

## Out-of-camp but not out of mind: Supporting Syrian refugees in Jordan's cities

The Syrian displacement crisis is entering its tenth year. Over one million Syrians have settled in Jordan, the majority of whom live in urban and peri-urban areas, others in Zaatari and Azraq refugee camps. A lot of attention has gone to the challenges faced by in-camp refugees, but those based in cities and rural areas are vulnerable in ways that also need attention. With no end in sight to the Syrian crisis, bolstering support for out-of-camp refugees could make a difference in the lives of more than 80 per cent of Syrians in Jordan.

From the start of their displacement to Jordan, Syrians' general movement was either out of or in avoidance of the refugee camps and into the urban and peri-urban areas. Camps offer benefits including housing, water, and electricity; but Jordan's Syrian refugee camps are associated with lower social status and poorer conditions as well as high levels of governmental surveillance. Syrians rely on family networks to resettle from refugee camps to urban areas, if not also during their displacement from Syria and into Jordan. However, family networks alone have not resolved the need for durable solutions to protracted displacement even in urban settings. Our findings based on research with 500 Syrian refugees show:

**Out-of-camp refugees have more network ties within and beyond Jordan and have little to no intention of ever returning to Syria**

Out-of-camp refugees are very well connected translocally and transnationally. Immediate family of urban Syrians are often dispersed within Jordan and across the world. Besides their home country, Syrian refugees' transnational connections include family ties to North America and Europe, the Gulf countries and other Middle Eastern countries. Only few (11%) of our survey respondents (living inside and outside of camps) had intentions of returning permanently to Syria. This means that both urban

and camp-based refugees are most likely to remain permanently in Jordan. Among those who are living outside of camps, however, existing family networks to other countries might pave the way for future onward mobility. Enabling transnational relations may increase potential income streams, mobility and asylum options that in the longer term could offset reduction in aid to Syrian refugees and ease the strain on host countries such as Jordan.

### Four out of five Syrian refugees in Jordan live outside of camps



● 81% living out-of-camp  
● 19% in-camp

Source: UNHCR data as of January 2021

## Out-of-camp refugees are more likely to work without a contract and in the informal sector

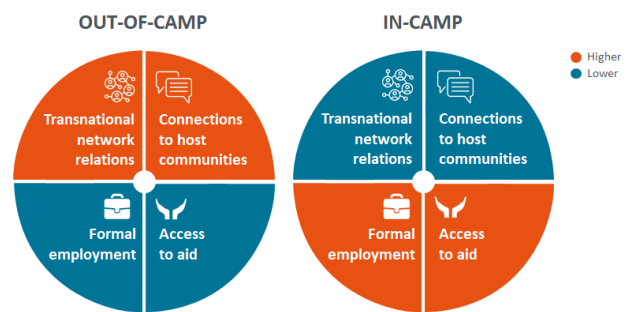
60% of Syrians in Jordan are unemployed. Many are forced into the informal sector because of the lack of viable work options and/or the pervasive exclusion of Syrians from the job market. This occurs within a context of high Jordanian unemployment (24%): There are simply too few jobs to go around. Interestingly, amongst those in our study that reported formal employment with a regular contract, 85% lived in Zaatari. By contrast, the overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees working in the informal sector and without a contract were from out-of-camp areas (93%). Almost none of our urban refugee respondents reported being employed through government and NGO programs or on-the-job training schemes.

## Out-of-camp refugees are better connected to host communities and have the potential to make these connections stronger

Syrians in urban areas are also ‘de-facto’ integrated with the host population. This stands in contrast to the Zaatari-based refugees who have fairly small networks beyond the immediate family but also little to no connection with the hosts. Connections between Syrians and Jordanians can be strengthened through more NGO-facilitated gatherings between the two groups, such as through religious classes and Qur’an memorisation courses. These and other activities were mentioned several times by some of our respondents living outside of camps as positive for facilitating introductions and engendering support for integration.

## Out-of-camp refugees are self-settled but have less access to aid to support their self-reliance

Camp-based refugees have more access to aid providers. For example, our study found that the majority (67%) of our Syrian interviewees who are enrolled in educational activities in Jordan live in Zaatari camp. Also, while 84% of our respondents had access to a hospital or other health service the last time they needed it, those who did not have access all lived outside of Zaatari camp.



### AREAS FOR ACTION TO SUPPORT 80% OUT-OF-CAMP SYRIANS

- ➔ Understand transnational relations as part of solutions
- ➔ Include urban Syrians in employment training programmes
- ➔ Support expanding local networks through facilitating gatherings
- ➔ Expand aid to support self reliance

This practice note is based on Tobin, S. A. et al. (2021). *Figurations of Displacement in Jordan and beyond: Empirical findings and reflections on protracted displacement and translocal connections of Syrian refugees* (TRAFIG working paper 6). Bonn: BICC. DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.5841870](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5841870)

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