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For beneficiary-led protection programming in Jordan

Sinead McGrath

Despite the humanitarian community's clear focus on addressing the protection concerns of displaced Syrians, in Jordan the beneficiaries of many protection programmes have had limited influence on the shape of the protection response to date.

One example of how the protection response has failed to adequately involve beneficiaries is the focus of humanitarian actors on child marriage amongst the displaced Syrian population. Evidence suggests the practice of child marriage has not increased as a result of displacement¹ and yet media articles focusing sensationally on the issue have influenced humanitarian protection actors responding to the crisis, as well as international donors.

While it is widely accepted internationally that the practice of child marriage is damaging to the well-being of the minor(s) involved, many Syrians believe this common practice is an acceptable way to secure a safe future for their female children in particular. While awareness raising on issues such as child marriage

is important, humanitarian agencies need to ensure that the immediate protection response is shaped by the community's own priorities and urgent needs and that the context and culture of the population is understood and respected by humanitarian agencies.

Notably, when consulted, female Syrian refugees said that the protection intervention they desired most was a basic literacy programme. These women felt that having the confidence and ability to read shop signs, rental contracts and identification documents related to their status in Jordan was the protection assistance they perceived as most valuable.

Sinead McGrath sineadmarymcgrath@gmail.com is a Program Manager with the International Catholic Migration Commission in Jordan. www.icmc.net
The views expressed here are those of the author and not necessarily of ICMC.

1. Gender-based Violence and Child Protection among Syrian refugees in Jordan, with a focus on Early Marriage (July 2013), Interagency Assessment, UN Women.
