

## **The Socio-Economic Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Local Communities in Mafraq Governorate / Jordan: Sociological Field Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Jordan is profoundly affected by the influx of over 1.4 million Syrians among them 655,000 registered refugees. Today, Jordan is struggling to provide housing, education, healthcare, and jobs to its increased communities and this enormous numbers of Syrian refugees. The study aims at understanding the socio-economic impact of refugees on Mafraq governorate. It used the Social Survey method with a sample consisted of 420 respondents randomly chosen from different geographical locations of the governorate. The study revealed that local communities first welcomed Syrians, offered jobs, and established good relationships with refugees. However, local communities in Mafraq became wearier of Syrians, as the two groups have to compete over such scarce socio-economic resources, such as jobs, education, health service and other infrastructures. The study recommends more international aid to Jordan to enable the country to provide various services to its communities including refugees to aid in coping with difficult circumstances.

**Keywords:** Jordan, Mafraq, Syrian refugees, crisis, socio-economic impact.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Syria crisis has displaced about 4.81 million Syrians into the neighboring countries mainly Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, in addition to more than 6.1 million displaced internally within Syria. Jordan hosts about 1.4 million Syrians among them 646,700 registered refugees (UNHCR: 2015). There are 134,900 refugees in Mafraq constitute around 50% of the total communities of Mafraq, with nearly half living in communities outside the refugee camps and form (10.48%) of the total number of registered Syrian refugees in Jordan. The majority of all Syrians in Jordan and other host countries are living in urban and rural areas across the country rather than in

official refugee camps (ILO: 2016). However, despite host countries and international organizations' financial aid, refugees face extremely high rates of poverty as (93%) of Syrians in Jordan; (70%) in Lebanon, (65%) in Egypt, and (37%) in Iraq are living below the poverty line. Moreover, the unemployment rates among Syrian refugees are far higher than their counterparts in these countries (Ostrand: 2015); (JRP 2016-2018).

The estimated 1.4 million Syrians in Jordan have undoubtedly increased competition for access to public utilities, schooling, health services, infrastructure, and jobs. The main socio-economic impacts can be summarized as follows: Increasing costs of various sectors such as education, health, shelter, water, energy, and housing; increasing pressure on public finances; threatening the sustainability of quality service provision in the most affected governorates. According to a statement made by the Minister of Planning the direct and indirect impact of hosting Syrian refugees since 2011 has

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cost Jordan \$7.9 billion. Weak economic growth, lack of public finances, export disruption and uncertain future, has long been major challenges to Jordan and other hosting countries and threatening their development plans, security, and stability (Ministry of Planning: 2015).

The Syrian crisis has impacted both public and private infrastructure in Jordan with the government facing significant difficulties to maintain the quality of services and infrastructure. Today there are many local, regional and international agencies working on the refugees' issue either providing aid or appealing directly for funding and part of the broader platform of policy, advocacy, and delivery efforts. Partners include government authorities in host countries, United Nations agencies, non-government organizations, donor governments, the private sector, charities and foundations (Achilli, 2015). In 2017, United Nations and NGO partners are appealing for USD 4.63 billion to support national plans. Of this, USD 2.73 billion (59%) is to address protection and assistance needs within the refugee Component and USD 1.9 billion (41%) is in support of the Resilience Component (3RP.Plan: 2017-2018). Moreover, the large numbers of refugees are classified as extremely vulnerable, largely comprised of women and children below 5 years of age; two-thirds of them are living below the monthly poverty line of (68) Jordanian dinars (\$97) per person, and one in six refugee households lives on less than \$40 per person (UNHCR, (2014). The fulfillment of the needs of Syrian refugees came at the expenses of the local communities as it significantly impacted the finances of the Governorate and increased the spending of the limited community resources to provide for refugees. This situation has led to complain and unrest among the local communities, directed at the refugees and their government. Indeed, the marginalized local communities have begun to mobilize around their grievances and aired them through social media as their frustration grows (Immenkamp. 2017).

### **Mafraq Governorate**

Mafraq governorate is situated in the north-eastern part of the Kingdom, and it borders Iraq (east and north), Syria (north) and Saudi Arabia (south and east). It has an area of 26,552 km<sup>2</sup> making up (29.6%) of the total area of the country. According to the Local Economic Development Strategy for Mafraq Governorate (ILO 2016 – 2018) the Governorate is characterized by its relatively small communities compared with the other governorates. According to the Statistics Department, the communities totaled about 300,300 by the end of 2013, or about (5%) of the country's communities (Statistics Department: 2016). About (56.3%) of the governorate's communities ranges in age between 15 and 64, and about (40.9%) are below the age of 15. As for the females, they constitute about (48.2%) of the governorate's communities (ILO: 2016).

The Governorate has always maintained a strategic position as it is situated at the crossroads of international routes linking up the Kingdom of Jordan to the Republic of Iraq via the Karama entry point, located at a distance of 285 km from the governorate's center. It also has features the Jaber border crossings into the Arab Republic of Syria, located 20 km from the governorate's center. The poverty rate of the Governorate, at (19.2%) exceeds the general poverty level in the Kingdom, which stands at (14.4%). The Governorate's inflation rate of 5.45% exceeded the general inflation rate in the country of 4.77% it significantly increased as a result of the Syrian crisis to become 8.92% at the end of 2013. The average family size is 5.9, while the mean annual household income in the Governorate is 7276.3 JD compared with the Kingdom's average of 8824 JD (ILO: 2016). The average annual household expenditure level in the Governorate is 7674.7 JD, which is lower than the general average of the Kingdom of 9626 JD (Ministry of Planning & UN. 2015). The main aim of this study is to examine the socio-economic impact of the Syrians on the governorate. The table below outlines the main indicators

reflecting the communities reality of the governorate,

compared with the general levels of the Kingdom.

**Table 1. Syrian Refugees distribution in greater Mafraq Governorate**

Municipality	communities	%	Syrian refugees	%
Mafraq Qasabah District	133336	69.4	48751	83.8
Manshieh Sub-District	9119	4.8	2828	4.9
Bal'ama Sub-District	30105	15.6	3594	6.2
Irhab Sub-District	19728	10.2	2970	5.1
<b>total</b>	<b>192288</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>58143</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Jordanian statistics Department, 2015

### Methodology

The study used the descriptive analytical approach to examine the impact of Syrian refugees on the socio-economic aspects of the local communities living in Mafraq Governorate. It utilized a social survey method applied on a sample representing (192288) of the local communities in addition to (58143) Syrian refugees living in the Mafraq governorate (study areas: Mafraq Qasabah District, Bal'ama Sub-District, Irhab Sub-District and Manshieh Sub-District). A closed ended questionnaire was used to collect data from the sample related to achieving the study objectives. Two groups found themselves living together and sharing the same job market, schools, health services, water, power and other public infrastructure. The scarce resources in the governorate created an atmosphere of cooperation, competition, and tension between the two groups.

**Sample of the study:** The study sample was chosen by irregular cluster sampling, and it's consisted of (420) head-families (Males), and it was distributed geographically in four areas in greater Mafraq Districts, started from the district, then the Neighborhood, Street, up to house. Table (2) shows the general distribution of the sample on the main administrative divisions in Mafraq Governorate, with Mafraq District accounting for (67.6%) of the sample followed by Balama sub-district (14.8%); Irhab sub-district (10.9%) and Manshieh sub-district was (6.7%) as following:

**Table 2. Distribution of sample of the study according to areas in Mafraq Governorate**

Municipality	number	%
Mafraq District	284	67.6
Balama Sub-District	62	14.8
Irhab Sub-District	46	10.9
Manshieh Sub-District	28	6.7
Total	420	100

Source: The researcher

### Significance of the study

The significance of this study stems from the fact that it tackles a serious crisis resulted from the influx of huge numbers of Syrian refugees into the Mafraq governorate. It is at least to my knowledge there is a little bit studies have so far conducted about the socio-economic impacts of Syrians refugees on Mafraq Governorate. It seeks to bring insight into the impact of Syrian refugees on Mafraq governorate from the first-hand field study, rather than just from secondary sources. The study further helps in the providing first-hand data about the nature of relationship and interaction between the two communities. Eventually, it aims at understanding such relationship and more importantly proposes the best way to plans and strategies that serve both communities and thus helping them integrating and living in peace side by side. This is particularly important given the prolonged nature of the Syrian refugees' crisis in Jordan which

requires local and international efforts to deal with this crisis and its consequences on both sides for the coming years. Hopefully, this study will pave the way for more work on the Syrian refugee issue in other governorates and open up the way for more field studies that try to come up with practical solutions to this complicated issue.

### Study Questions

The Syrians' refugees' influx put considerable pressures on the governorate of Mafraq's infrastructure and public facilities such as education, housing, health care, security and the labor market. Therefore, the study tries to answer the following questions:

- What are the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the local communities in Mafraq Governorate?
- What is the nature of social relations and interaction between local communities and Syrians in Mafraq Governorate?
- What are the social and economic impacts of Syrians on Mafraq Governorate especially on the labor market, education, health services and housing?
- What is the government's policy toward Syrians and locals' position from this policy?

### The study's goals are as follows:

- Identifying to demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the local communities in Mafraq Governorate.
- Identifying the nature of social relations and interaction between local communities and Syrians in Mafraq Governorate.
- Identifying the social and economic impacts of Syrians on Mafraq Governorate especially on the labor market, education, health services and housing.
- Identifying to now the government's policy toward Syrians and locals' position from this policy.

### Study period:

The collection of firsthand quantitative and qualitative data took two months (February-March 2017) through the application of the study's tool on a sample communities from the local community in Mafraq Governorate.

### Literature review

One of the most important aspects of the Syrian refugee crisis is the massive costs of hosting 1.4 million refugees in Jordan. This massive influx of Syrian refugees into Jordan has undoubtedly increased competition for access to public utilities, schooling, health services, infrastructure, and jobs. It increased the costs of various sectors education, health, shelter, water, energy and housing, and infrastructure. According to a statement made by the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation the direct and indirect cost of hosting Syrian refugees since 2011 was about \$7.9 billion (ILO & FAFO,2015). Some earlier studies made an attempt to monetize the costs associated with Syrian refugee crisis. One study prepared by the Economic & Social Council in late 2012 found that the estimated total cost of the Syrian refugee crisis in 2011 and 2012 amounts to JD590.2 million. (Wazani, 2012) According to government statements, Jordan received foreign assistance worth \$854 million in 2014, making up (37%) of the total financial demands estimated at \$2.3 billion in the JRP 2014but until the third quarter of 2015, only 5.5% has been financed by donors, equivalent to around \$165 million (Ministry of Planning, UN (2015) This has led to heavy pressures on the education system, such as (a) overcrowding in public schools especially in high communities density areas, (b) introduction of double shifts for teachers which is reducing the time available for both shifts and places stress on teachers, and (c) the recruitment of new teaching staff which puts an additional burden on public finances. All of these factors are pushing down the overall quality of education and teaching in the Kingdom. According to the Ministry of education, public spending on education

has increased by JD 200 million since the beginning of the crisis in 2011 ((Ministry of Education, report. 2016).

The large influx of refugees has negatively affected the labor market with increased competition for jobs and downward pressure on wages. Syrian refugees are predominately in competition for jobs with other migrant workers and much less so with host communities. For example, in Jordan, a study conducted by ILO, FAFO Research Foundation and the Jordanian Department of Statistics, found that instances of Syrian refugees 'crowding out' Jordanians from work in most sectors were modest (ILO and FAFO 2015). This is due in a large part to the fact that the vast majority of Syrian refugees who find work do so in the large informal economies characteristic of the region's host countries. One (ILO, 2015) study has argued that an increase in Jordanian unemployment from 14.5 per cent to 22.1 per cent between 2011 and 2014 demonstrates that Jordanians have been pushed out of jobs taken by Syrians. However, high unemployment, in particular, youth unemployment, has been a growing issue in Jordan for years before the influx of Syrian refugees and has been caused by some factors including the global financial crisis and a mismatch of skills and labor market needs and the closure of borders with Iraq and Syria. In Jordan between 2010 and 2013, unemployment increased in the formal sector while Syrian refugees have predominately found work and sometimes replaced local workers in the private sector (Stave and Hillesund: 2015).

The most pressing challenge arising from the Syrian refugee crisis is the competition on new jobs being created every year, which is by itself underperforming even before the arrival of the Syrian refugees. This is despite the fact that according to Jordanian laws, Syrian refugees are prohibited from working in the country. Therefore, most of the Syrian refugee laborers in urban environments are currently working illegally, without having a valid work permit (UNDP (2014) & (Care Jordan (2013)). This trend indicates that a large share of

Jordanians is being discouraged from looking for jobs. Discouraged workers decrease the labor force participation rate, and indeed the labor force participation rate for Jordanians fell consistently from (39.5%) in 2010 to (36.4%) in 2014. The discouraged workers raised the Jordanian unemployment rate in 2014 from (11.9%) to (16.2%) (Ajluni & Kawar (2014). A recent ILO report on the impact of Syrian refugees on Jordanian labor market found that more than 40% of employed Syrians outside camps in Amman, Irbid, and Mafraq work in the construction sector,( 23%) work in the wholesale and retail trade & repair sector, (12%) in manufacturing, and (8%) in the accommodation and food (ILO:2016).

It is important in this analysis to describe the social aspects of Syrian refugee workers, as compared with their Jordanian counterparts. One important aspect is that the majority of Syrian refugees in Jordan came from rural areas in Syria, and has a considerably lower education level compared to Jordanians. Around (60%) of Syrians above the age of 15 have never completed basic schooling, and only about (15%) of refugees have completed secondary education, compared to (42%) of Jordanians above the age of 15. This also helps explain why school enrollment rates for Syrian children are very low compared to their Jordanian counterpart (Erik & Hillesund (2015)). In spite of the economic and social challenges imposed by the hosting of a large number of Syrian refugees in Jordan, there have been some positive advantages stemming from the refugee crisis, which has often been overlooked by analysis and studies done on this issue (Husain & Sandstorm, 2014). A comprehensive study done on the impact of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian economy estimated that public revenues accrued by the presence of Syrians in Jordan have risen from around JD209 million in 2012 to JD780 million in 2013. The study also estimates that the total public revenues accrued from the hosting of refugees would cumulatively reach around JD2 billion (Wazani (2014)

A study prepared by the University of Jordan's Center

for Strategic Studies (CSS) in April 2013 shows that (71%) of the study's communities and (43%) of the opinion leaders would refuse entry to any new waves of Syrian refugees to Jordan. In June 2013, the rate increased to (73.5%) of the study communities and (55%) of opinion leaders wanting to refuse entry to new Syrian refugee waves to Jordan. Of these, (87%) said it would be better to keep the Syrians in refugee camps and not allow them to move into the local communities, while (92%) of the study communities claimed the existence of Syrians in Jordan had compromised job opportunities for Jordanians (Center for Strategic Studies: 2014).

### 1. Field data analysis

#### - Age and marital status of respondents

The field data in Table (3) breaks down the study

communities by age groups and marital status. The highest is the age group 25-29 years (24.8%), followed by the age group 30-40 (21.6%), followed by the age group 18-24 (21.2%) followed by the age group 40-50 (18.4%), the majority of whom are in the labor market. Finally, the age groups over 50 years of age formed only (14%). As for marital status, the highest is the married (47.2%), followed by the singles (44.3%), then the divorced and widows forming only (8%). This concentrates the majority of the study communities in the largest two categories: age groups 25-40 (46%) and the single and married, (91%) which can imply a stronger manpower asset among the study communities and a high percentage of youthful communities among the local workers.

**Table 3. Breakdown of sample respondents by Age groups and marital status**

Age group	number	%		Marital status	Number	%
18-29	193	46.0		single	186	44.3
				married	198	47.2
30-40	91	21.6		divorced	20	4.7
40-50	77	18.4		widow	16	3.8
50-60	33	7.8		Total	420	100
Over 65	26	6.2				
Total	420	100				

#### - Occupational Status & Monthly Income

Jordan is a resource-poor country with limited arable areas. The economy is dominated by financial services, tourism, transportation, manufacturing and remittances from Jordanian's working abroad. In 2017, following prolonged border closures with Syria and Iraq, a sharp fall in foreign investment, reduced remittances, and a drop in tourism, unemployment stands at almost 15 %, with joblessness among Jordanian youth reported to be approaching 40 %. The public sector is the largest employer in the kingdom; government positions accounted for around (39%) of all employment in 2013.

The refugee presence also weighs heavily on public finances. For 2016, public debt is likely to reach 26 billion dollars forming around (95.1%) of gross domestic product (GDP) compared to (60.2 %) of GDP in 2008 (*Immenkamp.2017*). The United Nations estimate the cost of hosting over half a million Syrian refugees in Jordan at US\$5.3 billion for the period 2013-2014, the cost being divided into US\$2.1 billion and a projected US\$3.2 billion for 2013 and 2014, respectively (*UNDP, 2013*).

The field data in Table (4) breaks down the study communities by occupation. The highest number of workers is in the service sector (25.3%), followed by

those working in construction sector (21.4%) followed by those working in the commercial sector (19.5%), followed by those working in the industrial sector (13.8%) while the rest are working in agriculture (5.7%) and finally (14.3%) unemployed. Regarding the monthly income the field data in Table (4) shows that the highest number of the sample are in the monthly income 180-300 (29.5%) followed by those with monthly income 301-400 (22.4%) followed by those with monthly income 401-500 (19.3%) followed by those with monthly income 0-180 (13.9%) while the rest are those of the monthly income over 501 (15%). Obviously accepting incomes less than JD300 is unsatisfactory for an average family in Mafraq sizing 5.9 persons. Indeed, accepting such low-income jobs is a big challenge for any Jordanian family. The field

data in Table (4) also shows only (25%) of Jordanians are working in services sector which reflects an increase in the Syrian laborer who works in this sector. Many Syrian workers are usually employed in restaurants, commercial stores, and handicraft shops and one main effect of this phenomenon is the deprivation of large numbers of Jordanians to get a job in this important sector. The effects of Syrians entering the labor market have also been negative as some local workers in Mafraq have lost their jobs to Syrians. More important, Jordanians workers can't compete with Syrians who are willing to accept lower wages, because of their situation and the cash and other financial assistance they receive from local, international aid organizations.

**Table 4. Breakdown of sample respondents by Occupational Status & Monthly Income**

Occupational Status	number	%		Monthly Income	Number	%
Services	106	25.3		0-180	58	13.9
Construction	90	21.4		180-300	124	29.5
Commercial	82	19.5		301-400	94	22.4
Industrial	58	13.8		401-500	81	19.3
Agriculture	24	5.7		501-600	52	12.3
unemployed	60	14.3		601++	11	2.6
Total	420	100		Total	420	100

**- Level of Education**

The field data in Table (5) breaks down the study communities by level of education. The highest numbers have a basic secondary education (50.8%) followed by secondary education (17.2%), followed by college graduates (11.4%) followed by illiterates (9.8%) and finally bachelor's at (8.1%) and postgraduates at (3.3%). The data shows a decrease in the educational level among the study communities, which can reflect, in turn, on the type of economic activities the respondents pursue. Learning about the economic characteristics of the local communities in Mafraq is significant because they

naturally reflect the needs of Jordanians and their abilities to compete with this huge Syrians influx.

**Table 5. Breakdown of sample respondents by educational level**

Educational level	number	%
Illiterate	41	9.8
Basic education	211	50.2
Secondary	72	17.2
College	48	11.4
Bachelors	34	8.1
Postgraduate	14	3.3
Total	420	100

## 2. Results discussions

### - Type and strength of social relations with Syrians

Social relations are very important in building up the social capital in any given society. Such relationships are governed by some social values and norms, such as mutual respect, trust, and cooperation. The study examined the different types of relationship between Jordanians and Syrians and the strength of these relationships in Mafraq Governorate. It tried to get answers to the following questions: What Type of relationship that developed between Jordanians and Syrians? And what was the Strength of such relationships between the two sides in Mafraq Governorate?

Field data in Table (6) shows type and strength of relationships between Local communities and Syrians in Mafraq governorate. The highest numbers said they have Syrians friends (25.1%); have Syrian neighbors (21.4%); have Syrians as workmates (16.0); have rented houses for

Syrians (13.4%); have intermarriages with Syrians (7.5%) and finally (16.9%) said they do not have any relationships with Syrians. Regarding the strength of their relationship with Syrian field data in Table (11) shows the highest numbers of respondents (28.5%) said they have very strong relationship with Syrians, (17.3%), said they have strong relationship (20.7%), said they have moderate relationship (12.8%), said they have weak relationship (4.1%) said they have a very weak and finally (16.6%) said they do not have relationships with Syrians.

These results show about 28.5% of the local communities have a strong relationship with Syrians implying a positive social interaction and integration between the two sides. The field data shows that more than half of the local communities has good relations with Syrians and such good relationships allow for several forms of social and cultural interaction. They also indicate a high degree of interaction with Syrians in Mafraq.

**Table 6. Type and strength of relationships between Local communities with Syrians**

Type of relationship			Strength of social relations			
Type	number	%	strength	Number	%	
Friends	105	25.1	Very strong	120	28.5	
Neighbors	90	21.4	strong	72	17.3	
Workmates	67	16.0	moderate	87	20.7	
House Rental	56	13.4	weak	54	12.8	
Intermarriages	31	7.5	Very weak	17	4.1	
none	71	16.9	None	70	16.6	
total	420	100	Total	240	100	

### - Locals' interaction with Syrians and visits

Exchanging visits, for example, takes up an important role in Jordanian society, which cherishes visits as a source of strengthening mutual relations, exchanging views, giving help, showing solidarity and paving the way for more participation in different social activities. So far there are no reports of major incidents or conflict between Syrians and their host communities in Mafraq or elsewhere in Jordan. When the respondents were asked about the

quality of their relationship with Syrians field data in Table (7) shows that (23%) characterized their relationship with Syrians as excellent; (22.1%); very good; (20.5%); good; (20.5 %); weak (17.8%) and finally bad (16.3%). Regarding Jordanian exchange visits with Syrians data in Table (7) shows that (24.8%) have regular visits with Syrians, (20.8); they sometimes exchange visits; (19.5%); they occasionally exchange visits; (19%) they rarely exchange visits; and finally (15.9%) they do not exchange

visits with Syrians. In fact, there is nothing in the above-detailed relations that would guarantee intimacy of relations between Jordanians and Syrians. Evidence collected from the field shows that around one-third of respondents said they have weak or bad relationships with

Syrians and that around (35%) said they rarely or not exchange visits with Syrians. Indeed many Jordanians criticize or blame Syrians as the reason for their precarious conditions.

**Table 7. Locals' interaction with Syrians**

How do you characterize Your relationships with Syrians			Do you exchange visits with Syrians?		
Indicators	number	%	Indicators	Number	%
Excellent	98	23.3	Regularly	104	24.8
Very good	93	22.1	Some times	88	20.8
Good	86	20.5	Occasionally	82	19.5
Weak	75	17.8	Rarely	80	19.0
none	68	16.3	None	67	15.9
total	420	100	total	420	100

**- Local's preference for Syrians workers**

Field data in Table (8) shows that (68.5%) prefer Syrians labor they make their preference on the basis of quality regardless of the nationality of workers (12.5%) prefer Egyptians workers (10.4%); prefer Asians and finally only (8.6%); prefer Jordanian workers. Table (8) describes the reasons for local communities to prefer Syrian workers over other nationalities available in Mafraq's labor market (24.3%) said they prefer Syrians because they accept lower wages (20.4%), they are skilled workers (16.9%); they are motivated to finish the job (15.1%); they are more efficient (12.9%); sympathy with their appalling conditions (10.4%) because they are easy

to manage. It is worth noting here that accepting lower wages by Syrians workers have been increasingly making local employers prefer Syrians to national workers. Also, this trend has practically lowered the standard wages in the labor market to the extent some employers started either lowering the wages of their current employees or replacing some of them with Syrians. Another important advantage of Syrians compared to Jordanians is that many Jordanians are reluctant to accept the sort of jobs that Syrians do. Therefore it is safe to say that the struggle for work is weak between Jordanian-Syrian job seekers in Mafraq and elsewhere in the Kingdom.

**Table 8. If you have some work to be done, which worker would you choose and why?**

Workers' nationalities	N0	%	Rank	Indicator	N0	%	Rank
Syrians	288	68.5	1	Accept Lower wages	102	24.3	1
				Skilled workers	86	20.4	2
Egyptians	52	12.5	2	Motivated to finish a job	71	16.9	3
Asians	44	10.4	3	more efficient	63	15.1	4
Jordanians	36	8.6	4	Sympathy	54	12.9	5
Total	420	100		Easy to manage	44	10.4	6
				Total	420	100	

### 3. Syrians impact on Mafraq governorate

#### - Impact on family structure

The refugees have negatively impacted the Jordanian family in many ways especially they accept child marriages, less financial and housing requirements for their pride. In other words, it is cheaper and easier to get married to a Syrian girl than a Jordan one. This situation has put pressure on the relationship, and structure of the Jordanian family as it encouraged some Jordanians to find Syrian wives, or get married to the second wife and thus creating a state of jealousy, hatred, and suspicion between Jordanian and Syrian women. Families became worried about the unfair competition between their young daughters and Syrian cheaper pride. There is also the fear of Jordanian wives of the possibility of an unlawful relationship between their husbands and poor Syrian widowed or single women.

Field data in Table (9) shows the local views regarding the impact of Syrians influx on the Jordanian family in Mafraq. The highest numbers said that the Syrians refugees have Created tension and jealousy between Jordanian and Syrian women (21.7%) as it is cheaper for a Jordanian males to get married to younger and cheaper Syrian woman and thus Jordanian women are threatened by Syrian newcomers; followed by those who believe their presence encouraged multiple marriages (20.3%); followed by those who said they encouraged divorce among Jordanians families (17.4%); followed by those who believe their presence encouraged adultery among Jordanians mails, (15.7%) followed by those who believe they encouraged child marriages (12.8%) and those who believe they do not have practical effects on Jordanian families (12.1%) as shown in table (9).

**Table 9. Local's views on the Syrians' impact on the Jordanian family structure**

Indicator	number	%
Created tension and jealousy between Jordanian and Syrian women	91	21.7
Encouraged multiple marriages	85	20.3
Encouraged divorce	73	17.4
Encouraged adultery among men	66	15.7
Encouraged child marriages	54	12.8
Has no practical effects	51	12.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>100</b>

#### - Impact on the Labor market

The governorate of Mafraq has long been a major point of trade between Jordan, and Iraq and Syria. The crisis in Syria weighed heavily on the governorate, the bulk of its commercial activities was dependent on cross-border trade. That trade came to a halt as a result of the conflict in Syrian and the closure of the border between the two countries. Against this background, Jordanian workers started to face tough competition from Syrians

for jobs. According to official sources, no less than 30,000 Syrian refugees are employed in many occupations; nearly half of them work in Mafraq. The main impacts of the Syrian refugee on workforce can be summarized as follows:

- Jordanians cannot compete with Syrian workers as the latter are inclined to accept lower wages, easy to manage, more skilled and more motivated to finish the job than Jordanians.

- Syrians can adapt to fewer wages either because of the financial aid they receive from UNHCR or because of the simple need to work.
- The socio-economic and trade in Mafraq was severely affected as a result of the conflict in Iraq and Syria and the closure of the border between Jordan and those two countries.
- Competition for work, housing, and other services between Jordanians and Syrians created social tension between the two communities.

Field data in Table (10) shows the local views regarding the impact of Syrians on the labor market in Mafraq. The highest numbers said that they Syrians have Created tough competition with Jordanian workers (36%) as they accept lower wages and receive United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) financial aid, followed by those who said they replaced and drove many Jordanians out their jobs (24.3%) followed by those who said they accept lower wages (16.4%) followed by those who said they lowered labor wages in the labor market for Jordanians (12.6%) followed by those who said they created tension with Jordanians (10.7%).

**Table 10. Local’s views on the Syrians’ impact on the labor market**

Indicator	number	%
Created tough & unfair competition	151	36.0
Replaced many Jordanians workers	102	24.3
Accepting lower wages	69	16.4
lowered labor wages	53	12.6
Created tension with Jordanians	45	10.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>

**- Impact on Education**

Field data shows that about twenty-six of thirty-six Municipalities in Mafraq governorate suffer from educational problems resulted from the huge influx of Syrian refugees. The UNHCR reports that 83,232 Syrian

children registered at public schools in Jordan up until the end of 2014. Several schools run evening shifts to provide schooling for these children. However, despite all attempts to encourage Syrian children to go to school, the UNHCR reported 60% of Syrian children are not registered at the school. In the final analysis, the impact of Syrian refugees on education in the Mafraq is a key issue for the Governorate. The following problems are identified: (Jordan independent watch: 2015)

- Many schools need maintenance and expansion to meet the increasing numbers of Syrian students;
- Local schools are already struggling to accommodate Jordanian students and the advent of a huge number of Syrians students caused schools to be overcrowded with typical classrooms in Mafraq hold around 50 students.
- Many schools in Mafraq are running two shifts, thus reducing the class time from 45 to 35 minutes, at the expense of quality.
- Lack of finance to pay teachers and staffs overtime dues as the government depends on international donors’ aid to pay for such extra expenses.
- Syrian students have a different culture and their level of educational is lower than their Jordanians peers in addition to the differences between their curricula at home and in Jordan.
- Overcrowding in public schools and that introduction of double shifts periods requires maintenance and puts additional burden on public finances

Field data in Table (11) shows the local views regarding the impact of Syrians on education in Mafraq governorate. The highest numbers said that the presence of Syrians have lowered the quality of education (35.7%) that it caused crowded classes and decreased the class period to 35 minutes (20.4%), and that many schools are running two shifts and need maintenance (14.5%); that there is Lack of money to pay teachers for working overtime (11.4%); that it raised the cost of education especially to pay management, teachers, and staff for

working for working overtime (10%) and finally that Syrian students have different habits from Jordanians and such differences may cause some conflicts between the two sides (7.8%).

**Table 11. Local's views of the Syrians' impact on Education**

Indicator	number	%
Lowering the quality of education	150	35.7
Class Rooms overcrowded & Reducing classes to 35minutes	86	20.4
Many schools running two shifts and need maintenance	61	14.5
Lack of money to pay teachers for overtime work	48	11.4
Raising the cost of education for paying teachers, staffs overtime	42	10
Syrian students' have Different habits from Jordanians	33	7.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>100</b>

#### - Impact on housing

The United Nations estimate the cost of hosting over half a million Syrian refugees in Jordan at US\$5.3 billion for the period 2013-2014, the cost being divided into US\$2.1 billion and a projected US\$3.2 billion for 2013 and 2014, respectively (UNDP, 2014). The soaring of housing rental and real estate prices pose a fundamental challenge to the host communities for Syrian refugees, with the following problems identified (Ministry of Planning & UN 2013).

- Jordanians are struggling to compete with Syrians for housing, taking into account the fact that the Syrians are entitled to a financial housing subsidy from the UNHCR and other local and international charitable organizations.
- Out of necessity it is natural to see several Syrian

families live together and share the cost of housing so that they share the burden of high rent and water and electricity bills;

- Real estate prices and houses rental soared by up to 100%, making access to housing extremely difficult for newly married couples and lower income citizens.

Field data in Table (12) shows local views regarding the impact of Syrians on health services in Mafraq governorate. The highest numbers said that the presence of Syrians has caused shortages of housing (26.2%); that it caused rise in houses rental (22.8%) that caused higher real estate prices (19.5 %) and several families living together (17.4%) and finally Access to housing became very difficult to Jordanians (14.1%).

**Table 12: Local's views regarding refugees' impact on housing**

Indicator	number	%
shortages of housing	110	26.2
Houses' rent soared	96	22.8
Real estate prices soared	82	19.5
Access to housing became very difficult to Jordanians	73	17.4
several Syrian families live together increasing social problems	59	14.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>100</b>

#### - Impact on health services

Nineteen out of thirty-six Municipalities in Mafraq suffer from this Issue. The government has spent around US\$35 million on medical care for the Syrian refugees during 2013, with only US\$5 million provided in direct foreign aid during that period. The influx of such large number of refugees put huge pressure on medical centers and hospitals in Mafraq. The numbers of complex surgeries performed on a daily relate to war injuries sustained in Syria and number of patients visiting medical centers has increased dramatically in the governorate. The

governments increased its total annual health expenditure by US\$135 million in 2013 and that it needs an additional US\$180 million to expand and upgrade ten existing medical facilities in the northern governorates to cope with the massive demands on the health care system there. The refugee issue has had a direct impact on the quality of medical services in the Mafraq and other northern governorates, with the following problems, identified: (Ministry of Planning & UN 2013).

- Medical centers in the Mafraq especially in remote areas, suffer a shortage of personnel, equipment, and facilities
- Many medical centers suffer from shortages of doctors, nurses and staff to meet the increased number of patients.
- Drug shortages have worsened, particularly those used to treat elderly patients with conditions such as heart disease and diabetes;
- The waiting times increased and so did the times between follow-up visits for the Jordanian patients, particularly in remote areas.
- There are almost no ambulances in the area. Though the Civil Defense Department (CDD) offers its vehicles for transporting patients, the scattered nature of the villages necessitates the availability of additional ambulances;
- Lack of medical services may be a key contributor to tensions in those communities

Field data in Table (13) shows local views regarding the impact of Syrians on health services in Mafraq governorate. The highest numbers said that the presence of Syrians have caused shortages of doctors, nurses & staffs (27.4%); that it caused short of drugs (23.3), crowded clinics and spread new diseases ( 21.2%); increased waiting time (15.5%) and finally shortages of facilities & equipment (12.6%).

**Table 13. Local's views regarding Syrians' impact on health services**

Indicator	Number	%
Shortages of doctors, nurses & staffs	115	27.4
Drug shortages	98	23.3
Crowded clinics brought new diseases	89	21.2
Increased waiting time	65	15.5
Shortages of facilities & equipment	53	12.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4. Government' policy toward Syrians and locals' position

The Study tried to explore Jordanians' views regarding first, their agreement with government's policy to confine Syrians to refugees' camps, consequently separating them from the local communities in Mafraq Governorate; and second, whether the Syrians presence affected their job opportunities. Table (14) shows a rising trend of local's agreement with government's policy towards Syrians as (55%) expressed their strong agreement with government's policy of confining Syrians to camps, so they could live separately from the local community in Mafraq governorate, (21.4.6%) said they somewhat agree with such policy (10.7%) neither agree nor disagree (9.8%) Somewhat disagree while only (3.1%) said they strongly disagree with such policy. The data in Table (14) reveals several reasons behind agreeing local's agreement with government's policy to the establishment of a camp for Syrians separating them from the local community. Field data in Table (14) shows that (27.1%) said this would reduce security risks (17.9%); would lower the rising real estate and rental prices (15.7%) would to say that Syrian refugees impact on reducing burden on public service, (16.4%) accepted that Syrian refugees reducing employment rates; would guarantee their return to their country (12.3%); (10.4%), would improve economic

conditions of the local communities. The analysis of this data explains that the behaviors of local community members which reflect their negative attitudes towards Syrians. This trend came as a result of several factors. The Syrian refugees had an impact on unemployment rates, standards of living and costs of everyday life. They are also blamed for the rising of apartment rental prices, as landlords prefer to let their apartments to Syrians for double the usual rent prices affordable by the local communities.

**Table 14. Local's reasons position and reasons for agreeing with government policy toward Syrians**

Do you agree with government's policy towards Syrians	number	%
Strongly agree	231	55.0
Somewhat agree	90	21.4
Neither agree nor disagree	45	10.7
Somewhat disagree	41	9.8
Strongly disagree	13	3.1
Total	420	100
Reasons	number	%
Reducing security risks	114	27.1
Reducing houses' rental prices	75	17.9
Reducing burden on public services	66	15.7
Reducing employment rates	69	16.4
Guaranteeing their return to their country	52	12.3
Improving economic conditions	44	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>100</b>

## 5. General Findings and Concluding Remarks

- On the first question: What are the demographic, social and economic characteristics of the local communities in Mafraq Governorate? The study used 420 respondents to collect field data about the socio-

economic conditions of the local communities. They were selected by irregular cluster sampling from four different sub-districts in Mafraq governorate; the majority of them are in the labor market. 47% of them are married against 44% singles and half of them (50%) attained basic education. Around (85%) of them are working in the services, construction, and other economic sectors while around (15%) are unemployed. Around (61 %) of them receive monthly income between (180-500) JDs.

- On the second question: What is the nature of social relations and interaction between local communities and Syrians in Mafraq Governorate? The arrival of huge numbers of Syrians to Mafraq Governorate increased social relations and interaction between them and the host communities in the governorate. The majority of the local communities described their relationship with Syrians as very strong, good or moderate (65%) while the rest said they have weak, very weak or no relationship at all (25%). Also, the majority of respondents (84%) said they have relationships with Syrians as friends, neighbors, work, or intermarriages while (16%) said they do not have any relationships. Regarding Locals' interaction and visits with Syrians the majority of respondents said they maintain excellent, very good or good relations with Syrians (65%) against (35%) said they have weak or no relationships at all, while (64%) of respondents said they exchange visit with Syrians regularly, sometime or in occasions against (36%) said they rarely or do not exchange visits with Syrians at all. The reaction of Jordanians toward Syrians is driven by religious and cultural bonds, and the majority showed solidarity and sympathy with the Syrians in their plight and offered them assistance and different moral and material support.
- Regarding locals' preference to workers (49%) of respondents said they prefer Syrians workers to other nationalities including Jordanians, (12% and (10%)

they prefer Egyptians and Asians while only (8%) prefer Jordanian workers. As the pre-season behind their choices and preferences (76%) said because they accept fewer wages, skilled workers, motivated to finish their jobs and more efficient while only (24%) said because they sympathize with them or because they are easy to manage.

- On the third question: What impact do the Syrian workers have on the labor market, education, housing, and health services in Mafraq Governorate?
- **Impact on the Labor market:** The study has found that the Syrians have a negative impact on the labor market, education housing, and health services. Regarding the impact on the labor market, the majority of the informant (76%) said they created tough and unfair competition, replaced many Jordanians' workers and accepted lower wages while (24%) said they lowered labor wages and consequently created social tension with Jordanians' laborers. Indeed the high supply of Syrian workers in the various labor sectors has resulted in a downgrade of wages by supply-demand rule, especially because Syrians workers accept to work for lower wages, given the hard conditions they are living. This issue has led employers to prefer Syrian workers to Jordanians, as the Syrians would be easier to manage, not to mention the exploitive trends of employers who can find in cheap Syrians labor an opportunity to replace current Jordanian workers. It is worth noting that the conflict between Jordanian and Syrian job seekers in Mafraq is weak because the majority of Syrians accept jobs that Jordan workers usually do not accept to do.
- **Impact on Education:** Regarding the impact on education they majority of respondents (70) said their presence has led to lowering the level of education, created crowded class and many schools have to run double shifts while (30%) said their presence caused considerable raise education's cost, shortage of money to pay teachers and staff for working overtime and that

Syrians' student have different habits from their Jordanians peers. Regarding the impact on housing the majority (86%) said Syrians have negative impact as their presence has led to shortage of housing, soaring houses' rent and real states prices and consequently access to housing became difficult for Jordanians while (14%) said it has forced several families live together and causing some social problems.

- **Impact on Housing:** Regarding the impact on housing they majority of respondents (86%) said their presence has led to housing shortages, soaring houses' rent and real states prices and n access to housing became extremely difficult for Jordanians while (14%) said their presence forced many families to live together with the consequences of causing social problems.
- **Impact on Health services:** Local communities in Mafraq believe that the large influx of Syrians into the governorate has negative impact as (27%) of respondents said it caused shortages of **doctors** (23%) drug shortages (21%) crowded clinics (15%) increased waiting time and finally (12%) said it caused Shortages of facilities & equipment.
- **On the fourth question:** What is local communities' position regarding government's policy towards Syrians in Mafraq especially confining them to camps? When local communities were asked about their agreement with government policy towards Syrians especially stopping their entry to the country and confine them to refugees' camps, data in table (14) shows that (76%) said they strongly agree or somewhat agree with such policy (10.7%) Neither agree nor disagree (13%) they said somewhat or strongly disagree with this policy. Regarding the reasons behind their support for government's policy (77%) said to reduce security risk, houses rental, unemployment rate and burden on public services while (12%) said to guarantee their return to their country and (10%) said to improve the economic conditions of the local communities in Mafraq.

## Conclusion

During the last 6 years, Jordan has received 1.4 million Syrians among them (657.334) registered refugees scattered all over the country, especially (207903) in Mafraq Governorate (UNCHR, 2016). The majority of Syrians has settled in the northern governorates especially in Irbid and Mafraq. Syrians in Mafraq form around (50%) of the total communities of Mafraq governorate and consequently formed a serious burden on the economic, labor market, education, housing, health services and infrastructure. This huge number of Syrians influx has undoubtedly exacerbated the preexisting economic hardships and labor market and education challenges facing local communities in Mafraq including high unemployment, soaring housing rental and real estates' prices and caused enormous pressure on health services, water, power and infrastructure in the governorate. However, there is a positive side for Syrian refugees' as they stimulated host economies in Mafraq and other governorates as a result of the humanitarian aid alongside Syrian investment in the country. However, looking forward, it can be expected that most Syrian refugees will remain in the Jordan for many years to come, due to the absence of any political solution in Syria.

The most significant cost of hosting such large numbers of Syrians is associated with increased pressures on the labor market, education, health services, in addition to the pressures placed on infrastructure and public services which require significant investments to be upgraded. However, to convert these challenges into opportunities, the government needs to formulate a comprehensive plan and build a practical strategy aiming

at integrating the Syrians into Jordanian society. Such integration plan must seek to achieve mutual benefits and reduce tensions between the two sides offering hopes for a future solution to this crisis. In parallel, a comprehensive economic development plan must be created to serve both local communities and Syrians in the Jordan in general and in Mafraq governorate, in particular, aiming at creating jobs, and easing pressures on education, health services and other infrastructure services, such as roads, water, and electricity. It is also important to create a sort of social harmony that is viable and sustainable in the long run.

The Syrian crisis is by no means a temporary phenomenon, nor can its burdens be easily solved by government alone or tolerated by the local communities, unless and until an appropriate international funding is provided to Jordan to enable the government to achieve the required socio-economic development and hence help to realize Jordan's national interests and to reduce the huge burdens placed on public services and infrastructure resulted from the presence of this huge number of Syrians in the country. Finally, Jordan must work today on devising a clear action plan integrate refugees into local communities and create jobs for both Jordanians and Syrians to avoid any future tension or conflict between the two sides. However, addressing tensions should be considered as part of a wider agenda of addressing structural vulnerabilities in host communities and strengthening social cohesion and resilience in those communities through a gradual increase of the capacity of national, regional and local governments to deliver key services to both sides.

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## الأثر الاجتماعي والاقتصادي لتدفق اللاجئين السوريين على السكان المحليين في محافظة المفرق/الأردن دراسة ميدانية اجتماعية

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### ملخص

يتأثر الأردن بشكل بالغ بتدفق أكثر من 1.4 مليون سوري ومن بينهم 655.000 لاجئ مسجل. حالياً، يكافح الأردن لتوفير السكن والتعليم والرعاية الصحية والوظائف لسكانها المتزايدين ولهذه الأعداد الهائلة من اللاجئين السوريين. تهدف الدراسة إلى إدراك الأثر الاجتماعي والاقتصادي للاجئين على محافظة المفرق. تم استخدام طريقة المسح الاجتماعي لعينة مكونة من 420 شخصاً تم اختيارهم عشوائياً من مواقع جغرافية مختلفة للمحافظة. وكشفت الدراسة أن السكان المحليين رحبوا باللاجئين السوريين أولاً، وقدموا لهم عروض وظيفية، وأقاموا معهم علاقات جيدة. وعلى الرغم من ذلك، فإن الجماعات المحلية في محافظة المفرق أصبحت أكثر احترازا من السوريين، حيث يتعين على المجموعتين التنافس على الموارد الاجتماعية والاقتصادية الشحيحة مثل الوظائف والتعليم والخدمات الصحية وغيرها من الخدمات العامة. وتوصي الدراسة بمزيد من المساعدات الدولية للأردن لتمكين الدولة من توفير الخدمات المختلفة لسكانها بما في ذلك اللاجئين لمساعدتهم على مواجهة الظروف الصعبة.

**الكلمات الدالة:** الأردن، المفرق، اللاجئين السوريون، الأزمة، الأثر الاجتماعي والاقتصادي.

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