



Jordan Situation Report

June 11, 2024

Background

The background to water scarcity, refugee livelihoods, and food security in Jordan can be found in Anera's last [Situation Report \(April 2024\)](#).

Overview

Azraq Refugee Camp in Jordan, now entering its tenth year of existence, grapples with ongoing challenges, including severe resource shortages and limited economic opportunities, affecting tens of thousands of Syrian refugees. Despite residents' coping mechanisms, reductions in humanitarian aid and restricted mobility significantly hinder their path to self-reliance and improved living conditions. Initially established in April 2014 to alleviate pressure on the Zaatari refugee camp, Azraq camp currently hosts more than 42,000 Syrian refugees. Living conditions remain harsh in the camp, characterized by ongoing issues with electricity and water access. Additionally, the camp's aging infrastructure, including shelters, demands substantial maintenance. The recent reductions in assistance have forced families to adopt negative coping strategies in order to fulfill basic needs. Outside the camp, economic opportunities are scarce due to limited mobility and employment options, exacerbating refugees' challenges.¹

The Impact of the War on Gaza

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development highlighted a decline in Jordan's economic growth due to the indirect impacts of the aggression on Gaza, including reduced tourist arrivals, decreased investment inflows, and postponed consumer spending. **High unemployment remains a significant issue**, averaging 21% in the last quarter of 2023, with women and youth facing exceptionally high rates of 30% and 42%, respectively.²

Since the start of the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, demonstrations in Jordan have escalated, with protests intensifying since March 24 in Amman, Karak, and Irbid. Protesters express anger over the aggression and the siege of Gaza and fears of

¹ [Jordan: As Azraq camp marks 10 years, long-term solutions remain elusive for Syrian refugees. May 2024 | Development Aid](#)

² [EBRD forecasts 2.6% economic growth for Jordan in 2024. May 2024 | The Jordan Times](#)

Palestinian displacement affecting Jordan, recalling events from 1948 and 1967.³ This could worsen the already dire humanitarian situation in Jordan, especially with UNRWA funding cuts and the already massive numbers of refugees hosted by Jordan.

Refugees in Jordan

During the United Nations Security Council Session on the Humanitarian Situation in Gaza and the Role of UNRWA in April, Jordan's representative underscored the agency's vital role in providing relief and essential services to Palestinian refugees, including those residing in Jordan. The country's representative highlighted the indispensable function of UNRWA in offering hope and stability to millions of refugees. Jordan called for the international community to ensure sustained financial and political support for UNRWA, stressing that weakening the agency would have dire consequences for the refugees and the broader region. Jordan reiterated its commitment to advocating for Palestinian rights and the necessity of maintaining and strengthening UNRWA's operations.⁴

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) recently received a contribution of \$1.8 million from the Government of Japan to support refugees in Jordan. This funding will enable UNHCR to continue providing basic needs and cash assistance to the most vulnerable refugees and supporting community-based protection initiatives, with a focus be on empowering refugee women through capacity-building initiatives and cultural events. UNHCR emphasized the importance of humanitarian funding, especially as socio-economic pressures on refugees continue to mount.⁵

Similarly, Germany has pledged 25 million euros in humanitarian aid to assist Syrian refugees in Jordan, with an initial commitment of 20 million euros designated for the World Food Programme and an additional five million euros for UNHCR to support aid and health services for Syrian refugees. Jordan, one of the most affected countries by the Syrian crisis, hosts around 730,000 refugees within UNHCR's mandate, predominantly from Syria, as well as from Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, and Somalia (Palestinian refugees in Jordan fall under UNRWA's purview). This aid aims to meet the needs of vulnerable refugee families in Jordan. In 2023, Germany provided approximately 90 million euros in humanitarian assistance to support refugees and host communities in Jordan, focusing on food supply, protection, counseling, and health services. The World Food Programme emphasized the critical timing of this contribution to prevent the suspension of assistance for all eligible refugees.⁶

³ [Jordan has long been a beacon of stability in the Middle East – but that looks to be changing. April 2024 | The Conversation](#)

⁴ [The Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question. April 2024 | UN](#)

⁵ [UNHCR welcomes continued funding from Japan to support refugees in Jordan. May 2024 | UNHCR.](#)

⁶ [Germany commits 25 million euros to help Syrian refugees in Jordan. May 2024 | NPA Syria](#)

Syrian refugees in Jordan face significant financial challenges and limited access to essential resources. **Over 90% of Syrian refugee families in Jordan are in debt**, with 28% resorting to borrowing money for food. The reduction in international funding has exacerbated the situation, leading to cuts in crucial assistance programs. As a result, families rely heavily on cash assistance from organizations such as UNICEF to meet their basic needs. Funding shortages have reduced the number of children benefiting from this assistance from over 10,000 to just over 5,500. This reduction exacerbates families' already dire circumstances, forcing them to prioritize basic needs over school uniforms and stationery. These significant financial constraints threaten children's ability to pursue education and break the cycle of poverty.⁷

Vulnerable Community Groups

Disability rates in Jordan exhibit an age-related increase, with 49% of the population aged 65 and above reporting a disability, compared to approximately 46% of the population over 60 worldwide and 11% of the general population in Jordan. Among Syrian refugees, older women are disproportionately affected, with 28% reporting functional difficulties, compared to 16% of older men. A significant proportion of older individuals, particularly men, continue to work beyond retirement age, with 21% of men aged 60-64 and 6% of men aged 65 and above still employed; only 16% of older women and 81% of older men receive pensions.⁸

Livelihoods

The economic strain in Jordan, marked by high unemployment and soaring living costs, has severely restricted people's access to necessities such as food, fuel, and water. With a lack of adequate social protection, many have turned to borrowing to make ends meet, resulting in hundreds of thousands facing the threat of imprisonment due to unpaid debts exceeding JOD 5,000 (a little over \$7,000 in current conversion rates).⁹

A recent report by a Jordanian organization highlighted significant issues in the local labor market, revealing that approximately half of the labor force lacks social security coverage. The report emphasizes the prevalence of low pay rates and the severe economic challenges workers face, with many earning below the absolute poverty line. Furthermore, most workers, constituting nearly 99% of the sample, are not affiliated with labor unions or associations. The report underscores that many workers receive

⁷ [Education is the light at the end of this dark tunnel. May 2024 | UNICEF](#)

⁸ [The rights and wellbeing of older persons in Jordan, January 2024 | UNFPA](#)

⁹ [The State of the World's Human Rights, April 2024 | Amnesty International](#)

wages below the minimum wage, contributing to ongoing challenges and higher unemployment, as such jobs fail to meet basic living requirements for Jordanians.¹⁰

Health and Education

Non-communicable diseases are the primary contributors to disabilities among older individuals, accounting for over 90% of years lived with disabilities. The prevalence of diabetes is notably higher among older women, with 35% affected compared to 29% of men. Disparities in education persist across gender and age groups, with older individuals aged 65 and above having lower educational attainment compared to those aged 60 to 64. Among women aged 65 and above, more than half are illiterate, compared to only 20% of men in the same age group.¹¹

A recent comprehensive national study conducted by UNRWA assessed the mental health status of children and adolescents in Jordan; the survey investigated 8,000 children and adolescents, including Jordanian nationals and Syrian and Palestinian refugees, who made up 38% of the participants. Results revealed that **91% of the children and adolescents exhibited symptoms of depression and anxiety**, 34% had emotional and behavioral problems, **60% showed signs of PTSD**, and 52% experienced a poor overall quality of life.¹²

Evidence from Jordan highlights the extent of income inequality, educational outcome disparities, and unequal access to educational opportunities. While men's average wages surpass women's, households led by women exhibit higher expenditure per capita. Despite compulsory and free basic education, ensuring universal schooling and preventing primary school dropouts among disadvantaged groups require additional actions. Inequality in educational opportunities persists, notably regarding secondary and tertiary completion rates, with family wealth and parental education serving as primary drivers.¹³

Water

Jordan grapples with severe water scarcity, ranking among the world's most water-stressed nations, exacerbated by reports indicating a utilization rate surpassing renewable water resources. Additionally, the looming specter of climate change threatens to diminish available water reserves further. In response, the

¹⁰ [Unemployment, low pay: Tamkeen reports labour market imbalances in Jordan, May 2024 | The Jordan Times](#)

¹¹ [The rights and wellbeing of older persons in Jordan, January 2024 | UNFPA](#)

¹² [National Study for Mental Health Status among Children and Adolescents in Jordan, April 2024 | UNHCR](#)

¹³ [Inequality of income and education in Jordan, May 2024 | ERF Policy Portal](#)

government has reduced water subsidies for households consuming over six cubic meters monthly.¹⁴

Many Jordanian households face constant anxiety due to severe water scarcity, with only 90 cubic meters available per person annually, far below the international scarcity threshold. This dire situation forces residents to seek alternatives beyond the limited government-supplied water, resulting in an unregulated and often inefficient water market dominated by well owners and truckers. Consumers frequently complain about price fluctuations and late deliveries.¹⁵

Germany agreed to intensify development cooperation with Jordan in May to enhance water supply. The cooperation will focus on constructing one of the world's largest seawater desalination plants and promoting resource-saving agricultural irrigation. Climate change has severely threatened Jordan's drinking water supply, exacerbating the impact of regional hostilities on tourism and trade.¹⁶

Anera's Response

Refugees & Livelihoods, WASH

With support from the Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair Refugee Education Fund, Anera, alongside its partner ILearn, will enhance vocational skills and foster digital entrepreneurial skills among youth refugees and host community workers. Funding will additionally support WASH awareness for public health, as well as the enhancement of household water infrastructure and water storage systems in Jerash and Souf refugee camps.

Food Security

Anera continues to scale up its rooftop garden initiative as a means of addressing food insecurity through sustainable and innovative farming practices. In expanding the project's target communities to include schools, Anera and ILearn will implement rooftop gardens and provide agricultural training to improve food security and individual and families' ability to meet their nutritional needs. Anera and its local partners aim to empower and encourage the adoption of eco-friendly practices that both mitigate climate change and improve the quality of life within these communities.

Health

In response to the significant shortages in noncommunicable disease (NCD) medications, Anera, with support from the United Methodist Committee on Relief ,

¹⁴ [The State of the World's Human Rights, April 2024 | Amnesty International](#)

¹⁵ [The Looming Climate and Water Crisis in the Middle East and North Africa, April 2024 | Carnegie Endowment](#)

¹⁶ [Germany and Jordan join forces for a sustainable water supply, May 2024 | Deutschland.de](#)

procured and delivered six essential NCD medications to the Syrian American Medical Society that will serve 580 patients for an entire year. This initiative aims to provide sustainable aid to the vulnerable Syrian refugees in the Zaatari and Azraq camps, where many families live below the poverty line. By alleviating the cost burden on patients and ensuring continuous care, this project significantly enhances their quality of life. The procured medications include treatments for hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases, ensuring comprehensive care for those in need.

Additionally, we received and distributed a shipment from International Health Partners that included NCD medications for hypertension, estimated to provide 143,864 treatments. These medications are provided to vulnerable communities that would otherwise be unable to afford them. The shipment also included analgesics, antifungals, and antibiotics, which are estimated to provide 850,862 treatments, further supporting those in need.

To address the rising mental health issues in Jordan, Anera is working to enhance the capacity of mental health services provided by our partners. We are collaborating with partners to upgrade their psychological services and support them with needed medications.