



Jordan Situation Report

April 24, 2024

Background

The background to water scarcity, refugee livelihoods, and food security in Jordan can be found in Anera's last [Situation Report \(January 2023\)](#).

Overview

A recent United Nations Development Programme report on the socioeconomic impact of the Gaza war on neighboring countries highlighted that Jordan's GDP growth has decreased by 2%, while poverty rates have risen by 4%. The report estimates that the first three months of the war collectively cost Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon an average GDP loss of 2%, equivalent to \$10 billion. In a six-month scenario, the GDP loss could escalate to 4%, amounting to \$18 billion.¹

A recent IMF report predicts a decline in Jordan's economic forecast for 2023 and 2024, with growth anticipated at approximately 3% for both years. This is a slight decrease from earlier forecasts. Similarly, a recent survey by the Jordanian Strategic Forum found that inflation, unemployment, public debt, and economic contraction were the top four identified risks in the short term. In the long term, a fifth risk was identified, represented by infectious diseases.²

On January 29, a drone attack on a military site killed three U.S. soldiers and injured others in Jordan. The U.S. government blamed radical groups for the attack³ and retaliated by carrying out strikes against Iranian forces and affiliated militants in Iraq and Syria.⁴

Climate projections for Jordan until 2100 indicate a significant rise in air temperature by 2.1°C (4°F). This accompanies a forecasted drier climate, with an average annual rainfall decrease of 21% and the likelihood of more frequent and severe droughts characterized by prolonged dry spells and intensified precipitation deficits. The projections also point towards escalating land degradation. Moreover, a notable shift in

¹ [Expected socioeconomic impacts of the Gaza war on neighbouring countries in the Arab region, January | UNDP](#)

² [Jordan's Risks After the War on Gaza, February 2024 | JSF](#)

³ [U.S. Names Three Soldiers Killed In Jordan Attack, January 2024 | Radio Liberty](#)

⁴ [South Lebanon: Despite fears of escalation at the border, diplomacy is making progress, February 2024 | L'orient le Jour](#)

rainy seasons towards the conclusion of wet periods is expected, affecting critical sectors such as water management, agriculture, biodiversity, marine ecosystems, and public health.⁵

Socio-economic conditions in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and United Nations Development Programme-organized Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) countries have significantly worsened, imposing more strain on refugees and host communities. Approximately 90% of Syrian refugees in Jordan are burdened with debt, resorting to borrowing from acquaintances to meet basic needs. Moreover, the average income of Syrian refugees in Jordan declined by 12% between the fourth quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2023. Across all 3RP countries, insufficient access to social safety nets, health care, and education is pushing more families below the poverty line, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups such as women, children, and individuals with disabilities, while funding for Syrian refugees is declining.⁶

The Impact of the War in Gaza

The war on Gaza continues to impact Jordan's economy severely. Tourism is the most affected, with about 50% of anticipated bookings canceled. This will significantly impact tourism revenues, which comprise 15% of the GDP and equate to about 5 billion dinars annually.⁷ Hotel bookings have stagnated at 10–15% of capacity in most areas since early 2024; some regions are experiencing no new bookings. Additionally, several international airlines have suspended flights to Jordan.⁸

The war considerably impacts the investment and business sector, disrupting investment and production processes. The negative indicators observed are rising costs, increased energy prices, disruptions in production lines, and decreased exports. These factors may render Jordanian industries uncompetitive and costly. Consequently, this is anticipated to create an unfavorable investment environment, ultimately reducing the sector's GDP contribution from 25% to 17%.⁹

Disruptions in the Red Sea, a vital economic route for Jordan, are expected to persist until at least April 2024. The port of Aqaba, which handles nearly one-third of imports and over 50% of exports, plays a pivotal role in the nation's economy. As Jordan is a significant exporter of potash and phosphate fertilizers, with 76% of potash output

⁵ [The multiple challenges from climate change, urbanization and forced displacement in Irbid Governorate, November 2023 | CGIAR](#)

⁶ [3 RP Regional Strategic Overview, March 2024 | UNDP](#)

⁷ [Jordan's economy and the war in Gaza, December 2023 | Jordan Times](#)

⁸ [War in Gaza: Implications for Jordan, January 2024 | Fronterview](#)

⁹ [Jordan's economy and the war in Gaza, December 2023 | Jordan Times](#)

leaving through Aqaba, these disruptions are expected to profoundly impact exports and imports, potentially leading to inflationary pressures throughout the first half of 2024.¹⁰

The trade and transport sector will face repercussions from these regional disruptions, leading to increased shipping, insurance, and delivery costs. Restrictions on the movement of goods and internal trade will contribute to rising expenses, complicating the economic landscape for individuals and businesses. Following this trend, the GDP contribution of the trade and transport sector is projected to decrease from 8% to 5%.¹¹

Refugees in Jordan

The total number of international migrants in Jordan is approximately 3.3 million, comprising 33% of the nation's population.¹² As per the UNHCR, Jordan accommodates 760,000 refugees and asylum seekers. Among them, 13% are children under five years old, and nearly 5% are over 60. The majority, 89%, are of Syrian origin.¹³ Moreover, Jordan has provided refuge to over 2 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA. This marks the highest count of Palestinian refugees among all UNRWA fields.¹⁴ Roughly 18% of Palestinians reside in densely populated and economically disadvantaged camp communities established following the conflicts of 1948 and 1967.¹⁵

UNRWA in Jordan offers vital services to over 2 million registered Palestinian refugees, operating in ten refugee camps and 169 schools serving 119,000 students, as well as 25 medical clinics and health centers.¹⁶ Jordan currently allocates \$1 billion for infrastructure and services to 10 Palestinian camps nationwide. These camps host nearly 400,000 inhabitants and are facilitated by UNRWA.¹⁷ The recent suspension of funds by UNRWA donors jeopardizes its ability to serve the refugees in Jordan, while the deteriorating economic conditions in the country, social tensions, and potential for the Gaza war's spillover further exacerbate the situation.

Presently, Jordan hosts two primary Syrian refugee camps, Za'atari and Azraq, accommodating approximately 120,000 refugees collectively. Additionally, a third camp, Mrajeeb Al Fhood, was established to manage overflow and currently hosts around 4,000 refugees. Those not residing in camps predominantly inhabit the northern and central governorates of Amman, Mafrqa, Irbid, and Zarqa. Notably,

¹⁰ [War in Gaza: Implications for Jordan, January 2024 | Fronterview](#)

¹¹ [Jordan's economy and the war in Gaza, December 2023 | Jordan Times](#)

¹² [WHO report highlights Jordan's strained healthcare service, April 2023 | Jordan Times](#)

¹³ [Jordan: Statistics for Registered Persons of Concern, October 2021 | UNHCR](#)

¹⁴ [WHERE WE WORK, n.d. | UNRWA](#)

¹⁵ [The multiple challenges from climate change, urbanization and forced displacement in Irbid Governorate, November 2023 | CGIAR](#)

¹⁶ [The multiple challenges from climate change, urbanization and forced displacement in Irbid Governorate, November 2023 | CGIAR](#)

¹⁷ [Jordan to be hit hard if UNRWA funding does not resume, February 2024 | Reuters](#)

around 83% of Syrian refugees in Jordan reside in urban and peri-urban areas, with only 17% living within camps.¹⁸

Food Security

The decreased humanitarian assistance significantly affects refugee families. The proportion of severely food-insecure households in communities and camps has surged, escalating from 3% to 18% in the third quarter of 2023. This directly impacts 74,000 out of the World Food Programme's total 410,000 beneficiaries. Consequently, harmful coping mechanisms, such as migration to third countries, are increasing, posing risks to social cohesion.¹⁹

The food security landscape in Jordan faces many challenges stemming from demographic shifts, economic constraints, environmental pressures, and dietary habits. The rapid population growth, compounded by the influx of refugees, strains existing resources and infrastructure. Ecological sustainability is a pressing concern, with water scarcity exacerbated by climate change impacting agricultural productivity. Moreover, high levels of food waste and inefficient consumption patterns contribute to the complex web of challenges.²⁰

In March, Prime Minister Bisher Khasawneh inaugurated the 37th Food and Agriculture Organization Regional Conference for the Near East, addressing pressing challenges such as climate change, water scarcity, and population growth. Khasawneh emphasized the need for strategies promoting self-reliance and cooperation among regional countries to ensure food security and nutrition. He advocated for more efficient and comprehensive food systems, stressing the importance of innovation and digital technology in agriculture. Jordan's commitment to revamping its agricultural sector and establishing a food security observatory was highlighted. Moreover, Khasawneh underscored Jordan's resilience in facing global challenges, including refugee crises and conflicts.²¹

Minister of Agriculture Khalid Hneifat highlighted Jordan's enduring resilience amid regional and global crises, emphasizing the nation's longstanding commitment to addressing challenges related to food availability, climate change, and forced migrations over the past century.²² Hneifat underscored the agricultural sector's crucial role in

¹⁸ [The multiple challenges from climate change, urbanization and forced displacement in Irbid Governorate, November 2023 | CGIAR](#)

¹⁹ [3 RP Regional Strategic Overview, March 2024 | UNDP](#)

²⁰ [An Overview of The Jordanian Food System, November 2023 | Foresight4Food](#)

²¹ [Jordan hosts regional conference on food security and sustainable agriculture, March 2024 | Jordan Daily](#)

²² [Agriculture minister spotlights global challenges during 37th session of FAO Regional Conference, February 2024 | Jordan Times](#)

ensuring food security, detailing initiatives such as financing modern irrigation systems, expanding the Agricultural Risk Management Fund's coverage, and implementing infrastructure projects like water wells and dams to enhance climate resilience in the Badia region. Hneifat stated that to strengthen food security further, the government is constructing its first national seed bank, set to be completed in 2024, and expanding food storage capacities to 400,000 tonnes. Additionally, efforts to digitize operations at Aqaba Port aim to enhance logistical capabilities. However, funding shortfalls were reported by the WFP, and food aid was limited to refugees amid increasing levels of food insecurity among Jordan's refugee population in the latter half of 2023.²³

Food affordability is a pressing concern in Jordan, with the consumer price index for food rising by over 5% annually since 2015. More than half of the refugee population has witnessed price increases in the fresh food market. Jordan's heavy reliance on imports renders it vulnerable to global fluctuations, exacerbated by events such as the COVID-19 crisis and Russia's war in Ukraine. This led to a halt in wheat exports from critical suppliers. According to the World Health Organization, Jordan faces challenges meeting recommended dietary intakes and global nutrition targets, with nutritional outcomes deteriorating. Intake of healthy food groups falls below recommendations, with whole grains intake at 14% and legumes, nuts, and vegetables at less than half of recommended levels.²⁴

Poverty, Livelihoods & Unemployment

The estimated GDP loss due to the war on Gaza could impact poverty, and UNDP estimated that approximately 230,000 people were at risk of falling into poverty in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon within the first three months and over half a million people within six months of the war.²⁵

In Jordan, unemployment persists at elevated levels, with rates standing at 23% for Jordanians, 28% for Syrian refugees, and 36% for refugees of other nationalities.²⁶ Among the most impacted are youth, with an unemployment rate of 46%, and women, with a rate of 31%. Jordan's labor force participation rate stood at 33% in 2023 quarter two, with women notably lower at only 14%.²⁷

According to UNDP, Syrian households face profound challenges: 93% remain in debt, 18% experience severe food insecurity, and 27% struggle to pay for food. Stress coping strategies are prevalent, with 79% of households resorting to measures such as depleting

²³ [Food Security Update, February 2024 | World Bank](#)

²⁴ [An Overview of The Jordanian Food System, November 2023 | Foresight4Food](#)

²⁵ [Expected socioeconomic impacts of the Gaza war on neighbouring countries in the Arab region, January | UNDP](#)

²⁶ [3 RP Regional Strategic Overview, March 2024 | UNDP](#)

²⁷ [The World Bank In Jordan, February 2024 | World Bank](#)

savings or taking out loans. Child protection concerns are alarming, with cases of withdrawn children from school doubling and instances of child labor and early marriages significantly rising.²⁸

Water and Sanitation

Jordan faces severe water scarcity, with an annual renewable water deficit of approximately 400 cubic meters per person. In 2021, the Kingdom negotiated a water-for-energy agreement with Israel, intending to construct 600 megawatts of solar power capacity to export to Israel in exchange for 200 million cubic meters of desalinated water. Although the deal was set for ratification in October 2023, escalating tensions between Amman and Tel Aviv during Israel's war on Gaza led to its suspension.²⁹ Water scarcity renders Jordan highly susceptible to climate change, as even minor alterations can profoundly affect watersheds, significantly impacting agricultural, industrial, and urban water needs. For instance, fluctuating precipitation patterns due to adverse climate change, coupled with more frequent droughts, are placing unprecedented strain on the already fragile natural water resources.³⁰

Jordan has annual renewable water resources of 100 m³ or less per capita. The country relies on the Sea of Galilee and river basins for 40% of its water supply, controlled by Israel and Syria. Consequently, Jordan heavily depends on groundwater, with 10 out of 12 basins exhibiting negative balances. Rapid aquifer depletion rates, ranging from 2 to 20 meters per year, pose significant risks, including heightened energy consumption and long-term sustainability concerns. To mitigate stress, Jordan is embracing treated wastewater as a non-conventional resource, contributing 15% to its water supply for agricultural purposes. Despite efforts, water stress levels in Jordan surpass 100%, reflecting the severity of the situation.³¹

Irbid Governorate hosts approximately 128,000 registered Syrian refugees with UNHCR and over 60,000 Palestinian refugees, comprising nearly 20% of Jordan's refugee population, with a total population of around 2 million. The population of Irbid City has surged by almost 34% between 2012 and 2022, primarily attributed to the influx of Syrian refugees. Jordan has experienced shorter, intense rainfall patterns, leading to decreased groundwater levels and increased temperatures during dry seasons, affecting urban air quality and crop evaporation rates. These changes have resulted in more frequent flash floods in urban areas and put pressure on water resources, threatening safe drinking water availability and long-term water supply for agriculture. In Irbid

²⁸ [3 RP Regional Strategic Overview, March 2024 | UNDP](#)

²⁹ [Can Jordan ever escape Israel's grip on water resources?, March 2024 | The New Arab](#)

³⁰ [The multiple challenges from climate change, urbanization and forced displacement in Irbid Governorate, November 2023 | CGIAR](#)

³¹ [An Overview of The Jordanian Food System, November 2023 | Foresight4Food](#)

Governorate, where 54% of the land is used for agriculture, water shortages directly impact Syrian refugees, especially in agricultural areas, where rural plots provide livelihoods to refugees.³²

The escalating volume of solid waste generated daily is straining collection and disposal services, notably impacting the capacity of the Al Ekaider Landfill Site in Irbid City. Sanitation experts warn that this strain will halve the site's lifespan from 10 to 5 years. Consequently, the pressure on solid waste management has prompted illegal dumping in valleys and farmland, obstructing culverts, drainage, and sewage systems, exacerbating the risk of flash flooding.³³

Anera's Response

Refugees & Livelihoods

Presently, Anera is dedicated to implementing and expanding programs focused on early childhood development and women's economic empowerment. These initiatives directly complement each other, as women who can avail themselves of opportunities to enroll their children in school are more likely to secure employment beyond their households.

Anera, in collaboration with I Learn Jordan, is offering vocational and digital skills training to young men and women residing in Souf Camp, a Palestinian refugee camp in Jerash. Within less than two months, 20 young individuals have undergone 35 hours of vocational skills training and 75 hours of digital skills training.

Food Security & WASH

Anera's rooftop gardens program addresses food insecurity through sustainable and innovative farming practices. In collaboration with its partner Durrat Al Manal for Development and Training, Anera established 50 household rooftop gardens and refurbished six existing rooftop gardens, including a community garden at a preschool in Jordan. The rooftop garden model maximizes limited farming space and uses less water than traditional methods, promoting WASH awareness in communities and encouraging economic growth through sustainable food production. Anera is working towards expanding its rooftop gardens program in schools and communities in the Jerash and Amman governorates to build more climate-resilient communities throughout the country. Anera will partner with I Learn Jordan to expand the project's component to target schools.

³² [The multiple challenges from climate change, urbanization and forced displacement in Irbid Governorate, November 2023 | CGIAR](#)

³³ [The multiple challenges from climate change, urbanization and forced displacement in Irbid Governorate, November 2023 | CGIAR](#)

Health

The blockade of Gaza in 2007, now followed by the ongoing war, has severely limited the import of critical humanitarian aid, with children and the elderly most susceptible to illness, yet without the means of receiving necessary medication due to supply shortages. Anera works in Jordan to support Palestinian and Syrian refugees through its in-kind program that distributes vital medicines and other supplies, including antibiotics, medicine for chronic illnesses, and wheelchairs. Anera additionally supplies kits for schools and hygiene, relief supplies, and blankets.

With support from the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Anera is also working to procure and distribute chronic illness medications for Syrian refugees in Zaatari and Azraq camps. These camps host a high number of families living in debt and below the poverty line, and chronic illness medications can be far too expensive. This project helps to alleviate the burden of these costs and ensure more equitable access to necessary medicines.