Syrian Youth

A Study on Sustainable Solutions, Skills Development, and Future Prospects

Mixed-Methods Research and Strategic Insights Report

March–April 2025

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Executive Summary

1. Executive Summary

On 8 December 2024, the Syrian government—led by the Assad family for over five decades—abruptly collapsed, marking a pivotal moment in the region's protracted crisis. The fall of the former government, thirteen years after the onset of the Syrian conflict, raised critical questions about the future of Syria's citizens, both within the country and across the region. Among the 5.5 million Syrian refugees residing in Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt, this dramatic development has sparked a renewed sense of hope, tempered by caution[1]. UNHCR's February 2025 Refugee Perceptions and Intentions Survey (RPIS), conducted in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt, reflected a notable increase in willingness to return: 80% of respondents expressed long-term hope to return, and 27% stated their intention to do so within the next 12 months—up from just 1.7% in 2024[2].

Jordan, home to over 1.3 million Syrian refugees, has seen shifts in return dynamics amid evolving security conditions. As of 26 April 2025, nearly 60,500 refugees had returned to Syria, with women and girls comprising 46% and children accounting for 41% of returnees. The majority of returns are taking place from host communities, particularly Amman and Irbid, though the share of returns from camps and of full family units is also rising. While this trend signals a shift, many refugees remain hesitant[3]. UNHCR's community consultations in April 2025 highlighted ongoing fears related to instability in southern Syria, loss of housing, economic hardship, and uncertainty over re-entry to Jordan. Many families are postponing decisions until after the academic year or in anticipation of revised border policies expected in mid-2025[4] . Concurrently, Jordan is grappling with significant reductions in donor funding-by the end of 2024, the country had received only 40% of its 2023 aid levels-placing considerable strain on public services. In this context, advancing the socio-economic inclusion of refugees-through equitable access to education, healthcare, employment, and social protection-is not only a humanitarian imperative but also essential to Jordan's national stability and resilience.

Given these shifts, it is increasingly important to assess how Syrian refugee youth-who make up one-fifth of the refugee population in Jordan-are navigating uncertainty and shaping their future aspirations. In response, Plan International Jordan undertook a targeted assessment to better understand the evolving needs, aspirations, and priorities of Syrian youth in both host communities and refugee camps. With return becoming a more tangible—yet uncertain—prospect, the aim was to evaluate how this changing landscape may influence youth participation in programming, service relevance, and long-term planning. Whether youth choose to remain in Jordan or prepare for return, the assessment aims to ensure that programs remain adaptive and responsive to their realities.

A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining a quantitative survey of 237 youth participants (104 males and 133 females) -66% from host communities and 34% from camps- with qualitative Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving parents and volunteers. This approach allowed for the cross-validation of youth perspectives with insights from parents and community members, ensuring that the findings reflect both individual experiences and broader community dynamics. The results provide a robust evidence base to inform strategic program adaptation and ensure that youth-focused interventions remain aligned with the emerging needs of a generation navigating protracted displacement and uncertain futures.

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[1] https://reporting.unhcr.org/2025-operational-framework-voluntary-return-syrian-refugees-and-idps

[2] https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/UNHCR_Flash_Intention_Survey2025.pdf

[3] https://reporting.unhcr.org/syria-situation-crisis-regional-flash-update-25

[4] Ibid

1.1 Headline Findings: Insights from Participating Youth

- **Youth Aspirations:**

  - 56% of youth prioritize employment or starting a business, while 16% aim to continue education or vocational training.
  - 51% see themselves staying long-term in Jordan, while 23% consider eventual return to Syria.

- **Return Intentions:**

  - Key barriers to return include security risks (78%), lack of economic opportunities (75%), and housing destruction (58%).

- **Employment and Livelihoods:**

  - 97.9% of youth lack access to formal employment opportunities in Jordan. Self-employment (business startup) remains the preferred economic path if returning to Syria (64.6% of youth) over other employment pathways like formal employment (working for a company or organization), freelance or online work, or agriculture or trade work.
  - Low wages (74.3%), limited job opportunities (70.5%), and difficulty accessing business financing (41.8%) were the most frequently anticipated employment challenges for youth planning to return to Syria.

- **Education and Learning:**

  - 59% of youth completed secondary education or higher.
  - Youth considering moving back to Syria face major conditional barriers, including financial constraints and a sharp decline[5] in the number of the operational schools and universities or training programs due to the severely disrupted system as a result of the war, remain major barriers upon youths who might opt for moving back to Syria.
  - 40% of youth expressed a desire to continue formal education upon return, but gaps in access and affordability persist.

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[5] According to UNICEF (2023), only two-thirds of Syria's 19,663 schools are operational, with 2.4 million children out of school and 1.6 million at risk of dropping out. Similarly, Assafir Al-Arabi (2023) reports that approximately 10,000 schools have been damaged during the conflict, with 5,000 completely destroyed — reducing public schools from 22,200 in 2010 to just 14,505 in 2023. The University of Cambridge (2019) further describes a "complete breakdown" in Syria's higher education system due to politicisation, infrastructure loss, and mass academic flight.

UNICEF (2023). Every Day Counts: The Cost of Not Investing in Education in Syria. Available at:
https://www.unicef.org/syria/media/13381/file/Syria-Every-day-counts-Cost-of-not-investing-in-Education-BRIEF-June-2023-English.pdf

Assafir Al-Arabi (2023). The Current State of Education in Syria: A Mediocrity Contest. Available at:
https://assafirarabi.com/en/57192/2023/12/26/the-current-state-of-education-in-syria-a-mediocrity-contest

University of Cambridge (2019). Syrian Higher Education System Facing 'Complete Breakdown' After Eight Years of War – Study. Available at:
https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/syrian-higher-education-system-facing-complete-breakdown-after-eight-years-of-war-study

• Health and Wellbeing:

- 42% of youth face financial or legal barriers[6] to accessing healthcare in Jordan, mainly due to the policy changes that require the Syrians to pay for healthcare services.
- Anticipated healthcare challenges upon return include lack of facilities, high costs, and shortage of medical staff.

• Mental Health and Psychological Readiness:

- 62% of youth do not feel mentally prepared for return, with major concerns around economic survival, trauma recovery, and reintegration of stress.

• Financial and Legal Challenges:

- 56% require financial assistance to complete documentation needed for return, with 65% indicating cash support would facilitate their legal and administrative processes.

• Social Reintegration and Support Networks:

- Youth anticipate relying heavily on NGOs and humanitarian organizations (57%) and family/friends (40%) for reintegration support in Syria.

• Communication Preferences:

- WhatsApp and SMS (49%) and social media platforms (41%) are the preferred channels for receiving information about support services and program opportunities.

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[6] The influx of Syrian refugees has placed pressure on the national health system. Government policy on Syrian refugees' access to health care services has changed over the last 10 years. At the beginning of the crisis, the Government of Jordan granted access to public health services free of charge, and in 2014 it granted access at the same rate as for Jordanians. In February 2018 the policy was reversed, with Syrian refugees required to pay 80% of the rates paid by foreign persons at MoH facilities. However, the Government decided to exempt Syrian refugees from the fees for maternity and childhood services provided in maternity and childhood centres affiliated with the MoH.

World Health Organization. Refugee and Migrant Health Country Profile – Jordan. EMRO, 2021. Available at:

https://www.emro.who.int/refugees-migrants-health/refugee_and_migrant_health_country_profile_Jordan.pdf

1.2 Strategic Implications:

- **While some youths are considering returning, many are still psychologically and economically unprepared for abrupt returns.** The high proportion of youth who do not feel mentally prepared for return (62%) and the overwhelming lack of access to formal employment (97.9%) indicate that abrupt return efforts may lead to adverse outcomes. Thus, INGOs and humanitarian agencies working or planning to work on young Syrians' return and reintegration should consider their non-readiness for any sudden voluntary return or reintegration in their initiatives design, and planning.

- **Economic uncertainty and transitional complexities influence youth's resilience.** As Syrian youth weigh options to stay or return, limited visibility into economic opportunities and the broader uncertainty of the transition process constrain their ability to plan confidently for the future.

- **Legal and financial constraints are major bottlenecks to return to Syria. Youth** reported that legal and financial barriers to return are among their top barriers, which indicates that their return and reintegration plans are hindered by inaccessible records and legal documents of loss or unresolved status. These barriers need to be mitigated as part of any successful broader return initiatives implementation.

- **Dual programming is necessary.** While young Syrian people are divided between those planning to stay in Jordan and others who plan to return with uncertainty about their future, a development program with an initiative solely focused on refugees' stabilized situation in Jordan or another initiative completely focusing on a return to Syria cannot be a good option as dual program is becoming essential to avoid forced choosing among youth.

1.3 Priority Recommendations for

- **Expand livelihood pathways:** Strengthen business startup support, vocational skills programs, and financial inclusion mechanisms for both youths staying in Jordan and potential returnees.

- **Prioritize mental health and psychosocial support customized for youth including return and integration relevant mental health services:** Develop community-based psychosocial interventions and prepare mental health safety nets[7] for returning youth.

- **Facilitate legal and financial preparation for return:** Establish cash-for-documentation programs and offer legal aid support to ease administrative barriers.

- **Enhance youth engagement in program design:** Involve youth in shaping reintegration programs through advisory groups, digital consultations, and leadership opportunities.

- **Maintain dual programming readiness:** Prepare adaptive interventions that address the distinct needs of youth choosing to remain versus those planning to return, without forcing decisions prematurely

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[7]A Mental Health Safety Net refers to the set of public services, community resources, and policy measures that guarantee access to essential mental health care for

populations unable to obtain such services through conventional healthcare systems. It ensures that mental health support remains available, affordable, and accessible,

particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups. Source: World Health Organization (WHO), Organization of Services for Mental Health: Mental Health Policy and

Service Guidance Package, Geneva: WHO, 2003. Available at: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/organization-of-services-for-mental-health

Methodology

2. Methodology

This assessment adopted a mixed-method design, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection tools to gain a holistic understanding of Syrian youth prospects, aspirations, and challenges.

2.1 Quantitative Component

A structured survey was conducted with Syrian youth in March 2025 across Azraq camp (Villages 2, 3, 5, and 6) and select host communities. The tool explored:

- Aspirations and plans
- Readiness to stay in Jordan, return to Syria, or relocate
- Employment, education, health, legal, and psychosocial needs

2.2 Qualitative Component

In addition to the surveys, four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with youth parents and stakeholders using a dedicated guide that mirrored the youth survey questions covering refugee camps and the host community. Participants selected were youth parents and Syrian volunteers from the community. The FGDs aimed at:

- Validating and contextualizing the findings from the quantitative youth survey
- Highlighting insights on any family and community influences
- Capturing gender-specific insights or variations
- Identifying broader reintegration and protection needs

The FGDs allowed for views triangulation between youth and parents, which sought to strengthen the analysis and inform more relevant recommendations for the Najahna program.

2.3 Target Population

The assessment focused on the Syrian youth refugees enrolled in Najahna project and their community who represents the Syrian youth in Jordan, the youth targeted in the assessment with a total of 237 youth participants are a sample of a total approximately reached 5,564 youth by Najahna project as of the end of 2024. The assessment targeted youth actively participating in the program interventions to help refine strategies or policies, if needed and applicable, with evidence-based insights and findings.

2.4 Sampling Approach

Quantitative

Plan International Jordan applied a two-stage sampling approach: Combining Quota sampling with a random Sampling method to ensure an efficient yet structured representation of key groups, including Gender groups, Settings, and the different intervention participants while maintaining feasibility for a preliminary assessment. This approach allowed for proportional inclusion of participants based on the demographics of participants reached under the project across host communities (67%) and refugee camps (34%), ensuring balanced gender representation (44% male, 56% female).

2.5 Sample Size and Distribution

Quantitative

Aimed at 250 respondents out of Najahna project participants reached by the end of 2024, the assessment reached 237 youth participants, given the tight timeline and participants' response rate. The participants provided meaningful findings, with a manageable margin of error (6-8%) at a 95% confidence level based on the achieved sample. This approach was chosen to ensure data reliability while maintaining feasibility for a preliminary assessment. The distribution was as follows:

Tabel 1: Sample Size disaggregation per Gender and Setting

Group	Males (44%)	Females (56%)	Total Sample
Host Community (170)	67	89	156
Camp Residents (80)	37	44	81
Total	104	133	237

2.6 Data Collection Approach

Quantitative

Plan International Jordan reached out to the targeted participants through enumerator-led surveys in Najahna program sites using a mix of in-person and phone interviews. The youth participants in the camp were reached in person, while the participants in the host community were reached via phone, considering the non-feasibility of the households' visits in the Najahna project context. The quota-based system ensured proportional coverage of key groups.

Qualitative

Four FGDs were conducted. They targeted the parents and active Syrian volunteers in the Community Based Organizations (CBOs). The FGDs included qualitative questions that covered multiple topics, acting as a data triangulation tool and diving deeper into the gender-specific dimensions.

2.7 Considerations and Challenges

1. Sampling Methodology

The study applied quota sampling combined with random selection, which, while not fully probabilistic, was the most feasible and contextually appropriate method. Given Najahna's wide reach-covering over 5000 Syrian youth participants across host and camp settings, diverse age groups, and balanced gender representation-the sample is considered broadly representative of Syrian refugee youth reachable by similar interventions in Jordan. Therefore, findings are not only relevant to Najahna programming but also offer indicative insights for the broader Syrian youth population in the country.

2. Challenging participants outreach via phone

While the enumerators reached significant number of Syrian youths via phone calls for the survey, the number of participants who responded and completed the survey was relatively modest. Several factors contributed to this, including the limited ownership of personal phones among Syrian youth, the practice of sharing phones among different family members, and the likelihood that many youths were unavailable at the time of contact.

3. Broad Assessment Scope

The broad scope of the assessment made it challenging to fully cover all intended areas within a single study. This also led to a lengthier data collection process, as noted by the enumerators. Nonetheless, the assessment successfully addressed several critical themes that contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the situation and youth perspectives

4. Reaching Younger Youth through Community Proxies

A major challenge was the low participation rate from adolescents aged 12–16 years (5.49%), who were mostly absent from school during assessment hours and had limited phone access, as parents reported during outreach. In the context of the project, home visits were not feasible. To address this, FGDs included parents and community representatives, primarily local volunteers, to represent the perspectives of all youth age groups.
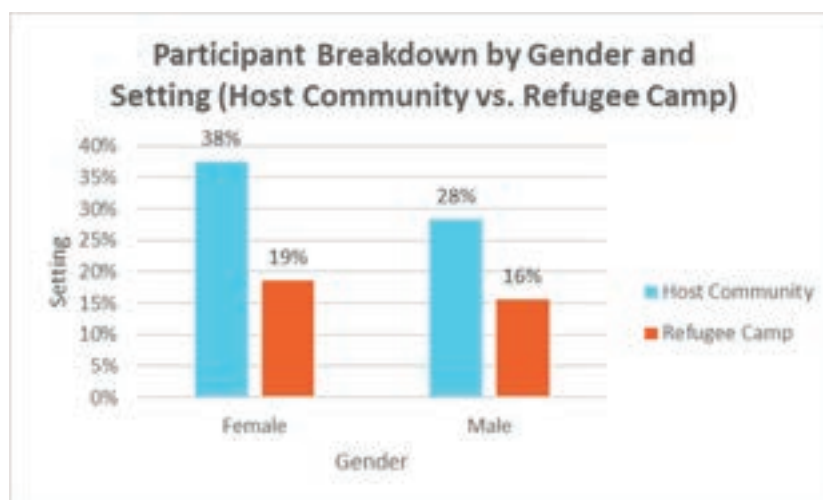
3. Key Findings

3.1 Demographic Analysis

Quantitative

Chart 1: Survey Participants Demographics (Gender vs Settings)

The findings presented in this section are based on a structured survey conducted with 237 Syrian youth participants enrolled in the Najahna program, including 56% females (133) and 44% males (104). Of the total, 65.8% were from the host community (156 participants) and 34.2% were from Azraq Refugee Camp (81 Participants).

In terms of age distribution, 52.3% of youth participants were aged 26–35 years, followed by 42.2% aged 17–25 years, and 5.5% aged 12–16 years. These variations in age group participation largely reflect the availability of youth participants at the time of data collection, which was influenced by school schedules, work commitments, and accessibility challenges, particularly in reaching the youngest age group (12–16 years).

In alignment with the study's objective to analyze the challenges youth face, their skills gaps, and future opportunities facing those youth in Jordan and planning to return to Syria, the assessment categorized participants into three strategic age groups: adolescents (12–16 years), younger youth (17–25 years), and older youth (26–35 years). Including the age group: 26–35 under the definition of youth reflects initiatives relevance and contextual necessity, due to long-term displacement, disrupted education, and limited access to decent work, the individuals in this group often remain in transition well into their thirties. They continue to face structural barriers to economic independence, social integration, and skills development, and thus affecting their self-development, family support, and contributions to their communities.

Chart 2: Survey Participants Demographics (Gender vs Age Groups)
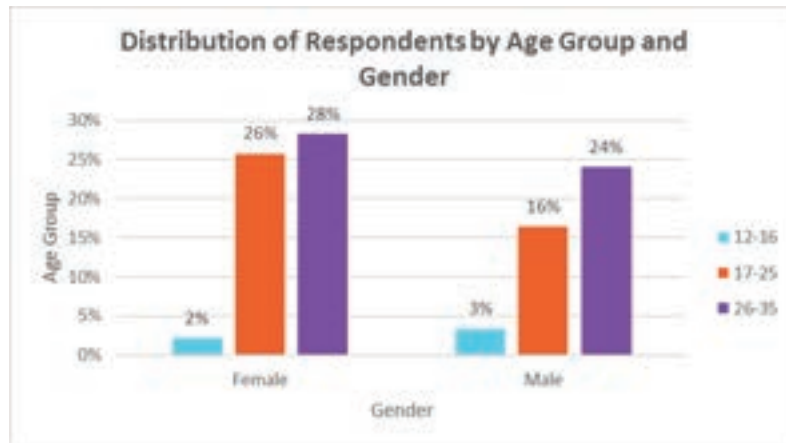
3.2 Refugee Plans and Future Prospects and Aspirations

This section presents findings drawn from a general aspirational question posed to all youth participants: "What are your plans for the next 1–2 years?" The purpose of this question was to explore participants' broader future goals and priorities, whether educational, professional, or personal, without directing them toward choices about relocation or return. While some participants reported plans related to moving or staying, these reflections are analyzed here as part of the wider aspirations' context. A more targeted analysis of participants' future living and relocation preferences is presented separately under the section: "Interpretation of Future Living Aspirations by Age Group"

Quantitative

Youth Prospects and Aspirations

Overall:

The findings reveal that seeking employment or starting a business was the most common plan among youth participants, including both youth who plan to stay in Jordan and those considering return to Syria, cited by 56.1% (133) of respondents. Continuing education or vocational training was the second most common plan, selected by 16.5% (39) of participants. Moving to Syria was cited by 13.5% (32) of respondents. This suggests that while return to Syria is part of the considerations for a segment of youth, it is not the majority view.

Focusing on family responsibilities was selected by 9.3% (22) of the youth participants.

Migrating or exploring relocation options outside Syria and Jordan, as reflected within the broader youth aspirations for the next one to two years, was selected by a small portion 4.2% (10) of youth participants, suggesting broader interest in options beyond both countries.

Finally, only 0.4% (1 participant) indicated having no plan, suggesting that most participants have clear aspirations or pathways they are considering.

Gender Differences:

- Both males 58.7% (61) and females 54.1% (72) selected seeking employment or starting a business almost equally, confirming that economic empowerment is a dominant aspiration across genders.
- A slightly higher percentage of females 17.3% (23) compared to males 15.4% (16) planned to pursue educational opportunities, reflecting ongoing interest in skill development and personal growth among participants, especially females.
- Males, at 16.3% (17) were slightly more likely than females, at 11.3% (15) to express their intention towards moving to Syria.
- Focusing on family responsibilities was notably higher among females 12.8% (17) compared to males 4.8% (5). This aligns with broader findings that young women more often carry family-related duties, which can influence their educational and employment aspirations.
- Slightly more females 4.5% (6) than males 3.8% (4) selected levels of interest in migrating or exploring relocation options outside Syria and Jordan.

Setting Differences:

- Youth participants from the host community were significantly more likely to plan to seek employment or start a business, reported by 72.4% (113) of host community participants, compared to 24.7% (20) of those in refugee camps. This highlights a stronger entrepreneurial or income-generation orientation among host community participants.
- In contrast, continuing education or vocational training was the most common plan among youth participants in refugee camps, selected by 33.3% (27), while only 7.7% (12) of youth participants from host communities chose this option. This indicates a higher demand for learning and skill-building opportunities in camp settings.
- Plans to move to Syria were cited more frequently by 27.2% (22) of the participants in refugee camps, compared to 6.4% (10) in host communities. This may reflect differences in perceived prospects for return or familial decision-making dynamics.
- Focusing on family responsibilities was more commonly reported among youth participants from host communities, 10.9% (17), versus 6.2% (5) from refugee camps. This could be influenced by the higher proportion of female respondents in host areas and differing social roles.
- Plans to migrate or explore relocation options outside Syria and Jordan were selected by a small share of youth participants, with 8.6% (7) from refugee camps and 1.9% (3) from host communities.
- Only 0.6% (1) in the host community reported having no clear plan for the next one to two years.

Chart 3: Youth Participants Aspirations

Future Aspirations of Youth Participants (Next 1–2 Years), Disaggregated by Gender
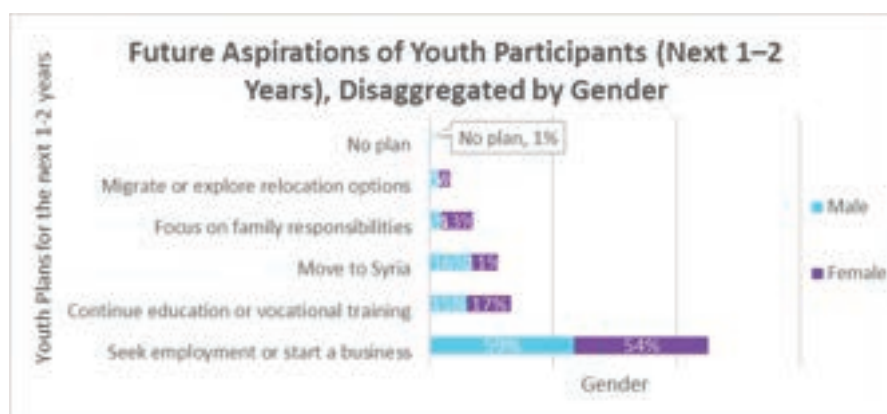
Future Living Aspirations

This section presents the results of the question "Where do you see yourself living in the future?", with an emphasis on youth plans regarding a potential return to Syria. This was designed to assess future residency preferences within the limited scope of return-related intentions, unlike broader aspiration questions, helping to understand youth perspectives related to returning to Syria versus staying in Jordan or seeking alternatives elsewhere.

Quantitative

Overall:

- Slightly more than half of the youth participants (51.5%, 122 out of 237) indicated that they see themselves staying in Jordan long-term.
- Moving to Syria at some point in the future was selected by 22.8% (54) of respondents.
- Undecided or unsure responses accounted for 18.6% (44) of the total.
- Plans to migrate to another country were the least selected option at 7.2% (17).

Chart 4: Youth Settlement Aspirations
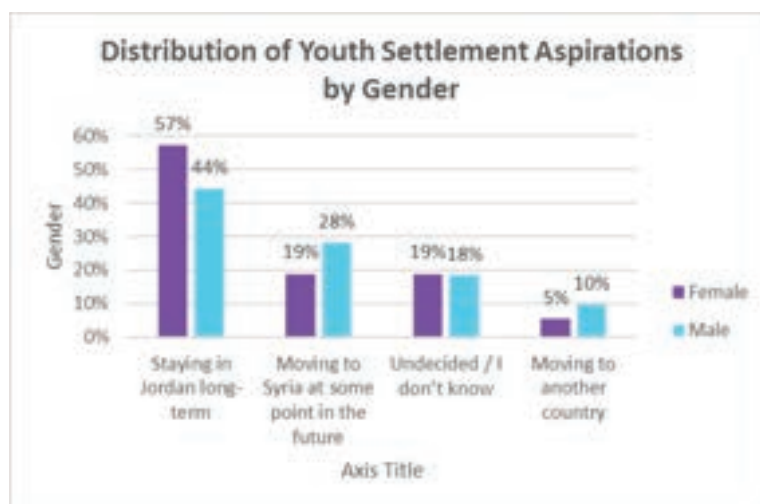
Gender Differences:

- 57.1% of females (76 out of 133) selected long-term settlement in Jordan compared to 44.2% of males (46 out of 104).
- 27.9% of males (29) indicated a plan to return to Syria at some point, compared to 18.8% of females (25).
- Undecided or unsure responses were similar: 18.8% of females (25) and 18.3% of males (19) reported uncertainty.
- Migration to another country was selected by 9.6% of males (10) and 5.3% of females (7)

Overall, females showed a stronger preference for long-term settlement in Jordan, while males showed slightly higher interest in returning to Syria or migrating elsewhere.

Settings Differences:

- Youth from host communities were significantly more likely to plan to stay in Jordan long-term with 66.0% (103) of host community respondents compared to only 23.5% (19) of those in refugee camps.
- Meanwhile, refugee camp youth were more likely to select to return to Syria in the future with 38.3% (31) of camp participants versus 14.7% (23) from host communities.
- Uncertainty was common across both groups, with 14.7% (23) of host community youth and 25.9% (21) of refugee camp youth indicating they were undecided.
- Plans to migrate to another country were more commonly cited by youth in refugee camps, 12.3% (10) compared to 4.5% (7) from host communities.

When analyzing by age group:

- Youth participants aged 26–35 were the most likely to plan to stay in Jordan long-term, with 60.5% (75) of youth participants this age group selecting this option, reflecting higher perceived stability or integration among older participants.
- Participants aged 12–16 showed the strongest proportional tendency toward returning to Syria, with 61.5% (8 out of 13) reporting that they see themselves moving back, potentially influenced by family decisions or a limited sense of long-term prospects in Jordan. In contrast, when looking at absolute numbers across the entire sample, the largest share of return intentions came from youth participants aged 17–25, who represented 50% of all those who expressed a return plan (27 out of 54 participants).
- Uncertainty about the future was most common among participants aged 17–25, with 22% (22) expressing indecision, followed closely by 26–35 youth participants at 16.9% (21). These figures suggest that younger and older youth participants in transition stages experience greater uncertainty about their long-term plans.
- Plans to move to another country were relatively low across all age groups, with 7.3% (9) among those aged 26–35, 7% (7) among 17–25, and only 1 participant in the 12–16 group expressing this intention.

Chart 5: Youth Settlement Aspirations by Age Group

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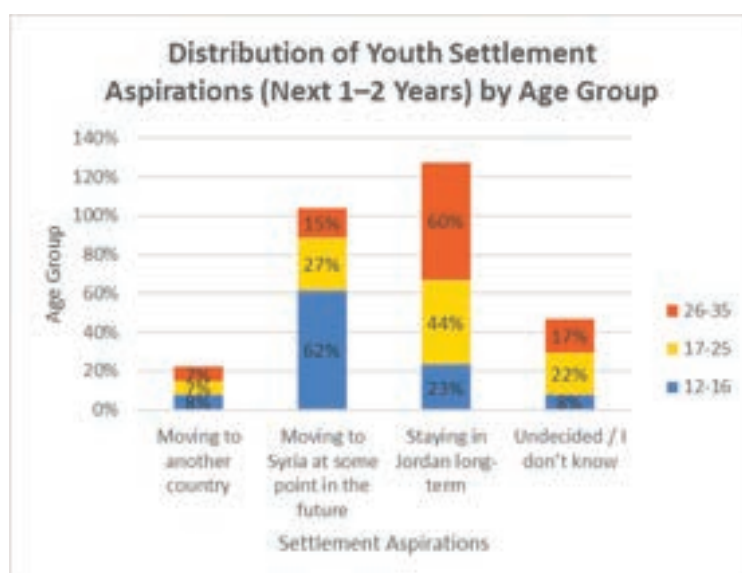
Youth Priorities and Readiness Themes from parents and community members perspective (Qualitative)

This section presents qualitative findings from focus group discussions (FGDs) with parents and community members on youth priorities and readiness. Direct participant quotes are cited throughout, using the following format: (P# = Participant number, Camp/Host = Setting, F/M = Gender).

Qualitative Insights (FGD) Table no.1: Youth Participants Priorities and Readiness Themes

Key Themes	Findings	Key Participant Quotes
Main Priorities	Youth prioritize employment, education, and securing an income. Vocational skills and financial stability are also highlighted.	"Most young people are looking for job opportunities, and even education must be complemented by creating job opportunities." (P1, Camp, Female) "Work, education, and securing an income." (P7, Host Community, F) "Learning costs and work permits are the most important." (P1, Host, Male)
Support Needed	Financial support is seen as the foundation, along with scholarships, psychosocial support, and easier access to work permits.	"Financial support is the solution to all problems." (P7, Camp, F) "When there is financial support, they will feel psychologically comfortable." (P9, Host, F) "The work permit costs 550 JOD." (P2, Host, M)
Gender Differences	Most agreed there are no significant gender differences in priorities, although cultural differences and roles (such as women's focus on child-rearing) exist.	"Our ambition is one: education and work." (P1, Camp, F) "Women's priorities center on raising children." (P3, Host, F) "The situation is bad for both genders." (P7, Host, M)
Factors Influencing Return	Security situation, destroyed housing, unstable economy, financial hardship, social stigmatization, and educational disruption influence return decisions.	"If you want to work there, the monthly salary is only 20–30 Jordanian dinars." (P4, Host, M) "My house is destroyed — should I set up a tent next to it?" (P7, Host, M) "There is no security, and there are still blood feuds and kidnappings." (P2, Host, F)
Impact of Return on Needs	Priorities upon return shift to basic survival: safety, employment, education, and freedom. Psychological stability is a major concern.	"We will start our lives and find an environment that nurtures us financially and psychologically." (P13, Camp, F)

Although the emphasis varied slightly by gender and location, participants in all FGD groups consistently ranked education and employment as essential components of youth's future plans in the community. One participant in the Azraq camp clearly expressed this dual objective: "Work and education." Most young people are searching for a job, so creating job opportunities must be a complement to education. Similarly, male participants in the host community identified the "inefficiency of the education system" and the "deteriorating financial situation" as the main barriers to accomplishing these objectives. The link between financial support and mental wellbeing was particularly evident among female camp residents: "When there is financial support, they will feel psychologically comfortable." One woman highlighted the psychological effects of economic stress by explaining that "psychological support is the most important thing" in host communities. Responses were also influenced by gender norms. Some male participants in Azraq emphasized that there was "no difference; the situation is bad for both genders," despite a female member of the host community stating that "women's priorities are raising children and taking care of the husband, while men consider how to work and ensure a decent life."

Concerns about emotional resistance, instability, and housing shortages were prevalent when it came to returning decisions. "Where am I supposed to go?" asked a male member of the host community bluntly. Should I construct a tent next to my destroyed house? "If I return, they'll bully us and say, 'You're just camp kids,'" another Azraq member continued. Women's conversations reflected these sentiments, with one saying, "Most people don't return because they don't have a home to live in," and another saying, "My son completely refuses to return, as he has integrated into Jordanian society."

A significant psychological and social component that the survey was disclosed by the FGDs. Many young people associate trauma and fear with returning. One member of the host community shared a story about how "a relative of mine experienced a psychological condition after returning," and another said, "All those who returned advised their relatives to stay in Jordan and not return."

When combined, the results demonstrate that young people evaluate education and work in the context of mental health, identity, safety, and family stability rather than in isolation. By providing crucial background information on emotional well-being, lived experience, and intergenerational dynamics, these insights build upon the quantitative findings, which indicated that employment and education were the top priorities. This emphasizes the significance of connecting economic interventions with psychosocial support, unambiguous information on return procedures, and localized mental health initiatives, especially for those projects and programs considering reintegration support.

Key Concerns by Youth participants

Overall Findings

- Security and safety concerns were the most commonly selected barrier, cited by 69.6% (185 out of 237) of youth participants.
- Lack of economic opportunities followed closely, selected by 75.1% (178), indicating widespread fears around income insecurity upon return.
- Limited access to housing and essential services was also a key concern, selected by 58.2% (138) of respondents.

- Access to education or vocational training was a concern selected by 21.5% (51) of youth participants.
- Family separation and established social ties in Jordan were each selected by 11.4% (27) and 10.1% (24), respectively.
- Legal or policy concerns were selected by 5.5% (13), and lack of legal documentation was the least mentioned barrier, cited by 2.5% (6).
- Other concerns that could influence the return decisions were selected by only 1.7% (4) of respondents.

Gender Differences

- Females were more likely than males to cite safety and family concerns: 82.7% of females (110 out of 133) selected safety, compared to 72.1% of males (75 out of 104).
- Lack of economic opportunities was reported by 74.4% 99) of females and 76.0% (79) of males, showing nearly equal concern.
- Female respondents also prioritized family separation (15.8%, 21) and social ties in Jordan (13.5%, 18), compared to males (5.8%, 6 for both).
- Education and training concerns were higher among females (23.3%, 31) than males (19.2%, 20).
- Lack of legal documentation was more frequently selected by males (3.8%, 4) than females (1.5%, 2). Similarly, legal and policy concerns were selected by 4.8% (5) of males and 6.0% (8) of females.

Overall, females showed higher concern across most categories, particularly in areas tied to social connections and caregiving roles, while male concerns were more focused on documentation and mobility.

Setting Differences

- Security concerns were expressed by 79.5% of youth participants in host communities (124 out of 156), compared to 75.3% (61 out of 81) in camps.
- Lack of economic opportunities was similarly reported in both settings: 75.6% in host communities (118) and 74.1% in camps (60).
- Limited access to essential services was cited by 59.6% of host youth participants (93) vs. 55.6% of camp youth participants (45).
- Access to education or training was a significantly greater concern in camps (29.6%, 24) than in host communities (17.3%, 27).
- Legal and policy concerns were more prevalent in camps (9.9%, 8) than host areas (3.2%, 5), as was lack of legal documentation (7.4%, 6 in camps; 0.0%, 0 in host).
- Social connections in Jordan were mentioned more by camp-based youth participants (12.3%, 10) than by those in host communities (9.0%, 14).
- Family separation was a greater concern for host community youth participants (14.1%, 22) than for camp-based youth participants(6.2%, 5).

- Given that the survey question was multi-response, the results highlight how many intersecting factors influence youth decision-making, with the most important barriers to voluntary return being safety, economic stability, housing access, and family support networks.

Overall Youth Participants Aspirations Based on Open-Ended Responses

72.7% of young people who answered the open-ended questions said they had plans centered on business development, such as growing current projects, starting new businesses, or breaking into new markets. 9.1% of respondents said they wanted to work toward financial stability or employment goals, and 9.1% said they wanted to pursue education or vocational skills training. Just 4.5% said they had no clear plan, and 4.5% said they had plans to migrate. These results highlight how entrepreneurship shapes young people's short-term goals.

Quantitative Summary Table no.2: Top 5 Concerns About Returning to Syria

Concern	% of Total Respondents (n = 237)
Security and safety concerns	78.1%
Lack of economic opportunities	75.1%
Lack of housing and essential services	58.2%
No access to education or vocational training opportunities	21.5%
Family situation (separation from family in Jordan)	11.8%

Factors Influencing Youth Decisions About Moving Back to Syria

Overall:

- The level of stability, conflict risks, and safety conditions in Syria was the most frequently selected factor, selected by 69.6% (165 out of 237) of youth participants.
- Employment opportunities or ways to earn a livelihood followed closely at 75.1% (178), highlighting the importance of income security.
- Access to housing, healthcare, and essential services was also prominent, with 57.8% (137) selecting this concern.
- Access to education, vocational training, or skill-building opportunities was selected by 19.8% (47).
- Reuniting with family, friends, or community networks was selected by 11.0% (26).
- Government policies and legal considerations influenced 4.2% (10) of respondents.
- Other factors were selected by 6.3% (15) participants.

Gender Differences:

- The level of safety and conflict risks was more often cited by 73.7% (98) of females compared to 64.4% (67) of males.
- Availability of stable employment options was selected by 69.9% (93) of females and 70.2% (73) of males, showing near-equal concern.
- Access to housing and essential services was selected by 57.9% (77) of females and 56.7% (59) of males.
- Availability of education and training opportunities were more commonly selected by 23.3% (31) of females vs. 15.4% (16) of males.
- Family reunification and social support was cited by 11.3% (15) of females and 10.6% (11) of males.

- Legal and policy considerations were selected by 4.5% (6) of females and 3.8% (4) of males.
- Other factors were cited by 8.3% (11) of females compared to 3.8% (4) of males.

Settings Differences:

- Host community youth participants were slightly more likely to cite employment as a key factor: 71.8% (112 out of 156), compared to 66.7% (54 out of 81) of those in refugee camps.
- Safety and conflict risks were nearly equally emphasized: 69.9% (109) in host communities vs. 69.1% (56) in camps.
- Housing, healthcare, and services were cited by 58.3% (91) of host youth participants and 55.6% (45) of camp-based youth participants.
- Education and training opportunities were a more prominent concern for camp youth participants: 37.0% (30) compared to 10.9% (17) in host settings.
- Government policies and legal considerations were selected by 3.8% (6) of host youth participants and 4.9% (4) of camp youth participants.
- Reuniting with family or social networks was cited by 10.3% (16) of host youth participants and 12.3% (10) of camp youth participants.
- Other factors were mentioned by 9.6% (15) of host youth participants and 0.0% (0) of camp youth participants.

These findings show that young people make complicated decisions by balancing a variety of risks and opportunities. The main factors shaping youths' willingness or reluctance to return are personal security, economic survival, and access to basic services.

Quantitative Summary Table no.3: Factors Influencing Youth Decisions About Moving Back to Syria

To 3 Factors	Expectation level
Personal Safety and Security	Highest
Job Opportunities availability	Very High
Housing, Healthcare, and Essential Services availability	High

3.3 Employment and Livelihood Opportunities for Youth

This section examines the employment situation of young people who are currently living in Jordan as well as what they are hoping for if they return to Syria. It evaluates the kind of employment assistance required, the perceived difficulties in the Syrian labor market, and the priorities for skill development to facilitate economic reintegration.

Quantitative

Current Access to Employment Opportunities in Jordan

• Among participating youth, 57.8% of participants (137) reported being unemployed.

• 27.4% of participants (65) reported working in informal jobs.

• 12.7% of participants (30) indicated that they do not work but rely on humanitarian aid or family support.

• Only 2.1% of participants (5) reported being employed in a formal job.

This indicates that most youth participants (97.9%) lack access to formal employment opportunities in Jordan, highlighting persistent structural barriers to stable employment for Syrian refugee youth.

Expected Type of Work After Moving to Syria

Overall:

• Self-employment was the most selected option, chosen by 64.6% (153 out of 237) participants.

• Formal employment (working for a company or organization) was selected by 28.3% (67) participants.

• Agriculture or trade work was selected by 16.9% (40).

• Freelance or online work was selected by 15.2% (36) of participants.

• 16.9% (40) of participants selected "don't know", indicating that they do not know yet what type of work they would seek.

Gender Differences:

• Self-employment was nearly equally preferred: 49.7% (77) of males and 50.3% (76) of females selected this option.

• Among those interested in formal employment, 58.2% (39)were females and 41.8% (28) were males.

• Freelance or online work was selected by 52.8% (19) of males and 47.2% (17) of females.

• Agriculture or trade work was more frequently selected by 60.0% (24) of males compared to 40.0% (16) of females.

Setting Differences:

• Self-employment was the preferred option for both groups: 69.2% (108) of the host community and 55.6% (45) of the refugee camp participants.

• Formal employment was notably the more prevalent option among the youth from the camp, with 54.3% (44) compared to 14.7% (23) in the host community.

• Interest in freelance or online work was moderate in both settings, with 14.1% (22) of youth participants from the host community and 17.3% (14) from the camp expressing interest.

Expected Challenges in Finding Work After Moving to Syria

Quantitative Summary Table no.4: Top Challenges Cited (multi-response allowed)

Challenge	Overall %	Host Community	Refugee Camp
Low wages or unstable income	74.3% (176)	117	59
Limited job opportunities	70.5% (167)	106	61
Difficulty accessing business financing	41.8% (99)	50	49
Lack of necessary skills or qualifications	21.9% (52)	41	11
Uncertainty about legal rights	7.2% (17)	5	12

Gender Differences:

- Low wages or unstable income was the most frequently cited challenge by both genders, but slightly more prevalent among males than females, reported by 76.9% of males (80 out of 104 males) compared to 72.2% of females (96 out of 133).

- Limited job opportunities followed closely, reported by 71.4% of females (95) and 69.2% of males (72), reflecting nearly equal concern across both genders.

- Difficulty accessing business financing was more frequently cited by females (42.9%, 57) compared to males (40.4%, 42), suggesting a slightly higher financial barrier perceived by young women.

- Lack of necessary skills or qualifications was cited by 21.8% of females (29) and 22.1% of males (23), indicating no significant gender gap on this issue.

- Uncertainty about legal rights for work or business registration was the least cited challenge overall, with minimal gender difference: 6.8% of females (9) and 7.7% of males (8).

Setting Differences:

- Host community youth participants were more concerned about low wages (117) and limited job opportunities (106).
- Refugee camp youth participants emphasized challenges in accessing financing (almost equal to host community youth participants, despite smaller overall numbers).

Support Needed to Find Work or Start a Business After Return

Quantitative Summary Table no.5: Support Needed for Employment or Entrepreneurship After Return

Top 5 Needed Support Types	Overall %	Host Community	Refugee Camp
Business startup grants	64.6% (153)	122	69
Job-matching[8] programs	28.3% (67)	68	41
Vocational training and skills development	15.2% (36)	41	39
Online work opportunities	15.2% (36)	6	23
Legal advice on employment	16.9% (40)	2	8

Overall:

- Business startup grants were the most frequently selected support type by 64.6% (153 out of 237) participants.
- Job-matching programs were the second most selected, chosen by 28.3% (67) of participants.
- Legal advice on employment was selected by 16.9% (40) participants.
- Vocational training and skills development was selected by 15.2% (36) of participants.
- Online work opportunities were also selected by 15.2% (36) of participants.
- "I don't know" was selected by 7.2% (17) of participants, indicating uncertainty about the support needed.

Gender Differences:

- Business startup grants were prioritized by both genders, with 77 females (57.9% of 133) and 76 males (73.1% of 104) selecting this option.
- Job-matching programs were selected by 53 females (39.8%) and 56 males (53.8%).
- Vocational training and skills development was chosen by 49 females (36.8%) and 31 males (29.8%).
- Online work opportunities were selected by 16 females (12.0%) and 13 males (12.5%).
- Legal advice on employment was cited by 4 females (3.0%) and 6 males (5.8%).
- "I don't know" was selected by 12 females (9.0%) and 5 males (4.8%).

Overall, males demonstrated slightly higher interest in legal advice and online work, while females leaned more toward vocational support.

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[8] Job matching refers to services that directly connect youth with employment opportunities—such as platforms where employers post vacancies and review CVs, or programs that facilitate job placements based on individual qualifications.

International Labour Organization (2023). Digital labour platforms and the future of work in Africa: job matching and online recruitment. Geneva: ILO. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_645337.pdf

Plan International (2021). A Working Future: Final Evaluation Report (Uganda). Plan International Uganda. Available at:

https://plan-international.org/uploads/2022/01/01-aworkingfuture_web.pdf

Setting Differences:

- Business startup grants were the top priority in both settings: selected by 122 youth participants in host communities (78.2% of 156) and 69 in refugee camps (85.2% of 81).
- Job-matching programs were selected by 68 youth participants in host communities (43.6%) and 41 in refugee camps (50.6%).
- Vocational training and skills development was more evenly distributed: 41 in host (26.3%) and 39 in camp (48.1%).
- Online work opportunities showed a marked difference, selected by only 6 host youth participants (3.8%) versus 23 camps (28.4%).
- Legal advice on employment was more relevant to camp-based youth participants: 8 selected it (9.9%) compared to just 2 from host communities (1.3%).
- "I don't know" was selected by 12 host youth participants(7.7%) and 5 camp youth participants (6.2%).

  These differences reflect the varying structural constraints and information access across settings, with refugee camp youth showing higher demand for flexible or remote work options and legal clarity.

Qualitative

Qualitative Insights (FGD) Table no.6: Economic & Livelihood Needs for Reintegration

Key Themes	Findings	Key Participant Quotes
Types of Jobs/Businesses Available	Limited opportunities; many jobs are informal, low-paid, or depend on connections; grants are rare.	"I personally benefited and have a productive kitchen." (P1, Host, F)
Skills Needed for Labor Market	Practical and technical skills (e.g., blacksmithing, carpentry, auto repair, agriculture, sewing, electrical wiring) are prioritized over academic education.	"Many skills, training and qualifications in blacksmithing, carpentry, and auto repair." (P13, Camp, F) "Agriculture, hairdressing, sewing, phone maintenance, sweets businesses, nursing, embroidery." (FGD1/Camp, M) "Tile painting, cooking, hairdressing." (Host, F)
Gender Differences in Employment Experiences	No major difference in challenges, but men face legal restrictions in labor markets (permits), while women often work from home.	"I do the same job as young men. I worked in bathroom maintenance, and I was better than everyone else." (P7, Camp, F) "Men have more options." (P8, Host, FA) "No difference between men and women." (P7, Host, M)
Business Support Availability	Business support is minimal to nonexistent; departure of NGOs (e.g., NRC) further reduced opportunities.	"Support is decreasing and organizations are leaving the camp." (P1, Camp, F) "There are no grants currently, only some training." (P1, Host, F) "I wish there was support for entrepreneurship." (P12, Host Community, M)

3.3.1 Youth-Led Businesses: Grant Recipients' Planning Amid Resettlement Uncertainty

Quantitative

Thirty-seven of the 237 youth who participated in the survey indicated they received grants to start or grow their businesses through the Najahna program. Resilience and confidence in their business growth despite possible uncertainties are demonstrated by the 51.4% of grantees who respond that they intend to continue investing and growing as originally planned when asked about their business planning under current conditions.

Until more stability occurs, 29.7% (11) of youth businesses intend to modify their business plans to better handle emerging uncertainties, confirming plans like postponing expansion, cutting back on investments, or implementing more adaptable planning techniques. A smaller group indicates more cautious intentions: 29.7% (3) intend to postpone major business planning until their settlement status is clearer, and 5.4% (2) plan to gradually scale down their businesses.

In contrast to grantees in host communities, where young people are more likely to intend to continue with steady expansion, grantees in refugee camps exhibit a marginally higher likelihood of modifying or scaling down their business operations. This implies that young people living in camps might experience more uncertainty that affects their business development paths.

While most of the youth who receive Najahna support show a strong commitment to sustaining or expanding their businesses, a significant portion, especially those who live in camps, are deliberately changing their plans to stay adaptable and reduce potential risks.

Qualitiative

Qualitative Insights (FGD) Table no.7: Impact of Different Settlement Options on
Employment and Business Operations

Key Themes	Findings	Key Participant Quotes
Available Jobs or Businesses	Very limited opportunities in camps; grants and work are often inaccessible.	"We applied for grants but only 3 out of 30 were awarded." (P8, Camp, M)
Skills Needed	Practical and vocational skills are essential (hairdressing, carpentry, electrical work, agriculture).	"Agriculture, hairdressing, embroidery are important skills." (P13, Camp, M)
Gender and Employment	No significant gender differences reported, though work nature varies.	"If she works as a hairdresser or seamstress, there is no problem." (P5, Camp, M)
Business Support Available	Business support has decreased significantly, with few training opportunities left.	"An INGO has left the camp and support is decreasing." (P7, Camp, M)
Impact of Return on Business	Return to Syria would worsen business prospects due to destroyed infrastructure and weak economy.	"If the situation here is zero, over there it's below zero." (P13, Camp, M)
Barriers to Starting Business in Syria	Major barriers include security risks, financial hardship, lack of infrastructure, and cultural integration difficulties for women.	"There are crimes and no security at all." (P9, Camp, F); "Our ideas won't be accepted easily after 13 years away." (P12, Camp, F)

3.4 Education Levels and Learning Aspirations among Youth

This section looks at the youth participants' educational backgrounds[9], whether they would like to continue their education if they determine to return to Syria, and any obstacles they might anticipate to getting access to training or educational opportunities.

Quantitative

Education Levels Completed

Overall

- 37.6% (89) of youth participants indicated completing secondary school.
- 21.5% (51) had completed a university degree or higher.
- 16.9% (40) partially completed secondary school.
- 15.6% (37) completed primary school.
- 6.8% (16) completed primary school without finishing school.
- Only 1.3% (3) never attended school, and 0.4% (1) received vocational training.

Gender Differences:

- A higher percentage of females completed secondary school: 47.4% (63) of females vs. 25.0% (26) of males.
- University education was slightly higher among males than females and males: 25.0% (26) vs.18.8% (25).
- Males were slightly more represented in incomplete primary education: 10.6% (11) vs. 3.8% (5) of females.
- Vocational training was only indicated by 1 male (1.0%) and no females.

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[9]In Jordan, the education system comprises several age-based stages:

- **Kindergarten:** Ages 3–5 (2 years)

- **Basic Education:** Grades 1–10, ages 6–15 (10 years, compulsory and free)

- **Secondary Education:** Grades 11–12, ages 16–18 (2 years, academic or vocational)

Source: Ministry of Education - Jordan

Setting Differences:

- Youth participants from host communities were more likely to have completed secondary school: 32.7% (51) vs. 46.9% (38) in camps.
- University attainment was higher among host community youth participants: 22.4% (35) vs. 19.8% (16) in camps.
- Camps had more participants who never attended school: 1.2% (1) vs. 0.0% in host communities.
- Vocational training was only reported by 0.4% (1) youth participants from the host community.

Aspirations to Continue Learning

Overall

- 56.1% (133) of the youth participants expressed a desire to continue learning after returning to Syria or resettling elsewhere.
- 40.5% (96) reported interest in formal education (school or university).
- 12.7% (30) preferred vocational or skills training, and 3.0% (7) were interested in non-formal education such as literacy programs.
- Meanwhile, 37.6% (89) stated they wanted to focus on work, and 6.3% (15) were not sure.

Gender Differences:

- A greater proportion of females expressed interest in formal education at 46.6% (62), compared to 32.7% (34) of males.
- Preferences for vocational or skills training were slightly more prevalent among males with 14.4% (15) than females 11.3% (15).
- A higher percentage of males reported wanting to focus on work—43.3% (45) compared to 33.1% (44) of females.
- Interest in non-formal education was slightly higher among males at 3.8% (4) compared to 2.3% (3) of females.
- Slightly more females (6.8%) than males (5.8%) were unsure.

Setting Differences:

- Interest in formal education was considerably higher among camp-based youth participants, with 60.5% (49 out of 81) selected this option compared to 30.1% (47 out of 156) in the host community.
- The desire to focus on work was more common among host community youth participants, with 50.6% (79) choosing this response compared to 12.3% (10) in camps.
- Vocational training was selected more frequently by refugee camp participants, with 19.8% (16) compared to 9.0% (14) from the host community.
- Interest in non-formal education was slightly higher among host community youth participants at 3.8% (6) compared to 1.2% (1) in camps.
- Uncertainty levels were similar across both groups among youth participants from both groups, with 6.4% (10) in the host community and 6.2% (5) in refugee camps

Anticipated Challenges in Accessing Education or Training

Overall

- 51.9% (123) of youth participants reported lack of financial resources as the most significant challenge to resuming education upon return to Syria, making it the most frequently cited barrier.
- 34.2% (81) of participants identified social or cultural barriers, such as gender norms or community restrictions, as obstacles that could prevent educational reintegration.
- 23.2% (55) noted the absence of available schools, universities, or training programs, indicating concerns about the readiness of Syria's educational infrastructure.
- 19.8% (47) said they have no interest in continuing education, with displacement-related discouragement likely contributing to disengagement.
- 19.0% (45) pointed to the need to work and support their families as a barrier to returning to school or training, reflecting economic pressure on displaced youth.
- 9.7% (23) cited a gap in study years, referring to interruptions in learning caused by conflict or mobility.
- 9.3% (22) mentioned a lack of official documents needed for enrollment, such as school certificates or ID papers.
- 5.5% (13) expressed uncertainty about how to resume education, indicating a need for guidance and accessible pathways back to learning.

Gender Differences:

- 50.4% (67 out of 133) of females and 53.8% (56 out of 104) of males identified lack of financial resources as a key barrier, making it the most common concern for both genders.
- 31.6% (42) of females and 37.5% (39) of males reported social or cultural barriers, suggesting slightly higher concern among male respondents, though both genders are significantly affected.
- 20.3% (27) of females versus 17.3% (18) of males cited the need to work and support family as a reason they may not resume their education.
- 22.6% (30) of females compared to 16.3% (17) of males said they had no interest in continuing education, reflecting higher disengagement among young women.
- 11.3% (15) of females and 7.7% (8) of males reported a gap in study years, suggesting slightly greater educational disruption among females.
- 7.5% (10) of females versus 2.9% (3) of males mentioned uncertainty about how to resume education, suggesting a slightly greater information gap among female respondents
- 7.5% (10) of females and 11.5% (12) of males reported lack of official documents as a challenge, with males showing slightly higher concern here.
- 21.1% (28) of females and 26.0% (27) of males cited lack of available schools, universities, or training programs, showing near parity between genders.

Settings Differences:

- 40.4% (63 out of 156) of host community youth participants 74.1% (60 out of 81) of camp-based youth participants reported the lack of financial resources, indicating much greater financial strain in camps.

- 30.8% (48) of host community youth participants and 40.7% (33) of camp youth reported social or cultural barriers, suggesting heightened cultural constraints in camp settings.

- 24.4% (38) of host youth participants versus 8.6% (7) of camp youth participants reported the need to work and support family, reflecting more external economic pressure on host-based youth participants. This finding may appear to contrast with the higher percentage of camp-based youth who reported lacking financial resources. However, it likely reflects differences in roles and responsibilities: while youth in camps may face more structural financial limitations and legal work restrictions, host community youth may be under greater household pressure to earn income and support their families.

- 9.6% (15) of host youth participants and 39.5% (32) of camp youth participants stated they had no interest in continuing education, a significant disparity indicating greater educational disengagement among camp residents.

- 5.1% (8) of host youth participants and 18.5% (15) of camp youth participants reported a gap in study years, suggesting learning interruptions were more common in camps.

- Uncertainty was much more commonly reported in host communities7.7% (12) than camps 1.2% (1), potentially indicating an information gap in host settings.

- 6.4% (10) of host youth participants and 14.8% (12) of camp youth participants identified lack of official documents as a challenge, indicating document retention is more difficult in camp contexts.

- 17.9% (28) of host youth participants and 33.3% (27) of camp youth participants cited lack of available schools or programs, again showing infrastructural barriers are more prevalent in camps.

Qualitative

Qualitative Insights (FGD) Table no.8: Impact of Different Settlement Options on

Employment and Business Operations

Key Themes	Findings	Key Participant Quotes
Education Challenges in Jordan	Financial barriers, limited scholarships, and transportation difficulties hinder access to education.	"Scholarships are only for those scoring above 90." (P7, Camp, F); "Transportation and buses are expensive and dangerous." (P2, Camp, F)
Family Influence	Families encourage education but weigh it against economic realities and societal norms.	"We encourage our children to continue education despite challenges." (P7, Camp, M)
Education Opportunities in Syria	Some opportunities exist but are costly and often limited to private universities.	"Universities are not free anymore, private universities charge high fees." (P12, Camp, F)
Returnees and Education	Students face difficulties in accessing educational institutions and getting recognition for previous studies.	"They will make you take placement tests to determine your level." (P13, Camp, F)

All groups' participants acknowledged that education is an essential pathway to stability and independence, but they also said that structural and financial barriers are making it more and more difficult to obtain. "Scholarships are only for high-scoring students, above 90...," said one young woman. The answer to every issue is financial assistance. Transportation was characterized as a compounding problem in the camps: "Vehicles and transportation are dangerous," and "Students face violence during the long walks to school." These difficulties, when combined with the lack of recognition of certificates and the growing expense of private universities in Syria, led some people to conclude that, despite the value placed on education, it feels like a "dead end without job prospects."

Education in Syria was seen as inadequate by those who were thinking about leaving, particularly in rural areas. "The Aleppo countryside and its surroundings are completely deprived, there are no schools or universities," one participant said, while another added, "all universities were free prior to the war." Private ones are now emerging, and the cost of education is rising.

These results further support the quantitative data—51.9% of respondents reported financial barriers, and 23.2% cited the absence of institutions —and indicate a significant decrease in confidence in education as a means of career advancement. The presence of distinct employment prospects, the portability of scholarships, and concrete reintegration plans for those returning appear to be prerequisites for this trust.

3.5 Access to Healthcare and Anticipated Health Challenges in the Context of   Return to Syria

This section looks at the youth participants' access to healthcare in Jordan, identifies the support they believe they will need to stay healthy after moving, and forecasts the challenges they may encounter when they return to Syria.

Access to Healthcare in Jordan

Overall

- Nearly half of all youth participants (49.8%, 118 out of 237) reported having access to public or private healthcare in Jordan without any challenges.
- An additional 42.2% (100) participants stated that although they have access to healthcare, they face financial or legal barriers to doing so.
- Only 8.0% (19) participants reported that they do not have access to healthcare services at all.

Gender Differences:

- Among those who accessed healthcare without challenges (49.8%, 118), 53.4% (71) were females and 45.2% (47) were males.
- Among those who faced financial or legal barriers (42.2%, 100), 36.1% (48) were females and 50.0% (52) were males.
- Among the 8.0% (19) who reported having no access to healthcare services, 10.5% (14) were females and 4.8% (5) were males.

Setting Differences:

- Among host community youth participants, 48.7% (76 out of 156) reported being able to access healthcare without challenges, while 44.9% (70) reported facing financial or legal barriers.
- Among refugee camp youth participants, 51.9% (42 out of 81) could access healthcare without challenges, while 37.0% (30) reported facing financial or legal barriers.
- Notably, the proportion of youth participants with no access was slightly higher in camps (11.1%, 9) compared to the host community (6.4%, 10).

Barriers to Accessing Healthcare Services in Jordan

Youth participants reported several barriers affecting healthcare access in Jordan:

Overall:

- Limited healthcare coverage for refugees was the most reported barrier, cited by 42.6% (101) of participants.
- Lack of specialized healthcare services was mentioned by 13.5% (32).
- Administrative or legal restrictions were reported by 7.2% (17).
- A considerable proportion of youth participants—32.5% (77)—indicated they have not faced challenges in accessing healthcare.
- A small minority, 2.1% (5), stated they did not know whether challenges existed.

Gender Differences:

- Limited healthcare coverage was reported by 42.1% (56) of females and 43.3% (45) of males, showing a nearly equal concern.
- Lack of availability of specialized healthcare was noted by 13.5% (18) of females and 13.5% (14) of males, indicating no gender disparity.
- Administrative or legal restrictions were more frequently cited by females at 9.0% (12), compared to 4.8% (5) of males.
- 33.8% (45) of females and 30.8% (32) of males reported facing no healthcare-related challenges.
- 3.0% (4) of females and 1.0% (1) of males were uncertain about healthcare barriers.

Setting Differences:

- Limited healthcare coverage was slightly more common in host communities at 33.3% (52) compared to 62.0% (49) in camps.
- Lack of specialized healthcare was notably higher among camp youth participants: 25.9% (21) vs. 7.1% (11) in host communities.
- Administrative/legal restrictions were more prominent in camps at 12.3% (10), compared to 4.5% (7) in host communities.
- Youth participants who reported no barriers were predominantly from host communities: 41.7% (65), compared to only 14.8% (12) in camps.
- 1.9% (3) of host youth participants and 2.5% (2) of camp youth participants responded that they did not know.

Chart 6: Health care Barriers faced by Syrian Youth in Jordan
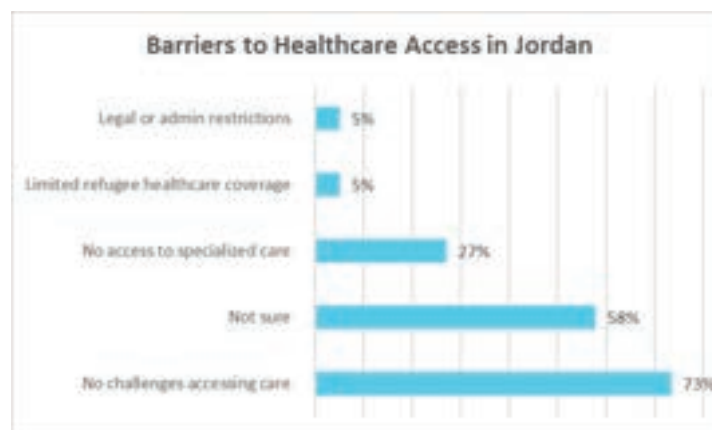
Anticipated Challenges in Accessing Health and Protection Services in Syria

Youth anticipated several difficulties if they moved back to Syria:

Overall:

*
*   Financial barriers (e.g., cost of healthcare and transportation) were the most cited challenge, selected by 73.4% (174) of participants.
*   Lack of available health and protection services followed, cited 57.8% (137).
*   Lack of awareness about where to seek services was reported by 27.0% (64).
*   A smaller group, 5.1% (12), mentioned social or cultural stigma as a barrier to seeking support.
*   Lack of solid support systems (both formal and informal) was raised by 15.2% (36).
*   5.1% (12) believed services would be accessible and reported no expected challenges.
*   Finally, 7.6% (18) selected "Other" as their response.

Chart 7: Anticipated Health care Barriers faced by Syrian Youth in Jordan
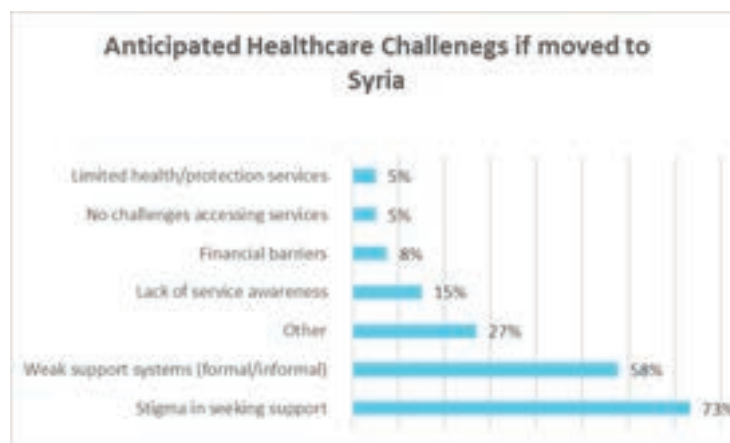
Gender Differences:

*   Financial barriers were reported more frequently by males at 79.0% (82) than females at 69.2% (92), making it the top concern for both genders.
*   Lack of available health and protection services was cited by 58.6% (78) of females and 56.7% (59) of males.
*   Lack of awareness about where to seek services was more commonly mentioned by males at 31.7% (33), compared to 23.3% (31) of females.
*   Social or cultural stigma was slightly more often reported by females at 6.0% (8) than males at 3.8% (4).
*   Lack of solid support systems was nearly evenly perceived across genders: 14.3% (19) of females and 16.3% (17) of males.
*   A similar proportion of females 6.0% (8) and males 3.8% (4) expressed no anticipated challenges.
*   "Other" was selected by 9.8% (13) of females and 4.8% (5) of males.

Across most challenges, females reported slightly higher levels of concern than males, particularly in relation to financial barriers and the availability of services

Setting Differences:

- Financial barriers were cited by 72.4% (113) of host community youth participants and 75.3% (61) of camp youth participants, making this the top challenge for both groups.
- Lack of available health and protection services was more frequently reported among youth participants in refugee camps at 66.7% (54), compared to 53.2% (83) in host communities.
- Lack of awareness about where to seek services was higher in host communities at 31.4% (49), while only 18.5% (15) of camp youth participants reported this issue.
- Social or cultural stigma was slightly more present among camp youth participants at 8.6% (7), compared to just 3.2% (5) in host communities.
- Lack of solid support systems was notably higher among camp-based participants at 35.8% (29), in contrast to only 4.5% (7) in host communities.
- Youth participants in the camp were also more likely to report facing no challenges (6.2%, 5) compared to those in host communities (3.8%, 6).
- "Other" was exclusively selected by host community participants, at 11.5% (18), and none from camps chose this option.

Support Needed Before Moving Back to Syria

Overall:

- Financial support for healthcare costs was the most cited need, reported by 48.5% (115) of youth participants.
- Information on available healthcare services in Syria was required by 35.9% (85) of participants.
- Assistance in obtaining medical records and prescriptions was needed by 34.6% (82).
- Vaccinations and preventive care were considered necessary by 21.5% (51).
- A total of 23.6% (56) stated that no additional healthcare support was needed prior to relocation.

Gender Differences:

- A higher percentage of females 49.6% (66) compared to males 47.1% (49) requested financial support for healthcare costs.
- Information on available healthcare services was slightly more requested by males 39.4% (41) than females 33.1% (44).
- Assistance in obtaining medical records was reported by 31.6% (42) of females and 38.5% (40) of males.
- Vaccinations and preventive care were nearly equally cited by females 20.3% (27) and males 23.1% (24).
- Females 25.6% (34) were more likely than males 21.2% (22) to indicate that no additional support was needed.

Setting Differences:

- Financial support was needed by 33.3% (52) of host community participants and 77.8% (63) of camp-based participants, showing a significantly higher demand in camps.
- Information on healthcare services was requested by 33.3% (52) in host communities and 40.7% (33) in camps.
- Assistance in obtaining medical records and prescriptions was reported by 32.7% (51) of host youth participants and 38.3% (31) of camp youth participants.

- Vaccination needs were slightly higher among camp youth 33.3% (27) compared to host youth participants 15.4% (24).
- Notably, 32.1% (50) of host community youth participants reported needing no additional healthcare support, compared to only 7.4% (6) of those in camps, suggesting better health access in host settings.

Qualitative

Qualitative Insights (FGD) Table no.9: Health & Well-being

Key Themes	Findings	Key Participant Quotes
Health Concerns in Jordan	Limited access to specialized care, shortage of medicines, high costs of treatment, and delays in emergency services.	"My son needed surgery for seven years and still didn't get it." (P3, FGD2); "The medical staff act based on their mood." (P9, Camp, F)
Health Challenges Upon Return	Health services in Syria are very poor, with no coverage for major illnesses like cancer and shortage of qualified doctors.	"Cancer patients have no coverage in Syria." (P13, FGD2); "All qualified personnel left Syria." (P13, Camp, F)

While not all participants expressed health as their top concern, when they did, their concerns were severe and profoundly systemic. Several participants in the Azraq camp reported that access to specialized care was limited and that referral systems had collapsed. "They only give us painkillers," said one participant, while another clarified, "My son has needed surgery for seven years, and I can't get it." One participant said, "There are no special facilities for women, and some are infertile." The lack of reproductive care and reasonably priced diagnostics for women was also brought up. Although lab tests are necessary, they are costly.

Even worse, the state of health in Syria was described. One participant stated that "all qualified personnel have left the country," adding that "there are no hospitals, a shortage of doctors, and treatment is not free." A bleak picture of return scenarios is painted by the combination of medical staff shortages, infrastructure collapse, and unaffordable care, particularly for young people or families with long-term medical conditions.

These qualitative findings are consistent with survey data that showed lack of services and financial barriers to the biggest challenges. But the FGDs added another layer, exposing distrust of camp systems, unfulfilled surgical needs, and a lack of services tailored to women. These issues need to be addressed through return preparedness planning, targeted advocacy, and medical referral tactics in host environments.

3.6 Mental Health and Psychological Readiness for Moving Back to Syria

The youth participants' mental wellness in relation to the prospect of returning to Syria is assessed in this section. It assesses their psychological preparedness, pinpoints anticipated mental health issues and investigates the kinds of assistance they need either prior to or following their move. Main Concerns About Mental and Emotional Well-being When Moving Back

Mental and Psychological concerns about moving back to Syria in terms

Overall:

- Fear of instability or new conflicts emerged as the most cited concern, reported by 78.9% (187) of youth participants, indicating that a return to Syria is closely associated with perceived physical and emotional risk.
- Stress and anxiety about economic survival were also heavily reported, mentioned by 70.9% (168), reflecting fears related to unemployment, inflation, or lacking livelihood security upon return.
- Trauma from past war experiences was expressed by 47.3% (112), suggesting that prior exposure to violence and displacement continues to affect mental health outcomes.
- Uncertainty about reintegration and social acceptance was cited by 19.0% (45), pointing to emotional discomfort about social belonging and reestablishing community ties.
- Separation from family or support networks was selected by 11.0% (26), highlighting emotional strain linked to potential family division or absence of care structures.
- 3.0% (7) reported being unsure, while 4.6% (11) selected "Other" reasons, reflecting individualized or unspecified psychological concerns.

Gender Differences:

- A higher proportion of females 82.0% (109) than males 75.0% (78) cited fear of instability, highlighting gendered perceptions of safety risks.
- Trauma from past experiences was reported by 52.6% (70) of females compared to 40.4% (42) of males, possibly indicating greater emotional vulnerability or willingness to disclose trauma.
- Uncertainty about social acceptance was more pronounced among females 23.3% (31) versus 13.5% (14) males, suggesting social reintegration may feel more challenging for young women.
- Separation from support networks was nearly equally mentioned (13 females and 13 males), though slightly higher in proportional terms for males 12.5% than females 9.8%.

Setting Differences:

- Fear of instability was more prevalent among camp residents 90.1% (73) than host community youth participants 73.1% (114), possibly due to greater vulnerability in camp settings.
- Similarly, stress over economic survival was reported by 75.3% (61) of camp-based youth participants versus 68.6% (107) in host communities.
- Trauma from past war experiences was more common among those in refugee camps 59.3% (48) compared to 41.0% (64) in host settings, likely reflecting the impact of displacement or protracted camp life.
- Separation from family/support was less cited in camps 6.2% (5) than in host communities 13.5% (21), perhaps due to stronger co-residency in camps or differing expectations about family structure.

Mental and Psychological Readiness to Move Back to Syria

Overall:

- Most youth participants, 62.4% (148), stated that they do not feel mentally prepared to return to Syria or reintegrate into society. This finding highlights the emotional and psychological toll of displacement and the perceived risks of reintegration.

- Meanwhile, 17.7% (42) of participants felt somewhat prepared but indicated that they would require psychological support to manage the transition. This suggests that while some participants are open to the idea of returning, they recognize a need for structured mental health support systems.

- A smaller segment, 15.6% (37), reported being fully ready to return and reintegrate without needing additional support.

- Only 4.2% (10) of participants stated they were unsure about their mental readiness, reflecting some indecision and potentially a lack of information or experience related to reintegration.

Gender Differences:

- Female participants were more likely than males to report feeling unprepared, with 71.4% (95) of females stating they do not feel mentally ready to return, compared to 51.0% (53) of males. This disparity may reflect the added psychological burden and risks that women anticipate, such as security concerns, caregiving roles, or the loss of social protection.

- Both genders were represented among those who felt somewhat prepared and would need support: 15.8% (21) of both females and males.

- Interestingly, 23.1% (24) of male participants expressed that they are mentally ready to return without support, compared to only 9.8% (13) of female participants. This may suggest that males, potentially due to gender norms or economic pressure, perceive themselves as more resilient or are more willing to return under current circumstances.

- A small percentage from both genders—3.0% (4) of females and 5.8% (6) of males—reported being unsure.

Settings Differences:

- Among those living in host communities, the percentage of participants who did not feel mentally prepared to return was notably higher at 73.7% (115), compared to 40.7% (33) among those residing in refugee camps. This could be attributed to stronger social and economic integration in the host communities, making the idea of leaving more psychologically difficult.

- In contrast, youth participants in refugee camps were more likely to feel ready: 29.6% (24) of camp residents stated they were mentally ready to return, compared to only 8.3% (13) of those in host communities. This suggests that camp-based youth participants may feel a greater sense of impermanence and therefore a stronger drive or openness toward returning.

- Those in host communities were more likely to feel "somewhat prepared but in need of support": 16.0% (25), compared to 21.0% (17) in refugee camps.

- Uncertainty was also slightly more common among camp-based youth participants: 8.6% (7) in camps vs. 1.9% (3) in host communities.

Chart 8: Youth mental readiness to move back to Syria
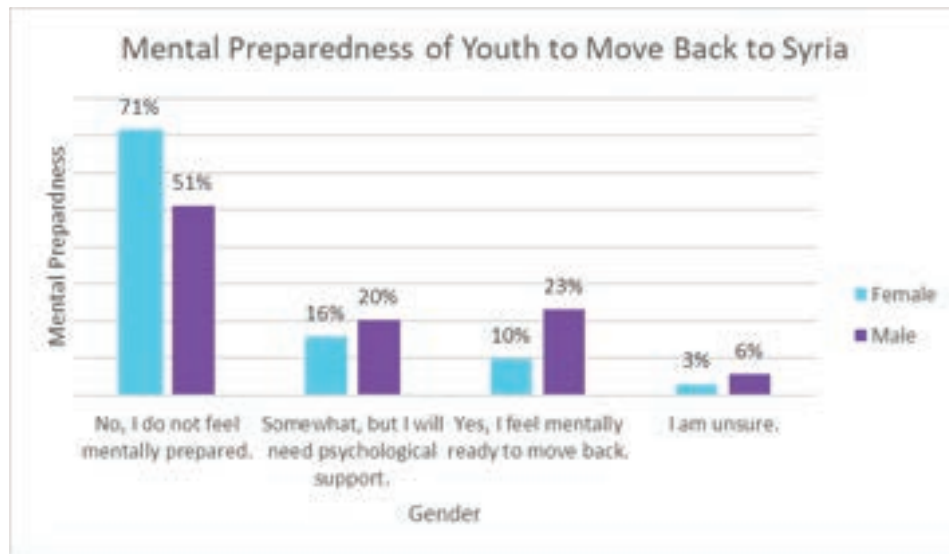
Current Psychological Support Needs Before Moving Back

Overall:

- The most frequently reported need was supporting groups for people considering moving back, selected by 38.8% (92) of youth participants.
- Community-based psychosocial support followed, mentioned by 33.3% (79), highlighting youth preference for locally accessible, group-based interventions.
- Individual therapy or counseling for trauma recovery was requested by 29.5% (70), reflecting a strong need for specialized one-on-one services.
- Stress and anxiety management programs were needed by 29.1% (69), confirming the prevalence of psychological distress as youth contemplate return.
- Family counseling and reintegration guidance was selected by 11.4% (27), indicating a more limited, but still notable, interest in family-level support.
- Meanwhile, 24.9% (59) of participants reported not needing any psychological support, reflecting either perceived readiness or limited awareness.

Gender Differences:

- Female participants were consistently more likely to report needing support across categories. For instance, support groups were chosen by 42.9% (57) of females compared to 33.7% (35) of males.
- Community-based support was selected by 39.8% (53) of females vs. 25.0% (26) of males.
- Individual therapy was needed by 35.3% (47) of females, while only 22.1% (23) of males selected it.
- A higher percentage of males, 33.7% (35), stated that they did not need psychological support compared to 18.0% (24) of females.

Settings Differences:

- Youth participants in host communities expressed greater need for almost all forms of support. Support groups were selected by 45.5% (71) in host settings vs. 25.9% (21) in camps.
- Individual therapy was more frequently requested by host youth participants at 34.0% (53) compared to 21.0% (17) in camps.
- However, community-based support had higher interest among camp participants (33.3%, 27) than in some individual categories, indicating a potential preference for group-based approaches within camps.
- Notably, 39.5% (32) of youth participants in camps reported no need for psychological support, compared to only 17.3% (27) in host communities.

Expected Mental Health Challenges After Moving Back

Overall:

- High levels of stress due to economic instability were the top anticipated mental health challenge, reported by 67.1% (159) of participants.
- The lack of mental health services and professionals was cited by 43.0% (102), highlighting infrastructure concerns.
- Increased social tensions and stigma against returnees were expected by 38.8% (92), showing anxiety about societal reintegration.
- A minority of 9.7% (23) stated they expect no challenges and feel mentally prepared.

Gender Differences:

- Female youth participants more often cited structural and stigma-related challenges. For instance, 45.1% (60) of females reported a lack of services, compared to 40.4% (42) of males.
- Stress due to economic instability was slightly more frequent among females (68.4%, 91) than males (65.4%, 68).
- Social tensions and stigma were reported by 45.1% (60) of females compared to 30.8% (32) of males—indicating females feel more vulnerable to community judgment or exclusion.
- Interestingly, a larger proportion of males (15.4%, 16) than females (5.3%, 7) believed they would face no challenges.

Settings Differences:

- Youth participants in host communities reported greater concern about economic stress, with 64.7% (101) expecting high stress due to instability compared to 71.6% (58) in camps.
- Lack of services was reported by 42.3% (66) of host youth participants vs. 44.4% (36) in camps, indicating the issue spans both environments.
- Social tensions and stigma were more commonly expected by camp-based youth participants (42.0%) than those in host communities (37.2%), suggesting heightened reintegration fears in camp settings.
- Roughly equal proportions in both settings (7.7%, 12 in host; 13.6%, 11 in camp) felt mentally prepared and expected no challenges.

Preferred Types of Community-Based Psychological Support in Syria

Youth participants emphasized the following as priorities:

- Establishing psychosocial support centers was the most selected option by 56.9% of participants (135).
- Trauma healing and mental health awareness programs were selected by 50.2% of participants (119).
- Mental health training for teachers, healthcare workers, and employers was selected by 30.8% of participants (73).
- Youth participants and women's empowerment programs for resilience were selected by 25.7% of participants (61).
- Hotlines or digital mental health support services were selected by 10.5% of participants (25).
- 8.0% of participants (19) indicated that they did not know what support should be prioritized.

Previous Psychological Support Received in Jordan

Overall:

- Nearly half of all youth participants (46.4%, 110) had never received any form of psychological support in Jordan, highlighting a major gap in mental health access.
- A smaller proportion (22.4%, 53) had only accessed informal support—such as from family, friends, or community circles—rather than professional sources.
- Formal psychological counseling or mental health services had been accessed by 31.2% (74), indicating that nearly one-third had some prior exposure to structured support systems.

Gender Differences:

- A similar percentage of females (42.9%, 57 out of 133) and males (51.0%, 53 out of 104) had never received psychological support, though males were slightly more likely to report no access.
- Informal support was almost equally accessed by females (21.1%, 28) and males (24.0%, 25), showing no major gender gap in relying on personal networks.
- More females (36.1%, 48) than males (25.0%, 26) had accessed formal psychological services, suggesting that females may be more likely to seek structured mental health care.

Settings Differences:

- Youth participants from host communities were more likely to report no psychological support access (53.2%, 83 out of 156) compared to 33.3% (27 out of 81) from refugee camps.
- Informal support access was balanced across settings (host: 17.3%, 27; camp: 32.1%, 26), while a slightly higher share of refugee camp residents (34.6%, 28) accessed formal services compared to 29.5% (46) from host communities.

Barriers to Accessing Psychological Support in Jordan

Overall:

- 56.1% of participants (133) indicated they faced no barriers, which may reflect improved service accessibility or a lack of awareness about available support.
- The top reported barrier was the financial cost of services, cited by 22.8% (54), closely followed by a lack of information about available services (21.5%, 51).
- Other notable challenges included the limited number of professionals and centers (15.2%, 36) and stigma or cultural barriers (11.8%, 28).
- Gender Differences:
- Female participants were slightly more likely to cite financial barriers (23.3%, 31) than males (22.1%, 23), and more likely to report lack of information (24.1%, 32 vs. 18.3%, 19).
- Social stigma was reported more by females (12.0%, 16) than males (11.5%, 12).
- A higher proportion of females (54.1%, 72) than males (58.7%, 61) stated they had no barriers—showing relatively similar perceptions of accessibility.
- Settings Differences:
- Youth participants in host communities were more likely to say they had no barriers (58.3%, 91) than those in camps (51.9%, 42).
- The cost of services (20.5%, 32 vs. 27.2%, 22) and lack of information (21.2%, 33 vs. 22.2%, 18) were nearly equally cited across settings.
- Refugee camp youth participants were slightly more likely to mention the limited number of professionals (25.9%, 21 vs. 9.6%, 15), possibly reflecting more strained services in camps.

Preferred Modes of Accessing Psychological Support Before Return

Overall:

- In-person counseling was the most preferred mode (42.2%, 100), underscoring the importance of human interaction in mental health care.
- Community-based peer support groups (32.5%, 77) and online therapy or hotlines (25.3%, 60) were also popular options, reflecting a need for diverse formats.
- Workshops on emotional resilience were selected by 20.3% (48), showing moderate interest in group-based educational approaches.
- 18.6% (44) stated they did not need support before returning, and 9.3% (22) were uncertain.

Gender Differences:

- More females (48.9%, 65) than males (33.7%, 35) preferred in-person counseling, suggesting greater receptivity to direct engagement.

- Peer support was also more popular among females (32.3%, 43) than males (32.7%, 34).
- Males were more likely to report no need for support (27.9%, 29) compared to females (11.3%, 15), pointing to a gender gap in perceived need or willingness to seek help.

Settings Differences:

- Host community youth participants showed greater preference for peer support (37.8%, 59) and in-person sessions (42.9%, 67) compared to camp residents (22.2%, 18; and 40.7%, 33 respectively).
- Equal proportions (14.1%, 22) in both settings stated they did not need support before returning.
- Refugee camp residents showed less interest in resilience workshops (16.0%, 13) compared to host community participants (22.4%, 35), possibly due to limited exposure to such formats.
- Notably, youth participants in refugee camps expressed much higher preference for empowerment programs (46.9%) than those in host communities (14.7%), suggesting a perceived need for resilience-building in more vulnerable settings.

Qualitative

– FGD Summary Table

Qualitative Insights (FGD) Table no.10: Psychosocial Needs

Key Themes	Findings	Key Participant Quotes
Link Between Financial Pressure and Mental Health	Financial insecurity is closely tied to youth and parent stress, especially among females.	"When there is financial support, they will feel psychologically comfortable." (P9, Host, F)
Psychological Barriers to Return	Past experiences and stories of psychological distress discourage return.	"A relative of mine experienced a psychological condition after returning." (P4, Host, F)
Children's Emotional Attachment to Jordan	Youth express emotional resistance to return due to social integration in Jordan.	"My son completely refuses to return, as he has integrated into Jordanian society." (P5, Host, F)

The matter of psychosocial needs was not consistently brought up in all focus groups, but among the female members of the host community, it became evident how closely related mental health issues are to financial strain, family responsibilities, and the psychological burden of relocation. Financial stability and psychological comfort were frequently associated by participants, suggesting that unfulfilled material needs play a major role in emotional distress. One woman said, for example, "They will feel psychologically comfortable when there is financial support."

The return to Syria also raised serious concerns about mental health. Anxiety about the possibility of reintegration was expressed by many participants, and some told stories of relatives who experienced mental breakdowns after returning. "A relative of mine experienced a psychological condition after returning," one participant recalled, highlighting the trauma and uncertainty that come with return trips.

Emotional resistance from young people, particularly those who were born or raised in Jordan and now consider it to be their home, made this situation even worse. "My son completely refuses to return, as he has integrated into Jordanian society," one mother wrote. These results highlight the necessity of integrating psychosocial and mental health support into employment and return-related programs. In addition to addressing trauma, this should assist families and young people in navigating stability, identity, and belonging in both present and possible future situations.

3.7 Financial and Legal Challenges Associated with Return to Syria

This section looks at financial and legal obstacles that young people encounter when contemplating a return to Syria are discussed in this section.

Their willingness to participate in returnee support groups, the kind of support they prefer, the financial requirements for documentation, the obstacles to legal processing, the possible use of cash support, and the approximate expenses of filling out the required paperwork are all covered.

Quantitative

Interest in Returnee Support Groups

Overall:

- 46.4% of youth participants (110) expressed a clear willingness to join returnee support groups upon returning to Syria.
- 30.4% (72) reported they may join depending on the type of support provided.
- 13.9% (33) were unsure about joining.
- 9.3% (22) stated they were not interested in joining such groups.
-

Gender Differences

- A slightly higher percentage of females (48.9%) than males (43.3%) showed strong interest in joining support groups.
- More males (35.6%) than females (26.3%) indicated their decision would depend on the type of support provided.
- Uncertainty levels were similar among males (12.5%) and females (15.0%).
- Slightly more females (9.8%) than males (8.7%) rejected the idea of joining entirely.

Settings Differences

- Refugee camp residents were more likely (60.5%) to express interest in joining groups than host community residents (39.1%).
- However, host community youth participants were more likely (35.3%) to be uncertain and evaluate their decision based on support type than their refugee camp peers (21.0%).

Preferred Type of Return Support

Overall:

- 61.2% of youth participants (145) stated that both pre- and post-return support were important to them.
- 20.7% (49) preferred support only after returning to Syria, particularly around job opportunities, reintegration, and housing.
- 14.8% (35) prioritized support before returning, such as financial planning, training, and legal help.
- Only 3.4% (8) stated they did not require any support.

Gender Differences

- A slightly higher proportion of males (63.5%) than females (59.4%) emphasized the importance of both support phases.
- Female respondents showed a stronger preference for support before return (15.8%) compared to males (13.5%).
- A similar proportion of males (20.2%) and females (21.1%) prioritized support after return.

Settings Differences

- A striking 74.4% of host community youth participants believed both support phases were important, compared to just 35.8% of refugee camp participants.
- Refugee camp participants were much more likely to favor support after return (35.8%) than host community respondents (12.8%).
- Support before return was favored by 24.7% of refugee camp respondents, versus 9.6% of host community youth participants.

Barriers to Obtaining Legal Documentation

Overall:

- The most common legal challenge was the high cost of authentication and legal processing, selected by 56.2% (133) of participants.
- 38.4% (91) reported limited access to government offices for authentication procedures.
- 19.4% (46) mentioned lack of legal guidance or assistance as a barrier.
- 14.8% (35) pointed to restrictions on mobility that hinder access to documentation.
- 8.4% (20) cited difficulty obtaining missing or lost paperwork.
- 17.3% (41) mentioned other reasons, mostly administrative complexities and individual family conditions.

Gender Differences

- Males more frequently identified high costs (65%) and legal authentication issues (33%) as key barriers than females (49% and 43% respectively).
- Female respondents reported greater challenges with access to government offices (43% of females vs. 33% of males) and "other" barriers (20% vs. 14%).

Settings Differences

- Refugee camp participants were far more affected by high legal fees (64%) and office inaccessibility (53%) than host community participants (52% and 31% respectively).
- Travel restrictions were also much more commonly reported by youth participants from refugee camps (32%) than host communities (6%).
- Cash Support Packages
- 65.0% of participants (154) indicated that receiving a cash support package would help them and their families secure the necessary documentation for return.
- 18.6% of participants (44) were not sure whether cash support would assist.
- 16.5% of participants (39) believed cash support would not significantly help.
- Estimated Costs for Documentation
- Youth Participants' perceptions of the costs required for documentation and related return expenses were:
- 41.4% (98) of participants estimated more than 200 JOD would be needed.
- 23.6% (56) of participants believed 50–100 JOD would suffice.
- 22.4% (53) of participants estimated needing 100–200 JOD.
- 12.7% (30) of participants estimated less than 50 JOD.
- Overall, more than 40% anticipated high financial burdens, highlighting the need for financial support interventions.

The results show that 61.2% of the youth population surveyed think that support is required both before and after return, and nearly half (46.4%) are willing to participate in returnee support groups.

More than half (55.7%) of participants need financial support to finish legal documentation procedures, with the two biggest obstacles being high authentication costs (56.2%) and restricted access to government offices (38.4%).
A sizable portion (41.4%) estimated that documentation costs would exceed 200 JOD, and 65.0% said that cash support programs would help overcome these obstacles.

These findings demonstrate the potential for focused interventions, such as financial grants, legal advice, and organized returnee support systems, to enable safer, more sustainable returns to Syria. They also highlight the significant legal and financial burdens that young people are expected to face.

Qualitative

Qualitative Insights (FGD) Table no.11: Cash for Protection – Supporting Documentation for Returnees

Key Themes	Findings	Key Participant Quotes
Documentation Challenges in Jordan	Authentication of certificates is expensive and sometimes confusing; transport costs are high.	"Transportation costs around 350 dinars and certificate validation about 50 dinars." (P9, Host, M)
Financial/Legal Support Needed	Returnees mainly need financial support for documentation and transport rather than legal advice.	"Documentation cost less than 50 JOD but transport is expensive." (P3, Host, F)

3.9 Social Networks and Support Systems for Moving Back to Syria

The support networks that young people anticipate using upon returning to Syria are examined in this section. It evaluates the kind of community and social support required to help them integrate both before and after moving. Additionally, it gauges young people's interest in taking part in support programs before and after their return.

Quantitative

Expected Primary Sources of Support After Moving Back

Overall:

- NGOs and humanitarian organizations were the most cited, selected by 57.4% (136) of participants.
- Family members and friends already in Syria were selected by 39.7% (94) of participants.
- Local community networks were selected by 27.0% (64) participants.
- Online support groups or digital networks were selected by 11.0% (26) participants.
- 10.5% of participants (25) stated they did not know who they would rely on.

Gender Differences:

- Females selected NGOs and their family and friends as the primary key support providers they can rely on, with 54.9% (73) and 41.4% (55) consecutively.
- 60.6% (63) of the males similarly prioritized NGOs but showed slightly lower reliance on family and friends, with 37.5% (39) males opting for this option.
- Online support groups were slightly more selected as a support provider method by 12.0% (16) of females than males (9.6% – 10 males).

Setting Differences:

- 58.3% (91) of the host community participants prioritized NGOs and 34.6% (54) family and friends.
- 55.6% (45) of refugee camp participants similarly prioritized NGOs, but family reliance was slightly higher among camp residents as reported by 49.4% (40) participants compared to host communities.

Types of Community-Based Support Expected After Return

Overall:

- Mental health and psychosocial support were the type of support, mostly selected by the youth participants with 56.5% (134).
- Community volunteering opportunities were selected by 53.6% of participants (127).
- Networking with other returnees was selected by 43.9% of participants (104).
- Leadership or youth-led activities were selected by 22.8% of participants (54).
- 9.3% of participants (22) selected other forms of support.

Gender Differences:

- 62.4% (83) of female participants selected mental health and psychosocial support, and 55.6% (74) chose community volunteering.
- Males similarly emphasized mental health and psychosocial support with 49.0% (51 males) and community volunteering with 51.0% (53) males.
- Females were less likely to indicate leadership/youth-led activities with 21.8% (29) females) than males, with 24.0% (25).

Setting Differences:

- Host community youth participants selected mental health and psychosocial support by 62.8% (98) and networking with other returnees by 41.0% (64).
- 79.0% (64) of the refugee camp participants emphasized community volunteering opportunities more than any other support type.
- Leadership or youth-led activities were selected more frequently by refugee camp participants, with 42.0% (34)

Interest in Participating in Support Programs

Overall:

- 46.4% (110) of participants expressed clear willingness to participate in support programs, showing strong interest in structured assistance before or after returning to Syria.
- 28.3% (67) selected "Maybe, if I understand more about the available support," indicating a significant portion of youth are hesitant but open to engagement with further information.
- 13.1% (31) of participants selected "I don't know yet," highlighting a moderate level of uncertainty.
- 12.2% (29) stated they were not interested in participating in any support programs.

Gender Differences:

- 51.1% (68) of female participants expressed clear willingness to participate in support programs, compared to 40.4% (42) of males. This indicates that women are more proactively open to structured support and reintegration opportunities.
- 35.6% (37) of males selected "Maybe, if I understand more about the available support," compared to 22.6% (30) of females. This suggests males are more hesitant and may require tailored outreach, further details, or peer influence to convert interest into participation.
- 14.3% (19) of females and 11.5% (12) of males selected "I don't know yet," indicating similar levels of uncertainty across both genders.
- 12.0% (16) of females and 12.5% (13) of males reported no interest, suggesting disinterest is not gender-specific but possibly related to personal or contextual factors.

Setting Differences:

- "Maybe, if I understand more about the available support" was selected by 30.1% (47) of host community participants and 24.7% (20) of refugee camp participants.
- "I don't know yet" was selected by 13.5% (21) of host community participants and 12.4% (10) of the participants in camps.
- "No, I am not interested" was selected by 16.0% (25) of host community participants and just 4.9% (4) of refugee camp participants.

These figures reflect an overall potential participation rate of nearly three-quarters (74.5%) when combining "Yes" and "Maybe" responses. Programs that are responsive to youth needs and communicated effectively are likely to attract wide engagement.

Gender Differences

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These patterns highlight the need for gender-responsive programming. Female participants may respond positively to psychosocial or mentoring models, while males might benefit more from information sessions, role models, or evidence of tangible outcomes.

Qualitative

Qualitative Insights (FGD) Table no.12:   Social & Community Support for Returnees

Key Themes	Findings	Key Participant Quotes
Community Support in Jordan	Overall good moral and social support, with a sense of inclusion and shared experiences.	"Jordan is a warm embrace for Arabs." (P1, Camp, F); "We feel like we are among our people." (P7, Camp, F)
Social Barriers in Syria	Integration challenges due to cultural differences, social stigmatization, and fear of sectarian barriers.	"Those returning from Jordan are seen as wealthy." (P4, Host, F); "Fear due to sectarian barriers." (P1, Host, F)

For Syrian youth participants in Jordan, social inclusion has proven to be a significant pillar of stability, especially when it comes to integration into host communities and moral support. Participants in a number of focus group discussions (FGDs) talked about feeling supported and accepted by Jordanians, frequently characterizing their experience as emotionally consoling or familial. "Jordan is a warm embrace for Arabs," said one female participant, and "We feel like we are among our people," said another. Young people's reluctance to return, particularly those who have grown up fully immersed in Jordanian society, is probably influenced by this sense of belonging.

On the other hand, social reintegration in Syria was viewed with concern. Participants expressed worries that their time overseas would make them seem privileged or alienated. One participant remarked, "Those returning from Jordan are seen as wealthy," underscoring the ways in which socioeconomic perceptions can cause divisions upon return. Deeper anxieties associated with historical tensions were voiced by others: "Fear due to sectarian barriers," one woman said, pointing to the ongoing social collapse that might be in store for returnees.

These observations highlight the necessity of preparing young people for the challenges of reintegration on all levels: economically, socially, and emotionally. For individuals who plan to return, programs should think about providing reintegration dialogue sessions, community mentoring, and counseling services, especially in places where sectarian or cultural stigma may make it difficult for them to be included.

3.10 Youth Participants Preferences for Receiving Information and Engagement in Program Design

This section identifies the most effective ways to include youth in the planning and design of programs that assist people who choose to return to Syria and investigates how young people prefer to be informed about such programs.

Quantitative

Preferred Methods for Receiving Information

- 48.5% of participants (115) prefer to receive information through WhatsApp or SMS.
- 40.9% of participants (97) prefer receiving information through social media platforms.
- 10.6% of participants (25) indicated that they are not interested in receiving information about support programs.

    The preference for direct messaging tools (WhatsApp/SMS) slightly outweighs social media, suggesting a stronger youth preference for more personal and immediate communication channels.

Best Ways to Involve Youth in Program Design

When asked about how youth should be engaged in designing programs that support voluntary return, participants suggested:

- 37.6% of youth participants (89) selected collaboration with local NGOs and community centers as the best method for creating inclusive opportunities.
- 20.7% of participants (49) considered offering leadership roles for youth participants in community projects, a chance to empower them to lead initiatives.
- 20.3% of participants (48) selected consulting youth participants in decision-making, particularly in shaping policies and planning programs- as a key method.

- 10.5% of participants (25) suggested using digital platforms and social media to facilitate youth engagement and idea sharing.
- 5.9% of participants (14) chose the establishment of Youth Advisory Councils or committees as a formal mechanism to create formal structures where youth provide continuous feedback and recommendations for programs.
- 5.1% of participants (12) indicated other methods for youth involvement, including informal focus groups or community forums.

Overall, the data indicates a strong preference for youth participation in leadership and decision-making processes as well as community-based collaboration.

When promoting support programs, it is crucial to use familiar and easily accessible communication channels. The majority of participants (48.5%) preferred receiving information via WhatsApp or SMS, with social media platforms coming in second (40.9%).

Community partnerships (37.6%), youth leadership (20.7%), and decision-making consultation (20.3%) were found to be important tactics for ensuring that youth voices are successfully incorporated into program design.

According to these findings, in order to guarantee the relevance, ownership, and sustainability of return support interventions, future program communications should place a higher priority on social media and mobile-based messaging. Additionally, program development should actively involve youth at different levels of planning and leadership.

Qualitative

Qualitative Insights (FGD) Table no.13 Future Communication & Donor Support

Key Themes	Findings	Key Participant Quotes
Donor Support Needs	Youth call for financial support, housing assistance, and support in transport for those returning.	"Supporting organizations should mobilize vehicles to transport us and our belongings, not just give monthly cash." (P7, Camp, M)
Communication Channels	Social media is the preferred method, but internet access is limited and costly.	"Social media is good, but we can barely afford internet." (P13, Camp, F)

The FGDs' parents and community representatives emphasized the critical need for more responsive and useful donor assistance, especially for families thinking about returning to Syria. In addition to financial aid, they also requested housing support and logistical assistance, particularly with regard to moving their possessions. "Supporting organizations should mobilize vehicles to transport us and our belongings, not just give monthly cash," one camp father clarified. This opinion is in line with a larger call for organized reintegration assistance, as one-time financial aid is not thought to be adequate to handle the difficulties of going back to Syria and starting over.

The significance of open and transparent channels of communication was also underlined by the participants, particularly for getting information about services, rights, and return policies. Although social media was mentioned as the preferred approach, obstacles are caused by issues with access and cost. "Social media is good, but we can barely afford internet," one community member clarified. This draws attention to the digital inequality that affects refugee households and indicates that initiatives funded by donors are needed to combine offline, community-based dissemination with digital outreach, especially in camp settings.

These results highlight the need for comprehensive and context-sensitive donor strategies that prioritize financial, logistical, and communication barriers that impact entire households dealing with displacement and return, rather than just individuals.

Gender-Specific Insights and Analysis

4. Gender-Specific Insights and Analysis

A recurrent theme in both the quantitative surveys and the qualitative focus group discussions examined gender disparities. The findings show that while the overall objectives of Syrian youth, both male and female, are similar (economic security and education), their experiences, priorities, and vulnerabilities differ, which may have implications for strategic programming.

Aspirations and Priorities

Quantitative findings showed that:

- Employment and financial independence were the top priorities for both males and females (58.7% of males vs. 54.1% of females).
- Interest in pursuing additional education or vocational training was marginally higher among females (17.3% vs. 15.4% among males).
- Focusing on family responsibilities was notably more common among females (12.8%) compared to males (4.8%), indicating that family-related duties were a higher stated priority among young women than among young men. It is worth mentioning that this disparity reflects prevailing social and gender norms in the local context, which tend to place a greater share of caregiving and domestic responsibilities on young women.

Qualitative discussions reinforced that while young men and women often share aspirations, social expectations, particularly regarding caregiving roles for women, influence their pathways.

FGD Quote: "Our ambition is one: education and work, but for women, supporting the family remains a stronger responsibility." (P1, Camp, Female participant)

Employment Challenges

Lack of employment opportunities was mentioned by both gender as a major problem, but there was gender-specific barriers as well:

- Due to their limited mobility and lack of access to formal employment sectors, young women are more likely to choose home-based occupations like cooking, hair styling, and tailoring.
- Young men reported feeling more pressured to provide for their entire family and expressed greater concern about the legal restrictions surrounding work permits[10].

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[10]Obstacles still remain, as many professions remain closed to Syrian refugees. However, Syrian refugees are entitled to apply for jobs in the 'closed professions' on the same basis as other foreign nationals, such as when they possess a qualification not available amongst Jordanians or by demonstrating that there are not enough Jordanian workers to meet employer's labour demands." — Norwegian Refugee Council (2019). Legalizing Labour: Work Rights and Conditions for Syrian Refugees in Jordan. Available at: https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/legalizing-labour-work-rights-and-conditions-for-syrian-refugees-in-jordan.pdf

Participants emphasized that:

- Men are still perceived as primary breadwinners, compounding pressure when opportunities are limits.
- Women showed a stronger tendency to seek informal, flexible work such as home-based businesses (e.g., cooking, tailoring), which may reflect the need to balance economic participation with traditional caregiving roles.

FGD Quote:

"Men have more options." (Host community, Femal Participant)

Readiness and Barriers to Return

When considering returning to Syria:

- Females were more cautious due to concerns about security, cultural expectations, and gender-based restrictions in Syria.
- Many young women feared the loss of educational or professional gains made during displacement and anticipated stricter gender norms upon return.
- Males cited economic hardship and lack of infrastructure as bigger concerns, focusing more on employment availability.

Quantitative data revealed that females were more likely to cite family separation and social reintegration challenges as barriers to return (78.6% of family concerns raised by females).

Health and Psychosocial Support Needs

- Females emphasized the importance of psychosocial support, reporting greater psychological impacts related to displacement, uncertainty, and fear of reintegration challenges.
- Both genders showed high needs for mental health support, but females more frequently prioritized structured group support (e.g., support groups, community-based interventions) over individual counseling.

FGD Quote: "Financial support can solve many problems, but without psychological support, stability cannot be achieved." (Female participant, Host community)

Strategic Implications and Recommendations

- Tailored Livelihoods Support: Programs should offer flexible income-generation options for young women, particularly home-based or digital opportunities.
- Gender-Responsive Reintegration Planning: Return support should explicitly address different gender needs, ensuring that women's security, education, and autonomy are safeguarded.
- Mental Health Services: Psychosocial interventions should be gender-sensitive, offering spaces where young women can seek support comfortably.
- Leadership Opportunities: Engaging young women in leadership roles (community mobilizers, youth councils) can strengthen their resilience and agency during both displacement and reintegration.

Conclusion

5. Conclusion

This evaluation offers a thorough and evidence-based understanding of the goals, preparedness, and obstacles faced by Syrian youth in relation to staying in Jordan and moving back to Syria. According to quantitative data collected from 237 youth, the majority (51.5%) envision themselves living in Jordan, while only a smaller percentage (22.8%) are thinking about going back to Syria. Youth concerns in both settings were dominated by financial barriers, limited job opportunities, and uncertainty about service access, while the most common aspiration was economic empowerment through employment or business ownership (56.1%).

By revealing the psychosocial, social, and cultural factors influencing young people's decisions, qualitative results from focus group discussions enhanced this analysis. The lack of service infrastructure in Syria, the perceived instability of returning, and the severe psychological toll of displacement were highlighted by parents and community stakeholders. Qualitative evidence also revealed gendered nuances, with young women expressing a greater sensitivity to social reintegration risks and a higher desire for education continuity than young men.

Youth continuously ranked access to healthcare, education, and psychosocial support, as well as financial stability, as necessary conditions for either a successful return or long-term local integration across both approaches. There was also a noticeable disconnect between the changing needs of young people and the service support systems that were in place, especially in the areas of livelihoods and mental health.

These results strategically highlight the need to continue a two-pronged programmatic focus: strengthening Jordan's youth empowerment, economic resilience, and psychosocial support while creating adaptable, need-based reintegration pathways for those who choose to return voluntarily. In the face of shifting political and socioeconomic conditions after 2024, future interventions must be flexible, data-driven, and youth-focused in order to have the greatest possible impact.

Together, the quantitative and qualitative data highlight the fact that youth paths are influenced by genuine, easily accessible opportunities for economic security, education, health, and psychological well-being alongside political changes. These elements need to be central to Najahna's future strategic planning.