

Summary of Panelist discussions

Submitted by: Louise Greeley-Copley FAWCO Region 9 coordinator

What issues are your organizations seeing on the ground here in Jordan in the refugee communities?

What can NGO's and citizens around the globe do to help other than sending money?

Overview: Jordan has a population of 6.4 million. In the last decade, refugees fleeing conflicts in neighboring Iraq and Syria have gone to Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. In last few years, since the Syrian civil war, up to one million Syrian refugees have fled to Jordan. Jordan is also host to several hundred thousand Iraqi refugees and Palestinian refugees. Jordan is known for hospitality, but is struggling to house, feed, water, and provide medical care, schooling, and other services for the growing population. There are more than one million Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Turkey also has several hundred thousand refugees.

The UN estimates over 191,000 Syrians have been killed in the current conflict. Over 9 million have been displaced with 3 million moved to neighboring countries. There are over 600,000 in refugee camps in Jordan. Refugees in UNHCR Camps are registered with the government and aid organizations. Many more refugees are not registered due to fear and mistrust of authorities. Refugees cannot legally work in Jordan without permits, but many do so under the radar, and are at risk of exploitation and deportation. Refugees are not eligible for government healthcare and many cannot attend local schools.

Youth are targeted, especially young men aged 14-24. They are often not allowed into protection countries, leaving them vulnerable to violence. Lack of opportunities for youth creates social problems.

Many displaced people do not have documentation, such as records of birth, marriage, property, health issues, educational credentials, work and or skill credentials. This can cause refugees to become "stateless" and creates huge challenges for people trying to move forward with their lives.

Donor fatigue is becoming a major challenge as the wars, conflicts and displacement of civilian populations continues.

Amanda Lane: <http://www.collateralrepairproject.org>

Ms. Lane is Director of *Collateral Repair Project (CRP)*, which was founded in 2006 to give assistance to Iraqi refugees fleeing to Amman; it now serves refugees of all nationalities, including Syrians. Ms. Lane is an experienced international development professional in youth, governance and civil society sectors and a documentary filmmaker who has produced a number of short films.

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Notes: CRP focus is teaching Life Skills via their community center, which also provides many activities:

- Budgeting
- Computer
- Wellness programs: yoga, dance, stress management
- Men's support groups
- Anger management

Refugees find CRP through word of mouth and home visits. CRP fundraising raises cash for food and fuel, and organizes clothing drives and distributions of food and other necessities to refugees registered with CRP.

Rob Maroni: <http://www.mercycorps.org>

Mr. Maroni is the Country Director & Regional Program Advisor for *Mercy Corps* in Jordan. He has over 27 years of private sector and international management experience in transitional, conflict, and post conflict environments. Mr. Maroni currently leads *Mercy Corps'* country program in Jordan and provides oversight to *Mercy Corps'* programs in Syria and Lebanon.

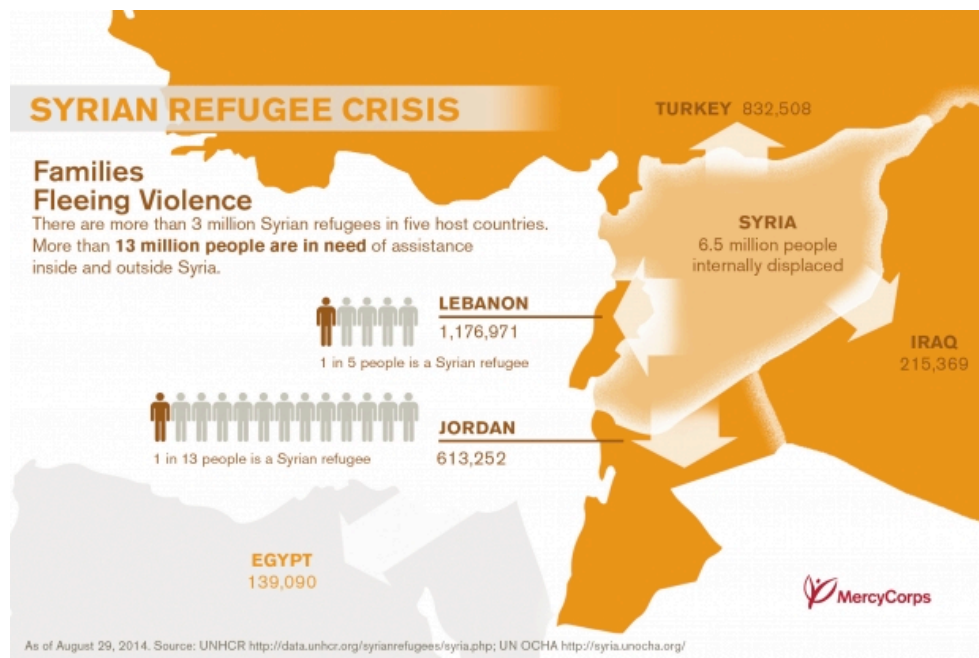
Notes: *Mercy Corps* has been in Jordan since 2003. *Mercy Corps* works in over 40 countries, the USA and in Europe. The main issues:

- Borders are closed and there is limited access to the two UN refugee camps. There are several thousand people stranded in a "no man's land" on the border.
- World Food Program (WFP) will have to cut their food voucher program if they don't receive adequate funding. This will deeply affect refugees not living in camps, who are dependent on vouchers.
- There could be more crime and violence in refugee communities due to food shortages.
- Syrians cannot access free healthcare in Jordan.
- *Mercy Corps* is not looking for donations; they strongly advocate supporting small community organizations like Collateral Repair Project to help refugees living outside the camps.
- Advocates getting cash to refugees so they can buy clothing and household goods. At many second-hand shops in Amman, can purchase a winter coat for approximately \$2, better for the local market economy than sending in-kind donations.

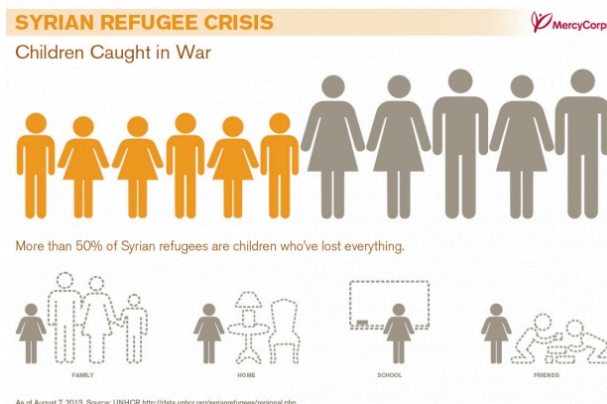
In the UNHCR camps, *Mercy Corps* has built playgrounds, weight rooms and gyms for adolescent groups, as exercise can help with stress management and conflict resolution.

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Refugees are dealing with many conflicts: housing, schools, healthcare, childcare, water, and food. Projects include renovating substandard housing and making agreements with Landlords that they will not increase the rent after renovations. Mercy Corps also has water projects to upgrade sources, wells, and distribution in northern Jordan to help alleviate the strain on local infrastructure caused by increased population.



Over half of the refugee population is made up of children.



Peter Chisholm:

Mr. Chisholm is Regional Refugee Coordinator for the *US Embassy in Amman*.

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Notes: Helps to provide a voice in Washington for refugees. It is imperative to keep humanitarian needs a part of policy discussion.

The USA is one of the largest donors to help refugees, contributing \$3 billion to UNHCR since 2012. The US contributes 1/3 of the World Food Program budget. There is a great need for other countries to also donate and help. There is a terrible and worsening humanitarian crisis, an existential crisis for host countries, which have reached the saturation point with the influx of refugees. Talk to your local government representatives and encourage them to provide support. Make donations to local NGOs directly.

Dr. Paul Fean: <http://www.nrc.no/jordan#.VKK9MCDA>

Dr. Fean is the Youth Program Coordinator for the *Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)* in Jordan, supporting NRC's youth skills training centers in Zaatari, Azraq and EJC camps. Dr. Fean is also co-chair of the Youth Task Force, an inter-agency coordination and advocacy group composed of youth-focused organizations in Zaatari camp. The youth demographic is often overlooked. NCR works closely with the UNFPA and UNICEF. NRC plans to involve youth in decision-making about programs in the future.

Notes: Provides services for 15-24yr old population. These include shelter, counseling, information, and education. There are 115,000 youths in Jordan out of a registered refugee population of 600K. That is equal to 20% of the population. Twenty percent live in refugee camps, the other eighty percent live in communities across Jordan. The key issues for the youth group are:

- Lack of education, cannot access school or get into higher education.
- Pressured to support families, so they are easily exploited.

NCR offers skills-based three-month courses for males and females, and daycare centers for students and teachers. Courses provided in

- Technical training: mechanics, welding, repairs, barbering, crafts
- Computer Skills
- Language

Key issues:

- Long distance to travel to the youth centers, and no transportation within the very large Zataari camp.
- Barriers to education including:
 - Lack of documentation (birth certificates, passports, identity cards, grades, certificates, school transcripts from high schools and universities.)

- Language difficulties
- Even if a student receives a scholarship abroad; will they be allowed to leave the country? What happens when they are finished?

Dr. Lars Feyling: <http://www.msf.org/jordan>

Dr. Feyling has been working as a family doctor for over 14 years, mainly in psychiatry and non-communicable diseases. He joined *Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)* Holland team in Jordan in September 2014 and is working as MD for MSF's non-communicable diseases project in Irbid (northern Jordan).

Before the war, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs, including (heart disease, strokes, diabetes, asthma, COPD and high blood pressure) accounted for 77% of all deaths in Syria. There was comprehensive health care in Syria pre-war. Now in Jordan, refugees face a complex system of referrals from the Ministry of Health. Chronic diseases cannot be treated by a primary clinic and referrals can take up to four months or more to see a specialist. Also refugees must pay for medications that were once free in Syria. Many patients show up in refugee clinics with advanced disease due to lack of medications and consistent treatment. The MSF NCD clinic is set up to provide holistic health care to treat 4,000 Syrians per year.

Jacqueline Scott:

Ms. Scott has 44 years experience working in humanitarian services. Most recently in Jordan, she founded *Family Kitchen*, an NGO that collects excess food from restaurants and hotels and distributes it to the poor. She saw excess food being wasted and hunger in the refugee population. She started the program, engaging Jordanian youth to help collect excess food from hotels/restaurants and distribute it to people in need.

Ms. Scott is establishing a new NGO to focus on education and poverty in southern Jordan. She has been concentrating on aiding Gazans with serious injuries who are being treated in Jordan.

Notes: The current situation in Gaza is not widely known because of the media blockade. The stories of Gaza get out via individuals. Most people do not have phones with cameras, computers or a way to get messages out. Jackie showed photos and told stories of the citizens of Gaza, including the injuries children, women and men have suffered and the dire conditions in which they are living.

The political situation looks dismal. The last war - 51 days of bombing - affected two million people. Homes destroyed, no electricity, no heat, shortages of shelter, food, medicine and other necessities. When is a Crisis over? A crisis is over when citizens can live normally. It

may take over 10 years. Water is polluted; blockades on building materials mean people can not rebuild their homes; flooding has exacerbated problems. War may be over but the crisis is just beginning.

Aslihan Tezel:

Ms. Tezel is a Ph.D candidate at Middle East Technical University and working for the Ministry of Education in Turkey. Her research focuses on a comparative study of non-governmental organizations working in the field of education to meet the needs of Syrian refugees in Turkey and Jordan.

Notes: In 2011, refugees were not counted in Turkey, as they were considered temporary. There are now estimated 1.5 million refugees in Turkey. Half of the refugees are under 18, who are becoming a “lost generation”.

In Turkey, language is a barrier as instruction in schools is Turkish. Most refugees speak Arabic. Providing education in urban areas for a displaced population is challenging. There are currently 8,000 in grades K – 12 in the Turkish school system, and 70,000 receiving schooling in Syrian refugee camps.

Mohanad Al-Abssi: <https://www.sams-usa.net/foundation/>

Mr. Al-Abssi serves as Psychological Project Manager for the *Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS)* and coordinates SAMS’ psychosocial program in Amman.

Notes: (Rihab from Lebanon provided translation.) SAMS, established by Syrian doctors in the US in 1998, is headquartered in Ohio. They send teams of social workers and psychologists to Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey to help meet the psychological needs of refugees. Syrian share culture and heritage, and are able to support members of their community. Problem is that refugees lack adequate food, health care and medical support and may be forced to consider returning to Syria.

Karen Whiting: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486566.html>

Ms. Whiting is a *UNHCR* Protection Officer working to ensure the rights of refugees not to be returned to a place where they would face or fear persecution. Options for refugees are voluntary return, integration into a new community, or resettlement in a third country.

Notes: There is an increasing awareness of the need to support the communities that are hosting large numbers of refugees, so that these countries can continue to host them. Ms. Whiting works on protection issues:

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- Right to seek asylum
- Freedom of movement
- Documentation: without documentation, displaced persons are at risk of becoming “stateless” and having no access to services, legal rights, and schooling.

Syrians can work, but must have a permit. They are vulnerable to exploitation including child labor, sex abuse, and risk deportation due to working illegally. All put families at risk.

Child marriages are increasing as families try to find security for young daughters. Cultural issues: Early marriage is being used as a protection device. The UNHCR has an awareness campaign working with sharia court to document marriages and childbirths. In Jordan the legal age for marriage is 18. In Syria it is 15. Under the Convention for the Rights of a Child (CRC) and Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), marriage between ages 15-18 require permission.

Media portrayal of refugee issues is becoming more negative. We must keep the focus on the facts:

- Refugees did not choose to leave. They are not economic migrants
- Domestic Violence
- Gender violence
- Family separations
- Situational risks of being displaced include: homelessness, health issues, mental health needs.

We should continue to support humanitarian groups. Encourage non-traditional donors from the Gulf area to donate. There is a camp sponsored by the Emirates and supported by the Red Crescent. We can also advocate for resettlement in our countries.

When we communicate, we need to do so in a responsible way. Focus on resilience. Do not be negative or report on the issues that create conflict.

We need to develop more effective integration programs for refugees into national protection, schools, and host country labor markets and help them contribute to the economy and to society. Create sustainable communities.