-governmental organizations and microfinance institutions.

The Jordan Response Plan 2017-2019⁹ (the years relevant to this study) addresses the needs and vulnerabilities of Syrian refugees and Jordanian communities and institutions affected by the conflict. The Plan consists of three main components and twelve sectors; the food security and livelihoods sectors are the focus of this study.

The JRP 2017-2019 total budget was about 5.4 billion JOD, 3 per cent of which was allocated to the livelihood sector and 8 per cent to the food security sector, with the rest of the budget going mainly for education, social protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and other basic needs. The overall objective of the livelihood sector is to promote sustainable livelihoods and create economic opportunities for Jordanian host communities and Syrian refugees, and to strengthen institutional capacity. The main overall objective of the food security sector, on the other hand, is to enhance the food security status of host communities and Syrian refugees in Jordan. Agriculture, as a livelihood source, was promoted under both sectors, with different targets and dimensions.

During 2017-2019, around 135 livelihoods and food security-related projects took place in the study area targeting both Syrian refugees and host communities. These projects were implemented by 113 national (NGOs, local associations, and Jordanian ministries) and international (INGOS and United Nations) organizations. It is important to note that some of these projects are still ongoing.

The implementing organizations were distributed as follows: Four ministries; five United Nations organizations; three governmental institutions; eight municipalities; 40 INGOs; 31 national NGOs; seven cooperatives; six training centres; one university and eight others.

The implementing organizations appealed to the Jordan Response Plan by selecting objectives matching their planned interventions. The 2017-2019 JRP included nine

9 Jordan Response Plan (JRP) for the Syria Crisis 2017-2019. Available at <http://www.jrp.gov.jo/Files/JRP%202020-2022%20web.pdf>.

objectives and 73 results/outputs related to livelihoods and food security projects, under which implementers intervened at varying degrees.

In total, 45 projects/interventions aimed at “Increased access to formal employment opportunities meeting decent work and protection standards”, reflecting the organizations’ interest in supporting the Government’s initiative to facilitate an inclusive enabling environment for employment. Twenty-four projects focused on “Increasing support to entrepreneurs to develop and scale market-driven businesses within an improved enabling environment”. Both objectives complement each other by creating the enabling environment and expanding market opportunities. The least targeted objectives were “Promoting sustainable development and long-term growth through increased capacity of national and local institutions” and “Enhanced participatory of the local economic development”, which reflected the interest of implementing organizations in supporting direct beneficiaries to access basic food needs (food security sector) and generate income (livelihood sector), rather than supporting the institutions that manage processes, rules and regulation at the national level.

Table 2 shows the number of projects that adopted the different JRP livelihood and food security objectives:

In terms of the listed outputs, table 3 shows the frequency of the top 14 achieved outputs from the 135 livelihoods and food security projects. Implementing organizations stated that the projects have resulted in the development of matching networks; provided case management, mentoring and coaching systems; supported small scale income generation activities and skills development; and provided financial education. This mainly covers the human and financial assets, depending on the support modality that could be through cash for work or cash for training. Organizations listed around 800 activities to achieve the main outputs. The activities were sometimes similar between various projects under the same output but different in terms of size, coverage and timeframe (short vs. long-term).

Out of the 135 projects, 88 (65 per cent) were implemented by INGOs that cooperated with local partners on 58 of these projects. Thirty-six projects (27 per cent) were implemented by national NGOs that also cooperated with other local partners. Finally, eleven projects (8 per cent) were explicitly implemented by United Nations organizations that also cooperated with local partners to reach beneficiaries.

Table 2. Number of projects that have implemented the different JRP specific livelihood and food security objectives

No. of Projects	Specific Objectives
45	Increased access to formal employment opportunities meeting decent work and protection standards
24	Increased support to entrepreneurs to develop and scale up market-driven businesses within an improved enabling environment
22	Increased ability of men and women to develop sustainable, market-oriented entrepreneurial activities within an enabling policy environment
20	Improved short-term self-reliance measures to promote access to income in preparation for long-term economic opportunities
11	Improved short-term self-reliance measures to promote protection, human dignity and social cohesion in preparation for long-term economic opportunities
6	Improved availability, access and utilization of quality food for vulnerable women, girls, boys and men affected by the Syrian crisis
5	Increased income generation and employment for vulnerable Jordanian men and women, leading to sustainable economic development
1	Promotion of sustainable development and long-term growth through increased capacity of national and local institutions
1	Enhanced participatory Local Economic Development

Table 3. The outputs frequency in the implemented projects

Frequency	Outputs
20	Developing matching networks, materials, database, counselling and case management systems
17	Supporting small scale individual economic activities (home-based)
16	Implementing vocational training, employability skills training and inclusive programming
12	Coaching, mentoring and financial education
12	Coaching, mentoring, skills training and financial education, graduation plan and referral
11	Implementing the selected short-term self-reliance opportunities, ensuring protection and decent work conditions
11	Matching, training and subsidies
11	Training for employment and self-employment. Promoting access to information and communication technologies
8	Identifying target groups, including market and socioeconomic assessments
7	Assessing gaps in terms of service provision and identifying and selecting appropriate modalities for the creation of short-term self-reliance opportunities
7	Developing artisanal work
6	Identifying target group, including market assessments
6	Accessing sustainable economic opportunities (self-employment and wage employment)
6	Providing apprenticeship and employment opportunities

The projects duration varied from one to 36 months. The average implementation period for the 135 projects was 15 months, with an average budget equivalent to 1.7 billion JOD. On average, the projects equally involved Syrian refugees (48 per cent) and Jordanian host community members (52 per cent). Although a large percentage of the refugees in the study governorates were farmers who were displaced from agricultural areas, only 21 projects were targeting the agriculture sector in Amman, Irbid, Mafraq and Zarqa. The total budget of agriculture interventions during 2017-2019 was equivalent to 10.7 million JOD. Agriculture projects focused on supporting entrepreneurship, small businesses development, access to formal employment and cash for work opportunities, in addition to the

provision of skills development under many agriculture value chains. Skills development transferred through trainings included small scale vegetable production, composting, food processing, marketing of surplus vegetables, greenhouses and irrigation system installation and conducting participatory value chain analysis, etc. In terms of assets, agriculture inputs were provided in some projects and participants were trained on their use. In some cases, agriculture cooperatives had received financial support and were also targeted through specific capacity-building programmes.

Table 4 summarizes the food security and livelihoods projects' interventions and their link to the five livelihood assets of the SLF and value chain nodes.

Table 4. Livelihood projects integration in the SLF and value chain nodes

	Social	Human	Natural	Physical	Financial	Value Chain
Percentage of 135 food security and livelihood projects analysed through SLF	36	94	6	33	59	32
Percentage of 21 agriculture-related projects analysed through SLF	33	95	24	57	86	52
Intervention characteristics for agriculture projects	Promotion of Social cohesion between refugees and Jordanian host communities; networking between the different associations/ stakeholders; support to cooperatives.	Training sessions; vocational training; knowledge and skills transfer programmes; apprenticeship and job training; capacity building.	Reforestation and sustainable landscape management.	Asset distribution; rural roads rehabilitation; soil terraces construction; irrigation system installation, etc.	Financial incentives (cash for work, cash for training); market access facilitation; grants distribution for small start-ups and home-based businesses.	Market driven value chains – support provided at the level of production processing and packaging. Example of targeted value chains: eggplant, grapes, apples, peppers and herbs, in addition to dairy products.

The livelihood and food security projects implemented between 2017 and 2019 in Jordan covered all Sustainable Livelihoods Framework assets with different support levels. The **human asset** holds the first place in terms of support, with around 95 per cent of the projects targeting this aspect. This reflects the general focus on capacity-building using the cash for training modality. It is a financial compensation in terms of incentives aiming to cover household food gaps or increase incomes by improving participants' skills and knowledge, which will eventually increase their chances to find jobs or venture into new businesses. Short-term increased access to food is also a direct output related to improved human assets within the food security and livelihoods programmes implemented under the protracted forced

displacement context of Jordan. The human asset is followed by the **financial asset**, which was targeted by 59 per cent of food security and livelihood projects and 86 per cent of agriculture projects, where financial incentives were provided in the form of cash or grants. The cash was related to the human assets' improvement and was used by refugees and host communities to cover basic needs, including food, health and education. The grants were provided to small-businesses, start-ups and home-based businesses. The efficiency of the grants modality is explored later under the primary data review.

The **social asset** was targeted by 36 per cent of the food security and livelihood projects and 33 per cent of the agriculture-related projects. Most projects have

implemented a 50/50 Jordanian/Syrian ratio to increase the social cohesion and promote an environment for networking between both communities. The **physical asset**, targeted by 33 per cent of food security and livelihood projects and 57 per cent of agriculture projects, provided toolkits to complement the financial and human assets.

Participants in trainings received tools to help them in their businesses or home-based activities (planting, food processing, etc.). In addition, and mainly under the agriculture-related projects, physical assets were community-based and mainly included rehabilitation of agriculture roads, installation of irrigation canals, building soil conservation measures and digging cisterns. This was eventually planned to improve production from irrigated agriculture or expand cropping areas. The **natural asset**, targeted by 6 per cent of food security and livelihood projects, and 24 per cent of agriculture projects, included mainly reforestation and sustainable landscape management. This was also planned to complement the human and

financial assets through cash for training or cash for work activities. The **value chain nodes** were targeted by 17 per cent of the food security and livelihood projects and 52 per cent of the agriculture projects. The value chain-related interventions focused on improving production practices, processing and packaging, with some focusing on marketing to increase access to fair markets. Several value chain-related projects conducted a baseline study in the inception phase to analyse the gaps and needs of the sector and the beneficiaries. In general, most of the projects targeted at least two SLF assets. However, discussions with different project implementers revealed that the design of interventions and the selection of activities did not directly take into consideration the integration of the SLF assets; rather, they focused on the JRP objectives and the beneficiaries' needs in the region. They anticipate that the JRP took into consideration the holistic needs of the food security and livelihoods sectors and covered the essential livelihoods assets required for a good enabling environment.

B. Stakeholders' perception: Key Informants Interviews (KIIs)

The KIIs' objective was to understand the perception of key national and international stakeholders of the integration of food security and livelihoods interventions targeting Syrian refugees (in specific Homs refugees) into local economic development; their complementarity with context-based priorities; projects' contribution to economic development; projects' link to value chain development; interventions' role in promoting sustainability; challenges and lessons learned from the interventions; and recommendations for future interventions.

1. Level of involvement in livelihood and food security activities

All interviewed organizations are involved either directly or indirectly with the Jordan Response Plan. They are divided into two groups:

a. Main implementers, who include both international and national organizations/institutions that decide

on which JRP objectives and outputs they want to work on. The selection is based on their mandates, interest and experience with the targeted population in Jordan. Usually, the main implementers either work directly with beneficiaries on the ground and/or implement their projects through local organizations and service providers in the different regions. The main implementers are the first contracting agents for donors;

b. Service providers are the local organizations/institutions that work directly with beneficiaries and implement the projects assigned by the main implementers. They are usually the sub-contractors who are not responsible for the projects' achievements (in front of the donors). They plan their activities with the main implementers.

According to the interviewed organizations, the service providers do not have a significant role in designing the interventions of the projects and their activities, as their role is limited to implementing activities

with the beneficiaries. On the other hand, the United Nations organizations, INGOs, and even national NGOs, participate in project design and prioritization of activities under the objectives chosen by the donors. The United Nations organizations design country strategic multi-year plans that are coordinated with mandated government institutions and fall within the JRP objectives.

All interviewed KII participants believe that their implemented projects contributed in different ways to improving the food security and livelihoods opportunities of Syrian refugees and host communities. The interventions, targeting various livelihoods assets as described above, played an essential role in reducing the food gaps and developing market-oriented skills. Each main implementer has been involved in at least two interventions that were classified according to the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework in table 5.

The outputs and activities varied according to the interests, mandates and vision of the organizations. Cash for training was implemented by all KII respondents (total of 21), while only six of them implemented cash for work activities.

Interventions in the agriculture sector varied. On the social capital level, one of the KII participants stated that he had been training agriculture cooperatives on improving their governance, finances and project management skills. The cooperatives received grants to implement direct projects and create job opportunities under this intervention. Another KII participant implemented cash for work projects and provided field training on agriculture value chain production.

Another KII participant said that his organization's contribution to the livelihoods of Syrian refugees

Table 5. Food security and livelihoods projects outputs/activities integrated into the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

SLF Asset	Projects outputs/activities
Human	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community awareness on women's rights and their role in the labour market and entrepreneurship • Attention to education and children who dropped out of schools, implemented to reduce women's care activities • Provision of theoretical and professional training in the fields of small project management, work skills, life skills, gender-based violence, construction, tourism, hotel services, sewing, financial and social skills, business development, marketing, hygiene and sterilization, establishment and management of home farming systems, service clients and employment skills • Training on labour-intensive approaches for both farmers and government employees • Training on arts and crafts and access to market • Training on various food industries, preservation and marketing
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of necessary funding (grants) to establish small and micro enterprises, home-based projects and community entrepreneurship enterprises • Cash for training and cash for work financial contributions • Multi-purpose cash assistance for emergency and relief
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision and delivery of necessary equipment and tools for trainees in the professions and handicrafts to continue earning a living from the acquired professions • Rehabilitation of facilities, equipment, tools and educational materials in some training centres of the Vocational Training Corporation and Cooperatives • Construction and rehabilitation of agriculture physical assets (roads, canals, etc.)
Natural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural projects in farmers' properties • Land reclamation • Reforestation (linked to cash for work)
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job networking in different sectors • Social cohesion between Syrian and Jordanian project beneficiaries through participation in joint training • Training agriculture cooperatives to improve their governance, finances and project management skills
Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting institutions to facilitate work permits

in Jordan had changed over the years. The first phase constituted mainly of a relief/rescue support by providing the refugees with unconditional aid to cover their basic needs in a humanitarian context. The second phase, said the participant, was the development phase/the current stage, where cash for work programmes are being implemented. Different organizations are helping the Syrian refugees engage in the labour market. The main mandate of some of these organization is employment creation, and their work is restricted to helping refugees obtain work permits. As a result, a total of 176,920 work permits were issued between January 2016 and December 2019. In terms of gender distribution, 95.2 per cent of work permits were issued for men. A total of 67,000 permits were issued under the umbrella of agriculture cooperatives, while 31,069 flexible work permits were issued under the umbrella of the General Federation of Trade Unions.

The JRP represented the framework for collaboration and planning among the various actors. The main implementers selected activities that best fit their mandates and visions, and the ones they considered as key priorities. It is important to look at the implementation modality to understand how this framework, which aims to promote engagement, was translated into impact on the ground and reduced the vulnerability of both targeted populations.

2. Projects' complementarities with the Jordanian context

All the implemented projects are expected to complement the Jordanian context, starting with their adherence to the national government priorities highlighted under the JRP. The degree of positive complementarity depends on the coordination among main implementers and the interventions' contribution to addressing local prioritized needs. Accordingly, the food security and livelihoods projects are hypothetically consistent with the Jordanian context. Again, the main intervention modalities (cash for work and cash for training) need to be revisited to check their significant contribution to addressing national needs under a protracted crisis. KIIs' respondents shed light on the importance of future tailored economic impacts assessment to better understand the national outcomes of adopted programming priorities.

3. Projects' contribution to the agricultural sector development

Agriculture, as a targeted sector under both food security and livelihoods working groups, was selected as a case study because it has the highest percentage of total work permits and due to the dominant nature of agriculture livelihoods in the place of origin of the studied population. Respondents stated that the implemented projects have contributed to the development of the agriculture sector, whether directly or indirectly. Agriculture projects targeted equally Syrian refugees and Jordanians and helped improve the skills of participants and the adoption of new practices. For example, hydroponic and aquaponics systems, soil conservation measures, water saving techniques, soilless agriculture and value chain targeting were provided to expose both populations to efficient and resilient systems of production. The projects also helped improve access to physical agriculture assets in order to maintain or expand production. Under both approaches, the modalities of cash for work or cash for training were applied. This has increased the access to basic needs, primarily food, for both communities.

Table 6 classifies the projects' main contributions to agricultural development according to the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, as classified by respondents.

In terms of targeting a value chain as a whole, the KII participants said that they did not work on one value chain. Rather, their activities were limited to providing training, awareness and logistical support. The training topics were not limited to the production techniques, but also covered the importance of the different value chain nodes (transportation, packaging, grading work, cooling facility, marketing, delivery, etc.). Some organizations conducted value chain analysis in cooperation with local agriculture cooperatives. One organization was able to work on a value chain as a whole and has implemented many projects on eggplant, herbs, grapes, apples, tomatoes, peppers and dairy products value chains.

Table 6. Activities' contribution to the development of the agriculture sector

SLF Asset	Activities' contribution to agriculture sector development
Human	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical training on various agriculture practices
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of grants to agricultural cooperative societies to start projects, such as hydroponics • Provision of grants to individuals to start their own small businesses
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloting modern technology in the agricultural sector, such as hydroponics and aquaponics • Adoption of green fodder cultivation with hydroponic system • Conversion of traditional greenhouses into hydroponic systems • Distribution of hand tool kits and household equipment • Installation of greenhouses • Equipping agricultural stations with modern agriculture systems and equipment
Natural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land reclamation projects • Improving land use by adopting soilless agriculture; • Reforestation and forest management (cleaning, pruning, etc.) • Supporting agricultural exhibitions
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting agriculture cooperatives • Ensuring decent work and safe environment for women working on farms
Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the efficiency of workers in the Ministry of Agriculture and NGOs in institutionalizing agricultural exhibitions • Reviewing and updating agricultural strategies • Empowering agriculture cooperatives (governance-related issues)
Value chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the mechanism of the working production and processing kitchens so that production inputs are coming from local farmers • Some projects focused on supporting value chains, such as medicinal and aromatic plants, eggplant, herbs, grapes, apples, tomatoes, peppers and dairy products

4. Interventions' impact on solving challenges at the national level

In the wider context, in terms of solving national-level challenges in a protracted crisis, the KIIs showed that implemented projects contributed to partial and context-based solutions, depending on the size of the budget and the expertise of main implementers. Institutional empowerment of local community organizations was listed as a main output. Short-term employment created through cash for work and financial incentives through cash for training have contributed to offering temporary job opportunities to the most vulnerable. The example of the work permits represents a model for an inclusive enabling environment that otherwise would have amplified

protection risks for refugees. This goes in parallel with the aim of the international community's involvement in supporting the resilience of national systems under crisis. Key informants stated that the harmony of work under the JRP presents a well-structured crisis management approach capable of leading to nationwide solutions if joint efforts receive enough budget and space from the Government of Jordan.

5. Projects' impact on addressing Syria's technical and institutional challenges for refugees' voluntary return with safety and dignity

While planning to improve the skills and knowledge of refugees through various modalities, project design

did not take into consideration the technical and institutional challenges that might face refugees when they decide to voluntarily return to their country. Main implementers mainly focus on the skills that might facilitate refugees' temporary inclusion in the Jordanian market, rather than the skills that are needed in specific governorates in Syria. They anticipate that the skills gained in Jordan, whether social, legal, technical or institutional, would likely be useful in Syria, particularly in the case of Homs, due to the similarities in the cultural and economic systems. Participants highlighted the importance of understating the specific technical and institutional challenges in the governorates from where most of the Syrian refugees originate in order to consider them in future programming.

One organization tried to implement what is called "The Return Package" that supported participants through trainings addressing pre-conflict technical, market and institutional challenges. The package did not pass through due to other humanitarian priorities set by donors.

6. Critical challenges and lessons learned from the food security and livelihoods activities

Key informants identified the following critical challenges and lessons learned from the food security and livelihoods activities targeting host communities and Syrian refugees:

Challenges

- Lack of safe working environment for women;
- Lack of the Jordanian community's engagement in projects focusing mainly on providing financial contributions to Syrian refugees, without an associated investment in other assets (physical, etc.);
- Limited interest in training-centred projects under a protracted crisis;
- Difficulty in engaging women in livelihoods activities due to social and cultural problems;
- Conflicting priorities between donors and implementing organizations, in particular national NGOs that consider some interventions as not context-based and were mainly designed without proper understanding of community needs.

Sometimes, donors' priorities do not take into consideration the field knowledge of national NGOs;

- Despite the integration of the projects within the Jordanian context, there was not enough structured coordination mechanisms between the different implementers to avoid redundancy in the nature of projects and activities;
- In case the profiles of training participants were required, implementers found difficulties in outreach due to the absence of baseline data and the lack of enough information on refugees;
- Bureaucratic and administrative approvals by the Jordanian authorities were identified as a main obstacle reducing the timeframe of projects and pushing implementers to skip some steps to be able to deliver on time.

Lesson learned

- To improve women's participation and prevent any related protection risks, there is a need for projects targeting women to consider childcare services as a complementary activity and to secure a safe working environment;
- Building comprehensive projects approaches and designing community-based interventions in an integrated manner are required to increase the chance of participants receiving skills improvement training to find jobs in the labour market;
- Coordination between donors/main implementers and local partners at the project design phase should be a must; there is a need for better coordination to save efforts (understanding the needs of the local community) and improve outputs;
- Improving the targeting process by matching the profiles with the market needs and training provided would improve the chance of access to temporary or permanent job opportunities;
- In-kind and cash assistance, preferred by the Government of Jordan, should be always combined with skills development and job placement services to encourage the transition towards more self-reliance based interventions;
- Cooperative societies' assessment and empowerment are essential to facilitate market access and improve context-based economic development.

7. Recommendations for future activities in agriculture and non-agriculture livelihood projects

The recommendations for new activities in agriculture and livelihoods projects planning suggested by the key informants are:

Recommendations for agriculture livelihoods

- Focusing on development projects in general and adopting modern technology in agriculture to produce high-value crops (smart agriculture);
- Selecting competitive value chains and tailoring interventions based on the weaknesses identified for each region;
- Expanding projects on protected agriculture;

- Conducting sectoral needs assessments to ensure that the training provided under different projects could support sustainable agriculture development.

Recommendations for non-agriculture livelihoods

- Introducing activities related to decreasing social violence and empowering women and youth;
- Expanding the infrastructure of labour-intensive projects to cover the tourism sector;
- Linking skills improvement with job placement services and tailored coaching;
- Equipping vocational schools with new technologies that can increase performance and quality of products or services;
- Supporting graduation projects that can help targeted refugees and host communities graduate out of poverty with useful skills and tools.

C. Jordanian farmers' perception: Focus Group Discussions results

The focus group discussions with Jordanian farmers were intended to understand their perceptions of the interventions' contribution to local economic development, their main outcomes, challenges and recommendations and projects complementarities with context-based priorities, and how the agriculture skilled labour supplied by Homs refugees is developing local value chains. The focus group discussions were guided by a semi-structured questionnaire, with each lasting 60 minutes on average. They were conducted in the same areas where refugees from Homs are concentrated. The following results present a synthetic analysis of the information collected from four focus group discussions with Jordanian farmers. The field team did not succeed in engaging Jordanian women in the discussions, owing to social and cultural restrictions on women. This constituted a limitation to understanding their perception of the food security and livelihoods sector.

1. Projects' complementarities with context-based agriculture needs

Jordanian farmers interviewed appreciated the programming nature of agriculture livelihoods targeting

them and Syrian refugees. Cash for work or cash for training, which aimed to protecting natural resources and improving water use efficiency, reforestation, land reclamation and agricultural roads rehabilitation, among others, have benefited them in terms of reducing cost, improving skills and protecting biodiversity. Projects that focused on developing the institutional capacity of agriculture extension offices as well as expanding the outreach of extension agents are of high interest. Specifically, farmers highlighted the following direct positive outputs:

- **Increased income:** Implemented physical assets (irrigation canals/networks, agriculture roads, water reservoirs, etc.) had direct positive impacts in terms of reducing cost and improving productivity, both of which resulted in an increase in income. Some farmers were also directly provided with training, grants and tools that allowed them to establish and operate their own small enterprises;
- **Development of business opportunities:** Farmers mentioned that several interventions had created small businesses to address needs in a specific value chain. This helped create business opportunities for farmers or their household members, and eventually increased their income;

- **Creation of short-term job opportunities:** Cash for work or cash for training created short-term job opportunities across value chains. This has reduced rural unemployment and contributed directly to the food security in remote areas during the project period. Unfortunately, most interventions, according to farmers, were not able to create a sustainable link between market demands and skills gained. This rendered similar interventions entering a training fatigue that needs to be extended or repeated in order to continue generating these short-term employment opportunities;
- **Empowerment of cooperative societies:** Farmers who were members of a cooperative society stated that several interventions have provided tailored capacity building to cooperative societies and helped improve their governance (internal system management; access to ICT, etc.). This will eventually have a positive impact on the efficiency of services provided. Some cooperatives also received physical assets, which had direct positive impacts on their members;
- **Skills development:** Farmers benefited from capacity building on different agriculture practices and marketing skills development. They evaluate this in terms of improved quality and quantity and reduced loss through better post-harvest practices;
- **Social cohesion:** Building up agriculture assets and joint participation in trainings have helped create an enabling environment for social cohesion between refugees and farming communities;
- **Improved access to markets:** A modest output was registered under improved access to markets. Skills development in term of packaging, sorting, etc. had a positive impact on the quality of products, which indirectly improved access to markets. However, no direct market linkages were significantly traced due to agriculture livelihoods programming under the Jordan Response Plan.

These outputs are directly linked to local economic development and represent the foundation of a structured development process. The magnitude of the sustainability of these outputs, however, depends on additional funding because rare sustainable interventions were captured. These positive outputs were not assessed at a macro level (group of villages)

to understand the economic angle under a protracted situation. The absence of economic impact assessments makes it difficult to claim tangible sustainable outcomes.

2. Skilled labour supply by Syrian refugees and contribution to the development of local value chains

The reliance on the Syrian refugees in the agriculture sector in Jordan comes at the second place after the reliance on skilled Egyptian labour force. Farmers who participated in the focus group discussions stated that the skills development livelihood interventions targeting refugees did not properly help them in gaining a skilled agriculture job (pruning, fertilization planning, pest management, etc.). Low-skilled agriculture activities continued to be the main service of most of the Syrian refugees' labour force. The financial contribution gained from the participation in the cash for training covered the revenue gap between the skilled and un-skilled labour supply. Accordingly, there is no evidence to show that the skills development through cash for training is contributing or will contribute to the development of specific value chains in Jordan. Skills need assessments should be at value chain level and refugees should be selected based on their profiles to build these skills and address context-based needs. This would ensure that agriculture livelihoods contribute to local value chain development.

3. Critical challenges and headline outcomes from the agriculture and livelihoods activities

Some of the critical challenges faced by the Jordanian farmers while participating in agriculture and livelihood activities included:

- Financial and legal issues that hindered some from receiving the distributed aid;
- The participation in some projects was conditioned on the presence of a formal small or medium enterprise. This has limited the ability of farmers to participate, considering the high informality in the sector;
- All projects should abide by certain participation ratios between Syrian refugees and host

communities. In some cases, this has limited the Jordanian youth participation and access to these employment opportunities, especially in cash for work projects.

For the Jordanian farmers, outcomes from agriculture livelihoods centred around skills improvement that in few cases facilitated access to the labour market. In terms of physical assets derived from cash for work activities, farmers highly appreciated the importance of collective assets that helped improve or expand production. The cash for work projects mainly improved the infrastructure by:

- Maintaining and cleaning agriculture roads;
- Maintaining and cleaning water bodies and natural reserves;
- Cleaning and pruning forests, in addition to reforestation;
- Maintaining and constructing irrigation canals;
- Reclaiming land and terracing;
- Installing road lighting;
- Developing agricultural stations, including infrastructure work.

In addition, a variety of activities were undertaken in farmers' private properties, including:

- Building soil conservation measures;
- Digging water cisterns;
- Installing irrigation networks;
- Installing weather monitoring units;
- Installing solar cells to generate electricity.

4. Recommendations for new activities in agriculture and livelihoods projects planning

The Jordanian farmers have recommended to expand agriculture livelihoods activities and tailor them to address value chain challenges in order to help create permanent or temporary employment for refugees and Jordanians in the agriculture sector. Table 7 includes the main recommendations distributed across the five livelihood assets.

Table 7. Recommendations for new activities/procedures in agriculture and livelihood projects as perceived by Jordanian farmers

Human	Financial	Physical	Natural	Social	Institutional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising farmers' capabilities in climate-smart best agricultural practices • Job placement services to increase access to the labour market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to implement cash-for-work projects, while expanding infrastructure interventions to cover core needs across value chains (post-harvest facilities, etc.) • Supporting access to soft loans with minimum guarantee • Supporting animal production inputs that are essential for food security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing facilities for grading, packaging and cooling of agricultural products • Setting up solar energy projects to operate physical assets and irrigation supplies • Creating value chain projects for agricultural products' differentiation at the governorate level • Establishing a new model of wholesale markets at the governorate level in Jordan • Maintaining and constructing irrigation canals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing water harvesting projects • Expanding fish farming initiative • Implementing land development projects • Supporting organic farmers • Implementing home garden projects; • Expanding forestry-neighbouring projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifying the percentages of Jordanian and Syrian beneficiaries to include both equally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing agricultural cooperatives that provide members with internal governance and expansion of services based on a social enterprise approach

D. Homs Syrian refugees' perception: Focus group discussions and survey results and analysis

The focus group discussions with Syrian refugees intended to understand the impact of food security and livelihood projects on improving their access to food, income, long-term employment and farming practices under agriculture livelihoods. The discussions also tackled the relevance of targeted agriculture value chains in the interventions to the agricultural context in Syria. They also helped understand refugees' perceptions of challenges that hinder their voluntary return to Syria, including livelihood and institutional challenges.

The survey sampling followed a mix of quota and purposive sampling methods to select Syrian refugees from Homs who participated in livelihood and food security projects in the study area. A total of 80 questionnaires were completed and four focus group discussions were held with 25 participants.

1. Demographics

Gender

Syrian women refugees were poorly represented in both the focus group discussions (84 per cent male, compared to 16 per cent female) and the survey (80 per cent male, compared to 20 per cent female). This might be due to social and cultural restrictions that limit the understanding of women's perceptions of the livelihood sector.

Marital Status

The majority of survey participants (85.5 per cent) were married (figure 3).

Education Level

Out of the survey participants, 50.5 per cent had elementary education; 23.8 per cent had secondary education; 21.3 per cent were illiterate; 3.8 per cent had university education; and 1.3 per cent had a diploma (figure 4).

Figure 3. Survey marital distribution

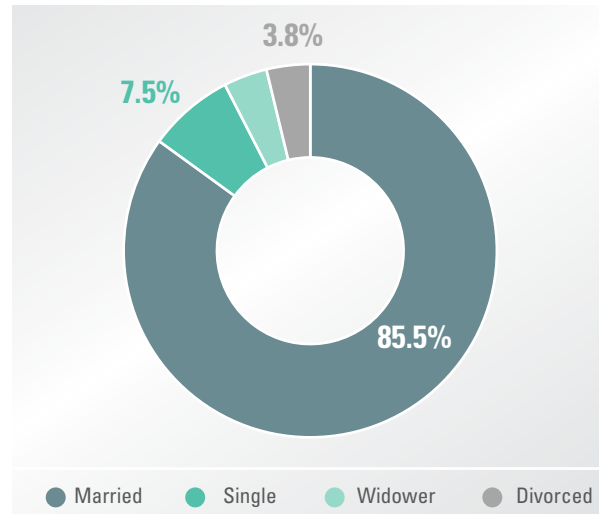
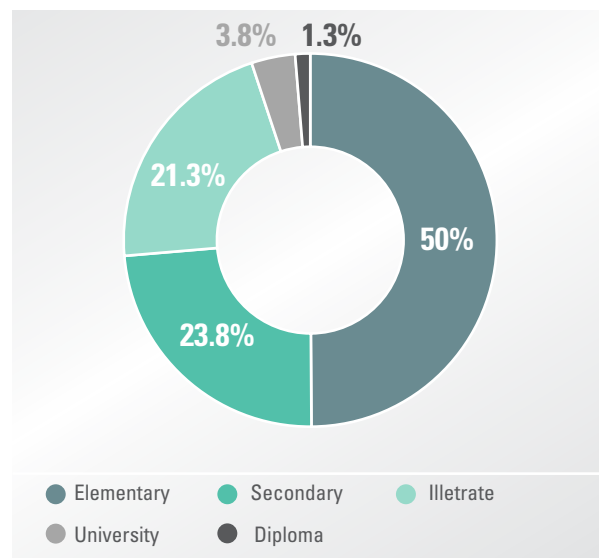


Figure 4. Survey respondents' education level distribution



2. Household characteristics

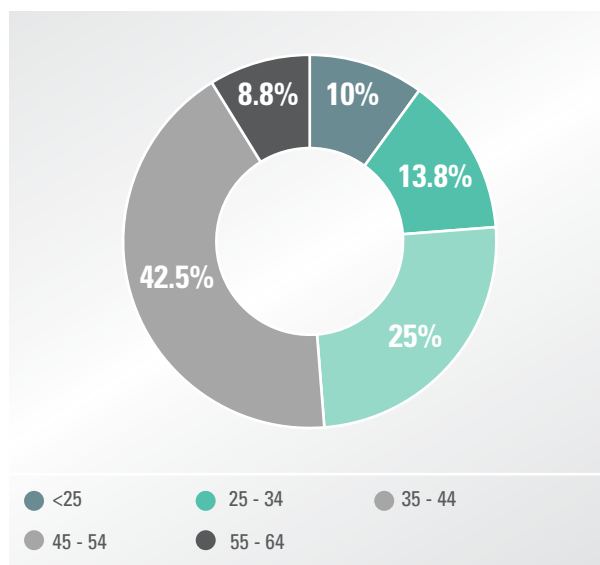
Number of Household members

The number of household members ranged from one to 16, with the average survey household member count reaching six, and with 72 per cent of the households having four to eight members in their households.

Head of the Household Age

The head of the household age varied between mainly 35-44 years (25 per cent), and 45-54 years (42.5 per cent) (figure 5).

Figure 5. Survey respondents' age distribution



Household income source in Syria (before displacement)

Eighty-five per cent of Homs refugees interviewed were farmers in Syria before moving to Jordan. It is interesting to note that no specifications were provided to whether the interviewed participant was a worker or a landowner (business owner in agriculture). The

farming profession was usually shared by members of the family and inherited from generation to generation. The refugees used to be involved in all production aspects of both plants (vegetables, field crops, and orchards) and animals.

Household income sources in Jordan

The main sources of income for the Syrian refugees from Homs in Jordan during 2017-2019 were the agriculture sector and international aid. Most Syrian refugees from Homs were agriculture labourers working in vegetable, orchards and olive productions. They usually receive a daily fee for their work, and, hence, they do not incur any production costs burden. During the last three years, no drastic changes have been seen in all survey participants' livelihoods. Some changes in livelihood patterns are listed in table 8 below. More than 38 per cent of the surveyed participants have experienced between little and much improvements, and 45 per cent indicated that their livelihood patterns got little or much worse due to lack of job opportunities, high cost of living and decrease in aid from international organizations.

3. Displacement characteristics

Year of displacement

Of the surveyed participants, 80.3 per cent said they had moved to Jordan between 2013 and 2014, 13.3 per cent in 2012, 4 per cent in 2015 and 2.3 per cent in 2011.

Table 8. Change in livelihood patterns during 2017-2019

Change in pattern	Frequency	Percentage
Much Improvement	10	12.5
Little Improvement	21	26.2
No Change	13	16.2
Little Worse	15	18.8
Much Worse	21	26.3
Total	80	100

Movement within Jordan

Around 30 per cent of survey participants said they had changed their residence location during their stay in Jordan. The top reason for moving from one area to another within Jordan was to live in regions offering more or better work opportunities, with decent work conditions and better wages.

Visiting Jordan before displacement

Fifteen per cent of the survey respondents said they had visited Jordan for economic and social purposes before the start of the Syrian conflict.

4. Agriculture, livelihoods and food security challenges of Syrian refugees from Homs

Table 9 presents agriculture, livelihoods and food security challenges reported by Homs refugees who participated in the survey and the focus group discussions.

The survey participants believe that the lack of security and safety is the main challenge they would face if they decide to go back home. The owners of orchards and lands in Homs believe that, in addition to

security and safety, the financial and physical assets and inputs essential for running their businesses and repairing their farms and orchards are not present. The farmers indicated that the financial and physical inputs are crucial to them to be able to introduce modern technology like the ones used in Jordan, such as hydroponic and greenhouses production, which have high production advantages in terms of both quantity and quality. Moreover, they pointed to a lack of access to certified seeds in Homs, as well as to inputs (fertilizers and pesticide) and basic tools. They explained that they are facing soil degradation and water scarcity in several districts of Homs. One of the main challenges they are also facing is the lack of marketing channels to sell their produce.

In Jordan, Syrian refugees identified the lack of knowhow in new agriculture technologies as a main challenge. Their lack of access to land and agriculture inputs restricts their potential to invest in agriculture and forces them to limit their role to supplying labour services to meet their basic needs. Another problem facing Syrian refugees from Homs in Jordan is the difficulty of selling their produce on the Jordanian market. Moreover, some workers said they were facing protection challenges with their employers, who force them to work for long hours for little or no wages sometimes.

Table 9. Agriculture, livelihoods and food security challenges of Syrian refugees from Homs back in Syria and in Jordan

In Syria (before displacement)	In Jordan
Livelihood challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to credit • Lack of an enabling environment (security and safety) Agriculture challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low productivity of the available seeds • Lack of production inputs, such as fertilizers and pesticides • Very basic tools used to practice agriculture • Water scarcity in some seasons • Soil degradation • High fuel and input prices • The obligation to sell produce at low prices to the Government • Difficulty in marketing the produce. 	Livelihood challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long working hours • Cruelty of employers and foremen (overwork, and not paying them their work's worth) • Inability to obtain drivers' licenses, forcing refugees to drive illegally Agriculture challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowhow in agriculture technologies, such as hydroponics • Lack of knowhow in greenhouse production and management • High costs of accessing land (renting and owning) • Lack of access to capital and agriculture inputs that would enable them to start their own businesses (start planting their own fields, etc.) • Difficulty in marketing the produce

5. Participation of Syrian refugees from Homs in food security and livelihood programmes in Jordan

Level of refugees' participation in livelihood projects/interventions

All surveyed refugees participated in cash for training or cash for work projects. The main projects revolved around the following activities: cleaning and maintaining roads; pruning and cleaning forests; cleaning natural and water reserves; building and cleaning irrigation canals; implementing soil conservation measures; digging water cisterns on farmers' private properties; building gabions and fences around forests; removing weeds from roadsides; maintaining and landscaping school gardens; and expanding dam streams.

Participants in cash for work interventions received a daily wage ranging from 12-15 JOD, in addition to lunch and transportation fees sometimes. The duration of such projects varied from several weeks to several months. According to the refugees, however, some individuals have participated many times in cash for work projects and received entrepreneurship support, which was allegedly due to nepotism. A very few of them have not heard of such projects being implemented in their areas. This might be due to the absence of any outreach efforts and the lack of a database and data sharing system among organizations that can identify those Syrian refugees who have already participated, and in what projects. It was noted by field surveyors that the survey participants did not know the name of the project(s) they participated in. Only a few knew the names of the implementing organization or, instead, always referred to OUMAM, meaning the United Nations.

Participants in cash for training interventions received a daily wage of 7 JOD. The training periods ranged from several days to several weeks. Most refugees participated in various life skills and artistic training sessions, such as training on employment and self-working, enhancing access to information and communication technology, and specialized vocational training in productive industrial occupations, such as carpentry, furniture, jewellery, mosaic

and others. Participants also received training in entrepreneurship skills, cost and profit calculation, marketing mechanisms, financial projects management for civil society institutions, reading and writing, basic accounting and professional and technical skills in line with the needs of the labour market, such as shaving, beauty industry, sewing, mobile maintenance and others. In addition, life and soft skills, such as self-knowledge, communication skills, conflict resolution, marketing skills and many more, were provided. In some projects, participants were provided with assets and financial incentives to help them start their small home-based businesses. That was mainly for those who have been trained in technical and professional skills, such as productive kitchen, confectionery, sewing, plumbing, hand crafts, etc. However, according to 93 per cent of the survey participants, the training did not help them to access jobs, except for a very few who were coached on the job for a considerable period of time. Ninety-one per cent of the respondents believe that training received will not be of much help if they return to their previous jobs in Homs.

Projects' relevance to the needs of Syrian refugees from Homs

Most of the refugees interviewed throughout the study believe that agriculture is the most important sector for them to secure their livelihoods, while other economic sectors, such as industry, trade, construction and business entrepreneurship, were not as important to them as working in the agriculture sector.

On the other hand, the most important livelihood determinants for most of the refugees are work opportunities; dangerous and unhealthy working conditions; absence of an official institution to take care of their interests; unavailability of health insurance; lack of social security; and fear of working without an official work permit.

Hence, many of the surveyed participants wish to participate in the following programmes/interventions: cash for work programmes; professional and technical training; empowerment of Syrian women; support of small and micro enterprises; and soft loans provision to the most vulnerable families. With most of the already implemented projects tackling these listed priorities and programmes/interventions activities, the findings of the

survey acknowledge that the current projects satisfy the Syrian refugees' demands, although more work should be done on empowering Syrian refugee women and including them in future livelihood projects. However, these priorities, as shown in the analysis, provide temporary jobs restricted to the project timeframe. This is convenient for refugees to ensure they cover their basic needs, although it will keep them dependent on humanitarian aid that prioritizes such interventions.

Projects' effectiveness

Although the projects improve the refugees' income and their access to adequate and healthy food through cash for work and training interventions, the benefit duration is limited to the project timeframe. However, training in life skills and communication, as well as psychosocial rehabilitation, helped to improve the psychological situation, increase social cohesion and reduce tensions between refugees and host communities. These actions, in turn, helped in increasing job opportunities, and, consequently, raising income and improving food security. Some survey participants said they will apply the skills they learned, especially in agriculture production, when they return to Homs.

Projects' impact on livelihood assets of Syrian refugees from Homs

Refugees reacted positively to the projects' impact on human assets, where cash for training helped them improve their skills and cover their basic needs. The type of training provided covered life skills and technical aspects across several sectors. Refugees stated that the financial contributions they received directly have improved their access to basic needs, particularly food. The training, however, did not improve their access to permanent or temporary jobs in the different sectors. Access to grants to set small businesses was limited and should be considered as a priority in any future planning. In addition, the interventions did not help improve the refugees' access to physical assets because of the restricted enabling environment and the nature of programming that focused on skills development. Most interventions were targeting both Syrian refugees and Jordanians and, accordingly, the social cohesion aspect was theoretically promoted. The win-win benefits for both populations played the core role in improving social cohesion.

6. COVID-19 pandemic's effect on Syrian refugees

With business closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the livelihoods of many refugees (92.5 per cent) were severely affected. Many were even forced to take loans to cover their basic needs. Nevertheless 4 per cent of the surveyed participants stated that their livelihoods were not affected as they were staying on farms and the lockdown did not restrict their movements.

When asked about the effect of COVID-19 on their desire to voluntarily return to Syria, 64 per cent of the refugees said that the pandemic had no effect on their choice to stay in Jordan or to repatriate home. However, 35 per cent of respondents indicated that the pandemic cancelled any voluntary return plans due to the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions in Syria resulting from the imposed sanctions.

7. Willingness to voluntarily return to Syria

Despite the few who wish to return to Homs, it is evident that most of the refugees do not want to return at the moment because of the unstable security conditions, lack of sustainable livelihood assets, fear of the unknown, and the loss of relatives and neighbours. There are very few refugees who do not wish to return at all, even if conditions improve. The Syrian conflict has destroyed everything they owned back home, their houses were demolished, looted or populated by others, and the same for their farms and infrastructure, such as water wells, irrigation canals, pumps and agricultural tools and equipment.

On the other hand, however, a refugee woman said: "My husband says if he has money, he will return immediately and invest in breeding sheep". Hence, the financial asset provision in Jordan and the financial support in Syria will help the Syrian refugees decide on their voluntary return since it will support the reconstruction of their homes and the start of their own businesses. Most refugees asserted that if they return to Homs, they will engage in the agricultural activities that they are currently practicing in Jordan, as well as the activities they were engaged in before the conflict back in Syria. Therefore, if security stabilizes, it is inevitable for them to return. Refugees said that they will need support in all livelihood assets, especially financial and physical, in order to rebuild their houses and the infrastructure of their farms.

03

**Policy recommendations for
agriculture and livelihoods solutions
under protracted displacement**



The findings of the study support tailored recommendations to promote solution-based outputs that prepare the ground for sustainable agriculture and livelihoods projects benefiting both Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan. These recommendations will also benefit Syrians who will voluntarily return to Homs Governorate when they deem the situation and conditions to be favourable. The recommendations listed below could inform humanitarian and development organizations on how to better plan future interventions.

- Accelerating the transition from humanitarian assistance to context-based economic development programming:** There is a growing acknowledgement that the current humanitarian funding and nature of programming focusing mainly on skills development are either insufficient or unsustainable under such a protracted crisis. Programming should consider more development-oriented approaches to improve the resilience of Syrian refugees and host communities and to decrease their dependency on humanitarian assistance over time. The positive legal framework adopted through the work permits supports this transition. Incorporating this legal framework within the nature of programming is essential to tackle core upstream and downstream challenges in major targeted sectors. The return on investment in a protracted crisis is higher in the long-term for both refugees and host communities. The Jordan Response Plan should lead this process by providing market assessments and opportunities, in addition to feasibility studies, to help the international community accelerate this move.
- Improving structured coordination mechanisms:** The coordination between the food security and livelihoods working groups under the Jordan Response Plan should be more structured to combine and complement the efforts through a phased-out approach. The Jordan Response Plan platform presents a positive enabling environment to pursue inclusive coordination and distribution of efforts, while avoiding programme duplications in the same region. This is a pre-requisite to accelerate the transition from humanitarian assistance to development-oriented programming. Learning from coordination processes in neighbouring countries should be encouraged by regional implementing

organizations. The coordination should structure short-term and multi-year programming to enhance complementarity and design phase-out strategies.

- Increasing access to credit:** There is insufficient financing available for Syrian refugees to establish small and micro enterprises. Microfinance institutions should be supported to facilitate tailor-made access to credit through guarantee mechanisms that could be installed as collaterals by various donors. Green financing for Jordanian businesses should be promoted and structured to expand the size of the job market while improving the efficiency of use of natural resources.
- Creating incentives for businesses to formalize employment through social-preference tax reduction:** Many businesses prefer not to formally declare Syrian employment to avoid tax payments and the difficulty of processing paperwork. The Government of Jordan might install a social-preference tax reduction for businesses employing vulnerable Syrians and Jordanians in remote areas. This would encourage businesses to report on employment and get a preferential tax rate that could cover their duties to the Ministry of Labour. This should be done while respecting an acceptable percentage distribution of employment between Syrian refugees and Jordanians.
- Supporting job matching institutions and initiatives:** Skills development must be complemented by job placement services to help matching and addressing market demands in a structured bottom-up approach. Digital transformation, such as creating e-platforms to link trained refugees with businesses, plays an important role in this aspect and should be promoted. These trained participants should understand the downstream needs and be exposed to the available choices that have the highest potential for temporary or permanent employment. Public and private institutions should be exposed to external experience in job placement, particularly in the European countries that received high numbers of Syrian refugees and included them in the job market.
- Emphasizing on-the-job coaching as a pre-requisite for success:** Skills development and new businesses are best supported when on-the-job training is offered through professional coaches to ensure market bottlenecks are addressed in an efficient

manner. Supporting the initiation of clusters is important to build the social capital and enhance knowledge sharing. This guarantees the success of market-oriented entrepreneurial activities within an enabling policy environment. Cluster development opens opportunities on the short and long terms and creates coherence between different players, which can help improve coordination and tailor interventions to address context-based needs.

- **Conducting economic impact assessments:** Economic impact assessments and cost benefit analysis should be conducted for the large budget projects to identify lessons learned and understand the return on investment in food security and livelihoods programming implemented under protracted displacement. The assessments should look at micro, meso and macro levels to capture the short- and long-term potential impacts and inform future programming.
- **Enhancing gender-sensitive programming:** Social and cultural restrictions affecting women's participation in livelihoods opportunities, among both Syrian refugees and Jordanian communities, should be addressed. Enabling mechanisms in terms of facilitating safe access to the trainings and providing childcare services are highly encouraged.
- **Prioritizing a sector-based approach relevant to the country of origin:** It is important for any future livelihoods programming to prioritize a list of common market-based needs between the place of origin and the host country. This facilitates livelihoods solutions and helps refugees to take part in livelihood restoration plans when they decide to voluntarily return with safety and dignity. It could start by selecting relevant value chains and identifying core weaknesses that could be addressed through skills development or livelihoods transformation.



Jordan hosts the second highest number of Syrian refugees per capita globally. With no foreseen political settlement for the Syrian conflict, refugees are trapped in a fragile environment with limited sustainable solutions. The present study aims to understand the characteristics and nature of agriculture and livelihood programmes targeting refugees from Homs and their host communities in Jordan, and examines their contributions to sustainable livelihoods. Food security and livelihood projects improved income and access to adequate and healthy food through cash-for-work and training interventions. Training in life skills and communication, as well as psychosocial rehabilitation, improved the collective mental health of refugees, increased social cohesion, and reduced tension between refugees and host communities.

To prepare the ground for sustainable agricultural livelihood solutions benefiting Syrian refugees and their host communities amid the protracted crisis in Jordan, and Syrians who decide to voluntarily return to Homs when the conditions become favourable, livelihood interventions should incorporate the following strategic objectives: accelerating the transition from humanitarian assistance to context-based economic development programming; improving structured coordination mechanisms; increasing access to credit; creating incentives for businesses to formalize employment through a social-preference tax reduction; supporting job matching institutions and initiatives; emphasizing on-the-job coaching as a pre-requisite for success; conducting economic impact assessments; enhancing gender-sensitive programming; and prioritizing a sector-based approach relevant to the country of origin.