



Jordan Situation Report

July 17, 2024

Background

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

Overview

Jordan faces significant challenges, including limited agricultural land and dwindling energy and water resources, rendering it what the United Nations calls a “resource-poor, food-deficit” nation. Moreover, Jordan shoulders the social, economic, and environmental impacts of hosting approximately 675,000 Syrian refugees and 87,000 refugees of other nationalities registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as of April 2022.¹ (For historical reasons, Palestinian refugees in Jordan are handled differently within the administrative system of the UN, falling under the purview of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.)

Syrian refugees face heightened vulnerabilities in Jordan, including limited livelihood opportunities and inadequate access to healthcare, education, and housing. These challenges are particularly acute for vulnerable groups such as refugee children and women. Child labor rates have risen, while access to education and protection services remains insufficient. Gender-based violence is pervasive. Socioeconomic vulnerabilities are significant, with reduced assistance contributing to rising debt levels and growing poverty rates. A high percentage of refugee households, both Syrian (91%) and non-Syrian (87%), report carrying debt, with an average household debt of JOD 1,217. As a result, refugees resort to negative coping strategies such as reducing food consumption, increasing borrowing, accepting high-risk jobs, and pulling children out of school to economically support families.²

Refugees in Jordan

In Jordan's recent history, three significant waves of refugees have significantly impacted its demographics and resources: Palestinian refugees in 1948 and 1967, Iraqi refugees in 1990 and 2003, and Syrian refugees in 2010. As of 2023, the number of migrants in Jordan exceeded 3 million, approximately one-third of the country's total

¹ [WFP Jordan Country Brief, June 2024 | UN](#)

² [Refugee Response & Resilience Strategy 2024 - 2025, June 2024 | ISWG](#)

population, representing 52 nationalities. The Government of Jordan estimates that the Syrian refugee population, including both UNHCR-registered and unregistered individuals, totals around 1.36 million. Approximately 80% of Syrian refugees reside in host communities, primarily located in Amman and northern governorates, while close to 20% live in camps, predominantly located in Za'atari and Azraq camps. As of July 2023, Jordan hosted 739,557 active registered refugees and asylum seekers, predominantly Syrians (88.5%) and Iraqis (8.8%). Of those registered, 46% are children, 48% are adults, and 6% are elderly. A majority (83%) of these refugees live within host communities. Palestinian refugees in Jordan are estimated at 2.5 million and are supported by UNRWA.³

UNHCR's 2024 Vulnerability Assessment Framework reveals that families in Azraq have a higher dependency ratio (3.3) than those in Zaatari (3.1), indicating more dependents per autonomous adult. **Nearly 40% of refugees in camps face severe climate vulnerability, with those in Zaatari particularly susceptible due to poor shelter conditions prone to leakages and flooding.** Zaatari experiences significantly higher adversity, with 78% of refugees affected by shelter leakages, compared to 47% in Azraq. Climate vulnerability affects all demographic groups, with individuals with lower levels of education having less ability to adapt. Many vulnerable refugees are risk-averse and lack knowledge about climate change.⁴

In 2023, 8% of children aged 5 to 17 were employed in Azraq and 6% in Zaatari, with an increase in hazardous work reported, particularly in Zaatari, where 3% of children experience abuse at work and 39% face workplace hazards. Economic difficulties push families towards harmful coping mechanisms such as borrowing and reducing non-essential spending. Gender disparities are prevalent, as boys are often withdrawn from school for work, while girls face a higher risk of early marriage.⁵

Food Security & Livelihoods

Recent data from UNHCR and the World Bank reveals alarming trends among registered refugees in Jordanian camps. **Poverty rates have sharply increased,** with 67% classified as poor, as opposed to 45% in 2021. Per capita consumption among Syrian refugees in camps has decreased from 92 to 83 Jordanian Dinars per month (about \$130 and \$117, respectively). Food security has also worsened, with a notable decline in the percentage of refugees who regard their own access to food as 'acceptable' — from 85% to 64% in Azraq and from 88% to 75% in Zaatari — compared to 2021.

³ [Refugee and migrant health system review. June 2024 | WHO](#)

⁴ [Vulnerability Assessment Framework: Socio-Economic Survey of Refugees in Camps, June 2024 | UNHCR](#)

⁵ [Vulnerability Assessment Framework: Socio-Economic Survey of Refugees in Camps, June 2024 | UNHCR](#)

Refugees in camps are increasingly resorting to harmful food coping strategies, including reductions in food consumption. Income levels have dropped significantly, with refugees in Azraq reporting an average monthly income of 168 JOD (down from 193 JOD in 2021) and those in Zaatari reporting 147 JOD (down from 188 JOD). This includes income from work and cash assistance. Household debt is notably high, averaging 969 JOD in Zaatari and 838 JOD in Azraq. Borrowing from shopkeepers, friends, and neighbors is common to cover food and healthcare expenses.⁶

UNHCR highlighted that since 2021, the employment rate among refugees has decreased slightly in both Azraq (from 24% to 22%) and Zaatari (from 28% to 25%) from already abysmally low levels. **Effective economic empowerment faces obstacles such as family obligations and a lack of incentive-based volunteering (IBV) opportunities, which are a primary source of employment**—particularly in Azraq, where 62% of jobs are IBV-based compared to 28% in Zaatari. Gender disparities are notable, as 97% of those citing household responsibilities as a barrier to employment are female. Refugees in Zaatari are more vulnerable to workplace hazards and abuses, including exposure to extreme conditions and underpayment, in comparison to Azraq. The proportion of refugees holding work permits has decreased to 9% from 16% in 2021, with 59% of permit holders currently employed. **Employment significantly contributes to the financial stability of refugee families**, accounting for 20% of total income in Azraq and 36% in Zaatari.⁷

Jordan's agriculture sector is primarily irrigated and water-intensive, characterized by fragmented, small-scale landholdings that limit organization and crop productivity. Despite the proximity to high-demand food markets, low productivity and high utility costs reduce Jordan's competitiveness. The agriculture sector is crucial for livelihoods, particularly in rural areas, though arable land faces water shortages.⁸

Health and Education

UNHCR indicated that in both Azraq and Zaatari camps, 36% and 32% of families, respectively, report having at least one member with a disability. Nearly half of those with disabilities state that it impacts their daily activities. **Chronic illnesses affect 62% of families in Azraq and 53% in Zaatari, significantly impacting daily life for many.** Depression is prevalent, with only 34% of adults indicating they never experience it. Access to medical facilities within the camps is high (94% in Azraq, 88% in Zaatari), but access to external facilities is lower (about 46% lack access in both

⁶ [Vulnerability Assessment Framework: Socio-Economic Survey of Refugees in Camps, June 2024 | UNHCR](#)

⁷ [Vulnerability Assessment Framework: Socio-Economic Survey of Refugees in Camps, June 2024 | UNHCR](#)

⁸ [Strengthening CGIAR's Agricultural Research for Resilient Food, Land, and Water Systems in Jordan, June 2024 | CGIAR](#)

camps). Health-related expenditures are higher in Zaatari (29.6 JOD per month) than in Azraq (25.0 JOD per month), with most spending allocated to hospitals, clinics, and dental services rather than prescriptions.⁹

In partnership with Qatar Charity and Qatar Red Crescent Society, the Qatar Fund for Development and the International Rescue Committee have launched a project focusing on primary healthcare. This project aims to provide reproductive healthcare, treatment for non-communicable and chronic diseases, vaccination services, and establish a health information system across three clinics in Zaatari camp. The two-and-a-half-year initiative seeks to address rising health needs amidst declining humanitarian funding, ensuring essential healthcare access for over 23,000 refugees, including many children who currently lack adequate medical services.¹⁰

Access to healthcare remains a significant challenge for out-of-camp Syrian refugees in Jordan. While refugees have free access to UNHCR-supported health clinics, those living outside camps must pay subsidized, non-insured Jordanian rates for treatment at public health facilities. However, many refugees find these subsidized rates expensive, and refugees and service providers often lack awareness of available benefits. Syrian refugees residing in camps do not benefit from the same subsidized access as those outside the camps and must pay higher rates for medical services. In the education sector, although public schools are open to refugees in the education sector, economic pressures often compel many refugee children to work instead of attending school to support their families. Additionally, some children face challenges such as discrimination, bullying, or abuse in overcrowded schools.¹¹

In Jordanian camps, 81% of children are currently enrolled in school, but enrollment decreases with age, particularly among older teenagers. Among those not enrolled, 32% have never attended school, citing reasons such as curriculum difficulty (21%), inability to pass previous grades (11%), and family obligations (10%). Gender disparities in reasons for non-enrollment are significant. **Most children who attend public schools face challenges such as bullying and safety concerns during travel.**¹²

In July, the World Bank Group approved two new programs to strengthen Jordan's human capital through targeted investments in education, health, and social assistance, with a combined financing of \$700 million. The Jordan Human Capital Program (\$300

⁹ [Vulnerability Assessment Framework: Socio-Economic Survey of Refugees in Camps, June 2024 | UNHCR](#)

¹⁰ [Qatar Fund, IRC launch health project for Syrian refugees in Zaatari camp, June 2024 | Arab News](#)

¹¹ [Vulnerability Assessment Framework: Socio-Economic Survey of Refugees in Camps, June 2024 | UNHCR](#)

¹² [Vulnerability Assessment Framework: Socio-Economic Survey of Refugees in Camps, June 2024 | UNHCR](#)

million) seeks to improve governance and effectiveness in social sectors, enhance resilience, and protect households from climate change impacts by curating education, health, and social assistance initiatives. The MASAR Program (\$400 million, including a \$7 million grant from GCFF) aims to equip Jordan's youth with relevant skills for the labor market and support economic transformation by improving home-to-school transitions, expanding access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and enhancing the efficiency of the education system. By 2029, MASAR aims to achieve significant milestones, including enrolling an additional 25,000 kindergarten students, ensuring 4,200 kindergarten classrooms meet quality standards, and graduating 50,000 students from accredited TVET programs.¹³

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Jordan's water resources are highly vulnerable, with an average annual precipitation of approximately 95 millimeters. Underground and surface water make up 85% of these resources. Each person has access to an estimated 61 cubic meters of renewable water annually. Due to demographic changes and population growth, rising demand has significantly reduced freshwater availability. Agriculture uses 47% of Jordan's freshwater, leading the government to establish the Water Substitution and Reuse Policy (2016) to encourage using treated wastewater for farming. Jordan also sees a shockingly high rate of water loss (whether due to leaks or illicit redirection) of some 47%. Climate change exacerbates Jordan's water scarcity through the reduction of annual precipitation and an increase in the frequency and duration of droughts. Climate change, resource scarcity, rapid urbanization, population growth, regional instability, and refugee influxes pose challenges to the country's water, food, and land systems.¹⁴

UNHCR found that in Azraq and Zaatari camps, most households have accessible outhouses (88% in Azraq and 90% in Zaatari). Still, safety perceptions are notably higher in Zaatari (93%) compared to Azraq (71%). Most families have use of their own latrines, with fewer than 10% of households relying on shared. Wastewater management differs significantly between the camps: 56% of households in Azraq use tanks, while 97% in Zaatari are connected to sewage systems. More than half of households in both camps experience issues with pests like parasites and rodents. Most obtain drinking water from piped connections, find adequate water supply, and practice water-saving measures. Average monthly spending on Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene services is 19 Jordanian Dinars in Zaatari and 17 JOD in Azraq, with most households allocating less than 10% of their budget to these services.

¹³ [Jordan: US\\$700 million to Boost Human Capital and Strengthen the Education and Skills Sector, July 2024 | World Bank](#)

¹⁴ [Strengthening CGIAR's Agricultural Research for Resilient Food, Land, and Water Systems in Jordan, June 2024 | CGIAR](#)

Anera's Response

Refugees & Livelihoods, WASH

With support from the Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair Refugee Education Fund, Anera, in partnership with ILearn, will enhance vocational skills and foster digital entrepreneurial skills among youth refugees and host community workers. The funding will also support WASH awareness for public health and improve household water infrastructure and water storage systems in Jerash and Souf refugee camps. The project is currently in the preparatory stages and is expected to finish by the end of 2025.

Food Security

Anera continues to scale up its rooftop garden initiative to address food insecurity through sustainable and innovative farming practices. By 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 help individuals and families meet their nutritional needs. Anera and its local partners aim to empower communities and encourage the adoption of eco-friendly practices that both mitigate climate change and improve quality of life.

Health

Anera successfully delivered four shipments of various non-communicable disease (NCD) medications, prescribed medications, and anticancer medications to our sub-partners in Jordan, which were donated by our partners Direct Relief in the USA and the International Health Partners in the UK. Anera distributed these medications to Syrian and Palestinian refugees along with proper healthcare services to maximize the benefit. In addition, Anera provided a highly valued anticancer medication shipment to support the Jordanian Ministry of Health, which faced inventory challenges and expressed the urgent need for this medication used in patients' chemotherapy regimens. Anera worked quickly with its donors to secure this shipment and delivered it in February.

A summary of medical donations that took place from June 2023- May 2024 are listed below:

Description	Total Number of Units	Total Value USD
Anticancer Medication	500	\$8,653,302.50
NCD Medications	20,828	\$731,750.56
Antibiotics & Antifungals	23,950	\$50,957.10

Analgesics & Anti-Inflammatory Medications	10,323	\$20,306.07
Vitamins & Supplements	2,700	\$15,444
Hospital Supplies	1,730	\$7,049
Total	60,031	\$9,478,808.36

In addition, with the support of the United Methodist Committee on Relief, Anera is collaborating with its partner, the Syrian American Medical Society, to implement a health project titled Empowering Health: Chronic Illness Care in Jordan to support 2,600 Syrian refugees suffering from chronic diseases in Jordan. The project will support the patients for a year by securing their essential NCD medications. For this project, Anera has received funds to procure the needed NCD medication locally and to support the shipping costs for in-kind donations to support these patients. This project was implemented by collaborating with the Syrian American Medical Society, based at Al Zaatari Camp, the largest camp for Syrian refugees in Jordan.