



Living in Limbo: Iraqi Young Women and Men in Jordan

Women's Refugee Commission
December 2009

Executive Summary

More than six years after the start of the war in Iraq, it appears that a significant number of Iraqis will remain in Jordan for the foreseeable future. This longer-term, protracted refugee situation is likely to lead to decreased international support.

In view of this, Iraqi refugees living in Jordan should be granted some type of temporary residency status and the restrictions on their right to work should be eased. The international community should continue to support Jordanian services that have been extended to Iraqis, such as education. Resources should also be channeled to promote greater economic opportunities for both Iraqi refugees and host communities.

Pre-employment readiness, job training and access to the labor market are particularly crucial for the large number of younger refugees. Iraqi young women and men, particularly those who have missed out on years of school, need access to education, skills training and employment opportunities. These skills are critical for those who will resettle to another country and for those who will eventually return to Iraq. Allowing Iraqis to earn a safe livelihood and young people to acquire skills is in the economic and security interest of Jordan, and is essential for the future of Iraq and the region.

The Women's Refugee Commission visited Jordan in October 2009 to look at the educational and skills-building needs and opportunities for Iraqi young women and men. This report aims to provide information and recommendations to assist the Government of Jordan, the international community and local agencies in designing and implementing programs and policies that can ease the burden of the Iraqi population on Jordan's infrastructure and best prepare Iraqis for life after displacement.

Key Recommendations

- 1. Relax restrictions on refugees' right to work and promote opportunities for self-sufficiency.**
- 2. Adapt lessons learned from other livelihood programs,** such as conducting market assessments, building on participants' existing skills and providing adequate follow-up and support.
- 3. Increase nonformal educational opportunities for out-of-school youth,** particularly those older than 18, including through catch-up classes, distance learning opportunities and certified skills building.
- 4. Improve information-sharing among the Iraqi community,** especially with regard to services available and national policies that affect them.

See page 10 for more recommendations.

Introduction

The Women's Refugee Commission undertook a two-week field mission in October 2009 to look at educational and skills-building needs and opportunities for Iraqi young women and men living in Jordan. The assessment sought to identify what knowledge and skills Iraqi youth need to prepare them for safe, dignified work in the future—whether in Jordan, Iraq or in a third country of resettlement.

The Women's Refugee Commission conducted interviews with 15 Iraqi young women and 16 Iraqi young men, ages 15–24, and with 23 United Nations (UN) agencies, universities, training centers, government offices, donors and international, regional and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (see Annex 1 for a complete list). The team spent two weeks in Amman, where 88 percent of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR's) registered caseload resides. The team also visited Zarqa—the second largest city in Jordan. The focus of the assessment was on Iraqis who have arrived in Jordan since the beginning of the Iraq war in 2003.

This assessment is part of the Women's Refugee Commission's Displaced Youth Initiative, a global research and advocacy project that focuses on improving formal and nonformal education and job training opportunities for conflict-affected young women and men during every phase of displacement. Through global desk research, field assessments and innovative pilot projects, the Women's Refugee Commission is looking at the skills and education young people (15 to 24 years old) need to move forward with their lives, both while they are displaced and when they are able to return home, integrate into the host community or are resettled elsewhere.

As Iraqis' experiences living in Jordan vary by individual and location, the following should be read as a compilation of observations, experiences and perspectives of individuals met; it does not purport to be representative of the entire refugee population. While the focus of the assessment was on displaced Iraqis living in Jordan, lessons learned and recommendations in this report may have application for displaced youth living in urban areas in other countries.

Background

The Iraqi conflict has created one of the world's largest current displacements of people. Approximately 2.7 million people are displaced within Iraq and another 2 million have fled to neighboring countries.¹ The majority have sought refuge in Syria and Jordan, with smaller numbers living in Egypt, Iran, Lebanon and the Gulf states.

Although the exact number of Iraqis living in Jordan remains unclear, the Government of Jordan places the number as high as 450,000.² An estimated 18 percent are between the ages of 15 and 24.³ As of October 2009, approximately 46,661 refugees were registered with UNHCR, 17 percent of whom were between 15 and 24 years old.^{4,5} Generally, young people in this age group who are registered have a high level of education; however, 95 percent of females and 75 percent of males do not have any work experience or evidence of professional skills.⁶

Palestinians make up the majority of the population in Jordan today. Even when the Palestinian population is excluded, Jordan hosts the largest number of refugees per capita of any country in the world, with 84 refugees per 1,000 Jordanians.⁷ This has placed a significant strain on government resources and services. The global economic crisis has further exacerbated the situation; Jordan faces an unemployment rate of 14.5 percent, growing inflation and a decrease in remittances from Jordanians working in the oil industry in Gulf states.⁸

Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (refugee convention) or the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. As such, the government does not recognize Iraqis as refugees but as temporary "guests." As "guests," Iraqis do not have any legal protection provided under the refugee convention and face real and perceived risks and constraints, including the denial of return to Jordan for those who would



like to visit Iraq in order to evaluate their possibilities for return.⁹

Most Iraqis do not have legal residency in Jordan and, therefore, are not allowed to work legally. An Iraqi may apply for residency if he/she meets one of three conditions: (1) is married to a Jordanian; (2) has US\$25,000 in the bank; or (3) is an admitted university student. In addition, he/she must pay any outstanding fines, including overstay fines of 45 Jordanian dinar (JD)/month (approximately US\$63). The vast majority of Iraqis cannot meet these requirements and, as a result, only several thousand have legal residency in Jordan.¹⁰

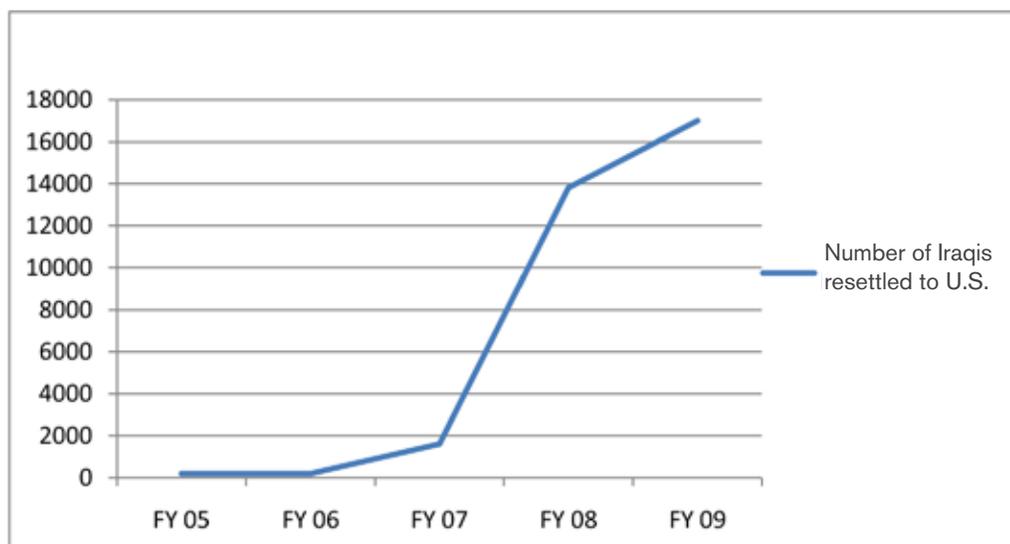
Most Iraqis who have arrived since 2003 have little to no source of sustainable income and many are struggling to support themselves and their families. The Iraqis that the Women's Refugee Commission met were surviving off property sold in Iraq or money sent from relatives living abroad. After a number of years in Jordan, their savings are quickly being depleted. Approximately 4,500 Iraqi families are receiving financial assistance from UNHCR in the form of preloaded ATM cards.¹¹ The ATM cards have proven to be effective, reliable and cost-efficient, and are popular with the refugees.¹² The amount depends on a sliding scale, with individuals receiving 75 JD (approximately US\$105)/month; a family of three getting 160 JD/month (US\$225); and a family of five 220 JD/month (US\$310). According to a recent UNHCR survey, most people are using this money to cover rent and food.¹³ However, many refugees told the Women's Refugee Commission that the assistance is not enough to pay their bills.

Despite these constraints, the Kingdom of Jordan has been extremely hospitable and generous in extending resources to the thousands of Iraqis who have sought refuge there since 2003. As one international humanitarian worker said, "Jordan has to be one of the most hospitable host communities."¹⁴ Beginning in 2007 and 2008, the Government of Jordan started to relax some policies, including allowing Iraqis to access public schools and government primary health care centers for free. These new policies coincided with an increase of international support to the Kingdom in 2007.

Based on conversations with Iraqis and information gathered from a May 2009 UNHCR survey with Iraqis in Jordan, it seems unlikely that people will return to Iraq until the security situation significantly improves. While many Iraqis are anxious to return home, some told the Women's Refugee Commission that they will never be able to go back to Iraq. The UNHCR survey found that only 2 percent of Iraqis interviewed have definite plans to return, while 92 percent do not plan to return to Iraq.¹⁵ UNHCR estimates that 20-30 percent may be interested in returning in the medium term, pending improvements in security.¹⁶ Only 233 refugees have returned to Iraq from Jordan with UNHCR assistance between January and October 2009. Since 2008, a total of 522 refugees have returned.¹⁷

Resettlement to a third country remains a very important option, particularly for the most vulnerable refugees. In 2008, UNHCR identified 80,000 – 100,000 of the 2 million Iraqi refugees as "extremely vulnerable and in need of resettlement."¹⁸ However, despite apparent demand, only a small number of Iraqis will have the opportunity to resettle. The United States is the largest recipient of Iraqis, with more than 33,000 going to the U.S. since 2003.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the number of Iraqis in Jordan who are registered with UNHCR is remaining steady, as new arrivals from Iraq are replacing those who leave.²⁰ Iraqis with a visa or a residency permit are still coming into Jordan.

Annual Iraqi Refugee Admissions to the United States since 2005²¹



Key Findings

Challenges in the Transition from Relief to Development

"It is a very artificial environment where we are supporting and subsidizing Iraqis to live."
International NGO worker. Amman. October 7, 2009.

More than six years after the start of the war in Iraq, it appears that a significant number of Iraqis will remain in Jordan for the foreseeable future. This longer-term, protracted refugee situation will probably mean decreased international support, although the need for assistance remains. Iraqis living in Jordan are quickly going through whatever savings they may have brought with them. Without the possibility of working legally, many are forced to rely on international assistance.

To date, much of the international support has been in the form of food and cash assistance to the most vulnerable Iraqis.²² The combination of the current aid system and legal constraints is contributing to a sense of dependency among the Iraqis and represents a waste of valuable human resources and potential. Young people growing up in this environment miss the opportunity to acquire requisite knowledge and skills—critical for their protection, development and the rebuilding of their communities.

Meanwhile, some donors' funding policies make effective, sustainable programming for Iraqis nearly impossible. Many donors reportedly expect a quick return on their investments, and are more interested in numbers served than program quality and adequate follow-up. As some relief agencies are under pressure to get a certain number of Iraqi beneficiaries into their programs in an eight-month period, they may offer incentives or enticements, such as transportation fees or stipends, that are not sustainable or may undermine the efforts of longer-term development agencies in the region. (The Women's Refugee Commission was told, however, that many Iraqis would be unable to access services if they had to pay for transportation themselves.) Additionally, changes in donors' funding priorities make planning challenging.

Concerns were also raised that this new influx of donors and relief agencies is likely to leave Jordan as funding decreases. Meanwhile, refugees will remain and it will be left to development and national organizations to address their longer-term needs. This might prove challenging where there has not been adequate coordination between relief and development agencies.

Presently, only one Iraqi NGO, Al-Sunbela, is registered with the Jordanian government. The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation told the Women's Refugee Commission that it prefers not to have Iraqi NGOs operating in Jordan to avoid organizations serving communities along religious or political lines,²³ which might lead to sectarian divisions. Building the social capital of the Iraqi community, however, is important in order to increase self-reliance, share information and reduce the burden on Jordanian national services.

General Education

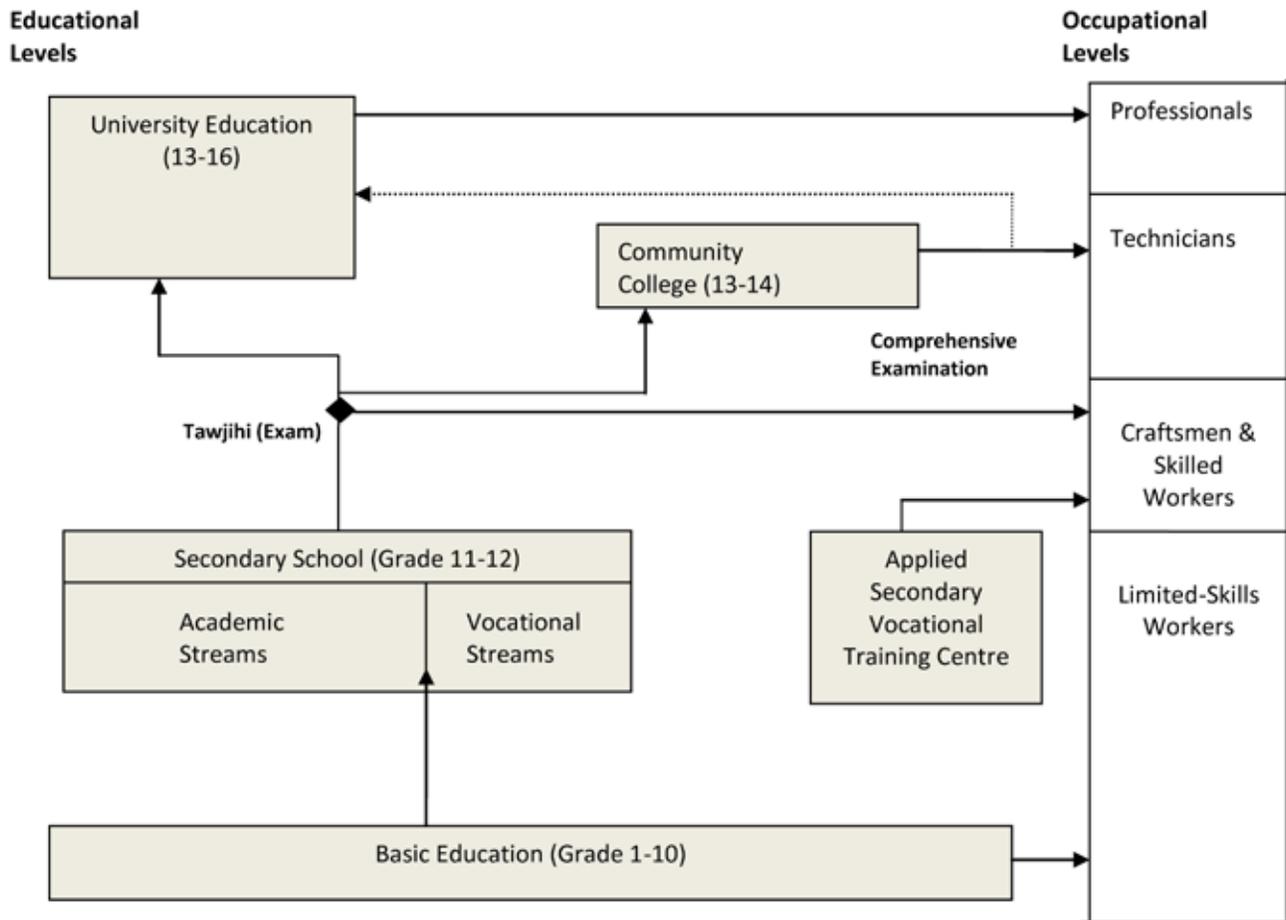
The public school system in Jordan (see chart page 5), which was already strained before the arrival of Iraqis, is now further strained. The government estimates that in 2008, 26,000 Iraqi children were in primary and secondary public school,²⁴ out of a total of 1.6 million children in school in Jordan.²⁵ There are 80,000 teachers and 5,000 schools across the country.²⁶ The Jordanian government estimates that an additional 50 schools or annexes attached to existing schools are needed to accommodate the Iraqi students.²⁷

In the 2007–2008 school year, the Kingdom of Jordan received funding from UNICEF and the European Commission (EC) to support the attendance of Iraqis in public schools. As a result, the government waived fees for Iraqi students to attend public school, with the waiver renewed on an annual basis. Fees are 40 JD/year for primary school and 60 JD/year for secondary school. The EC extended this support for school years 2008–2009 and 2009–2010. It is unclear if international support will continue after 2010 and whether Jordan will continue allowing Iraqis to attend public school for free.

Despite the availability of public school, many Iraqi families that the Women's Refugee Commission met did not want to send their children to public schools. They preferred to send them to private schools, where tuition had

been supported previously by the international community. Many said that they found the education substandard at the public schools or that their children complained of being bullied by the Jordanian students. Other young people were content at the public schools and were advancing in their studies.

Structure of the Jordanian Educational System*



* Based on information in: Mryyan, Nader, *ETF STUdy Labor Market Funcitoning: The Case of Jordan*. National Center for Human Resources Development. Amman, Jordan. No date.

School Dropouts

“Five years has been lost from my son's life.”

Mother of 25-year-old son who is out of school in Jordan. Amman. October 3, 2009.

Many young people that the Women’s Refugee Commission met were not in school. A number of reasons were given, including that some had arrived before public school was opened to Iraqis in 2007 and now they have been out of school more than three years; there is a law in Jordan that children over 13 years old are unable to re-enter the formal school system if they have been out of school more than three years. Others arrived without documentation, which previously was a barrier to their enrollment. While some young people have the ability to return to school now, they are older than their grade and are embarrassed to sit in class with much younger children. Other young people are now over 18 and, although they missed years of school, they have “aged out” of the formal system.

There are some opportunities available for school dropouts. Questscope, an NGO that works with low-income communities in the Middle East, runs nonformal and informal education programs that offer alternative paths to an education for young people who have missed years of school. The nonformal education program, which operates in partnership with the Ministry of Education, serves Jordanians and Iraqis and has reached more than 6,000 students

since 2003. The first group of 90 Iraqis graduated in January 2008 and another 320 are expected to graduate in January 2010. The program condenses a number of years of school into a 24-month, flexible cycle and prepares graduates to return either to the formal education system or to pursue vocational training at a government-run center. Jordanian graduates from the vocational training centers can apply for a small loan from the Development Employment Fund to start a small enterprise. To date, microcredit is not available to the Iraqi graduates. These opportunities are critical for young people to get back into the school system or learn skills in order to work. While reaching hundreds of young people each year, both Iraqis and Jordanians need access to more opportunities.

Higher Education

“Our culture forces us to build the future for our children regardless of the economic situation, regardless of the war.”

Mother of a 26-year-old daughter with a master’s degree in Biology. Amman. October 3, 2009.

The Iraqi population is highly educated, with many arriving in Jordan with university and advanced degrees. Thirty-five percent of Iraqis registered with UNHCR have a university or post-graduate degree.²⁸ Young women and men who have completed secondary school either in Iraq or Jordan almost universally voiced the desire to go on to university and continue their studies. However, higher education is more expensive for non-Jordanians and the costs are insurmountable for many Iraqis. Meanwhile, some agencies suggested that short-term courses might be more appropriate due to challenges they have experienced in identifying qualified Iraqis who are committed to remain in Jordan during the four to five years of their study.

The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) program, funded by the German government and administered by UNHCR through a cooperative agreement with Questscope, provides 55 scholarships for Iraqis who wish to study a nonmedical science discipline in Jordan. While this has been an important opportunity for some Iraqis, the number of scholarships available does not meet the demand and the selection criteria are too narrow for many potential applicants. Meanwhile, according to some international agencies, the lack of opportunity to pursue higher education has negatively impacted secondary school enrollment as some Iraqis view secondary school as a dead-end and do not see the value in attending.

Livelihoods

“Better than cash, I prefer employment—better to give me a job.”

26-year-old woman with a master’s degree in biology. Amman. October 3, 2009.

In the Jordanian economy, there remains a mismatch between labor demand and labor supply. The unemployment rate is more than 14 percent, and most jobs available are low-skilled and low-wage jobs. Many highly educated and skilled Jordanians are unwilling to accept the jobs that are available out of “embarrassment and shame.”²⁹

The situation is especially difficult for young people. Forty-one percent of the total unemployed within Jordan are aged 20 to 24.³⁰ Completing tertiary education is no guarantee of employment, as 40 percent of those with bachelor’s degrees are unemployed.³¹

Many of these low-skilled jobs, such as in construction, domestic work and the service industry, are occupied by migrant workers from Egypt, the Philippines and elsewhere. The Jordanian economy is producing approximately 55,000 new jobs a year, with 53 percent going to foreign workers.³²

While it is illegal for Iraqi refugees to work without residency and work permits, roughly half of Iraqis are engaged in some form of work, though it is frequently informal, part time and irregular.³³ Most are employed in low-skill, low-paying jobs, without any legal protection or recourse if they are exploited or abused. The Women’s Refugee Commission heard a number of stories where Iraqis had worked without receiving any pay or were paid significantly less than their Jordanian counterparts. The government is aware that some Iraqis are working and “turns a blind eye” to it. Women tend to generate a modest, but more regular income, and are at less risk than men (see page 10). It has been reported that these changing gender roles can sometimes be a source of conflict within families.³⁴

Abdul and Bilal*: A Portrait of Two Young Iraqi Men in Jordan

Abdul and Bilal are friends who met at a car dealership. Bilal is 29, rather heavysset, with a quiet demeanor. Abdul is 18, slightly built, with a charming smile. He appears very bright and quick. His first remark to the Women's Refugee Commission team was, "I have talked to people like you before, but nothing changes." After hearing his story, we understand why he said this.

Abdul has been in Jordan for two years; he came from the northern part of Iraq, probably the Kurdish area that was oppressed during Saddam Hussein's regime. But curiously enough, he said that had things stayed the same in Iraq, he would have finished school and "had a future." As it was, he only went to school through ninth grade and is currently not in school. Once in Jordan, he was offered the opportunity to take a course in auto repair or computer maintenance, but it was too far away and he couldn't afford the transportation.

He was part of a group of 11 "unaccompanied children," children under 18 who came to Jordan without parents. This group was his "family"—when anyone had problems they all banded together and helped one another. Ten of them have been resettled, one in Sweden and the others in the U.S. Abdul now lives alone, waiting to be resettled. Why was he not resettled...who knows? It is painful to think how he must feel. He is not in school, cannot work. Abdul said he spends from about 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at an Internet cafe communicating with friends and playing games. Sounds like teenagers everywhere.

When asked what he would like for his future, Abdul said he wants to go to another country to finish his education, go to university and study mathematics or languages and become a teacher.

Bilal has been here since 2005 and just received his UN identity card and now gets 70 Jordanian dinars a month (about US\$100). This appears to be one system that gives refugees some dignity. When they are eligible for a monthly stipend, they are given an ATM card and collect their money that way. They don't have to stand in line for hours each month to receive a handout.

Bilal is a carpenter and only completed elementary school in Iraq. He also lives alone and is not allowed to work. He told of a friend who was working illegally, was picked up by the police and sent back to Iraq. Bilal still has family in Iraq but cannot go back there, nor does he want to. Both he and Abdul said if they went back they would probably be killed. We did not ask why. Some questions you do not ask. But we did ask how they spend their time as they don't go to school and can't work. Bilal said they reverse day and night.

All of the youth said they want to resettle in non-Arab countries. They feel Iraqis are looked down upon by other Arabs. And Iraqis were once considered one of the best-educated, most elite group in the Arab world.

* Not their real names.

Vocational Training

The Jordanian government has recently allowed vocational training programs for Iraqi refugees in preparation for their return to Iraq or resettlement to a third country. As a result, there has been a significant effort among humanitarian and development agencies to provide training. These efforts include: International Relief and Development's partnership with Entity Green at the Ein El Basha training center, where there is a focus on construction; Mercy Corps' computer training programs; Save the Children's support of students in the government-run vocational training centers; and CARE's livelihood programs, where they are partnering with local Jordanian community-based organizations (CBOs). In 2008–2009, hundreds of young people have benefited from these trainings, many of which have been funded by the U.S. State Department's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration.

Most of the training has focused on skills that can be practiced at home and that do not require an official certificate to practice, such as catering, sewing or mobile phone repair. The main emphasis has been on the training of women. Most of these home-based businesses are not particularly lucrative, but money earned does contribute to self-sufficiency. Among UNHCR and implementing partners, there is now more emphasis on improving entrepreneurial and transferable skills, such as interview techniques, financial literacy and marketing. This shift is based on an assessment conducted by UNHCR, other donors and partner NGOs, which found that employers need—and the market demands—more employable and “trainable” youth.

Potential Sectors to Consider for Vocational Training for Iraqi Refugees in Jordan

The following is a list of potential areas to consider for training Iraqi young women and men based on labor market studies in Jordan,³⁵ literature reviews and interviews with service providers, government officials and employers in Jordan and Arizona, the latter with a view to resettlement. While the chart provides some sectors to consider, it must be noted that: the majority of Iraqis are not allowed to work legally in Jordan; there are few rigorous evaluations of current training programs for Iraqis in Jordan; the future for many displaced Iraqis is unknown; and there is no in-depth analysis looking at local supply and demand for goods and services vis-à-vis job opportunities for young people in Iraq.

The chart also contains information on potential vocations in the U.S., given the possibility of resettlement for some Iraqis. In general, most refugees who resettle to the U.S. start their employment history in low or unskilled

Industry	Jordan	U.S. (Arizona)*
Accounting		√
Child care	√	√
Computer & mobile phone repair	√	
Construction		√
Home care attendant		√
Hotel management	√	√
Information technology		√
Nursing		√
Office management	√	√
Restaurant/Food production	√	√
Sewing	√	
Security guard		√
Tourism/Hospitality (dishwashing, housekeeping, laundry)	√	√
* Based on Women's Refugee Commission's August 2009 assessment in Arizona. For more information, see <i>Life in the Promised Land: Resettled Refugee Youth Struggle in the U.S.</i> www.womensrefugeecommission.org/docs/arizona_youth_report_2009_for_web.pdf		

labor sectors, such as the hospitality and service industries, for example as housekeepers in hotels, janitors in offices, cooks and dishwashers in restaurants and nurses' aides in homes for the elderly.

Service providers and participants said that many Iraqis participating in livelihood programs face many challenges, including:

- lack of access to a market;
- lack of access to start-up capital;
- lack of opportunity to practice skills learned in vocational training, for example through internships or apprenticeships;
- lack of interest among the Iraqis in jobs available in low-skilled industries;
- lack of follow-up support for graduates after training programs; and
- difficulties in going to scale—only reaching a few hundred young people, while the need is in the hundreds of thousands in the region.

Some agencies are attempting to address some of these challenges. UNHCR conducted a recent assessment of livelihoods for Iraqis in Jordan. As a result, it developed a comprehensive livelihoods strategy that includes promoting access to legal work and financial services and improving employability and entrepreneurship skills.

UNHCR is also funding a pilot project to connect a small number of Iraqis who have legal residency to a local microfinance institution in Amman. The Noor Al Hussein Foundation and Jordan River Foundation organize three-day markets where Iraqi and Jordanian women who have participated in their trainings can sell their goods, such as rugs, baskets and other handicrafts.

Information Sharing

Among the Iraqis whom the Women's Refugee Commission met there was wide-scale confusion about the availability of services and the status of certain government policies and procedures for accessing international assistance, such as cash assistance and resettlement. Many refugees were not aware that public primary health care clinics are now free for all Iraqis or that documentation is no longer required to enroll in public school. The majority of the out-of-school young women and men that the Women's Refugee Commission interviewed were not participating in any nonformal or informal education or training programs and were not aware of any that existed. Many Iraqis, including adults, inquired about how decisions were made as to who qualified for cash assistance and about the process to be considered for resettlement.

There have, however, been attempts to share information with Iraqis in Jordan. A number of NGOs, such as International Relief and Development and Save the Children, have recruited Iraqis to serve as volunteers to conduct outreach on available services and to gather information, such as health screening, for project planning purposes. UNHCR publishes an annual directory of all services available to Iraqis and distributes it at its office and through partner organizations. The Government of Jordan and the Jordan River Foundation have established two free helplines (Jordan River Foundation's number is #110 and the Government of Jordan's is #111) where Iraqis can anonymously and confidentially call for advice related to health care and report abuse or any protection concerns. Iraqis also benefit from access to Jordan's advanced information and communication technologies (ICT). Almost all Iraqis the Women's Refugee Commission met had a mobile phone and were visiting Internet cafes. UNICEF is launching an innovative pilot project to establish state of the art ICT classrooms in 14 schools to develop computer skills and share information. This could be an important source of information for Iraqis wishing to learn more about the situation at home or in resettlement countries in order to make more informed decisions.

More Programs for Women and Girls Than for Men

"I would like to have more of these types of meetings because I feel relaxed."

23-year-old young man after a focus group discussion with the Women's Refugee Commission. Zarqa. October 10, 2009.

In general, females experience limited mobility and face greater constraints than men in the Middle East. However, for Iraqis in Jordan, this is not necessarily the case as many women have more mobility and more opportunities than men. This is because males, especially young men, used to be targeted much more than women by the Government of Jordan for questioning and deportation. Therefore, there is still more concern about Iraqi men working illegally than women.

To date, most programming for Iraqis has focused on women and girls. There is arguably more space in Jordan for Iraqi women to gather and discuss their concerns. A number of donors, UN agencies and NGOs reported that among the Iraqis in Jordan, the most vulnerable population may very well be young men. At the same time, many of the vocational training programs still have a lower enrollment of females.

Recommendations

The Kingdom of Jordan, with support from the governments of Iraq, United States, European Union and other donors, UN agencies, international and national nongovernmental organizations, should:

1. Ease restrictions on the right to work and promote greater self-sufficiency.

Given that a significant number of Iraqis will likely remain in Jordan for the foreseeable future, the Kingdom of Jordan should consider a temporary protection status for refugees and ease restrictions on Iraqis' right to work, perhaps starting with safe, available jobs that are least desirable among Jordanians and are most difficult to fill. While these jobs might not be attractive to Iraqis either, at least it would allow them to make some money and gain some skills.

The international community should work with the Government of Jordan to develop and implement economic programs that will benefit both Iraqis and Jordanians. Iraqi youth who have participated in training programs should be permitted to practice their skills through internships or apprenticeships. Allowing Iraqis to earn a safe livelihood and young people to acquire skills is in the economic and security interest of Jordan, and is essential for the future of Iraq.

2. Continue to provide international support for vital services for Iraqis refugees.

The international community should stay engaged and continue to support Jordanian state structures that are providing vital services to the Iraqi population. This support has enabled a number of refugees to gain access to schools, health clinics and other facilities and has decreased the number of deportations and detention of refugees. In particular, it will be important for donors to continue to support school fees. At the same time, it must be recognized that this support is not indefinite. Donors and international agencies should partner with, and build the capacity of, local organizations to help deliver assistance to refugees and low-income Jordanians in a way that is sustainable and makes sense for longer-term development.

3. Adapt lessons learned from other livelihood programs to the Jordanian context.

It is encouraging that livelihood programs are now available for some Iraqis in Jordan. It is imperative, however, that these programs build on existing knowledge and good practice, which is adapted to the Jordanian context. It is not clear, for example, that programs are being designed based on market assessments conducted in Jordan, Iraq and/or resettlement countries. Meanwhile, program objectives are not always clear and vary between psychosocial and economic objectives. Adequate support and follow-up must be built into the programs, including advocacy to secure Iraqi access to microfinance institutions. Additionally, rigorous evaluations of the effectiveness of training interventions are needed. Both will require longer funding cycles and additional donor support.

4. Increase support for out-of-school young women and men older than 18 years old.

Out-of-school young women and men who are older than 18 years old arguably face the most difficult time accessing services. Many have missed out on years of school and are no longer able to re-enter the formal system.

Informal education programs, such as vocational training and remedial classes, should be expanded to reach more young people. These programs should include certificates that are recognized by the Jordanian and Iraqi governments. Such basic literacy and numeracy classes could be taught by former Iraqi teachers now living in Jordan. Distance learning opportunities should be further explored and developed to reach more young people, particularly those with the least access and mobility.

5. Expand outreach to inform youth of available services and policies.

As many refugees were not aware of existing services or policies that affect them, it is critical that the Government of Jordan and the international community reassess their outreach efforts and revise as needed. This will require creative thinking in close consultation with Iraqis in order to determine the best methods and locations for information dissemination. It may require both physical structures, such as community centers run by Iraqis in areas where a large number of Iraqis live, as well as virtual forums, such as online message boards, as many Iraqi youth access the Internet on a regular basis.

Next Steps

The Women's Refugee Commission is sharing these findings and recommendations with policy makers, donors and service providers working with displaced youth worldwide to help better prepare young people for life during and after displacement. These organizations and agencies are encouraged to use these recommendations as they make decisions about funding and develop programs to support young people affected by conflict.

Information gathered from this mission will help to shape a pilot project in which the Women's Refugee Commission will partner with an operational agency to try out an innovative practice and build on these recommendations to strengthen education and job training for young people in Jordan. Lessons learned from this demonstration project, as well as additional pilot projects focused on other durable solutions (resettlement and local integration), will feed into the Women's Refugee Commission's global Displaced Youth Initiative.

Over the next two years, the Women's Refugee Commission will visit other conflict-affected countries to build on these recommendations and compare how the situation varies in different locations. Advocacy briefs will be developed after each assessment.

Lessons learned from field visits to displaced settings, global desk research and pilot projects will culminate in a "resource toolbox" for donors, policy makers and practitioners that will offer guidance and practical steps to improve programs and policies for displaced youth.

Annex 1: Agencies Met

Al-Sunbela

Amideast

CARE International

Ein El Basha Training Center

Entity Green Training

European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO)

INJAZ–Junior Achievement

International Relief and Development (IRD)

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Jordanian Higher Council on Youth

Jordan River Foundation

Mercy Corps

Middle East University

Ministry of Education

Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

Noor Al-Hussein Foundation

Questscope

Refugees International

Relief International

Save the Children–US

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Youth Society for Self-Development

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Notes

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Since 1989, the Women's Refugee Commission has advocated vigorously for policies and programs to improve the lives of refugee and displaced women, children and young people and those seeking asylum—bringing about lasting, measurable change.

