



Jordan Situation Report

October 6, 2023

Background

The background to the circumstances of water scarcity, refugee livelihoods, and the impact of COVID-19 on education in Jordan can be found in Anera's last [Situation Report \(February 2023\)](#).

Overview

Jordan hosts 736,159 refugees registered with UNHCR, over 650,000 of whom are Syrian refugees. Of these, 81.5% live outside of Jordan's refugee camps.¹ (Over 2 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA also live in Jordan, many of whom are citizens.) Fluctuations in funding continue to impact the livelihoods of refugees who rely on cash assistance. Unemployment also contributes to money and debt-related stress for refugees in Jordan, communities that are especially vulnerable to the effects of food insecurity and water scarcity.

Refugees in Jordan

April-June 2023 saw a 23% increase in Syrian refugee household spending from the previous quarter.² In addition, 93% of Syrian refugee households, as well as 88% of non-Syrian refugee households, remain in some form of debt.³ The average amount of debt has increased significantly over the past year, according to a July report from the World Food Programme (WFP).⁴

Unemployment rates have decreased overall, but youth unemployment remains at 46%.⁵ Though unemployment rates have decreased slightly, the most recent UNHCR socio-economic report found that over 70% of refugee households felt their situation and livelihoods have worsened in the past 12 months.⁶ The same report showed an increase in stress coping mechanisms.

Overarching political context contributes to this stress for refugees, namely Syria's reinstatement into the Arab League and talks of a shift in Jordanian refugee policy.

¹ [Jordan Operational Update July 2023 | UNHCR](#)

² [Socio-economic situation of refugees in Jordan Q2 2023 | UNHCR](#)

³ [Socio-economic situation of refugees in Jordan Q2 2023 | UNHCR](#)

⁴ [Jordan Country Brief July 2023 | WFP](#)

⁵ [Jordan Country Brief July 2023 | WFP](#)

⁶ [Jordan: unemployment rate drops to 21.9% | Middle East Monitor](#)

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad agreed to let 1,000 Syrian refugees return to Syria in May as a test group for further repatriation efforts. While the returns are voluntary, many Syrian refugees expressed fear that they would be pushed to leave.⁷

Food Security & Health

An unprecedented WFP funding shortage in July led to scaled back food assistance for 465,000 refugees in Jordan, the majority of whom are Syrian. Prior to this shortage, cash-based transfers consistently provided food assistance. Cuts reduced assistance by one-third for refugees living both in and outside of camps.⁸ For those living in camps, the cuts came after UNHCR's quarterly report, which showed a 4% increase in food bought on credit in both Zaatari and Azraq camps.⁹ Also prior to July WFP cuts, a June Human Rights Watch report addressed flaws in the combined World Bank and Jordanian government efforts to identify poverty and allocate funds to Jordanians, indicating that it did not effectively target large families with the highest need.¹⁰ A comparable targeting model for refugee families in Jordan, designed by UNHCR and WFP, underwent revisions in August to more accurately reflect the needs of large refugee households.¹¹

Recently, the WFP also introduced food waste reduction strategies. The campaign is an effort to reduce Jordan's estimated 955,000 tonnes of food waste per year, which could feed up to 1.5 million people for a year.¹²

On September 19, the World Health Organization held its Eastern Mediterranean regional meeting in Amman, where discussions centered around nutrition, particularly the coexistence of malnutrition and obesity. HRH Princess Salha Bint Asem of Jordan addressed a "rapid nutritional shift that has led to high rates of overweight and obesity, and thus a high incidence of related noncommunicable diseases."¹³ The conference also focused on nutritional deficiencies that threaten child development, including vitamin and mineral deficiencies and, especially in young girls, anemia.

Water, Sanitation & Hygiene

According to a UNHCR report, the proportion of refugee households without sufficient water storage increased from 19% in January through March to 22% in the second

⁷ [They fled Syria's shattering civil war. Now, Syrian refugees in Jordan fear being forced to return | AP News](#)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ [Socio-economic situation of refugees in Jordan Q2 2023 | UNHCR](#)

¹⁰ [World Bank / Jordan: Poverty Targeting Algorithms Harm Rights | HRW](#)

¹¹ [Jordan Operation Update July 2023 | UNHCR](#)

¹² [Agriculture Ministry, WFP launch 2 projects to tackle food waste | Jordan Times](#)

¹³ [WHO EMRO | Faster progress on nutrition is the focus of regional meeting and new resource | News | Media centre](#)

reporting period of April through June.¹⁴ Climate change affects water resources in Jordan. Groundwater, considered a nonrenewable resource, is steadily declining, and this decline is exacerbated by increasingly high temperatures.¹⁵ Jordan's per capita water availability is only 97 meters per capita per year, which is already far below the absolute water scarcity threshold. Climate change combined with Jordan's growing population mean that per capita water resources are expected to further reduce by 30% by 2040.¹⁶ Pipe leakage, theft, and inaccuracy of reporting means that around 50% of municipal water in Jordan is lost before it reaches consumers.¹⁷

On September 26, the Israeli energy ministry met with UAE and Jordanian officials to discuss preliminary plans for a trade involving solar energy and desalinated water. If carried out, the project would supply 200 million cubic meters of water per year to Jordan.¹⁸

Anera's Response

Refugees

Anera has partnered with Thaki since 2020 to provide laptops with preloaded learning materials to refugee children in Jordan. The project's second phase is focused in Gaza camp and Baqa'a camps and aims to establish an official computer lab for refugee students. The program has already donated over 130 laptops to refugee and vulnerable children. These laptops are equipped with pre-loaded offline learning materials, digital skills toolkits, and teacher trainings, increasing access to education without the barrier of internet connectivity. With increased digital skills and computer access, students are on the path to sustainable employment and teachers can continue to learn and improve their skills for future students.

Food Security & Health

In the past year, Anera expanded its rooftop gardens program to successfully construct 50 new gardens for individual families in Jordan. In addition to these households, the project renovated seven more gardens, including one community garden. These gardens relying on our custom-designed wicking beds use less water than traditional farming practices and foster financial autonomy and a sense of pride in the food families grow, harvest, and cook themselves. Women heads of households in particular benefit from their rooftop gardens, as they can provide them with supplemental income if they sell

¹⁴ [Socio-economic situation of refugees in Jordan Q2 2023 | UNHCR](#)

¹⁵ [Jordan's Bedouins take on the struggles of climate change | Al Jazeera](#)

¹⁶ [Estimated 1.6 million People in Jordan to Benefit from New Project to Tackle Jordan's Water Crisis and Build Climate Resilience | World Bank](#)

¹⁷ [US allocates \\$20.5m to help Jordan's water infrastructure | Arab News](#)

¹⁸ [Israel advances water-for-energy deal with Jordan, UAE | Al Jazeera](#)

surplus crops. The project is ongoing and is expected to expand operations in Jordan in the near future.

Anera's medical donations team also partners with hospitals and Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO) to provide shipments of the most needed medicines for both vulnerable Jordanians and refugee families. In the past year, Anera delivered a total of 68,172 medical treatments to Jordan and worked closely with JHCO to ship, distribute, and monitor shipments to ensure they reach populations in Jordan with the highest need. Anera recently partnered with the Jordan Medical Aid for Palestinians healthcare clinic to build an elevator, increasing access to medical equipment for patients with mobility challenges.

WASH

In addition to growing food, the rooftop gardens program also increases awareness of good water and sanitation practices. Households working on their own gardens are enabled to increase their understanding of hydroponic water for crops and see the impact firsthand of decreasing and reusing water for the gardens.