

Mini-feature

Syrians in displacement: work and economies

When people are forced by conflict or other circumstances to leave their homes, they usually also leave behind their means of economic activity and subsistence. In their new location, they may not be able, or permitted, to work to support themselves. This has wide-ranging implications not only for people's immediate earning capacity and well-being but also for community relations, economic development and the capacity of future generations to lead fulfilling lives.

The six articles in this FMR mini-feature focus specifically on the impact of displacement on Syrians' access to work and local economies. The authors explore some of the constraints and opportunities involved, and highlight the roles of new actors, new technologies and new approaches. These articles were originally published in FMR issue 58 on 'Economies: rights and access to work' (June 2018) which

is available in English, Arabic, Spanish and French at www.fmreview.org/economies.

This compilation of six articles is available online and in print in English and Arabic. Email the Editors fmr@qeh.ox.ac.uk for print copies or print your own: www.fmreview.org/economies/syrians.pdf.

This issue has been published with the assistance of the Regional Development and Protection Programme for the Middle East, a joint European initiative supporting refugees and host communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, funded by the EU, the Czech Republic, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, UK and Denmark.
<http://rdpp-me.org/RDPP/index.php>.

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Quality of work for Syrian refugees in Jordan

Maha Kattaa and Meredith Byrne

Work permits have been at the centre of the policy debate on the hosting of Syrian refugees in Jordan. This approach needs also to involve ensuring decent working conditions for all.

The issuing of over 100,000 work permits to Syrian refugees in Jordan as of May 2018 – following a joint commitment by the Government of Jordan and the international community – is in itself an important achievement. However, work permits can also be a deceptive indicator because they measure the legalisation and formalisation of employment but not necessarily actual job creation nor the quality of work. Evidence from a 2017 International Labour Organization (ILO) rapid impact assessment¹ suggests that obtaining a work permit is only the first step towards formalising Syrian workers. Policies must also improve working conditions.

Social protection and decent work

With few exceptions, employers in Jordan are required to enrol their employees in social security, irrespective of nationality, and must do so for new employees soon after their work permits are issued. In the agriculture sector, however, Syrian workers are permitted to obtain work permits through cooperatives. This de-links them from a sponsor and thereby also bypasses the requirement for employers to register Syrians in the social security system. Similarly, in the construction sector, Syrians may obtain a work permit through the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU). Under the GFJTU scheme, workers are not required to register with the national social security system but must instead obtain an insurance policy, costing approximately 45 Jordanian dinar (US\$65) annually.

The implications of protecting a large number of Syrian workers through work injury insurance schemes are not yet clear, although insurance schemes do not provide minimum social protection coverage as defined by ILO's Social Security Convention No. 102.² Furthermore, while social security

systems deduct contributions from workers' wages to contribute to national social security funds, insurance schemes do not operate in the same way. Protecting Syrian workers through social security is important not only for securing equality of treatment but also for extending social protection coverage to unemployed and retired Jordanians – because unregistered workers increase the supply of unprotected labour, while decreasing the share of workers making contributions to social security funds.

Only 20% of interviewed Syrian workers who had work permits reported being covered by social security; 13% did not know whether they were covered, nor what benefits social security provided. Many Jordanian employers interviewed during the rapid impact assessment did not believe that they were required to register Syrian workers in social security, even in sectors where they were in fact required to do so.

Since the adoption of non-employer and non-profession specific work permits, the responsibility of insuring against injury at work has shifted to the permit holders. Early focus group discussions held with Syrian construction workers who had obtained employment via ILO Employment Service Centres across Jordan indicate a generally positive reaction to having insurance (and that they do not consider the cost prohibitive) but that there is a lack of awareness of the provisions and benefits of insurance. It is also unclear whether Syrian workers who are young and in good health will want to invest in insurance policies as they may not perceive the risk of illness, injury or death as being relevant to them.

Labour inspection

Our research suggests that labour inspectors appear to prioritise verifying that all foreign workers, including Syrian workers, have the

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required permits but pay less attention to decent work conditions. Of those interviewed Syrian workers who had permits, only 8% reported that their working conditions, as well as work permits, were checked during labour inspections. It would seem therefore that not all indicators of decent work have improved with formalisation. Overall, Syrians with work permits do report an increased likelihood of having written work contracts; however, hourly wages, safety provisions and relations with employers are not necessarily any better. Our evidence suggests that Syrians with permits are actually working in excess of the standard 40-hour work week, although none reported receiving overtime compensation. Focus group discussions, however, showed a more complex picture. Some Syrian workers wanted to work more hours so that they could increase their income, even though they knew they might not be compensated for the additional work. Despite having been briefed on occupational safety and health (OSH) procedures, others preferred not to wear protective gear, finding that it got in the way of their work. Employers reported that fines for non-compliance were not substantial or evenly applied, that OSH provisions were not usually checked during inspections, and that there was a general lack of consistency in the enforcement of labour laws.

Finding the right balance

By facilitating the employment of Syrian workers, the Government of Jordan has taken proactive steps to turn the arrival of Syrian refugees into a development opportunity. Government policies must continue to promote decent work conditions which should include mechanisms that gradually bring workers into national social

protection systems. In some sectors, clear information on the benefits of social security coverage or employment insurance, as well as workers' entitlements, may be of use. Clear communication is also needed around the social security system as a whole and its reliance on workers' contributions. Labour inspection could also play a more prominent role in promoting decent work if inspectors were better equipped to provide relevant recommendations to employers and workers to help them comply with regulations and standards, rather than only playing an enforcement role. Reasonable and well-regulated penalties can, when necessary, play a part in encouraging compliance.

A comprehensive review of work permits' accordance with applicable international labour standards³ could be of use for workers, employers and government representatives. More work needs to be done to identify the challenges Syrians face in obtaining work permits but of equal importance is to support the Jordanian government to find the right balance of incentives and sanctions that serve the interests of employers, Jordanian citizens and Syrian workers alike.

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1. International Labour Organization (2017) *Work permits and employment of Syrian refugees in Jordan: toward formalising the work of Syrian refugees* <http://bit.ly/ILO-permits-Syria-Jordan-2017>
This assessment was based on questionnaires completed by 450 Syrian workers (half of whom had work permits and half of whom did not) in the service, agriculture and construction sectors, and on two focus groups.
2. <http://bit.ly/ILO-Convention-102>
3. ILO (2016) Guiding principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market. Principle 14 (d) <http://bit.ly/ILO-guiding-principles-refugees>

FMR issue 57 Syrians in displacement



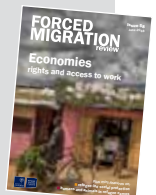
includes 27 articles – written from a wide range of perspectives – exploring new insights and continuing challenges relating to the displacement of millions of Syrians both internally and in neighbouring countries.

Online at www.fmreview.org/syria2018

FMR issue 58 Economies: rights and access to work

includes 22 articles that draw on case-studies from around the world to debate the impact of displacement on people's rights and access to work, and the consequences of this.

Online at www.fmreview.org/economies



The gig economy in complex refugee situations

Abigail Hunt, Emma Samman, Dina Mansour-Ille and Henrieke Max

Research with Syrian women refugees in Jordan suggests that, despite significant challenges, the gig economy has some potential to help refugees participate in host communities and to bolster their economic participation.

As elsewhere in the world, the gig economy – in which companies develop mobile platforms which bring together workers and the purchasers of their services – is fast taking root in Jordan. These platforms enable businesses to order timed and monetised tasks from an available worker, with a fee or commission commonly charged to the worker or client by the platform. Workers take on particular ‘gigs’ without any guarantee of further work and are typically classified as self-employed or independent contractors by gig economy companies. The operating model of gig economy platforms can be divided into ‘crowd work’ and ‘on-demand’ work. Crowd work refers to tasks which are commissioned and carried out via the internet using suitably skilled ‘crowd workers’ located anywhere in the world. On-demand tasks are carried out locally, assuming close physical proximity of service purchaser and provider.

A 2017 study commissioned by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and carried out by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) explored the potential of the gig economy to provide economic opportunities to Syrian women refugees currently living in Jordan.¹ Although the sector is still in its infancy, international companies (such as Uber and Careem) and home-grown companies (such as Bilforon and Mrayti) have already established operations in the country. To understand the implications for humanitarian practitioners of this fast-developing form of paid work in complex refugee situations, we examined the potential and challenges of including the gig economy in livelihoods programming.²

Challenges

The gig economy remains indisputably small. Worldwide, it involves a very modest share of the active workforce, the most

generous recent estimate being 1.5%.³ Our research in Jordan suggests that gig work may involve a few hundred Syrian refugee women at most. On this basis alone, it could be argued that engagement with gig work is not a good use of scarce development and humanitarian resources.

The gig economy does not – as it currently stands – offer decent work as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO). Therefore, a wider focus on improving access to livelihoods in sectors which offer opportunities for a more stable income, coupled with better working conditions, may be more appropriate.

Furthermore, structural constraints – both practical and political – to accessing gig work present a barrier to entry for marginalised communities. For example, for many refugees in Jordan, internet connectivity is limited or non-existent. Women face further constraints to digital connectivity, sometimes requiring permission to use the internet or due to access restrictions imposed by limited digital literacy.

The legal implications of involvement in gig work may also be of concern to practitioners. It remains unclear whether non-Jordanian gig economy workers are entitled to work permits. Expanding gig work may therefore appear to be supporting workers to access informal work, bearing potential risks for both practitioners and workers themselves. Crowd-work platforms complicate matters further because of their transnational character: workers can be based in one country and undertake tasks for clients based in a second, via platforms located in a third – leaving it unclear which is the legally responsible jurisdiction.

Finally, gig workers in general confront many challenging working conditions, including a lack of social protection and

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bargaining power. Refugee gig workers in particular face yet greater difficulties, such as heightened apprehensions around the submission of private information online that might put them at risk.

Opportunities

Notwithstanding the challenges, the gig economy does present some opportunities for livelihoods programming. Early engagement with the expanding gig economy offers an opportunity to understand its positive and negative implications (for gig workers and the labour market more broadly), and to address them proactively while there is time to shape these technologies and their impacts.

Although the gig economy may, in some ways, be little different from other forms of casual, informal work available to refugees, gig workers appear to value some features of platform apps – such as their independent log of hours worked, which alleviates the risk of wage theft and facilitates prompt payment on task completion.⁴ The gig economy also makes it possible for refugees to undertake crowd work, which is not tied to a particular location. This could present new economic opportunities for suitably skilled and equipped workers, although it introduces challenges around the governance and the precariousness of such work.

The gig economy also has potential to help overcome the barriers that restrict the mobility – and therefore participation – of Syrian women refugees in the labour force. Some focus group members reported how home-based gig work could open up opportunities for women's livelihoods. Moreover, on-demand work could expand possibilities for engagement in sectors in which these women may already be skilled, such as catering or tailoring.

Avenues for gig economy livelihoods programming

We believe there is a case for livelihoods programming in Jordan to include opportunities in the gig economy, if integrated alongside robust protection measures and other employment options. Potential avenues for such livelihoods support include:

Engaging in dialogue with government:

Given the lack of clarity around the applicability and enforcement of existing labour regulation in relation to the gig economy, practitioners need to engage with the legal implications and potential risks of supporting gig work. One approach could be to engage in dialogue with the Jordanian government to clarify what engagement the government is willing to permit. At the same time, it would be valuable to undertake a range of advocacy activities, including calling for government-led social dialogue around opportunities and conditions in the gig economy and policies to promote digital inclusion and permit freedom of association.

Supporting refugee engagement in navigating gig work:

Practitioners should monitor the policy environment relating to refugee engagement in gig work. They should provide timely, ongoing information



(c) Western Union

Syrian refugees and Jordanian citizens take part in crowd work, outsourced from Western Union. Why have we pixelated their faces? See www.fmreview.org/photo-policy

to refugees seeking or involved in gig work about the relevant regulations and the associated opportunities and risks, as well as specific support such as digital literacy training and legal advice. Considering the challenges that gig work poses, this support should include building transferable skills that would enable refugees to seek alternative economic opportunities if they wish.

Encouraging responsible company engagement: Practitioners may be well-placed to encourage companies to pay serious attention to workers' concerns, including around privacy. In addition, practitioners might initiate connections with those crowd-work companies which operate on a more ethical and inclusive model in order to explore their interest in working with vulnerable communities, such as Syrian women refugees. Central to this should be ensuring that companies consider the specific needs of these groups (for example, for robust digital literacy training) and that the work offered is decent and desirable.

Facilitating refugee association: Even in contexts in which refugee association is prohibited, refugees are usually permitted to come together for training led by non-governmental organisations. This could provide a very good opportunity to link with (registered) women's groups to train and support women, and to enable them to advance collective action in different areas of their lives, including by developing economies of scale in small businesses.⁵ Practitioners could also facilitate links between refugees engaging in gig work and labour unions. This would raise unions' awareness of the experiences of workers as the gig economy emerges, so that they can amplify gig workers' voices and advocate on their behalf.

Exploring cooperative models: In a recent precedent, the Jordanian government has permitted agricultural cooperatives to apply for Syrian refugee work permits, acting as the 'employer' and handling their paperwork. These cooperatives have also supported the Ministry of Labour by providing information

to refugees on the work permit process and their rights and entitlement under labour laws. Developing platform cooperative models with existing women-inclusive cooperatives in Jordan and technology company leaders could provide an opportunity to harness digital technology to expand workers' access to paid work and markets, while mitigating some of the challenges posed to workers by gig economy models.

Finally, we recommend that practitioners support the collection of evidence about gig worker experiences in order to inform programming (to support women's economic empowerment) and advocacy (to raise awareness about worker experiences and needs). Taken together, these steps could help increase the individual capacity of workers to engage within the gig economy and – critically – improve the conditions of work itself.

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1. Hunt A, Samman E and Mansour-Ille D (2017) 'Syrian women refugees: opportunity in the gig economy?', Overseas Development Institute www.odi.org/syrian-refugees-jordan-gig-economy

2. The authors thank Kimberly Behrman, Sawsan Issa, Daphne Jayasinghe, Ghadeer Al Majali, Barri Shorey and Elizabeth Stuart for their contributions to this article.

3. Based on author computations of ILO data and Codagnone C, Abadie F and Biagi F (2016) 'The Future of Work in the Sharing Economy: Market Efficiency and Equitable Opportunities or Unfair Precarisation?', *JRC Science for Policy Report EUR 27913*, Institute for Prospective Technological Studies <http://bit.ly/Codagnone-Abadie-Biagi-2016>

4. Hunt A and Machingura F (2016) 'A good gig? The rise of on-demand domestic work', ODI <http://bit.ly/ODI-GoodGig-Domestic-2016>

5. Ritchie H A (2017) 'Towards inclusion and integration? Syrian refugee women's fragile new livelihoods in Jordan', *SLRC Briefing Paper* <http://bit.ly/SLRC-Jordan-livelihoods-2017>

Integrating refugees into the Turkish labour market

Ximena V Del Carpio, Sirma Demir Seker and Ahmet Levent Yener

The granting to Syrian refugees in Turkey of the right to access formal work was a first step towards their economic integration but a number of challenges remain. With support from the international community, the Turkish government is taking action to overcome some of these.

Turkey hosts nearly 3.3 million registered refugees, mostly from Syria. The country has shown exemplary openness, and has made considerable efforts to support Syrians despite the strain on social services. It has facilitated their access to critical public services including health, housing, education and social assistance.

Recognising that refugees cannot rely solely on social assistance, however, the government of Turkey passed a regulation in January 2016 to allow Syrian refugees¹ to obtain formal work permits. The goal was to help Syrian refugees be economically independent, graduate from social assistance, and contribute to the Turkish economy.

Economic development varies widely across Turkey and in some cases divergence between regions has increased over the last few years. Rising general unemployment (peaking at 13% in early 2017) and persistent youth unemployment (with a national average of around 19%)² highlight that the number of jobs available is insufficient to absorb all job seekers.

Ominously, many of the provinces with a large population of Syrians relative to the local population and to the total Syrian refugee population in Turkey are among the most disadvantaged, having significantly lower density of formal businesses, low net formal job creation, a less educated population, lower labour force participation and higher unemployment rates than the national average. Statistics compiled by Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Agency, the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization suggest that at least half of the over two million working-age Syrians work informally. Of these, most are men; the percentage of women working is low, peaking at 7% among women aged 30 to 44.

Barriers to formal economic integration of refugees

Refugees currently receiving cash support from the EU-financed cash transfer (social assistance) programme risk losing benefits if they work formally. There are also location-related disincentives since the place in which a refugee is registered determines where they can seek formal work. Therefore, many Syrians who have moved to more dynamic labour markets such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir cannot seek formal employment there unless they change their registration location – a cumbersome and costly administrative procedure.

Low education levels and limited data on the types of skills and experiences of Syrians living in Turkey are further barriers to facilitating their employment. Data from before the war show that in the provinces near the Turkish border, Syrians' educational attainment was low compared with that of Turkish people. Around 20% (from Aleppo and Idlib) were educated to secondary- or post-secondary levels. Estimated figures are lower (15%) for people from Raqqa and higher (40%) for those from Lattakia. In Turkey, on average around 45% of people have completed secondary or post-secondary education. Syrian refugees' lower levels of education and lack of recognised or formally documented skills are associated with the low issuance of formal work permits.

The Ministry of Labour (MoLSS), Turkish Public Employment Services (ISKUR), the World Bank and the European Union are collaborating on two joint programmes to adapt services that are already available to Turkish citizens in order to support Syrians. These programmes, Employment Support for Syrians under Temporary Protection and Host Communities, and Strengthening Economic Opportunities for

Syrians under Temporary Protection and Host Communities in Turkey, were designed in 2017. Their activities are aimed, respectively, at addressing supply-side challenges (relating to employability) and demand-side challenges (relating to employment and economic activity) and will be implemented from 2018 to 2021. During the current pilot phase of each project the aim is for services – and, where possible, jobs – to be provided to 15,700 people; the systems now being set up will later provide for thousands more.

Labour supply-side activities

‘Supply-side’ activities in the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey address challenges which hinder their access to formal work (namely, access to a work permit), as well as employability challenges that hinder job placement. Activities include language training, setting up systems for assessing skills, counselling and job search assistance in Arabic, and a variety of financial incentives and support. Beneficiaries can also be referred to the Vocational Qualification Authority for validation of their foreign credentials or assessment of their educational level and work experience.

There is a need for better information to be provided to job seekers about how to obtain a work permit, and for improvements to the still largely manual application and issuance processes. 15,022 work permits were issued by MoLSS to Syrian refugees between January 2016 and November 2017, which was fewer than expected and is indicative both of information barriers faced by refugees and employers and of IT system-related issues hindering the processing of permits. The Employment Support for Syrians under Temporary Protection and Host Communities programme focuses on conducting outreach campaigns via multiple channels and languages to improve knowledge of the process, and on improving the IT system.

Many efforts to provide language and vocational skills for Syrian refugees have been made by various humanitarian and development actors from the first years of their arrival. Some of these efforts were effective in imparting valuable skills that

helped many refugees enter the economy, albeit mostly informally. However, many of the programmes offered were limited in scale, designed largely outside government institutions, almost fully dependent on external funds, and not built on the existing system of labour integration used for the local population. As a result, many training courses delivered were not formally recognised by the Turkish national education system, making it difficult for refugees to secure relevant credentials or formal credit for such training.

As part of the programme, ISKUR has been mandated to help refugees enter the formal labour market, building on its experience of providing employment support services for over three million Turkish citizens annually.³ It is designing a tool to assess refugees’ language, cognitive and technical skills; with this information, ISKUR can help Syrian refugees find jobs, and identify those who require additional training prior to being integrated into the workplace. As with the local population, the training programmes to be offered to refugees will be delivered by public training providers or private training providers certified by the Ministry of National Education, accompanied by a financial stipend for participants.

ISKUR’s active labour market programmes for Turkish citizens – such as on-the-job training, entrepreneurship training and cash-for-work programmes – are also being modified in order to be provided to Syrians. During on-the-job training, the participant is employed, with the programme financing the net minimum wage and covering insurance premiums for accidents at work, occupational diseases and health insurance. Receiving on-the-job training and obtaining Turkish work experience can help beneficiaries remain employed or facilitate their transition to another job.

For those who are the least employable, cash-for-work programming is more suitable, although it is the last resort because it does not, alone, lead to permanent employment. The target populations are women and young people aged 15–29, residing in selected localities. ISKUR finances the gross minimum wage and work permit costs for

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these workers. Those taking part in cash-for-work programmes are given extensive support to develop familiarity with the workplace, increase motivation and build their networks. Refugee job seekers will be provided with continual support through counselling, job-search assistance, and support when starting a new job, delivered by trained counsellors from ISKUR, and supported by interpreters when needed.

Labour demand-side activities

An important challenge faced by all stakeholders investing in skills training is the gap in knowledge of the occupations and skills most in-demand by employers, especially in locations where most Syrians reside. The limited availability of reliable information has hindered training providers from designing and imparting appropriate skills programmes to encourage sustainable employment. The first activity as part of the Strengthening Economic Opportunities for Syrians under Temporary Protection and Host Communities in Turkey programme is the creation of a data-based system that assesses employers' demand for occupations and skills, with a special focus on provinces with the greatest numbers of refugees. The

information gleaned from this exercise can guide training providers, with changing demands being continuously monitored.

Promoting economic activity and entrepreneurship is also at the core of the demand-side activities. Such activities are being designed jointly by the World Bank and the Government of Turkey to promote entrepreneurship, business start-ups and formal job creation among Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens residing in selected local communities.

Syrian women, particularly those coming from border provinces where very low levels of education are common, are unlikely to become economically active in standard private sector wage employment. Thus, the social entrepreneurship support project within the wider demand-side interventions includes an activity targeting women who are bound to a specific location (either within their home or their city) for cultural or family reasons. It promotes the creation of social enterprises to produce goods for sale. Activities include technical assistance to support the government and local authorities to develop and implement a sustainable business model for social enterprises engaging self-employed females, financial support for



UNHCR/Claire Thomas

The Boukah book café/lending library in Istanbul set up by a Syrian refugee who received a UNHCR/Habitat Association development grant.

the creation of the social enterprise, business-related support, and support to document the experiences of social enterprises for scaling-up similar initiatives. The model will prioritise sustainability to ensure that more women become economically active after the initial investment.

About 6,000 formal businesses were established by Syrians in Turkey as of 2017, a figure rising to 20,000 when informal businesses are included.⁴ As part of the programme, and with the support of development partners, a micro-grants scheme is being designed jointly with the government to encourage Syrian entrepreneurs to set up and register new businesses or to formally register currently operating informal businesses. A second micro-grant scheme is being designed to target existing Syrian- or Turkish-owned formal businesses located in areas where large numbers of Syrians reside to enlarge their production capacity in order to hire new workers. The pilot phase of the programme will enable the effect on new business and job creation to be measured.

Evidence and monitoring

During the preparation of the various programmes, expert teams relied on the evidence available from Turkey and around the world. However, the lack of assessments and impact evaluations of labour-related programmes targeting refugees limited the team's ability to build on previous experience, either in Turkey or in similar contexts. Fortunately, all stakeholders agreed on the importance of learning from this experience to guide future work in Turkey and elsewhere. The teams have therefore designed a strong monitoring and evaluation framework and will undertake periodic assessments. Two lessons have emerged to date.

First, it is critical to identify contextual barriers to employment and employability from the outset in order to address them early on. There is a clear advantage to having knowledge early on about the disincentives for institutions to promote formal employment, for employers to offer formal employment, and for workers to seek formal employment, in order to set out realistic expectations of

regulatory changes and investments, and to preempt unexpected (negative) behaviours.

Second, investments to serve people should be made in such a way that they are sustainable and increase the efficiency of spending and effective use of resources. As early as possible, actors should seek to ensure the strengthening of national systems rather than create separate structures that depend on external financial and technical support. In so doing, development practitioners can support governments in strengthening their institutional systems for the provision of critical services, ensuring the sustainability of investments, and better supporting refugees in their transition to self-reliance and to becoming contributors to the economy.

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1. Officially referred to by Turkey as 'under temporary protection' but for ease of reading referred to here as 'refugees'. Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection, adopted in 2013, and Regulation No. 29153 on Temporary Protection of Syrians, which entered into force in 2014, regulate their protection. Syrians who entered the country after 27 April 2011 were retroactively placed under temporary protection.

2. www.turkstat.gov.tr

3. ISKUR (2017) Annual Report <http://bit.ly/ISKUR2017>

4. Karasapan O (2017) 'Syrian businesses in Turkey: The pathway to refugee integration?', Brookings Institution <http://bit.ly/Syrian-businesses-Turkey-2017>

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Towards greater visibility and recruitment of skilled refugees

Leah Nichles and Sayre Nyce

Showcasing refugees' skills connects refugees to global work opportunities, and also shifts the narrative from one of refugees being burdens to host countries to one in which refugees are recognised as skilled workers for whom countries should be competing.

Refugees face multiple barriers to gaining access to employment. In addition to the frequent lack of access to the right to work in host countries and the lack of accessible, legal and safe economic migration pathways, there are added barriers of lack of visibility of refugees' skills and difficulty in verifying qualifications. Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB) is conducting a pilot in Jordan and Lebanon to determine how labour mobility pathways to protection that address these obstacles might be opened up.

Employers need detailed information about work histories and skill sets in order to make informed recruitment decisions. The first step, therefore, to opening up international work opportunities to refugees is to map and demonstrate the depth and breadth of what refugees have to offer. TBB has created an accessible electronic platform – the Talent Catalog, the first of its kind – in which refugees in countries of asylum can document their qualifications, skills and experience to share with international employers who are seeking to fill skills gaps. In order to encourage refugees to register with and create a profile in the Talent Catalog, TBB conducted information sessions with refugees across Lebanon and Jordan to explain labour mobility pathways to protection. Since July 2016, more than 10,000 refugees in Jordan and Lebanon have registered and created profiles in the Talent Catalog. Those registered represent some 180 occupations; more than one third have a tertiary qualification; and more than one third speak a language other than Arabic.¹

Another element of the equation is to find employers willing to recruit skilled refugees to fill skills gaps. TBB identifies potential employers and makes

the economic and humanitarian case for hiring refugees. To date, five companies have offered jobs in Australia and Canada to 11 candidates currently in Lebanon and Jordan, while 60 other candidates are in various stages of recruitment processes with 20 other Australian and Canadian employers. Meanwhile, other employers in South America, Europe, the Caribbean and North Africa are either already exploring the Talent Catalog or have committed to do so when vacancies arise.

TBB works closely with both refugees and employers to clarify with employers the particular skills and qualifications they are looking for, identify qualified candidates from the Talent Catalog for hard-to-fill roles, and facilitate remote recruitment processes. As part of this, TBB assists refugees to showcase their skills and expertise by, for example, helping them prepare or update CVs, providing guidance on recording video introductions to employers, providing access to interview skills training and facilitating access to language classes in anticipation of formal language skills assessment. Employers may conduct their own tests – effectively an informal qualifications recognition process – to ensure that candidates meet their standards, although such processes may be insufficient to meet visa requirements for certain regulated professions. The opportunities TBB offers are also seen by refugees as being of longer-term benefit to them. One candidate in Lebanon said, “You will gain a lot of benefits even if you cannot get the job. Your confidence will increase, your skills will improve and you will be ready for any challenge in the world of work.”

Draft 2 of the Global Compact on Refugees proposes the collection of population and

socio-economic data – including on labour markets, investment and skills – which would, among other benefits, help foster inclusive economic growth for both host communities and refugees. The Talent Catalog is one example of capturing data on and demonstrating the range and depth of refugee skills – skills which could meet employers' needs and contribute to economic growth anywhere in the world.

Engaging States

Governments have a critical role in creating economic opportunities for skilled refugees and in recognising qualifications but, to date, economic migration pathways have not been designed with the circumstances of refugees in mind. Those fleeing conflict zones may not have access to evidence of their qualifications or legal identification documents, and may not be able to provide traditional work histories, references and evidence of annual earnings. Recognising this, the Government of Canada is funding a pilot project in Kenya to identify barriers to refugees' access to its skilled migration schemes. In both Canada and Australia, while working with increasing numbers of employers to recruit skilled refugees, TBB continues to consult with and

carry out advocacy work targeting both governments on how existing skilled visa systems may take account of skilled refugees' unique circumstances. It is also in similar discussions with three other States.

Talent Beyond Boundaries is helping to advance an effective framework – one that may be replicated by others – for refugees to rebuild lives of self-reliance with protection and dignity, while contributing to the global economy.

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1. See Talent Beyond Boundaries (Sept 2017) *Mapping Refugee Skills and Employability: Data and Analysis from the Talent Catalog* <http://bit.ly/TBB-Sept2017>

“Attracting and retaining global talent is critical to Canada’s digital future.

Refugees should absolutely be a part of that talent pipeline.”

(Sandra Saric, Vice President of Talent Innovation, Information and Communications Technology Council, Canada)

The macro-economic impacts of Syrian refugee aid

Tobias Schillings

A new study on the effects of humanitarian assistance in response to the Syria crisis finds significant positive impacts for regional economic growth and job creation.

With currently 5.6 million registered Syrian refugees being hosted by neighbouring countries and over six million internally displaced within Syria, creating economic opportunities has become a central component of the resilience approach in response to the crisis. Acknowledging the destructive impact of the conflict on livelihoods and economic resources, the international community committed to creating 1.1 million jobs for refugees and host communities by the end of 2018. This ambitious goal, announced at the London Conference for Supporting Syria and the

Region in February 2016, is complemented by commitments from the affected national governments neighbouring Syria (to open up their labour markets and improve their regulatory environment), the international community (to strengthen job creation through access to concessional financing and external markets) and the private sector (to foster economic growth by providing new investments).

The core response of the international community is the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP)¹ which is based on plans developed under the leadership of the

relevant national authorities – namely, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The 3RP combines humanitarian and development elements, spans eight different sectors, including livelihoods, and is supported by a total annual funding appeal of US\$5.6 billion for 2018. A recent study of the macro-economic impacts of the 3RP (undertaken in cooperation with the UN Development Programme’s Sub-Regional Response Facility for the Syria Crisis)² demonstrates its noticeable contribution to economic growth and job creation in the region – a contribution that has mostly been overlooked in public discourse yet offers a powerful narrative for policymakers in fostering social cohesion among host communities.

The qualitative evidence

In many host communities, the economic impact of Syrian refugees and humanitarian assistance has been the subject of significant debate. The Syrian crisis has clearly had an overall negative impact on many neighbouring countries’ economies by affecting trade flows, GDP and growth, and could threaten regional stability. However, as over 90% of refugees live outside camps, they have become important customers for local goods and services, paid for with savings, labour income, remittances and humanitarian assistance. Local businesses also benefit from humanitarian assistance programmes as they get contracted as suppliers for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and humanitarian agencies. Furthermore, the arrival of Syrian refugees’ private capital and expertise has accelerated business growth in countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Turkey.³ Syrian businesses have become an important engine for refugee job creation and represent a premier example of the ‘growing the pie’ approach in host communities.

The quantitative evidence

To further support these qualitative statements, the new study uses an economic framework to estimate fiscal stimulus and employment effects of the 3RP. As a first step, we estimate the potential GDP impact based on ‘fiscal multipliers’. Public investments

generate higher economic effects than their initial value, as the economy benefits from spillover effects. For example, building a refugee camp creates income not only for the construction company but also for the suppliers of materials and labour. This income is then spent on other goods and services which in turn create additional economic effects. Fiscal multipliers capture these spillover effects. In a 2015 study of Lebanon, UNDP and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) found that each dollar spent of their US\$800 million refugee aid package generated an additional 0.6 dollars of revenue, making the multiplier 1.6.⁴

The second step of the analysis is to quantify the potential for job creation. By using historic data (including data that captures recent national developments) to quantify the relationship between changes in unemployment and output at the macro-economic level for each country, it is possible to translate the national GDP impact into expected job creation.⁵

It is important to note that the study’s final estimate is a projection for the general job creation potential in each country. It does not distinguish between refugees and host nationals, nor does it claim the kinds of jobs that are created. This micro-level impact will depend on 3RP programme implementation, targeting and national economic policies. Especially with regard to refugees, labour market barriers must be taken into account. Refugees experience much stronger economic, legal and social restrictions to employment than do citizens of host countries. As long as these barriers exist, refugees will not be able to benefit fully from the estimated expansion of economic opportunities. It is therefore up to the international community and host governments to target their programmes and policies in such a way as to promote inclusive growth.

The study’s results indicate the potentially significant impact of the 3RP programming on host countries. With a total spending over 2017 and 2018 of about \$9 billion, the response plan creates a much larger fiscal stimulus. The short-term effects account for a projected GDP impact of about \$17–25 billion, while



UNHCR/Scott Nelson

Syrian refugees sell soaps and detergents in their shop in Alexandria, Egypt. UNHCR supported this and other job creation projects in Egypt.

the associated job creation impact adds up to an estimated 75,000–110,000 jobs.⁶

The relative effect for each country depends mostly on the size of its economy and the amount of funding received, with Lebanon and Jordan being the largest recipients. With a relatively small market, these countries are expected to experience a much stronger momentum in economic growth due to the large inflow of humanitarian assistance. However, even large economies such as Turkey and Egypt are expected to contribute between 12,000 and 23,000 jobs to the London target. Emphasising the positive economic impacts of refugee aid, this research advocates a fully funded 3RP. Although the job target seems unlikely to be achieved by the resilience response alone, the 3RP represents a significant contribution to expanding economic opportunities for refugees and supports long-term growth by fostering resilience in host communities.

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1. 3RP (2018) *Regional Refugee and Response Plan 2018-2019: Regional Strategic Overview* <http://bit.ly/3RPStrategicOverview2018-19>
2. Schillings T (2018) 'Jobs Make the Difference – Estimating job creation potential of the 3RP Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan', Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs Working Paper No. 44, American University of Beirut <http://bit.ly/Schillings-3RP-2018>
3. See for example Ucak S, Holt J and Raman K (2017) 'Another Side to the Story: A Market Assessment of Syrian Businesses in Turkey', *Building Markets* <http://anothersidetothestory.org/>
4. UNDP/UNHCR (2015) *Impact of humanitarian aid on the Lebanese economy* <http://bit.ly/UNDP-UNHCR-Aid-Impact-Lebanon-2015>
5. The full explanation of the framework and results is available at <http://bit.ly/Schillings-3RP-2018>
6. This projection assumes that the 3RP is fully funded. Given the significant funding gap in recent years, especially with regards to the livelihoods sector, achieving these results will require further financial support by donors.

Syrian economies: a temporary boom?

Ahmad Al Ajlan

Some displaced people and their host communities have benefited economically from the consequences of conflict in Syria's Raqqa province. Others need support – and the type of support needed will change as circumstances change.

When civil war erupted in 2011, Raqqa in northeastern Syria was not directly engaged in the conflict, and thus many Syrians from other provinces – such as Deir Az Zor, Homs and Hama – fled to Raqqa. They mainly settled in Raqqa city, where the pre-war population of some 220,000 nearly doubled in 2012 with the influx of internally displaced people (IDPs). This created huge pressures on Raqqa's fragile infrastructure but also created job opportunities for many people. When Raqqa was captured by the so-called Islamic State group – ISIS – in 2014, the city enjoyed a boom in commercial activity for a short time, because of two main factors: firstly, Raqqa became the capital of a very large area of Syria and Iraq controlled by ISIS and, secondly, ISIS did not enforce a specific price for goods, nor did they enforce payment of taxes (except *zakat*¹).

But the city's commercial boom was of short duration. Because of increasing air raids, many civilians were forced to leave the city. Some moved to Lebanon or Turkey but many travelled to nearby towns and villages to stay with relatives. Towns like Al-Mansoura, Al-Rashid, Al-Qahtaniyah and Al-Jurnia took on the economic roles that Raqqa city had previously played. Towns' populations expanded, bazaars proliferated, small shops enjoyed increased sales, and new shops were built. Some families gained a new source of income by renting rooms to displaced people.

People took advantage not only of the new economic opportunities created by the presence of those who had been displaced but also of the lack of strong authority in the area. For decades, people had had to ask permission from the central government in Damascus even to build a small shop on their own land, and getting that permission had been neither easy nor cheap. People, particularly those in rural areas of Raqqa, took advantage of the removal of these obstacles to build homes and shops.

As well as winners, there were of course losers. Many people had their sources of income cut off by the war, people such as those who conducted trade between the rural areas and the city and those who were dependent on renting land and property, while thousands had to flee Raqqa with little more than the clothes they were wearing. Little assistance gets through. Displaced families in Al-Jurnia, as in other towns in Raqqa, have received a small amount of financial support only twice in one year. As a result, children in these families have been forced to sell vegetables and bread in the street. Women who have lost their husbands are particularly affected, since this also usually means the loss of the household's breadwinner, and many widows have been obliged to remarry.

Since the withdrawal of ISIS from Raqqa in late 2017, the short-lived boom is over and the circumstances have changed once again for everyone. The biggest mistake that the international community has made concerning the humanitarian situation in Raqqa now is that the aid provided usually consists of food and a small amount of money. This kind of aid is rapidly consumed. Support should rather concentrate on rebuilding the infrastructure: roads, irrigation systems, hospitals and schools (and, eventually, clearing the landmines planted in Raqqa city by ISIS). Then people will be better able to produce what they need and once more establish livelihoods, rather than be dependent on external assistance.

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1. *Zakat* is a form of alms-giving treated in Islam as a religious obligation or tax.



A Syrian refugee makes pizza at his bakery in Jordan's Za'atari refugee camp. Originally from Dara'a in southern Syria, he opened his 'Pizzeria of Peace' in 2013 in order to support himself and his family while living in the camp. He recently started the camp's first pizza delivery service, delivering food by bicycle to aid workers and refugees who are not able to visit his shop.

