Access to Housing and Tensions in Jordanian Communities Hosting Syrian Refugees

Thematic Assessment Report
Introduction

• Supported by the British Embassy in Amman.

• Data collection took place between December 2013 and March 2014 across the six northern Jordanian governorates of Ajloun, Balqa, Irbid, Jarash, Al Mafraq and Zarqa.

• Exploring refugee-host community relations > specifically factors influencing tension and destabilization relating to Education, Employment, External Support, Health, Shelter and Water.

• Housing was the most commonly cited sector linked to community tensions by respondents, with a total of 81%.

• The thematic assessment report focuses on perceptions of access to housing, and tensions in accessing housing.
Methodology

- **Mixed-methods approach** using focus group discussions (FGDs) and individual questionnaires using **Open Data Kit (ODK)** uploaded onto smart phones.

- **FGDs** were held with the following demographic groups: Jordanian women, Jordanian men, young Jordanian women, young Jordanian men, Syrian women, Syrian men, young Syrian women, and young Syrian men.

- Findings from a **key informant assessment** were used to identify the 160 host communities estimated to be most at risk of high tension and low levels of social cohesion and resilience.

- A **purposive sampling approach** did not allow for generalisable findings but provided a more nuanced understanding of Syrian and Jordanian perceptions of the sectors assessed.
Perceptions of access to housing

**How long have you been living in this community?**

- The vast majority of Jordanian respondents indicated a **longer period of residency** than their Syrian counterparts. 96% of Jordanians had lived in their community for **more than two years**, as opposed to a mere 3% of Syrians.

- Only 1% of Syrians and 0% of Jordanians had been living in their community for **less than one month**, indicating that a minority of respondents were new arrivals.

- 69% of Jordanian respondents considered access to housing in their community to be inadequate, as did 51% of Syrians.

- One narrative arising in FGDs maintains that **some Syrians have displaced Jordanians in the housing market** due to their willingness to pay higher rents.

- Jordanian respondents who have lived in their community for longer may base their **perceptions of access to housing** on the **steady decline** in housing availability subsequent to the influx of Syrian refugees.
Perceptions of access to housing

There was a notable difference in reported access to housing between male and female respondents.

- When disaggregated by sex the findings showed that more male (63%) than female (56%) respondents perceived there to be inadequate access to shelter in their community.

- In Jordanian host communities a limited capacity to secure housing arrangements and concerns over rising rental costs may have contributed to more acutely negative male perceptions of access to housing in the community.
Perceptions of tensions in accessing housing

- 83% of Jordanians and 77% Syrians identified access to housing as a cause of tension in their community (81% overall).

- FGDs in Ajloun, Jarash, Al Mafraq and Zarqa revealed a narrative of Jordanians being displaced by Syrian tenants in the housing market.

- An equal proportion of Jordanians and Syrians (44%) rated challenges to housing in their community as ‘very urgent’, with a further 36% of Jordanians and 32% of Syrians considering these ‘extremely urgent’.

### Access to housing causes tension in your community (by nationality)

- **56%** of Jordanians and **53%** of Syrians agreed that access to housing causes tension in their community.
- **21%** of Jordanians and **21%** of Syrians strongly agreed.
- **9%** of Jordanians and **14%** of Syrians disagreed.
- **2%** of Jordanians and **3%** of Syrians strongly disagreed.

### Rate challenges to housing in your community (all respondents)

- **56%** of respondents rated challenges to housing as 'extremely urgent', with **30%** considering them 'very urgent'.
- **4%** of respondents rated challenges as 'not important at all'.

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Reasons behind housing-related tensions

- When asked to indicate key reasons behind housing-related tension, the majority of Jordanian respondents (66%) cited a lack of housing.

- FGD outcomes provided evidence to support this finding. Example: In Downtown, Ajloun Jordanian and Syrian families reported coping with the increase in population and lack of available housing by living in shared accommodation.

- Syrians most commonly cited the high cost of housing as a reason behind tension, with 51% selecting this response, compared to 30% of Jordanians.

- This finding is corroborated by evidence that Jordanians in host communities spend considerably less on rent and utilities than Syrians, on average JOD 107 per month compared to JOD 193. Furthermore, in FGDs Syrian participants expressed acute concerns that they were unable to afford housing prices.
Conclusion

• Findings indicate that a lack of adequate housing and high rental costs represented the two most discernible reasons for housing-related tension perceived by both Jordanian and Syrian respondents.

• According to anecdotal evidence some Jordanians and Syrians face near insurmountable obstacles in securing housing that is both adequate and affordable. Challenging circumstances have reportedly led many to resort to a range of negative coping strategies, which many entail harmful effects.

• FGD findings suggest that access to housing not only represents a basic need but also a social issue, which may have a direct influence on social norms by impeding the ability of young people to marry, and encouraging more communal living.

• While some Jordanians have profited from charging Syrian refugees lucrative rents, others are purportedly being replaced by Syrians in the rental market leading to a decline in social cohesion between the two groups.
Thank you

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