REACH IN JORDAN: ASSESSING LIVELIHOOD VULNERABILITIES TO INFORM A RESILIENCE-BASED APPROACH TO THE REFUGEE RESPONSE

As the crisis in Syria becomes increasingly protracted with no immediate prospect for refugees to return home, concerns continue to grow about the resilience capacities of refugees and countries hosting refugees across the region. During the “Supporting Syria and the Region” donor conference held in London in February 2016, there was a mutually acknowledged need to shift the refugee response towards a more sustainable and resilience-based approach, an approach which will not only promote economic integration of refugees but also improve the livelihood situation within host communities. In the aftermath of the conference, several donor governments, multilateral donors and the Government of Jordan concluded the “Jordan Compact”. Through this compact, Jordan aims to allow 200,000 refugees to work and governments and multilateral donors have made large-scale pledges to support this compact. A range of initiatives have since sought to promote the economic integration of refugees and efforts are also being made to ease the burden on host communities through creation of job opportunities for Jordanian men and women.

The need to understand livelihood needs and vulnerabilities for both Syrians and Jordanians has become particularly important in the backdrop of these developments. As such, in the past few months REACH has conducted several research exercises in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) and UN Women to shed light on the livelihood situation in Jordan. These include the third annual Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise (CFSME) aimed at understanding the food security and livelihood situation of Syrian refugees, an assessment of Jordanian and Syrian women’s access to basic services and another assessment of women’s access to livelihoods.

The Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise (WFP/REACH) seeks to provide up-to-date information on the food security and livelihood vulnerabilities of Syrian refugees and to understand how vulnerabilities have changed since 2014. This information helps to inform WFP targeting and to guide the prioritisation of vulnerable refugees for urgent assistance. To provide a comprehensive overview, CFSME explores vulnerability to food insecurity and its interaction with economic and livelihood vulnerabilities, including access to livelihoods, households’ income, expenditure and debt levels, and strategies used to cope with the lack of resources. The 2016 assessment report builds on experiences from 2015 and 2014 and will be available soon on the REACH Resource Center.

With large-scale funding being provided to livelihood programming in the aftermath of the London conference, this comprehensive overview of refugees’ vulnerabilities is relevant to understand sector-specific needs and inform an effective resilience-based response. To further enhance resilience, some of the funding for livelihood programming is also designated to support women entering the work place. However, there is limited information currently available on women’s status of employment and access to livelihoods in Jordan. To address this gap, the Women’s Livelihoods Assessment (UN Women/REACH) looked into Syrian and Jordanian women’s access to livelihoods, specifically, labour force participation, factors that might hinder this participation and women’s attitudes towards employment. The assessment seeks to contribute to an evidence-based gender-sensitive approach to livelihood programming and to ensure that the realities and needs of women are taken into account in ongoing discussions. REACH and UN Women also conducted an assessment of access to basic services in Irbid and Zarqa governorates to understand access, identifying general access challenges, as well as challenges related to specific individual services.

To further inform targeting and highlight the distinct livelihood needs among different demographic groups, in the coming months, REACH, with generous support, will also be rolling out a youth assessment in Zaatari, Azraq and Emirati Jordanian refugee camps. This study will assess the outcomes of youth programming, primarily by mapping access to and enrolment in youth activities in these camps.

Building on these past experiences and to contribute to a robust evidence base to guide large-scale livelihood programming in Jordan, REACH is aiming to conduct a nationwide livelihood assessment in the coming months. This assessment will provide a comprehensive overview of the current livelihoods landscape in the country. Specifically, the proposed assessment seeks to address existing information gaps related to Syrians’ and Jordanians’ access to
livelihoods, barriers that exist for different demographics to participate in the labour market, and the interaction between livelihoods and issues relevant for long-term resilience such as protection, social cohesion, migration, education and food security. Such an understanding is necessary to both develop and implement effective programming as well as to monitor and evaluate the impact of livelihood interventions in Jordan.