



ILO Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan

Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA)

January 2017

Since the onset of the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan, increased competition over jobs has been affecting livelihoods and social cohesion between Syrian refugees and host communities. As part of the wider UN response to the Syrian refugee crisis, the ILO has adopted a development-focused and employment-driven strategy to support host communities and refugees in order to maintain and reinforce the social and economic stability of the affected neighbouring countries. Over the past few years, the ILO has used USD 1.76 million of its Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) funding to kick start activities targeting both Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan.

The main results have been the following:

- 1- Intensive evidence-based advocacy on the right to work for Syrian refugees has contributed to the commitment of the government to ease Syrian access to the labour market. This was presented at the February 2016 “Supporting Syria and the Region” conference in London, through the Jordan Compact.

Extensive research was conducted and shared systematically with all partners through workshops and roundtables, providing the necessary evidence to advocate for opening the formal labour market to Syrian refugees. The Jordan Compact, which was presented at the 2016 London conference, proposes that the entry of the Syrians to the labour market is matched with increased foreign investment and easier access of Jordanian exports to European markets with relaxed Rules of Origin.

- 2- Two local economic development plans were drafted by the most affected governorates with the ILO’s technical support. The plans provide a framework for interventions owned by the local development committees at governorate level.

Intense consultation with Local Economic Development Committees in Irbid and Mafrq resulted in two comprehensive plans that are being used as resource mobilisation tools at governorate level.

- 3- Demonstration projects were piloted, which allowed the ILO to try specific approaches that work in the context of this crisis.

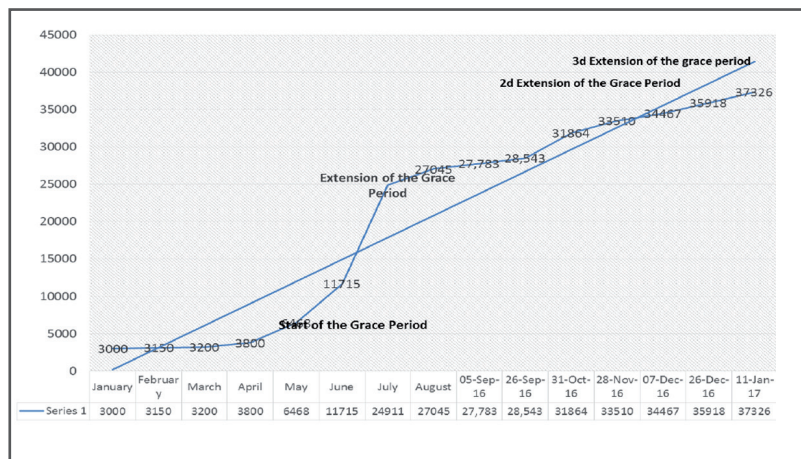
Gender-sensitive participatory value chain reports in agribusiness (tomatoes and olives) were developed with local stakeholders and recommendations were partially implemented. Activities were also implemented in collaboration with agricultural cooperatives, related to thyme and medicinal plantation. Demonstration projects were also run for employment intensive programmes – maintenance and rehabilitation of roads as well as improvement of farmers’ lands. These activities helped generate jobs but were also useful pilots for the up-scaling of the activities in the next phase.



- 4- Once the Jordan Compact was approved, the ILO designed and continued to implement innovative approaches that allowed for refugees to access work permits.

When the government of Jordan took the decision earlier this year to give Syrian refugees a three-month grace period to apply for work permits, the number of applicants was small. In response, the Ministry of Labour, in consultation with the ILO, introduced a new model that includes de-linking the work permit application from specific employers in the agricultural sector, and allowing cooperatives to apply for Syrian refugee work permits – thus enabling cooperatives to act as the “employers” or “mediators” in the work permit process. By mid-January 2017, the number of work permits issued to Syrian refugees increased to almost 37,000 – compared to 3,800 before the grace period was announced in April 2016.

Number of work permits issued to Syrian refugees in 2016



Source: Ministry of Labour



- 5- The RBSA also allowed for the ILO to establish a strong Programme of Support to the Jordan Compact that is now partly funded and is in the process of implementation.

These RBSA-funded interventions have positioned the ILO as a lead UN agency in employment and livelihoods in Jordan in response to the Syrian crisis. The ILO is co-facilitating with UNDP the livelihoods task force of the Jordan Response Plan (JRP). The ILO is mentioned in the Jordan-EU trade agreement as a third-party monitoring body. Disbursement Linked Indicators of the World Bank Programme of Results reflect ILO concerns.

A comprehensive Programme of Support was designed relying on three pillars tackling short-term and long-term challenges of the Jordanian labour market: (a) improved governance for greater compliance to decent work principles; (b) private sector support to allow companies to take advantage of the new trade agreement; and (c) immediate job creation. It is now partially funded by the UK Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO), the German Government through its Development Bank (KfW) and the Norwegian embassy, while more support is being negotiated with other donors.

6. The RBSA also supported the ILO to become one of the main actors of the livelihoods sector.

The ILO is supporting the Ministry of Labour in chairing the livelihoods task force, which contributes to the livelihoods sector under JRP and 3RP. The ILO response coordinator, funded under RBSA, has been seconded to the Ministry of Labour as an advisor to the ministry, to support the implementation of the Jordan Compact. The ILO is also tasked with the implementation of one-third of the cash-for-work activities.

7. The RBSA fund also supported an initiative boosting the skills and accreditation of Syrian construction workers, in efforts to help them obtain work permits.

The ILO, through its RBSA funds, began implementing earlier this year a skills training programme for Syrian refugees and Jordanians working in the construction sector. The training courses, which are being implemented in collaboration with the National Employment and Training Company (NET), cover areas such as floor layering, painting, plastering, plumbing and interior decoration. Workers who complete the training will be awarded a certificate accredited by NET and the Jordan Centre of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA), in an unprecedented step to formally recognise the skills of these workers. The RBSA fund helped train and accredit the first 120 of these workers. The model gave the ILO the opportunity to receive further funding from the UK and expand its programme, which has currently reached more than 2,600 construction workers in various parts of Jordan.