

TECHNICAL REPORT

# RESTORING DIGNITY AND BUILDING RESILIENCE



MONITORING REPORT  
ON UN WOMEN'S PROGRAMMING  
IN ZA'ATARI REFUGEE CAMP  
June-October 2015



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Monitoring Report on UN Women's Programming  
in Za'atari Refugee Camp, June–October 2015

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The UN Women Cash for Work and Empowerment programme in Za'atari refugee camp is implemented with generous contributions from the Governments of Finland, Italy and Japan.

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>C4W</b>	Cash For Work
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>JOD</b>	Jordanian Dinar
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedure
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations Refugee Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>VAF</b>	Vulnerability Assessment Framework
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Deemed “the great tragedy of this century” by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees<sup>1</sup>, the Syria crisis is now extending into its fifth year. Since the outbreak of the conflict in 2011, more than 7.6 million Syrians have become displaced internally and over 4.1 million have fled to neighbouring countries. Of the latter, around 1.4 million are estimated to reside in Jordan<sup>2</sup>, where 628,887 are registered with UNHCR<sup>3</sup>. Refugees have left their homes with very little, and they have since coped by liquidating their belongings, selling assets still in Syria (such as land), relying on humanitarian assistance and finding opportunities to earn an income, mostly through the informal economy. With their problems compounded by price inflation, scarce resources and dwindling international assistance, many refugees are increasingly turning to negative coping mechanisms – such as reducing food intake or relying on child labour – to deal with life’s demands. Further challenges include increasing social tensions between refugees and Jordan’s hosting communities, who perceive refugees as worsening existing social challenges such as unemployment and overcrowded social services.

Actors responding to the Syrian refugee crisis have acknowledged the vital importance of a shift in strategies. Instead of focusing on emergency response, building resilience among the displaced communities and in national service delivery is now prioritized. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) launched its support for Syrian refugees in Jordan in November 2012 when, in coordination with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), it opened its first centre in Za’atari refugee camp: ‘an Oasis – safe space for women and girls’. In addition to carrying out its role as a technical advisor on gender equality and women’s rights to humanitarian actors, the agency has extended its programme to three centres in Za’atari and undertaken a range of work for refugees and hosting communities throughout the north of Jordan. Within Za’atari, the centres offer a multi-sectorial programme providing cash for work (C4W), life skills, dialogue forums, leadership support and protection referral services. The most recent centre was officially opened in November 2015 in

partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP), after the completion of this monitoring.

International assistance in Jordan seeks to enable refugees to cope with the shocks of displacement and to be positioned to resume productive lives after displacement. Difficulties faced by refugees in accessing markets and livelihood opportunities result in the long-term ‘erosion human capital’, as noted by the World Bank and UNHCR<sup>4</sup>. UN Women is working in Za’atari camp to abate this and to build social equality, within the confines of the current operating environment. To this end UN Women provides close to 200 female-focused cash-for-work opportunities per day, serving as the largest female-focused cash-for-work provider in Jordan. Women’s work and productive assets are linked to the internal refugee camp economy, in which they produce social goods such as comprehensive maternal kits and school uniforms. These, in turn, are distributed by camp partners such as the United Nations Children’s Agency (UNICEF) to camp residents.

To ensure the Za’atari-based programming is achieving its desired impact, UN Women commissioned an

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1 Sly 2013.

2 Government of Jordan 2015.

3 UNHCR 2015a.

4 Verme et al. 2016.



*Tailors cutting the fabric for the newborn kits*

independent researcher to conduct a monitoring of its work in the camp. Completed in two months, the research utilized a mixed method approach to collect data from a sample of UN Women beneficiaries, predominantly female. A key focus of the monitoring was to assess the impact of UN Women's C4W programme on women's empowerment in the camp and their ability to meet their basic needs. In addition to providing insights into UN Women's programming, the monitoring sheds light on the situation of female refugees living in Za'atari – both the key issues and challenges they face and the entry points for support and empowerment.

## Key findings

**Women cited economic opportunities as the key priority for support from international donors and partners.** Respondents, especially C4W programme participants, identified the additional income as essential in enabling them to diversify their families' dietary intake. Men as well as women reported gaining a greater sense of purpose, self-esteem and dignity since they began providing for their family's basic needs, which has positive effects not only for themselves but for their families as well.

Women report the following to be their spending priorities: (1) food, (2) clean water (and ice, to maintain food items) and (3) phone credit to

communicate with displaced family members and to maintain relationships at home.

The vast majority of respondents – 87 per cent – earning C4W reported not being able to save any of their income. **53 per cent of those interviewed had some paid work experience prior to arriving in Jordan. 74 per cent of women stated a preference for paid work outside the home and 18 per cent prefer to have paid work at home.**

**Isolation and boredom are key challenges facing women and girls in Za'atari. Their key stressors also include weak familial and social networks, difficult living conditions and inadequate services. The provision of economic empowerment, access to public spaces and engagement with their peers is instrumental in breaking this isolation.** Programme beneficiaries overwhelmingly stressed the positive impact of the economic empowerment-focused, safe space modality, allowing them opportunities to leave their homes and engage with their peers. Many stated that participating in the activities offered in the safe spaces has helped them establish new social connections and build friendships, which has alleviated the isolation and emotional distress that they feel.

Programme participants and beneficiaries reported that they utilize the Oases to **overcome potentially tense relations** and to be among people they can relate to. They are able to share problems with each



other, think through solutions and temporarily escape their worries. In this way, the Oases are means and markers of social connectedness and psychosocial support for the refugees.

Moreover, respondents noted **a decrease in domestic violence as a result of engagement in full-time C4W opportunities.**<sup>5</sup> Of those interviewed, 20 per cent stated that involvement in the programme had resulted in decreased domestic violence within the household, with the remainder reporting no change.

Furthermore, respondents reported that this form of comprehensive support – the provision of economic empowerment with access to public spaces and social capital – has helped them **recover their self-esteem and their identities, which have been impacted by displacement.**

**Women serve as key leaders and decision makers within their families** and see their leadership growing within their communities – though they note that for the most part they remain excluded from community decision-making. Those serving on UN Women-supported women’s committees and in the UN Women-supported voluntary protection network stated that the opportunity to have an active role voicing the community’s needs to service providers and stakeholders in the camp has also helped them understand their self-worth. However, the women expressed frustration that their concerns were not being adequately addressed when it came to pressing infrastructural issues.

**Adolescent girls reported weak intra-familial communication.** Some of the young girls interviewed had strained family relationships, and many felt that they could not share information with members of their families, fearing that they would prevent them from walking outside their caravan, going to school or attending various programmes. Girls reported that disclosure is discouraged; they avoid speaking to their family members about harassment because they fear a negative reaction.

**Respondents reported an increased feeling of safety,** due in part to the systematic changes that the camp has undergone and to strengthened social networks. However, adolescent girls report that **sexual harassment is “rampant”** and contributes to their curbed mobility and lack of safety. The data demonstrate that Syrian refugees rely heavily on

word of mouth to map the services available to them. Speaking more broadly about service provision within the camp, respondents suggested that friends and family are usually their leading trusted source of information, followed by United Nations/non-governmental organization (NGO) workers, religious leaders and the police.

**Low self-esteem among Syrian men has led to negative or exaggerated expressions of masculinity, including domestic violence.** Feeling disempowered with an eroding social status, men resort to violence to assert their authority and express their frustrations within the family.<sup>6</sup> **Economic opportunities are key to combatting this.**

## Recommendations

- 1. Expand support for self-reliance opportunities for women and men.** Self-reliance opportunities provide much-needed financial assistance in supporting refugees to lead dignified lives. Moreover, they enable the restoration of self-worth and self-respect. New opportunities need to take into account the importance of targeting women and men equally. Their creation must therefore be underpinned by a solid gender analysis of available skill sets, the ability to engage in different sectors and the systems needed to facilitate women to access self-reliance opportunities (e.g., day-care services on site, all-female spaces).
- 2. Strengthen the participation of adolescent girls** in programme activities and engage them more effectively in decisions that affect them.
  - Engage girls in programme design, implementation and monitoring exercises. Consider having a platform for refugee girls to propose project ideas for camp partners and develop the ideas with staff to encourage agency and responsibility.
  - Improve girl’s involvement in programmes that focus on positive behaviour and enhance problem-solving skills, conflict mediation and prevention, as well as technical training. This can include reading clubs or mentorship programmes that promote positive coping mechanisms and teach skills that are directly relevant to their daily lives.
  - Foster closer cooperation with parents by organizing roundtable sessions to hear adolescent

<sup>5</sup> This was found through monitoring undertaken for a separate end-of-project cycle evaluation, December 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



Children play in the playground in Oasis One

girls' concerns about the impacts that displacement and war have had on them and to better understand their coping mechanisms. More effectual awareness sessions can then be developed with partners to discourage negative coping mechanisms.

- Invest in adolescent girls' capacities to become more active within camp structures. For example, provide opportunities for them to join the women's committee and to meet with service providers and camp decision makers. Intergenerational activity enhances learning and helps improve self-esteem.
  - Provide targeted outreach (i.e., home visits) to inform parents about programme facilities and activities. Adolescent girls reported that parents who are visited at home and have their fears addressed or alleviated are more likely to allow them to attend classes at the Oases.
3. **Engage men and boys more effectively**, while keeping in mind that the strength of the Oases' model lies in their being safe spaces for women and girls. The fact that the Oases are gender segregated ensures that beneficiaries who have reservations about gender-mixed facilities are able to attend and feel safe and comfortable doing so.
    - Engaging men can be through dedicating a separate safe space for men and boys where expanded learning and C4W opportunities are possible
    - It is also crucial to involve men and boys through awareness-raising sessions that increase knowledge and promote positive coping mechanisms, especially pertaining to sexual and gender-based violence, and in a language that they are able to relate to.
  4. Provide **transportation** from various collection points within the camp to help address the negative health impacts that some beneficiaries mentioned and to ensure greater participation from adolescent girls, people with disabilities and other vulnerable beneficiaries.
  5. Expand **advocacy on issues related to sexual and gender-based violence**. Consider appointing a protection focal point for UN Women's activities in the camp. At present, protection is conducted through site managers, who are working at capacity and some of whom are not adequately trained.
  6. Advocate for **increased donor support** for both refugee and host communities to alleviate tensions and to expand programmes that foster cohesion.

# INTRODUCTION

The war in Syria is now entering its fifth year, and it is becoming increasingly complex. Violence, social fragmentation and economic disintegration have transformed the country's human landscape. According to United Nations estimates, the conflict has already claimed more than 220,000 lives and left 12.2 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>7</sup> It has also caused a large-scale displacement crisis, with more than 7.6 million people displaced inside Syria and around 4.1 million registered refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and North Africa.<sup>8</sup> Today, Syrians constitute the largest refugee population in the world.

## Syrians in Jordan

Situated between Syria to the north, Iraq to the east and Israel and Palestine to the west, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has the second largest ratio of refugees to citizens in the world.<sup>9</sup> Since its inception, the Kingdom has been a haven for displaced people: Palestinians, Circassians, Armenians, Somalis, Sudanese, Iraqis and more recently Syrians have all sought refuge there. Since the violence broke out in Syria in March 2011, 628,887 Syrian refugees have registered with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Jordan,<sup>10</sup> with the Government estimating that there are 1.4 million Syrian refugees living within the Kingdom's borders.<sup>11</sup> The current registered Syrian refugee population in the country constitutes almost 10 per cent of its total population.<sup>12</sup> Of these, approximately 85 per cent reside outside camps.<sup>13</sup>

Jordan is not a State Party to the major international refugee law instruments – the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol<sup>14</sup> – which set the standards for the treatment and protection of refugees and grant them their status. However, it adheres to a limited protection regime under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with UNHCR in 1998 and is bound by international customary law. Jordan has legal obligations to respect the principle

of non-*refoulement*, which maintains that a State shall not “expel or return – *refouler* – a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion”.<sup>15</sup> The Kingdom has also taken additional steps beyond international customary law to affirm its commitment to this principle, notably through its ratification of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

In Jordan, refugees are received within the framework of its *Alien Law*<sup>16</sup>. To this end, the Government has extended immense generosity in allowing registered Syrians to access free public education as well as subsidized health care. The absence of a mechanism for granting refugee status under Jordanian law means that asylum seekers do not have essential legal rights safeguarded by the refugee conventions, including the right to residency and freedom of movement. The right of Syrians refugees to work is currently under discussion within the Government. Although they may apply for work permits, these are difficult to obtain and require lengthy administrative and financial processes, which most refugees cannot afford.<sup>17</sup> As a result, many Syrians have resorted to working illegally and hence risk being detained and deported. The Ministry of Labour estimates that less than 1 per

7 UN News Centre 2015.

8 UNHCR 2015b.

9 UNHCR 2015c.

10 UNHCR 2015a.

11 Government of Jordan 2015.

12 Government of Jordan and UNHCR 2014.

13 UNHCR 2015a.

14 United Nations 1951 and 1967.

15 Ibid.

16 ACAPS 2013.

17 In Jordan, work permits can cost more than 275 JOD (1 JOD is equivalent to 1.41 USD). They also require a lengthy application and formal sponsorship by a Jordanian employer.

cent of refugees have access to legal work permits,<sup>18</sup> while 160,000 to 200,000 Syrians are currently accessing the labour market illegally.<sup>19</sup>

As displacement continues and options for livelihoods remain limited, vulnerability among the refugee population has increased. The Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) found that, in the first half of 2015, 86 per cent of refugees were living below the national poverty line of 68 Jordanian dinar (JOD) per capita per month.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the number of food-insecure families increased from 6 per cent in 2014 to 22 per cent in early 2015.<sup>21</sup> As vulnerability deepens, refugees are increasingly turning to negative coping mechanisms to help meet their basic needs.<sup>22</sup> A recent study by the World Food Programme (WFP) documents that 91 per cent of households are forced to adopt unsustainable livelihood coping mechanisms.<sup>23</sup> These include reducing the number of meals, consuming limited portions, borrowing to pay for food and, in some cases, prioritizing food over other essential expenditures such as health and education.<sup>24</sup> Some families are also relying on child labour and risky or exploitative work to offset the increasing costs of living. Incidents of domestic violence and early marriage are on the rise as well.<sup>25</sup>

These circumstances pressure more and more refugees to make difficult decisions about their futures. Households have to determine whether they will move to cheaper accommodation with worse sanitary conditions, leave urban settings to stay in refugee camps, take perilous routes to Europe or return to Syria.<sup>26</sup> In recent months, UNHCR has reported a steady rise in individual and family returns. Compared to 1,305 persons in July 2015, a total of 2,712 Syrians returned in August, 1,116 of whom left from Za'atari.<sup>27</sup> The reasons cited included lack of livelihood opportunities as well as increasing vulnerability in Jordan.

18 According to data from the Ministry of Labour, cited in Su 2015, only about 6,000 Syrian refugees currently hold valid work permits.

19 The Jordan Times 2015.

20 VAF 2015.

21 World Food Programme 2015.

22 Government of Jordan and UNHCR 2014.

23 World Food Programme 2015.

24 Ibid.

25 UN Women and Queen Zein Al-Sharaf Institute 2014.

26 World Food Programme 2015.

27 UNHCR 2015d.

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## Both refugees and vulnerable Jordanians are facing severe and deepening economic pressures.

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Moreover, the large influx of Syrian refugees has overstretched the absorptive capacity of Jordanian host communities.<sup>28</sup> Both refugees and vulnerable Jordanians are facing severe and deepening economic pressures, which are exacerbated by grossly inflated rent, food and essential non-food prices as well as unreliable or insufficient assistance from relief organizations. As such, competition for natural resources and employment has intensified, particularly in northern Jordan, where it is reported that 76 per cent of Syrian refugees live.<sup>29</sup> This situation has aggravated social tensions between refugees and host communities, threatening to undermine social cohesion.<sup>30</sup>

### Syrians in Za'atari refugee camp

Za'atari, which is managed by the Government of Jordan with the support of UNHCR, is the largest of the Syrian refugee camps. Located in the northern governorate of Mafraq, it covers three square kilometres and, according to UNHCR data for September 2015, currently hosts 79,333 Syrian refugees.<sup>31</sup> It began as a cluster of UNHCR tents set up for Syrians when they began to flee across the border in large numbers in mid-2012. Now, it is the fourth largest city in Jordan.

More than half (53.4 per cent) of Syrians in Za'atari are from Dara'a governorate, while 14.9 per cent are from

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28 Government of Jordan and UNHCR 2014.

29 Ajluni and Kavar 2015.

30 UN Women and Queen Zein Al-Sharaf Institute 2014.

31 UNHCR, Za'atari Refugee Camp Factsheet, September 2015. file:///Users/is/Downloads/ZaatariFactSheetSeptember2015%20(1).pdf



Homs, 7.5 per cent from Damascus and 4.4 per cent from Hama.<sup>32</sup> August 2015 data shows that 50 per cent of the camp population is female, and 80 per cent are women and children.<sup>33</sup> Further, one in five households are headed by women.<sup>34</sup>

## Services within the camp

Za'atari is currently divided into 12 districts, though not all of them are serviced equally. Humanitarian agencies, government entities and other service providers operating in the camp provide daily support to the refugees. The majority of these services cover core relief items including shelter, potable water and food assistance as well as health, educational and protection services. On a monthly basis, refugees receive 20 JOD per person from the WFP, which is primarily used to purchase food from the two supermarkets in the camp. There are also two field hospitals, nine primary health centres and one delivery unit<sup>35</sup> as well as six schools, with morning shifts for girls and afternoon shifts for boys.<sup>36</sup>

While the infrastructure has improved drastically since the camp first opened, some challenges remain. Refugees have irregular access to electricity, and many have to walk long distances to get water from distribution points.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, freedom of movement outside the camp premises is restricted; only those with official permission are able to leave. And while there are schools within Za'atari, UNHCR data indicate that only 51.6 per cent of school-aged children are enrolled in them; an estimated 13 per cent of children are engaged in child labour to support their families.<sup>38</sup>

## Cash for work programming

Within Za'atari, a number of organizations are providing self-reliance and resilience opportunities for Syrians through cash for work (C4W) programming. C4W offers skilled and unskilled volunteer opportunities, usually following a rotation system, in exchange for monetary stipends. These

programmes are vital not only because they provide one of only two options for refugees to work within the camp<sup>39</sup> but also because they enable refugees to identify their own needs and priorities and have a greater sense of dignity and purpose. C4W opportunities allow refugee households to have more control over how they rebuild their lives and, in the process, help restore self-esteem.

Access to C4W opportunities is limited inside the camp, however, as less than 5 per cent of the population has access to the programmes. The 12 agencies implementing C4W programmes<sup>40</sup> support on average 6000 beneficiaries in a camp that hosts close to 80,000 persons of concern. A recent review by UN Women, which analysed data collected by the camp-based Needs Based Working Group, suggests that C4W targets mostly male beneficiaries; men fill approximately 76 per cent of the total C4W opportunities while women fill around 24 per cent.<sup>41</sup>

The C4W opportunities are varied and include positions in education, training, outreach, protection referral, waste management and security. For women beneficiaries, a simple breakdown below shows the fields of work offered to them:

### Skilled labour

Protection
Tailoring
Handicrafts
Education and childcare

### Unskilled labour

Cleaning
Solid waste management
Community mobilization

32 UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency). 2015d. "Za'atari Refugee Camp Factsheet." UNHCR, August. Accessed 8 Dec 2015

33 Ibid.

34 UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency). 2015d. "Za'atari Refugee Camp Factsheet." UNHCR, August. Accessed 8 Dec 2015

35 UNHCR 2015d.

36 UNICEF 2015.

37 UNHCR 2014.

38 UN Women and Queen Zein Al-Sharaf Institute 2014.

39 Ajluni and Kawar 2015.

40 UN Women, Oxfam, JEN, International Relief & Development (IRD), Save the Children International, Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), War Child UK, Questscope, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Noor Al-Hussein Foundation (NHF), International Medical Corps (IMC) and Finn Church Aid (FCA).

41 Touq 2015.

Residents in the camp have voiced a number of concerns regarding the implementation of C4W programmes. Corruption and nepotism are seen as major issues. Some camp residents believe the process of acquiring C4W is not transparent and that a small minority controls the selection of beneficiaries. They also believe that tribal affiliations, familial relations and personal connections play a role in accessing such opportunities.<sup>42</sup> In a closed camp setting, where access to employment is highly prized for generating livelihoods, such claims of preference fuel tensions.

Another aspect that has been criticized is the rotation system. While its aim is to provide opportunities to as many residents as possible, one of the system's adverse effects is that individuals are not able to sustainably meet their needs or build their skills because a few weeks or months of work is not sufficient to have a measurable financial or psychological impact. In addition, it presents a number of challenges to the hiring organizations, which have to regularly invest in training and building the capacity of new personnel, thus delaying the ability to deliver on demands.

While UN agencies and NGOs have worked to address these issues by implementing a variety of measures, such as enhancing inter-agency information sharing and drafting standard operating procedures (SOPs) to govern the hiring process, C4W programmes remain a heated, and at times contentious, topic – as is evident in discussions at UNHCR's community gatherings.

## UN Women's programming in Za'atari

UN Women launched its support for Syrian refugees in Jordan in November 2012 when it opened its first centre in Za'atari.

UN Women implements a multi-sectoral programme in the camp providing services, skills and protection through the management of three women- and girl-focused safe spaces. Known as 'Oases for Women and Girls', these facilitate Syrian women's increased access to self-reliance opportunities and provide a space for educational, recreational and psychosocial activities. Currently, the two operational centres, termed "Oasis 1" and "Oasis 2," provide a total of 116 C4W opportunities

and host approximately 1,500 beneficiaries on a monthly basis, while "Oasis 3" is scheduled to support an additional 56 C4W opportunities – bringing the total to 172 by end 2015.

Inside Za'atari, UN Women operates largest women-focused C4W programme. While men are engaged in UN Women's activities, the programme targets women and girls; women currently hold close to 83 per cent of UN Women's C4W opportunities.

The components of UN Women's programmes in Za'atari include:

1. **Self-reliance opportunities through C4W** that link Syrian refugees to the camp-based economy. Through these incentive-based volunteer opportunities, refugees are hired as administrators, hairdressers, guards, tailors, teachers and day-care professionals. The women and men in turn provide the camp population with free services (classes, hairdressing and makeup, tailoring), which can be accessed by visiting any of the three Oases. UN Women partners with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) through the C4W programme to produce school uniforms and comprehensive baby kits, which are distributed to schools and hospitals within the camp – thereby linking the women hired under the C4W programme to the internal camp economy.
2. **Life skills classes** include literacy classes (Arabic, English, computer), art classes (drawing, mosaic, psychodrama, dance), as well as awareness-raising sessions on issues related to rights, hygiene, camp services, legal information, reproductive health, sexual and gender-based violence and other protection-related concerns. Day care services are also offered.
3. **A micro medical fund** was launched in March 2015 to help refugees working with UN Women in Zaatari to obtain medical support for cases that cannot be treated within the camp or through UNHCR support. Regular Oases users as well as C4W participants and their families can apply to use the medical fund to access life-saving, limb-saving or sight-saving secondary or tertiary care. Managed by Operation Mercy, the fund is maintained through profits generated from the sale of items within UN Women's Oases (such as jewelry, mosaics, etc.). All the proceeds raised from the sales are allocated to the medical fund.

<sup>42</sup> UNHCR 2014.



*Syrian girl, Za'atari refugee camp*

4. **A Syrian women's committee** comprised of 22 women, who live in 10 districts in Zaatari, serves as an interlocutor between the community and service providers and decision makers within the camp. UN Women facilitates regular meetings between the women's committee and camp service providers and decision makers to discuss women's concerns and find solutions to pressing issues. The women also participate in UNHCR's community gatherings, which serve as a two-way communication tool between the refugees and the various stakeholders in the camp. Issues that the women's committee has discussed with stakeholders include: C4W opportunities for female-headed households, electricity and water in the camp, protection issues, nepotism and the role of street leaders.

5. **Protection referral** services are provided within UN Women's safe spaces. Program staff, beneficiaries and members from the voluntary

protection network identify protection cases, which are then brought to the attention of site managers. Given the beneficiaries' consent, their cases are referred to the appropriate service providers within the camp. The work is done confidentially to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those involved.

UN Women implements this work in cooperation with a number of United Nations and other partners. The Oasis most recently opened in district 7, termed 'Oasis 3', is managed in cooperation with the WFP. It aims to harness resilience-based approaches to food security and nutritional diversity. In district 3, where UN Women runs its oldest Oasis, 'Oasis 1', the physical space is shared with UNFPA. UN Women provides C4W, life skills and protection referrals and UNFPA provides case management and awareness raising on issues of gender-based violence. UNHCR is a close partner on issues related to protection and leadership.

# RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section begins with a brief description of respondent profiles, providing basic demographic information. This is followed by an explanation of key stressors, challenges and priorities that the programme participants have identified. The section titled 'Refugee women, decision-making and civic participation' elucidates the disparity between refugee women's engagement in family life and community life, especially regarding their perceived roles in decision-making and conflict resolution. The section ends with an examination of changes in refugees' perceptions of themselves since they joined and benefited from services at the Oases.

## Research Objectives

To ensure UN Women is achieving its desired impact – to empower Syrian refugee women through its camp-based programming – this report, which was prepared by an external monitoring consultant, details:

1. Changes in refugee women's perceptions of themselves since they joined and/or benefited from services at the Oases.
2. Feedback from UN Women programme beneficiaries in Za'atari to identify good practices and areas for strengthening.
3. Priorities for programme beneficiaries and recommendations to improve UN Women's programming in the camp.

Results and recommendations of this monitoring exercise will be used to strengthen UN Women's programming in Zaatari and within Syrian refugee communities in the broader region.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a mixed method approach combining observation, literature review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and a survey questionnaire. **Details of the research methodology can be found in Annex 1.**

## Programme participants and beneficiary profile at a glance

- Are predominantly from Daraa governorate (91%)
- 54% are married; 20% single; 17% widowed; 9% divorced

- Have had formal education (26% finished primary education; 25% intermediate education; 23% secondary education)
- Have been in Za'atari for over 2 years (95%)
- 24% live with 1–3 other members, 41% with 4–6 members and 32% with 7–9 members in the same household
- Live throughout the camp; the only districts not represented in the random selection of respondents are districts 6 and 7
- 53% had some paid work experience prior to arriving in Jordan and 47% did not; tailoring was the most frequently cited job, followed by hairdressing, teaching, office administration, business and volunteering; one respondent practiced law
- 74% prefer to have paid work outside their home, 18% prefer to have paid work at home and 8% prefer to stay at home without needing to work
- 34% know where to get the support they need from camp service providers, 42% know where to access some services and 24% do not know
- 24% have many fears and/or concerns about getting involved in activities or attending meetings in the camp, 32% have some and 44% have none

## Key stressors

During the FGDs, when asked to prioritize the top challenges they face, both women and men agreed that '*alghorba*,' an Arabic term that is difficult to translate but most closely means



strangeness or exile, is one of the top stressors. At the core of being 'ghareeb' – a person stricken with *alghorba* – is being exiled from one's land, social networks and loved ones, who are seen as a great source of strength and support. The female FGD participants explained that in Syria, family relations were stronger and the family unit more intact. A refugee mother describes this change in family dynamics:

*"Families lived in the same village. Parents and children lived together. Even after marriage, children [male children] remained in the same house. Now when the kids get married, they get their own caravan in the camp. Syrians are scattered. I have children in Syria. One of my brothers is in Iraq with his family. Others are in the camps in Turkey ... and we are here."*

In addition to displacement of family members and feeling estranged from loved ones, programme participants and beneficiaries suggest that **difficult living conditions, inadequate services** as well as **routine and boredom** are among their top stressors. Interestingly, questionnaire participants reported that economic difficulties are not major causes of stress for them at present – these ranked number seven in terms of key stressors – while both women and men in the FGDs named economic conditions as one of the leading causes of stress among

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53% of those interviewed had some paid work experience prior to arriving in Jordan. 74% of women stated a preference for paid work outside the home, 18% prefer to have paid work at home and 8% prefer to stay at home without needing work.

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Mosaic classes at UN Women's Oasis in Za'atari camp



FIGURE 1

### What are the major sources of stress for you?

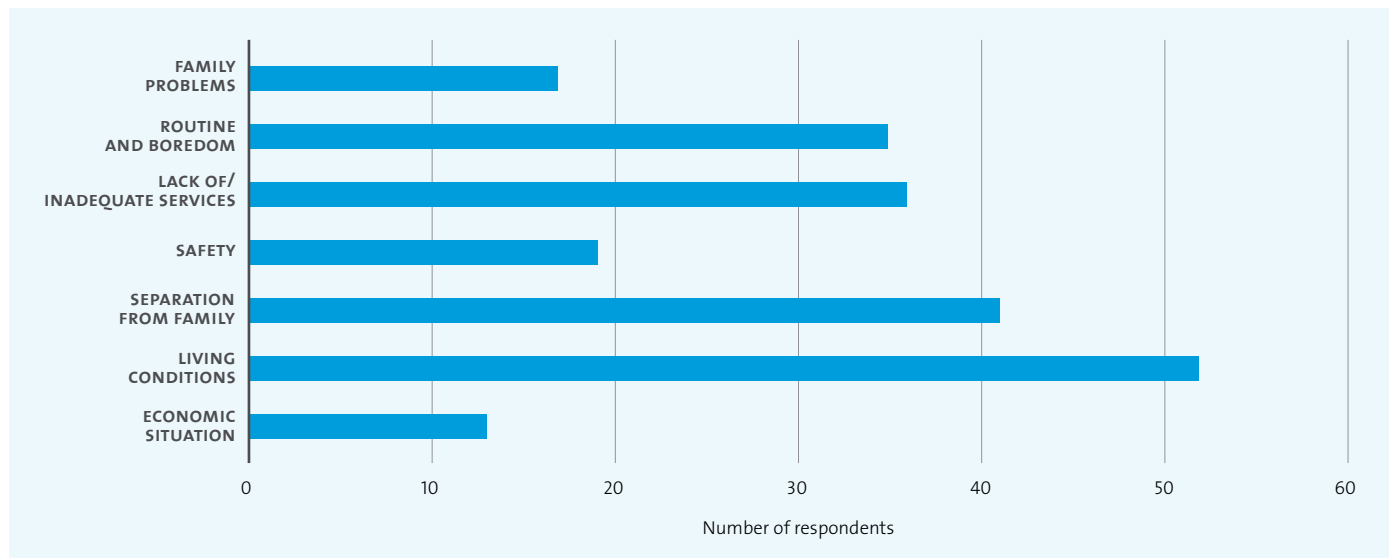
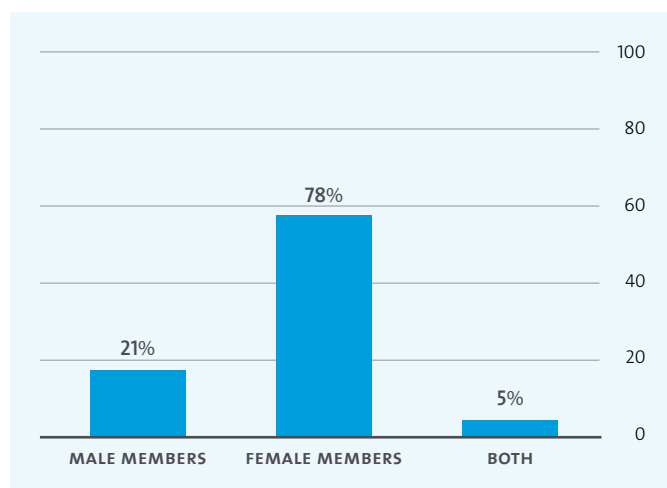


FIGURE 2

### Who is generating income in your household?



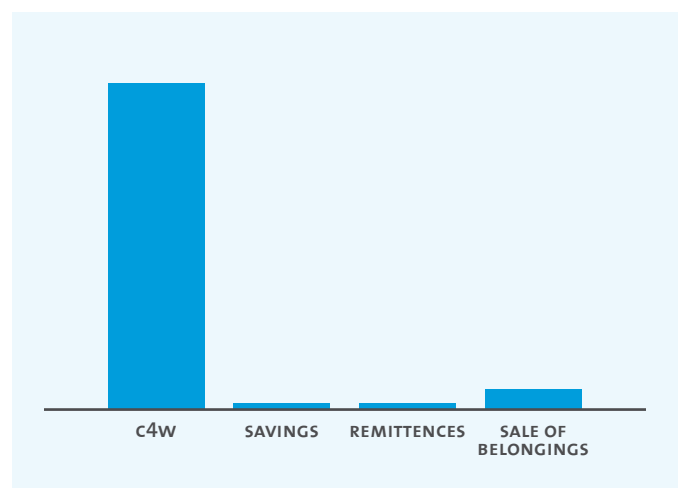
families and prioritized access to economic support. One explanation for this divergence could be that questionnaire respondents **have a source of income** at present and are meeting their needs through the money earned. Results reveal that 78 per cent of all respondents currently have a source of income.

### A breakdown of household income and spending priorities

Questionnaire respondents or their family members are **enrolled in C4W programmes** (91 per cent), have **belongings** that they are selling (6 per cent),

FIGURE 3

### What are the sources for income generation?



have **savings** (2 per cent) or have **remittances** (1 per cent). As such, many are able to meet their financial needs, mostly through the C4W programmes. Data indicate that 41 per cent of those who named economic difficulties as a major cause of stress do not currently have a source of income.

Taken more contextually, the data suggest that while economic conditions are not a top stressor for programme participants and beneficiaries – who currently have access to self-reliance activities or are able to meet their basic financial needs – access to livelihood opportunities is still a top priority for many

in the camp. FGD respondents as well as camp-based assessments and consultations stress the importance of economic opportunities in order to supplement the assistance that the refugees currently receive.<sup>43</sup> This finding is also supported by the fact that the rate of applications to C4W programmes, such as UN Women's programme, remains very high.<sup>44</sup>

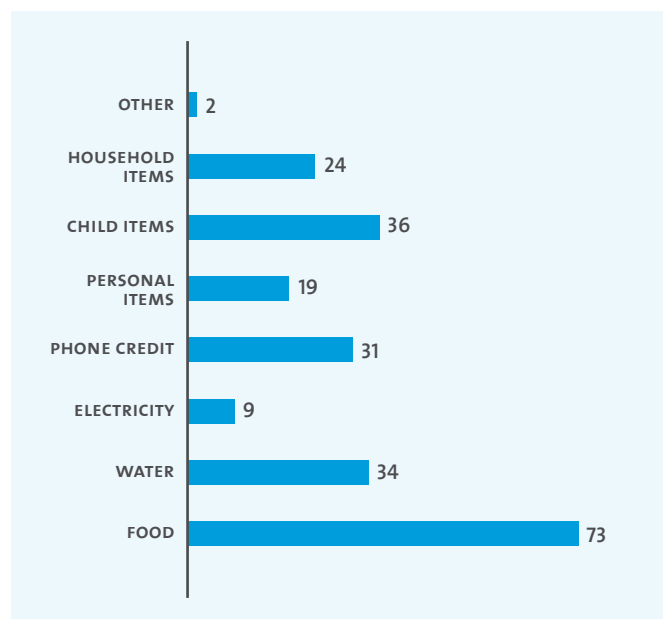
C4W participants' income varies depending on whether they are enrolled full or part time and whether they are engaged in skilled or unskilled labour. UN Women's C4W stipends range from 72 to 180 JOD per month, with participants earning an average of 1 JOD an hour, six hours per day, five days per week (as stipulated in the camp C4W SOPs). As noted above, Syrians residing in Zaatari also receive vouchers through the WFP. Many reported using these to buy essential food items such as oil, sugar, flour, rice, canned food, tea and bread, while C4W income is used to supplement the WFP vouchers and to meet nutrition and hygiene-related expenses that they do not cover.

Questionnaire respondents stated that they spend the most on food, followed by items for children and then water, including ice (especially during the hot weather and given the absence of electricity during the day in the camp). Many also reported that the purchase of phone credit to keep in touch with displaced family members was another top expense. FGD participants reiterated these spending priorities.

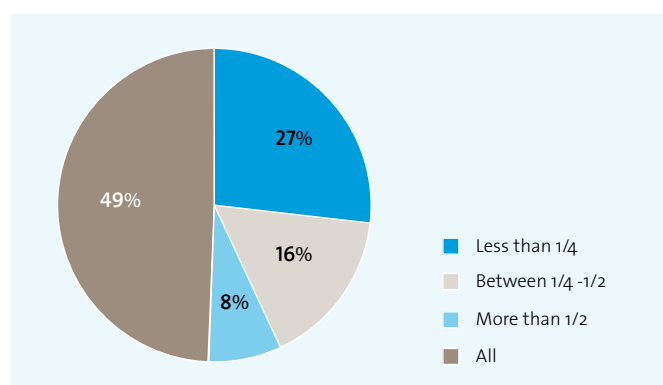
When asked whether they help in covering their household expenditures, 87 per cent of respondents stated they do. Of these, 49 per cent cover all the costs, 8 per cent cover more than half, 16 per cent cover between one fourth and one half and 27 per cent cover less than a quarter. Data also reveal that 87 per cent of respondents are not able to save any of their income. A small minority – about 10 per cent – are able to save less than half of their income.

Based on data collected from FGDs, the visual below represents an estimated breakdown of how income is spent on a monthly basis. It shows that refugee households in the camp spend most of their income on food and water. Due to the absence of electricity, and their inability to have functioning freezers or fridges at home, FGD respondents stated that

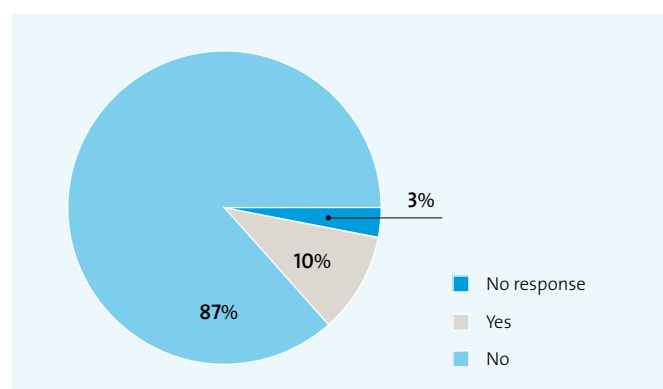
**FIGURE 4**  
Spending priorities



**FIGURE 5**  
Percentage of household expenses covered



**FIGURE 6**  
Are you able to save any of your income?



43 UN Women 2015.

44 Touq 2015.



they are incurring extra costs because of having to purchase vegetables and/or meat to cook on a daily basis, as opposed to buying produce in bulk.

Collectively, these findings are indicative of the need for increased C4W and other economic

opportunities for refugees within the camp. The assistance currently available is not sufficient to cover the needs of refugee households.

### Refugee women, decision-making and civic participation

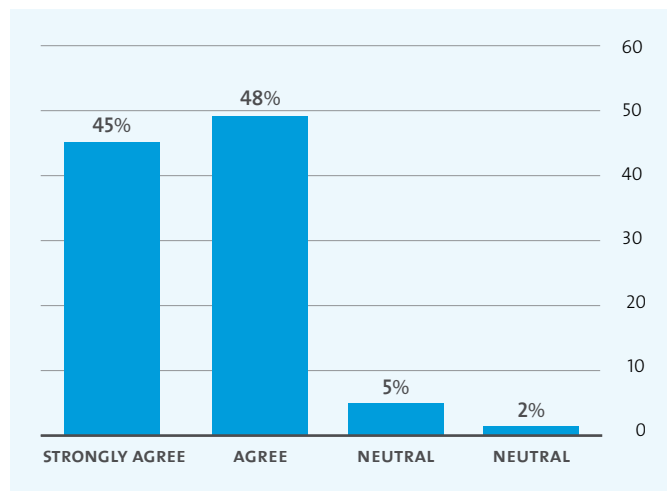
Questionnaire results suggest that 81 per cent of women respondents believe that they have good ideas to help their families and communities. The data also indicate that 93 per cent of women **want to help their families and improve community life** as 45 per cent strongly agreed with the statement “I am motivated to improve my family and community life” and 48 per cent agreed.

Average Monthly Expenses	
-----	
Zaatari Refugee Camp	
-----	
CUSTOMER RECEIPT COPY	
CUSTOMER NUMBER: 120	
Water & Ice	30,00
Fresh Veg/Meat	70,00
Cleaning Supplies	20,00
Additional Gas Canister	08,00
Phone Credit	07,50
Medicine	Varies
Clothing	Varies
Shoes	Varies
For smokers - Cigarettes	30,00
=====	
SUBTOTAL	165,50
Transaction:	09/15/2015
1010	3:05 PM

Refugee households in the camp spend most of their income on food and water.

FIGURE 7

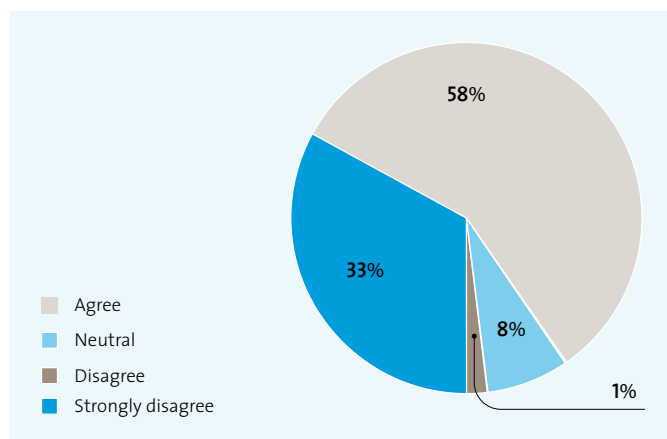
Women respondents - “I am motivated to improve my family and community life”



Women said they play a greater role in making decisions and resolving conflict within their families than they do within their communities.

FIGURE 8

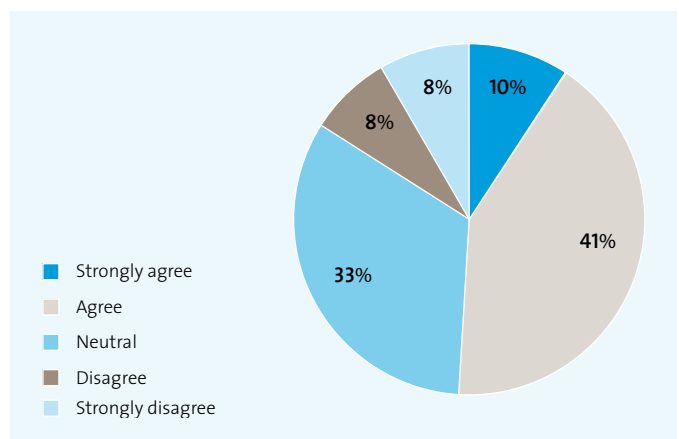
Women respondents - “I think I play a significant role in making decisions that impact my family”



When it comes to decision-making and conflict resolution, the women said they play a greater role in **making decisions and resolving conflict within their families than they do within their communities**. Nine out of 10 women (91 per cent) believe they play a **significant role in making decisions that affect their families** (33 per cent strongly agree and 58 per cent agree). Only 1 per cent disagrees with the statement and none strongly disagrees. In contrast, 16 per cent either disagree or strongly disagree with the same statement at the **community level**, while 51 per cent either agree or strongly agree.

FIGURE 9

Women respondents - “I think I play a significant role in making decisions that impact my community”

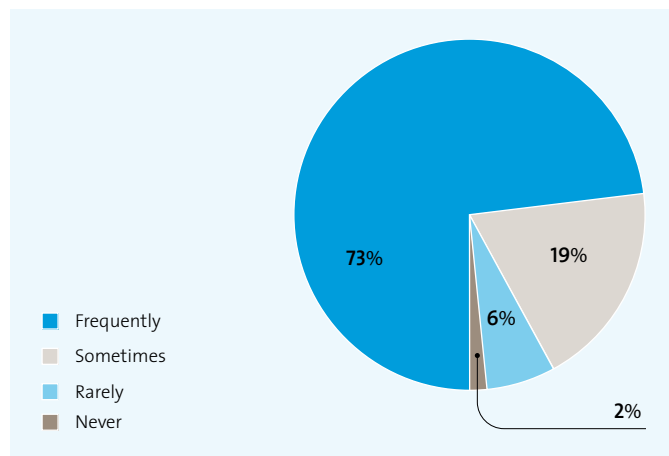


Asked about their role in **resolving conflicts within their families**, 73 per cent of women respondents said that they **frequently** partake in solving problems that affect their families, 6 per cent stated that they **rarely** solve family problems and only 2 per cent **never** take part in family conflict resolution. At the community level, the percentage drops to 17 per cent of respondents who **frequently** partake in conflict resolution while those who **rarely** take part increase to 14 per cent and those who **never** take part are 10 per cent.



FIGURE 10

Women respondents - “I take part in solving problems that my family suffers from”



FGD respondents explained that generally elders and male community leaders play a greater role in resolving community problems. ‘A woman’s place is the home’ was a phrase mentioned by both women and men.

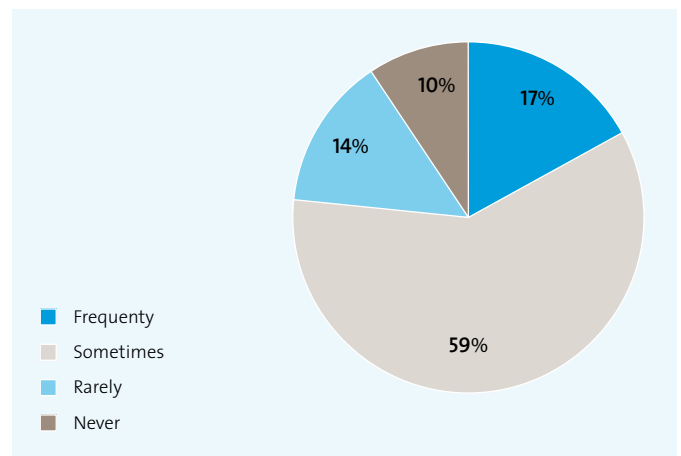
### Impact of the programme

#### General overview

Those interviewed overwhelmingly stressed the positive impact that holistic programming has had on them, emphasizing the importance of

FIGURE 11

Women respondents - “I take part in solving problems that my community suffers from”



comprehensive, targeted service delivery to women and girls within Za’atari. Indeed, 94 per cent reported that **participating in programme activities affected them positively**, while 5 per cent reported that they are new in the programme and unable to respond to the question. Approximately 89 per cent stated that they benefit in ways that are not just limited to financial gain. **Engaging in female-focused empowerment programming has helped beneficiaries re-establish their social network within the camp, break the cycle of isolation that they feel, build their**



“I was prompted to attend classes at the Oasis because I wanted my life to feel normal”.

skill set, feel safer and become more active in their families and communities as well as increase their awareness about services within the camp and issues around gender-based violence.

When asked if the programme had any adverse effects on their lives, 20 per cent of beneficiaries responded that it did. Of these, 42 per cent stated that they do not see their families as much as they would like. Another 33 per cent said that the burden of responsibility on them has increased as they are now working both inside and outside the home. For the 17 per cent who reported that participating in the programme had adverse impacts on their health, walking long distances in difficult weather conditions (hot and dusty summers and rainy and cold winters) was mostly to blame. This emphasizes the importance of finding transportation solutions within the camp.

### Building social capital

French sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant describe social connections and interactions, also known as social capital, as “the sum of the resources ... that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”.<sup>45</sup> In the context of Syrian refugees in Za’atari, social capital is particularly important because it serves as a conduit for the flow of information that facilitates their access to material and social resources.

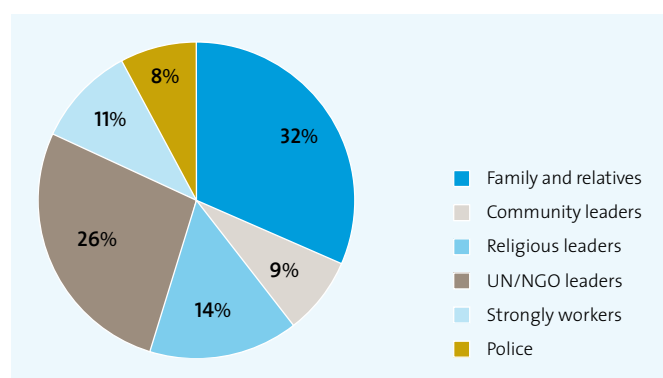
The research found that Syrian refugees rely heavily on word of mouth to map the services available to them within the camp. Speaking more broadly about service provision, respondents said that

45 Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 119.

**FIGURE 12**  
Has participating in programme activities had any adverse impacts on you?



**FIGURE 13**  
Trusted sources of information



friends and family are usually their leading trusted source of information, followed by United Nations/ NGO workers, religious leaders and police.

A statement made by a female programme participant with reduced mobility recognizes the importance and **role of social capital in helping her adapt to new challenges**. She suggests that social connections make her feel supported and help her to learn, gain a sense of belonging and carve out normality in such challenging conditions:

*“I was prompted to attend classes at the Oasis because I wanted my life to feel normal. I did not want to be broken in the environment here [in the camp]. I wanted to meet new people to know I am not alone and to learn how to acclimate to this new environment.”*

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“When we stay at home and do not know what to do with ourselves, all this turns into anger... when the pocket is full, everything is fine”.

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Through the Oasis model, programme participants and beneficiaries reported forming **new community bonds** and **rebuilding their social networks**, which have been eroded by the war and displacement. For example, a group of 10 women from the Oases began a rotational weekly lunch, with a different woman cooking for the group every Friday. The women, who are from different districts in the camp, make a point of meeting each other on their days off. “After a year with each other [at the Oases], we are now a single family,” one respondent stated.

Although access to public spaces is more readily available for men, they still reported that isolation and a shattered social network combined with a loss of social status, resulting from not being able to fulfil their gendered role as breadwinners, were major sources of stress. Participating in the C4W programme has helped them **build trusted friendships and regain a sense of self, factors that have contributed to their overall mental health** and the general health of their families. A father of three explained:

*“I was getting depressed when my children needed something, and I could not get them anything. I tell them one day that I cannot buy them this item. Then tomorrow, they ask me for something else, even something small like a lollipop, and I tell them ‘Sorry, we cannot buy*

*it’. But how many times can I tell them that I cannot buy them things? These are children and a child does not understand. He knows that he wants something and his father should get him what he needs.”*

Another man added:

*“Everyone has a mountain of problems on their shoulders. [At the Oasis,] I’ve met these gentlemen here. We’re all in the same boat. We learned to make fun of each other and the situation here to make things better. For example, take our colleague here. He needs more than 100 dinars for his son’s medications every month. If he cannot work, what would happen to his son? What would happen to him seeing his son deteriorate in front of his eyes? You shrink and shrink as a man. And this is what has happened to the Syrian man ... When we stay at home and do not know what to do with ourselves, with time, all this turns into anger at ourselves for failing. At our families for needing things. They tell you that family violence is increasing. Why do you think that is? When the pocket is full, everything is fine.”*

In their statements, the men drew a connection between their ability to provide for their families and their emotional well-being, as well as that of their families. Working and earning a stipend through C4W gives them a sense of purpose and helps them improve their temperaments. Aggression, which they linked to financial and other stressors, is sometimes directed inwards; their families bear the brunt of this in the form of domestic violence.<sup>46</sup> The men also elaborated that their newly strengthened social network, which is made up of men who understand their situation because they live under similar stressors, provides them with support and helps to “make things better”.

#### **Adolescent girls and isolation in the camp**

**Adolescent girls** explained that they had very few close friends before participating in the programmes offered at the Oases. They reported that, especially if

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<sup>46</sup> For more on this topic, see UN Women, “Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection among Syrian Refugees in Jordan,” 2013, <http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/7/report-web%20pdf.pdf?v=1&d=20141013T121458> and SGBV Sub Working Group 2014.





*Syrian adolescent girls performing a play as part of the 16 Days of Activist against Gender-Based Violence*

unmarried, they are mostly **homebound**.<sup>47</sup> Their days usually consist of waking up before family members, preparing breakfast, stowing away the bedding, cleaning the house, cooking lunch and caring for younger siblings throughout the day. In the evenings, when the electricity is on, they are expected to help their mothers with the laundry.

During the FGDs, some girls said that attending classes at the Oases is one of the only times that they have access to a public space to meet potential friends. For girls, particularly those not enrolled in school, **life in the camp is very isolating**.<sup>48</sup> Some girls reported that they know peers who barely leave their caravans. Others stated that they are only allowed to be in public spaces if they are chaperoned by a male or older female member of the family.

Fear of sexual harassment is one factor that explains why their movements are limited.<sup>49</sup> Other reasons why some girls are kept from attending school and various extracurricular programmes, according to the respondents, are family concerns about one or more of the following: (1) the safety of male family members who could “get in trouble because of a girl”, as one respondent put it, and

might be imprisoned or sent back to Syria; (2) the spread of negative rumours that, according to one respondent, can “tarnish the girl’s respectability” and thus affect her marriage prospects; (3) long walking distances to schools or centres; (4) mal-equipped schools and badly trained teachers who are providing students with a poor quality of education; and (5) the need to “train girls of marriage age to run a family so that when it’s time for her to form her own, she knows what needs to be done”.

Adolescent girls reported that their parents feel more at ease permitting them to participate in the activities at the Oases when staff members conducted outreach home visits to address the families’ concerns, which were alleviated mostly because the **centres are safe spaces for women and girls**. Despite this, some girls reported that their parents require a staff member from the Oases to call on a daily basis to request permission for them to attend literacy, art and theatre classes.

The girls also reported weak intra-familial communication. Some of those interviewed had strained relationships with their families, and many felt that they could not share information with members of their families, fearing that they would prevent them from walking outside their caravan, going to school or attending various programmes.

47 Safety Audit for Za’atari Refugee Camp 2015.

48 UN Women and Queen Zein Al-Sharaf Institute 2014.

49 SGBV Sub Working Group 2014.

## “Our parents tell us this [distress and nightmares] is normal.”

Girls reported that disclosure is discouraged; they avoid speaking to family members about harassment because they worry about the negative reaction that such information might have on them.

An adolescent female beneficiary stated,

*“Girls cannot tell their mothers about problems they are facing because they fear that she might get upset and beat her or she might tell her father or brother. For example, if a girl is sexually harassed, she cannot tell her family because they would prevent her from leaving the house to go to school or to the programme or brothers get in trouble and then the family blames her. They would tell her if you did not leave the house, none of this would have happened. It is all because of you.”*

A pattern of denial of trauma also seems to be the norm among adolescent girls. When speaking about stress, sleep patterns and coping mechanisms, they reported disrupted sleep, frequent nightmares and an inability to constructively cope with stress. A 14-year-old beneficiary exclaimed, “Our parents tell us this [distress and nightmares] is normal.” While denying trauma, or normalizing it, might serve the families in surviving extremely vexing circumstances, in the long term such coping mechanisms, which encourage repression of distress, have detrimental impacts and hinder parental support to adolescent girls.

### Perception of safety

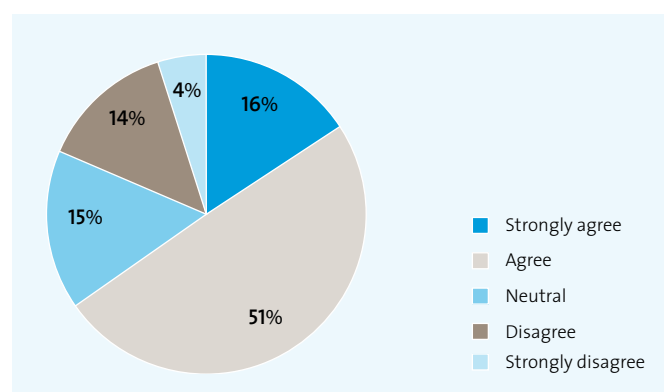
Programme participants and beneficiaries mostly reported that they are able to move freely and safely in the camp: 67 per cent of questionnaire respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “**I am able to move freely in the camp**” while only 14 per cent disagreed. The 4 per cent who strongly disagreed were women of different age groups and marital statuses. Similarly,

67 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “**I feel safe in the camp**” and 9 per cent disagreed. None of the respondents strongly disagreed.

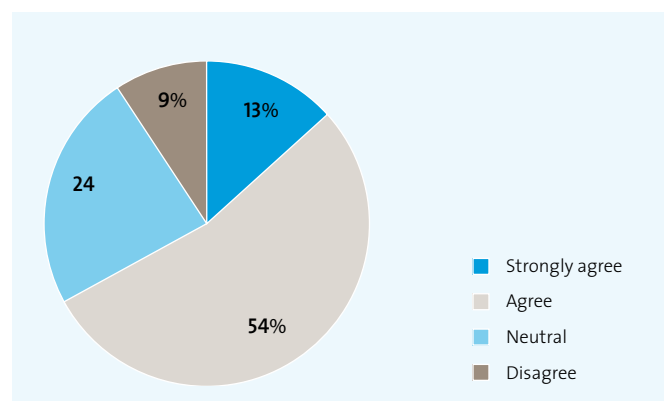
During the FGDs, women and men generally reported feeling safe in the camp, while adolescent girls said that they felt unsafe. Girls reported that sexual harassment in the camp was “rampant” and contributed to their curbed mobility and lack of safety.<sup>50</sup> As a way of coping with this phenomenon, they reported moving around the camp accompanied by a male chaperone or married woman or in a group.

Programme participants and beneficiaries also alluded to the importance of and interplay between social networks and their **perceptions of safety**.

**FIGURE 14**  
“I am able to move freely in the camp”



**FIGURE 15**  
I feel safe in the Camp



<sup>50</sup> This supports the findings of the Safety Audit for Za’atari Refugee Camp, 2015.



Cash for Work participants at UN Women's tailoring workshop

Many women and girls recounted that during their first year in the camp, they did not leave their tents because they did not feel safe. In addition to the conditions in the camp (absence of street lighting, living in tents), not knowing who the camp inhabitants were also contributed to their feeling of insecurity.<sup>51</sup> As one woman put it:

*"In the early years, people did not know each other. We lived in tents. A tent doesn't protect. Now we have caravans and a door to lock and people know each other. Before, people didn't know their neighbours or the people in the camp. Now people have relations with each other and a sense of safety and trust is built."*

Although it is difficult to quantify or measure how the programme has contributed to participants' and beneficiaries' perceptions of safety, it would be fair to say that by facilitating social capital, the Oases contribute to increased feeling of security.

Moreover, supplementary programme monitoring undertaken in December 2015 as part of a broader project evaluation found a link between engagement in the programme and a reduction in domestic violence: 20 per cent of C4W beneficiaries

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During the FGDs, women and men generally reported feeling safe in the camp, while adolescent girls said that they felt unsafe.

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reported **a reduction of domestic violence** within their households, with the remainder reporting no change.<sup>52</sup> When asked why, many gave the same reason: that they were spending fewer hours idle in their home with their spouse. The opportunity to leave the home and the fulfilment of the work provided less space for domestic disputes.

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<sup>52</sup> This question was asked as part of a broader set of questions and was asked by female data collectors with expertise in protection-related data collection.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.



### An antidote to isolation and an avenue for psychosocial support

Programme participants and beneficiaries reported that they utilize the Oases to **overcome potentially tense relations** and to be among people they can relate to. They are able to share problems with each other, think through solutions and temporarily escape their worries. In this way, the Oases are means and markers of social connectedness and psychosocial support for the refugees.

Women, many of whom are heads of their households, are expected to be calm and composed and to care for and support their families. They have to shoulder a great deal of responsibility within their households. When they have time to sit by themselves, they can be **overwhelmed** by the “weight of [their] problems”. This feeling is summarized by a statement made by a widowed mother:

*“Over the weekend, you sit at home and when you are alone you remember your family members who are in different countries or you remember your martyred brother, and it hurts you. I spent the past weekend crying. I could not wait to come to the Oasis to get out of the house.”*

Similar feelings were expressed by another woman:

*“[At home] we face a lot of stress, having to deal with the death... [and] bombing [of friends and family in Syria]. [At the Oasis], we empty our negative energy. We entertain each other. We sing. We dance. We perform dabke. We spend three quarters of the day here... It's better for us to be outside the house, engaged.”*

The data reveal that 26 per cent of respondents **rated their emotional health as ‘bad’** and 13 per cent ‘very bad’, while 41 per cent rated it ‘fair’ and 20 per cent ‘good’. None of the respondents reported their emotional health as ‘very good’, despite that being an option. FGD participants explained that rating their emotional health is difficult because there are days where it is ‘very bad’ and other days when it is better, hence the high ratings for ‘fair’. Generally, respondents tied their emotional well-being to events in Syria, mostly to tragic events involving family members. The data also show an association between the women’s ability to handle difficult situations well and feeling in control of events in their lives.

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[At home] we face a lot of stress, having to deal with the death... [and] bombing [of friends and family in Syria]. [At the Oasis], we empty our negative energy. We entertain each other. It’s better for us to be outside the house, engaged.”

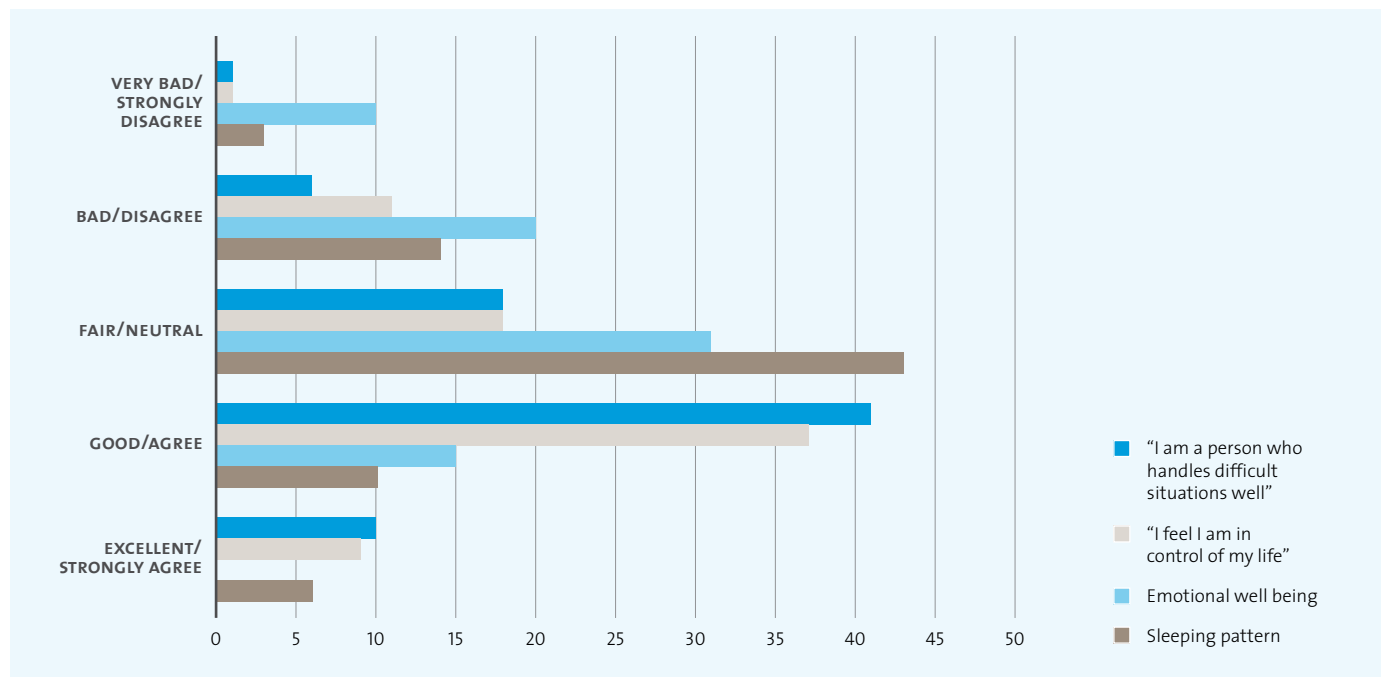
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### Gendered identities and self esteem

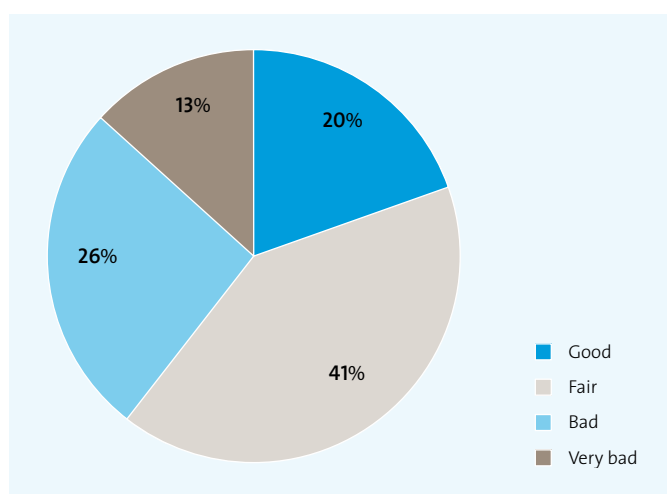
Programme participants and beneficiaries reported that the programme helped them **recover their self-esteem and their identities, which have been impacted by displacement**. A female programme participant suggested: “[C4W] helped me understand my self-worth. I go to the centre, and my family awaits my return. It makes me feel like I am a useful person. A useful member of my society... In Syria, my husband did not trust me to leave the house. But now that I am working and supporting our family, I come and go to work on a daily basis ... My husband trusts my abilities.”

Men echoed similar feelings, but their responses focused on the fact that by being able to provide for their families, they have regained their self-worth. The men conceptualize their responsibility within the household unit as the breadwinners. If they are not able to provide for their families, a large part of their identities is ‘deleted’. While some acknowledged that their wives had been employed in Syria, the men had also held jobs. “It is not

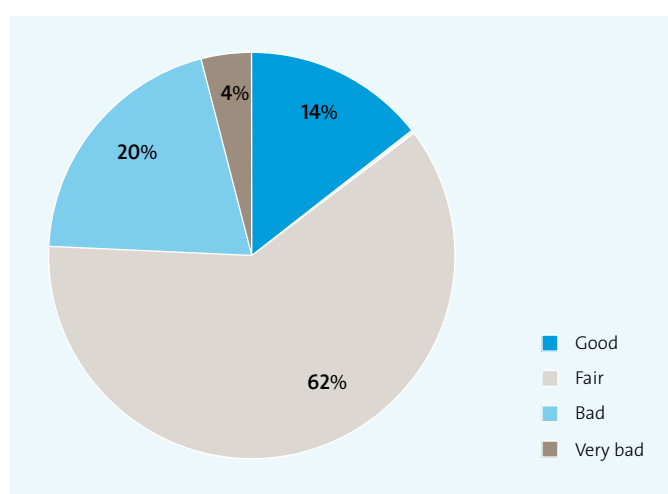
**FIGURE 16**  
Indicators of Emotional Wellbeing



**FIGURE 17**  
Emotional Health



**FIGURE 18**  
Sleep Pattern



that women should not work," one FGD respondent stated. "... It is a problem when I am sitting at home without a job or something to do and my wife is making money, and I have to ask her for money to buy things."

The men closely link their identity to their role as providers for and protectors of their families.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Women's Refugee Commission 2014.

Given the dearth of C4W opportunities available, many feel they have lost their identities as men. Male and female FGD respondents articulated the reversal in gendered hierarchies through humour; they joked that men in the camp are no longer men. Rather, they have turned into "armchairs," "chair legs" or "mattress presidents"; they are relegated to the domestic sphere and are no longer able to leverage *'mawneh'*, influence, within their

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“We’re living in a strange time. A man cannot be a man anymore.”

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families. “Men lost their authority. I do not even have influence over my little boy nowadays. If I slap him or discipline him, he will go crying to protection services,” one respondent stated as the others laughed. “We’re living in a strange time. A man cannot be a man anymore,” added another.

However, FGDs revealed that lower self-esteem among Syrian men led to negative or exaggerated expressions of masculinity. Feeling disempowered with an eroding social status, they resort to violence to assert their authority and express their frustrations within the family.<sup>54</sup> One of the interviewees stated that before he was enrolled in UN Women’s C4W programme, his wife was the breadwinner through C4W in the camp. He stated that he and his children “lived on bread and canned food” until his wife returned from work. He felt “at her mercy” when she came back tired and unable to “fulfil her duties as a wife and mother”. He would “argue and fight and make a big deal out of something small.” Now that he is working, “things are back to normal”.

In the discussion about gender-based violence, the men said they believed a major factor for its increase among displaced Syrians is economic in nature. A father of four exclaimed:

*“You know this thing that all the organizations are always talking about [domestic violence] is not the issue. I do not need you to tell me that hitting my wife or yelling at my child is bad. I know that. Let me earn a living and you will see that it will solve this.”*

The men also described feeling side-lined by service providers, who, in their perception, tend to prefer

women to men because women are “polite” and “dependable” while men are considered “difficult” and “rough”. This is an interesting point of view given that more than three quarters of all C4W opportunities in the camp go to men.

**Similar to the men, some female respondents stated that their gendered identities are challenged in the camp.** A married programme beneficiary, who frequents the hair salon operated at the Oases, stated that she “lost her sense of femininity” in the camp. She explained that living in cramped quarters, with little privacy, limited financial means and difficulty in maintaining standards of cleanliness (due to heat, dust and shared facilities such as latrines) affected her self-esteem and domestic life with her partner in a negative manner. She conceptualized her gendered identity in relation to her physical appearance and her domestic sphere. Although she no longer shares latrines, and access to water is more

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“You know this thing that all the organizations are always talking about [domestic violence] is not the issue. I do not need you to tell me that hitting my wife or yelling at my child is bad. I know that. Let me earn a living and you will see that it will solve this.”

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54 Ibid.

available, she stated that having access to a space in the camp where she can assert a continuity and normalcy of life and care for herself is crucial. It helps her feel like her “old self”.

Due to the difficult financial disposition of families within the camp, a space such as a hair salon, for example, is not only somewhere for women to care for themselves. It also helps people recreate normal life, providing a space where women socialize and get updates on ‘goings-on’ in the community without needing to consider the fees associated with private beauty salons.

### Strengthening women’s participation

The beneficiaries reported that participating in UN Women’s programmes has helped them become **active members within their families and their communities**. They are not only supporting their families’ financial needs but also contributing to their communities in various ways. A married woman who supports nine family members through C4W at UN Women said:

*“The programme made women aware of their existence and status, even at home. It helped women understand their rightful position in the camp. It helped me understand my self-worth. I go to the centre, and my family awaits my return. It makes me feel like I am a useful person – a useful member of society.”*

Programme participants gave examples of ways in which they believe they have helped their communities. A tailor in the C4W programme stated:

*“We supported the schools in the camp. The tailoring project was excellent. Many school children benefited from the recycled bags that we made. And the hair salon as well, for example. Many people cannot afford to send brides to hair salons and to do henna before the ceremony. They come here instead. It is a two-way benefit system. We [as C4W participants] benefit and the women in the camp benefit from our services.”*

FGD participants cited the production of baby kits as another example of how women at the Oases have helped their communities. The women in the C4W programme produce the baby kits, which are then distributed to hospitals in the camp through a close collaboration with UNICEF. The baby kits are

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“It is a two-way benefit system. We [as C4W participants] benefit and the women in the camp benefit from our services.”

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distributed as incentives to encourage families to register their children and to seek antenatal care, including immunizations.

Furthermore, women involved in the community-based protection network and the women’s committee recognized that their work is needed within the camp, especially as interlocutors between their community and service providers. The women stated they are able to **echo the community’s pressing needs** to stakeholders and to think through solutions with decision makers within Zaatari.

When asked what they thought about the efficacy of the meetings they have held with decision makers, and whether they believe their concerns are taken into consideration, some stated that action is usually slow but that, depending on the issue, they feel their voices are taken into account. When it came to their concerns about the role of street leaders and accusations of nepotism, one woman cited this as an example where she felt the community’s concerns are being addressed. However, when it came to large infrastructural issues, such as electricity, they feel as if they are “speaking to themselves”.

Results of the survey echoed these remarks. More than half of survey respondents believe their **concerns are sometimes addressed**. Their voices are heard depending on the issue. Close to 30 per cent believe their **concerns are not addressed** when they voice them. They have vocalized their concerns in the past, but no one listened.

FIGURE 19

“I feel my concerns will be addressed if I voice them”

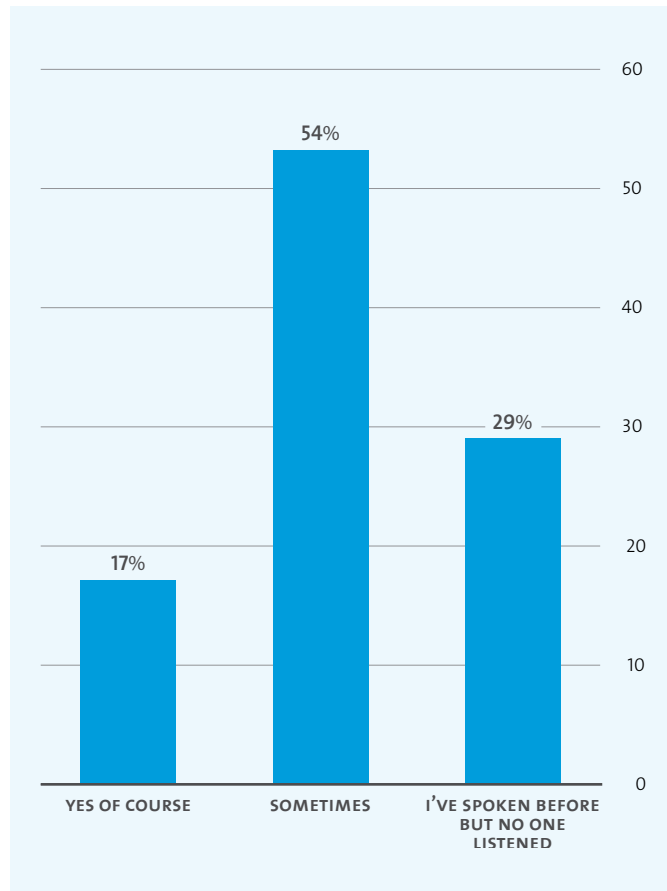
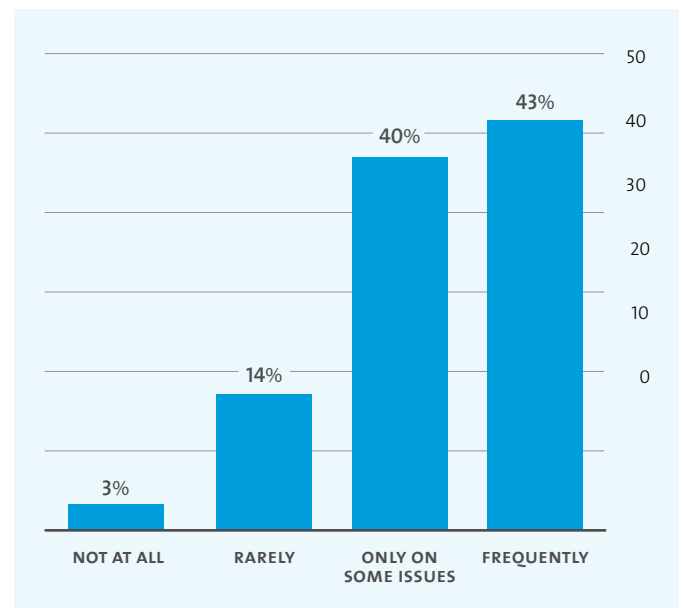


FIGURE 20

“Women’s voices and concerns are represented within service provision”



Asked about whether they feel **women’s voices and concerns, in particular, are represented** within camp structures and service provision, 43 per cent believe that women’s voices are frequently represented and 40 per cent believe that these are represented in some issues only.



# CONCLUSIONS

Humanitarian actors responding to the Syrian refugee crisis have come to understand the importance of shifting policies from an emergency response to a more resilience-based approach embedded in community-development and self-reliance. Given current challenges in accessing legal employment opportunities, C4W serves as a powerful mechanism in supporting refugees to sustain themselves, prioritize their own needs and lead healthful lives.

At Za'atari, the C4W activities provided through UN Women focus on tailoring, hairdressing, handicraft making, teaching, day-care services and administrative support. The tailors make school uniforms and baby kits that UNICEF distributes within the camps. The school uniforms are provided to school-aged children and the baby kits are given to new families as an incentive to complete immunizations and breastfeeding classes. Hairdressing services are also provided free of charge for camp inhabitants, and they are frequently utilized by women who cannot afford private salons. While the opportunities tend to focus on areas that are seen as 'traditional' for women, this is based on requests made by refugees to help ensure their ability and social acceptance in accessing these opportunities. Moreover, many of the beneficiaries came to UN Women's programmes with the skills needed to work in these sectors.

Beneficiaries of UN Women's programmes overwhelmingly expressed the positive impact these have had on their lives. At the Oases, they have built and strengthened their social networks, regained their sense of self, developed their coping strategies, learned new skills and helped supplement the assistance they receive. The monitoring research also revealed that households use the income earned through C4W mostly to diversify their food choices, access drinking water (and ice during the hot summers) and communicate with family members. Furthermore, women involved in the protection network and the women's committee have expanded their awareness about services within the camp and become more engaged in family and community life.



*Cash for work links women's labour to the camp economy. Among other things women are paid to produce comprehensive maternal kits for distribution to new parents in the camp.*

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Expand support for self-reliance opportunities for women and men.** Self-reliance opportunities provide much-needed financial assistance in supporting refugees to lead dignified lives. Moreover, they enable the restoration of self-worth and self-respect. New opportunities need to take into account the importance of targeting women and men equally. Their creation must therefore be underpinned by a solid gender analysis of available skill sets, the ability to engage in different sectors and the systems needed to facilitate women to access self-reliance opportunities (e.g., day-care services on site, all-female spaces).
2. **Strengthen the participation of adolescent girls** in programme activities and engage them more effectively in decisions that affect them.
  - a. Engage girls in programme design, implementation and monitoring exercises. Consider having a platform for refugee girls to propose project ideas to camp partners and develop the ideas with staff to encourage agency and responsibility.
  - b. Improve girls' involvement in programmes that focus on positive behaviour and enhance problem-solving skills, conflict mediation and prevention, as well as technical training. This can include reading clubs or mentorship programmes that promote positive coping mechanisms and teach skills that are directly relevant to their daily lives.
  - c. Foster closer cooperation with parents by organizing roundtable sessions to hear adolescent girls' concerns about the impacts that displacement and war have had on them and to better understand their coping mechanisms. More effectual awareness sessions can then be developed with partners to discourage negative coping mechanisms.
  - d. Invest in adolescent girls' capacities to become more active within camp structures. For example, provide opportunities for them to join the women's committee and to meet with service providers and camp decision makers.
- Intergenerational activity enhances learning and helps improve self-esteem.
- e. Provide targeted outreach (i.e., home visits) to inform parents about programme facilities and activities. Adolescent girls reported that parents who are visited at home and whose fears are addressed or alleviated are more likely to allow them to attend classes at the Oases.
3. **Engage men and boys more effectively**, while keeping in mind that the strength of the Oases' model lies in them being safe spaces for women and girls. The fact that the Oases are gender segregated ensures that beneficiaries who have reservations about gender-mixed facilities are able to attend and feel safe and comfortable doing so.
  - a. Engaging men can be through dedicating a separate safe space for men and boys where expanded learning and C4W opportunities are possible.
  - b. It is also crucial to involve men and boys through awareness-raising sessions that increase knowledge and promote positive coping mechanisms, especially pertaining to sexual and gender-based violence, and in a language that they are able to relate to.
4. Provide **transportation** from various collection points within the camp to help address the negative health impacts that some beneficiaries mentioned and to ensure greater participation from adolescent girls, people with disabilities and other vulnerable beneficiaries.
5. Expand **advocacy on issues related to sexual and gender-based violence**. Consider appointing a protection focal point for UN Women's activities in the camp. At present, protection is conducted through site managers, who are working at capacity and some of whom are not adequately trained.
6. Advocate for **increased donor support** for both refugee and host communities to alleviate tensions and to expand programmes that foster cohesion.

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# ANNEX 1: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Sample size and target** – The report is based on data collected from 128 programme participants and beneficiaries. The sample aimed to be as representative as possible, maximizing the sample size and striving to include diverse profiles within time constraints and the availability of resources. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a mixed method approach, combining observation, literature review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and a survey questionnaire. A mixed method approach enhances the reliability of the data collected and answers the questions at hand from a number of different perspectives to offset the weaknesses of using each method separately.

**Survey questionnaires** were collected from 76 programme beneficiaries selected randomly. They were designed to provide the answers to key questions concerning programme participants and beneficiaries:

- What is their demographic make-up?
- What is the gendered division of labour within their households?
- What are their perceptions and attitudes towards their health (physical and emotional), labour, civic participation and decision-making (at the household and community levels)?
- Does gender play a role in accessing services within Za'atari? If so, what role does it play?
- What are their current priorities? What challenges affect them at present?
- What impact has UN Women's C4W programming had on their perceptions of themselves and their lives?

**Six focus group discussions (FGDs)**, with 7–9 participants in each for a total of 48 participants, were held. Two FGDs were facilitated with women aged 19–65, three were held with girls ages 13–18 and one was held with men aged 21–41. Participants were recruited to include both programme participants

and beneficiaries and to cover the demographic characteristics (women, girls and men of different age groups). Sex- and age-segregated FGDs were held to ensure that respondents spoke comfortably. To determine the most relevant areas of focus, the FGDs were designed and implemented after the survey questionnaires were completed and took the initial findings from the survey into account. The first two FGDs with girls provided a breadth of information that the researcher was not expecting. A third FGD was therefore undertaken to triangulate the data collected.

Five **key informant interviews** were also conducted to collect in-depth information about:

- Programme strengths and areas for improvement
- Protection referral mechanisms and the community protection network
- The women's committee's role and its effectiveness

Key informant interviewees included a programme beneficiary, a member of the women's committee and a member of the protection network as well as programme staff.

The **literature review** focused on UN Women programme documents and reports as well as the most relevant reports by humanitarian agencies.

**Accuracy** – To identify systematic errors, 10 per cent of questionnaires were randomly selected for revision. The data was also 'cleaned' to remove errors and inconsistencies in responses. To ensure accuracy of information gathered from the FGDs and in-depth interviews, discussions were recorded both electronically and by hand, given the participants' consent. The recordings were later deleted.

**Ethical considerations** – The data collection process adopted a 'do no harm' approach. All participants were informed of the purpose of the monitoring research, the voluntary nature of their participation and that they would not gain direct benefits, financial or otherwise, from participating in the





*The sun rising over UN Women's Oasis One in Za'atari refugee camp*

research. They were also given the option of non-response. Further, only questions that were considered appropriate given the cultural context were asked. The research also ensured the confidentiality of the respondents; names and case ID numbers were not requested.

**Challenges and limitations** – The research provides insightful analysis of the perceptions of the refugee population in Za'atari that benefits from UN Women's programmes. Although the results are not statistically representative of the entire population in the camp, they are indicative of shared perceptions, challenges and experiences.

Some of the challenges and limitations of the research include:

1. Chiefly a monitoring exercise, the research and report were completed in the span of two months. Additional time would have allowed for more comprehensive data collection and analysis.
2. This monitoring tool is implemented for the first time, and thus there are no comprehensive baseline data on programme participants' and beneficiaries' self-perceptions with which to compare these results.
3. The Oases at Za'atari are operating at their capacity, so there was difficulty in securing a suitable space to conduct the FDGs. As such, the discussions were conducted in different settings and were interrupted on a number of occasions.
4. Because access to C4W opportunities is scarce in the camp, some respondents expressed unease at the prospect of losing their positions with the C4W programme. This fear might have informed their answers regarding areas for strengthening or impact of the programme. While the respondents were informed of the researcher's status and the purpose of the research, it is possible that they might have edited some of their responses due to their perception of the researcher as programme staff.



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