

Adolescent girls in Jordan

The State of the Evidence

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Abbreviations

DfID	Department for International Development
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EER	Emergency Education Response
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender based violence
GII	Gender Inequality Index
IMC	International Medical Corps
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JRP	Jordan Response Plan
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

Adolescent girls living in Jordan are a diverse population. While the lives of all are shaped by broader regional culture – and its highly patriarchal gender norms – as well as the ongoing Syrian Crisis, in many ways the lives of Jordanian girls, Palestine refugee girls and Syrian refugee girls are markedly different. This situation analysis attempts to pull together the thin and fractured evidence base regarding adolescent girls living in Jordan as both a stand-alone resource as well as to inform the participatory research that the GAGE programme is initiating in 2017. Beginning with a brief overview of the broader Jordanian context, as well as a short history of the Syrian Crisis, the paper then turns to an analysis of the existing evidence as to how adolescents are faring vis-à-vis the capability domains laid out in the GAGE conceptual framework: education, physical health and nutrition, bodily integrity, psychosocial wellbeing, voice and agency and economic empowerment. Where possible we disaggregate between populations of girls in our exploration of each of these domains. We then turn to a discussion of the actors working in Jordan to improve girls' outcomes, and the change strategies they are employing.

Jordan

Sitting at the crossroads of the Middle East and North Africa, Jordan has long served as a haven for the region's refugee population. Beginning with Palestine refugees in 1948, continuing with Iraqi refugees in the 1990's, and since 2011 absorbing hundreds of thousands of Syrians fleeing both drought and civil war, it is estimated that of the 9.5 million people living in Jordan, one in three is a refugee. Of those, just over 2 million are Palestinian and about 1.5 million are Syrian. While ranked "high" in terms of human development, Jordan is not a rich country. It has struggled to absorb those fleeing from civil and regional wars – physically, economically and socially. Its economic growth has been nearly flat (or negative) since 2010 and its real unemployment rate is estimated to be double that of the officially reported 14.8%. Jordan's public schools,

which are running double-shift, cannot meet demand and the country is running out of water.

Jordan long ago granted most Palestine refugees full citizenship, giving them access to the same rights and services as other Jordanian citizens. The roughly 20% who remain living in refugee camps, however, continue to face high rates of unemployment and poverty. Jordan's Syrian population, of which only about half is officially registered with the UNHCR, is incredibly fragile. Nearly 90% live below the Jordanian poverty line and, despite assistance from the UNHCR and UNICEF, at least two-thirds are food insecure.

Girls and women living in Jordan – regardless of whether they are Jordanian or are refugees – also face gender-specific threats. In 2015, it was 111th (out of 188) on the Gender Inequality Index¹, due to its low rates of female labour force participation and political representation, and in 2014 was ranked "high" on the Social Institutions and Gender Index², due to the disadvantages that women face in terms of the family code, civil liberties, and access to assets and resources.

Adolescent girls

Adolescent girls living in Jordan have disparate experiences and needs, some of which we know quite a bit about and others of which remain largely unexplored. While Syrian refugee girls appear to be the most vulnerable – across all capability domains – adolescent girls in general face sharp limits on their voice, choice, and control. In terms of:

Education

- Jordanian adolescent girls are more likely to go to school than their male peers – 93% complete primary school and only 10% of secondary-age girls are out of school (compared to 15% of boys). Furthermore, girls' scores on the OECD's PISA are higher than those of boys. Where Jordanian girls are out of school, social norms tend to be responsible.

¹ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

² <http://www.genderindex.org/country/jordan>

- Palestine refugee girls are also more likely than their male peers to be in school, regardless of whether they live inside or outside of camps. At age 15, for example, 94.7% of girls living outside of camps – compared to 89.5% of boys – are still enrolled in school.
- While Syrian girls, like their Jordanian and Palestinian peers, are more likely to be enrolled in school than same-aged boys, their overall odds of school enrolment are far lower. Only 72% of Syrian girls between the ages of 9 and 14 – and 29% of girls between the ages of 15 and 17 – are enrolled in school. The primary reason that Syrian children are out of school is that there are too few school places available – and families are too poor to pay for transportation to other schools. For girls, concerns about violence and “family honour” also drive non-enrolment.

Physical health and nutrition

- Native born Jordanian girls have a low fertility rate and health-related research has recently focused on obesity, which appears to be driven by a growing penchant for unhealthy Western food.
- There appears to be no research that addresses the health of Palestine refugee girls – even their fertility rate is unknown.
- Syrian girls are especially vulnerable. Rates of adolescent pregnancy are climbing, with 11% of births in Za’atari camp in 2014 to girls under the age of 18. Syrian girls are also far more vulnerable to food insecurity.

Bodily integrity

- The rate of child marriage among native born Jordanians is largely unchanged over the last decade and was 12.7% in 2013. Most girls who married as children married men at least five years older than them – primarily because their families saw the arrangement as a form of protection and security for their daughters.
- Palestine refugee girls are more likely to marry as children – 17.6% of all marriages were to girls under the age of 18 in 2013. Girls living inside camps are more likely to marry as children than girls living in host communities. Palestinian families reported that child marriage is primarily driven by poverty born of large families.
- Syrian girls face an ever growing risk of child marriage. While rates before the war were not low (13% in 2011), in 2015 nearly one-third of all marriages involving a

Syrian bride involved a girl under the age of 18. While poverty was initially suspected as a primary driver, most research has found that child marriages appear arranged in order to solve one of two closely related problems: the perceived need to protect girls’ and families’ honour and improve girls’ security.

There appears to be almost no research directed at exploring the experiences of adolescent girls with gender-based violence. While the Jordanian Demographic and Health results show that GBV is common and accepted, in terms of adolescents that survey includes only married girls over the age of 15. Furthermore, although there have been any number of rapid assessments focused on GBV in the Syrian refugee community, very little has disaggregated between girls and women – and there is broad agreement that girls and women are simply unable to talk about the subject because doing so could put them at further risk.

Psychosocial wellbeing

- Overall it appears that most Jordanian girls are optimistic about their own futures and feel well connected to their families. On the other hand, where girls struggle with depression and eating disorders they are unlikely to receive treatment because of stigma – as parents are concerned about damaging girls’ marriage prospects.
- While we know that Palestine refugee girls in other contexts are lonely and bored, because of mobility restrictions, the psychosocial wellbeing of those living in Jordan does not appear to have been studied.
- Syrian girls’ wellbeing is under continual assault. Not only have they lost their homes to war – and sometimes experienced and witnessed horrific violence – but they are nearly all living in poverty, face increasing hostility from the Jordanians around them, and have had their mobility sharply restricted in order to protect them from real and imagined threats.

While donors and NGOs are working to create girl-friendly spaces that can provide mobility-restricted girls with places to go and visit with their friends, there is little known about the role that Qur’anic centres are already playing in girls’ lives.

Voice and agency

Gender norms across the MENA region largely preclude girls voice and agency – regardless of whether they are

Jordanian, Palestinian or Syrian. Girls have far more limited mobility than boys, especially after puberty, and are expected to show almost complete obedience to their parents' decisions, even when those decisions dictate the shape of girls' futures. Syrian girls again appear particularly disadvantaged, with only a third of adolescent girls even leaving home on a daily basis.

Economic empowerment

Growing up in a country with one of the lowest rates of female labour force participation in the world, Jordanian and Palestine refugee girls are extremely unlikely to be employed. While in part this is because of girls' lengthening engagement with education, research has again found that the primary barrier girls face is normative. Women in Jordan are not only not supposed to have careers, they are not supposed to work. While Syrian boys are all too often engaged in child labour, Syrian girls are unlikely to work. The vast majority of Syrian adolescents are neither in work nor at school and spend their days at home with family.

Actors for change

Primary actors working to improve adolescent girls' lives in Jordan include the Jordanian government and an array of UN and humanitarian agencies (especially UNICEF, UNRWA, UNFPA, and UN Women) – many of whom are partnering on the No Lost Generation Initiative. These primary actors are joined by a large number of international and national NGOs. While most responses are broadly aimed at Syrian and Palestinian populations in general (e.g. cash transfers, food aid, and WASH infrastructure) – and are not especially girl- or even adolescent-focused – the government's policy of allowing Syrian children free access to public education has been critical to reducing the number of girls who are out of school (albeit mostly younger adolescent girls). Similarly, UNICEF's Makani Centres, which provide a wide range of services including both non-formal education and psychosocial support, are not only helping out-of-school girls keep learning, but giving girls a safe place to meet and play. UNRWA, UNFPA and UN Women are also running programmes for adolescent girls. Outside of working to prevent child marriage, which is a high priority for many

NGOs in Jordan given the rate at which it is now occurring, few NGO programmes appear to target adolescent girls specifically. Most are aimed more broadly at children – or include older girls as a subset of women.

Conclusion and ways forward

In terms of capability domains, the picture of adolescent girls living in Jordan is relatively clear despite the lack of focused research. Jordanian and Palestine refugee girls tend to stay in school longer than their brothers, whereas despite progress, Syrian girls still face huge obstacles to accessing education. Jordanian and Palestine refugee girls are far less likely to marry as children than their Syrian peers, but child marriage remains common across populations of girls. Few adolescent girls living in Jordan, regardless of whether they are Jordanian, Palestine refugee or Syrian, have access to any sort of decision-making or economic empowerment, in large part due to the same social norms that encourage child marriage and also restrict girls' mobility, deprive them of friendships, and harm their psychosocial wellbeing. Gender-based violence is the one topic that remains relatively opaque. Girls to date have not been afforded the voice to tell their stories.

It is also clear that there is both interest and funding to effect change in the lives of adolescent girls living in Jordan. The number of actors working in the field is large and the number of interventions aimed at girls is growing. Unfortunately – although understandable given the humanitarian nature of the context – to date evaluations have been non-existent.

By supporting girls and their male peers to research their own lives, GAGE will help them not only develop the voices they have been largely denied, but also provide them with a way to use their stories to encourage change. Even more importantly, however, while we know a great deal about the threats that girls in Jordan face – and can identify dozens of actors working to improve their lives – we do not know what encourages, or prevents, change in the social norms that shape girls' daily lives. By providing us with a grassroots view, adolescent voices will not only enrich the evidence base but also help to inform policy and programmatic action relevant to their lives.

1 Introduction

Understanding the lives of girls living in Jordan – whether they be refugees or native Jordanians – requires substantial contextualisation. It is not only necessary to have some sense of Jordan's socio-economic development, and its history hosting refugees, but also to have some understanding of the lead up to Syria's civil war, as that lead up does much to explain the fragility of Jordan's Syrian population (see Box 1). It is also critical to understand the size and shape of the broader Syrian and Palestine refugee³ populations.

1.1 The Jordanian context

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan sits at the crossroads of the Middle East and North Africa and is bordered by Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Israel and Palestine. An upper-middle income constitutional monarchy which gained its independence from Britain in 1946, Jordan is one of only two Arab states that have signed a peace treaty with Israel. Jordan's population, according to the 2015 census, is now 9.5 million people – very nearly double what it was a decade earlier (GoJ, 2016). The country is overwhelmingly

Sunni Muslim and urban and its economy is largely built on services and industry.

Jordan is ranked “high” in terms of human development (UNDP, 2016). While 14.4% of the population lives under the national poverty line (2010 figures reported in World Bank, 2017) and its official unemployment rate of 14.8% is likely half that of the actual unemployment rate, it has the best health care in the region and an educational system that includes not only 10 years of free basic education, but also two years of either vocational training or secondary school (CIA, 2017). Enrolment rates in basic education are over 90% for both girls and boys and 86% of children ultimately complete their primary education (with a slight bias towards girls) (GoJ, 2016). Girls, however, are substantially more likely than boys to enroll in secondary school (65.9% versus 57.5%) and university (33.7% versus 29.8%) (GoJ, 2016). Child marriage in Jordan is comparatively uncommon (7.4%) and the average age at which women marry is 25.6 years (ibid.). The country's total fertility rate, 3.4, has left it with a very young population – over 40% of residents are under the age of 18 (World Bank, 2017).

Box 1: Syria yesterday, Syria today

The crisis in Syria started well before the 2011 onset of its civil war and has according to some analysts as much to do with rain – or the lack thereof – as it does with politics. Syria is a small, arid country. Less than a quarter of its land is arable and it is subject, outside of a narrow band of land around the Mediterranean, to extreme temperature swings and dust storms. Despite its unfavorable geo-climactic location, Syria a decade ago was a markedly different place than the Syria of today. Not only was it a haven for Palestinian, Lebanese and Iraqi refugees, but its population was overwhelmingly literate and its GDP/capita was roughly equal to Jordan's (about \$5,000).

In 2006, the rain stopped. By 2010, crop failures had reached 75%, 85% of livestock had perished, and over 800,000 farmers had lost their livelihoods. For a country that had been overwhelmingly agricultural, this was devastating. UN experts estimated that immediately before the war, some 20-30% of the Syrian population had already been reduced to extreme poverty and the World Bank reported that its GDP/capita had fallen over 40% (to \$2,900). Most Syrians went into the civil war already suffering significant and overlapping vulnerabilities.

Today's Syria, which has been declared by the UN to be the worst humanitarian crisis in the 21st century, is unrecognizable. In addition to the death toll, which is approaching a half a million, the UNDP estimates that 45% of its population is displaced, 45.2% of its school aged children are no longer in school, and its GDP loss since 2011 is over 64%. The country's current poverty rate is estimated at 85.2%.

Sources: Polk, 2013; UNDP, 2017

³ This is the preferred term. Palestine refugees are defined as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.”

While girls in Jordan are unlikely to marry as children and are more likely to pursue higher education than their brothers and male peers, the country does not rank highly in terms of gender equality. In 2015, it was 111th (out of 188) on the Gender Inequality Index⁴, due to its low rates of female labour force participation and political representation, and in 2014 was ranked “high” on the Social Institutions and Gender Index⁵, due to the disadvantages that women face in terms of the family code, civil liberties, and access to assets and resources.

1.2 Jordan’s refugee population

Jordan’s location – at the crossroads of the Middle East and North Africa – has meant that it has long served as a refuge for those fleeing the region’s perpetual conflict. Indeed, the UNHCR (2016) reports that on a per capita basis Jordan hosts the second highest number of refugees in the world (behind Lebanon) and according to data from the World Bank, refugees now make up 41.2% of Jordan’s population (World Bank via Jordan Times, 2015). Jordan’s refugee population is not only large, but varied. While estimates vary by source, the country is hosting 2.1 million registered Palestine refugees, 1.4 million Syrians (about half of whom are registered and half of whom are not), over a half a million Egyptians, 61,000 Iraqis, 15,000 Lebanese, 5,000 Yemenis, 3,500 Sudanese about 800 Somalis⁶. In addition to refugees, there are also about 1.2 million illegal and 500,000 legal migrant workers in Jordan.

The recent influx of refugees is straining Jordanian capacity and leading to growing unrest. While most non-Jordanians are not legally allowed to work (Carrion 2015), they compete with the poorest Jordanians for informal jobs – pushing wages down and driving unemployment up (MoPIC, 2014). Inflows have also driven up demand for housing and other basic commodities, which has contributed to rising inflation that the country’s population can ill afford, and put tremendous strain on education and health services – leading to a significant drop in quality (ibid). The Jordanian Government (2014) reports that as a direct result of the Syrian crisis, an extra 20,000 Jordanian families have been pushed into poverty so deep that they require cash assistance. As one of the world’s four most

water-poor countries, Jordan’s natural resources are also suffering (WFP, 2016).

The 2016 Jordan Compact⁷ is aimed at mitigating these strains and reining in unrest. In exchange for increased international aid, and better access to EU markets, the Jordanian government has pledged to open up work opportunities for refugees (3rp 2016; Economist, 2016). The government’s plans for this aid are laid out in its most recent Response Plan – which is both multi-sectoral and long-term. They include an array of improvements designed to benefit both Jordanian and refugee populations, including expanding schools and health clinics, distributing solar panels, providing case management services to survivors of gender based violence and building parks and playgrounds (MoPIC, 2016).

1.3 Syrian refugees

UNHCR (2017a) reports that there are 656,231 Syrian refugees registered with it in Jordan (as of March) – though government sources estimate that the total Syrian population is at least twice as large (MOPIIC, 2015). While about 80% of Syrians live in urban and peri-urban host communities, a sizeable number live in one of the country’s four official camps and about 4% live in tent communities (Hamad et al., forthcoming). Just under 80,000 live in Za’atri camp alone – making it one of Jordan’s largest cities (UNHCR, 2017b). The population of Syrian refugees living in Jordan is markedly different from the pre-war Syrian population. They are more likely, for example, to have been farmers – and are thus especially likely to be destitute because of the drought (Verme et al. 2016). They are also less likely to be educated, have larger families and are younger (ibid.). Of registered refugees, UNICEF (2016b) reports that about half are children and over a third are school aged.

Before the 2016 Jordan Compact, due to which the government issued Syrian refugees 200,000 work permits, only 10% of Syrian refugees were legally allowed to work (ILO, 2015) – which drove staggeringly high rates of unemployment and poverty (see Figure 1). Using the UNHCR cash assistance threshold, which is about \$5.25/ per person per day, about 70% of Syrian refugees were poor in 2016 (Verme et al. 2016). Using the higher Jordanian

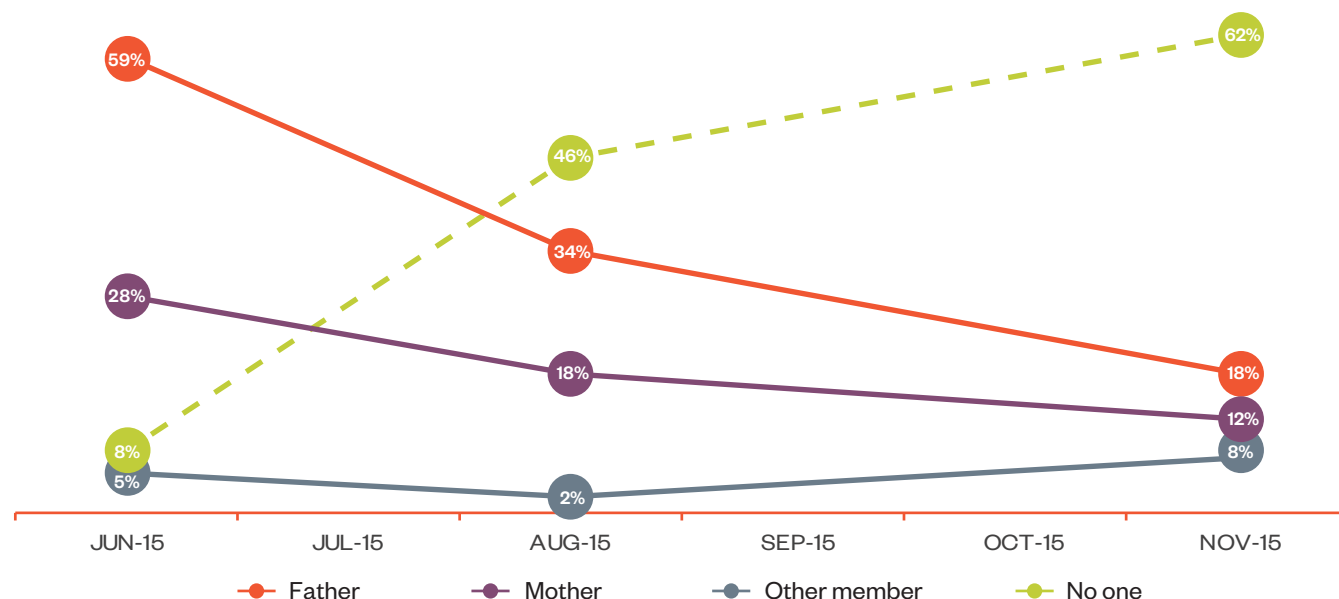
4 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

5 <http://www.genderindex.org/country/jordan>

6 UNHCR, 2015; UNHCR, 2016; MoPIC, 2014

7 The Jordan Compact: <https://2c8kkt1ykog81j8k9p47oglb-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Supporting-Syria-the-Region-London-2016-Jordan-Statement.pdf>

Figure 1: Sources of earned income for Syrian refugee families



Source: UNICEF, 2016

poverty line (about \$8.20/per person/per day), nearly 90% were poor that same year⁸ (UNHCR, 2015b; Verme et al. 2016). The UNHCR's (2015b) Vulnerability Assessment found that more than 60% of Syrian refugees belong to households with a 'severe' dependency ratio and over 60% of non-camp families have incurred a 'high' or 'severely vulnerable' level of debt per capita. While registering with the UNHCR does not automatically guarantee refugees to legal rights or entitlements, on average registered refugees are 20% less likely to be poor than those who are not registered (ibid.). UNICEF (2016) reports that as a result of "running on empty", families are increasingly forced to rely on negative coping strategies including reducing food quantity and quality, cutting accommodation costs, borrowing and depleting savings and minimising educational expenses – sometimes by pulling children out of school (see also UNHCR, 2015b). A 2016 survey, for example, found that 62% of Syrian households admitted to eating less food in the last month due to poverty and 54% to eating poorer quality food (Hamad et al., forthcoming).

There is hope that as a result of the 2016 Jordan Compact that unemployment and poverty rates will begin to fall (3rp 2016). However, Verme (2016) observes that work permits remain extremely difficult to secure, owing to the requirement of proof that the specific skill set is unavailable in Jordanian candidates, and IRIN

(2017) reported in early 2017 that one year on only 38,516 work permits had actually been issued. Unemployment among Syrians remains extreme high. A late 2016 survey by Hamad et al. (forthcoming) found that only 14.2% of Syrian fathers had paid employment (with only 22.4% of households having any paid worker).

1.4 Palestine refugees

Although the world's eyes are focused on Syrian refugees, Syrians are neither the largest nor the first population of refugees to make their home in Jordan. Indeed, Jordan has hosted Palestine refugees since the 1948 war and is now home to the largest number of Palestine refugees of all UNRWA fields – some 2.1 million individuals (UNRWA, 2016). Most (1.7 million) live in host communities throughout Jordan, but about 380,000 live in one of 13 refugees camps⁹ run by UNRWA (ibid.). The vast majority of Palestine refugees have been granted Jordanian citizenship and have access to the same rights and services as native-born Jordanians. The population of "double refugees", however, which includes about 140,000 ex-Gazans who entered Jordan after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War as well as nearly 14,000 Palestine refugees who had been living in Syria until the onset of that country's civil war, are not citizens and face a wide variety of restrictions and deprivations. These double-refugees are nearly invisible in existent research.

⁸ Figures in 2005 PPP.

⁹ Only ten of these camps are officially recognized as refugee camps—because they were built in response to the 1948 and 1967 crises.

Because Jordan's Palestine refugee population has been in the country for decades, and is not in flux due to civil war, there is more accurate information available about its shape and need. We know, for example, that it is an especially young population – about one-quarter of Palestine refugees are children under the age of 15 (512,000) and another fifth are young people between the ages of 15 and 24 (432,000) (UNRWA 2016). We also know that despite their refugee status, Palestinian children are very likely to enrol in school. Primary enrolment is 99% and by age 15 more than four-fifths of Palestine refugee children are still students (Tiltne and Zhang 2013). However, while girls' and young women are now at least as educated as boys and young men¹⁰, Palestine refugee women are significantly less likely than their male peers to join the labour force (60% versus 10%) (ibid.).

Critically in terms of understanding the needs of Palestine refugees, we also know that there are stark disparities between those living in host communities and those living in camps (Tiltne and Zhang 2013). For example, the former are more likely to be Jordanian citizens (96% versus 85%) and less likely to be unemployed (8% versus 33%) or poor (13.5% versus 31%). From Gaza are especially likely to be poor, they are three times more likely than non-Gazans to be living on less than \$1.25/day. Camp dwellers have larger households (5.1 versus 4.7), due both to higher odds of living in a three generation household and higher fertility, and are more likely to report ill-health. Indeed, while on most indicators Palestine refugees living outside of camps are increasingly indistinguishable from their Jordanian hosts, those living in camps – who were the least educated and the most destitute and vulnerable upon their arrival decades ago – appear to be falling further and further behind (ibid.).

The Syrian crisis has had a number of serious ramifications for Palestine refugees – especially those living in camps, who largely depend on UNWRA assistance and increasingly see themselves as the “forgotten people” (Jones et al., 2016). Not only has international attention turned to their Syrian counterparts, but UNRWA budgets have been slashed to accommodate the region's greater need – even as costs for daily necessities have

skyrocketed. As a participant in a recent evaluation of UNWRA's cash transfer noted, ‘the Syrian card [the e-card provided by UNHCR / UNICEF] can buy much more than the UNRWA card’ (quoted in ibid.).

1.5 Iraqi and Yemeni refugees

While there have been Iraqi refugees in Jordan since the 1991 Gulf War, with a significant increase following the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, the ascendancy of the Islamic State has forced tens of thousands of Iraqis – especially Christians – into Jordan since late 2013. UNHCR (2017a) estimates that about one-third of the roughly 62,000 registered refugees are children under the age of 18. Like their Syrian counterparts, Iraqi refugees have access to Jordanian public services, including schools and health care. Unlike their Syrian counterparts, however, they are not automatically granted refugee status and they do not have camps or earmarked aid (Su, 2014). They also remain completely excluded from legal work. As a result, while many of those fleeing Iraqi violence were middle class and significantly better off than Syrian refugees, which kept many from even registering with the UNHCR, over time their resources have been exhausted and they are being forced to turn to negative coping strategies given the paucity of aid available to non-Syrians (IRIN, 2013).

Jordan's Yemeni refugees are also largely invisible on the international scene. Arriving in the country en masse since 2015, when the conflict in Yemen escalated, these are now – according to the UNHCR (2016) about 5,000 Yemeni refugees in Jordan. Government figures are much higher, with ARDD (2016) reporting that based on official figures there may be at least 15,000 Yemeni refugees in the country. They also note, however, that all figures are questionable. The Jordanian government, trying to prevent another humanitarian crisis, has required that Yemenis have a visa in order to enter the country since December 2015, and thus there is considerable incentive on the part of Yemenis to remain invisible. The lack of official residency means that Yemeni children have no access to education – and young Yemeni mothers are unable to register their children's births.

¹⁰ For those under the age of 25, females are significantly more likely than males to have completed primary school.

2 Adolescent girls in Jordan

It is clear that adolescent girls in Jordan – whether they are Jordanian, Syrian, or Palestine refugees – face a wide variety of threats that work to prevent them from realising their capabilities. It is also clear, however, that our overall knowledge base about adolescent girls in specific and adolescents in general remains comparatively small and fragmented. While we know quite a bit about Palestine refugee girls' access to employment, the rising risk that Syrian girls face in terms of child marriage (which is mirrored by boys' growing participation in child labour), and the rising incidence of eating disorders amongst Jordanian girls, no one population of girls is well understood and no one capability domain – outside of education – well explored. Below we lay out what is known, taking care to disaggregate between populations of girls where possible, and contextualising with the experiences of boys and young women where necessary.

2.1 Education

Jordan's educational system, which serves – for free – Jordanian, most Syrian and most Palestine refugee children, has been overwhelmed by the influx of new students (Culbertson et al., 2016; USAID, 2015). There are significant pressures on school spaces, teachers and teaching materials. Schools are running on double shifts and retired and newly graduated teachers have been brought in as a way to expand capacity. This has not, however, been enough. There are over 170,000¹¹ children in Jordan who are out of school and those who are enrolled are facing crowded conditions and insufficient teaching time and experiencing declines in educational quality so large that they can be tracked on international metrics such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)¹² (Culbertson et al., 2016; USAID, 2015). Adolescents in USAID's (2015) National Youth Assessment also report high rates of teacher absenteeism and turnover and rampant physical and verbal abuse at the hands of

teachers. Despite the educational challenges facing Jordan, schooling is very important to adolescent girls. Of those in the IRC's 2015 Adolescent Girls Assessment¹³, nearly a quarter said that going to school was their favourite activity, as it not only helped them obtain an education, but also provided a venue for interacting with their friends.

The last few years notwithstanding, the last four decades have seen a sea-change in terms of educational opportunities for Jordanian girls, who see schooling as a "weapon" with which to protect themselves (USAID, 2015). Driven by a primary enrolment rate that is now 98% – and a primary completion rate that is 93% (EPDC, 2014) – Jordanian girls between the ages of 15 and 24 have seen their literacy rates climb from only 55% in 1980 to 99% in 2010 (World Bank, 2013). Indeed, only 10% of secondary-aged adolescent girls are out of school, compared to 15% for boys (EPDC, 2014), and young Jordanian women are more likely to enrol in university than are their male peers (World Bank, 2013).

Interestingly, despite the fact that over half the Jordanian women in a recent survey reported that education was important for girls "mostly to become good wives and mothers and not to get a good job" (World Bank, 2013:54; see also USAID, 2015), Jordanian adolescent girls are strong academic performers who do not shy away from doing well even in traditionally 'male' subjects. Using scores from the 2006 PISA, Jordanian 15 year old girls were amongst the few in the world who did not test poorly in math and science compared to their male peers (Shafiq, 2013). Indeed, on the 2012 PISA, while Jordanian girls significantly underperformed on all three subtests compared to the OECD mean, they tested far higher than their male counterparts. On reading they scored 436 (compared to 361 for boys), on math they scored 396 (compared to 375 for boys) and on science they scored 430 (compared to 388 for boys) (USAID, 2014).

¹¹ Of those children, roughly half are Jordanian and Palestinian children of basic school age (see: http://www.oosci-mena.org/uploads/1/wysiwyg/summary/150114_Jordan_summary_English_Preview.pdf) and roughly half are Syrian refugees.

¹² The PISA is a worldwide study undertaken by the OECD to test 15 year old students' performance on science, math and reading. In 2006 it was given to 400,000 students in 57 countries.

¹³ About 80% of the girls in the survey were Syrian refugees and about 20% were Jordanian nationals.

For Jordanian girls who continue to be denied an education, social norms regarding girls' work and purity overwhelmingly drive school leaving. The King Hussein Foundation (2016) found, in its study of homebound girls, that girls' number one reported reason for school leaving was "my mother needs me at home". Girls' number two reason was "my parents encouraged me to leave". Mothers, on the other hand, were more specific. They focused on the cost and insecurity of transportation to secondary school, there being no need to educate "girls who are not clever", and their beliefs that once girls have feminine bodies school is not an appropriate place for them to be. The Foundation also found that Jordanian girls are far more likely than boys to be assigned household chores (see Figure 2).

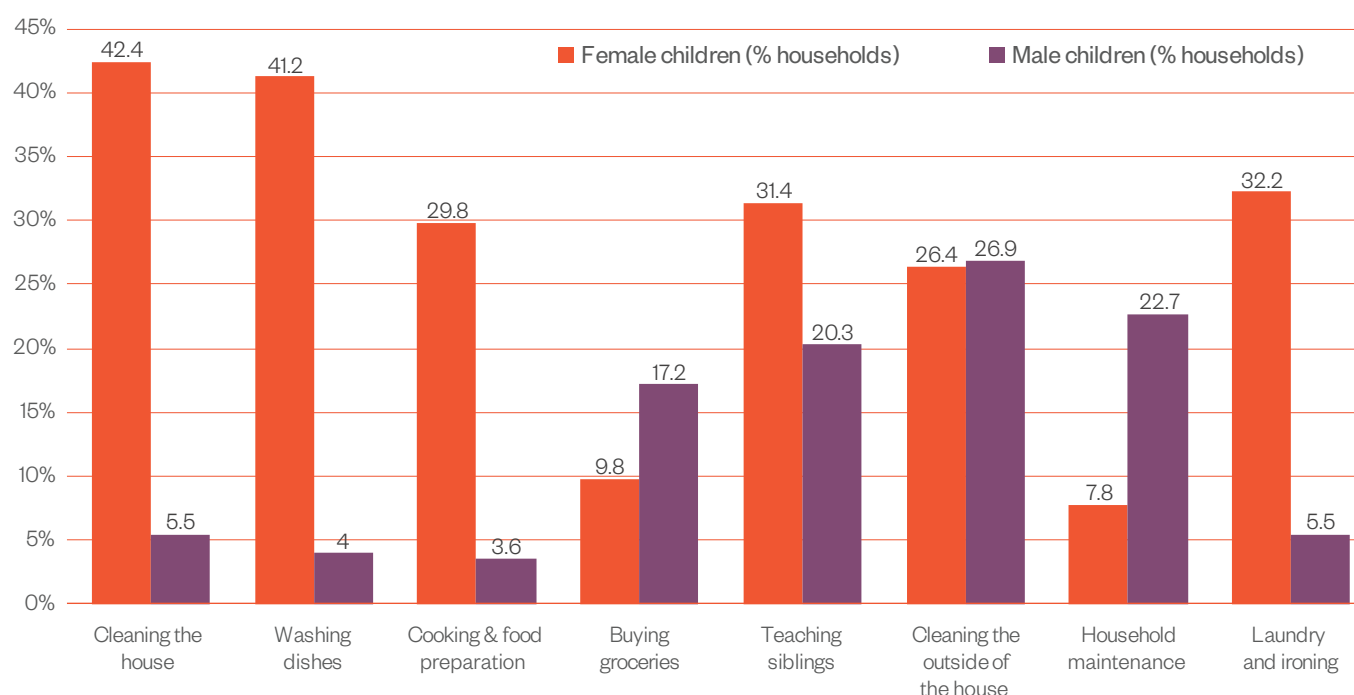
Palestine refugee girls living in Jordan have seen similar improvements in their educational access and outcomes. While girls living outside of camps – who most often attend Jordanian public schools – have higher enrolment rates than those living inside camps – who mostly attend UNWRA schools (98% versus 94.6%), girls' enrolment rates in both environments are higher than those of boys (96.8% and 94.2% respectively) (Tiltne and Zhang 2013) (see Table 1). By age 15, both types of disparities have grown. For girls, 94.7% of those outside of camps and 82.1% of those inside camps are still enrolled. For boys, the figures are 89.5% and 80% respectively (ibid.). While girls are more likely than

boys to pursue secondary and tertiary education, boys are more likely than girls to undertake vocational training. For those outside of camps, 13% of boys and only 6% of girls enrol in a vocational programme (16% versus 9% for those in camps). Furthermore, subject choices remain highly gendered. Boys tend to study construction and mechanics while girls elect personal grooming and nursing (ibid.).

While in the past it was relatively more common for Palestine refugee girls to be denied an education simply because parents did not believe in girls' education, surveys find this is not primarily the case today. Of women over the age of 15, 8% of those living in camps and 7% of those living outside of camps left school because "girls are not allowed schooling". Of girls and young women aged 6 to 24, however, 1% of those inside of camps and 5% of those outside of camps had left for that reason (Tiltne and Zhang, 2013).

While Jordan is doing significantly better in terms of enrolling Syrian refugees than other host countries, with about two-thirds of school aged children attending school (compared to 20% in Lebanon and 30% in Turkey), tens of thousands of Syrian girls remain out of school in Jordan (Sirin and Sirin-Rogers, 2015). Given that before the war primary school in Syria was nearly universal and 70% of adolescent girls enrolled in secondary school (UNDP, 2011), this represents a remarkable drop in just a handful of years. Unsurprisingly, since the refugee population is in

Figure 2: Chores girls versus boys do



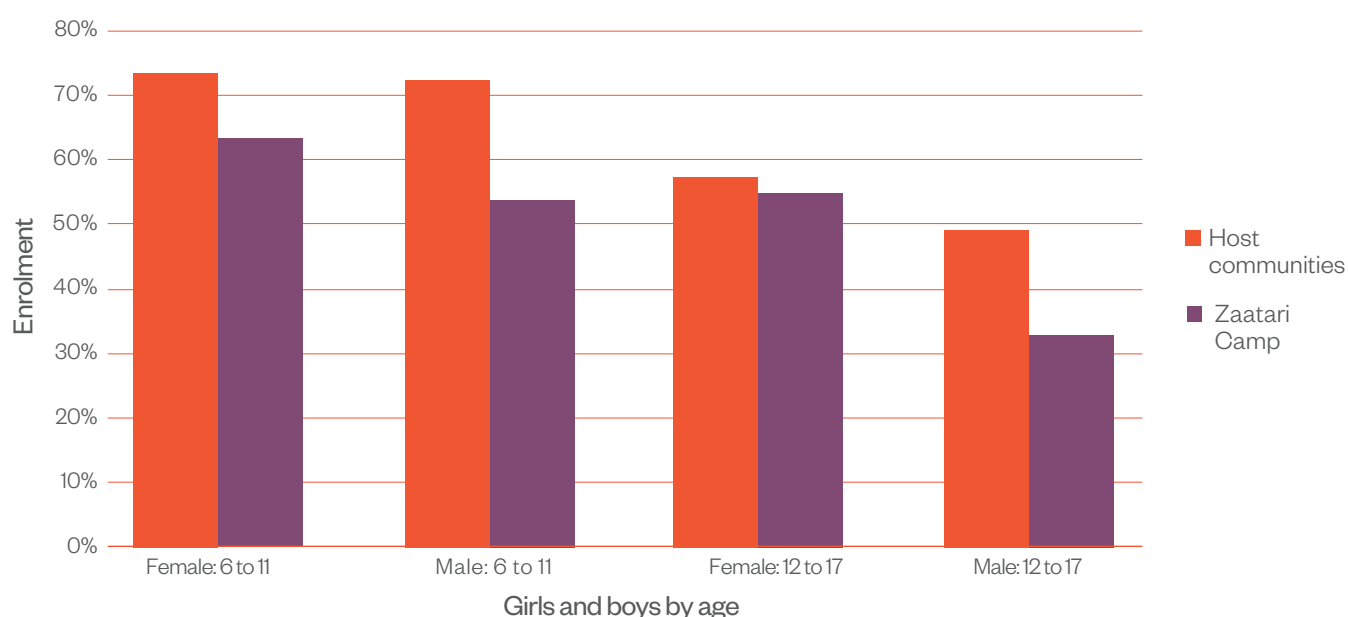
Source: King Hussein Foundation, 2016

Table 1: School enrolment, by age, sex and camp vs. non-camp location

Age	Outside Camps			Inside Camps		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
6	97.1	96.3	96.7	95.9	96.7	96.3
7	99.0	99.7	99.3	99.1	98.5	98.8
8	100.0	98.9	99.5	98.7	98.9	98.8
9	100.0	99.6	99.8	98.5	98.7	98.6
10	98.3	100.0	99.2	98.1	98.3	98.2
11	98.1	99.4	98.9	97.1	97.2	97.2
12	97.8	100.0	98.9	95.4	95.9	95.6
13	96.8	95.7	96.2	92.4	92.0	92.2
14	93.0	95.7	94.2	86.7	88.0	87.3
15	89.5	94.7	91.9	80.0	82.1	81.0
All 6-15	96.8	98.0	97.4	94.2	94.6	94.4
n	1,840	1,800	3,640	25,028	23,948	48,976

Source: Tiltne and Zhang 2013

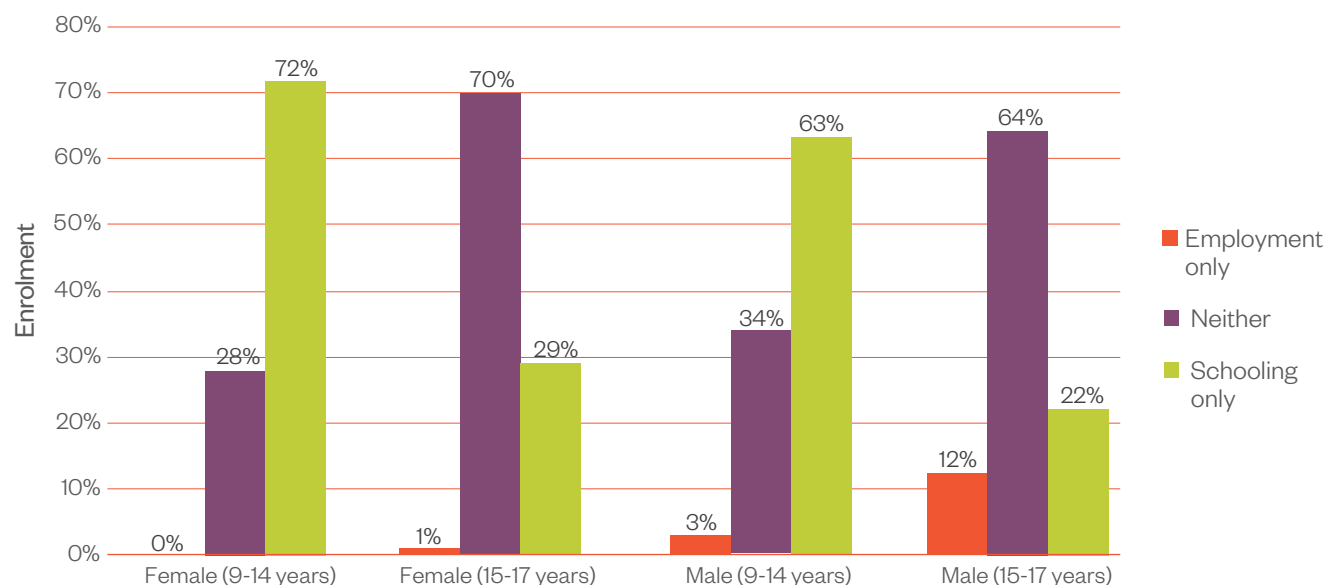
Figure 3: Number of programmes by outcome areas



Source: Culbertson, 2015

constant flux, estimates of the number of children out of school vary – ranging from a low of 80,000 (HRW, 2016) to a high of 97,000 (Culbertson et al., 2016) – though sources agree that most out of school children are engaged in some sort of informal education (HRW, 2016; UNICEF, 2015). DfID (2016) reports that as of March 2016 the Jordanian MoE estimates just under 85,000 children

are out of formal school and that 32,000 lack access to even informal education. Similar to their Palestinian peers, Syrian boys are more likely to be out of school than girls – often because they are working, adolescents are less likely to be enrolled than younger children and children living in Za'atari camp are less likely to go to school than children living in host communities (see Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 4: Schooling and employment status, by age and sex

Source: Culbertson, 2015

Interestingly, children living in female headed households are significantly more likely to be attending school than those living in male headed households (70.4% versus 61%) – with effects especially large for adolescent boys (57.5% versus 44.7%)(UNICEF, 2015).

Culbertson et al. (2016) found that there were four primary reasons that Syrian children were not attending school, two more procedural and two more practical. In terms of policy, some 65,000 children are barred from formal education because they have been out of school for more than three years¹⁴ – most because so many schools in Syria have closed due to the war. Additionally, Jordan has no mechanism for mid-year registration, meaning that all recently arrived children must wait until the following year in order to enrol. In terms of practicalities, despite the fact that the Jordanian government provides free public education to Syrian students, there are simply not places for all the children who would like to attend school, even with double shifts. Nearly 40% of respondents in one recent survey said that their children were out of school because there were no places for them (38%)--another 20% said that school was too far and a further 33% could not afford the transport that would allow their children to access school (Hamad et al., forthcoming). Furthermore, where schools do have space for new students, they are likely to be located in places where potential students are not, meaning that transportation issues prevent enrolment, or to only be available in the second-shift – which is especially

problematic for girls, given the mobility restrictions they face in the evenings (see also Hamad et al., forthcoming).

Other research has pointed to other educational barriers. For example, the IRC (2015), Sirin and Sirin-Rogers (2015), USAID (2015) and the WRC (2014) found that Syrian parents kept their children out of school because they were worried about their children's safety in the face of growing bullying – including sexual harassment in the case of girls, recognised that teachers were not prepared to teach highly traumatised children or were intimidated by the fact that their children would not be allowed to have Syrian teachers. Dean (2015) and Hamad et al. (forthcoming), on the other hand, found that Syrian children sometimes see no point in education, given their limited employment prospects. In Hamad et al.'s (forthcoming) survey, 21% were out of school because of "lack of motivation" and 13% were out of school for ill health or disability.

A recent survey highlighted a common thread: poverty. One third of respondents in UNICEF's (2016) most recent work identified lack of money as a key reason for children's non-enrolment – with 14% saying that their children were working to support the family. These figures are echoed in Hamad et al.'s (forthcoming) research, which found that transportation costs were unsurmountable to 33% of Syrian children and that 8% of children spent their days working rather than studying. The top reason that adolescent girls living in the Jena host community gave for being out of school was that they did not have money for

14 DfID reports that the Government of Jordan declared an end to this policy after the Jordan Compact

uniforms, shoes and books (Culbertson et al., 2016) – the first of which was particularly important to girls in the IRC's (2015) study given that girls are supposed to look "elegant".

Despite the fact that most Syrians agree that Jordanian schools are providing a decent education, with only 9% of those in host communities and 20% of those in Za'atari describing school quality as "bad", even Syrian adolescents who stay in school rarely see good educational outcomes (Culbertson et al., 2016; IRC, 2015; Sirin and Sirin-Rogers, 2015). At the end of 12th grade students in Jordanian schools sit the Tawjihi exam – which determines whether or not they are eligible to attend university. That exam, which is considered flawed by many researchers because it does not take account of the reality that urban students' education tends to be superior than that of rural students', is proving a particular stumbling block for Syrian refugees (Culbertson, 2015; Brown et al., 2014). Only 2% of students living in Za'atari camp passed the exam – compared to 40% native born Jordanians (Culbertson et al., 2016).

Critical to understanding the educational trajectories of all groups of girls is the reality that girls themselves have little say over how long they will be allowed to study. While most girls in USAID's (2015) Youth Assessment reported that as long as they were doing well in school they would be allowed to continue, they also made it clear that "decisions to remove females from school are generally made by parents who are more preoccupied with family honour which is linked to their daughters' reputations" (p.5). While Syrian boys are regularly pressured by their parents to leave school in order to work, because the government has tended to turn a blind eye towards their illegal employment, boys overall have more input in the decision that impact their schooling (ibid.).

2.2 Physical health and nutrition

Like its educational system, Jordan's health system has been strained by the recent influx of refugees. While Jordan prides itself on its health care, and provides free primary health services – including maternal and child health, immunisations and school health services – wait times have grown in recent years and quality has dropped (UNICEF, 2016). Participants in a recent assessment of UNHCR's cash transfer programme reported that many refugees now opt for private care even if it is a significant cost (Hamad et al., forthcoming). That said, the 2012 DHS found that maternity care is nearly universal.

There has been little research directed at the physical health and nutrition of adolescent girls living in Jordan. In large part this appears to be because Jordanian and Palestine refugee girls are generally well fed and healthy and do not face high rates of adolescent pregnancy. Neither can be said of Syrian girls.

For native born Jordanians, who have a low adolescent fertility rate (2.3%)(World Bank, 2017) despite adolescents' low rate of contraceptive use (26.1% for girls 15-19 versus 45.4% for women 20-24)(GoJ and ICF International, 2013), recent research has almost exclusively focused on eating disorders – which while having physical outcomes, will be discussed below under the rubric of psychosocial capabilities. From a more physical perspective, obesity is a growing concern in Jordan. Not only are nearly 70% of all Jordanians overweight (Mokdad et al., 2014), but adolescents have a growing penchant for consuming unhealthy foods such as soft drinks and sweets (Haddad et al. 2009) and girls in particular face cultural constraints against physical activity. Climbing rates of obesity are especially concerning given the country's high rate of smoking. A 2010 survey found that one-fifth of girls between the ages of 13 and 15 smoke (compared to over one-third of boys)(WHO 2010 as cited in Youthpolicy.org, 2014).

The sole study that touches on the physical health of Jordan's Palestinian population merely observed that girls between the ages of 15 and 19 were in good health – with no real differences between those living in and out of camps (Tiltne and Zhang 2013). That survey did not include the adolescent fertility rate for either population of girls (though girls in camps are more likely to marry as children, discussed below).

Syrian girls' physical health appears more at risk – with rates of adolescent pregnancy climbing in tandem with rate of child marriage (see below). Shabani et al. (2016) report that while 5% of deliveries in Za'atari camp in the first quarter of 2013 were to girls under the age of 18, by 2014 the rate had reached 8.5%. Samari (2015) notes the same upward trend, but reports the 2014 rate at 11%.

2.3 Bodily integrity

In Jordan, threats to adolescent girls' bodily integrity revolve around child marriage and gender-based violence. Syrian girls are particularly vulnerable to the first. The second, however, is almost completely unexplored – meaning that we have no idea how many girls experience violence, by whom, where and what sorts of violence are most common.

2.3.1 Child marriage

As noted by Al Gharaibeh (2016), the importance of marriage to those living in the Arab world cannot be overstated. It is not only “central to obtaining social acceptance and self-actualisation of the socio-religious adult role for the individual”, but is a contract between families and across generations (p. 14). Because marriage is so important to Jordanian social fabric, the law does not prevent child marriage. On the one hand, the minimum age for marriage, for both women and men, is 18. On the other hand, girls between the ages of 15 and 18 can be married if given permission from a Sharia Court (World Bank, 2013). This legal “loophole” appears responsible for Jordan’s lack of progress on child marriage, which UNICEF (2014) found nearly stable rates between 2005 (at 14.3%) and 2013 (at 13.2%) (see Table 2)¹⁵. UNICEF (2014) observes that while poverty and education are clearly related to child marriage in Jordan, statistical relationships appear complicated and non-linear. Girls in better off governorates are sometimes more at risk of child marriage than those from poorer governorates and school enrolment itself sometimes less protective than academic success. That said, nearly all married girls had already left school before their marriage and very few married girls had access to continued education.

Most respondents in UNICEF’s qualitative follow-up study felt that child marriage was not ideal. However, they also agreed that in “compelling” circumstances, it could be the best for both girls and their families. Circumstances considered “compelling” included adolescent pregnancy,

an abusive home environment and situations in which girls were living with extended family (ibid.). Respondents also agreed that even where female relatives were instrumental in arranging and encouraging girls to marry as children, the ultimate decision was made by girls’ fathers (or male guardians), who have legal authority over their daughters until they are married – at which time that authority is assumed by their husbands.

Disaggregating populations of girls, 12.7% of marriages registered to Jordanian nationals in 2013 involved a bride under the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2014) – with child brides especially likely to marry relatives (GoJ and ICF International, 2013) (see Box 2). About 20% of these Jordanian girls married a man less than five years their elder. Nearly half married a man between five and ten years their elder and over a quarter married a man more than ten years their elder (UNICEF, 2014). Jordanian respondents in UNICEF’s study (2014) focused largely on marriage as a form of protection and security for girls, especially for girls already out of school. Some parents also mentioned a fear of the media and technology as a reason for marrying their daughters as children. They were afraid that their daughters might be exposed to bad habits as they progressed through adolescence and believed that early marriage might ensure better marital prospects. A handful also mentioned that they did not believe that school adequately protected their daughters – leading them to take their daughters out of school and thus raise their odds of child marriage. Girls in USAID’s (2015) National Youth Assessment reported that

Table 2: Child marriage in Jordan

Child marriages registered in Jordanian shari’a courts by nationality, 2013			
Nationality	Marriages at age 15-17	All registered marriage	Marriages age 15-17 as % of all marriages
Jordanian	8 402	66 184	12.7%
Palestinian	382	2 173	17.6%
Syrian	735	2 936	25.0%
Iraqi	19	471	4.0%
Other	80	1 096	7.3%
Average			13.2%

Source: UNICEF, 2014.

¹⁵ Data on child marriage in Jordan has some notable inconsistencies. UNICEF’s 2014 study on child marriage in Jordan found rates significantly higher than the 2012 DHS—which found that of women aged 20-24, 8.4% had been married by the age of 18 and also found that rates had declined significantly across cohorts. UNICEF’s international website (<https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>) reports a rate of 8% (rounding from the 2012 figure). In 2016, UNICEF reported that the 2015 Jordan Population and Housing Census found the child marriage rate for girls to be 7.4% (https://www.unicef.org/jordan/New-Graphs-LAST-UPDATE_Pro15Mar2016_-1A3.pdf).

Box 2: Consanguineous marriage

It is common in Jordan for girls and women to marry their cousins. This not only has ramifications for the bride, as it speaks to an arranged marriage, but also has knock-on implications for the future, as consanguineous marriages are more likely to result in children with disabilities that require more care—and face uncertain futures.

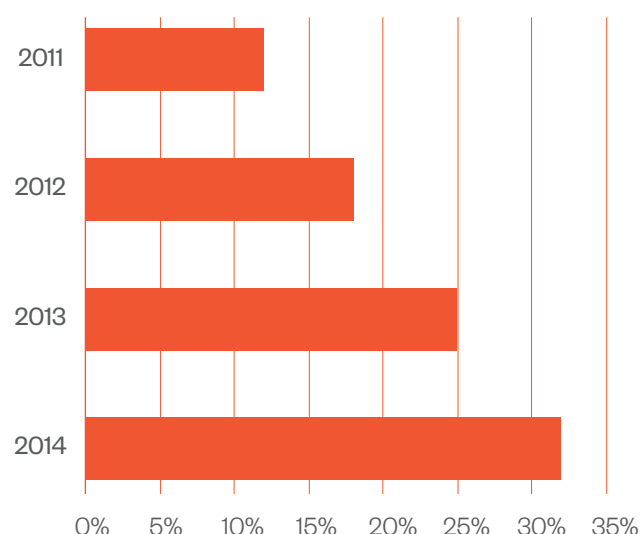
The youngest Jordanian brides are the most likely to marry relatives, because they are the most likely to have arranged marriage. According to the 2012 DHS, 43% of married 15-19 year old girls are related to their husbands. This is markedly different from older women. For women aged 20-24, only 30% are related to their husbands.

girls who were not doing well in school were the most likely to be removed from school and forced into marriage.

Palestine refugee girls living in Jordan are more likely to marry as children than their Jordanian peers. UNICEF's (2014) study found that in 2013, 17.6% of marriages to Palestine refugees involved girls under the age of 18. Disaggregating between camp and non-camp population, Tiltne and Zhang (2013) found that 12% of girls aged 15-19 living inside of camps – and 6% of their peers living outside of camps – were already married. Palestine refugee girls, like their Jordanian counterparts, are quite likely to marry men substantially older than they are. Over half of girls married men between five and ten years their elder and over a quarter married men more than ten years older than themselves (UNICEF, 2014). In terms of drivers, Palestinian respondents focused on household poverty, largely born of large family size, as a key reason that girls married as children. On a related note, UNRWA (2016c) reports that while forced marriage is uncommon among Palestine refugees who have been living in Jordan for years, among those who have recently arrived from Syria it is quite common – 20%.

Syrian girls living in Jordan are at the highest risk of child marriage. UNICEF's (2014) analysis found that in 2013, a full-quarter of all marriages involving Syrians involved a girl under the age of 18 – and by 2014 that proportion had risen to 32% (UNICEF, 2016). It also found that Syrian girls are the most likely to marry older men. Over 37% of child marriages involved a groom five to ten years older than the bride. Nearly 32% involved a groom ten to fourteen years older and over 16% involved a groom more than fifteen years older. While Syrian respondents, like their Jordanian and Palestinian counterparts, most often mentioned marriage as a form of security for girls, especially in the

Figure 5: Proportion of Syrian marriages involving a child bride, over time



Source: UNICEF, 2016

context of growing poverty, they also focused on other drivers. For example, some saw child marriage as a way to reduce the odds of rape and others reported that girls had married in order gain Jordanian citizenship (where they had married nationals) or permission to live outside of Za'atari camp. Still others explained that child marriage had been used to improve men's access to Jordan (where they believed that married male refugees were more likely to be admitted to Jordan than those who were not married) or to secure better financial prospects for their families (especially where they were brokered to men from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States).

Although child marriage was not unheard of in Syria before the war, with 3% of girls married before the age of 15 and 13% married before the age of 18, it has become markedly more common as the war drags on (UNICEF, 2016) – perhaps especially for girls from urban areas, for whom child marriage had become relatively rare (WRC, 2016) (see Figure 5). Syrian refugee girls are not only twice as likely to marry as children now than they were just a few years ago, but the shape of their marriages is also shifting. UN Women (2013) and the WRC (2014) report that child brides used to marry boys and young men just a few years older, which they no longer do. It also reports that temporary marriages are becoming more common, with one-in-ten respondents knowing of at least one temporary marriage, despite Jordanian clerics' attempts to stamp them out by issuing fatwas.

There has been much research aimed at identifying the factors pushing Syrian girls into marriage (WRC, 2016; CARE, 2015; IRC, 2015; UNICEF, 2013; Save the Children, 2014; UN Women, 2013). While poverty was initially suspected as a primary driver, with some authors even reporting fathers choosing to marry their daughters in order to collect dowry, most research has found that child marriages appear arranged in order to solve one of two closely related problems: protect girls' and families' honour and improve girls' security. First, war and displacement have left girls highly vulnerable to stigma as they have had to enter and endure mixed-sex settings that have caused their neighbours to gossip and their parents to become fearful for their reputations (WRC, 2016; IRC, 2015; USAID, 2015). As a result, CARE (2015) found that "child marriage was seen as a form of 'protection' and a way for families to keep the 'honour' of their daughters" (p. 7), with married girls not only seen as less vulnerable to rape, but also less stigmatised in the event that they were raped (WRC, 2016). Save the Children (2014), however, notes that honour all too often has little to do with girls and much to do with families. They observe that in Syrian culture a girl's "value is largely determined by her upholding family honour, producing children and remaining within the home" (p. 5), meaning that families' claims that child marriage protects girls is more about protecting an asset than it is about protecting a child. Indeed, CARE's (2015) research also found that older adolescent girls reported that their parents were distant and emotionally abusive as they began to obsess about "so-called 'honour'" and push their daughters into accepting a marriage and USAID (2015) found that brothers and even older married sisters bully unmarried girls in order to reinforce their lowly position in the family.

That said, what is important to recognize from a programming perspective, is given that marriage is the most significant form of protection available for Syrian women, parents' logic that it can offer their daughters financial and physical security is culturally sound – albeit often empirically inaccurate (Charles and Denman, 2013). UN Women (2013) notes that this is particularly the case for girls whose marriages are not reviewed by Sharia courts, either because their parents cannot afford the cost or do not understand the rules. Those girls, and their children, have little access to any form of legal protection (see also WRC, 2014).

2.3.2 Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is both common and accepted in Jordan. The 2012 Demographic and Health Survey found that about a third of women had been subjected to at least one form of violence at least once since the age of 15 and that about a fifth had been subjected to violence at the hands of their husband (Government of Jordan and ICF International, 2013). Furthermore, 70% of ever-married women agreed that husbands had the right to perpetrate violence on their wives for at least one reason (ibid.). As noted above in the discussion about Jordan's poor performance on gender indices, national law effectively supports men's dominance over women (Grandlund, 2014). Not only are all unmarried women under the age of 30 legally required to have a male guardian, for example, but under the Penal Code charges of rape can be dropped if the perpetrator marries the victim for at least five years (Grandlund, 2014; Ismayilova et al. 2013). Indeed, Husseini (2016) reports that claims of violence against women are so denigrated within the justice system that only 3% of survivors of gender-based violence reported that they would seek help from the police. Likely reflecting the deep importance attached to notions of honour, women with the most education and from the best-off families were the least likely to report (World Bank, 2013).

Adolescent girls in Jordan are even more likely than adult women to experience violence and to believe that it is justified. The 2012 DHS, which does not allow us to distinguish between populations of Jordanian and Palestine refugee girls, found that while 70% of all ever-married women believed that wife beating could be justified, 85% of ever married girls between the ages of 15 and 19 believed that it could be (Government of Jordan and ICF International, 2013). Furthermore, while 6% of all ever-married women had experienced sexual violence at the hands of their husbands in the last year, 12.9% of adolescent girls had been victimised. The youngest adolescents are especially vulnerable. Married girls between the ages of 15 and 17 were significantly more likely to experience physical violence than were girls who were 18 or 19 (30.2% versus 23%). Adolescent girls are also less likely to seek help for violence. While 40.7% of all women who admitted to having experienced violence also said that they had sought help, only 33.1% of girls reported that they had done so.

The only study that focuses on **Jordanian nationals** and appears aimed at the nexus of gender-based violence

and adolescence addresses honour killings (Eisner et al., 2013). While absolute numbers are low¹⁶, honour killings account for a “substantial portion of all known homicides” in Jordan (ibid.: 406) – and appear to be experiencing a “sharp increase” over the last few years (Outhbert, 2016). Born of a belief that girls’ value is in their chastity and that girls and women who disobey their fathers’ (and male guardians’) strictures around their chastity have impugned family honour, honour killings are treated lightly by the law because victims and perpetrators are from the same family (Granlund, 2014; Whitman, 2014). Eisner et al.’s (2013) research, with ninth grade students from 14 government schools in Jordan, suggests that rates are unlikely to drop soon. A full 40% of boys and 20% of girls believed that “killing a daughter, sister, or wife who has dishonoured the family can be justified” (p. 405). While neither religion nor religious intensity predicted adolescents’ attitudes toward honour killings, boys who experienced harsh discipline from their fathers – reflecting authoritarian patriarchal parenting – were significantly more likely to believe such crimes are justified. Impacts on girls, and harsh discipline from mothers, were not significant.

Palestine refugee girls’ experiences with gender-based violence have not been studied. Findings from the 2012 DHS, however, suggest that those living in camps are likely especially vulnerable. The DHS, which does not allow us to disaggregate camp-dwelling girls from camp-dwelling older women, found that of women over the age of 15, those living in camps are significantly more likely to have ever experienced any form of violence than those living outside of camps (30.5% versus 20.7%). They are also more likely to believe that violence is justified (79% versus 69.6%).

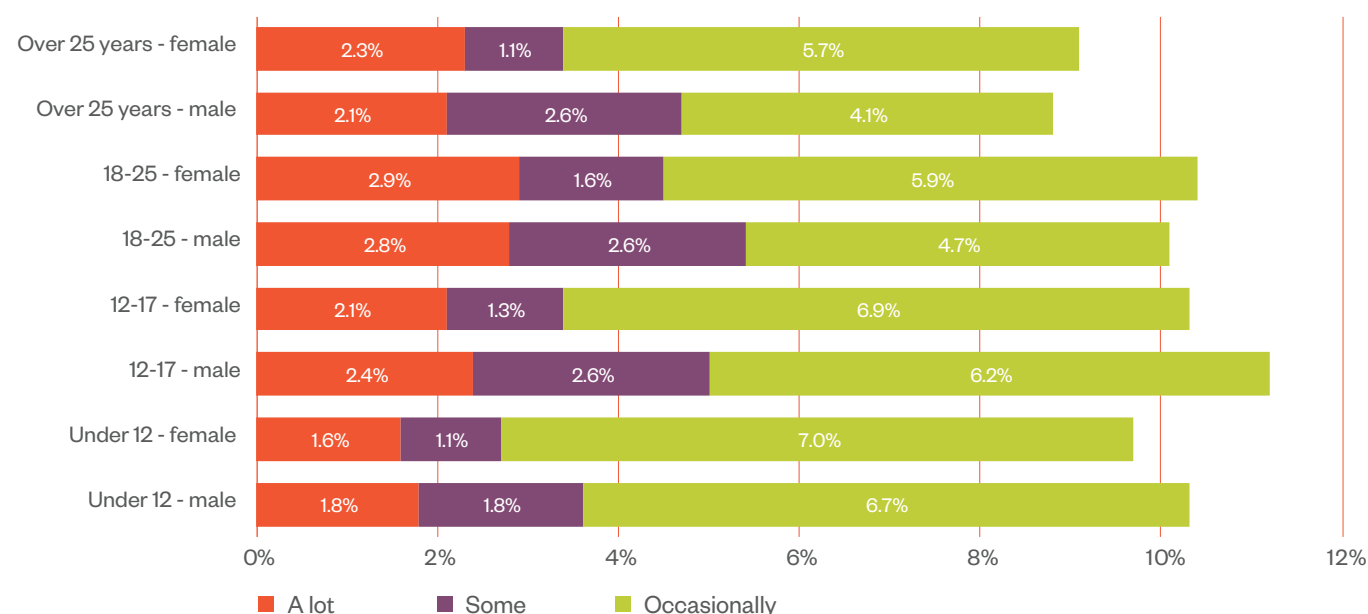
Mirroring recent work on child marriage, Syrian refugees’ experiences with gender-based violence have seen much attention in recent years – albeit with almost no attempt to disaggregate between girls and adult women and insufficient focused attention on refugees in Jordan as opposed to the region more generally. Studies have found, for example, that more than a quarter of refugee households living in Jordan fled to that country in part to escape sexual and gender-based violence (CARE, 2013), which became increasingly common in Syria after the onset of the war (IRC, 2012; FIDH, 2012), and that since their arrival in Jordan up to 50% of girls and women have experienced violence at the hands of their husbands,

Jordanian men and even service providers – some of whom pressure girls and women into trading sex for the goods and services they need to ensure their survival (UNHCR, 2014; IRC, 2014; WRC, 2014). Rates of domestic violence in particular are reported to be increasing due to men’s immense stress – brought on by their inability to fulfil the normative expectation that they will provide for their families (ibid.; see also IRC, 2015; Charles and Denman, 2013). The Interagency assessment also found that in Jordan, Syrian survivors of violence are more likely to seek help from family members than from justice officials and health care practitioners, even in the case of sexual violence – perhaps because refugees are relatively less likely to know what services are available, but also because some fear being deported if they approach the authorities (UN Women, 2013; see also Samari, 2016; IRC, 2015).

Critically, in terms of understanding the magnitude and shape of GBV among the Syrian refugee population, the Interagency assessment on gender-based violence found that women were unable to speak openly about GBV – with a large number either refusing to answer questions or simply responding “I don’t know” (ibid.). Participants explained that this is because if survivors speak up then they could be at risk from further violence from male family members for “disgracing” the family (see also Hassan et al., 2015). Indeed, despite evidence that most of the violence experienced by Syrian girls and women happens in the home (70%) and at the hands of a husband or someone else known to the victim (80%) (UNFPA, 2016), girls and women who participated in the Interagency assessment focused on sexual harassment in public spaces – including schools and the marketplace – rather than violence in the home. Survivors attributed this harassment to growing hostility towards refugees, which has become acute as Syria’s civil war drags on and the number of refugees continues to grow (USAID, 2015; IRC 2014; MoPIC, 2014).

Despite the growing body of research aimed at GBV in Jordan’s Syrian refugee community, few studies have looked specifically at the issues facing Syrian girls. A rare exception is the IRC’s 2015 Adolescent Girls Assessment – which included a sizeable sample of Syrian girls. That study found that girls overall felt Jordan to be a safe place, especially compared to war-torn Syria, and most were concerned not about violence per se, but – mirroring the Interagency assessment of gender-based violence (UN Women, 2013)

¹⁶ Eisner et al. (2013) report that in 2010 it was estimated that there were 20 honour killings a year in Jordan. The Human Rights Watch (2016), however, reports 26 in 2016 by October (see: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/27/recorded-honor-killings-rise-jordan>).

Figure 6: Overview of programme outcomes by type of change

Source: UN Women, 2013

– about sexual harassment from adolescent boys on the street and at school. They were especially concerned that boys might follow them to their homes, which in turn might lead their parents to “blame” the victim and further restrict their mobility or even remove them from school (see also USAID, 2015). Girls, and their parents, reported that their primary response to harassment was to ignore it. They were afraid of being deported if they complained about the behaviour of Jordanians. Interestingly, particularly given girls’ focus on sexual harassment rather than sexual violence, the Interagency assessment on gender based violence found that boys are considered to be at greater risk of sexual violence than girls (for both children under 12 and adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17), perhaps because of their greater risk of being detained (see Figure 6).

2.4 Psychosocial well-being

Research on adolescent girls in Jordan and the broader MENA region has been broad – and found mixed results. On the one hand, there is strong evidence that the continuous, multi-faceted threats that girls face are taking a toll on their mental health (UNFPA, 2016; Samuels and Jones, 2015). For example, one study of refugee girls living in Lebanon found that over half reported symptoms of clinical depression (Sirin and Sirin-Rogers, 2015). Others

found that adolescent girls are more likely than their male peers to feel sad, fearful and depressed; that PTSD is a growing concern; that they are especially likely to experience physical and social isolation; and that they are more likely than boys to engage in suicide ideation (Hassan et al. 2015; UNFPA, 2014; Sami, 2014). With little mental health care available (Naufal 2013), adolescents – wary of adding to their parents’ already considerable stress – have been found to be especially likely to use withdrawal as a coping mechanism (Hassan et al. 2015).

On the other hand, the IRC’s 2015 Adolescent Girls Assessment, which surveyed just under 900 girls aged 13 to 17¹⁷, found that while some girls are exhibiting considerable stress, overall most girls in Jordan are doing well. They enjoy spending time at school and with their friends. They find meaning in religious activities. Nearly all (94%) have someone in their lives (usually parents) who supports them to make decisions. Indeed, of the over 800 girls in their study, 85% of Syrians and 95% of Jordanians reported being “excited about the future – for a variety of reasons (see Table 3). The survey also identified factors that put girls at risk of mental health issues, namely being unsure of what their goals are, feeling their goals are not achievable and lacking familial support. Other research has also highlighted the importance of familial support and

¹⁷ Of these girls, about 700 were not accessing IRC services. They were sampled randomly and were from both cities (35%) and rural villages (54%). Of final respondents, 80% were Syrian and 20% were Jordanian (less than 1% were “other”).

Table 3: Reasons girls are optimistic or pessimistic

Reasons for optimism		Reasons for pessimism	
Feel future plans are achievable	72%	Feel future plans are not achievable	30%
Have support of family	15%	Do not have support of family	19%
Have financial support	1%	Do not have financial support	6%
Need to excel	3%	Do not have support of anyone else	3%
Next steps are clear	7%	Not sure what to do next	31%
Attending school	3%	Don't attend school	11%

Source: IRC, 2015

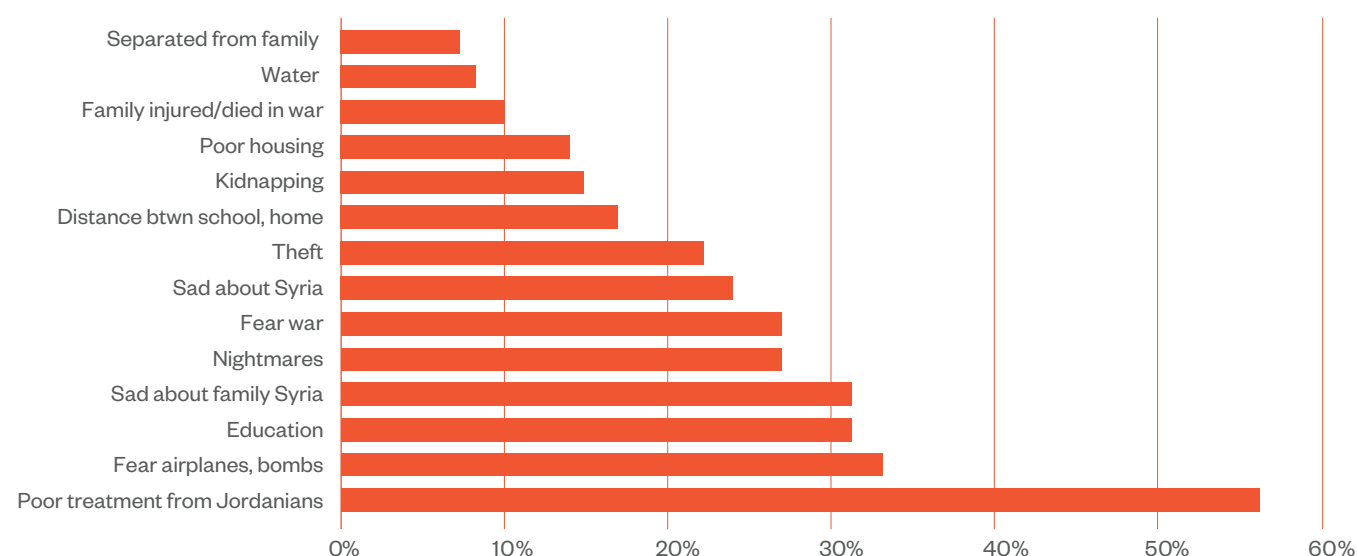
parenting styles to refugee adolescents' outcomes. For example, Smetana et al. (2015, 2016) found that greater hopefulness is associated with a stronger belief in parental authority, likely because adolescents perceive that it indicates love and caring.

Research into the psychosocial wellbeing of Jordanian girls has largely focused on depression and eating disorders. A study of over 8,000 students between the ages of 14 and 25 found that girls and young people who had been exposed to violence were particularly likely to exhibit depressive symptoms (Ismayilova et al. 2013). It also found that while young people with better parent-child relationships were less likely to exhibit symptoms, only half reported that they were able to share their problems with their parents. Another study, with nearly 1,000 adolescents attending secondary school, found that while boys are more likely to engage in non-suicidal self-injury than girls, girls are especially likely to engage in cutting, which is arguably a more dangerous form of self-injury (rather than punching themselves) (Hanania et al. 2015). Other recent research has focused on Jordanian girls' increasingly complicated relationships with food, which is no doubt complicated by climbing rates of obesity. Mousa (2010), for example, found that out of a sample of 300 girls between the ages of 10 and 16 who were attending private schools in Jordan, over 40% had a negative attitude towards eating and over a third had an eating disorder. Noting that plumpness has traditionally been valued in Arab cultures, as it indicates good health and fertility, Mousa concluded that young Jordanian girls had assimilated western values of beauty from the constant media messages with which they are surrounded. Using a sample of young women at university in Jordan, Gable (2014) also found high rates of body dysmorphia and eating disorders. Gearing (2013) found that despite the fact that girls and young women

appear to be especially susceptible to some forms of mental health issues, they are also more stigmatised for their suffering –and less likely to receive treatment. Study participants reported that they were more likely to accept depressed adolescent boys, rather than girls, at their children's schools, and more likely to hire untreated than treated females (for a hypothetical job opening). Critically for adolescent girls and young women, the fear of damaging marriage prospects appears to preclude treatment (ibid.).

The psychosocial well-being of Palestine refugee girls' in Jordan appears to have not been studied. We know that Palestinian adolescents in Jordan are less likely than other adolescent refugees to respect parental authority, and more likely to be rebellious and exhibit emotional distress (Smetana et al., 2015, 2016). We also know from populations of Palestine refugee girls in Gaza that they are often lonely and bored, because their mobility is restricted, and more likely to be depressed and anxious than boys because they have less access to the agency that allows them to work towards their goals (Hamad et al., 2015). However, there does not appear to have been any research undertaken with Palestine refugee girls in Jordan. They were not included in the IRC's (2015) Adolescent Girls Assessment and Smetana et al. (2015, 2016) did not simultaneously disaggregate by gender and ethnicity.

There have been a great many recent studies aimed at exploring the psychosocial well-being and mental health concerns of Syrian refugee girls. As noted above, most have not focused on girls living in Jordan or have not disaggregated girls by age or adolescents by gender. Of the Jordan-based research, the Interagency assessment of gender-based violence in Jordan found that stress on families had generally increased tensions between parents and their children (UN Women, 2013) and adolescents in

Figure 7: General problems for displaced Syrian adolescents

Source: UNICEF and IMC, 2014

UNICEF and IMC's (2014) research reported that their parents were consequently resorting to physical violence as a form of discipline more often. However, that study, which included over 2,000 Syrian adolescents, some living in Za'atari camp and others living in host communities, found that it was threats outside the family which adolescents felt to be the most compelling. Indeed, their largest complaint was poor treatment from Jordanians (especially for those living outside of the camp), followed by fear of more violence, lack of education and sadness about the family they had left behind in Syria (see Figure 7). Adolescents reported that they were verbally bullied, for being Syrian or for being a refugee, and were threatened with or experienced physical violence, including having head scarves ripped off. This theme of being made to feel

unwelcome was echoed by adolescent girls in IRC's (2015) Adolescent Girls Assessment and USAID's (2015) National Youth Assessment. Syrian girls reported that not only were they harassed by Jordanian boys, but also that they were bullied by Jordanian girls. This was particularly the case in cities, where Jordanians and Syrians tend to attend school in different shifts, which reinforces notions of "otherness".

UNICEF and IMC's (2014) study found that adolescent girls tend to have more emotional distress than adolescent boys – despite the fact that boys report more difficulties and are less likely to feel supported by their parents and their friends. Girls feel unsafe away from their parents, are more isolated and confined and report more depression, tension, sadness and fear than boys. Mothers of girls in IRC's (2015) research concurred that some girls are

Box 3: A window to the world

Adolescents in Jordan spend hours a day online. In their study of 400 teens in 7th to 12th grades, Darweesh and Mahmoud (2014) found that they average 3.5 hours day—with most accessing the internet on their phones or laptops. While girls and boys are equally likely to spend time online, the sites that they visit are markedly different. Girls are more likely to visit educational sites and boys are more likely to visit social media, sports and pornographic sites (Darweesh and Mahmoud, 2014).

Maitland and Xu (2015) found that Syrian young people also use their phones to connect with the world. They found that 86% of Syrian youth owned their own mobile phones and 83% owned their own SIM cards.

For girls, especially those who are confined to home, these virtual experiences can be a window to the world that mitigates isolation and loneliness (USAID, 2015; King Hussein Foundation, 2016). The IRC's (2015) Adolescent Girls Assessment found that TV is a primary form of entertainment for girls, as they are only rarely allowed to leave home for recreational purposes, and that WhatsApp and Facebook help girls connect with others. While many girls did not have their own phones, since phones are expensive and parents are concerned that they might expose girls to harm, girls without their own phones frequently use their mothers'. The King Hussein Foundation (2016) found that for girls who have been removed from school, TV is not just entertainment. It is the only window they have into a world different from their own.

struggling. Those whose daughters had given up mobility reported that their daughters were depressed by being confined to the home, even if they understood that it was for their own safety (IRC, 2015) (see Box 3). Impacts are magnified for those living outside of Za'atari. UNICEF and IMC's (2014) study found that children in the camp felt better supported and exhibited more emotional resilience.

The Adolescent Girls Assessment concluded that Syrian girls' pessimism has two fundamental roots (see Table 3). First, they are restricted by their refugee status, which "imposes a burden on girls to move freely, access education, obtain work permissions and opportunities, and access self-development opportunities especially at the professional level." Second, girls are trapped by gender roles, which largely limit their futures to marriage and motherhood and close off other aspirations they might have (IRC, 2015; see also USAID, 2015). Married girls are particularly trapped by the latter. Not only are they exposed to early and forced sexual activity, often with a man a generation older, but Save the Children (2014) found that they felt very unready to assume the role of mother.

2.5 Voice and agency

In Jordan, and across the MENA region, gender norms largely preclude women and girls from accessing voice and agency (World Bank, 2013). Socialised since childhood to "accept control and oppression", Jordanian girls and women can travel only with the permission of their fathers or husbands, must renounce all property rights in order to initiate divorce and are not given legal guardianship over their children even when they are granted physical custody (Ismayilova et al, 2013: 138). While the laws that limit women's options are important, the World Bank (2013) notes that women's agency remains primarily restricted not by law, but as a result of the social norms that play out on a daily basis. Those norms confine women to the household, forcing them to shape their lives around their husbands and their children, and preclude their access to all forms of decision-making because their voices are considered less important than those of boys and men (ibid.).

Ahmad et al. (2015) observes that in addition to "oppressive" gender norms, Arab cultures also emphasize generational hierarchies, with even adult children expected to accede to their parents' demands and adolescents seen as immature and in need of monitoring and control. Parents stress traditional values, including obedience and interdependence, and adolescents are expected to

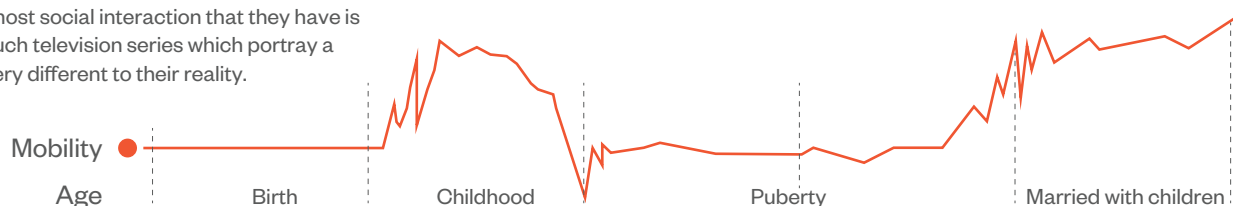
conform to tradition and uphold family honour (see also USAID, 2015; Smetana, 2016). Recent research, however, paints a more nuanced picture. On the one hand, USAID's (2015) National Youth Assessment found that Jordanian and Syrian adolescents and young adults feel that that adults do not listen to them and are pessimistic about making change happen – especially in public spaces. On the other hand, in terms of their personal lives, Smetana (2015) found that adolescents in Jordan are increasingly "normative" and see parental control as "bounded". That is, while it is perceived as legitimate in some contexts (e.g. those that are risky or touch on morality), teens – regardless of age, parental education and socio-economic status – are increasingly unlikely to bow to their parents' wishes about how they choose for friends or spend their leisure time.

There is little information about the voice and agency of specific populations of adolescent girls in Jordan. While the authors above agree that as girls are restricted by both gender and age they have especially little freedom, and are largely parented to encourage "submission", there has been little research directed at ascertaining whether and how the lives of Jordanian girls, Palestine refugee girls and Syrian girls differ in terms of their access to even the most concrete outcomes – such as mobility or input into decision-making regarding their own education. USAID's (2015) National Youth Assessment, which included both Jordanian and Syrian girls between the ages of 10 and 24, found that as a group girls feel "infantilised" by society. They have few places outside of Qur'anic centres (and in recent years UNICEF support Makani centres, see below) where they can participate on a regular basis and even within the family are permitted only to propose solutions to "small problems". The IRC's (2015) Adolescent Girls Assessment, which also included Jordanian and Syrian girls, remained even more general. In terms of voice and agency it concluded only that girls are expected to obey their parents, dress modestly, speak softly and politely and attend to "home business" – doing chores for their parents while they wait to marry. Al Gharaibeh (2016), in his study of young people between the ages of 18 and 24, found that girls and women perceived higher barriers to participation across all domains – educational, economic, health, social and political – than boys and young men.

The King Hussein Foundation (2016) found that adolescent Jordanian girls see marked declines in their mobility with the onset of puberty (see Figure 8). After

Figure 8: Girls' mobility over time

Given the domestic confinement of homebound girls, the most social interaction that they have is through such television series which portray a lifestyle very different to their reality.



Source: King Hussein Foundation, 2016

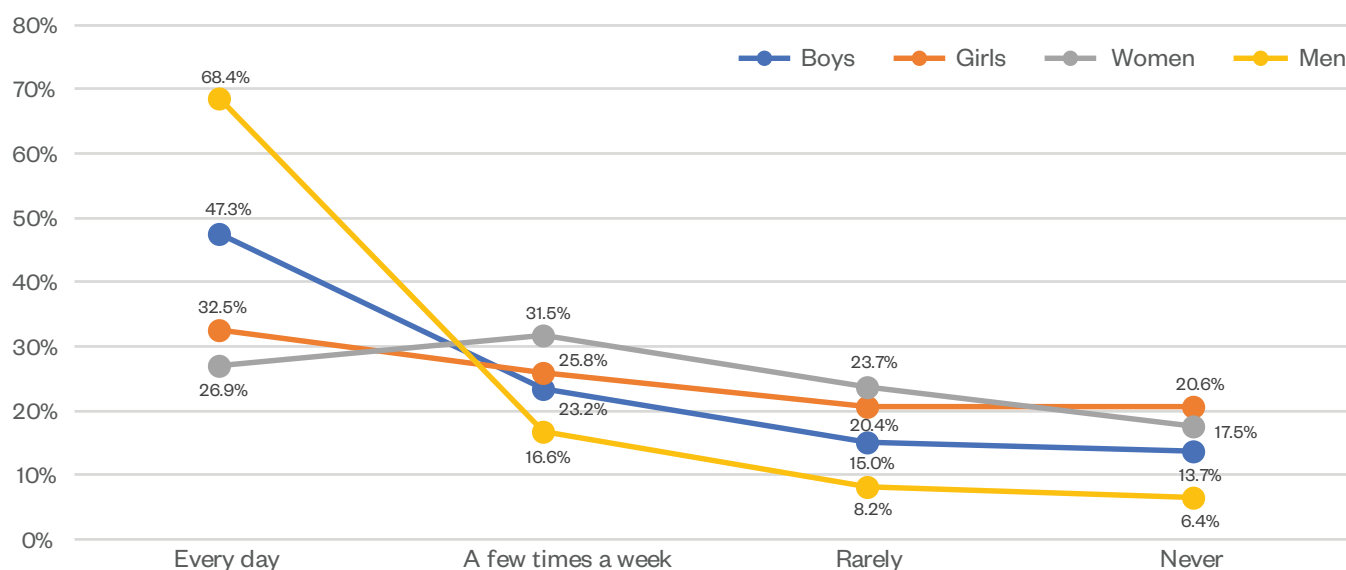
comparatively free childhoods, girls are confined to home until they are not only married, but have children. Even then, however, girls' access to voice and agency is limited. The 2012 Jordan DHS found that of married girls between the ages of 15 and 19, only 43.4% were allowed input into decision-making regarding their own health care and mobility and household purchasing (compared to 65.1% for all women aged 15-49). Furthermore, Ismayilova et al. (2013) found evidence that girls who attempt to access agency may face backlash. They reported that of girls between the ages of 14 and 25, the most religious demonstrated the lowest levels of depressive symptoms. They attributed this to greater familial and community resistance aimed at girls who believed in gender equality.

In terms of Palestine refugee girls, Ahmad et al. (2015), working with nearly 500 camp dwelling adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17, found that girls were more

closely monitored by parents than were boys and were also more likely to disclose information about their lives to their mothers. The latter appears primarily related to the fact that boys engage in more activities about which they did not want their mothers to know (Ahmad et al., 2015), but may also be related to the fact that girls are more likely to report a higher belief in parental authority than boys (Smetana et al., 2015). While Smetana et al. (2016) did not simultaneously disaggregate their findings by ethnicity and gender, their research suggests both are likely true. Both Palestinians and boys in their sample were less likely to be considered "normative" and more likely to be "rebellious" – meaning that they undertook more of their own decision-making.

Syrian girls appear to have especially limited access to voice and agency as with few exceptions they not only have "no opportunities to channel their voice in Jordan

Figure 9: How often do family members leave the house?



Source: UN Women, 2013

or to be civically active” (USAID, 2015: 8), but also have particularly little access to decision-making within their own families. Authors have focused on girls’ lack of say in their own marriages – which are arranged by their fathers – and their especially poor mobility, which is often even worse than it was in Syria and can even preclude their access to education (UNFPA, 2016; IRC, 2015). For example while over 47% of adolescent boys leave home on a daily basis, less than 33% of girls do so (see Figure 9) (UN Women, 2013).

2.6 Economic empowerment

Even within MENA, which on a regional basis has the world’s lowest rate of female labour force participation – 21.3% in 2014 compared to a global rate of 39% that same year¹⁸ – Jordanian women are unlikely to work. In 2014, the country’s female labour force participation rate was only 18.4%. While markedly higher than 1990’s 11%, women’s employment rate is less than a quarter of that of men’s¹⁹. Furthermore, despite low participation rates, Jordanian women also experience high unemployment rates, more than twice that of men (19.5% versus 9.2% in 2014). The World Bank (2013) observes that while men are more likely to be unemployed if they are uneducated, the reverse is true for women. In Jordan, the most educated women are the most likely to be unemployed. A similar pattern holds for marriage. While married men are more likely to be employed, married women are much less likely to be employed. The Bank (2013) also notes that labour market segmentation has kept women out of high productivity sectors. Nearly half of employed women work in the public sector, which is viewed as the only “socially acceptable” form of employment for women because the hours are compatible with marriage and motherhood (ibid.). Unsurprisingly, most women (69%) work in services such as education and health care (GoJ, 2017).

While Jordanian women support the notion of women’s employment, with 80% rejecting the beliefs that full-time employment prevents a woman from having a good life with her husband or means that she cannot be a good mother, most also still believe that men have greater rights to employment than women (World Bank, 2013). Amongst women, 85% believe that when jobs are scarce they should go to men (versus 90% of men) (ibid.).

Jordanian women are also less likely than men to own assets or have access to credit. The Government reports that while 73.8% of men own land, only 21.3% of women do. Similarly, while 69.5% of men own flats, only 25.6% of women do. Of those taking out loans from commercial banks, more than 80% are men (GoJ, 2017).

Given the broader context of women’s employment, it is not surprising that Jordanian girls and young women are unlikely to be employed. The Jordanian government reports that in 2014, 7.8% of young women between the ages of 15 and 24 were employed, compared to 36.8% of young men (GoJ, 2017). Furthermore, rates of employment for young women – and especially for adolescent girls – appear to be dropping over time. Disaggregating government figures, USAID (2014) reports that in 2013 only .1% of girls between the ages of 15 and 18 were employed, down from .6% in 2010, with employment rates for young women 19-24 falling from 18.5% to 15.4% over the same time frame. Youth unemployment figures show a similar pattern. The 2014 rate for young women 15-24 was 53.3% (up from 37.1% in 2010) and for young men was 26.3% (up from 23.1% in 2010). Vocational training is a path that few Jordanian young people pursue (GoJ, 2014). A government survey found that while most older adolescents and young adults were aware that classes and programmes were available to them, fewer than 10% had ever participated. Of those, nearly 90% had taken a single class. (ibid.). Most young people indicated that they simply were not interested.

USAID (2015) observes that for girls and young women, many of whom have high career aspirations that they are afraid to voice because their families do not share their views, “social constructs rather than choice determine whether they will work at all, and if they do work, in what type of occupation” (p.6). Indeed, restrictive gender norms precluding most girls and women not only from having a career, but also from pursuing casual employment. The World Bank (2013) adds that even when girls and women are allowed by their families to undertake employment, their options for finding a job are further limited by convention, as they are “restricted to using indirect, anonymous methods of job search, such as sending an application or registering at a labor office” (p. 53). This is in contrast to their male peers, who use more direct methods such as phone calls and asking friends and relatives for

¹⁸ See: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.FE.ZS?view=chart>

¹⁹ Using comparable modeled ILO estimates, rates were 16% and 67% respectively in 2014. See: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?view=chart>

help. Finally, even when they are employed, girls and young women are less likely to have control over their own income than are boys and young men or older women. The 2012 DHS found that only 21.4% of employed women between the ages of 20 and 24 had primary control over their own cash income (compared to 34.7% for women aged 25-29). Girls were especially unlikely to have any say over their husbands' incomes. Of married girls aged 15-19, only 47.3% had joint decision making over their husbands' incomes, compared to 64.6% of women aged 20-24 (GoJ and ICF International, 2013).

Palestine refugee girls' access to economic empowerment largely mirrors that of their Jordanian peers. Tiltne and Zhang (2013) found that female youth labour force participation was minimal – less than 1% for girls between the ages of 15 and 19 and only 13% for young women between the ages of 20 and 24 – regardless of camp versus non-camp residence. They also found that marriage impacts young Palestine refugees' employment rates, with male youth 20% more likely to work after marriage than before but female youth much less likely to do so. Employment rates plunged from 30% before marriage to only 5% after and declines were steeper for young women living in host communities, presumably reflecting their lower likelihood of poverty. Tiltne and Zhang (2013) also found that some Palestine refugee girls and young women would like to work, but are not

allowed to do so by their families. Six percent of those in host communities, and double that in the more traditional camps, reported that they were not allowed to work.

Little is known about Syrian girls' access to economic empowerment, although much can be assumed given the poverty of the population, the mobility constraints girls face and the positions girls occupy in their families. Indeed, the fact that USAID's (2015) National Youth Assessment found that Syrian adolescent girls wanted to become flight attendants, pharmacists, doctors and teachers – while young Syrian women wanted to get married – speaks volumes. Critically, employment for Syrian girls appears to be far more of an indicator for their child protection needs rather than for their economic empowerment. UN Women (2013) found that there was a strong correlation between household size and adolescent girls' employment, with the largest families the most likely to have sent their daughters to work. Their assessment also found that of employed adolescent girls, 80% worked in agriculture or domestic service – both high risk sectors in terms of physical and sexual exploitation. The literature is oddly silent about whether it is becoming more common for refugee girls to take on domestic service as their families' economic situations continue to decline. On the one hand, many Jordanian families employ domestic workers – making it a readily available job. On the other hand, parents' concerns about girls' safety suggest that it may remain quite rare.

3 Actors for change

On the one hand, there are a wide variety of actors working to create change in the lives of adolescent girls living in Jordan. These include not only the Jordanian government and a wide variety of UN and humanitarian agencies, but also over a dozen international and national NGOs. While many of the interventions in progress target refugee families more generally (e.g. with cash transfers, food vouchers, and WASH infrastructure), and many more interventions broadly target children or women (e.g. educational or gender based violence programming), a growing number of actors are now also providing girls' clubs specifically for adolescent girls. However, while refugee girls – and vulnerable Jordanian girls in host communities – have a great many interventions aimed at improving their lives, there has yet to be any concerted attention to evaluation. If we are to understand what encourages, or prevents, change in the social norms that shape girls' daily lives, so that we can better tailor policy and programming, we need to ask girls what is working for them.

Before turning to the actors about whom we do have information, it should be noted that a key gap in our understanding programming for girls is the role that religious organizations are playing in their lives. While our work on the ground suggests that for many girls Qur'anic centres are lifelines – as they are the only place outside of the home that girls are allowed to go, existent research barely acknowledges their existence. Research also does not address Christian missionary efforts, which for Iraqi refugee girls appear to be significant.

3.1 Main actors

Actors working at scale in Jordan include the Jordanian government and a variety of UN agencies – plus DfID and USAID. It should be noted that a great deal of large-scale programming is the result of partnerships between organisations, and that donors are playing key roles in strengthening the services that the Jordanian government is providing. Below we highlight some of the main change strategies that actors are employing.

The Jordanian Government

In part driven by the 2016 Jordan Compact, the Jordanian Government is a key player in helping adolescent girls – and their families – develop their capabilities. Not only has it granted the vast majority of Palestine refugee families full citizenship, but it is taking steps to ramp up services to better meet the needs of Syrian families and prevent Jordanian families from experiencing further service degradation due to overload. In particular, the government recognises that even if the war in Syria were to end tomorrow, rebuilding the country and repatriating the population will take years. Consequently, the government is focused not only on short-term humanitarian relief, but also on the longer-term development programming needed to promote resilience and ensure that refugee and host populations “cope”, “recover” and “sustain” their capacities (MoPIC, 2016).

The most recent Jordan Response Plan (MoPIC, 2016) is multi-sectoral and aimed broadly – meaning that many of its components are not directly relevant to adolescent girls (e.g. scaling up efficient energy and protecting vulnerable ecosystems). Other components, such as strengthening the health care system (which provides free primary and secondary care to refugees as well as nationals) and improving access to justice services for survivors of GBV, include girls as an ancillary population, but are not especially focused on meeting their daily needs. The Jordanian approach to education, however, is directly aimed at meeting the needs of girls and boys for a quality education. Since 2012, with technical support from UNICEF (under its Emergency Education response, see below) and funding from a range of donors including the EU and the US, the government has provided free education to Syrian children that roughly mirrors that it provides to Jordanian and Palestinian children.

UNICEF

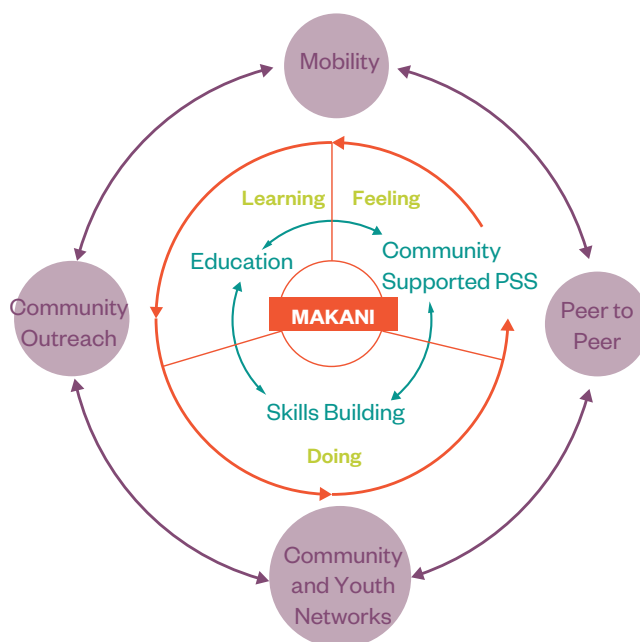
UNICEF's programming in Jordan is significant and multifaceted. In addition to the more girl-targeted responses detailed below, it has upgraded camp WASH facilities, provides recreational spaces for camp-dwelling children,

offers parenting classes, teaches child-friendly pedagogy and supports a Juvenile Police Department (UNICEF, 2016b). It also, beginning in 2015, provides an unconditional Child Cash Grant to assist the most vulnerable Syrian refugee families living in host communities. The grant consists of a monthly cash transfer of \$28/month/child – capped at \$106 for 4 children per family – and aims to increase spending on child-specific needs and prevent families from adopting negative coping strategies that affect child wellbeing. In 2015, the programme assisted 55,000 children from 15,000 of the most vulnerable refugee families, with eligibility based on poverty and protection status as identified through the Inter-Agency Vulnerability Assessment Framework (UNICEF 2015b).

UNICEF's Emergency Education Response (EER) is directly affecting the lives of thousands of adolescent girls. THE EER has supported the Jordanian Ministry of Education to provide education to Syrian refugee children. It has also worked with donors and NGOs to develop and implement a wide range of non-formal education programmes for children who do not have access to government schools. A recent evaluation found that the programme has been broadly successful in terms of helping children access education – with over 130,000 Syrian children enrolled in formal schooling and another 35,000 provided with informal or non-formal opportunities. That evaluation also noted, however, that nearly 40% of students lack access to formal education and quality – especially for Syrians²⁰ in double-shifted schools – is low (Culbertson et al., 2016).

The No Lost Generation Initiative, which was launched in 2013 by UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children, World Vision, Mercy Corp and other actors, is also impacting the lives of adolescent girls. The Initiative, which is running in 5 refugee hosting countries in MENA (Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt) aims to improve children's access to educational and psychosocial services and open opportunities for young people to meaningfully participate in the world around them (NoLostGeneration, 2016). Specific programming is varied, depending on children's age and country, but school aged children in Jordan – including adolescents – have access to Makani Centres, which are offered on the premises of community-based organizations and have a "holistic approach that provides... learning opportunities, life skills training and psychosocial support under one roof" (UNICEF, 2017) (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: The comprehensive approach of Makanis



Source: UNICEF, 2016

Jordan's 233 Makani centres (UNICEF, 2016c) offer a wide range of activities including e-learning (in partnership with Orange Jordan), vocational training, referrals to for health services, interactive theatre, participatory action research (UNICEF, 2016a,c; UNICEF, 2015d). In 2016 the programme reached 146,000 children, the majority of whom (88%) were Syrian refugees (UNICEF, 2016c).

UNICEF is working in Jordan to develop opportunities for Palestinian young people to develop leadership skills and participate in civic life. Programming will be offered in UNRWA schools and adolescent-friendly spaces hosted by CBOs and will include life-skills education. UNICEF is also expanding options for young people's engagement through its "UCAN network", which links adolescents and young adults with one another and offers them the opportunity to plan and evaluate programming – including through social media.

UNICEF Jordan is actively involved in preventing child marriage and gender-based violence and is working to deliver services to survivors (UNICEF, 2015e). It helped develop, and is now implementing, an early marriage action plan that includes community awareness-raising, empowering girls through Makani centres and comprehensive case management. It also runs a women's shelter and provides services to child survivors of GBV in both camps and host communities.

²⁰ Syrians tend to attend the afternoon shift, which is shorter than the morning shift

UNICEF has also heavily invested in research aimed at identifying and exploring the threats facing adolescent girls. In addition to work exploring access to education, the impact of poverty and the incidence and drivers of child marriage, UNICEF also helped the country complete its first National Youth Survey. Including 12,000 young people between the ages of 10 and 24, the survey aims to inform both the National Youth Strategy as well as direct programming.

UNWRA

The UNWRA provides services to Palestine refugees displaced by the 1948 and 1967 conflicts. In Jordan, it runs 10 official camps, 174 schools – serving nearly 120,000 children, and provides 23 primary health care centres – half of which are located in camps and half of which are located in host communities with high Palestinian populations (UNRWA, 2016). It also supports 3,500 students in higher education, subsidizes some of the cost for complicated medical care undertaken at government facilities (such as high risk maternity care), and runs 14 Women Centres (ibid.). In addition, the UNRWA runs the Social Safety Net Programme, which provides the poorest Palestinian families with a cash grant. In Jordan, the programme provides nearly 12,000 families with an e-card worth about \$115/per person/per year.

UNRWA also provides programming for children and adolescents – largely through its schools. Its Education in Emergencies response, for example, includes the provision of psychosocial support, survival skills and alternative learning modalities for refugee children. The agency has recruited and trained counsellors which not only give individual support to Palestine refugee children, but also conduct recreational activities. The recreational activities are primarily play and learning activities, but there are also behavioural and emotion group-based games, which help to support healing and recovery and identify children who need further support. In addition to its school based work, UNRWA's Children and Youth Programme works through local CSOs and aims to provide recreation and promote participation. Its Education Programme also organises awareness raising activities for adolescents and their parents (UNRWA, 2016b).

UNRWA is also implementing, in conjunction with UNICEF, a programme called “Palestinian Adolescents: Agents of Positive Change” (Peebles, 2015). Launched as a multi-country initiative in 2004, and implemented slightly differently across countries, in Jordan the programme

has focussed on camp-dwelling adolescents and helping them to develop a sense of identity and belonging. UNRWA adapted the programme's participatory action research to fit into its school curriculum and has implemented it in all of its schools. While the first phase of the programme overwhelming benefited boys (80-90% of participants), UNRWA has made a concerted effort to reach out to parents, hold different activities at different time for girls and boys and hire female facilitators. In the most recent phase, 65% of beneficiaries were girls. A 2015 evaluation of the programme made special note of its participatory action research, which – while expensive to implement – was found to return particularly large benefits not only to adolescent participants, but also to their communities.

UN Women

UN Women is running a large number of programmes in Jordan, some inside of camps and some outside of camps. Programming modalities tend to be diverse and layered. Oasis for Women and Girls, for example, runs inside of Za'atari and aims to empower Syrian girls and women through a range of activities including i) creating safe spaces that host regular women's meetings, ii) providing life skills and literacy education that includes child care, iii) offering cash-for-work for food insecure households, iv) referral services for those with specific legal- or disability-related concerns, v) serving GBV survivors and and vi) engagement with boys and men through activities such as #Hefor She.

Outside of Za'atari, UN Women is working to address trigger points for conflict – namely overextended service delivery and unemployment – in ways that also promote women's empowerment and gender equality. Through the Restoring Dignity Project, for instance, the agency is creating short-term employment opportunities, including in ICT, hospitality, agriculture and the garment industry, for vulnerable Jordanian households. Through its Social Cohesion and Gender Equality Programme it helps women create jobs by providing access to microfinance and social entrepreneurship support and to feed their families by teaching them how to grow kitchen gardens. It also engages Syrian and Jordanian adolescents in sports as a way to foster dialogues and grow understanding between groups of young people.

UN Women is also working to strengthen government and NGO systems that support adolescent girls. The Social Cohesion and Gender Equality Programme,

for example, is engaged across levels and sectors. It is working in communities, with health care and protection providers, to extend reach and capacity and with the MoSD to extend its employment programme. In addition, UN Women's Oasis programme provides the government with technical assistance in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment and its Hemayati project is working to expand and strengthen national and subnational responses to gender based violence.

UNFPA

The UNFPA partners with the Jordanian government, other UN agencies, NGOs, foundations and the private sector to promote maternal and newborn health, gender equality and reproductive health, and the collection and analysis data relating to population dynamics. Since 2012, UNFPA has supplemented its regular country-level work with emergency programming aimed at the Syrian crisis (UNFPA, 2012).

UNFPA is, for example, working with the MoH to improve comprehensive SRH care to women and girls in 17 centres (UNFPA, 2016b). It is also providing 17 safe spaces (8 in camps) for women and girls to meet and learn about their rights. Participants are offered life-skills education, counselling and – where needed – confidential and coordinated GBV services. Safe spaces have tailored activities for young women.

Aimed more specifically at adolescents, UNFPA also runs Youth Centres that provide targeted services and participatory activities for young people. These include recreation, health education, and life skills and also use mobile approaches to build awareness. In terms of specific youth-focused interventions, UNFPA is implementing Shobak Sehetna, Shababna, and Y-PEER. The first revolves around a six day camp that uses interactive activities to encourage young people to adopt a healthy life style. The second is aimed at at-risk youth and helps motivate them to make smart choices regarding reproductive health and rights. Y-Peer is a network of NGOs and young people who advocate for youth engagement and adolescent reproductive health services. It uses peer education and engaging modalities such as street theatre to empower young people to make healthy choices. In Jordan, the programme has trained hundreds of camp-dwelling young people to reach out to their peers about reproductive health, GBV and child marriage.

UNHCR

Syrian refugees registered with the UNHCR are eligible for a wide range of benefits, including health care and cash transfers. The latter are structured around three interlinked programmes – one provided directly by UNHCR, one provided by the World Food Programme (see below) and one provided by UNICEF (see below). UNHCR's transfer was originally designed in 2012 to be universal. However, owing to budget constraints it is now poverty targeted. Monthly cash assistance ranges from \$75 to \$400 – depending on household size and vulnerability – and averages about a \$127/month (UNHCR, 2016). In late 2016, the transfer was reaching about 32,000 Syrian families – with another 11,000 on the waiting list (Hagen-Zanker, 2017). A recent assessment found that nearly all beneficiaries use the transfer to pay rent and that the reduced stress of stabilising living arrangements is resulting in higher levels of wellbeing (ibid.).

UNHCR is partnering with UNICEF on the No Lost Generation Initiative (see below) and with UNFPA on a task force dedicated to preventing forced and early marriage and mitigating the consequences for girls and women already married. It also provides psychosocial support services to children, including to adolescent girls, and works towards family reunification for children who have become separated from their families due to the Civil War.

DfID is heavily vested in providing humanitarian assistance and services for the most vulnerable in refugee camps and host communities. It is not only working with the Government of Jordan, UNICEF, UNRWA and UNHCR to strengthen and extend public services – including education – but is also working to support job creation and promote longer term stability (DfID, 2017). Its Jordan Compact Education Programme, for example, is aiming to get 58,000 refugee children enrolled in school for the 2016/2017 school year, making sure that no child is left un-schooled.

In terms of adolescent girls more specifically, DfID is providing support to a number of NGO partners including Mercy Corps.

USAID

USAID is working to strengthen Jordan's health and education systems, building infrastructure and human capacity to meet the demand incurred by the Syrian refugee flow (USAID, 2016). A key partner in the No Lost Generation Initiative, it has already built 28 new schools and expanded

97 (USAID, 2016), as well as trained over 11,000 female MoE education professionals on better teaching methods. It has also trained over a 100 female community health workers who have provided over 400,000 women with information about women's health and family planning (USAID, 2017).

Gender equality and women's empowerment are key priorities for USAID – which is working with the government and NGOs to change social norms and expand women's political and economic participation. In addition to programmes offered through the education and health sectors, USAID provides micro-finance and business development programmes to female entrepreneurs. It has also launched the Takamol Gender program, which is a three-year initiative aimed at empowering the government, CSOs and individuals to address challenges facing gender equity, gender mainstreaming and female empowerment (USAID, 2017). It is also supporting the Circle of Peace, which is an initiative that involves Syrian women in peacebuilding activities.

USAID is heavily involved in supporting research. For example, in 2015 it funded the National Youth Assessment – which among other topics explored the ways in which adolescent girls and young women were particularly excluded from all domains of Jordanian life.

WFP

The WFP voucher programme was introduced for those living in host communities in 2012 – and later in Za'atari camp – to help create some sense of normalcy for Syrian refugees by allowing them to shop in regular supermarkets for their preferred foods and to offer them access to a greater diversity of foods with higher nutritional value (Luce 2014). The WFP programme has shifted completely to electronic vouchers aside from the daily distribution of bread in camps (owing to concerns about the government bread subsidy), with each refugee receiving monthly vouchers based on the cost of a basic food basket which provides approximately 2,100 kcals/person/day. The WFP is currently offering the voucher programme to 95,000 beneficiaries in refugee camps and 430,000 in host communities (Roeth et al., forthcoming). The voucher is currently worth \$21/per person/per month (WFP, 2016b; Jordan Times, 2016). The WFP is also supporting the Jordanian government to feed over 300,000 school children and distributes 20 tons of bread each day in refugee camps (WFP, 2016). It also runs cash-for-work programmes in refugee camps.

The WFP does not have any programming aimed specifically at adolescent girls.

3.2 NGO Partners

The work of the Jordanian Government and UN agencies is supported by a wide array of international and national NGOs, many of which provide at least some adolescent girl-focused programming. Here we cover those which are working at scale – or are offering innovative programming for girls – in alphabetical order (for a more complete list of the GAGE learning partners, see the Annex).

The **Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development** aims to contribute to a just and stable society free of inequality and conflict. It works to empower the marginalised to realise their rights by representing their needs to duty bearers and encouraging those individuals and institutions to conform to the rule of law. It provides free legal and psychosocial support services, especially to refugees, and focused on women and gender and youth empowerment. In Za'atari it is running sessions for boys and men to give them space to talk about the issues impacting their lives, while also raising awareness of GBV and helping men realise how they can support women's empowerment. It is also running sessions for women, aimed at increasing their civic engagement.

CARE, which has worked in Jordan since 1948 when it began to meet the needs of Palestine refugees displaced by Israel, runs a multi-sectoral programme that centres on three areas: emergency response for refugees and host communities, women and girls empowerment and civil society strengthening (CARE, 2015b). As part of its emergency response, CARE manages a protection programme through community centres in urban areas. Case workers address families' economic and social vulnerabilities with the aim of reducing the stress on families that forces them to choose negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage or child labour. Case workers also work to detect VAWG and child abuse and refer survivors to specialised agencies for targeted care. In addition, in 2014, CARE partnered with the UNHCR to open Azraq camp. CARE's women and girls' empowerment programme is multi-level, working with CSOs and women's social movements to advocate for policy, with men and boys to change social norms and with women to form Village Savings and Loans Associations that can help improve women's economic participation – and ultimately their access to decision-making.

The **Danish Refugee Council** has worked in Jordan since 2003, when it responded to the growing number of Iraqi refugees fleeing the US-led invasion. The DRC runs Community Centres that offer, to both refugees and Jordanians in host communities, information sessions, life-skills trainings, psychosocial support activities, safe areas for children, women, and men, sports activities, and community events. Centres have benefited more than 10,000 individuals thus far, 60% of whom are women and girls (DRC, 2017).

The DRC also runs five Women's Resource Centres in Jordan. They provide specialised case management services to survivors of gender-based violence and at-risk adolescents. Its Proactive Participatory Programme, for married and unmarried girls, combines innovative methods such as field trips with life skills education, engagement with husbands, livelihoods training and cash transfers.

Beginning in 2016, the DRC also began working in Azraq camp, which – despite harsher conditions – has seen little of the support offered to Za'atari. The DRC supports women and young people by providing them with temporary employment and skills-building opportunities designed to not only reduce poverty, but to prepare them to participate in productive activities when the conflict ends and they return to Syria. Most critically, from girls' perspective, they also run girls' clubs that give girls a chance to be girls with other girls (DRC, 2017).

The **Institute for Family Health** provides comprehensive, multi-disciplinary counselling services to all family members, with a focus on adolescent girls and women, through its Women's Health Counseling Center (IFH, 2016). Its psychosocial programme provides counselling and legal services to girls and women through individual and group sessions, runs awareness campaigns and support groups on gender based violence and child marriage, and offers empowerment activities (mostly recreational) for girls and women.

The **International Rescue Committee** has worked in Jordan since 2007 to build the resilience of vulnerable groups, including adolescent girls, through both outreach and centre-based activities (IRC, 2017). It offers case management and psychosocial services for girls who are engaged or married, breaking down their specific vulnerabilities and offering services to meet them. It encourages girls to network between themselves and also offers programming for caregivers and in-laws in order to ensure that marriages do not become violent.

The IRC's Women's Protection and Empowerment programme seeks to improve the availability of and access to basic services as well as tackle gender-based violence. It embeds survivor-centred services within female-staffed primary and reproductive health clinics, provides psychosocial activities (skills trainings, information sessions, non-formal education) within safe spaces, and offers cash assistance, given that lack of access to and control over economic resources a key driver of multiple forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

The **Jordan River Foundation**, which is chaired by Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah, focuses on the needs of Jordan's children and women. For example, the Foundation not only raises awareness about children's need for protection, but also provides psychosocial support services for at risk families and emergency care for at-risk children.

The Foundation recognises the particular value of engaging with Jordan's youth – given the country's demographics – and is working to encourage adolescents to become more engaged in civic matters. Its Youth in Aqaba Initiative, for example, is helping young people to identify their needs and work at the governorate level on a variety of voluntary activities designed to address those needs. Similarly, its Youth Career Initiative, which launched in 2007, is helping the most vulnerable young people to develop the life and work skills that they need to become business professionals.

Mercy Corp has a four pillar programme of work in Jordan (Mercy Corp, 2017). Its emergency response supports Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanian families to meet their basic needs. Its water procurement intervention is helping to dig wells in camps and communities and to repair and replace aging municipal water systems. Its conflict and governance work is aimed at strengthening subnational governments and local communities to collaboratively generate solutions to common problems. Mercy Corps also works with children and youth. It provides safe places for young people to gather and play and learn (e.g. playgrounds and sports fields) – both inside and outside camps. It also works with schools, growing their capacity to deliver a quality education and fostering the inclusivity that allows children with disabilities to participate. Mercy Corps' adolescent focused programming aims to foster dialog between Syrian and Jordanian teens and help them develop friendships and life skills. It provides them with vocational training classes that build their skillsets.

and also gives them the opportunity to “kick back” and remember that they are still children.

The **Noor Al Hussein Foundation** provides adolescent girls with education and training in the areas of gender, health, education and the environment. It also fosters the development of leadership, communication skills, civic responsibility, healthy lifestyles and career options – including, critically for girls, entrepreneurship. The Foundation also works to shift the discriminatory social norms that impact girls’ lives, inviting religious leaders to help clarify misinterpretations of religious and cultural concepts. The Foundation’s Aqaba Center supports unemployed secondary school graduates and disadvantaged women to produce tourist items and over the last three decades has helped tens of thousands of women to develop their own incomes (Noor Al Hussein Foundation, 2017).

The **Norwegian Refugee Council** is running programming that builds the resilience of Syrian refugee families and also works to relieve the stresses currently facing the Jordanian communities hosting them. In the country since late 2012, the NRC primarily focuses on providing shelter, both in camps and in host communities, providing information and legal assistance, and on education and youth (NRC, 2017). It offers catch-up learning in three camps, manages classroom building in host communities, provides afterschool tutoring and recreational activities, and runs e-learning and vocational training programmes for adolescents (e.g. hairdressing, tailoring, ICT).

As part of its innovative programming for children, the NRC is running the Better Learning Programme. It offers school-aged children affected by violence the opportunity to engage in school-based psycho-educational activities aimed at promoting learning by establishing a sense of safety and stability and increasing community and self-efficacy. Classes revolve around breathing and relaxation exercises that include prayers and positive self-talk.

The NRC also implements the Youth Education Pack (YEP) in Jordan. Aimed at young people between the ages of 15 and 24, the programme combines technical and vocational education with life skills and non-formal education. In Jordan, the YEP operates separately from other educational programming so as to facilitate a more nimble model that can quickly respond to evolving need (NRC, 2016). Critically, NRC training for girls is enabling them to learn the more technical skills usually reserved for their male peers – such as mobile phone repair.

Save the Children has a number of humanitarian and development initiatives running in Jordan. Its humanitarian response revolves around food and livelihoods, child protection and education (Save the Children, 2017a,b). For example, StC is working with the WFP to deliver dry rations to refugees living in Za’atari and has built communal kitchens for families to cook their own meals. It also, in conjunction with a wide range of partners, provides economic empowerment programmes that prioritise women and cash assistance to especially vulnerable refugee and Jordanian families. StC’s education programming is focused on both immediate and longer-term need. It is helping to build access to schooling for children and young people between the ages of 0 and 24, providing early childhood education, renovating and expanding public school classrooms, offering informal education for out-of-school children and youth and working with the MoE to to scale up educational capacity and promote quality – violence free – learning environments.

Child protection is another key area for StC. It has set up safe areas for children to socialise and play and runs Youth Friendly Spaces in Za’atari camp. These spaces provide an opportunity for adolescents to do more than socialise. They are also supported to develop a wide range of skills – including interpersonal, literacy, occupational, and financial. StC also offers Youth, Technology and Career activities – both in camps and communities. These activities revolve around helping in-school young people map out and plan for careers and using sports to help adolescents develop communication, teamwork, problem-solving, negotiation and critical thinking skills.

Save the Children is also working to prevent child marriage in Jordan by running awareness raising sessions with community and religious leaders, parents and adolescents and working with other agencies to run a community campaign called “Our Sense of Safety is Everyone’s Responsibility”. Its child protection teams also refer girls who have been married and child victims of GBV to specialised agencies for targeted care.

World Vision has been working in Jordan since 2013 and in 2014 planned, built and installed the WASH infrastructure for the newly opened Azraq camp. World Vision also distributes food, water and clothes – and provides non-formal education – for children and adolescents in host communities. It offers adolescent-friendly spaces in Irbid, Zarqa, Amman, Mafrq, Jerash, Ajloun for Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanian families (World Vision, 2017).

Conclusions and ways forward

In terms of capability domains, the picture of adolescent girls living in Jordan is relatively clear despite the lack of focused research. Jordanian and Palestine refugee girls tend to stay in school longer than their brothers, whereas despite progress, Syrian girls still face huge obstacles to accessing education. Jordanian and Palestine refugee girls are far less likely to marry as children than their Syrian peers, but child marriage remains common across populations of girls. Few adolescent girls living in Jordan, regardless of whether they are Jordanian, Palestine refugee or Syrian, have access to any sort of decision-making or economic empowerment, in large part due to the same social norms that encourage child marriage and also restrict girls' mobility, deprive them of friendships, and harm their psychosocial wellbeing. Gender-based violence is the one topic that remains relatively opaque. Girls to date have not been afforded the voice to tell their stories.

It is also clear that there is both interest and funding to effect change in the lives of adolescent girls living in Jordan. The number of actors working in the field is large and the number of interventions aimed at girls is growing. Unfortunately – although understandable given the humanitarian nature of the context – to date evaluations have been non-existent.

By supporting girls and their male peers to research their own lives, GAGE will help them not only develop the voices they have been largely denied, but also provide them with a way to use their stories to encourage change. Even more importantly, however, while we know a great deal about the threats that girls in Jordan face – and can identify dozens of actors working to improve their lives – we do not know what encourages, or prevents, change in the social norms that shape girls' daily lives. By providing us with a grassroots view, adolescent voices will not only enrichen the evidence base but also help to inform policy and programmatic action relevant to their lives.



UNDP vocational programme to address youth unemployment, Jordan. Alessandra Biasi.

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About GAGE

Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) is a nine-year longitudinal research programme generating evidence on what works to transform the lives of adolescent girls in the Global South. Visit www.gage.odi.org.uk for more information.

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Cover photo: Syrian adolescent girl in an informal tented settlement in Jordan.
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