



# Examining Barriers to Workforce Inclusion of Syrian Refugees in Jordan

25

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Renad Amjad  
Jaafar Aslan  
Emma Borgnäs  
Divya Chandran  
Elizabeth Clark  
Alessandro Ferreira dos Passos  
Jaiwon Joo  
Ola Mohajer



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Renad Amjad

Jaafar Aslan

Emma Borgnäs

Divya Chandran

Elizabeth Clark

Alessandro Ferreira dos Passos

Jaiwon Joo

Ola Mohajer

School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA)

Columbia University

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Renad Amjad  
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School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA)  
Columbia University

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As the conflict in Syria enters its sixth year, Jordan continues to shoulder a disproportionate refugee burden as it hosts 2.7 million refugees - making it the second largest refugee-hosting country per inhabitants in the world. Jordan has opened its doors to more than 650,000 Syrian refugees; the vast majority - around 79% - live outside of camps and face precarious living conditions. Against this backdrop, the Jordan Compact signals a paradigm shift in responding to the Syrian refugee crisis as it sets out a roadmap to achieve long term resilience for Jordanians and Syrian refugees alike by shifting the focus from short-term aid to job creation, growth, and investment.

This report focusses on the livelihoods component of the Jordan Compact and provides a timely analysis of the new enabling environment created by the modified trade agreements between Jordan and the EU. While the Jordan Compact envisions the creation of a robust investment landscape, our primary focus is to examine the barriers faced by Syrian refugees' in their pursuit of work permits and sustainable livelihoods in Jordan. To this end, this report analyses specific barriers that limit the formal employment of Syrian refugees in the Development Zones, particularly in the export industry.

Putting refugee perspectives at the centre of the analysis, the research reveals key recommendations for meaningful strategies to increase the formal participation of Syrian refugees in the Jordanian labour market. Beyond identifying ways in which Syrian refugees can access formal work in Jordan, it is paramount that they are able to access decent work opportunities to secure sustainable livelihoods and most importantly, their dignity. While the report looks at the short-term barriers on both the demand and supply side, a comprehensive analysis of the longer-term effects of the Jordan Compact, especially on the demand side (e.g. employers, industries, investors), is beyond the scope of this report.

Our research findings are based on 41 semi-structured expert and stakeholder interviews with government, non-governmental organizations (NGO), international organizations, donor agencies, trade and employers' unions, academia, and refugees and five Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with a total of 138 Syrian refugees in Jordan. This primary research was supplemented by an extensive review of key publications on refugee economies and compacts, livelihoods and social cohesion programming, the Jordanian labour market and the relaxed rules of origin. To better understand the gender-differential impact of the Jordan Compact on Syrian refugee women's entry into the formal labour force, a gender analysis framework is mainstreamed throughout the report.

Our findings reveal eleven supply-side and demand-side barriers that continue to affect the uptake of work permits and formal employment. The barriers are divided into two categories:

1. When refugees want to apply for **work permits**, they face barriers in the following areas:
  - **Difficulties in obtaining the necessary documentation to access work**

**permits.**

Syrian refugees cited the lack of documentation as the greatest obstacle to obtaining the Ministry of Interior (MOI) cards - which is a requirement for work permit applications - even though they were eligible for them. In addition to this, the difficulties that refugees in camps face in obtaining leave permits may limit their awareness about local work opportunities and may reduce their attractiveness to employers, consequently reducing their possibility of being included in the local labour market.

- **Lack of clear and concise information about employment-related regulations.** Our FGD and expert interviews have pointed to the lack of clear and concise information about employment-related regulations, especially related to Syrian refugees, as one of the main barriers Syrian refugees face in accessing formal work opportunities. There continues to be critical information gaps in 1) work permit and employment rules, and 2) social security rules.
- **Quotas on the employment of Jordanians and closed professions.** Jordanian employers and their associations reported that it is often difficult to meet the Jordanian quota - especially in the garment sector - due to a range of factors. This in turn affects Syrian employees' prospects of obtaining work permits because employers who fail to meet the required quota for Jordanian employees are unable to hire Syrian employees. In addition to this, the nature of closed professions is a barrier for Syrian refugees' participation in the formal labour market because the jobs that match their skills and expertise are in the closed professions category.
- **Lack of labour market information about labour demand and supply.** Our findings revealed a two-way information problem in the labour market: 1) employers lack accurate information about Syrian refugees' labour supply skills and distribution in the territory, and 2) Syrian refugees inside and outside the refugee camps lack adequate information about job opportunities.

2. When Syrian refugees seek **sustainable livelihoods**, the following barriers affect their preference to seek employment in the export industry:

- **Low wages in the export industry and higher wage opportunities in the informal sector.** Our FGD findings show that the minimum wage in garment sector is below the wage expectations of Syrian refugees because it is not sufficient to cover living expenses, such as rent and food, which amounts to more than JD 200 (US\$ 282) per month. Our findings also show that informal work opportunities with higher wages steer Syrian refugees away from seeking employment in the export industry.
- **Prohibitive commuting distance and cost.** In interviews with stakeholders across Jordan, transportation, specifically prohibitive commuting distances, emerges as a central hurdle for Syrian refugees to take up work in factories in the Development Zones. The issue of prohibitive commuting distance is a key barrier for women who are primary caregivers in their households cannot afford to be away from their homes and families for a long period of time in a day.

- **Perceptions of sub-optimal working conditions in factories.** Though refugees often face a number of hurdles in accessing the formal labour market, at times the working conditions in these workplaces, or refugees' perceptions of such conditions, prove to be a barrier both for employers to retain refugees and refugees to find sustainable work.
- **Societal attitudes towards women's employment.** There seems to be a wide-held belief that specific jobs are better-suited for women. During focus group discussions with Syrian refugee women in Zaatari refugee camp and in Mafraq, Syrian refugee women expressed that they feared that they would face harassment at the factories and a lack of women-only working space. There were perceptions of factories as 'prisons' and that it was socially unacceptable for women to work with men. While most Syrian refugee women interviewed for this report expressed willingness to work, they indicated a strong preference for jobs that allow them to work from or closer to their homes.
- **Fears related to work formalization.** Refugee insights from FGDs and NGO experts highlight that one of the main reasons Syrian refugees do not take up work permits is their fear of losing UNHCR cash assistance. Even though the official information is that holding a work permit is not a sufficient condition to make refugees ineligible for cash assistance, it may indeed have this result, and the fear that this might be the case is very real - a fear that was consistently mentioned by refugees and NGOs throughout our primary research.
- **The existence of more appealing job opportunities in the informal sector.** For Syrian refugee women who prefer to work from or closer to their homes, the informal sector is viewed as a viable income-generating alternative. Syrian refugees' reluctance to apply for work permits stem from the design of the one-year renewable work permit which is tied to a particular employer in a specific job. This limits their ability to switch jobs or employers.
- **Employers' hiring preferences.** Social security costs and concerns related to increased workplace inspections are two factors that prevent employers from hiring Syrian refugees. In the garment sector, migrant workers make up 75% of the workforce and are highly skilled - therefore, Syrian refugee workers might require additional training and supervision, which factors into increased costs at lower efficiency levels.

The research concludes with recommendations, organized in five clusters, to minimize the barriers faced by Syrian refugees when accessing work permits and sustainable livelihoods in Jordan. These recommendations include:

#### 1. **Improve processes and reduce employment costs**

One of the main barriers that refugees identified in obtaining a work permit was the difficulties in acquiring the necessary documentation – most notably the Mol card – that is required to apply for work permits. The lack of documentation is for many refugees also an important barrier in obtaining the



Mol card. A first step in facilitating the process of obtaining work permits would therefore be to **simplify the process of obtaining an Mol card**. In addition to this, we recommend **smoothing the process of acquiring leave permits** and **lengthening the validity of leave permits** to incentivise Syrian refugees to seek employment. Social security costs is another major barrier that can be eliminated by **substituting the work permit costs and social security contributions with a tax on firms' revenues or profits**, calibrating the level of the tax to reach the same level of fiscal revenue obtained *ex ante*.

**2. Reduce labour market and work permit information asymmetries**

Syrian refugees in Jordan often lack full or coherent information about labour market regulations including information about the process and costs of obtaining a work permit as well as costs and portability of social security. Therefore, **a one-stop system to provide job-related information and services** for refugees and employers in the form of a centralised government web page will help address information asymmetries that often hinder Syrian refugees from applying for work permits. Furthermore, Syrian refugees are not fully aware of the available job opportunities, and employers lack information about the geographical distribution and skills characteristics of the Syrian labour force. A solution to this may be the **creation of a labour market intermediation service**, either publicly or privately provided, to connect refugees and employers. A complementary way to assist with refugees' job search - especially for refugees living in camps - is to have employers coming to camps to do **information sessions for refugees in camps**.

**3. Increase the participation of non-Jordanians in restricted sectors**

**Opening up additional sectors** to Syrian workers will enable more Syrian refugees to participate in the Jordanian job market. We acknowledge that opening up or expanding the participation of non-Jordanian workers in these sectors is a politically sensitive issue because of the high unemployment rate among Jordanians, amounting to around 14.7% in the second quarter of 2016. However, if sectors related directly or indirectly to the export industry suffer from a shortage of Jordanian workers, opening up these sectors will create more opportunities for Syrians without threatening the position of Jordanians in the labour market.

**4. Increase productivity and competitiveness of the export industry**

We recommend an alternative approach to increasing the minimum wage by which employers are encouraged to **create fiscal space to raise net wages by reducing other expenses and costs**. This would result in meeting Syrians' wage level expectations (JD 300 or US\$ 423 per month) and would decrease their preference for working in the informal sector. To encourage higher participation of Syrian refugee women in the export industry - particularly the garment sector - we recommend **establishing satellite factories in urban settings and camps** to alleviate the costs and psychological barriers associated with long-distance commuting to Development Zones. In addition to investment in satellite factories, **investment in logistics infrastructure**, especially the maintenance and expansion of more heavily trafficked roadways connecting the Mafraq, Irbid, and Zarqa governorates, is essential. Investment in public projects has proved

to have far reaching economic benefits; these projects can serve not only to improve commuting, but also to provide large-scale employment.

**5. Improve working conditions, especially for women**

Employers should take steps to ***create an enabling environment for women*** to work by accommodating women's concerns in the workplace. It would be a good first step for stakeholders such as humanitarian and development actors to map some of these concerns and distribute this type of information to employers, in order to improve the understanding of what type of measures would incentivise women to seek job opportunities in their factories. This will also help alleviate some of the negative connotation - or reason for shame - to have a wife working outside of the home. To address the perception and reality of suboptimal working conditions, specifically harassment and discrimination at work, employers should implement and monitor operational complaint mechanisms for Syrian refugees in the workplace to ensure accountability and ***strengthen efforts to improve working conditions.***

## ملخص تنفيذي

مع دخول النزاع في سوريا عامه السادس، لا يزال الأردن يتحمل عبئاً غير متناسب حيث يستضيف 2.7 مليون لاجئ، مما يجعله ثاني أكبر بلد مضيف للاجئين في العالم بالنسبة لعدد السكان. فتح الأردن أبوابه لأكثر من 650000 لاجئ سوري، الغالبية العظمى منهم حوالي 79٪ يعيشون خارج المخيمات ويواجهون ظروف معيشية غير مستقرة. في ظل هذه الظروف يشير ميثاق الأردن (Jordan compact) إلى تحول نوعي في آلية الاستجابة لأزمة اللاجئين السوريين حيث أنه يضع خارطة طريق لتحقيق القدرة على المواجهة طويلة الأمد لكل من الأردنيين واللاجئين السوريين على حد سواء وذلك من خلال تحويل التركيز من تقديم المساعدات على المدى القصير الأجل إلى العمل على خلق فرص العمل، والاستثمار.

هذا التقرير يركز على مكون سبل العيش ضمن ميثاق الأردن ويقوم بتحليل البيئة الجديدة التي أنشأتها الاتفاقيات التجارية المعدلة بين الأردن والاتحاد الأوروبي. بينما تقوم رؤية ميثاق الأردن على إنشاء إطار استثماري قوي، فإن تركيزنا الأساسي هو دراسة العوائق التي يواجهها اللاجئون السوريون في سعيهم للحصول على تصاريح العمل وسبل العيش المستدام في الأردن. وتحقيقاً لهذه الغاية، يحلل هذا التقرير العوائق التي تحد من العمالة الرسمية للاجئين السوريين في مناطق التنمية، ولا سيما في قطاع التصدير.

من خلال التركيز على وجهة نظر اللاجئين وجعلها المحور الرئيسي للتحليل، يكشف البحث عن توصيات استراتيجية تهدف لزيادة أعداد اللاجئين السوريين في سوق العمل الأردني الرسمي. وبعيداً عن تحديد السبل التي يتمكن اللاجئون السوريون من خلالها الوصول إلى سوق العمل الرسمي في الأردن، فإنه من الأهمية بمكان أن يتمكنوا من الوصول إلى فرص عمل لائقة تساعدهم على تأمين سبل العيش المستدام والأهم من ذلك الحفاظ على كرامتهم. تركز الدراسة على العوائق قصيرة الأجل لكل من العرض والطلب على حد سواء، أما التحليل الشامل للأثار طويلة الأجل لميثاق الأردن وخاصة على جانب الطلب (أصحاب العمل والصناعات والمستثمرين)، يعتبر خارج نطاق هذه الدراسة.

تستند نتائج البحث على 41 مقابلة شبه منظمة (semi-structured) مع أصحاب العلاقة من المنظمات الحكومية وغير الحكومية والمنظمات الدولية والوكالات المانحة والاتحادات التجارية وأرباب العمل والأوساط الأكاديمية واللاجئين وخمس مجموعات نقاش مركزة مع ما مجموعه 138 لاجئ سوري في الأردن. وقد استكمل البحث الرئيسي باستعراض واسع للأبحاث والدراسات الرئيسية عن اقتصاديات اللاجئين وسبل كسب العيش وسوق العمل الأردني وقواعد المنشأ المبسطة.

تكشف النتائج التي توصلنا إليها عن أحد عشر عائق من جانب العرض والطلب ما زالت تؤثر على تصاريح العمل والعمالة الرسمية. تنقسم هذه العوائق إلى فئتين:

1. عندما يرغب اللاجئون في التقديم على تصاريح عمل، يواجهون العوائق في النواحي التالية:
  - **صعوبات في الحصول على الوثائق اللازمة لاستصدار تصاريح العمل.** أشار اللاجئون السوريون إلى أن عدم حيازتهم على بعض الوثائق الرسمية المطلوبة للحصول على بطاقة وزارة الداخلية التي تعد مطلب أساسي من متطلبات تصريح العمل يعتبر أكبر عائق حتى في حال كانوا مؤهلين للحصول عليها. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن الصعوبات التي يواجهها اللاجئون المقيمون في المخيمات في الحصول على تصاريح الإجازات قد تحد من معرفتهم بفرص العمل المحلية وقد تقلل من جاذبيتهم بالنسبة لأصحاب العمل، مما يقلل بالتالي من إمكانية إدراجهم في سوق العمل المحلية.
  - **عدم وجود معلومات واضحة ومحددة حول القوانين والإجراءات المتعلقة بالتوظيف.** أشارت نقاشاتنا مع الخبراء و مقابلاتنا التي أجريناها مع اللاجئين السوريين من خلال المجموعات النقاشية المركزة إلى عدم وجود معلومات واضحة ومحددة حول اللوائح والقوانين والإجراءات المتعلقة بالتوظيف، خاصة فيما يتعلق باللاجئين السوريين، وتعد هذه العقبة إحدى العقبات الرئيسية التي يواجهها اللاجئون السوريون في الوصول إلى فرص العمل الرسمية. لا تزال هناك ثغرات أساسية في المعلومات المتعلقة في (1) قوانين تصاريح العمل و (2) قواعد الضمان الاجتماعي.
  - **الحصص المخصصة لتوظيف الأردنيين والمهن المغلقة.** أفاد أصحاب العمل الأردنيون أنه غالباً ما يكون من الصعب تلبية الحصص المخصصة لتوظيف الأردنيين ولا سيما في قطاع صناعة الألبسة بسبب مجموعة من العوامل. ذلك يؤثر بدوره على إمكانية توظيف السوريين وحصولهم على تصاريح العمل اللازمة لأن أصحاب

العمل الذين لا يستوفون الحصة المطلوبة للموظفين الأردنيين غير قادرين على توظيف عمال سوريين. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تشكل طبيعة المهن المغلقة عائقاً أمام مشاركة اللاجئين السوريين في سوق العمل الرسمي حيث أن الوظائف التي تتناسب مع مهاراتهم وخبراتهم تقع ضمن نطاق المهن المغلقة.

● **قلة المعلومات المتوافرة عن العرض والطلب في سوق العمل.** كشفت النتائج التي توصلنا إليها عن وجود مشكلة في اتجاهين ضمن سوق العمل: (1) عدم توفر معلومات دقيقة لدى أصحاب العمل حول مهارات العمل لدى اللاجئين السوريين ومناطق تواجدهم و (2) افتقار اللاجئين السوريين المقيمين داخل المخيمات وخارجها إلى المعلومات الكافية عن فرص العمل .

2. **عندما يسعى اللاجئون السوريون إلى الحصول على سبل عيش مستدامة، تؤثر العوائق التالية على خيارات بحثهم عن عمل في صناعة التصدير:**

● **انخفاض الأجور في صناعة التصدير وارتفاع الأجور في القطاع غير الرسمي.** أظهرت نتائج مجموعات النقاش المركزة أن الحد الأدنى للأجور في قطاع صناعة الألبسة أقل من توقعات اللاجئين السوريين حيث أنه لا يكفي لتغطية نفقات المعيشة مثل الإيجار والغذاء، والتي تصل إلى أكثر من 200 دينار أردني (282 دولار أمريكي) شهرياً. كذلك تبين النتائج أن فرص العمل غير الرسمية والتي ترتبط عادةً بأجور أعلى تدفع اللاجئين السوريين إلى عدم البحث عن عمل في صناعة التصدير.

● **مسافة التنقل الطويلة والتكلفة المرتبطة بها.** من خلال المقابلات التي أجريت مع أصحاب العلاقة في جميع أنحاء الأردن، تظهر وسائل النقل، وتحديدًا مسافات التنقل الطويلة كعقبة رئيسية أمام اللاجئين السوريين للعمل في المصانع ضمن المناطق التنموية. إن مسألة مسافة التنقل الطويلة هي عائق رئيسي أمام النساء اللاتي يقمن بتقديم الرعاية لأسرهن، ولا يمكنهن تحمل تكاليف الابتعاد عن منازلهن وأسرن لفترة طويلة من الوقت.

● **التصورات المسبقة حول ظروف العمل في المصانع واعتبارها دون المستوى الأمثل.** على الرغم من أن اللاجئين يواجهون في الكثير من الأحيان عدداً من العقبات في الوصول إلى سوق العمل الرسمي، إلا أن التصور المسبق عن ظروف العمل في المصانع واعتبارها دون المستوى الأمثل تشكل عائقاً لأصحاب العمل للاحتفاظ باللاجئين و أيضاً عائق لللاجئين من أجل إيجاد عمل مستدام.

● **المواقف المجتمعية تجاه عمل المرأة.** من خلال مجموعات النقاش يبدو أن هناك اعتقاداً واسعاً بأن هنالك وظائف محددة أكثر ملائمة للمرأة حيث أعربت اللاجئات السوريات عن خشيتهن من تعرضهن للمضايقات في المصانع والافتقار إلى مساحة عمل مخصصة للنساء فقط. كانت هناك تصورات عن المصانع بأنها "سجون" وأنه من غير المقبول اجتماعياً أن تعمل المرأة مع الرجل. وفي حين أعربت معظم اللاجئات السوريات اللواتي تمت مقابلتهن خلال الإعداد لهذا التقرير عن رغبتهن في العمل في المصانع، إلا أنهن أظهرن تفضيلاً كبيراً للوظائف التي تسمح لهن بالعمل من منازلهن أو في أماكن قريبة منها.

● **المخاوف المتعلقة بإضفاء الطابع الرسمي على العمل.** تسلط رؤى اللاجئين وخبراء المنظمات غير الحكومية الضوء على أن أحد الأسباب الرئيسية لعدم حصول اللاجئين السوريين على تصاريح عمل وهو خوفهم من فقدان المساعدات النقدية التي تقدمها المفوضية العامة لشؤون اللاجئين. على الرغم من أن المعلومات الرسمية تفيد بأن الحصول على تصريح عمل ليس شرطاً كافياً لجعل اللاجئ غير مؤهل للحصول على المساعدات النقدية، لكنها عقبة محتملة. فالعائق الذي يواجهه اللاجئون هو الخوف من أن هذه النتيجة قد تكون محتملة. هذا الخوف ذكر باستمرار من قبل اللاجئين والمنظمات غير الحكومية على حد سواء أثناء إجرائنا للبحث.

● **وجود فرص عمل أكثر جاذبية في القطاع غير الرسمي.** بالنسبة للنساء اللاجئات السوريات اللواتي يفضلن العمل من منازلهن أو في أماكن قريبة منها فإنه ينظرن إلى القطاع غير الرسمي باعتباره بديلاً أفضل للحصول على دخل أعلى. ويعزى عزوف اللاجئين السوريين عن التقديم على تصاريح العمل إلى آلية وهيكلية الحصول عليها. حيث أن تصريح العمل صالح فقط لمدة عام واحد قابل للتجديد ويرتبط بصاحب عمل محدد وفي وظيفة محددة. وبالتالي يحد من قدرة اللاجئين على تغيير وظائفهم أو العمل لدى أصحاب عمل آخرين.

● **خيارات أصحاب العمل المتعلقة بالتوظيف.** تكاليف الضمان الاجتماعي والمخاوف المتعلقة بزيادة عمليات التفتيش في مكان العمل هما عاملان يمنعان أرباب العمل من توظيف اللاجئين السوريين. وفي قطاع صناعة الملابس، يشكل العمال المهاجرون 75% من القوى العاملة وهم من ذوي المهارات العالية ولذلك قد يحتاج العمال السوريون اللاجئين إلى تدريب وإشراف إضافيين، الأمر الذي يؤدي إلى زيادة التكاليف بمستويات أقل من الكفاءة.

ويختتم البحث بتوصيات للحد من العوائق التي يواجهها اللاجئون السوريون عند الحصول على تصاريح العمل وسبل العيش المستدام في الأردن وتشمل هذه التوصيات خمس نقاط:

### 1. تحسين العمليات وخفض تكاليف العمالة.

من أحد أكبر العقبات التي يتعرض لها اللاجئون أثناء الحصول على تصاريح العمل هي الصعوبة في الحصول على الوثائق اللازمة وعلى الأخص بطاقة وزارة الداخلية. إن نقص الوثائق لدى العديد من اللاجئين يشكل عقبة هامة في الحصول على بطاقة وزارة الداخلية في المقام الأول. لذلك فإن الخطوة الأولى في تسهيل عملية الحصول على تصاريح العمل هي تبسيط عملية الحصول على بطاقة وزارة الداخلية. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، نوصي بتسهيل عملية الحصول على تصاريح الإجازات وإطالة صلاحية تصاريح الإجازات لتحفيز اللاجئين السوريين على البحث عن عمل. وتمثل تكاليف الضمان الاجتماعي عائقاً رئيسياً آخر يمكن القضاء عليه عن طريق استبدال تكاليف تصاريح العمل ومساهمات الضمان الاجتماعي من خلال اقرار ضريبة على إيرادات الشركات أو أرباحها، ومعادلة مستوى الضريبة للوصول إلى نفس مستوى الإيرادات المالية التي تم الحصول عليها قبل ذلك.

### 2. الحد من الاختلاف والتباين بين معلومات سوق العمل وتراخيص العمل.

غالباً ما يفتقر اللاجئون السوريون في الأردن إلى معلومات كاملة ومحددة حول أنظمة سوق العمل بما في ذلك معلومات عن آلية وتكاليف الحصول على تصريح عمل، وكذلك تكلفة الضمان الاجتماعي. ولذلك، فإن إيجاد نظام النافذة الواحدة لتوفير المعلومات والخدمات ذات الصلة لكل من اللاجئين وأرباب العمل على شكل صفحة مركزية للحكومة على شبكة الإنترنت سيساعد في معالجة التباين في المعلومات التي غالباً ما تعوق اللاجئين السوريين من التقدم للحصول على تصاريح العمل. وعلاوة على ذلك، فإن اللاجئين السوريين لا يدركون تماماً فرص العمل المتاحة، وأرباب العمل يفتقرون إلى معلومات عن التوزيع الجغرافي والمهارات التي تتمتع بها القوى العاملة السورية. قد يتمثل الحل لذلك في إنشاء خدمة وساطة في سوق العمل، سواء كانت علنية أو خاصة، لربط اللاجئين وأرباب العمل. ومن الطرق التكميلية للمساعدة في البحث عن عمل للاجئين وخاصة للاجئين الذين يعيشون في المخيمات أن يأتي أصحاب العمل إلى المخيمات للقيام بعقد جلسات (معرض توظيف) مع اللاجئين في المخيمات بهدف إعلامهم بالفرص المتاحة.

### 3. زيادة مشاركة غير الأردنيين في القطاعات المقيدة.

إن فتح قطاعات إضافية أمام العمالة السورية سيمكن المزيد من اللاجئين السوريين من المشاركة في سوق العمل الأردني. إننا ندرك بأن فتح أو توسيع مشاركة العمالة غير الأردنية في هذه القطاعات مسألة حساسة سياسياً بسبب ارتفاع معدل البطالة بين الأردنيين، حيث بلغت حوالي 14.7% في الربع الثاني من عام 2016. ومع ذلك، إذا كانت القطاعات ذات الصلة المباشرة أو غير المباشرة بقطاع التصدير تعاني من نقص في العمالة الأردنية فإن فتح هذه القطاعات سيخلق المزيد من الفرص للسوريين دون أن يشكل ذلك تهديداً للعمالة الأردنية.

### 4. زيادة الإنتاجية والقدرة التنافسية لصناعة التصدير.

ونوصي باتباع أسلوب بديل لزيادة الحد الأدنى للأجور لتشجع أرباب العمل على إيجاد حيز مالي لزيادة الأجور الصافية عن طريق تخفيض النفقات والتكاليف الأخرى. ومن شأن ذلك أن يؤدي إلى تلبية تطلعات السوريين لمستوى الأجور (300 دينار أو 423 دولاراً في الشهر)، ومن شأنه أن يقلل من تفضيلهم للعمل في القطاع غير الرسمي. ولتشجيع زيادة مشاركة النساء السوريات اللاجئات في قطاع التصدير ولا سيما في قطاع صناعة الملابس. كما نوصي بإنشاء مصانع فرعية في المناطق الحضرية والمخيمات لتخفيف التكاليف والحواجز النفسية المرتبطة بالتنقل لمسافات طويلة إلى المناطق التنموية. وبالإضافة إلى الاستثمار في المصانع الفرعية، فإن الاستثمار في البنية التحتية اللوجستية، ولا سيما صيانة وتوسيع الطرق الأكثر استخداماً والتي تربط محافظات المفرق وإربد والزرقاء أمر ضروري. إن الاستثمار في المشاريع العامة له فوائد اقتصادية بعيدة

المدى؛ هذه المشاريع يمكن أن تخدم أهداف أخرى كتوفير عمالة على نطاق واسع وليس فقط لتحسين التنقل.

#### **5. تحسين ظروف العمل، ولا سيما بالنسبة للمرأة.**

ينبغي لأصحاب العمل أن يتخذوا خطوات لتهيئة بيئة تمكن المرأة من العمل من خلال الأخذ بعين الاعتبار مخاوف المرأة في مكان العمل. كخطوة أولى في هذا الطريق فإنه من الجيد بالنسبة لأصحاب العلاقة مثل الجهات الفاعلة الإنسانية والإنمائية العمل على تحديد هذه المخاوف أو المشاغل ومشاركة هكذا نوع من المعلومات مع أصحاب العمل من أجل تحسين فهمهم لهذه المشاغل والعمل على تحديد نوع التدابير التي من شأنها أن تحفز المرأة على البحث عن فرص عمل في المصانع. وسيساعد ذلك أيضا على التخفيف من بعض الدلالات السلبية أو العار- من عمل المرأة خارج المنزل. ولمعالجة التصور المسبق وظروف العمل وتحديد التحرش والتمييز في العمل، يجب على أصحاب العمل تنفيذ ورصد آليات الشكاوى التشغيلية للاجئين السوريين في مكان العمل لضمان المساءلة وتعزيز الجهود الرامية إلى تحسين ظروف العمل.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The war in Syria has, since its onset in 2011, resulted in large numbers of refugees fleeing to neighboring countries, amounting to what the then UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, in summer 2014 described as "the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era."<sup>1</sup> In Jordan, which shares a 375 kilometer long border with Syria, more than 650,000 Syrian refugees are currently registered with the UNHCR.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the country hosts another 72,000 refugees mainly from Iraq, Yemen and Sudan. With 87 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants, or 8.7% of the population, Jordan is the second-largest host of refugees per inhabitants in the world and the sixth largest refugee-hosting country in the world in absolute numbers.<sup>3</sup>

The refugee influx due to the war in Syria has posed significant challenges to the local communities and economies that host refugees in Jordan.<sup>4</sup> Today, most Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR (78.6%<sup>5</sup>) live outside of camps in the northern governorates where competition for resources and services with the host community is most intense. Partly because of the refugee influx, partly because of an economy that is slowing down for a variety of reasons,<sup>6</sup> unemployment in Jordan rose from 11.4% in the first quarter of 2014 (when it was at its lowest point since 2007) to 15.6% in the first quarter of 2017.<sup>7</sup> The international community has recognised the strains that Jordan's economy and infrastructure is put under and has directed funds and resources to alleviate some of that pressure. However, matching resources with needs is increasingly difficult. In 2016, UNHCR requested US\$ 319 million, most of which was budgeted to cover its Syrian refugee response operations, but only received about US\$ 185 million - leaving 42% of the funding need unmet.<sup>8</sup>

In the face of this challenge, there has been a growing recognition of the need for a combined approach that seeks to meet the needs of refugees, while at the same time stimulating economic development in the region. Non-traditional actors are increasingly engaging in the humanitarian space to provide more long-term solutions and to strengthen the development approach to situations of forced displacement. These actors include multilateral banks, the private sector and civil society. The World Bank, for instance, has recognised that forced displacement is emerging as an important development challenge<sup>9</sup> not only because extreme poverty is increasingly concentrated among refugees (93% of Syrians residing outside of camps live under the Jordanian poverty line),<sup>10</sup> but also because the effects on the local economies and physical infrastructure of host communities create new development dynamics

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<sup>1</sup> Edwards, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, 2017a.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR, 2017b.

<sup>4</sup> Government of Jordan, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> As of 31 March 2017, UNHCR, 2017a.

<sup>6</sup> For an analysis of Jordan's economic growth, see World Bank, 2017, International Monetary Fund, 2016 and International Monetary Fund, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Trading Economics, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, 2017b.

<sup>9</sup> World Bank, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, 2017a.

that affect entire countries.<sup>11</sup> In these dynamics lie both risks and opportunities.

The idea that migration can contribute to development – if managed wisely in collaboration with all stakeholders and in a spirit of true responsibility-sharing – is echoed in numerous global normative frameworks that have been adopted within the past few years. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises “the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development”,<sup>12</sup> while the Agenda for Humanity calls for all stakeholders to, in the pursuit of “leaving no one behind”,<sup>13</sup> integrate refugees into communities by providing employment opportunities.<sup>14</sup> The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted by states at the UN General Assembly in September 2016, boldly states that “migrants can make positive and profound contributions to economic and social development in their host societies and to global wealth creation”, thus bringing “enormous development potential.”<sup>15</sup>

In order to tap this potential, host states and the donor community alike are increasingly coming together to enact proactive trade and employment policies in order to create the right incentives for productive investments. While the international community has committed to help strengthen the resilience of host countries and communities through employment creation and income generation schemes,<sup>16</sup> several states, including Jordan, have taken progressive steps to opening their labour markets to refugees. Indeed, the livelihoods component of the Jordan Response Plan 2017-2019 (JRP), a comprehensive national plan combining refugee and development responses, articulates the aim to “ensure dignified, sustainable livelihoods and create economic opportunities for both Jordanians and Syrian refugees”.<sup>17</sup>

The importance of using national policies and action plans to foster opportunities for the self-reliance of refugees through formal and decent work is echoed in several international instruments. Moreover, much research has showed that affording refugees the right to work enhances their resilience and reduces their vulnerability. Meanwhile, the benefits that come with making good use of refugees’ variety of skills and resources are often diffused into local economies, thus contributing to national development.<sup>18</sup>

During the drafting of the 1951 Convention it was noted that “without the right to work, all other rights are meaningless.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, several Member States made the commitment to increase access for refugees to labour markets and social services, strengthening coping capacity and

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<sup>11</sup> United Nations, 2016b.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations, 2016b.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations, 2016a.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations, 2016b.

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation - Jordan, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> International Labour Organization, 2016a. Zetter & Ruaudel, 2016. Alexander, Bloom, Kaplan, & Omata, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> UN Economic and Social Council, 1950.



self-reliance.<sup>20</sup> This is also a key pillar of the *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework* (CRRF) that was adopted with the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The CRRF is envisioned as a central part of the future Global Compact on Refugees, and it highlights the need to establish an enabling framework for refugees, which will work towards achieving refugees' self-reliance. To this end, Member States are "pledging to expand the legal, social and economic opportunities for refugees to access education, health care and services, livelihoods and labour markets [...] consider ways of enabling refugees [...] to use their skills and capacities, in recognition of the fact that empowered refugees are better able to contribute to their own and their communities' protection."<sup>21</sup> Recognizing the particular relevance of formal livelihood strategies, the International Labour Organization established Guiding Principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market.<sup>22</sup>

In order to turn the Syrian refugee crisis into a development opportunity, international and Jordanian actors recognise the importance of attracting new investment to Jordan. Thus, during the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference in London in February 2016, the Jordan Compact was established. The Compact was a direct response to Jordan's request<sup>23</sup> to the EU to relax some of the rules of the EU Association Agreement and the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement, and it enabled Jordan to export industrial items duty-free to the EU market for a period of ten years.<sup>24</sup> The intention of the Compact is to stimulate additional investment, economic activity and employment creation - especially for Syrian refugees - in specific Development Zones<sup>25</sup> in Jordan (See Map 1).

This report analyses the effect of the new environment created by the Jordan Compact vis-a-vis the modified EU trade regulations on the employment of Syrian refugees in Jordan in order to identify the main barriers keeping Syrians - who need sustainable work and income - from working in Jordanian businesses - who need Syrian employees to comply with the new EU rules of origin.

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<sup>20</sup> Outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Para 16 of the CRRF that was adopted as Annex I of the New York Declaration.

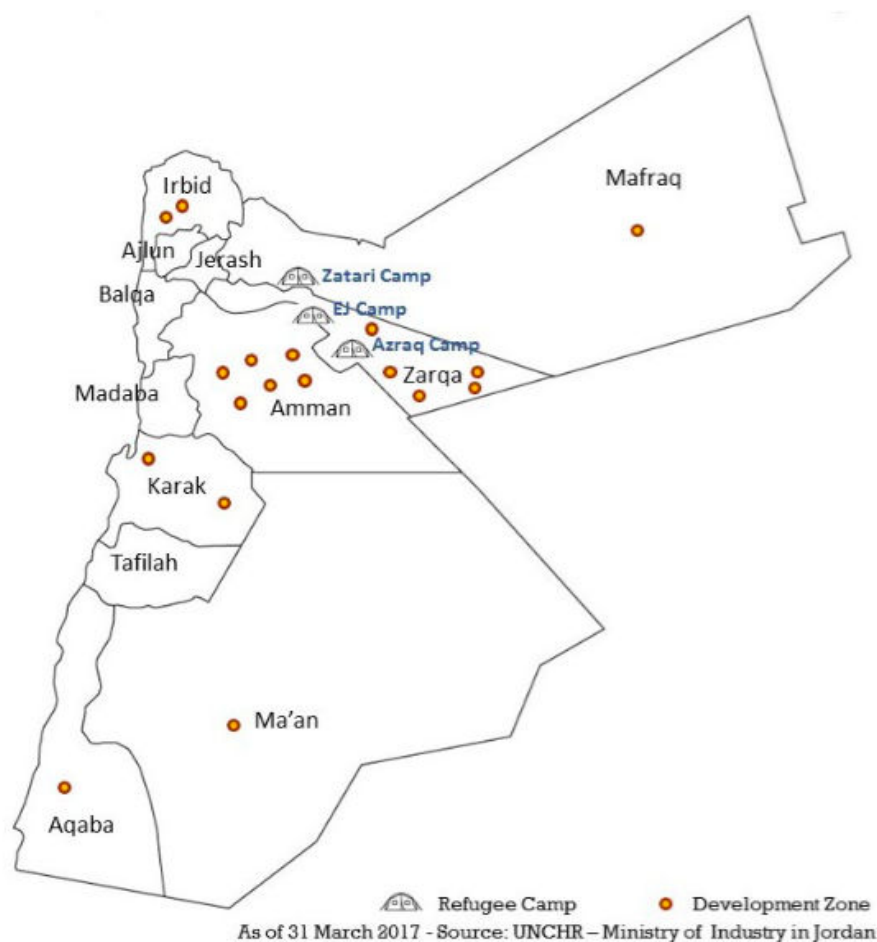
<sup>22</sup> ILO, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> European Commission, 2016b.

<sup>24</sup> European Commission, 2016a and European Commission, 2016b.

<sup>25</sup> Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung & Royal Scientific Society, 2013.

Special Development Zones



**MAP 1: Locations of refugee camps and development zones in Jordan.**

## **The Jordan Compact - a panacea for job creation in Jordan?**

The Jordan Compact includes three main pillars, one of which is to turn “the Syrian refugee crisis into a development opportunity that attracts new investments.”<sup>26</sup> This will be achieved by opening up the EU market using simplified rules of origin. Rules of origin stipulate a threshold of 40% for non-originating materials for certain products, and single transformations for garment products. Simplifying the rules of origin increases the threshold from 40% to 70% and from single to double transformation for garment products.<sup>27,28,29</sup> In order for companies to benefit from these relaxed rules of origin, their total workforce must be made up of at least 15% Syrian refugees in the first and second year of the Compact and at least 25% in the third year (by 2019). The Jordanian government has, for its part, introduced extensive labour market reforms, including making work permits available to Syrian refugees. Indeed, it has pledged to provide 200,000 new work permits for Syrian refugees by 2026.<sup>30</sup> It is estimated that the designated Development Zones could provide hundreds of thousands of jobs for Jordanians and Syrian refugees over the coming years.<sup>31</sup>

However, though the Jordan Compact envisions a substantial increase of Syrian refugees employed in Jordan’s formal sector, Jordanian businesses have not yet been able to attract Syrian workers in significant numbers.<sup>32</sup> And the government’s pledge to provide 200,000 work permits to refugees in specified sectors will not be met without increasing Syrian women’s participation in the Jordanian labour market. However, very few of the work permits have been issued Syrian refugee women (only 2%, or 558, in December 2016)<sup>33</sup> - this indicates that there are unforeseen gender-differential impacts arising from the Jordan Compact. Together, these observations suggest that there are remaining barriers for Syrian refugees, male and female, to enter the formal labour market in Jordan, and thus for the Jordan Compact to reach its full potential.

## **Jordan’s export industry as a source of employment for Syrian refugees**

Jordan’s export industry is the core element of the Jordan Compact, and the Jordanian government wishes to use the new environment created by the Compact to attract investment, generate employment, and stimulate economic growth. Jordan has limited natural resources and is known for its service economy;<sup>34</sup> however, the country did enjoy industrial development in the late 1990s, mostly led by growth in the garment sector. In 2015, the country exported US\$ 7.8 billion worth of goods and

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<sup>26</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> European Commission, 2016c.

<sup>28</sup> European Commission, 2016b.

<sup>29</sup> European Commission, 2016d.

<sup>30</sup> European Parliament, 2017.

<sup>31</sup> European Commission, 2016d.

<sup>32</sup> World Bank, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> International Labour Organization, 2016c.

<sup>34</sup> Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung & Royal Scientific Society, 2013.

services, which represented 37.5% of that year's GDP.<sup>35</sup> The United States is Jordan's major export destination, followed by Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and India in 2015.<sup>36</sup> In 2016, Jordan's industry accounted for 29.6% of total GDP (meanwhile, services accounted for 66.2%, and agriculture 4.2%).<sup>37</sup> The garment sector is Jordan's largest export industry, followed by sectors related to chemical products.<sup>38</sup>

Jordan's geographical location, situated at the nexus of several major trade routes and relatively closely to Europe, gives the country's export industry some degree of competitiveness.<sup>39</sup> The Jordan Compact and its relaxed rules of origin for exports to the EU added another layer to an already wide set of incentives including duty-free trade under the EU Association Agreement (signed in 1997 and entered into force in 2002).<sup>40</sup> However, exports from Jordan to the EU have been minimal and did not increase significantly immediately after the Agreement came into effect in 2002.<sup>41</sup> Rather, exports have grown slowly from US\$ 60 million to US\$ 350 million between 2002 and 2015.<sup>42</sup> Exports to the EU amounted to 4.1% of total exports in 2014,<sup>43</sup> and 6.1% of total exports in 2015.<sup>44</sup> The share of Jordanian export goods as part of EU imports has been tiny and amounted to only 0.02% of total EU imports during 2012-2015, on average.<sup>45</sup> Out of the total exports from Jordan to the EU in 2016, 88.1% consisted of industrial goods and 11.9% of agricultural goods.<sup>46</sup> The top three Jordanian export products to the Union in 2016 were chemical products (30.1%), machinery and appliances (19.9%) and garments (11.6%).<sup>47</sup>

This can be compared to Jordan's exports to the United States, which in 2015 amounted to US\$ 1.44 billion.<sup>48</sup> The core portion of the exports to the US consists of garment products, amounting to US\$ 1.25 billion in 2015.<sup>49</sup> This was the outcome of the Qualified Industrial Zone (QIZ) initiative established in 1996 by the US (the First QIZ opened in Jordan in 1997 under the initiative),<sup>50</sup> and the US - Jordan Free Trade Agreement (signed in 2000 and entered into force in 2001).<sup>51</sup> While the rules of origin under the Free Trade Agreement with the EU requires around 60% of the manufactured goods to be locally (in Jordan) value-added,<sup>52</sup> the corresponding

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<sup>35</sup> World Bank, 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, 2017.

<sup>38</sup> World Integrated Trade Solution, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Supply in Jordan, March 19, 2017. Interview with Mercy Corps, March 23, 2017.

<sup>40</sup> European Commission, 2016c.

<sup>41</sup> Al Jidara, 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Oxford Business Group, 2016.

<sup>43</sup> European Commission, 2016d.

<sup>44</sup> Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2015.

<sup>45</sup> European Commission, 2016d.

<sup>46</sup> European Commission, 2017a.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> World Integrated Trade Solution, 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> U.S. Office of Textiles and Apparel, 2017.

<sup>51</sup> Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, 2001.

<sup>52</sup> European Commission, 2016b.

percentage in the US Agreement is only 35%.<sup>53</sup> The more stringent rules of origin in the earlier EU agreement were an impediment to EU-Jordanian trade,<sup>54</sup> as Jordan's lack of raw materials and natural resources requires the export industry to import processed materials from other countries.<sup>55</sup> Against this backdrop, the relaxation of the rules of origin introduced by the Jordan Compact is important to these industries, as it raised the allowed value of foreign material to up to 70% for certain products manufactured in the 18 Development Zones.<sup>56</sup>

According to the Jordan Chamber of Industry, there were 1,561 companies in the 18 Development Zones in 2016. 936 of these companies are eligible to benefit from the simplified rules of origin introduced by the Compact.<sup>57</sup> Among these firms, most are manufacturing engineering-related products, packaging and office equipment, plastic and chemicals, and garment products.<sup>58</sup> Firms that perceive the simplified rules of origin as beneficial to their business will be incentivised to hire more Syrian refugees in order to qualify for the simplified rules of origin. As a result of the potential increase in exports to the EU, there may be spillover effects to other related businesses both inside and outside of the Development Zones. However, since January 2017, only nine companies had applied to export to Europe under the EU-Jordan agreement and to benefit from the simplified rules of origin,<sup>59</sup> despite efforts by both Jordanian and EU officials to bring together Jordanian businesses and EU buyers and investors.<sup>60</sup>

It has become clear that few companies currently qualify for the simplified rules of origin framework as less than 15% of their workforce is comprised of Syrian refugees (only six out of the nine that applied actually qualified<sup>61</sup> and not all of them are in the garment sector<sup>62</sup>), even among firms inside the Development Zones. There are a number of reasons for the new trade policies' lack of effect on the ground. First, only one year has passed since the introduction of the new policies, and the market has not had enough time to react to any significant degree. This is particularly important when assessing the country's ongoing investment challenges as it finds itself in precarious economic neighbourhood as a result of the conflict in Syria and across the region. Moreover, the demand from the EU for these firms' products has not picked up for a variety of reasons and there are a number of barriers of varied character, including legal and administrative, that stand in the way of the effective application of the simplified rules of origin.

Another explanation for why the export industry in Jordan may not yet have become the source of employment for Syrian refugees envisioned by the Jordan Compact might be found in the background and experiences of the refugees themselves.

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<sup>53</sup> Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, 2001.

<sup>54</sup> Jordan Strategy Forum, 2016 and Oxford Business Group, 2016.

<sup>55</sup> Jordan Strategy Forum, 2016.

<sup>56</sup> European Commission, 2016d.

<sup>57</sup> Jordan Chamber of Industry, 2016.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Malkawi, 2017.

<sup>60</sup> European Commission, 2017b.

<sup>61</sup> Malkawi, 2017.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Supply in Jordan, March 19, 2017.

Although Syrian refugees in Jordan have arrived from locations throughout Syria, a substantial number of them arrived from areas close to the Syrian-Jordanian border, such as Dar'a. Indeed, a UNHCR report has stated that 41.8% of all registered Syrian refugees in Jordan (276,213 refugees<sup>63</sup>) have arrived from Dar'a, making it the greatest source of Syrian refugees in Jordan - likely because of its proximity to Jordan and the involvement of the city at the early stages of the Syrian conflict. Dar'a is characterized as a largely agricultural area with a population of 1,126,000 in 2010.<sup>64</sup> The second greatest source of Syrian refugees in Jordan is the city of Homs, with 105,006 refugees representing 15.9% of the total Syrian refugee population in Jordan.<sup>65</sup> Homs is also characterized by a longstanding agricultural sector and has only recently experienced an emerging industrial sector. Another significant place of origin of Syrian refugees in Jordan is the city of Aleppo, from which 10.2% of the Syrian refugee population in Jordan (67,484 individuals<sup>66</sup>) is reported to originate. Aleppo has a long history of being an industrial hub in Syria. Of note, however, is that Aleppo is the major source of Syrian refugees in Turkey, which is close to the Syrian-Turkish border.<sup>67</sup>

According to the World Bank Group and UNHCR 2016 report on the Welfare of the Syrian Refugees,<sup>68</sup> it is difficult for Syrian refugees who worked in agriculture before the conflict to use their skills in the Jordanian labour market, and, needless to say, especially in the exporting industry. The job market in Jordan is substantially different in structure and form to that in pre-conflict Syria, so it is not a guarantee that abilities and skills developed in Syria will translate to employability in Jordan. This demographic aspect arguably constitutes another layer of barriers for Syrian refugees to enter the Jordanian workforce and participate in Jordan's exporting industry.

## **Why this report?**

Underlying the Jordan Compact is the idea that integrating refugees into the job market of host communities is not only beneficial to refugees, but it is also in the interest of host communities; allowing refugees to work formally allows them to fully use their skills to become self-reliant as well as to become active contributors to the economy of the host country.<sup>69</sup> Unlike traditional labour migrants, refugees tend to stay longer, pay rent, and contribute to the host community's economy.

By adding another layer of incentives to an already existing set of preferential trade arrangements, the Compact aims to turn Jordan's export industry into a greater source of Syrian refugee employment. However, up until now, the number of companies that have actually qualified for the new rules introduced under the Compact, and the number of Syrian refugees who have obtained work permits in this

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<sup>63</sup> UNHCR, 2017b.

<sup>64</sup> Al-Rebdawi, 2014.

<sup>65</sup> UNHCR, 2017b.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Verme et al, 2016.

<sup>69</sup> World Bank, 2016.

industry, are lower than expected. It is against this backdrop that this report sets out to investigate the gaps between policy aspirations and practical implementation vis-a-vis the Jordan Compact. More specifically, this report identifies a number of barriers, real and perceived, that limit the large-scale entry of Syrians into the labour force in the Development Zones and the exporting industry in particular. These barriers exist both on the labour supply and demand sides. On the supply side, the report highlights why Syrian refugees may be unable or unwilling to obtain work permits and take up employment in the Development Zones. On the demand side, it identifies barriers that employers face in hiring Syrian refugees, a necessary condition to be eligible for the simplified rules of origin.

The report aims to contribute key insights on the issue at hand, by putting refugee perspectives at the centre of the analysis, and providing recommendations for meaningful strategies to increase the formal participation of Syrian refugees in the Jordanian labour market. The goal is not just to identify ways in which Syrian refugees can access formal work in Jordan, but to also ensure that they are able to access decent work opportunities to secure sustainable livelihoods and most importantly, their dignity.

## **Structure of the report**

The report begins with a description of the research methodology used in this study, followed by a discussion of the primary and secondary sources of data, including the challenges and limitations of the methods used. The report goes on to discuss the different barriers to increased Syrian refugee enrolment in decent work in Jordan. Needless to say, several of the barriers are closely interrelated and build on each other. In order to help the reader navigate the complex web of barriers and incentives, the barriers have been divided into the following two categories (see Figure 1 overleaf):

- **Barriers in pursuit of work permits.** This section outlines the barriers that limit Syrian refugees' ability to access work permits. Refugees need *documentation* in order to access formal work and they can only work within certain *open sectors*. In order for refugees to access job opportunities, both refugees and employers need the right *information* about labour rules and regulations. There also needs to be *coordination* between labour supply and demand for refugees to find job opportunities and for employers to find Syrian workers. Finally, employers can only employ Syrians if they also comply with the *quota* that requires them to hire a certain percentage of Jordanian workers.
- **Barriers in pursuit of sustainable livelihoods.** In this section, we examine the types of barriers that affect Syrian refugees' preferences to seek formal work in the export industry, and employers' preferences to hire Syrian refugees. They include the *low wage levels* in the export industry in general, and in the garment sector in particular, the existence of more appealing *informal work opportunities*, a *mismatch between skills and previous experience* of Syrian refugees and the jobs in the export industry, perceptions of *poor working conditions*, prohibitive *commuting distances*, *employers'*

*preferences*, and *societal attitudes* that prevent women from taking up jobs in these industries.

The final section of this report provides an overview of the implications of our findings and concludes with a set of recommendations to help different stakeholders address key bottlenecks, concerns and gaps related to the successful implementation of the Jordan Compact.



**FIGURE 1: Barriers faced by Syrian refugees in pursuit of work permits and sustainable livelihoods.**



## **METHODOLOGY**

We conducted primary and secondary research to understand the barriers faced by Syrian refugees in their pursuit of work permits and sustainable livelihoods. The secondary research included an extensive literature review, strategic mapping of the barriers, as well as institutional and gender analyses. The primary research involved semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and a limited survey. The following sections provide a more comprehensive overview of both the qualitative and quantitative components used in this research.

### **Secondary research**

- **Literature review and desk analysis**

An extensive literature review provided the background to the research. The review involved an assessment of a wide collection of publications, articles, and documents, ranging in topic from the specificities of the relaxed rules of origin, refugee economies and livelihoods, social cohesion programming for host and refugee communities, the export industries in Jordan and Syria, Syrian and Jordanian women's labour force participation to donor-funded reports on the efficacy of humanitarian and development assistance targeted at Syrian refugees.

The literature review informed a mapping exercise prior to our fieldwork in Jordan, as well as the drafting of interview and focus group discussion guides that will be discussed below. This involved the identification and mapping of barriers that emerged from our desk analysis, and resulted in their categorization into overarching themes. Following this, the research team examined the linkages between barriers and stakeholders in their pursuit of work permits and sustainable livelihoods.

Based on this, an institutional analysis was developed to show how the various actors engage with one another and institutions, as well as how processes and funds flow within the environment (see Figure 2). The mapping of processes, stakeholders and institutions at the international, national and local level illustrate the breadth of our research topic and helped us narrow our focus to the barriers faced by Syrian refugees in accessing work permits and employment opportunities in the companies within the Development Zones that are eligible for the relaxed rules of origin. Figure 1, showing the interaction between the main relevant actors and institutions associated with refugee access to the labour force, was a key process and tool in identifying who the team should consult, about what, and in relation to which contexts and experiences.

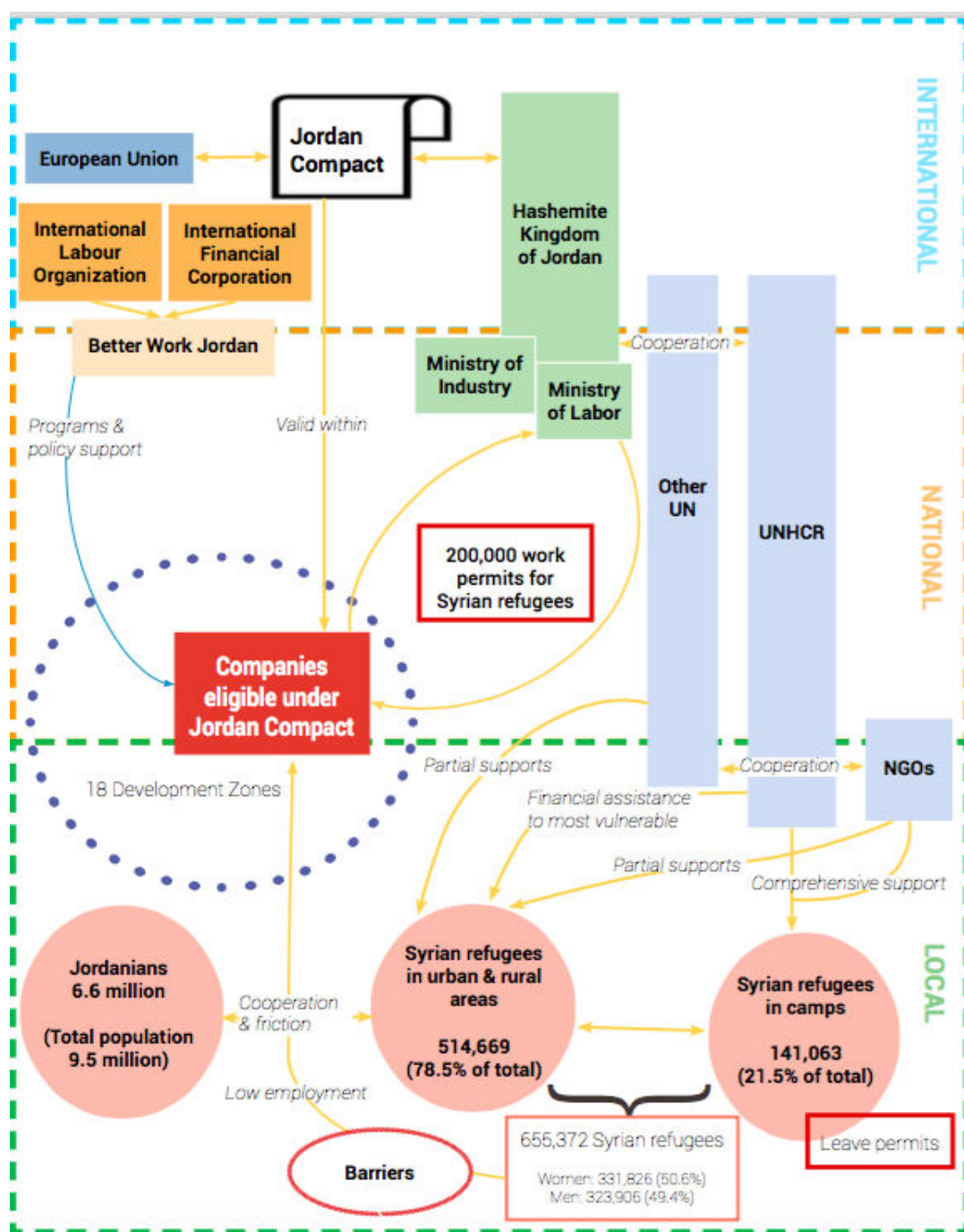


FIGURE 2: Actors and institutions involved in facilitating refugees' access to the labour market in Jordan

## Primary research

We supplemented our desk analysis with primary information from semi-structured interviews, FGDs, and surveys. At every stage of information gathering, we applied a gender lens to analyse the distribution of resources, accessibility to resources, power relations, the impact of culture and traditions, as well as the implications of the Jordan Compact on challenging or maintaining existing gender roles among Jordanians and Syrian refugees. The questionnaires and guides used for the

interviews, FGDs and surveys can be found in the annex to this report.

- **Semi-structured interviews with practitioners, experts, and refugees**

We conducted 41 semi-structured interviews with staff from UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), local NGOs, employers, unions, as well as academics. We also conducted interviews with refugees. As a result, four interview guides were created to conduct these interviews with 1) experts (which includes academics and staff of local and international organizations), 2) employers, 3) refugees, and 4) government officials. Some expert interviews were conducted by phone or Skype prior to departure, while employer, refugee, government, and some expert interviews were conducted in person in Jordan. Importantly, refugees who participated in interviews self-selected to participate and also had regular engagement with CARE International. Table 1 provides an overview of the breakdown of interviews by stakeholder.

<b>Stakeholder Category</b>	<b>No. of interviews</b>
International organizations	9
INGO	5
NGO	5
Employers	5
Trade and labour Unions	3
Jordanian Governments (national and local levels)	6
Academic Experts	2
Refugees	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>

- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with refugees**

Through our preliminary desk and institutional analyses we conceptualised key themes which were explored through a number of FGDs. These themes included barriers to accessing work permits and sustainable livelihoods, refugees' preferences for formal or informal work, societal attitudes towards women's employment and refugees' desire for work permits.

In total, five FGDs were conducted for which the team developed three specific FGD guides, namely, 1) Zaatari Community Gatherings with men and women, 2) unemployed/employed men and women in Mafraq, and 3) factory employed men and women in Dulayl.<sup>70</sup> The FGDs at the Community Gatherings in Zaatari camp and in Mafraq were organised in collaboration with UNHCR. The factory employed FGD in Dulayl was organised by Better Work Jordan in collaboration with a garment factory that employs Syrian refugees as well as Jordanians and migrants.

All of the FGDs were conducted in March 2017 and all were conducted in Arabic. One Arabic native speaker on the team served as the facilitator while one to two native speakers took notes. Due to sensitivities in the refugee context and based on the preferences expressed by UNHCR and BWJ, the discussions were not recorded.

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<sup>70</sup> For details on the FGD guides, see Annex.

The FGDs were designed to include a mix of closed-form (responses were counted by a 'show-of-hands') and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were intended to generate discussion among FGD participants as well as to allow facilitators to probe and ask clarifying questions when necessary. The FGDs within Zaatari were designed to have more closed questions since we anticipated larger groups. On the other hand, the FGDs in Mafraq and Dulayl were designed with the expectation of having six to thirteen participants and thus had more open-ended questions. The FGDs in Mafraq and Dulayl were designed to last 2.5 hours whereas those in Zaatari were shortened to 20 minutes in order to better fit within the schedule and dynamic of their regular Community Gatherings.

To supplement the qualitative analysis of FGDs and interviews, the team collected standardised information on key issues during the FGDs through the use of limited surveys. This included demographic and socio-economic information (such as age, employment status, type of work, as well as key questions on the preference for work permits).<sup>71</sup> The survey yielded 76 survey responses from all FGDs, filled on a voluntary bases. Zaatari yielded a response rate of 38%, Mafraq of 100%, and Dulayl of 100%, with the total response rate for all refugees consulted via FGD being 55%. These and other figures concerning response rates can be seen in Table 2 below. The factors affecting the response rate in Zaatari are discussed in the limitations section to follow.

**Table 2: Participation and Response Rates in FGDs with Syrian Refugees in Jordan**

FGD	Number of Participants (n)	Number of Survey Responses	Survey Response Rate (%)
Zaatari Men	~40*	23	58
Zaatari Women	~60*	15	25
Mafraq Men	13	13	100
Mafraq Women	13	13	100
Dulayl	12	12	100
TOTAL	138	76	55

*\*Exact numbers of participants for the Zaatari FGDs were not possible because participants joined late and left early. Further, for the women's FGD, the room was dark, overcrowded, and children were present, making it further difficult to count exact numbers.*

With regards to the sampling of participants required for the research, we designed the FGDs to consider gender, employment (formal, informal or unemployed), and dwelling (camp and urban). We were not able to sample for employment in the Zaatari FGDs, but managed to consult 2:3 ratio of men to women. In Zaatari, the average age of the male participants was 44 while the average age of the female participants was 41. Comparing this to the overall age distribution of the Syrian refugee population in Jordan, the External Statistical Report on UNHCR-registered

<sup>71</sup> Due to UNHCR guidelines, the survey instrument had to be adjusted for the Community Gathering to exclude questions about refugees' place of origin.

Syrian refugees in Jordan published on 15 June 2017 reported 337,034 refugees (51.0% of the total Syrian refugee population in Jordan) in the youngest age group 0-17 years, of whom, 51.4% are male and 48.6% are female. In the age group 18-59 years, there are 298,704 refugees (45.2% of the total). Within this age stratum, 48.0% are male and 52.0% are female. In the third age group, individuals 60 years or older, there are 24,812 individuals comprising 3.8% of the population, 41.3% of whom are male and 58.7% are female. Thus, the overwhelming majority of the Syrian refugee population in Jordan are either youth and/or of working age.

We managed to capture data on the employment statuses of the refugees we consulted in Zaatari and those results are shown in Figure 3 below. In this case, we were not able to accurately assess informal versus formal employment due to the quality of the responses on employment (with some not responding) as well as because of work dynamics within the camp.



**FIGURE 3: Zaatari Syrian refugees employment statuses**

In Mafraq, we were successful in consulting equal numbers of men and women separately, 13 in each, where the average age of the male participants was 44, and the average age of women was 34. After the first part of each FGD, the Mafraq participants were split into employed and unemployed to be asked more specific questions about those employment experiences. Employment statuses are relatively balanced as demonstrated in Figure 4, which gives a breakdown of employment status of the refugees consulted in Mafraq.



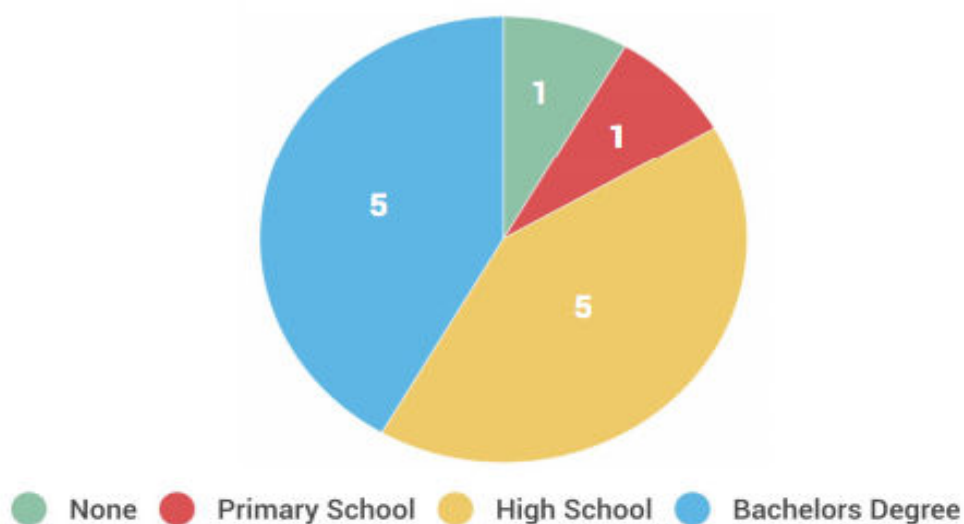
**FIGURE 4: Mafraq Syrian refugees employment statuses**

In Mafraq, we were able to capture information related to place of birth within Syria and this is shown in Table 3 below.

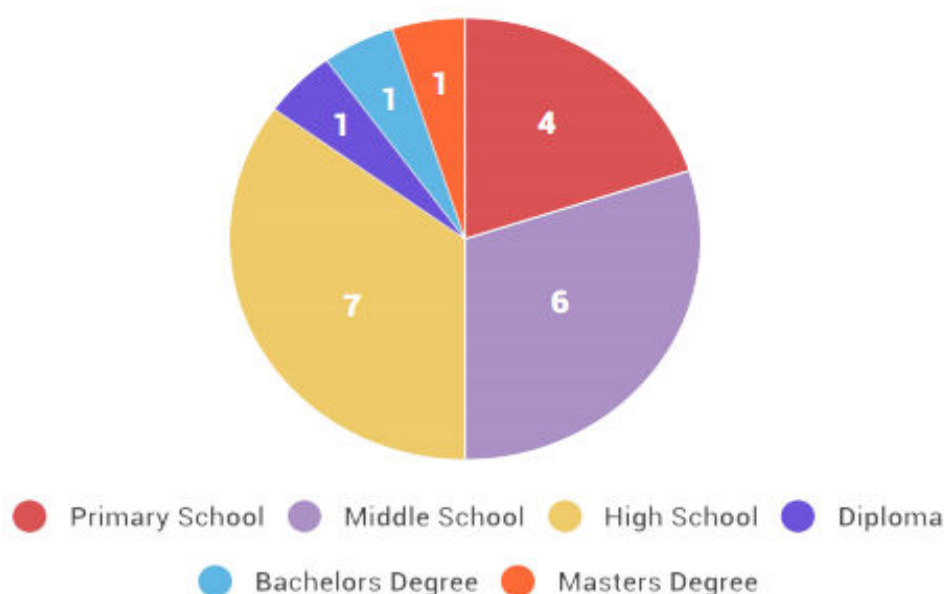
Place of Birth	Number of participants
Homs	10
Daraa	8
Damascus	4
As-sweida	2
Hama	1
Idlib	1

In Dulayl, our FGD participations were factory-employed refugees consisting of 3 men and 9 women. The lack of gender parity is representative of the fact that the majority of employees in garment factories in Jordan are women. After the main first part of the FGD with men and women together, the Mafraq participants were split by gender to be asked more specific questions. The average age of the men was 22, and that of women was 27. It is important to note that the Dulayl FGD was designed with the assumption that all employees would have work permits, however, none of the refugees in the Dulayl FGD had yet received a permit. In this FGD, we were able to accurately capture education levels and those results are shown in Figures 5a and 5b below.

**FIGURE 5A: Dulayl Syrian Refugees Education Levels**



**FIGURE 5B: Mafraq Syrian Refugees Education Levels**



*\*We were not able to capture education levels for the other FGDs*

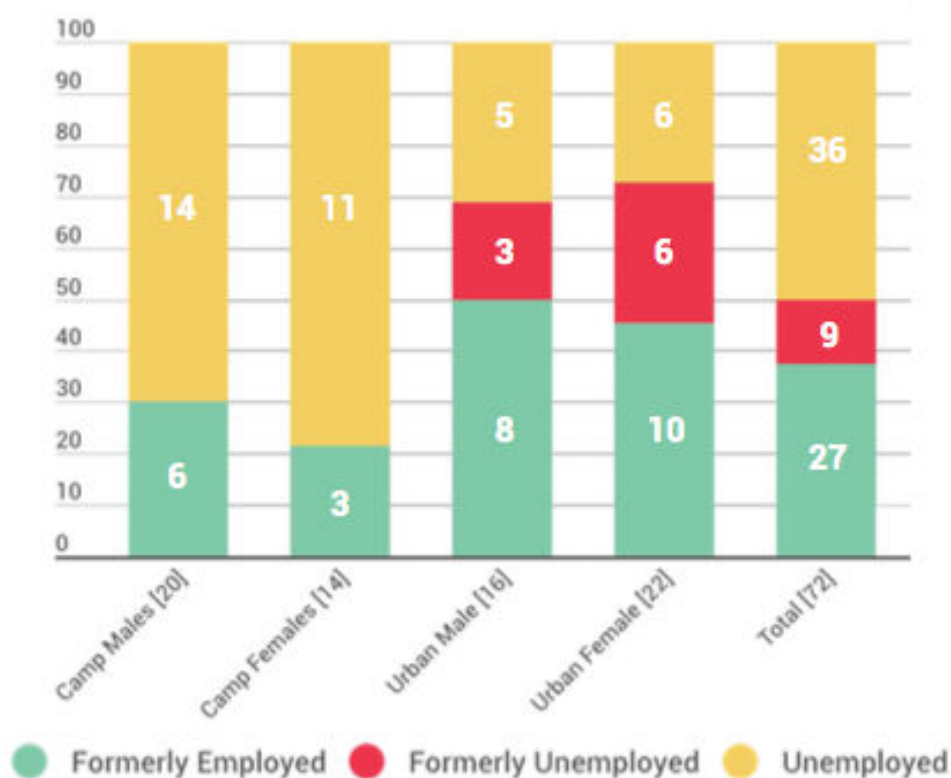
In all FGDs, participation was self-selected. For those who participated in the Zaatari FGD, it is important to note that only refugees that were otherwise unoccupied during the middle of the day and aware of, or value the UNHCR organised Community Gatherings, attended. We did not provide any meals or stipends for the Zaatari FGDs in order to respect the guidance and regulations of UNHCR. In Mafraq, many of the refugees had an established relationship with UNHCR and had some awareness, or direct involvement with, employment or training programmes conducted by NGOs or IOs. Additionally, each participant in Mafraq was given JD 5 (US\$ 7)<sup>72</sup> each in order to cover any costs that they may have incurred in order to attend (such as transport, childcare, missed work etc.). They were also provided lunch. The refugees in Dulayl were also provided lunch, and since they were already at work, we did not need to cover costs of attendance. Importantly, refugees in Dulayl did not lose wages because of their participation in the FGD.

On employment, those we consulted in camps had higher levels of unemployment with 74% unemployment overall. On the other hand, urban refugee participants had: 29% unemployed, 47% formally employed, and 24% informally employed (with a total of 71% employed in some manner). In total, of the 74 of the participants who responded to the question on employment, 38% are formally employed, 13% are informally employed, and 50% are unemployed. These numbers are represented in Figure 6 and Figure 7. Importantly, for this study, formal employment is defined as an individual who holds a steady job with an entity, and may not necessarily have a work permit.

<sup>72</sup> In 2017: 1US\$= 0.71JD, Central Bank Of Jordan: [http://www.cbj.gov.jo/currency\\_table.php](http://www.cbj.gov.jo/currency_table.php)

It is worth assessing camp dwelling and urban refugees separately, which is why we have provided information on age and employment status in Figure 8 for these two groups separately as well as for both groups combined. The average age of participants consulted in Zaatari was 44 years for males and 41 years for females, whereas the average age of urban refugee participants was 40 years for males and 31 years for females.

**FIGURE 6: Camp and urban Syrian refugee employment Statuses (disaggregated by sex)**



**FIGURE 7: Camp and Urban Refugee Employment Statuses**

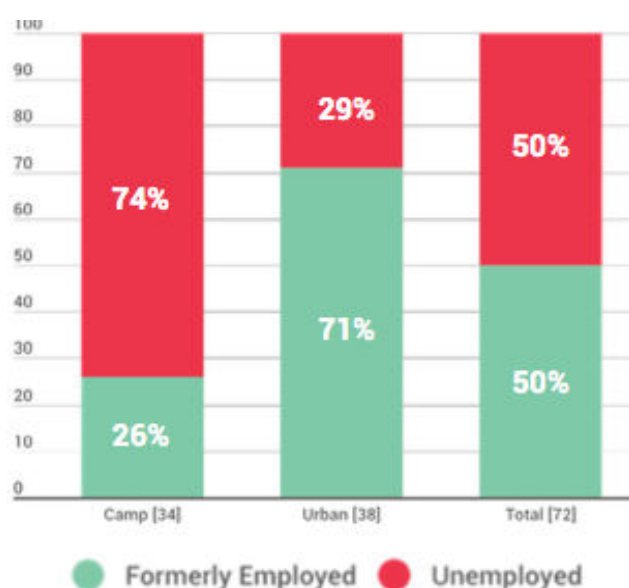
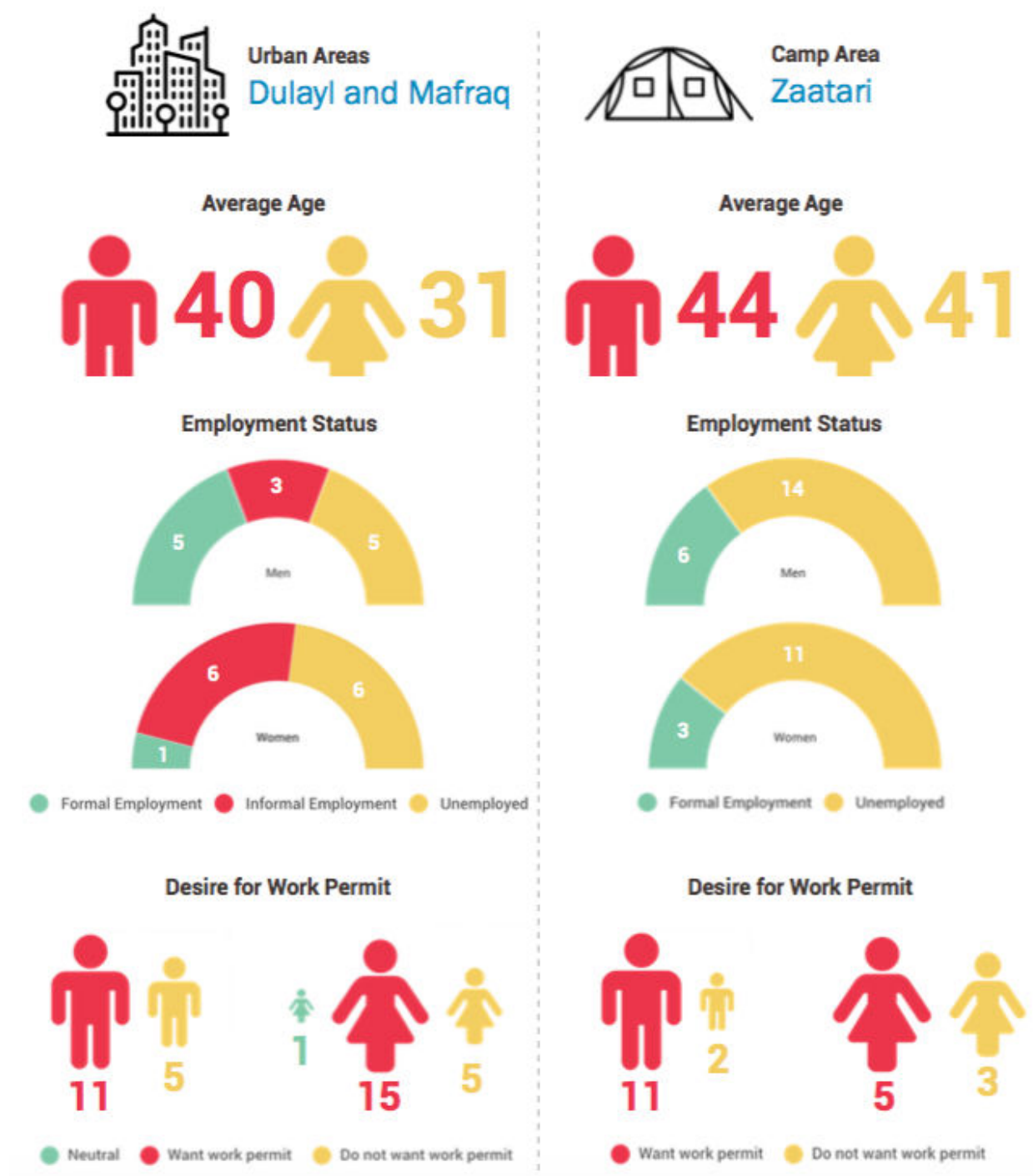




FIGURE 8: Data from focus group discussion with urban and camp refugees



## **Challenges and limitations**

All Focus Group Discussions, with the exception of those in Zaatari, involved a participatory approach. However, due to time constraints and despite best efforts, the team was only able to partially implement them. For example, the exercise that allowed refugees to identify and map barriers was not possible, although their recommendations were always solicited. As the field team consisted of only two native Arabic speakers, the quality and interpretation of results from FGDs remained a challenge as one person noted down most of the data and information, while the other facilitated the session. On two occasions, we were able to seek support from an interpreter. As for limitations concerning sampling, the study's sample size and sampling strategy limit the generalizability of the findings, as the interviewed refugees are not representative of all refugees in Jordan. While all efforts were taken to conduct FGDs with urban and camp refugees, it must be noted that the findings from FGDs conducted in Zaatari, Mafraq, and Dulayl are indicative, rather than representative, of the wider Syrian refugee population in Jordan. Therefore, the sampling strategies used in this research aimed to arrive at broader insights instead of definitive conclusions.

Notable limitations with respect to the surveys, particularly the low response rates in Zaatari include partially completed surveys, illiteracy and low education levels among some refugees. In all other FGDs there were only some inconsistencies in answers (with at least five instances of duplication). These limitations posed a challenge to the data analysis because some submissions could not be included in the dataset in order to maintain quality, thereby decreasing our response rate. Further, it is acknowledged that the FGD in Dulayl might not have yielded accurate responses from participants about their levels of satisfaction with work since the FGD was conducted at their workplace and within a small group, and therefore there may have been an element of censorship, although assurances of confidentiality were made at the beginning and closing of the FGD. Due to scheduling and venue constraints, the Syrian women refugees in the Dulayl FGD were unable to make their recommendations - therefore, the omission of recommendations from Syrian refugee women working in the garment industry adds another limitation to this study.

Our study cannot account for self-selection bias in those who chose to participate in the discussions and interviews, however we have done our best to identify how refugees came to participate to allow readers to infer how these, among other factors, may affect responses. The limitations were considered when interpreting the data and therefore the information was triangulated with other sources, such as expert interviews, transcripts of other FGDs, and relevant reports. Finally, in consultation with the various stakeholders, and as we were focusing more on the Syrian refugees' side of barriers, we did not have time to meet with a large number of employers. Thus, our findings do not represent all export industries in Jordan. In the garment sector, to support our findings, we tried to double check the findings with the employers' association (JGATE), the employees' union (The General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment & Clothing Industries), and other stakeholders. However, we only met two non-garment sector employers and the information from these stakeholders is limited. Therefore, we could not get a full picture of employer's preferences and the barriers they face, which weakens the assessment of barriers and recommendations from the employers' side.

## **BARRIERS TO LABOUR FORCE INCLUSION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES**

Decent work is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, was adopted in a victory for those who work on labour rights and the decent work agenda.<sup>73</sup> Particularly relevant is target 8.8 to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment.<sup>74</sup>

While the Jordan Compact sets out an ambitious roadmap for job creation for Syrian refugees and Jordanians alike, there are supply-side and demand-side barriers that continue to affect the uptake of work permits and formal employment. Therefore, this section will delve deeper into the specific barriers Syrian refugees face at two different stages: 1) in pursuit of work permits and 2) in pursuit of sustainable livelihoods.

We arrived at this demarcation since findings from our Focus Group Discussions (FGD), as well as expert interviews point to a pervasive sense of insecurity felt by Syrian refugees - men and women - in navigating the labour market and accessing formal channels in the work permit process. A study conducted by the Jordanian Health Aid Society in 2012 reported that fear was the most common psychological problem among Syrian refugees, followed by worry and grief.<sup>75</sup> From our FGD surveys with urban refugees, 58% of those who did not have a work permit stated that they would apply for work permits because it gave them security and guaranteed their rights, as well as the ability to work freely. While there is no single Syrian refugee archetype, it must be noted that emotional, physical and financial security are key areas of concern to almost every Syrian refugee interviewed during the FGDs. It is against this backdrop that we established a bridge between work permits and sustainable livelihoods - the barriers at each phase overlap and interlink at different junctures.

When refugees want to apply for **work permits**, they face barriers in the following areas: 1) difficulties in obtaining the necessary documentation to access work permits, 2) lack of clear and concise information about employment-related regulations, 3) quotas on the employment of Jordanians and closed professions, and 4) lack of labour market information about labour demand and supply.

Meanwhile, when Syrian refugees seek **sustainable livelihoods**, the following barriers affect their preference to seek employment in the export industry: 1) low wages in the export industry and higher wage opportunities in the informal sector, 2) prohibitive commuting distance and cost, 3) perceptions of sub-optimal working conditions in factories, 4) societal attitudes towards female employment, 5) fears

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<sup>73</sup> For more info on the decent work agenda, see <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang-en/index.htm>.

<sup>74</sup> Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2012.

<sup>75</sup> Jordan Health Aid Society, 2012.

related to work formalization, 6) the existence of more appealing job opportunities in the informal sector, and 7) employers' hiring preferences. The following sections provide detailed analyses of each of these barriers.

## IN PURSUIT OF WORK PERMITS

Following the establishment of the Jordan Compact, Syrian refugees have started to prioritise obtaining a work permit.<sup>76</sup> To this end, the Jordanian government has taken several steps to reach the goal of increasing the number of Syrians who hold work permits to 200,000.<sup>77</sup> In April 2016 the government lifted the work permit fees levied on employers, and halted the relocation of refugees working irregularly to camps. This policy has been extended multiple times;<sup>78</sup> the most recent extension was issued in April 2017 and is set to expire at the end of December 2017.<sup>79,80</sup> The policy eliminates a would-be barrier to Syrians taking up work permits, as it reduces some of the costs that employers faced when hiring Syrian labour. As refugees often had to pay the work permit fee (although the employer by law is required to absorb this cost), this policy also increased incentives to take up work permits, as it eliminated some of the costs that Syrian refugees faced when obtaining work permits. However, during our interviews, Syrian refugees reported that they occasionally still pay work permit fees to employers as some employers exploit refugees' lack of knowledge. This fee can range between 170 and 370 Jordanian Dinars (JD) and most refugees find the cost prohibitively high.<sup>81</sup>



### Difficulties in obtaining the necessary documentation to access work permits

- Mol cards

Refugees need a number of documents in order to obtain a work permit (see Box 1). However, they often lack documentation. Therefore, the Jordanian government took a positive step in allowing Syrian workers to use their Jordanian Ministry of Interior identity (Mol) cards - instead of their passports - to apply for work permits.<sup>82</sup>

The Jordanian authorities require that all refugees register with the Ministry of Interior in order to receive a service card. This card is required to access subsidised public healthcare and government-run education services in host communities. Nearly 363,000 UNHCR-registered Syrian

***“I know people who have been deported and people who have been put in Azraq. There are many difficulties there. It's cold. It's unliveable. Even a fly wouldn't live there” - FGD***

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with Ministry of Labour in Jordan, March 14, 2017.

<sup>77</sup> International Labour Organization, 2017a.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ministry of Labour in Jordan, 2017.

<sup>80</sup> International Labour Organization, 2015a.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Danish Refugee Council, Oxfam, & Save the Children, 2017.

refugees have obtained the service card.<sup>83</sup> However, refugees' lack of documentation also makes it difficult for them to get an Mol card. In a study by the International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School (IHRC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council Jordan (NRC), refugees cited the lack of documentation as the greatest obstacle to obtaining the Mol card even though they were eligible for them.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, if refugees are reported to have left a refugee camp without the required exit permit, they become ineligible for the Mol card.<sup>85</sup> This is often the case as significant numbers of refugees leave the camps irregularly due to informal work opportunities outside the camps. They avoid interacting with the authorities or going to the police because they fear that this irregularity constitutes a ground for deportation.<sup>86</sup>

### **BOX 1: Required documents for work permits<sup>87</sup>**

#### **Required documents from the worker**

- Valid Ministry of Interior (Mol) service card
- Certificate of Good Health – only required if the Mol service card is older than one year at the date of application
- Personal Photo (2)

#### **Required documents from the employer**

- Certificate of Incorporation/ Commercial Registry Certificate.
- Occupational licensure certificate
- A statement from Social Security confirming registration
- Work contract
- Identity Card of the Employer or an authorization of the applicant to apply for the work permit signed by the employer.
- For work permits in agriculture applications: a letter from Agriculture Directorate stating the details of the land, type of ownership and the irrigation method.
- If the Employer was an Agricultural Union/ Agricultural Association: a certificate of incorporation.

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<sup>83</sup> Danish Refugee Council, Oxfam, & Save the Children, 2017.

<sup>84</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council & International Human Rights Clinic, 2016.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Intersos, March 20, 2017.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Jordan River Foundation, March 20, 2017.

<sup>87</sup> Ministry of Labour in Jordan, 2016.

- **Leave permits**

Around 20% of refugees in Jordan are officially residing in camps.<sup>88</sup> Those who are registered in camps require a special permit to leave the camp: this is widely referred to as the 'leave permit.' FGDs in the Zaatari refugee camp raised the issue of the difficulty to obtain leave permits. Although UNHCR officials contend that there is no difficulty connected with obtaining leave permits, refugee women interviewed in Zaatari camp stressed how hard it was to obtain, including that it requires standing in line for long periods of time. In response to long waiting-times, refugees rotate responsibility for standing in line, and reported instances of fighting over spots.

The leave permit requirement also presents an obstacle for the employer, as refugees need to renew their approval every fourteen days by going back to the camp, which means they have to miss a day of work every two weeks.<sup>89</sup> The difficulties in obtaining the necessary documentation may help explain why, despite the many steps taken by the Jordanian government to increase the number of work permits issued to Syrian refugees to 200,000, only 37,326 work permits had been issued as of 11 January 2017.<sup>90</sup> The difficulties that refugees report in obtaining leave permits may constrain their awareness about local work opportunities and may reduce their attractiveness to employers, consequently reducing their possibility of being included in the local labour market.<sup>91</sup>

***“We wait from 5:00 to 12:30 for a leave permit and sometimes up to three days.” – Syrian woman in Zaatari camp***



**Lack of clear and concise information about employment-related regulations**

Our FGD and expert interviews have pointed to the lack of clear and concise information about employment- regulations, specifically for Syrian refugees, as one of the main barriers Syrian refugees face in accessing formal work opportunities. There continues to be critical information gaps in 1) work permit and employment rules, and 2) social security rules.

The information gaps in these areas were either: directly mentioned by employees in NGOs and experts in international organisations; encountered in the conflicting information that these same organisations and employers sometimes provided regarding employment-related regulations for Syrian refugees; or surfaced during community gatherings in Zaatari or FGDs conducted with Syrian refugees in Mafraq.

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<sup>88</sup> International Rescue Committee, 2016b.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Jordan Chamber of Industry, March 07, 2017.

<sup>90</sup> International Labour Organization, 2017a.

<sup>91</sup> World Bank, 2005.

- **Work permits**

The FGDs with Syrian refugees community gatherings in the Zaatari refugee camp and the FGDs in Mafraq highlighted a lack of information about the cost of work permits and the process to obtain and retain them. In a community gathering with men in Zaatari, for example, the majority reported that they were not aware of work permits and how to access them.

In interviews with NGOs, Syrian refugees pointed not only to a lack of awareness among refugees about work permits, but also highlighted the fact that the information gap affects government bureaucracy – one of these experts claimed that refugees would receive different responses from the government regarding the application process for the work permit depending on which agency they asked. Some NGOs informed us that even they were unsure whether they possessed accurate information about the work permit process as well as the rights and duties granted to a Syrian work permit holder. As a consequence, the NGOs they represent preferred not to provide any advisory services to Syrian refugees on the work permit process. One employer also pointed out that the new laws governing the employment of Syrian refugees were unclear. Moreover, some of the experts we interviewed reported that refugees fear that they will be less likely to be accepted as migrants or refugees to the Europe and other countries if they get a Jordanian work permit. This could potentially explain Syrian refugees' lack of willingness to get such a permit.

Information problems or uncertainty about legal rights and responsibilities contribute to a higher degree of vulnerability for refugees, especially for those who have less access to the means to guarantee that their rights are upheld. In the employer-employee relationship, and in the case of work permits and labour market information problems, workers tend to occupy the weaker position. In the specific case of Syrian refugees, one aspect that exacerbates this vulnerability is the fear among Syrian refugees, also captured in many interviews with stakeholders, of being deported or sent back to refugee camps if they report that something is wrong with their work or living conditions.

- **Social Security**

The Ministry of Labour announced in June 2016 that when the work permit applications are submitted, employers are not required to show evidence of social security coverage for their employees. However, employers are required to register their employees with social security when they obtain the work permit.<sup>92</sup> The main informational barrier regarding social security, according to NGOs, stems from a lack of clarity on who bears the responsibility for paying for social security and its portability. According to Jordanian labour law, social security should be paid by both the employer and employee through a monthly contribution. Currently, the cost amounts to 21.75% of employees' salaries, out of which employers are responsible for paying 14.25% and employees the remaining 7.5%.<sup>93</sup> However, it seems that many refugees are unaware of this stipulation.

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<sup>92</sup> International Labour Organization, 2017b.

<sup>93</sup> KPMG, 2017.

In interviews, refugees expressed their concerns about paying for the social security in its entirety. Some of them believed that they have to cover the employer's part in order to be offered a job, while others find that they cannot afford their share of the cost.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, refugees seem to be uncertain about the long-term return of investment from their social security contributions, especially with regards to the portability of benefits. This leads them to perceive their contributions to the social security system as a mere increase in the opportunity cost of work formalization, thus reducing refugees' willingness to formalise their work by applying for a work permit.

***“None of us have work permits. We are paying social security and if we don't get permits, we will never get it back.”***

***- an employed Syrian female refugee***

***“I worked for two years without a permit. At first, the manager used to talk about getting the permit, but in the end he never got it. I did get all my social security back though. I had all my rights in this case, like a Jordanian.” - an employed Syrian male refugee***

***“I worked for a year and a half without social security or work permit and wasn't paid at the end. I didn't challenge the system or complain because any Syrian who is working without a permit will be deported.”***

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<sup>94</sup> UNHCR, 2017c.





### Quotas on the employment of Jordanians

Several key stakeholders and experts describe the Jordanian policies regarding employment quotas as a main barrier for Syrian refugees to access formal work in the export industry. Many host countries have a similar quota system, but Jordan's regulations are more restrictive than those of other governments.<sup>95</sup> The policy requires employers to hire certain percentages of Jordanian workers as part of their overall work force. Also, the government has specific regulations with regards to Syrian investors hiring foreign workers. For example, the garment sector inside the Qualified Industrial Zones and Syrian investors operating inside the Industrial Areas are required to hire 30% Jordanians.<sup>96</sup> If businesses fail to comply with the quota regulations, they have to pay penalties or face delays in obtaining work permits for their migrant workers.<sup>97</sup>

- **Employers in export industries face difficulties in complying with the quota**

The Jordanian government regards Syrian refugees as foreign workers, so in order for employers to hire Syrian refugees and other migrant workers, and comply with Jordanian labour law, they have to increase the employment of Jordanians as well. Because the garment sector relies heavily on migrant workers - in 2016 they comprised 73% of all garment employees in Jordan - employers in the garment sector face more difficulties than those in other sectors in fulfilling the quota requirements.<sup>98</sup>

Jordanian employers and their associations find that the retention of Jordanian labour is also very challenging, which often makes it difficult to meet the Jordanian quota.<sup>99,100</sup> Not only does the garment sector have trouble meeting this quota, but employers in other sectors also stress that their Syrian employees cannot obtain work permits because the company could not reach the required number of Jordanian employees. The quota is a barrier to the labour market inclusion of Syrian refugees because it prevents employers from providing them with jobs. GIZ mentioned that because employers could not easily meet the quota, the Jordanian labour market is segmented, hence Syrians have to find other work opportunities.

In addition, since the Ministry of Labour counts Syrian refugees towards the migrant workers' percentage, who may comprise up to 70% of the total workforce. The requirement of the Jordan Compact that Jordanian businesses hire 15% Syrian refugees brings the maximum percentage of other migrant workers to 55%. According to JGATE, this will lead to lower efficiency levels, as migrant workers are generally viewed as more hard-working, better skilled at the job and more loyal.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> United Nations Development Programme, International Labour Organization, & World Food Programme, 2017.

<sup>96</sup> International Labour Organization, 2015b.

<sup>97</sup> Creative Associates International, 2014.

<sup>98</sup> General Trade Union of Workers in Textile Garment & Clothing Industries in Jordan, 2016.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Jordan Garments Accessories and Textiles Exporters' Association, March 22, 2017.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Hi-Tech Textile, March 20, 2017.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Jordan Garments Accessories and Textiles Exporters' Association, March 22, 2017.

This might help explain why some companies have not been quick to comply despite the incentive of the simplified rules of origin.



### Closed professions

Many host countries have a system that restricts access to certain job sectors for foreigners, but Jordan's policy is more restrictive than most.<sup>102</sup> Since many formal sectors are not open to refugees (see Box 2 for a full list of closed professions), many Syrian refugees prefer to stay in the informal sector. When employers violate this law by hiring foreign workers in closed professions, they pay fines starting from 200500 JD (\$280700).<sup>103</sup> According to Article 12 of Jordanian labour law, non-Jordanian workers can be employed in these closed sectors only when they possess qualifications that are not available among Jordanians, or if there are not enough Jordanian workers to meet employers' labour demand.

Refugees interviewed considered these regulations to be a main barrier. Many expressed an interest in working in one of the closed professions, such as hairdressing and teaching. To this point, the 2016 UNHCR rapid assessment reported as one of the most frequent reasons that Syrian refugees do not have work permits that "Work permits are not given in my profession".<sup>104</sup>

***"I studied Economics. I am a university graduate. Look at me now. I am working in just any kind of work. Our certificates mean nothing here. Even doctors and engineers, their certificates mean nothing." - an employed Syrian female refugee***

*Story: A Syrian women who used to work as a teacher successfully for 12 years, couldn't get a teaching position in Jordan because it's " a closed job for Jordanians only". She is now working with CARE as a volunteer with a stipend. Recently, she started a home- based business in addition to her work at CARE where she cook and sell. She is hoping to expand her business as for now all her customers are from CARE or friends and friends of friends.*<sup>105</sup>

Even though teaching and hairdressing jobs are not directly related to the export industry, there are closed professions (such as administrative and accounting professions, warehouse work, engineering professions) directly or indirectly associated with the industry.

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<sup>102</sup> United Nations Development Programme, International Labour Organization, & World Food Programme, 2017.

<sup>103</sup> International Labour Organization, 2017b.

<sup>104</sup> UNHCR, 2016.

<sup>105</sup> Individual interviews - at CARE

## BOX 2: Closed Professions<sup>106</sup>

### Closed Professions

- Administrative and accounting professions
- Clerical work including typing and secretarial work
- Switchboards, telephones and connections works
- Warehouses works.
- Sales works, including all groups.
- Decoration works
- Fuel selling in main cities
- Electricity professions
- Mechanical and car repair professions
- Drivers
- Guards and servants
- Medical professions
- Engineering professions
- Haircutting works (coiffeur)
- Teaching professions, including all specialties except for the rare ones when there is no Jordanian available
- Loading and unloading workers in the fruits and vegetables market (except Central Fruit and Vegetable Market)
- Loading and unloading workers in malls and supermarkets
- Cleaning workers in private schools and hotels.
- Regional offices for foreign companies

**\*There are some exceptions\***



### **Lack of labour market information about labour demand and supply**

Interviews have revealed a two-way information problem in the labour market: 1) employers lack accurate information about Syrian refugees' labour supply skills and distribution in the territory, and 2) Syrian refugees inside and outside the refugee camps lack adequate information about job opportunities. This was also observed by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in a recent study.<sup>107</sup>

On the employers' side, one expert mentioned the difficulty employers face in finding Syrian labour, contending that employers do not know where the refugees can be found. Additionally, one large employer mentioned an experience the company had on a project developed along with UNHCR to train and hire Syrian refugees; a total of 300 Syrian refugees showed interest in undertaking the training, only 125 actually started it and almost all of them dropped out. By the time the programme ended, only seven were hired. This experience illustrates the level of mismatch between the

<sup>106</sup> Ministry of Labour in Jordan, 2016.

<sup>107</sup> International Rescue Committee, 2016b.

expectations of refugees and employers.

Additionally, one of the employers interviewed, who is Syrian and employs 15% Syrian refugees out of its total workforce (and, therefore, fulfills the requirement for the relaxed rules of origin under the Jordan Compact) claimed that they identified these workers through informal networks existent among Syrians – networks that, therefore, would not be available to Jordanian employers.<sup>108</sup>

**“Employers do not know where the refugees are.” - JGATE**

Information problems from the refugees’ side emerged mostly during FGDs with urban refugees in Mafraq. When both employed and unemployed Syrian refugees were asked about the mechanisms used to look for jobs, they said that the main mechanisms that they used were word of mouth, facebook ads, informal networks and direct, one-to-one approach to employers. There was no mention of any public or private labour market intermediation service, or any other minimally organised form of delivering job opportunities, like newspapers. Additionally, refugees explicitly mentioned that there was no help from organisations on this matter.

While labour markets for residents may sometimes function reasonably well and minimise friction in the absence of centralised labour market intermediation services by using the above mentioned organised or semi-organised mechanisms; it is clear that the task of eliciting all the job opportunities available in one region through these mechanisms mentioned by the refugees is unfeasible, and they end up relying on an incomplete picture of the job market, which reduces their chances of inclusion.

It is also important to note that one NGO mentioned the prevalence in Jordan of an informal allocation mechanism called “*wasta*,” which refers to the existence of nepotism with regards to labour market job allocation. Indeed, in the Jordanian 2014 family status report, 83% of Jordanians reported that they believe *Wasta* is a form of corruption, however 65% think it is necessary to get a job.<sup>109</sup> Needless to say, the prevalence of nepotism contributes to the difficulty refugees have in finding work, as they lack these informal networks.

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<sup>108</sup> Interview with Danish Refugee Council, March 13, 2017.

<sup>109</sup> Azzeh, 2017.

## IN PURSUIT OF SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

On September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the UN and its Member States adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, a set of goals that set the development agenda for the next fifteen years. As noted earlier, Goal 8 - to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all - was adopted in a victory for those who work on labour rights and the decent work agenda.<sup>110</sup> Particularly relevant is target 8.8 to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, the 3RP Jordan Response Plan 2017-2020 explicitly includes the goal to “ensure dignified, sustainable livelihoods and create economic opportunities for both Jordanians and Syrian refugees.”<sup>112</sup> However, as a study by the International Labour Organization found, “Syrian workers are accepting lower incomes, work for longer hours and without social benefits,” which has led to lower wages and a reduction in job opportunities for all.<sup>113</sup>

As stressed in many of our interviews with stakeholders, the objective is not just to find jobs for refugees, but also to fulfill Goal 8 and find decent work that allows refugees to rebuild their lives and become contributing members to society. In this section, we examine the types of barriers that affect Syrian refugees’ preferences to seek formal work in the export industry, and employers’ preferences to hire Syrian refugees.



### **Low wages in the export industry and opportunities for higher wages in the informal sector**

- **Employers in the garment sector tend to pay the minimum wage.**

The garment sector is in general a labour-intensive industry, and the Jordanian garment sector has traditionally relied on “inexpensive, single, female migrant workers who live in worker compounds”<sup>114</sup> for their production process. These migrant workers come mostly from Asian countries and comprised 73% of the Jordanian garment sector’s workforce in 2016.<sup>115</sup>

The average wage in the private sector in Jordan was estimated to be JD 474 (US\$

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<sup>110</sup> For more info on the decent work agenda, see <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>.

<sup>111</sup> Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2012.

<sup>112</sup> Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation - Jordan, 2016.

<sup>113</sup> International Labour Organization, 2013.

<sup>114</sup> United Nations Development Programme, International Labour Organization, & World Food Programme, 2017.

<sup>115</sup> General Trade Union of Workers in Textile Garment & Clothing Industries in Jordan, 2016.

668) per month in 2014.<sup>116</sup> The new minimum wage rule announced in February 2017, which raised the minimum wage from JD 190 (US\$ 268) for Jordanians to JD 220 (US\$ 310).<sup>117</sup> To accommodate the new minimum wage rule, the stakeholders in the garment sector agreed in March 2017 that the minimum for Jordanians would be JD 205 (US\$ 289) per month.<sup>118</sup> They agreed that the minimum wage for migrant workers would be JD 117.5 (US\$ 165) in cash and JD 87.5 (US\$ 123) “in-kind wage” per month. It will be increased another JD 15 (US\$ 21) wage per month for Jordanians and another JD 7.5 (US\$ 10.5) wage and JD 7.5 (US\$ 10.5) in-kind per month for migrant workers on March 2018. In-kind wage is the outcome of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between the Jordan Garments, Accessories & Textiles Exporters Association (JGATE) and the Labor Union in the Weaving, Textiles & Garments Sector in 2014, which established that employers in the garment sector should provide workers with an additional “in-kind wage” in the form of accommodation, food and other amenities.<sup>119</sup> The stakeholders signed a new CBA in March 2017 to implement the new minimum wage rule.

When we interviewed employers, the new CBA had not yet been signed, but three of the garment firms interviewed paid their migrant workers JD 110 (US\$ 155) in cash and JD 80 (US\$ 113) in-kind per month, which according to The General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment & Clothing Industries is the level of compensation that migrant workers in the sector receive in general. One garment company stated that it pays JD 190 (US\$ 268) per month to Jordanians and Syrian refugees. Employers in other exporting sectors tend to provide higher wages than the garment industry.<sup>120</sup>

- **Syrian refugees expect payment above the minimum wage.**

All thirteen urban, male refugees who participated in the focus group discussion (FGD) in Mafraq agreed that the minimum level of wage they would be willing to accept to work in the factories is JD 400 (US\$ 563) per month with twelve-hour workdays. Most of them believed the wage level in the factories to be between JD 180 (US\$ 254) per month and that the workday is twelve hours. In addition, they mentioned that the factory should cover transportation costs in addition to the salary. Likewise, three urban Syrian refugee men currently working in a garment factory said their current wage is not enough to cover their expenses. Some of them said they would want more working hours if they would be able to earn more.

***“The minimum we would accept to work in those factories would be 400JD (563 US\$).” - Syrian refugee man***

***“Ideally, I want 6 hours a day for 250JD (352 US\$).” - a Syrian refugee woman***

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<sup>116</sup> The Jordan Times, 2016.

<sup>117</sup> The Jordan Times, 2017.

<sup>118</sup> Information provided by Better Work Jordan, May 2017.

<sup>119</sup> Jordan Garments Accessories & Textiles Exporters Association, General Union of Garment Factories, & Labour Union in the Weaving Textiles & Garments Sector, 2014.

<sup>120</sup> One chemical manufacturer, which hires twelve Syrians out of a total workforce of 62 employees mentioned that the minimum salary of the company is 240 JD (338 US\$) per month. One plastic manufacturer# that hires 150 Syrians out of almost 300 employees said that most of the factory line workers receive 250JD (352 US\$) per month.

Meanwhile, some urban female refugees who participated in the FGD in Mafraq said they would prefer JD 250 (US\$ 352) per month with a six-hour workday. They agreed that companies should provide free transportation to the workplace.

- **A wage gap between the demand and the supply side**

Throughout the interviews and FGDs, we found that there is a gap between the level of wages that Syrian refugees expect and the actual wages that employers in the garment sector pay. In sum, Syrian refugees require either JD 400 (US\$ 563) per month for twelve-hour workdays, or JD 250 (US\$ 352) in cash per month for a six-hour workday. Based on what Jordanian labour law stipulates regarding standard work day hours,<sup>121</sup> Syrian refugees' wage expectation for an eight-hour workday is around JD 300 (US\$ 423) per month.

Meanwhile, employers in the garment sector pay the minimum wages of JD 190 (US\$ 268) per month. They are also required to pay for any overtime worked in addition to the standardised eight hours per day or 48 hours per week.<sup>122</sup> Thus, there is a gap between Syrian refugees' wage expectation on the one hand which is around JD 300 (US\$ 423) per month and on the other hand, the actual payment they receive from employers in the garment sector is JD 190 (US\$ 268) per month. The gap exists, but is smaller in other sectors where employers pay between JD 240 (US\$ 338) and JD 250 (US\$ 352) per month.

Our sample size is small, and does not in itself provide sufficient data to draw general conclusions. However, our findings were strengthened by interviews with other stakeholders like the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the World Bank, who also mentioned the existence of this gap between expectations and the reality on the ground. Moreover, a recent report by IRC also strengthens our findings with regards to Syrian refugees' wage expectations. According to the report, the wage expectation of 111 Syrian refugees interviewed in Amman, Irbid, and Mafraq was, on average, JD 325 (US\$ 458) per month.<sup>123</sup> The IRC report found that the lowest wage expectation in the manufacturing sector is around JD 250 (US\$ 352) per month, and the highest is around JD 400 (US\$ 563) per month.

In 2010, the average wage level in Syria before the onset of the war in 2011 was SYP 11,344 (US\$ 241<sup>124</sup> or JD 171<sup>125</sup>) per month. Service sector workers received SYP 13,047 (US\$ 278 or JD 197) Industrial sector workers received SYP 11,175 (US\$ 238 or JD 169) per month and agricultural sector workers received SYP 7,628 (US\$ 162 or JD 115) per month<sup>126</sup>. Thus, the minimum wage level in Jordan is higher than the wage levels Syrians faced in Syria. However, low wages emerged as a significant barrier for the urban refugees we met in Mafraq to seek work in the

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<sup>121</sup> International Labour Organization & International Finance Corporation, 2013.

<sup>122</sup> Better Work Jordan, 2016.

<sup>123</sup> International Rescue Committee, 2016b.

<sup>124</sup> In 2010: 1 US\$ = 47 SYP ([http://www.xe.com/currencycharts/?from=US\\$&to=SYP&view=10Y](http://www.xe.com/currencycharts/?from=US$&to=SYP&view=10Y)).

<sup>125</sup> In 2010: 1US\$ = 0.71 JD

(<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/PA.NUS.FCRF?end=2010&locations=JO&start=1991>).

<sup>126</sup> Syrian Central Bureau Of Statistics, 2010.

garment sector. They claimed that a wage of JD 190 (US\$ 268) is not sufficient to cover living expenses, such as rent, which amounts to JD 200 (US\$ 282) per month, on average. Research done by UNDP, ILO, and WFP supports this finding as they have found that lower paid factory jobs in the Development Zones “is not likely to be compatible with the needs of Syrian refugees who must support families.”<sup>127</sup> Moreover, they report that Syrian refugees usually incur large debts and that “the minimum wage is often not enough to cover either living expenses or debts.”<sup>128</sup>

Despite the clear evidence in our findings that there exists a significant gap in wage expectations that constitutes a barrier for Syrian refugees to take up formal jobs in the garment sector, the low wage level is not prohibitive for all refugees. We met Syrian refugees working in factories for a wage of on average JD 250 (US\$ 352) per month, and IRC’s report mentions that 19% of refugees in Amman, 28% of refugees in Mafraq, and 27% of refugees in Irbid are willing to take up minimum-wage (before the new rule) jobs.<sup>129</sup>

- **Informal work opportunities present better income-earning potential for Syrian refugees**

Our findings also show that informal work opportunities with higher wages steer Syrian refugees away from seeking employment in the exporting industry. Stakeholders such as IRC, CARE, and JGATE mentioned that Syrians can earn more than minimum wages in the informal sector.

According to the UNDP, informal employment represented 44% of total employment in the Jordanian economy in 2010,<sup>130</sup> and according to the ILO and FAFO, 55% of Jordanians worked informally in 2014.<sup>131</sup> With regards to Syrian refugees, figures vary but the Boston Consortium for Arab Region Studies estimated that between 120,000 and 160,000 out of the 655,399 registered Syrian refugees in 2015 worked informally.<sup>132</sup>

The choice of informal work is often related to the low wages provided in the sectors that are open to Syrian refugees. It appears that the informal sector in Jordan provides more attractive wage-earning opportunities for Syrian refugees than the export industry does. According to UNDP, workers in the informal sector earned JD 269 (US\$ 379) per month in 2010.<sup>133</sup> The DRC also claimed that Syrians can earn between JD 250 (US\$ 352) and JD 350 (US\$ 493) per month in the informal sector. Some refugees we met confirmed this claim. Women in

**“We earned 300 JD (423 US\$) per month working sorting garbage”  
- women refugees in one of the focus groups**

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<sup>127</sup> United Nations Development Programme, International Labour Organization, & World Food Programme, 2017.

<sup>128</sup> Boston Consortium for Arab Region Studies, 2017.

<sup>129</sup> International Rescue Committee, 2016b.

<sup>130</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 2013.

<sup>131</sup> International Labour Organization & Fafo, 2015.

<sup>132</sup> Boston Consortium for Arab Region Studies, 2017.

<sup>133</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 2013.

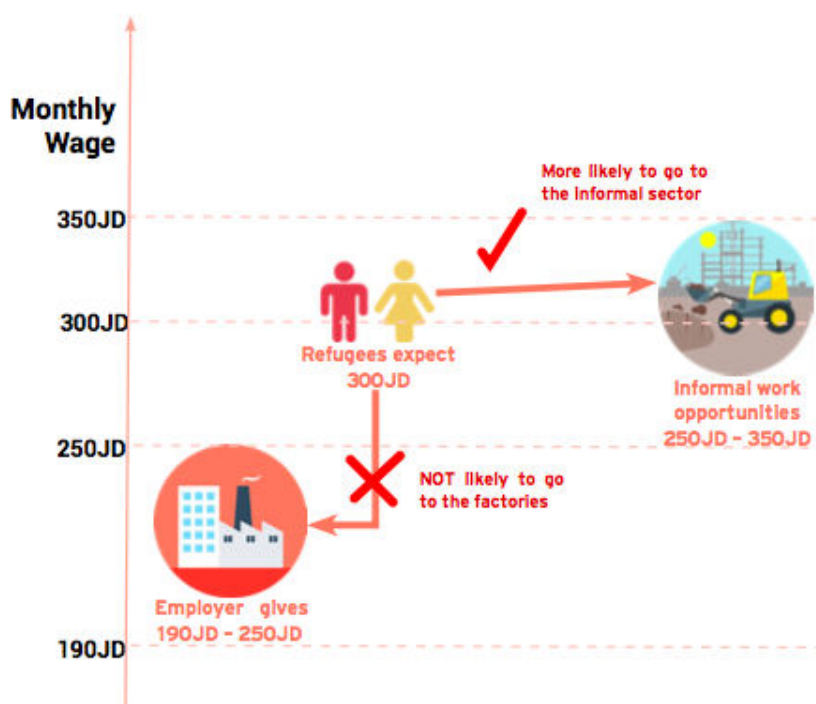


Mafrag told us that they worked sorting garbage without work permits and that they earned around JD 300 (US\$ 423) per month. A male Syrian refugee said that he could earn JD 450 (US\$ 634) per month working with meat packaging.<sup>134</sup> FGDs conducted by the ILO in 2016 with 25 individuals working in the construction sector revealed an earned income of JD 20 (US\$ 28) per day with eight hours of work,<sup>135</sup> corresponding to a wage of JD 400 (US\$ 563) with a standard eight-hour work day and 20 workdays per month.

Under the present conditions, many Syrian refugees prefer to work in the informal sector as the benefits of working in factories for many do not currently outweigh the benefits of working in the informal sector. The fact that factories cannot provide attractive wages for Syrian refugees is a central factor pushing refugees towards informal work. On the other hand, the fact that the informal sector is thriving in Jordan is a pull factor, as is the perception of Syrians as being skilled in service sectors, such as restaurants and small-sized businesses.<sup>136</sup>

***“I could earn 450 JD (634 US\$) per month working in meat packaging” - a male refugee in the focus groups***

**FIGURE 9: Refugees’ wage expectations**



<sup>134</sup> He said that with the safety gears, he could receive 300 JD (423 US\$). But he opted for the option which provided him more wage.

<sup>135</sup> Results of FGDs on Work Permits with Syrian Refugees and Employers in the Agriculture, Construction & Retail Sectors in Jordan, page 7,

<sup>136</sup> Majalla, 2014.



### **Prohibitive commuting distance and cost**

In a study on Jordanian and Syrian women's labour force participation and perceptions on employment published by REACH in 2016, Syrian participants cited an overwhelming preference for home based work. FGDs facilitated by the NGO suggest that this may be due to adaption to the restrictive livelihood environment and limited resource availability, including transportation.<sup>137</sup> In interviews with stakeholders across Jordan, transportation, specifically prohibitive commuting distances, emerged as a central hurdle for Syrian refugees to take up work in factories.<sup>138</sup> Commuting, and the effect distance has on financial considerations, came up regularly in the community gatherings and FGDs.

The Jordan Response Plan discusses the often-overlooked role of transportation and ease of commuting in raising social tensions in host communities,<sup>139</sup> stating that planned development, maintenance and expansion of new investments, services and infrastructure is sacrificed to pay for the mitigation of the impact of the crisis, eroding development gains made by Jordan over the last decades.<sup>140</sup> Existing roads, especially those around Irbid, Mafraq and Zarqa governorates affected by the inflow of Syrian refugees, need expansion and maintenance. Increased pressure on already strained public transport and road networks leads to poor conditions and traffic congestion, which affect both Jordanians' and Syrian refugees' ability to access work.<sup>141</sup>

In interviews with employers, transportation was not viewed as an insurmountable barrier, as they stated that they were ready to offer transportation to urban refugees living in different locations.<sup>142</sup> However, the barrier is not just a product of eroding or nonexistent transportation infrastructure (as some companies already provide transportation), but the distance many refugees must travel to access work changes their financial calculations. In FGDs held in Mafraq, a Syrian refugee man said that he spent two hours commuting to and from the factory every day. An IRC report found that refugee populations largely reside in urban centres or refugee camps and that job opportunities are often distant from their homes.<sup>143</sup> The need to commute changes the financial equation and in some cases becomes prohibitive. A subset of the population interviewed by IRC, stated that the problem was not just the costs or lack of transportation options, but that "long transit times were a deterrent to taking jobs because of their inability to immediately address any home emergencies, such as a health concern or potential eviction."<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> UN Women & REACH, 2017.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with UNHCR, March 13, 2017. Interview with Jordan Garments Accessories and Textiles Exporters' Association, March 22, 2017. Interview with Sigma Detergents Industry Co., March 22, 2017. Interview with IRC, March 08, 2017.

<sup>139</sup> Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation - Jordan, 2016.

<sup>140</sup> Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation - Jordan, 2016.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with employers, March 14 and March 22, 2017.

<sup>143</sup> International Rescue Committee, 2016b.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

Distance is an especially precarious barrier for women, both Syrian and Jordanian. It is hard for many women to commute long distances alone, as especially in the more conservative families, women are not allowed to walk outside alone.<sup>145</sup> The lack of public transportation to Development Zones and childcare facilities specifically affect Syrian and Jordanian women's participation and interest in pursuing opportunities in the manufacturing and exporting industries.<sup>146</sup> Women who are primary caregivers in their households cannot afford to be away from their homes and families for a long period of time in a day. While employers have indicated that they are willing to provide transportation for workers, the long commuting times discourage both men and women from pursuing jobs in these Development Zones. Furthermore, studies have shown that the psychological impact of commuting is amplified for women as it adds on to an already heavy workload that often involves household and care work.<sup>147</sup>

Some employers have responded by offering satellite factories or by outsourcing some of the production, for example giving women simple sewing tasks that can be done inside the house.<sup>148</sup> However, as one employer highlighted, although satellite factories carry the potential to help hire more Syrians, it is difficult to translate into practice, as it is hard to find a place with stable electricity, requiring large-scale and costly investments in off-grid energy.<sup>149</sup> To this point, the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Supply contended that even though it requires large upfront costs, building satellite factories will offset the cost to employers by allowing them to hire more Syrian refugees.

Overall, it appears that commuting by itself is not prohibitive per se. It is only in combination with long hours, low wages, and perceptions of sub-optimal working conditions generally that it becomes another barrier that Syrian refugees face in accessing sustainable livelihoods.

As for employers, according to UNDP, Syrian refugees are mostly living far from the Development Zones, thus, transportation is a problem for employment in these areas, and employers prefer to recruit someone from inside the zones.<sup>150</sup> Employers provided different point of views when they explained the transportation factor. The manager of the firm that already employed 30% Syrian refugees among its workforce mentioned that some Syrians need transportation from places that are very far from the company, but that since the rent near the factories is cheap, some Syrian refugees decided to move to the factory's area.<sup>151</sup> Still other firms explained that they cannot buy buses to transport refugees because they lost a lot in moving the company to the Development Zones.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Interview with Danish Refugee Council, March 13, 2017.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Roberts & Dolan, 2011.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with UNHCR, March 13, 2017.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with employer, March 22, 2017.

<sup>150</sup> Interview with UNDP, March 07, 2017.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with employer, March 22, 2017.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with employer, March 22, 2017.



### Perceptions of sub-optimal working conditions in factories

Though refugees often face a number of barriers in accessing the formal labour market, at times it is the working conditions in these workplaces, or refugees' perceptions of such conditions, that prove to be a barrier both for employers to retain refugees and refugees to find sustainable work. At community gatherings in the Zaatari Refugee Camp, refugees were eager to work formally.<sup>153</sup> They described the informal sector as being fraught with conditions such as maltreatment, instability, difficulty in securing a job daily, and the risk of being underpaid or not paid at all. Despite this, there has been low uptake of work permits by Syrian refugees, although this would presumably alleviate many of the cited problems.

In our interviews as well as in studies including the IRC's survey "Solving the Refugee Employment Problem in Jordan," refugees claimed that the greatest deterrent in searching for jobs was the potential for workplace harassment or abuse.<sup>154</sup> Refugees in FGDs described older men being maltreated in workplaces in general, and many men asked rhetorically: "if men are facing harassment, how much worse do you think women would feel?" There was a widespread belief that it is considered acceptable for Syrian women to be harassed on the basis of their nationality, spurring greater fears of working outside the home. These fears of sexual harassment and gender-based violence are not unfounded; in the IRC survey multiple respondents said they had experienced workplace sexual abuse and others were sexually harassed in public spaces.<sup>155</sup> According to IRC, 58% of the Syrian refugee workers in a recent survey said they felt unsafe in their jobs.<sup>156</sup>

In the informal sector, refugees felt that employers went unchecked because refugees couldn't escalate issues to the authorities.<sup>157</sup> During the Mafraq FGD, a Syrian couple who worked making pickles in partnership with a Jordanian said that when the Jordanian was unable to secure customers he demanded that the Syrian couple pay him for the cost of the pickles. They paid with no hesitation to avoid being reported and potentially deported.

In the formal sector, meanwhile, the refugees interviewed felt similarly constrained given the fact that employers held their work permits.<sup>158</sup> In the manufacturing sector, for example, work permits are tied to employers, and as UN Women found many refugees were hesitant to apply for work permits and tie himself or herself to a single sponsor. This link was associated with a loss of control, especially by women. There are complaint mechanisms, but they are only accessible with work permits and many do not know they exist. Overall, refugees have weak access to justice or public

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<sup>153</sup> Interviews with refugees in community gatherings.

<sup>154</sup> International Rescue Committee, 2016b.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> World Bank, 2016.

<sup>158</sup> International Rescue Committee, 2016b.

institutions.<sup>159</sup>

Added to this are low wages, long hours, no incentives to stay, long commuting distances, and a lack of childcare. Indeed, as a study by the International Labour Organization found, “Syrian workers are accepting lower incomes, work for longer hours and without social benefits”.<sup>160</sup> Thus, as Intersos, IRC, and the DRC told us during interviews, refugees wonder if the protection the work permits provide is worth it if it does not in fact protect them from poor workplace conditions. NRC and DRC claimed that work permits do not give an additional layer of protection. In fact, NRC’s ICLA case managers were hesitant to recommend work permits because it gives a misperception about increased protection. In support of that, ILO claimed that even with the work permit there is no guarantee that refugees will get social security, added labour opportunities, or better work conditions. However, they did say that that it does bring protection from harassment in the workplace. Some actors also contended that holding a work permit does give better protection than in the informal sector and that refugees are still more interested in working formally than informally for this reason.<sup>161</sup> In addition, Syrians do not have their monetary rights protected even in the case of having a work permit. Finally, in the FGDs with Syrian women refugees working in the factories, they stated that the perceptions and fears they had regarding suboptimal working conditions, especially the appropriateness for women to work in these spaces, were lifted once they started working there.<sup>162</sup>



### **Societal attitudes towards women’s employment**

Given Syrian and Jordanian women’s low levels of labour market participation, it is important to contextualise this issue within the social and cultural perceptions of women and work. The Jordan Compact has opened up important avenues for essential conversations about the unique challenges women face in accessing decent livelihoods and work opportunities. While many experts allude to a set of cultural and social barriers that prevent Syrian and Jordanian women from taking up jobs in factories in the Development Zones, it must also be noted that those who wish to work do not have the means to access these opportunities.<sup>163</sup>

In a FGD conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council with Syrian women in Amman, one of the participants asked if women could apply for work permits.<sup>164</sup> This perception that work permits are for men only highlights the pervasive societal expectations of men as main breadwinners and of women as primary caregivers in the family. In an assessment of Jordanian and Syrian refugee women’s labour force participation conducted by UN Women and the Reach Initiative between 23 May and 22 June 2016, it was found that the majority of women residing in Jordan are not

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> International Rescue Committee, 2016a.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with UNHCR, March 13, 2017.

<sup>162</sup> Interviews with employers, March 14, 2017.

<sup>163</sup> Interview ILO and UN Women, March 2017.

<sup>164</sup> Interview with ICLA case managers at Norwegian Refugee Council, March 19, 2017.

employed. The assessment also reported that a majority of women (57%) who are not employed want to work if they had the opportunity. This is indicative of external barriers rather than women's individual attitudes alone that are contributing to the gender gap in the Jordanian labour market.

There seems to be a wide-held belief that specific jobs are better-suited for women - these include home-based businesses and work that is considered more 'womanly', i.e. food production and handicrafts. While formalizing home-based businesses is a policy option that is being considered at the government level to help transition women from the informal to the formal sector, the uptake and implementation of this policy remains ambiguous. Currently, Zarqa governorate is the only municipality that is providing licenses to home-based businesses as part of their women's empowerment programme. Although formalizing home-based businesses appears to be a quick win, the legal requirements to set up a home-based business pose another set of hurdles. Therefore, while there is an understanding that formalization of home-based businesses is a good step forward, structural barriers hinder women's transition to the 'formal' sector.

In order to convince families that working in factories in the Development Zones is safe for women, one employer organised an 'open day' for prospective Syrian workers and their families to visit its factory to see where the women would be working.<sup>165</sup> These 'site visits' were recommended across the board to alleviate Syrian refugee women and men's concerns of exploitation at the workplace. The refugee women we spoke to during our fieldwork – at a UNHCR community gathering in Za'atari refugee camp and FGD in Mafraq – raised concerns about harassment at the factories and the lack of women-only working space. There were perceptions of factories as 'prisons' and that it was socially unacceptable for women to work with men. Participants of the UNHCR community gathering in Za'atari expressed that jobs in factories are better-suited for men and that they would rather see men in their households employed in such sectors. These concerns further illustrate a set of complex challenges and societal attitudes that prevent women from working specifically in factories.



### **Fears related to work formalization**

One thing mentioned by several NGOs was that Syrian refugees fear having lower chances of being resettled outside Jordan (e.g., in the EU) if they get a work permit, a condition that was also found by IRC in a recent study (IRC, 2017).<sup>166</sup> While we could not assess how justified this fear is, if Syrian refugees plan to leave Jordan at some point – which is most probable, given that they have explicitly claimed during FGDs that they would not like to remain permanently in Jordan - and they have the perception that getting a work permit would reduce their chances of being resettled, then it is reasonable to expect that this perception may contribute to reducing refugee take up of work permits.

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<sup>165</sup> Interview with employer, March 14, 2017.

<sup>166</sup> International Rescue Committee, 2016b.

Refugee insights from FGDs and NGO experts highlight that another main reason why Syrian refugees do not take up work permits is their fear of losing UNHCR cash assistance. Although official UNHCR information stipulates that holding a work permit does not have any direct bearing on refugees' eligibility for cash assistance, there is a pervasive mistrust and fear amongst Syrian refugees that this is the case. This point was consistently mentioned by refugees throughout our primary research, and also mentioned in a recent study by IRC.<sup>167</sup> When asked about this issue, a UNHCR representative explained that Syrian and non-Syrian families received cash assistance based on different scales and that it is not multiplicative on a per capita basis. The minimum amount given is JD 80 and the maximum is JD 155. Additionally, the UNHCR representative informed us that having a work permit does not affect Syrian refugees families' eligibility for cash assistance *unless* it affects their vulnerability condition as assessed, on an annual basis, through UNHCR's Vulnerability Assessment Framework. Therefore, even though there is no immediate nor necessary effect of having a work permit on Syrian refugees' eligibility for cash assistance, it may affect it through the annual assessment of their vulnerability condition.

Thus, we believe that this fear leads Syrian refugees to perceive UNHCR cash assistance as an opportunity cost when deciding to move from the informal to the formal sector: when assessing the utility of a work permit, refugees may be comparing the wages in the formal sector with the income they can make, alternatively, in the informal sector, combined with additional security of the UNHCR cash assistance. With the potential for earning higher wages in the informal sector as well as other costs associated with the work permit (work permit fees/social security contribution eventually charged by the employer), refugees fear that they have more to lose and less to gain with a work permit and a job in the formal sector.

Another main barrier is the perception among refugees that once they obtain a permit they are less likely to receive any humanitarian assistance.<sup>168</sup> As reported in a recent IRC paper, many Syrian refugees are concerned that if UNHCR is notified about their formal employment status and monthly income, they will lose access to humanitarian assistance.<sup>169</sup> Another perception is that obtaining a work permit will hinder their resettlement chances to Europe or another third-country.<sup>170</sup> We are unable to ascertain whether this is a real or perceived fear, yet it has emerged as one of the significant barriers expressed by refugees in our interviews.



### **The existence of more appealing work opportunities in the informal sector**

The fact that wages are low, commuting is long and costly, working conditions aren't ideal, women face gender-based restrictions to work in these industries, and there is a general fear that work formalization implies loss of benefits or resettlement opportunities all serve to make the informal sector an

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Interview with CARE, March 8, 2017. Interview with DFID, March 23, 2017.

<sup>169</sup> International Rescue Committee, 2017.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with Danish Refugee Council, March 13, 2017. Interview with CARE, March 8, 2017.

appealing alternative. These are all "push-factors" that push refugees away from working in these industries. In this section we identify some "pull-factors"; factors that for some refugees make working informally more appealing than working formally in the export industry.

- **Women's preference for working at home**

In the FGD with Syrian refugees in Mafraq, some women have mentioned that working at home would be better because it would allow them to balance better their time between work and family duties. In general, most of the women present at the FGD prefer not to work outside of their homes, as it is not comfortable for them. One of them said "we are house women". To them, working from home is more convenient, rewarding, more stable, and safer.

One of the participants in our FGD in Mafraq - called "the famous chef" by the others in the room - explained that she started making "kubbeh" at home, selling it to her neighbors and community, and eventually became a self-made entrepreneur, and that now she has customers not only from Mafraq, but also from Irbid, Amman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, so that, for her, obtaining a work permit and working under another person's supervision (kafeel) will be less rewarding.

Additionally, one NGO mentioned that many Syrian refugee women arrived to Jordan with children and without their husbands, due to many factors, and that these women would be more likely to work at home in order to be able to take care of their children. Moreover, one international organisation mentioned that having a wife working outside home could be considered a reason for shame for Syrians.

***"There is a sense of fulfillment and achievement, working from home is productive and feels good, allows us to meet new people, and stay comfortable without our hijab (veil)".***

While the reasons mentioned refer not necessarily to a higher preference for informal work but to work at home and not on a public environment like a factory, home-based work is much more likely to be informal.

- **Reluctance to being linked to a single employer**

Together with the limitation of sectors allowed for refugees to work in with a work permit, the lack of flexibility to change employer was an additional issue that many of the interviewed refugees raised. According to Jordanian labour law, foreign workers are required to obtain a one-year renewable work permit for a particular employer in a specific job. Being linked to an employer with a work permit and not making it open to any other jobs in the same sector is also considered a key barrier. As a Syrian man explained in the FGD conducted in Mafraq: if you are working at a cellphone shop and have a janitorial permit, and the police raids the shop, a Syrian refugee could be detained just for standing behind the counter and not cleaning (even if he or



she was simply taking a break). This restriction was annoying for them as they want more flexibility with regards to changing their jobs just like in the agriculture sector.

The Ministry of Labour, in consultation with the ILO, has introduced a new model that includes de-linking the work permit application from specific employers in the agricultural sector, and allowing cooperatives to apply for Syrian refugee work permits.<sup>171</sup> Work permits for agriculture and construction sectors are linked to the sector and not linked to a specific employer, but workers have to pay a “go-between” or sponsor “Kafeel” to get a work permit.<sup>172</sup>



### Employers' hiring preferences

While the Ministry of Labour (MOL) has been very flexible with business owners who hire Syrian refugees,<sup>173</sup> some of them prefer not to hire Syrian refugees because they fear it will result in more inspections and restrictions from the MOL, which might cause them worries.<sup>174</sup> Another reason why employers do not prefer to provide work permit to refugees mostly because of social security costs,<sup>175</sup> which should be borne by both parties in a monthly contribution.

Moreover, the need to provide training programmes was a concern to many employers. As the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment & Clothing Industries said one form of training is to have those trained train the new workers. In addition, he mentioned that training is not in the interest of the employer and they do not want to do this; thus, there can be outside training, perhaps from organisations.<sup>176</sup> However, as IRC explained, many firms prefer to train refugees themselves because they want ensure they are trained in the specific skills that is required.<sup>177</sup>

***“ It depends on the kind of work. Some get training for 10-15 days, some get for 5 minutes. One women cited that she watched how other women worked, and that’s how she learned” - Focus Group Discussion***

A factory that has hired seven Syrians, is an example of a company that started providing training to Syrian refugees in cooperation with UNHCR. According to one of the biggest garment manufacturer in Jordan, 300 Syrians showed interest in undertaking a training programme that they offered, 125 of them started the training, but the number decreased to 20 after a while with unknown reasons.<sup>178</sup> As the manager explained, the company is ready not only to provide a friendly environment

<sup>171</sup> International Labour Organization, 2016b.

<sup>172</sup> Interview with International Labour Organization, March 31, 2017.

<sup>173</sup> Interview with Ministry of Labour in Jordan, March 14, 2017.

<sup>174</sup> Interview with Jordan Chamber of Industry, March 07, 2017.

<sup>175</sup> Interview with UNDP, March 07th, 2017

<sup>176</sup> Interview with Jordan Garments Accessories and Textiles Exporters' Association, March 22, 2017.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with International Rescue Committee, March 08, 2017.

<sup>178</sup> Interview with employer, March 14, 2017

to Syrian refugees (for example by providing Syrian food) and cover transportation to Syrians, but also to train Syrians, because building new human resources will benefit the company and community. The company thinks that current supply of labour from some Asian countries could stop because of political reason and they think labour supply from these countries is not a sustainable source of labour. Therefore, investing in Syrian refugee labour is an important insurance against such events.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Jordan Compact was established with the intention to increase economic opportunities for Syrian refugees in Jordan and the Jordanian host community alike. The simplified rules of origin, a central feature of this Compact, aims at providing incentives to employers in the export industry in 18 Development Zones to employ Syrian refugees. Together with the Jordanian government's steps to increase the number of work permits issued to Syrian refugees, this Compact intended to increase Syrian refugees' labour market participation in Jordan, enabling them to become increasingly self-reliant and more secure, as well as to actively contribute to the Jordanian economy.

However, the increased incentives that the new policy environment envisioned to create on both ends of the employment relationship have yet not proven to be as strong as hoped for. Only six out of the 936 exporting companies who are eligible to apply for the relaxed rules of origin currently qualify by employing at least 15% Syrian refugees, and the number of Syrian refugees who have obtained work permits in the export industry remains limited. This suggests that there are remaining barriers keeping Syrian refugees from either being able to or wanting to seek formal work in this industry, and employers from either being able to or wishing to employ Syrian refugees in their factories.

Thus, the barriers to increased Syrian refugee labour-market participation identified in our research can be divided into two types: barriers standing in the way for refugees to be able to work legally in Jordan - by obtaining a work permit - and barriers standing in the way for refugees to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities - by obtaining jobs that are decent, safe and provides refugees with a sense of dignity. Prevalent throughout both types of barriers is the sense of security, or lack thereof; there is ample uncertainty with regards to the work permit process and implications as well as around the availability and character of the available jobs in the export industry.

It is important to not solely link uncertainty challenges with shortcomings of the Jordanian labour market, regulations and policies; uncertainty also stems from and is an extension of refugees' psychosocial state and well-being as a vulnerable population that has left a home behind.<sup>180</sup> The Jordan Compact has brought together a disparate group of stakeholders all with the same mission: to find a sustainable way forward for both refugees and the host community. Ideally, this will serve to reduce many of the uncertainties that not only refugees face, but also the uncertainties of host communities created by a changing socioeconomic landscape due to the influx of large numbers of Syrian refugees.

Although some doubts have emerged during expert interviews regarding the appropriateness of choosing work permits as the vehicle to unlock a less uncertain future the overwhelming evidence collected in a large number of interviews, several focus group discussions (FGD) and analysis of available data and research suggests that the Jordan Compact can work. However, it requires time.

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<sup>180</sup> UNHCR, 2015.

Under the Jordan Compact, reducing the uncertainties experienced by refugees in terms of economic opportunity and host communities in terms of economic development, is associated with job creation mainly in the export industry. The Compact is based on the premise that the simplified rules of origin will help Jordan's export industry to increase exports to the EU. This would generate more jobs for Syrians and Jordanians alike and attract more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which in turn would support job creation and induce economic development.

However, it is fair to assume that the adoption of a macro level policy such as the Jordan Compact requires a transition period before bringing visible results. Indeed, it took almost four years after the US QIZ initiative brought an increase of exports from Jordan to the US, and for the FDI to the QIZs to increase. Garment exports to the US were minimal from 1997 to 2000, and only started to increase in 2001. In 1997, exports from Jordan to the US amounted to only US\$ 5 million, but in 2001 this number soared to US\$ 164 million. FDI to the QIZ was limited until 2000, and began climbing in 2001, bringing in more than US\$ 150 million to Jordan's economy.

Likewise, it took around four years after the US-Jordan Free Trade Agreement (JUSFTA) generated an increase in exports from Jordan to the US. Even after the agreement was signed in 2001, the amount of the export to the US under the JUSFTA programme was less than US\$ 30 million per year until 2004. From 2005, however, it began to increase by more than US\$ 200 million per year. Although there are many reasons why these agreements (the QIZ initiative, and JUSFTA) affected the increase of the export amount to the US, it is obvious that it takes time for certain trade programmes or policies to generate results. The Jordan Compact is still in a very early stage of implementation, and therefore ways should be explored to help the Compact to actively contribute the Jordanian economy also in the short run.

Although it will take time for the intended effects of the Jordan Compact to take hold, there are actions that can and should be taken to create an enabling environment for Syrian refugees to become active participants in the Jordanian economy. In doing this, strategies can and should be adopted on two, closely interlinked, levels: in society in general and in the labour market. At the societal level, strategies should be adopted to reduce the "internal" barriers Syrian refugees are facing and that relate to psychosocial well-being. According to a study on the mental health of Syrian refugees in Jordan 'fear' is the most common psychological problem reported by Syrians in Jordan, followed by worry and grief.<sup>181</sup> In another report, the Jordan Health Aid Society and International Medical Corps Agency found that "urban refugee men in Jordan frequently mentioned feeling depressed and ashamed of their inability to continue their education, and being forced by circumstance to work in very low paying and/or harsh jobs to help support their families".<sup>182</sup> Moreover, men, women and children report that these additional stressors exacerbate family tensions and have led to increased domestic violence.<sup>183</sup> The consistent repetition of 'I had my own land, I worked for myself' during our FGDs with refugees is illustrative of the fact that there is a significant mental or emotional barrier for refugees to seek employment in any of the professions open to them. Moreover, spending every day

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<sup>181</sup> Jordan Health Aid Society, 2012.

<sup>182</sup> UNHCR, 2015.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

with machines, in an alien environment, without knowing where or how this factory job is going to help them in the long turn is triggering mental insecurity.

Although these types of internal barriers are not the focus of this report, the existence of them have to be considered in the development of a successful and comprehensive policy aimed at eliminating or reducing barriers in the labour market. Creating an enabling and welcoming host community is the most important and fundamental issue to stimulate Syrians to actively engage in the Jordanian society including seeking stable and formal job opportunities in the labour market. Therefore, it will be important that policies are aimed at supporting the process of overcoming worry and grief. Creating a welcoming environment and adopting host community policies that aim to increase social cohesion between refugee and host communities should be a priority. To this end, any policy aimed at addressing refugees' situation should consider the implications for the host community and Jordanians. Indeed, introducing policies that may cause friction between refugee and host populations may constitute the single most important threat to the successful inclusion of Syrians, not only in the labour market, but in society as a whole.

At the labour market level, which has been the focus of this report, strategies should address the main 'external' barriers for labour market participation of Syrian refugees identified in this paper. In our interviews and FGDs, we found that Syrian refugees are conflicted regarding whether or not to obtain a work permit. On the one hand, refugees are often motivated to obtain a work permit as it relieves their fears of being deported, sent back to the refugee camp, paid less money, or it serves as a legal protection when they are questioned by the police.<sup>184</sup> On the other hand, based on personal experiences and stories they have heard, many refugees prefer to work informally without a work permit for a variety of reasons outlined in this report.

If the chosen vehicle for the stated goal of the Jordan Compact of providing jobs to Syrian refugees - work permits - is to be successful, these work permits must be sufficiently attractive for Syrian refugees for them to choose them over informal work. There are several reasons why refugees would want to obtain work permits and other reasons why they may simultaneously view work permits as being disadvantageous. Having a work permit and a formal work contract is supposed to bring benefits that help ensure a person's security - in the workplace and in society in general. However, this dynamic is not self-enforcing; public policies have to help forge and sustain the connection between holding a work permit and enjoying such benefits. Without such policies, certain groups of refugees may not feel sufficiently attracted to the prospect of holding a work permit.

In other words, offering work permits to Syrian refugees is not enough. Rather, work permits must lead to enough reduction of uncertainty - including, but not limited to, uncertainty about refugees' legal status, their working conditions, how their wages will cover daily living expenses, how they can get to and from work safely and without incurring additional costs, how they can combine work with household and caregiving responsibilities - in order for refugees to be incentivized to seek formal job opportunities. This applies to all sectors in which Syrian refugees are allowed to

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<sup>184</sup> FGD, Mafraq. As Intersos mentioned, while the number of deported Syrians has decreased, the fear of deportation is still based on the experiences in 2012 when there was a peak in deportations.

work. This report, however, has outlined the specific uncertainties related to the export sector that must be addressed. The following section provides specific recommendations to overcome these barriers.

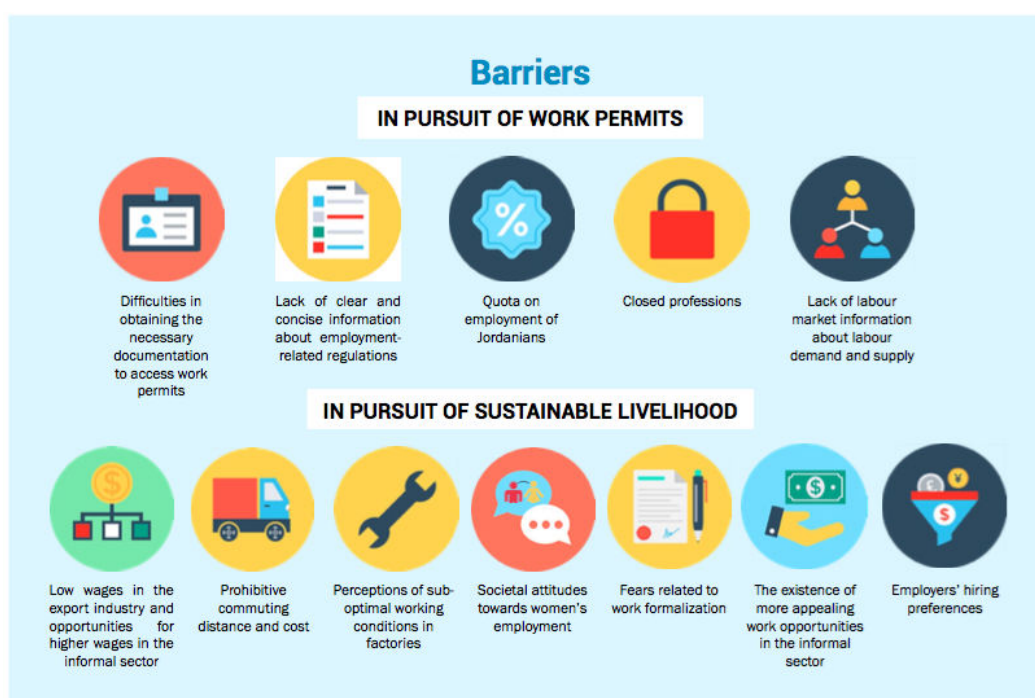
## RECOMMENDATIONS

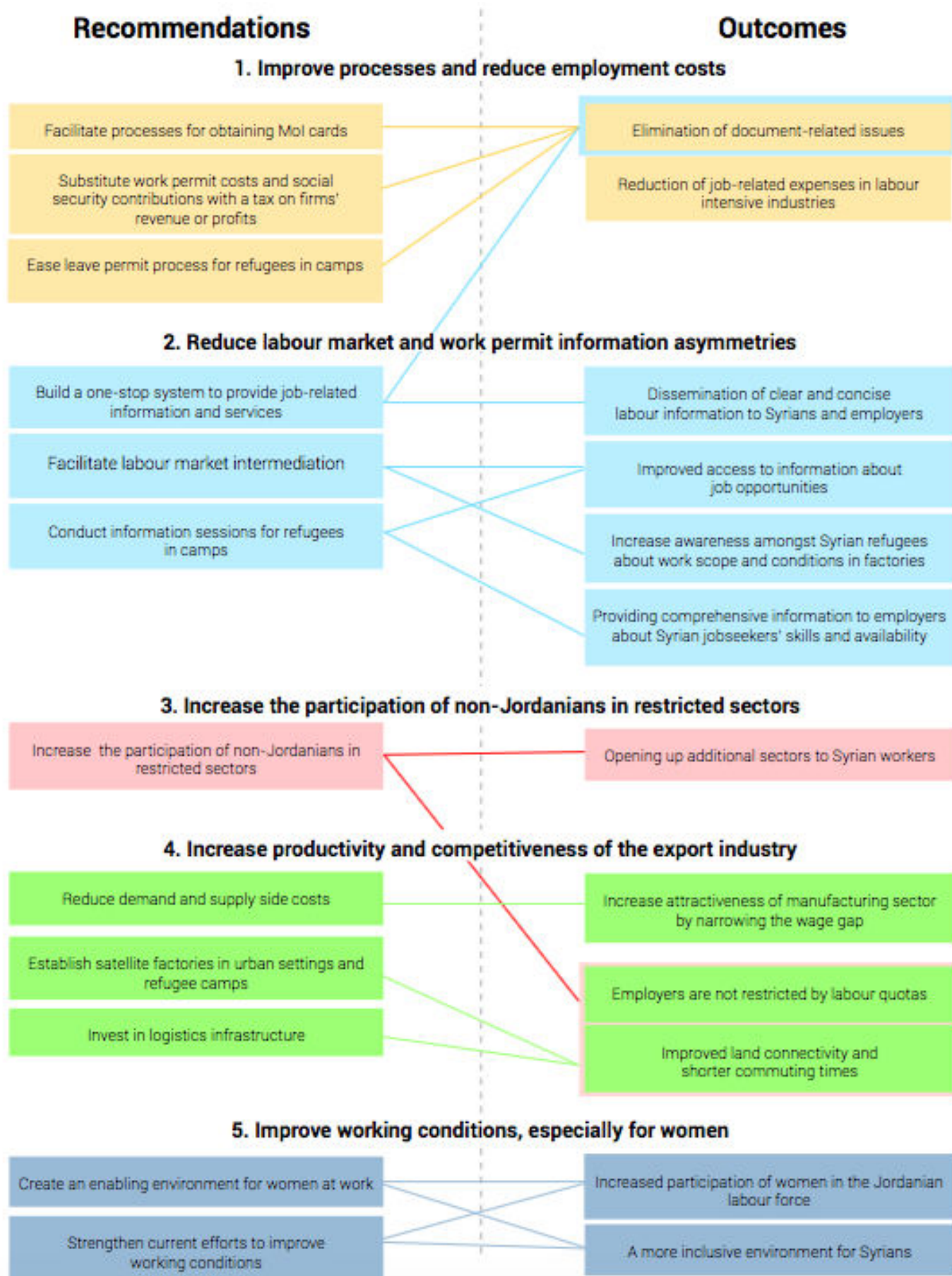
The extensive analysis of 41 semi-structured one-on-one interviews and five FGDs, as well as sociodemographic data and other studies on Syrian refugees in Jordan reveals eleven barriers that pose challenges when Syrian refugees pursue a work permit and sustainable livelihoods. This section presents a number of recommendations, incorporating the views expressed by stakeholders and the voices of the refugees, which we believe will help minimise these barriers.

In brief, the recommendations involve: (i) improve processes and reduce costs associated with employment (work permits, social security and leave permits); (ii) reduce information asymmetries about these processes as well as about job opportunities in the labour market; (iii) increase the participation of non-Jordanians in restricted sectors; (iv) increase productivity and competitiveness of the export industry; and (v) improve working conditions, especially for women.

Divided between these five groups of recommendations, twelve specific recommendations are associated with the multiple barriers previously identified (see Figure 10 below). These twelve recommendations are expected to generate twelve outcomes, which also have been categorised under the same the five groups of recommendations. Figure 11 (overleaf) illustrates the interaction of recommendations and expected outcomes that are described in more detail below.

**FIGURE 10: Barriers faced by Syrian refugees in pursuit of work permits and sustainable livelihoods.**

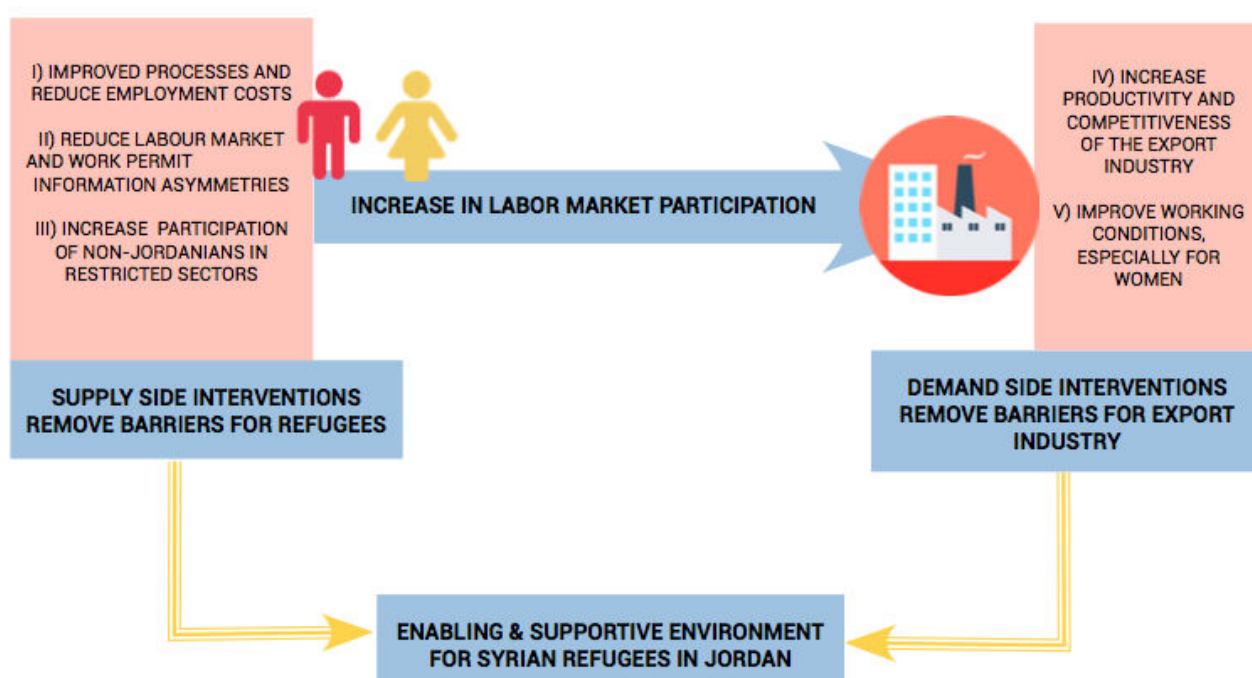




As shown in Figure 12 below, these recommendations aim to address the barriers identified in this report and help build an enabling and supportive environment for Syrian refugees in Jordan. The recommendations are expected to increase capacity on the demand side (employers) to 'welcome' Syrians to the workforce, and enhance the incentives and motivations on the supply side (Syrian refugees) to seek work opportunities ('increase in labour market participation') in the export industry.

It is important to highlight that the potential outcomes from these policies are expected to benefit not only Syrians but also Jordanians and other migrant workers, based on the holistic perspective of improving the development of the host community as a pathway to improve Syrian refugees participation in Jordan's labour market.

**Figure 12: Towards an enabling and supportive environment for Syrian refugees in Jordan**



## I. Improve processes and reduce employment costs

### i.1. Facilitate processes for obtaining Mol cards

One of the main barriers that refugees identified in obtaining a work permit was the difficulties in acquiring the necessary documentation – most notably the Mol card – that is required to apply for work permits. The lack of documentation is for many refugees also an important barrier in obtaining the Mol card. A first step in facilitating the process of obtaining work permits would therefore be to simplify the process of obtaining an Mol card. Indeed, as noted in an NRC report: “To obtain new Mol cards,



refugees in these categories have to go through a special process that is relatively obscure and inaccessible".<sup>185</sup> To address this, government agencies could work more closely with UNHCR in establishing the identities of refugees and accept other identity documents than passports, such as UNHCR-issued identification, for the purpose of obtaining an Mol card.

Another barrier to accessing Mol cards is the fact that refugees who have left camps without leave permits are ineligible to obtain the card. To address this problem, more information should be provided in camps, through community gatherings and other communication channels, about the consequences of leaving camps without the permits and how it may affect their chances of obtaining formal work in the future. However, many refugees, despite knowing about these types of consequences, are still willing to leave without the permits. Therefore, information dissemination should be coupled with policies aimed at facilitating regularization of status for people who have left camps irregularly. Legal pathways to obtaining work permits and Mol cards should be provided to urban refugees who have not obtained the necessary documentation to leave camps. At the very least, they must be ensured that they will not face deportation if they turn to authorities for assistance. At the moment, there seems to be a significant fear among refugees that this will happen. In our interviews with expert stakeholders, we received contradictory responses whether deportations and forced relocations back to camps still happen or not.

### **i.2. Substitute work permit costs and social security contributions with a tax on firms' revenue or profits**

Considering that work permit fees and social security contributions are significant barriers and constitute important sources of fiscal revenues, it is necessary to find ways to ease the burden caused by them without affecting its associated fiscal revenues.

The associated cost of work permit has been waived until December 2017. However, before the waiver of the work permit fee, the fees were fixed per sector, constituting a fixed cost per worker per year, independently of her or his wage. This fixed cost was a strongly regressive fee, and placed a proportionately larger burden on those in low-wage jobs in Jordan, such as Syrian refugees.

Regarding the social security costs, according to many stakeholders, the main information problem regarding social security relates to who bears the responsibility for paying for it, and about its portability. Even though the rule is clear on the responsibility and portion of the social security costs, social security costs represent an additional cost to the formal employment relationship, and constitute a strong barrier, either if they are to be paid by the employer and employee, or irregularly charged to the employee only.

One way to eliminate this barrier would be to substitute the work permit costs and social security contributions with a tax on firms' revenues or profits, calibrating the level of the tax to reach the same level of fiscal revenue obtained *ex ante*.

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<sup>185</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council & International Human Rights Clinic, 2016.

This is, of course, not a simple measure, but a structural one, and requires a significant level of study on Jordan's private sector conditions in order to determine the best way to implement it. One possibility would be, e.g., to have different tax levels across different sectors. But it may deliver a set of advantages over the current structure of Social Security contributions based on the payroll and of fixed annual work permit fee per worker. The most immediate effect would be to avoid the probability that these costs are beared by the workers as a cost associated to their employment<sup>186</sup>, through informal mechanisms as the ones described before or through a formal and implicit discount on the wages paid. Additionally, it reduces the marginal cost per additional worker in the economy – with a stronger proportionate reduction for lower-wage jobs, since work permit fees are fixed per sector.

Finally, this substitution may also distribute the costs of these fiscal revenues in a more fair way across the society: intensive-labour firms, which usually face lower profit margins – such as the garment sector - would contribute less than they contribute today, while more capital-intensive firms, which usually face higher profit margins – such as the financial sector – would increase their share of contribution.

### **i.3. Ease leave permit process for refugees in camps**

One of the obstacles for job-searching for refugees who reside in camps includes the leave permit requirement. The process of obtaining the leave permit in itself needs to be smoother, with more centres in camps where these can be obtained so as to cut down waiting times. Moreover, lengthening the time for which leave permits are valid (from the current two weeks) would provide increased incentives to spend the time and efforts to obtain one, as refugees would not have to go through the same procedure every other week. Such a policy would also be welcomed by the employers who reported that the requirement for refugees to go back to the camp every second week to renew their leave permit constituted a barrier for them.

## **II. Reduce labour market and work permit information asymmetries**

### **ii.1. Build a one-stop system to provide job-related information and services**

Syrian refugees in Jordan often lack full or coherent information about labour market regulations includes information about the process and costs of obtaining a work permits as well as costs and portability of social security costs.

In order to avoid these uncertainties and the associated costs, it must be assured that (i) the information about these regulations obtained through various mechanisms by Syrian refugees and employers is coherent, and (ii) that whenever the conduct of any of these parties do not follow the specified regulations, their enforcement can be easily claimed by any of them.

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<sup>186</sup> Since the substitution proposed does not prevent the employers from bearing these costs, they are to represent either a reduction of the firms' profits or, for example, a reduction of wages or even an increase of the firm's products prices, depending on the conditions the firm faces on its products' market and on the labour market. However, distributing this cost among these possibilities seem to be a more favorable option to the workers than keeping them associated to the payroll and to the employment relationship.

There are many ways to do this. One way to streamline the information would be to guarantee that all information about work permits and social security is centralised in one very simple government webpage, with all the traditional mechanisms (frequently asked questions, online support) to dissolute doubts. There should be no other official source that conflict with this centralised webpage. This one-stop system would help intensify information dissemination to refugees and governmental institutions around the rules and regulations around fees related to work permits and social security, as well as on the rights of employees. A strong effort should be made to publicise this webpage across the government bureaucracy, through traditional and social media and through folders distributed in government agencies and workplaces.

In order to guarantee everyone the opportunity to lodge a complaint whenever she or he perceives that the regulations are not being followed, a possible approach would be to create a hotline, or an electronic form linked to the centralised webpage described above to enable anyone to easily generate a formal or anonymous complaint. This would need to ensure that every complaint received by the government generates an adequate response.

## **ii.2. Facilitate labour market intermediation**

Information asymmetries in Jordan's labour market present challenges to refugees' labour market participation. Syrian refugees are not fully aware of the available job opportunities, and employers lack information about the geographical distribution and skills characteristics of the Syrian labour force. A solution to this challenge may be the creation of a labour market intermediation service, either publicly or privately provided, to connect refugees and employers.

These services, also categorised as "Labour Market Intermediaries", can be defined as "entities or institutions that interpose themselves between workers and firms to facilitate how workers are matched to firms".<sup>187</sup> In this sense, a classical format of a labour intermediation service consists of agencies that collect information about job vacancies with firms as well as information about workers looking for jobs, and based on this information suggest matching possibilities. This format alone would strongly minimise the coordination problem in the labour market.

It is important to mention that, additionally, the creation of a service like this allows for a more precise identification of training and capacity needs, which can be very useful not only to the inclusion of the Syrian refugee population in the Jordanian labour market but also for Jordanian and other migrant workers.

## **ii.3. Conduct information sessions for refugees in camps**

A complementary way to increase refugees' job-searching opportunities - especially for refugees living in camps - as well as information about the availability of work outside the camp is to have employers conducting information and recruitment sessions for refugees in camps. In interviews with UNHCR, it emerged that a

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<sup>187</sup> Autor, 2009.

process of decoupling the work permit application process from that of the leave permit is underway in camps, including by inviting companies to the camps. This seems to be a positive process that should be encouraged and facilitated.

### **III. Increase the participation of non-Jordanians in restricted sectors**

Many formal sectors such as sales, warehouse works, medical, and electricity professions are not open to refugees and this is one of the reasons why many Syrian refugees prefer to stay in the informal sector. The Jordanian labour law restricts or, in some cases, even totally prevents the employment of migrant labour force in specific sectors, and only in exceptional circumstances, foreigners are allowed to work in restricted sectors. Therefore, development partners, such as UN Women, DFID, and IRC, suggest that opening up additional sectors to Syrians will enable more Syrian refugees to participate in the Jordanian job market. Opening up or expanding the participation of non-Jordanian workers in these sectors is a politically sensitive issue because of the high unemployment rate among Jordanians, amounting to around 14.7% in the second quarter of 2016.<sup>188</sup> However, if sectors related directly or indirectly to the export industry suffer from a shortage of Jordanian workers, opening up these sectors will create more opportunities for Syrians without threatening the position of Jordanians in the labour market. As some stakeholders mentioned, it may be difficult to generate 200,000 jobs in the export industry alone. Nevertheless, a more practical approach could help generate more jobs in the industry and related sectors, which would eventually contribute to reach the target of the Jordan Compact.

### **IV. Increase productivity and competitiveness of the export industry**

#### **iv.1. Reduce demand and supply side costs**

The low wages especially in the garment sector is a main barrier to a higher labour-force inclusion of Syrian refugees in the export industry. While manufacturers in the less labour-intensive export sectors can and do provide higher wages, the number of new jobs created by these less labour-intensive factories will be limited unless the Jordan Compact brings additional investment into the sector. Moreover, there are many informal workplaces that offer higher wages than the export industry - instead of pursuing employment in factories, Syrian refugees pursue other alternatives to earn income.

Therefore, it is necessary to find a way to make the employment in the export industry more attractive to Syrian refugees. An easy solution would be - and one that would please Syrian and Jordanian workers- to further increase minimum wages, most notably in the garment sector. However, there are concerns that an increase in wages will impact the competitiveness of the export industry. The Ministry of Planning and one garment factory mentioned that the increase in wages may lead to

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<sup>188</sup> Boston Consortium for Arab Region Studies, 2017.

Jordan losing competitiveness when compared to countries such as Tunisia, Morocco, and Ethiopia. In addition, any new attempt at increasing minimum wages would likely be met with strong opposition from employers in the industry. Employers participating in a Jordan Garment Sector Alliance meeting in Amman in March 2017 raised concerns with regards to potential increased minimum wage levels, claiming that it would negatively affect their businesses. Thus, a number of stakeholders preferred other methods to address this issue.

Against this backdrop, we recommend an alternative approach that can create fiscal space to raise the wage for the demand side, and can increase the net wage (wage after the fees) received by the supply side. If the companies hiring Syrians (and Jordanians) can cut other expenses, there will be more space to raise wages and create better working conditions in order for the companies to attract more Syrians (and Jordanians). Likewise, if the expenses connected to Syrian refugee labour could be reduced, it increase Syrians net wage. In this way, Syrians' wage level requirement (JD 300 per month) could be met, which would reduce their preference for working in the informal sector. Examples of possible reduction of fees:

- Demand side: reduce the Corporate Income Tax,<sup>1</sup> reduce the documentation fees, cutting utility charges, and change the social services contribution from the payroll bases (the employer should pay 14.25% of the employee's wage<sup>2</sup>) to the revenue bases\*, etc.
  - Supply side: eliminate the burden of paying the social services costs which constitutes 7.5%<sup>3</sup> of their wage,\* reduce the documentation fees, etc.
- \* For more details see section i.2. above.

Overall, the reduction in fees will ease the wage gap between the supply side and demand side, decreasing the Syrian refugees' preferences to seek work opportunities in the informal sector, and make the export industry more attractive to Syrians and Jordanians. Thus, it will also help eliminate the barrier related to the quota faced by employers.

#### **iv.2. Establish satellite factories in urban settings and refugee camps**

Refugees interviewed in urban settings and camps continuously pointed to prohibitive commuting distance and costs as a key barrier to seeking job opportunities in the factories. For camp refugees, obtaining a leave permit constituted another barrier to exploring formal work opportunities in the export industry. To address these issues, some employers are already operating satellite factories. According to the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing Industries Jordan, satellite factories in the garment sector employ 3,684 workers (3,478 Jordanians, 206 migrants) out of a total of 69,278 employees.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Total number of workers in garment sector-Jordan (2016/1/1-2016/12/31), General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing Industries Jordan

Against this backdrop, we recommend expanding the satellite factories to urban areas and into the refugee camps. The costs involved with operating the satellite factories will be borne by employers. However, as the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Supply explained, expanding satellite factories may offset the cost incurred by employers by allowing them to hire more Syrians and Jordanians. With the establishment of satellite factories in urban settings, Syrians and Jordanians can contribute to the development of the host community.

Given issues related to the expenses of operating satellite factories, such expansion may only work for businesses that can set up a satellite factory without a huge infrastructure investment. In this way, these factories can minimise their cost while attracting more labour. Other companies can outsource some of their manufacturing processes to refugees in cooperation with NGOs or stakeholders. This can also be done as a part of CSR (corporate social responsibility) activities. For example, IKEA in cooperation with the Jordan River Foundation, plans to establish a production centre, using existing Jordan River Foundation's production centres, and hire Syrian refugees to work in the woven process of crafted products. The products will be launched in Jordan and then expanded for sale globally.<sup>190</sup>

The idea of satellite factories is also aimed at addressing existing societal attitudes towards women's employment. While it remains unclear if there is a specific policy or set of policies by NGOs, donor agencies and the government to address the pervasive cultural and social barriers restricting Syrian refugee women from pursuing formal employment, the general consensus remains that bringing jobs to the homes of Syrian refugee women would increase their participation in the garment sector. The idea to expand the satellite factories to encourage Syrian and Jordanian women to work in the garment sector has received positive responses from different stakeholders. As mentioned above, while employers have to consider the costs of production associated with the establishment of such units, the argument made in favor of satellite units focuses on the premise that one successful model is all that is required to create a positive image around work in the industry.<sup>191</sup>

However, the idea of expanding satellite factories (including outsourcing some of the manufacturing processes to refugees) should be done with a compliance monitoring system in place, which ensures these units meet international labour standards and national labour law, health, and safety condition, quality control, and labour environment. If satellite factories fail to meet such conditions set by appropriate compliance monitoring systems, local manufacturers will not be able to expand their exports to the EU market as well as attract Syrian workers to work in these factories.

### **iv.3. Invest in logistics infrastructure**

Factories, particularly in the garment industry, tend to be located far from refugee hosting communities - thus, requiring many hours of commuting a day. This situation is exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure that is beginning to crumble under the

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<sup>190</sup> IKEA aims to take 200,000 people out of poverty in massive social sustainability drive, for more information see, <https://www.dezeen.com/2017/04/18/ikea-massive-social-sustainability-drive-production-centres-refugee-camps-jordan>

<sup>191</sup> Interview with JGATE.

increased use and lack of funds for maintenance. Commuting is not an irresolvable barrier, and commuting by itself is not necessarily a problem. However, it is prohibitive when combined with other barriers including low wages in the export industry and a higher wage opportunities in the informal sector identified in this report. The paucity of transportation infrastructure further exacerbates the commuting experience.

Investment in satellite factories in host communities for labour intensive sectors, such as the garment sector, would open up a more conducive space for refugees and employers to negotiate other issues such as wages and working arrangements. As outlined above, satellite factories are just one option for creating a more robust and attractive package of incentives for both Syrian, and Jordanian, workers. In addition to investment in satellite factories, investment in infrastructure development, especially the maintenance and expansion of more heavily trafficked roadways connecting Mafraq, Irbid, and Zarqa governorates, is essential. Investment in public projects has proved to have far-reaching economic benefits; these projects can serve not only to improve commuting, but also to provide employment in a sector reserved for Jordanians.

## **V. Improve working conditions, especially for women**

### **v.1. Create an enabling environment for women at work**

By accommodating women's concerns about working in factories, employers would be able to create a more enabling environment for Syrian refugee women to thrive at the workplace. For example, several refugee women we talked to mentioned that they would not like to work in an environment where they would be in contact with other men, as this would not be accepted in their community. Some of the factories we talked to expressed that they would be willing to create an environment that would be more welcoming to Syrian refugees. One factory is already providing Syrian food in an effort to attract and retain Syrian workers.

Thus, there is a reason to believe that some of these factories would be willing to take steps that would accommodate Syrian women's particular preferences. As a first step, it would be a good to map some of these concerns and distribute this information to employers, in order to improve the understanding of what type of measures would incentivise women to seek job opportunities in their factories. It might also help alleviate some of the negative connotations and shame associated with having a wife working outside of the home. To this end, recent efforts by factory owners to establish child care facilities at factories is a positive step. Women are more likely to stay at home in order to look after their children; therefore, the provision of childcare facilities at factories is essential to foster a supportive environment for Syrian refugee women and enable them to pursue work opportunities without having to worry about care work.

### **v.2. Strengthen current efforts to improve working conditions**

From interviews with refugees, one of the main barriers to Syrian refugees' inclusion into the formal labour market is the perception of and reality of suboptimal working conditions, specifically harassment and discrimination at work. In order to facilitate

the entry of Syrian refugees - especially women - into the workforce, this issue must be adequately addressed. The implementation of operational complaint mechanisms for all workers in the workplace is an important measure to ensure accountability and this would alleviate some of the concerns faced by Syrian refugees. Existing policies must also be disseminated and enforced. In cases where refugees still feel unsafe in the workplace, embracing programming that would allow them to do piecework from home should be investigated. The idea of piecework could potentially accommodate those with disabilities and the elderly who might not be able to work in factories. However, it is important to note that this has potential downsides such as the possibility of engaging child labour and inconsistent product quality. Hence, similar to the satellite factory, it is important to implement piecework only if and when labour conditions and product quality meet relevant compliance standards.



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## **ANNEX**

### **Focus group discussion guides**

#### **FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION: MALE AND FEMALE REFUGEES IN ZAATARI**

**Composition:**

Participants of male Community Gathering (quantity estimated at 35)

Participants of female Community Gathering (quantity estimated at 35)

**Schedule:**

Group 1: All - 35 minutes

**Location:**

Zaatari Refugee Camp

<b>All participants</b>
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**PROMPT 1:**

I would like to begin by welcoming you to this focus group, we greatly appreciate you being here. Before we begin we would like to introduce the team, the purpose of our research, and how the information will be used.

**PROMPT 2:**

My name is...

I am from...

I study...

**PROMPT 3:**

We are doing research from Columbia University in New York City with Better Work Jordan. We are trying to identify the barriers to Syrian refugees accessing work and greatly value your opinions in helping us understand this better. We hope to improve work opportunities and access to work for Syrian refugees.

**PROMPT 4:**

This information will be used to compile a report that will be shared with Columbia University, Better Work Jordan, UN agencies in Jordan, and departments of the Jordanian government. Again, it's overall purpose is to understand the struggle that Syrian refugees are facing when finding and keeping work with the hopes to change

or create policies to make things easier. But we must remind you that we are not here to give you jobs, we do not have this power.

**PROMPT 5:**

All participants will remain anonymous and nothing you say will be voice or video recorded. Your names, location, or any information associated with you will not be shared with any entity whatsoever.

We would like to take a few pictures, if you would not like to be in any photos, please let us know and we will not take your photo or any photos at all.

Do you have any questions?

**PROMPT 6:**

- When we begin we will:
- Welcome intake form (5 min)
- Icebreaker (10 min)
- Everyone together (1 hr)
- Group 2 will be invited to eat if they wish while Group 1 is in session (45 min)
- After eating and after Group 1 is finished with their session, Group 2 will be invited into session and Group 1 will be invited to have lunch (45 min)

**PROMPT 7:**

If you agree to participate, you are welcome to stay with us. If you at any point feel that you no longer wish to participate, you are welcome to withdraw. Please do not be shy about this, we understand and will not be offended. Your comfort is our priority.

Thank you for coming here to be with us today. We greatly appreciate your presence and look forward to learning about your experiences.

We will begin by filling in this **Welcome Intake Form** (5 min)

**QUESTION 1:**

PREAMBLE:

First of all, we would like to understand what kind of work you did back in Syria, whether it be through a formal employer or work you did on your own to earn money.

QUESTION:

**Could you tell us about what work you did in Syria and how long you did it?**

PROBE:

- What area(s) did you work in?
- Did you have an employer or were you self-employed?

- If you did not work, what were the reasons?

## **QUESTION 2**

### **PREAMBLE:**

We would also like to understand how Syrians earn a living here in Jordan and your experiences.

### **QUESTION:**

**For those who have worked previously or are currently working in Jordan, what do you do, where, and for how long?**

### **PROBE:**

- What area do you work in?
- Do you have an employer or are you self-employed?

## **QUESTION 3A-B**

### **PREAMBLE:**

We hear different stories about how easy or difficult it is to find a job as a Syrian in Jordan.

### **QUESTION 3A:**

**How did you find your job and what were the difficulties if any?**

### **PROBE:**

- Why would you say it was difficult?
- How do you look for jobs?
- Do you receive support in looking for a job, from for example a government agency or NGO?
- What additional support do you think is needed to help you find a job?
- For those who have **work permits**, can you share with us how you obtained it? What were the challenges, if any?

### **QUESTION 3B:**

**Do you think that men and women face the same challenges in trying to find work?**

### **PROBE:**

- Do you think women should work? Why or why not?
- Do you think women want to work? Why or why not?
- Do you think women who want work face unique challenges? If so, what do you think they are?

## **QUESTION 4A-C:**

### **PREAMBLE:**



Last year, the Jordanian government announced that it would grant 200,000 work permits to Syrians to work in factories in development zones, but it seems very few Syrians are working in them.

QUESTION 4A:

**Do you know about these factories and if so can you please tell us about them and how you learned about them?**

PROBE:

- What do you know about the salaries, working hours, and benefits?
- What do you know about the working conditions?
- What do you know about the benefits and social security?
- Are the factories far from where you live? What type of transportation would you take to get there and how much would it cost?

QUESTION 4B:

**Given what we have spoken about, by a show of hands, who would apply for a work permit to work in a factory and why?**

QUESTION 4C:

**Given what we have spoken about, by a show of hands, who would NOT apply for a work permit to work in a factory and why?**

PROBE:

- What would change your mind?

**CLOSING:**

Thank you very much for sharing your insights with us, we are very appreciative. Everyone did very great work and we will be using your insights in our report.

We would now like to invite those who are not employed to eat until our second round of discussions begin in 40 minutes. For those who are employed, we would like you to stay with us for a short discussion and will bring you tea shortly.

**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION:**

**PART 1: EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED MEN**

**PART 2: EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED WOMEN**

**Composition:**

Part 1: Formally or informally employed (6) and unemployed (7) men

Part 2: Formally or informally employed (6) and unemployed (7) women

**Schedule for each part:**

Group 1: All - 1 hour

Group 2: employed - 45 min

Group 3: unemployed - 45 min

**Location:**

Princess Basma Centre, Mafraq

<b>Group 1 - All</b>
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**PROMPT 1:**

I would like to begin by welcoming you to this focus group, we greatly appreciate you being here. Before we begin we would like to introduce the team, the purpose of our research, and how the information will be used.

**PROMPT 2:**

My name is...

I am from...

I study...

**PROMPT 3:**

We are doing research from Columbia University in New York City with Better Work Jordan. We are trying to identify the barriers to Syrian refugees accessing work and greatly value your opinions in helping us understand this better. We hope to improve work opportunities and access to work for Syrian refugees.

**PROMPT 4:**

This information will be used to compile a report that will be shared with Columbia University, Better Work Jordan, UN agencies in Jordan, and departments of the Jordanian government. Again, it's overall purpose is to understand the struggle that Syrian refugees are facing when finding and keeping work with the hopes to change or create policies to make things easier. But we must remind you that we are not here to give you jobs, we do not have this power.

**PROMPT 5:**

All participants will remain anonymous and nothing you say will be voice or video recorded. Your names, location, or any information associated with you will not be shared with any entity whatsoever.

We would like to take a few pictures, if you would not like to be in any photos, please let us know and we will not take your photo or any photos at all.

Do you have any questions?

**PROMPT 6:**

- When we begin we will:
- Welcome intake form (5 min)
- Icebreaker (10 min)
- Everyone together (1 hr)
- Group 2 will be invited to eat if they wish while Group 1 is in session (45 min)
- After eating and after Group 1 is finished with their session, Group 2 will be invited into session and Group 1 will be invited to have lunch (45 min)

**PROMPT 7:**

If you agree to participate, you are welcome to stay with us. If you at any point feel that you no longer wish to participate, you are welcome to withdraw. Please do not be shy about this, we understand and will not be offended. Your comfort is our priority.

Thank you for coming here to be with us today. We greatly appreciate your presence and look forward to learning about your experiences.

We will begin by filling in this **Welcome Intake Form** (5 min)

**ICEBREAKER (10 min)**

[Everyone will be asked to introduce themselves and something interesting about themselves]

[The participants will be randomly split into group 1 and 2 and each group will be asked to put together a picture that relates to working in Jordan. After completing the puzzle, members of each group will be asked to explain their picture and what they think it represents. This exercise will be described as something that will represent what is going to be touched upon in our upcoming discussion; each piece of the puzzle is important, and that all of them together paints a wider picture. This is to show that each of their experiences is unique and important and that all of them together are critical to understanding some kind of unified but diverse experience. Working together is the only way we can see this picture in its full reality.]

**QUESTION 1:**

PREAMBLE:

First of all, we would like to understand what kind of work you did back in Syria, whether it be through a formal employer or work you did on your own to earn money.

QUESTION:

**Could you tell us about what work you did in Syria and how long you did it?**

PROBE:

- What area(s) did you work in?

- Did you have an employer or were you self-employed?
- If you did not work, what were the reasons?

## **QUESTION 2**

### **PREAMBLE:**

We would also like to understand how Syrians earn a living here in Jordan and your experiences.

### **QUESTION:**

**For those who have worked previously or are currently working in Jordan, what do you do, where, and for how long?**

### **PROBE:**

- What area do you work in?
- Do you have an employer or are you self-employed?

## **QUESTION 3A-B**

### **PREAMBLE:**

We hear different stories about how easy or difficult it is to find a job as a Syrian in Jordan.

### **QUESTION 3A:**

**How did you find your job and what were the difficulties if any?**

### **PROBE:**

- Why would you say it was difficult?
- How do you look for jobs?
- Do you receive support in looking for a job, from for example a government agency or NGO?
- What additional support do you think is needed to help you find a job?
- For those who have **work permits**, can you share with us how you obtained it? What were the challenges, if any?

### **QUESTION 3B:**

**Do you think that men and women face the same challenges in trying to find work?**

### **PROBE:**

- Do you think women should work? Why or why not?
- Do you think women want to work? Why or why not?
- Do you think women who want work face unique challenges? If so, what do you think they are?

## **QUESTION 4A-C:**

**PREAMBLE:**

Last year, the Jordanian government announced that it would grant 200,000 work permits to Syrians to work in factories in development zones, but it seems very few Syrians are working in them.

**QUESTION 4A:**

**Do you know about these factories and if so can you please tell us about them and how you learned about them?**

**PROBE:**

- What do you know about the salaries, working hours, and benefits?
- What do you know about the working conditions?
- What do you know about the benefits and social security?
- Are the factories far from where you live? What type of transportation would you take to get there and how much would it cost?

**QUESTION 4B:**

**Given what we have spoken about, by a show of hands, who would apply for a work permit to work in a factory and why?**

**QUESTION 4C:**

**Given what we have spoken about, by a show of hands, who would NOT apply for a work permit to work in a factory and why?**

**PROBE:**

- What would change your mind?

**CLOSING:**

Thank you very much for sharing your insights with us, we are very appreciative. Everyone did very great work and we will be using your insights in our report.

We would now like to invite those who are not employed to eat until our second round of discussions begin in 40 minutes. For those who are employed, we would like you to stay with us for a short discussion and will bring you tea shortly.

<b>Group 2 - Employed</b>
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**QUESTION 1A-B:**

**PREAMBLE:**

We would like to know a little more about how you like your work.

**QUESTION 1A:**

**By a show of hands, who is satisfied/happy with the work they are doing? Can you tell us why?**

PROBE:

- Please feel free to discuss the kind of work, salary, work hours, distance, safety, skills match etc.

QUESTION 1B: SENSITIVE must gauge whether or not to ask

**By a show of hands, who is NOT satisfied/happy with the work they are doing? Can you tell us why?**

PROBE:

- What makes it hard?
- Please feel free to discuss the kind of work, salary, work hours, distance, safety, skills match etc.

### **QUESTION 2:**

PREAMBLE:

We would like to know about what it is like to hold a job in Jordan as a Syrian refugee.

QUESTION:

**How easy or difficult is it for you to keep your job?**

PROBE:

- What are the challenges you face? (legal, distance, informality, etc.)
- What would make it easier?

### **QUESTION 3:**

PREAMBLE:

Before we finish this discussion, we would like to hear your recommendations for how work could become more easily accessible for Syrian refugees in Jordan.

QUESTION AND EXERCISE:

How do you think that the challenges you've mentioned, including [*insert brief recap*] can be overcome? Who should be involved in helping overcoming these and how? (ie: salary, working conditions, working hours, transport etc.)

EXERCISE FORMAT:

1. The challenges that were identified throughout the FGD will be put on large papers as headers.
2. Participants will be asked to write on a post-it what solution(s) they would like to see under the first challenge.
3. The participants will then be asked to explain what they each came up for that

challenge and then place their post-it under it.

4. As each consecutive solution is being placed under the challenge, participants will be asked to group them with other solutions on the paper that are similar, if any. This way as the solutions are gathered, all can begin to see where their solutions congregate.
5. Steps 2-4 will be repeated for all challenges.
6. The team will discuss the results.

**QUESTION 4:**

**Lastly, is there anything anyone would like to add before we finish for today?**

**CLOSING:**

Thank you very much for sharing your insights with us, we are very appreciative. We would now like to invite you all to eat while we speak with the other group. Thank you all once again.

<b>GROUP 3 - Unemployed</b>
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**QUESTION 1A-B:**

PREAMBLE:

We would like to know a little more about the reasons that you are not working, if you're trying to find work, and what the challenges you are facing.

QUESTION 1A:

**Do you want to work? If no, can you tell us the reasons?**

PROBE:

- Are some of the reasons concerned with disability/age, child care, distance, legality, culture etc?
- We heard that some refugees may not want a work permit because they think that they will become ineligible for assistance from the UNHCR, or they might no longer be able to move on from Jordan. What do you think about such worries?

QUESTION 1B:

**For those who would like to work, what would you like to do?**

PROBE:

- What do you think prevents you from getting the job you want?
- Do you think your skills match the work that is available?

**QUESTION 2:**

We would like to know about what it is like to hold a job in Jordan as a Syrian refugee.

QUESTION:

**For those who had jobs but are currently not working, can you tell us about what the reasons are?**

PROBE:

- What are the difficulties in keeping a job? (legal, distance, informality, etc.)

**QUESTION 3:**

PREAMBLE:

Before we finish this discussion, we would like to hear your recommendations for how work could become more easily accessible for Syrian refugees in Jordan.

QUESTION AND EXERCISE:

How do you think that the challenges you've mentioned, including [*insert brief recap*] can be overcome? Who should be involved in helping overcoming these and how? (ie: salary, working conditions, working hours, transport etc.)

EXERCISE FORMAT:

1. The challenges that were identified throughout the FGD will be put on large papers as headers.
2. Participants will be asked to write on a post-it what solution(s) they would like to see under the first challenge.
3. The participants will then be asked to explain what they each came up for that challenge and then place their post-it under it.
4. As each consecutive solution is being placed under the challenge, participants will be asked to group them with other solutions on the paper that are similar, if any. This way as the solutions are gathered, all can begin to see where their solutions congregate.
5. Steps 2-4 will be repeated for all challenges.
6. The team will discuss the results.

**QUESTION 4:**

**Lastly, is there anything anyone would like to add before we finish for today?**

**CLOSING:**

Thank you very much for sharing your insights with us, we are very appreciative.

**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION:  
QEZ EMPLOYED MEN AND WOMEN**



**Composition:**

Employed men (4) and employed women (12)

**Schedule:**

Group 1: All - 1.5 hour

**Location:**

Dulayl

<b>Group 1 - All</b>
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**PROMPT 1:**

I would like to begin by welcoming you to this focus group, we greatly appreciate you being here. Before we begin we would like to introduce the team, the purpose of our research, and how the information will be used.

**PROMPT 2:**

My name is...

I am from...

I study...

**PROMPT 3:**

We are doing research from Columbia University in New York City with Better Work Jordan. We are trying to identify the barriers to Syrian refugees accessing work and greatly value your opinions in helping us understand this better. We hope to improve work opportunities and access to work for Syrian refugees.

**PROMPT 4:**

This information will be used to compile a report that will be shared with Columbia University, Better Work Jordan, UN agencies in Jordan, and departments of the Jordanian government. Again, it's overall purpose is to understand the struggle that Syrian refugees are facing when finding and keeping work with the hopes to change or create policies to make things easier. But we must remind you that we are not here to give you jobs, we do not have this power.

**PROMPT 5:**

All participants will remain anonymous and nothing you say will be voice or video recorded. Your names, location, or any information associated with you will not be shared with any entity whatsoever.

We would like to take a few pictures, if you would not like to be in any photos, please let us know and we will not take your photo or any photos at all.

Do you have any questions?

**PROMPT 6:**

- When we begin we will:
- Welcome intake form (5 min)
- Icebreaker (10 min)
- Everyone together (1.5 hr)
- We will all eat together after our discussion

**PROMPT 7:**

If you agree to participate, you are welcome to stay with us. If you at any point feel that you no longer wish to participate, you are welcome to withdraw. Please do not be shy about this, we understand and will not be offended. Your comfort is our priority.

Thank you for coming here to be with us today. We greatly appreciate your presence and look forward to learning about your experiences.

We will begin by filling in this **Welcome Intake Form** (5 min)

**ICEBREAKER (10 min)**

[Everyone will be asked to introduce themselves and something interesting about themselves]

[The participants will be randomly split into group 1 and 2 and each group will be asked to put together a picture that relates to working in Jordan. After completing the puzzle, members of each group will be asked to explain their picture and what they think it represents. This exercise will be described as something that will represent what is going to be touched upon in our upcoming discussion; each piece of the puzzle is important, and that all of them together paints a wider picture. This is to show that each of their experiences is unique and important and that all of them together are critical to understanding some kind of unified but diverse experience. Working together is the only way we can see this picture in its full reality.]

**QUESTION 1:**

PREAMBLE:

First of all, we would like to understand what kind of work you did back in Syria, whether it be through a formal employer or work you did on your own to earn money.

QUESTION:

**Could you tell us about what work you did in Syria and how long you did it for?**

PROBE:

- What area(s) did you work in?
- Did you have an employer or were you self-employed?
- If you did not work, what were the reasons?

## **QUESTION 2**

### **PREAMBLE:**

We would also like to understand how Syrians earn a living here in Jordan and your experiences.

### **QUESTION:**

**For those who had a job in Jordan before working in the factories, what did you do, where, and for how long?**

### **PROBE:**

- What area do you work in?
- Did you have an employer or were you self-employed?

## **QUESTION 3A-B**

### **PREAMBLE:**

We hear different stories about how easy or difficult it is to find a job as a Syrian in Jordan.

### **QUESTION 3A:**

**How did you find your previous and current job, and what were the difficulties if any?**

### **PROBE:**

- Why would you say it was difficult to find work?
- How did you look for jobs?
- Did you receive support in looking for a job, from for example a government agency or NGO?
- What additional support do you think is needed to help others find a job?

### **QUESTION 3B:**

**Do you think that men and women face the same challenges in trying to obtain work?**

### **PROBE:**

- Do you think women should work? Why or why not?
- Do you think women want to work? Why or why not?
- Do you think women who want work face unique challenges? If so, what do you think they are?

## **QUESTION 4:**

We would like to know about how you got your work permit and what made the process easy or difficult.

QUESTION:

**Can you please tell us about the different steps involved in getting your work permit. What made it easier? What made it harder?**

PROBE:

- What documents did you need?
- How many different groups were involved (ie: employer, NGO, etc.)

**QUESTION 5A-B:**

PREAMBLE:

Last year, the Jordanian government announced that it would grant 200,000 work permits to Syrians to work in factories in development zones, but it seems very few Syrians are working in them.

QUESTION 5A:

**What were the reasons that you applied to work in a factory?**

PROBE:

- Could it be salary, working hours, benefits, work conditions, distance, etc.?
- Did you get additional training for your job? Who provided the training?

QUESTION 5B:

**Why do you think many Syrian refugees are not applying to work in these factories?**

PROBE:

- Could it be salary, working hours, benefits, work conditions, distance, better informal work?

**QUESTION 6A-B:**

PREAMBLE:

We would like to know a little more about how you like your work.

QUESTION 6A:

**By a show of hands, who is satisfied/happy with the work they are doing? Can you tell us why?**

PROBE:

- Please feel free to discuss the kind of work, salary, work hours, distance, safety, skills match etc.

QUESTION 6B: SENSITIVE, must gauge whether or not to ask.

**By a show of hands, who is NOT satisfied/happy with the work they are doing?  
Can you tell us why?**

PROBE:

- What makes it hard?
- Please feel free to discuss the kind of work, salary, work hours, distance, safety, skills match etc.
- Would you rather be doing something else?

### **QUESTION 7:**

PREAMBLE:

We would like to know about what it is like to hold a job in Jordan as a Syrian refugee.

QUESTION:

**How easy or difficult is it for you to keep your job?**

PROBE:

- What are the challenges you face? (legal, distance, work hours, salary, etc.)
- What would make it easier?

### **QUESTION 8:**

PREAMBLE:

Before we finish this discussion, we would like to hear your recommendations for how work could become more easily accessible for Syrian refugees in Jordan.

QUESTION AND EXERCISE:

How do you think that the challenges you've mentioned, including [*insert brief recap*] can be overcome? Who should be involved in helping overcoming these and how? (ie: salary, working conditions, working hours, transport etc.)

EXERCISE FORMAT:

1. The challenges that were identified throughout the FGD will be put on large papers as headers.
2. Participants will be asked to write on a post-it what solution(s) they would like to see under the first challenge.
3. The participants will then be asked to explain what they each came up for that challenge and then place their post-it under it.
4. As each consecutive solution is being placed under the challenge, participants will be asked to group them with other solutions on the paper that are similar, if any. This way as the solutions are gathered, all can begin to see where their solutions congregate.
5. Steps 2-4 will be repeated for all challenges.

6. The team will discuss the results.

**QUESTION 9:**

**Lastly, is there anything anyone would like to add before we finish for today?**

**CLOSING:**

Thank you very much for sharing your insights with us, we are very appreciative. Everyone did very great work and we will be using your insights in our report.

We would now like to invite those who are not employed to eat until our second round of discussions begin in 40 minutes. For those who are employed, we would like you to stay with us for a short discussion and will bring you tea shortly.

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this Focus Group Discussion. We appreciate your participation very much. Please use the next 10 minutes to fill out the information below. All information provided will remain anonymous.

1a. Age:

\_\_\_\_\_

1b. Gender: Male / Female.

2. Place of birth? (NOTE: This question should be omitted for FGDs in Zaatari)

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Education level: Primary School / Middle School / High School / Diploma or Certificate / Bachelors, Masters / PhD

4. Employment status: Employed / Unemployed

4b. If employed, what is your occupation?

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4c. If employed, where do you work?

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4d. If not employed, do you earn money? Y / N

5a. Are you a financial support to anyone? Yes / No

5b. If yes, how many people do you support? \_\_\_\_\_

5c. How many people are working in your household?

Person 1: Gender: M / F Age: Relationship to  
you: \_\_\_\_\_

Person 2: Gender: M / F Age: Relationship to  
you: \_\_\_\_\_

Person 3: Gender: M / F Age: Relationship to  
you: \_\_\_\_\_

Person 4: Gender: M / F Age: Relationship to  
you: \_\_\_\_\_

6a. Do you have a Jordanian work permit? Yes / No

6b. If not, would you like to have a work permit and why or why not? Yes / No

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