



# Jordan Situation Report

December 14, 2021

## Background

The background to the circumstances of COVID-19, economic recovery, and educational challenges in [Jordan](#) can be found on Anera's last [Situation Report \(October 13\)](#).

## Overview

In the coming winter months, Jordanians are likely to face an increase in COVID-19 cases in tandem with flu season and an unprecedented drought crisis. In the midst of a third wave of COVID-19,<sup>1</sup> vulnerable populations will either seek indoor shelter due to dropping temperatures, increasing the risk of crowding and spreading COVID-19 and seasonal flu, or face the harsh winter with little to protect themselves from sub-zero temperatures and snowfall.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Jordan faces decreasing water levels and the threat of a water crisis due to delayed seasonal rainfall<sup>3</sup> and dangerously low levels of the country's largest dam.<sup>4</sup>

## COVID-19

As of December 14, there have been 1,015,289 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 12,024 cumulative deaths in Jordan. Ten percent of the population has been infected.<sup>5</sup> With nearly ten percent of the population having already contracted COVID-19, Jordan now ranks 39th of the 224 countries and territories tracking COVID-19 cumulative cases.<sup>6</sup> The average daily number of reported infections has increased to 4,788, which is equivalent to 57 percent of Jordan's peak infection period. So far, Jordan has administered 8.07 million doses of various COVID-19 vaccinations, which is enough to vaccinate around 39.9 percent of the population, assuming that each person needs two doses.<sup>7</sup> Official figures indicate that as of November 21, 3,674,761 people in Jordan are considered to be fully vaccinated out of a population of 10 million, or approximately 36.7 percent.<sup>8</sup>

Jordan entered a third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in the week of November 21, when weekly infections increased from 15,000 cases to 20,000. As of November 21,

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<sup>1</sup> [20,000 weekly COVID cases bring Kingdom into 3rd wave of pandemic | Jordan Times](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Keeping Children In Jordan Warm, Fed and Learning This Winter | Forbes](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Jordan dam reserves at all-time low as water crisis looms | Arab News](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Jordan struggles with dry dams, water deficit | Al-Monitor](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Coronavirus in Jordan | Coronavirus COVID-19 Observer](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Worldometer - Reported Cases and Deaths by Country or Territory; Andrew Shitov, "https://covid.observer/jo/" \(data collected from the Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering\); Andrew Shitov, "Coronavirus per capita" \(data collected from the Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Jordan: the latest coronavirus counts, charts and maps | Reuters](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Jordan pushes child vaccinations to fight COVID-19 surge | Arab News](#)

hospitals in Jordan have “comfortable levels” (Adel Bilbeisi, who leads the COVID response for the Health Ministry) of capacity for COVID-19 patients, with 3,500 isolation beds, 1,200 ICU beds, and 1,000 ventilators available among Ministry of Health hospitals.<sup>9</sup> On December 6, the US Department of State issued a level four advisory against travel to Jordan due to the rapidly increasing cases of COVID-19.<sup>10</sup>

Jordan responded on November 21 to the surge in COVID-19 cases by announcing several containment measures. The government now asks children and young people to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, with the consent of their parents or guardians. In addition, the government plans to encourage all adults over the age of 18, and especially those over the age of 50, to receive booster doses. Despite new vaccination recommendations, the government plans to avoid implementing a nationwide lockdown.<sup>11</sup>

A study conducted by the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan reports that 21 percent of Jordanians believe conspiracy theories related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, four percent do not believe in the existence of the pandemic. Another study conducted by the National Society of Consumer Protection (NSCP) found that 73 percent of commercial shoppers do not adhere to face mask guidelines.<sup>12</sup>

In September, UN Women released the 2021 Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Women in Jordan. Out of the 560 respondents, 351 were vulnerable Jordanian or Syrian refugee women. The report says 18 percent of the women did not have access to medications. In comparison, only eight percent of the surveyed men lacked access to medications. The survey revealed that women from remote communities face difficulties in accessing healthcare facilities, mainly due to financial constraints, lack of transportation and lack of permission from their husbands.

Forty-five percent of respondents reported that someone in their household lost their job as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Out of that 45 percent, 73 percent have yet to find a new source of income. In addition, one out of five households responding to the survey said they do not have enough food on a daily basis. Eighty-two percent of those who lack food live in larger households of four to ten people. Due to financial constraints, 23 percent of respondent households cannot access the sanitation products necessary to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.<sup>13</sup>

### **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene**

Jordan is the second most water scarce country in the world and continues to face falling water levels. According to the National Water Strategy for 2015-2016 released by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, each individual is entitled to access around 61 liters (16 gallons) of water each day.<sup>14</sup> In 2014, Jordanians had access to an estimated

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<sup>9</sup> [20,000 weekly COVID cases bring Kingdom into 3rd wave of pandemic | Jordan Times](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Jordan Travel Advisory | US Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Jordan pushes child vaccinations to fight COVID-19 surge | Arab News](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Mask compliance drops despite growing attention towards hygiene | Jordan Times](#)

<sup>13</sup> [2021 assessment of the impact of covid-19 on vulnerable women in Jordan | UN Women](#)

<sup>14</sup> [The Dead Sea is dying. Drinking water is scarce. Jordan faces a climate crisis | Los Angeles Times](#)

average of 80 liters of water per person per day. However, in informal settlements, consumption ranged between an estimated 15 and 50 liters per person per day, meaning that vulnerable populations living in informal settlements already lacked access to the recommended amount of water per person per day.<sup>15</sup> While daily water access overall decreased in recent years, large disparities continue to exist among vulnerable groups, especially refugees.<sup>16</sup> The demand for water in Jordan has increased by 40 percent since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Jordan in 2020,<sup>17</sup> further straining an already depleted water system.<sup>18</sup>

The National Water Strategy also reports losses of 65 liters of water per person per day in the municipal water system due to “physical and administrative gaps.”<sup>19</sup> As a result of infrastructure issues such as leaky pipes as well as theft, **more than half of the pumped water in Jordan is lost.**<sup>20</sup> **Jordan’s estimated water loss of 663,204,100 liters per day, or the equivalent of over 265 olympic-sized swimming pools,**<sup>21</sup> reveals significant gaps in water infrastructure that must be addressed in order to meet the country’s increasing water needs as the population continues to increase and climate change continues to impact the country’s water supply. **The amount of water lost per day could provide over 10.2 million people, or Jordan’s entire population, with an adequate amount of potable water (65 liters) per day, if saved.**<sup>22</sup>

The government facilitates water distribution to Jordanians between twice a week and once every two weeks. Households that can afford to do so purchase extra water from private companies to fill the gap in state-supplied water. The inability of many Jordanians to purchase tanks of water has created a water disparity between wealthy and impoverished Jordanian households.<sup>23</sup>

Jordan currently faces an unprecedented drought as the country’s largest dam, the King Talal Dam, contains dangerously low levels of water. The dam is responsible for irrigating 80 percent of the agricultural land in the Jordan Valley. So far, six of Jordan’s 14 dams have dried up.<sup>24</sup> In addition to the low water levels of Jordan’s dams, the country faced a delay in rainfall throughout the month of November. Without adequate rainfall and the rehabilitation of Jordan’s dams, the country will fall into a severe drought. Since agriculture consumes approximately 60 percent of the water in Jordan,<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> [End visit statement by United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Water and Sanitation | UNOCHA](#)

<sup>16</sup> [The Dead Sea is dying. Drinking water is scarce. Jordan faces a climate crisis | Los Angeles Times](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Water resources operating at highest capacity as demand surges by 40 per cent | The Jordan Times](#)

<sup>18</sup> [The Dead Sea is dying. Drinking water is scarce. Jordan faces a climate crisis | Los Angeles Times](#)

<sup>19</sup> ['Catastrophe' faces Jordan's water sector as climate heats up | Al Jazeera News Network, National Water Strategy 2016-2025 | Jordan - 2016](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Jordan's water crisis deepens as climate changes, population grows | Reuters](#)

<sup>21</sup> Estimates are based on population data reported by [The World Bank](#)

<sup>22</sup> ['Catastrophe' faces Jordan's water sector as climate heats up | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

<sup>23</sup> ['Catastrophe' faces Jordan's water sector as climate heats up | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Jordan struggles with dry dams, water deficit | Al-Monitor](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Jordan's water crisis deepens as climate changes, population grows | Reuters](#)

the government is creating an emergency plan for Jordan Valley farmers to help preserve the so-called food basket of Jordan.<sup>26</sup>

A Stanford University study predicts the water use per capita in Jordan could diminish by half by the end of the century. By then, most households will not even have access to 40 liters of piped water per person per day.<sup>27</sup> That falls below the required amount of 50 to 100 liters per day according to the UN.<sup>28</sup> A report issued in March, 2021 by Laboratory News revealed that Jordan's water supply is being depleted by population growth, climate change and demographic changes. The population surge fueled by the Syrian refugee crisis plays a significant role in increasing competition for water and decreasing its accessibility among vulnerable populations.<sup>29</sup>

On November 17, 2021, King Abdullah requested the creation of a long-term water strategy for Jordan.<sup>30</sup> While this may be beneficial in preventing future droughts or addressing Jordan's future water levels, the strategy will likely not be created or implemented quickly enough to address urgent water needs.

### **Child Labor**

In 2016, the National Child Labor Survey found that 76,000 children participated in the labor force, with 60 percent working in dangerous jobs. Sources estimate the number of child workers has more than doubled in the past few years as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting economic downturn. The director of Jordan Labor Watch estimates there are now around 150,000 child laborers in Jordan.

The youth employment rate in Jordan is 53.7 percent. The unemployment rate is 24.8 percent. With the population nearly doubling in the past ten years and the deteriorating economic conditions caused by the pandemic, Jordan's social support systems face growing pressure and the informal sector has grown. Children are forced to leave school to help provide for their families to mitigate deteriorating living conditions due to falling household incomes. In many cases, they work long hours with dangerous machines, unsafe conditions and difficult physical labor.<sup>31</sup>

## **Anera's Response**

### **Medical Donations**

In May, 2021, Anera completed a shipment of chronic medicines to International Medical Corps, the Jordanian Red Cross, and JMAP. The \$168,000 shipment targeted vulnerable Jordanians and refugees, who live both in and out of refugee camps. Anera recently partnered with Direct Relief in Jordan to continue providing in-kind assistance of medications, PPE, and other medical supplies to vulnerable communities.

### **Education**

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<sup>26</sup> [Jordan dam reserves at all-time low as water crisis looms | Arab News](#)

<sup>27</sup> [Jordan's water crisis deepens as climate changes, population grows | Arab News](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Water | United Nations](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Jordan's water crisis offers a warning for world | Jordan Times](#)

<sup>30</sup> [King directs gov't to devise long-term water strategy | Jordan Times](#)

<sup>31</sup> [Child labor on the rise among Jordan's most vulnerable | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

Through a [partnership with Thaki](#), Anera provided laptops, preloaded with educational materials and resources, to vulnerable refugee and host community students and teachers. The donated laptops contain offline learning content for teacher training and students' education. The 12-month program is funded by the Catalyst Foundation for Universal Education and aims to ensure that students have access to remote and digital learning. It also addresses internet connectivity restraints. The program provides accessible enrichment materials and teacher training resources to teach skills and methods necessary to create digital learning opportunities for students. Five cohorts, with an average of 25 to 30 students, and 18 teachers in Jordan currently benefit from the donated laptops and educational materials. To date, Anera delivered 131 laptops, provided 111 hours of educational instruction, and reached 116 students and 15 teachers through the Thaki program.