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Manufacturing Landscapes:
The Politics and Practices of the Jordan Refugee Compact

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Introduction

With the number of refugees increasing to record levels, state governments together with United Nations agencies have reached a consensus that there is the need for substantial reform. 60% of the world's refugees are hosted by ten states in the global South, many themselves struggling with issues of poverty and stability. In 2016, Jordan hosted 691,769 refugees, the sixth highest number worldwide.[1]

On September 19, 2016 the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, a landmark political declaration. The New York Declaration sets out a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, the Global Compact, with specific actions to ease pressure on host countries and enhance refugee self-reliance. The Compact tasks the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to work in close coordination with states with significant refugee populations. As part of their commitment, the Jordanian government, together with World Bank and donor funding, pledged implementation of the Jordan Compact. The $1.7 billion Jordan Compact calls for a dramatic increase in resettlement opportunities for refugees, including the development of special economic zones (SEZs) in which refugees are given work rights. Organizations operating from the SEZs are expected to employ 15% Syrians within their workforce, and will access tariff-free trade in the European market in exchange under a 10-year starter program.

Unemployment in Jordan stands at 18.2% (around double that for youth) and 14.4% in poverty.[2] At the same time, tension in the public is very high with anger at the country's level of debt and fiscal and monetary stability. In January 2018 Jordan's cabinet announced a major package of IMF-guided tax hikes followed by the removal of subsidies to cover bread prices, which skyrocketed by 60%. With Arab Spring protests erupting in neighboring countries, including in Tunisia over soaring living costs, and in Sudan over increased bread prices, the government is fearful over appearing to show preferential treatment to non-Jordanians as they agree to highly unpopular IMF structural reforms.[3] It is partially this anxiety over refugees taking already scarce jobs that have prevented the government from granting them the right to work legally.

Many in the public are also still acutely aware of the country's history as a host country for protracted displacements in the region. Palestinian refugees from 1948, followed by those who fled the Six Day War in 1967, and then Iraqis fleeing the Iraqi War in 2003 are part of Jordan's history of refugee intakes. While Jordan at first granted Palestinian refugees citizenship in 1954, the level of integration has decreased over the years. The government maintains that similar levels of integration will no longer be granted refugees. But concerns are also felt in the public

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[1] UNHCR. 2016. Population Statistics Database. http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html.

[2] Jordan Department of Statistics 2017. http://web.dos.gov.jo.

[3] Ma'ayeh, Suha. 2018. 'Jordanians angered by removal of subsidies that will double the price of bread.' *The National*, January 10. https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/jordanians-angered-by-removal-of-subsidies-that-will-double-the-price-of-bread-1.694456.
Al-Khalidi, Suleiman. 2018. 'Jordan ends bread subsidy, doubling some prices, to help state finances.' *Reuters*, January 26. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-jordan-economy-subsidies-bread/jordan-ends-bread-subsidy-doubling-some-prices-to-help-state-finances-idUSKBN1FF2CP.

as to how long refugees from Syria will be in situ as with Palestine and Iraq before. In this context, tying economic incentives directly to work opportunities for refugees attempts to open the job market to Syrians and Jordanians. It is also a means for the Jordanian government to create new economic opportunities by allow for more international aid to be channeled into the country.

The New School Amman Summer Intensive

In March 2018, Zolberg Institute faculty led a research trip to Amman, Jordan to examine the implementation of the Jordan Compact. The objectives were:
(1) to give the student an overview of the central debates in refugees and development politics,
(2) to familiarize students with conducting meaningful ethnographic research in sensitive contexts,
(3) to introduce students to the main institutions and operating practices involved in various forced migration-related settings,
(4) to provide students with key training for future work in policy or academic disciplines,
(5) to forge helpful partnerships between academic, humanitarian and development institutions in challenging contexts of conflict, displacement, and crisis relief.

The project was largely student driven, intended to lend a helpful perspective on employment programs and provide a creative eye towards ensuring that refugee and host communities have the support to succeed in situations of protracted displacement. Our main research questions were as follows:

1. What are the successes and challenges in refugee employment programs? How can positive practices be harnessed and effects be mitigated?

2. Are there any experiences specific to the Syrian refugee context? Are there any experiences specific to men, women or youth? How can programs be adapted to cater to these particular requirements through engaged and proactive partnership?

Students interviewed a total of eight of the leading humanitarian and development organizations operating in Amman whose work intersects with refugee integration and employment. Each of these interviews were planned and led by students who devised interview questions connected to the project's driving questions. Students also took part in a user journey project with the International Rescue Committee as part of their job-matching pilot scheme. Students divided into two groups, taking on the role of job seekers and employers as they considered how organizations are directly engaged in the creation of design projects that seek to address the challenges of protracted displacement. During the field visit, other opportunities also arose for learning about the context in more depth including talking with refugees, locals and international aid workers.

Prospects and Challenges

Throughout our fieldwork, we certainly observed positive practices, in particular the resilience of many refugees, forced to rebuild their lives after displacement with unclear prospects of return. We also observed the unwavering dedication of many committed humanitarian and development workers, none strangers to the critiques

voiced here, and indeed keen they be made visible. Finally, we witnessed the kindness of local Jordanians, some working to support and offer employment to Syrians. Local community volunteer groups, large organizational donations of mobile phones and other essentials, were some of the ways in which locals have mobilized resources.

At the same time, a number of concerns emerged during our fieldwork around the operations of the Jordan Compact as a framework that professes a 'paradigm shift' in responding to forced displacement. The international community certainly overestimated Jordan's ability to take advantage of this agreement. At the time of our fieldwork, only three businesses had exported to the EU with net earnings of only 1.5 million euros. Businesses are unsure how to export to the EU in ways that the Compact envisaged and Jordan is not seen as a hub for international enterprise. Nor has there been the level of interest by Syrian refugees in the employment on offer. Jobs tend to be in sectors like garment manufacture, which are unregulated and are more often than not rife with overtime physical abuse. These are jobs at the bottom of global brands' supply chains. The hours can be punishingly long, wages low, and safety of little concern. Being reliant on tenuous worker visas place people in a position where they end up not voicing concerns, may be more exploitable and paid lesser wages – or are unaware of the labor standards that should be in place. It is thus arguable that efforts focused on supporting refugees may in fact result in what others have shown elsewhere to be precarious labor contexts.[4] Living under tenuous residence permits, refugees may be more exploitable and paid lesser wages; in turn this may increase public resentment attached to the idea of refugee integration. Within this context, new profit-based structures, and the need to show short-term, quantifiable outcomes, present challenges for humanitarian practitioners.[5] Many organizations have quotas of Syrians for whom to facilitate employment. But in the drive to employ maximum numbers of Syrian refugees, it is vital that organizations not forgo ensuring labor standards.

Throughout our fieldwork, we observed how complex and time-consuming the work permit process is, with many employers continuing to employ refugees without permits. Although allowed to apply for work permits outside of the SEZs, Syrian refugees are barred from applying for some professions, such as engineering, medicine, law, and teaching, for which they have previously been trained, but which are viewed as potentially taking opportunities from Jordanian workers. Clear throughout our research is the need for the Jordanian government to open more sectors to refugees. This will enable refugees disinterested in working in a factory context to not have to operate under the radar. There will also be incentives for refugees to be employed rather than being force to rely on UNHCR subsidies. Importantly, when the conflict ends, young people will have the skills needed to not be reliant on international aid if they choose to return to Syria. This is at the risk of a lost generation unused to core professions.

The final key concern that the Jordan Compact must address is providing support to non-Syrian refugee and labor migrant populations. The Compact has created few if

[4] Anderson, Bridget. 2010. 'Migration, immigration controls and the fashioning of precarious workers.' *Work Employment & Society* 24 (2): 300-317.
Shelley, Toby. 2007. *Exploited: Migrant Labour in the New Global Economy*. London: Zed.
[5] Wallace, T., L Bornstein and J. Chapman, 2006. *The aid chain: coercion and commitment in development NGOs*. London: Practical Action.

any new jobs, and instead redistributes some positions held by migrant Bangladeshis and Egyptians to Syrian refugees as preferential migrant workers. The challenge for organizations is that it is Syrian refugees who have become the major funding targets of development aid. However, rather than creating livelihood opportunities for refugees, the Jordan Compact may in fact demonstrate a high degree of control and coercion over individuals. The Compact is partially constructed to militate against the movement of Syrian refugees to wealthier European countries that have established refugee resettlement programs. Major Western donors — such as the US, the UK, Germany and the European Commission — have supported the Compact with the view that it will stem the flow of migrants and refugees to Europe. Thus, instead of focusing on the profoundly political problems that underpin the drivers of forced migration, such as increased conflict, the Compact runs the risk of abdicating global responsibility, regulating people's movement in line with global interests and market prerogatives.

This report represents the culmination of our findings. Each student focused on a particular theme, from gender and labor precarity through to migrant labor and local cooperations. Taken together, this report highlights some of the most salient positive practices and challenges that we observed in the field. We hope it lends a critical eye to the operations of the Jordan Compact, and serves as a helpful starting point for policy makers, practitioners, academics, and others in the field seeking to address long-term displacement. Above all, it is vital that those individuals affected by conflict and displacement be actively consulted in the programs that affect their lives. Without the inclusion of refugees, organizations run the risk of promoting top-down autocratic approaches to development. With similar projects being explored elsewhere, including in Ethiopia, Zambia, and Uganda, we see it as essential that the international community address these concerns. Otherwise governments and organizations run the risk of facilitating increased labor precarity and exploitation.

Photograph, Ousmane Sow.

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Legal Background for the Jordan Compact and Refugee Livelihoods in Jordan
Joelle Peikes

Jordan's Constitution provides for protection against extradition for political asylum seekers, but it has failed to enact legislation pursuant to refugees and is not party to the 1951 Convention on Refugees or 1967 Protocol. However, in 1998 the government of Jordan agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) under which it accepted the definition of a refugee under the 1951 Convention, agreed to respect non-refoulement and to treat refugees according to international standards. Under the MOU, the UNHCR is responsible for refugee registration in Jordan and is also responsible for finding a durable solution for each individual - either voluntary repatriation to their country of origin, or third country resettlement - within six months of registration. Additionally, the MOU recognizes several rights of refugees in Jordan, including freedom of religion, freedom from discrimination based on race, religion, or nationality, free access to courts of law, and exemption from overstay fines or departure fees. A 2014 amendment to the MOU extended the validity of refugee identification cards from 6 months to one year from the time of registration, but it was not well publicized.[6]

In the years since, Jordan has come to be acknowledged internationally as a relatively welcoming and stable society for receiving refugees. However, certain insecurities remain for refugees in Jordan, especially in the economic sphere. Anyone who wants to work legally in Jordan is required to obtain a work permit. Work permits can be obtained by non-Jordanians (including refugees) with legal residency and valid passports, and only if the prospective employer pays a fee and demonstrates that the required skills for the job cannot be found among the Jordanian population. Such restrictions have of course made it difficult for non-nationals to obtain regular employment in Jordan, and as of 2015, the UNHCR reported that only one percent of visited refugee households had a member with a work permit.[7] This changed however with the 2016 London Syria conference and the enactment of the Jordan Compact, an agreement between the Government of Jordan, the World Bank, UK's Department of International Development (DFID) and the European Union that would grant $12 billion to aid Syrian refugees in Jordan.

The initial phase pledged $1.2 billion in grants over three years to support infrastructure projects, a 10-year exemption from the E.U. rules of origin (a tariff barrier) for producers in Jordan who met a specified employment quota of Syrian refugees, and a commitment from Jordan's government to create 200,000 new job opportunities for Syrians. It was decided that these job opportunities could be created by making work permits more accessible to Syrian refugees by waiving the associated fee and the requirement of having a passport, which most Syrians had fled their homes without. (Notably, the Compact extended no such provisions to other refugee populations, such as Palestinians and Iraqis, who have been living in Jordan for several decades). For a number of reasons though, simply making work permits more accessible did not make them more appealing to Syrians. Many Syrians found that they earned more money by working informally, or had more flexibility to work

[6] Saliba, Issam. "Refugee Law and Policy: Jordan." *The Law Library of Congress* . March 2016.
[7] Achilli, Luigi. "Syrian Refugees in Jordan: a reality check." *European University Institute* . February 2015.

multiple jobs, or to decide their hours, which is especially important for women who prefer to work from the home and have numerous caretaking responsibilities outside of paid employment.[8] Additionally, in order to ease the concerns of its national population about Syrians taking high-demand domestic jobs, Jordan limited the employment sectors it would legally open to Syrians under the Compact to construction, agriculture and manufacturing. This means that Syrian refugees can only be granted permits to work in one of these three sectors, despite that many are trained or experienced in a number of other fields including teaching, technology, cosmetology, law or medicine. This restriction has widely been cited as the biggest constraint keeping more Syrians from obtaining work permits. Based on our findings, there is generally skepticism among the humanitarian and development community in Amman about whether there is any possibility that this policy will change.

The result of Jordan's weak legal framework addressing refugees, and the limits it places on the Compact, is a broad sense of uncertainty about the future. There has been a push within the aid community to develop supplemental and alternative routes to employment, such as job matching and training programs through the International Refugee Committee and Danish Refugee Council and the Jordan River Foundation's partnership with IKEA that is creating jobs for both Jordanian and Syrian refugee women. However, without opening more sectors to Syrian refugees, Jordan risks undermining the advancements it has made in creating potentially sustainable solutions for more than one million Syrian refugees.

[8] Howden, D., Patchett, H. et al. "The Compact Experiment: Push for refugee jobs confronts reality of Jordan and Lebanon." *Refugees Deeply* . December 2017.

Labor Precarity

Ousmane Sow

Employment opportunities within Jordan have shifted due to the implementation of the Jordan compact. In camps and host communities, Syrian refugees face precarious labor circumstances; low wages, dangerous conditions, and status determining the availability to certain work sectors. Syrians with refugee status feel it is safer to remain undocumented within the Jordanian government and rely on the informal work sector. Alternatively, other Syrians feel status provides them with benefits and other contraries like, vocational training, cash assistance, and cash for work. According to Oxfam, the cash for work system pays unskilled laborers 1JD an hour and skilled 2.50JD an hour. The Jordanian minimum wage is 250/JD a month, the poverty line in Jordan is 50/JD a month.

Work permits that the Jordan Compact legalized has normalized the informal work sector that was already in existence. Work permits greatly limit the time, space, and sector Syrians can work in. According to the Tamkeen Group, Syrian refugees prefer flexible work permits. Precarious conditions are elevated when Syrians can work freely and have a stable and fair contract with Jordan employers. Refugees generally avoid contracts with employers because the work permit does not reflect or provide protection. For example, agriculture (a large sector of work) does not provide social security or health care. Females also face precarity in the employment sectors, many jobs that they have the ability to do are not open due to religious and cultural stigmas. Most women feel comfortable managing home based shops or businesses, however the Jordanian government has entirely banned it. Refugees live in precarious situations because the Compact cannot create enough jobs due to the absence of foreign direct investment, this in turn impacts the Syrian refugees seeking work. Jordan has a large population of migrant workers, and due to the Jordan compact the attention has been focused on Syrians, deciding them as a less exploitable population.

The Jordan Compact & Migrant Labor

Rania Salem Manganaro

Throughout the interviews that we conducted with organizations in Jordan on the effects of the Jordan Compact from 2016, almost all revealed that the Jordan Compact results in the displacement of migrant workers with Syrian refugees. Furthermore, we found that the reality of the roll-out of the Compact was contingent on Syrian refugees taking the place of migrant workers–who are most specifically from South & East Asia and Egypt–in positions that have necessitated highly exploitable labor. Whether some organizations stated this as a peripheral fact of the Jordanian economy or as a crucial stain on the Jordan Compact, it was a heavily present element throughout all of our interviews. Although much of the public discourse around Syrian refugees in Jordan frames all refugees as a "burden" on the Jordanian population and their job opportunities, the sectors open to Syrian refugees–agriculture, construction, and manufacturing–are dominated by migrant workers. But, the fact that the jobs are predominantly held by people from Egypt and South and East Asia–rather than from Jordan–does not lessen the need for basic human and labor rights for Syrian refugees, migrant workers, and non-Syrian refugees alike working formally and informally in these sectors. Ultimately, we found that folding Syrian refugees into the system for how the Jordanian government deals with migrant workers isn't working for multiple reasons.

A great concern is that the living and working conditions of legal migrant workers in Jordan within those particular sectors are extremely poor. Common practices of forced labor that are imbibed in the system–even within a legal setting–would be susceptible to Syrian refugees as well. Although the case for Syrian refugees' safety working in these sectors is vital, it's also crucial to note that accepted methods within legal migrant labor employment still have constant violations of human rights and labor law which is pivotal to the conversation and movement building around employment rights for all non-Jordanians. By inviting registered Syrian refugees with work permits into the culture of exploitation that legal migrant workers endure, the international community supporting the Jordan Compact accepts the continuation of that culture. In the agricultural sector, for example, the Tamkeen team established that "migrant workers holding work permits who work effectively with their legal employer rarely earn more than 190 JD per month, and are working more than 8 hours a day, sometimes more than 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition, they are often victims of passport confiscation, restriction of freedom, as well as extremely poor living conditions, especially when living in plastic houses" (*Forgotten Rights*, 147). The potential obstruction of the right to freedom of movement could clearly continue to be violated for Syrian refugees. The Tamkeen team continues in sharing that "passport confiscation is so widespread that many workers and employers consider this practice as normal or even necessary" (*Forgotten Rights*, 147). This often leads to forced labor cases in which "some employers take advantage of the situation by deducting 20 JD or more from their wage or require them to work longer hours, without paying for extra hours" (*Forgotten Rights*, 148). Even with legal work permits, the potential for these practices to stop are low.

Syrian refugees are highly vulnerable. After a devastating war that has been present in Syria for over seven years, organizations shared that the amount of debt accrued, lack of resources, and necessity for income can be significant. This increases the

ability for employers to potentially take advantage of them. This vulnerability is exemplified by Syrian families who have worked informally in agriculture for the past seven years and "are generally paid extremely low wages: 1JD per hour, or 100 to 120JD per month." This is obviously far below the national minimum wage of 190JD per month (set by Labor Law in 2011), which excludes migrant workers whose minimum wage is "at 150JD, with an exception for garment-industry sectors, domestic work, and gardening. The minimum wage of these sectors remained at 110 JD" (*Between a Rock and a Hard Place,* 29). These three sectors overlap with some positions available legally to Syrian refugees in the Jordan Compact. For informal workers, in comparison to that of Egyptian workers we see that employers' "recruitment of Syrian refugees on a monthly basis reduces salary costs by nearly 50%, as compared to recruiting Egyptian workers in regular situations" (*Forgotten Rights*, 154). Even though this is speaking to a condition of informal employment–which is often more dominant than formal–this example illuminates the potential for exploitation in any setting.

Although Syrian refugees are highly vulnerable, it was expressed that they are also increasingly highly venerated by the international humanitarian community. The UNHCR and the Kingdom of Jordan have particular exclusive benefits and documentation granted to registered Syrian refugees that are not accessible to non-Syrian refugees (or migrant workers). The UNHCR has documented that of the registered refugees in Jordan there are over 80,000 refugees from other nationalities–mostly from Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, and Somalia–who are not getting the same treatment as Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 1). Although the number might not seem formative in comparison to Syrian refugees, the exclusion of their rights in this conversation devalues the potential of the Jordan Compact to endure a conversation about all non-Syrian employment rights rather than a singular population. The clear difference in fees towards education, health services, and work permits for Syrian refugees and other migrants in the country also reflects how many organizations are limited to where their aid goes to reflect their donors' wishes.

The fact that Syrian refugees hold this unique duality of status of vulnerability and veneration does not make Syrian refugees', non-refugees', or migrant workers' basic employment rights less important. The veneration of registered Syrian refugees with work permits through the Compact from the UNHCR and other organizations–although positive–potentially deters employers from their willingness to hire them because of heavy oversight from organizations of their potentially unlawful practices. Long hours and low wages that employers might rely on in creating additional surplus could be monitored by organizations. With less protection and oversight, employers may continue with practices of hiring migrant workers–from Egypt or Bangladesh for example–or Syrian refugees who are not registered and are working informally for half the wages. The competition for exploitative-ness that the Jordan Compact pushes for pins highly vulnerable populations against each other by endorsing hierarchies amongst these populations which deters solidarity for the massive problem of all migrant workers' rights. Rather than a deeper conversation about undoing problematic structures of employment, the Jordan Compact–while providing some opportunities–could also ultimately be placing Syrian refugees as another player in a vicious cycle of production prioritization.

Additionally, we found that organizations that chose to push forward Jordanian government's quota for work permits in the contract were then focused on how to

incentivize employers to hire Syrian refugees rather than pushing the perspective of refugees themselves. This framing creates a cost-benefit argument that virtually tries to convince employers that Syrian refugees are more exploitative than migrant workers. An NGO expressed how single migrant workers are cheaper than most Syrian refugees who would need enough money to support their family, rent, transportation and an overall higher cost of living. The cost-benefit argument that hinges on these organizations' work expresses a "means to an end" outlook that still fails to have a conversation about intersectional employment rights and therefore lacks a sustainable protection for all Syrian refugees.

The superficial "benefits" of the Jordan Compact–a deal between the EU and the Kingdom of Jordan–are transparent. The EU "benefits" by keeping refugees out through a virtual extension of its borders by endorsing a deal that–through work permits–necessitates formal registration and potential employment within the Kingdom and therefore oversight, tracking, and encampment *outside* of the European Union's borders. Jordan "benefits" through extensive foreign direct investment to the Kingdom. But, are Syrian refugees actually benefiting from the Compact? Time will tell, but it's possible that the continued *fetishization* of Syrian refugees within development communities fails to have made strides towards practices of fair employment. Additionally, such a development solution splash in the name of Syrian refugees attempts to absolve stakeholders from the responsibility of a more integrated conversation about actual refugee employment rights. The fact that the key incentivizing element of the compact is the *product* of employers that will receive the subsidized trade between the EU and Jordan, illuminates the Compact's decision to frame Syrian refugees as a commodity in a supply chain, rather than Syrian refugees as rights-bearing humans existing in our world.

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Gender and shrinking domestic spaces

Janie Ziye Shen

A recurring theme throughout our interviews was the question of the low participation among Syrian women in the employment schemes that were a result of the Jordan Compact. Out of the 92,703 work permits that have been issued since 2016, less than 4% has been issued to women.[9] The vast majority of these permits are in the agricultural sector. In the manufacturing sector, which was envisaged to create jobs, only 173 work permits have been issued to women.[10]

According to the Jordan River Foundation, a majority of the work permits for women in the manufacturing sector can be attributed to the JRF projects. Their partnership with IKEA Foundation to employ Syrian and Jordanian artisans to co-design and create IKEA products have employed 60 Syrian women full-time with work permits, this includes a monthly salary (above minimum wage), social security and health benefits. UNHCR staff also mentioned that 150 Syrian women were part of a cash-for-work program, leaving to work in factories in the SEZs on a rotational basis.

To tackle poverty and economic integration of displaced Syrians in Jordan, women's participation is at least half the puzzle if not more. Given that the female-headed household among Syrians is on the rise, from 25% a few years ago to nearly 40% in 2016 (CARE 2016), addressing the economic empowerment of Syrian women and their access to the right to work is paramount. The Syrian conflict has forced women to take on new roles and responsibilities in displacement, including being responsible for livelihoods. This is while they continue to work at home, cooking, cleaning and taking care of their children and others in need.

The Jordan Compact, while it purports to help displaced Syrian to join the labor market, is really a program to push to formalize Syrian refugees' work in certain sectors. Among the three main sectors that are open for Syrians to formally work in: agriculture, construction and manufacturing, two are predominantly male. The manufacturing sector offers the most potential for Syrian women to work in, particularly in the garment industry. Moreover, as most garment factories are located in special economic zones (SEZs), they can benefit from the relaxed Rules of Origin policy[11] and get duty free access to EU markets if they employ at least 15 percent Syrian labor. As a result, we heard from several NGOs that they have focused part of their livelihoods programming to target Syrian women to work in garment factories.

However, a closer look at the garment industry in Jordan raises several concerns. The garment sector currently employs over 62,000 workers in Jordan. Of these, 72% are women and 73% are economic migrants, from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal (Razzaz 2017). Although the US Department of Labor removed the Jordanian

[9] Work Permit Figures MoL/PMU, published 18 April 2018. Available from: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/63147

[10] Bear in mind that these numbers are total number of permits issued and renewed over the two-year period, so the actual number of active permits is closer to half to the official numbers.

[11] Under the new EU rules of origin initiative in the Jordan Compact, 52 industrial product categories including garments and textiles, can have duty free access to EU markets if they are manufactured in 18 special economic zones and include at least 15 percent Syrian refugee labor.

garment sectors from its watch list of Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act in 2016, and the sector has made efforts to advance labor conditions and rights through Better Work Jordan, there are still many reported cases of abuse and exploitation. For example, in 2016, Tamkeen lead a human trafficking case against two factories in Al Hassan for reports spanning abuse on the production floor, failure to pay salaries, seizure of passports and overcrowded living quarters.[12]

In the eye of most Jordanian and Syrian women, the sector is not appealing because one, it does not offer decent working conditions and two, it offers minimum wage (currently 220 JD), which is below the wage expectations of Syrian women and not enough to cover their living expenses such as rent and food, which amounts to more than 200 JD a month. Thirdly, the location and requirements of the industry does not fit with the gender roles and responsibilities they have as mothers, and in the case of female-headed households, as mother and breadwinner. As a NGO staff said: "We have gone to the garment factories [in Khaldiyeh] linking Jordanians and Syrians with employers. Both Jordanian and Syrian women have successfully started working but then they have dropped out. Why? Because it takes at least 30 minutes to get there, 1 hour both ways. They need to work 10 hours, minimum 8 hours with 2 hours extra … Mothers only want to work 8 hours but this doesn't work for the industry. On the other hand, migrant workers who are there by themselves and living there are asking for double shifts."

In another interview, staff said that even when the "perfect" program was launched, that provided Syrian women with child care, transportation to the factories in the SEZs, and decent working hours and conditions, they still could not retrain the workers (UNHCR interview, but would be good to compare with someone else's notes). For cultural and practical reasons, Syrian women generally prefer to work at home, or close to home.

The Compact's focus on work permits has pushed certain sectors forward as options for Syrian refugees to work formally in, while in other areas, such as supporting home-based businesses, which could have a transformative economic impact on Syrian women, things have "gone a bit backwards."

[12] http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/jordan-s-textile-factories-eye-new-housing-safeguards-migrant-workers-818707710

Gendered Aid - The Jordan Compact and Economic Inclusion

Lara-Zuzan Golesorkhi

Research Question: How has the Jordan Compact affected labor market participation of refugee women and how can it be optimized?

Argument: The Jordan Compact perpetuates a gendered structure in the Jordanian labor market. It limits the issuance of work permits to "female-unfriendly" sectors (i.e. agriculture, construction, etc.) and does not adequately address the specific challenges that refugee women face to enter and to succeed in the labor market (i.e. work conditions and transportation options). The Jordan Compact hereby inhibits the labor market participation of refugee women and maintains a trajectory of economic exclusion, rather than inclusion.

Method: Interviews with representatives of international humanitarian and civil society organizations in Amman, Jordan in March 2018.

Limitations: The quantitative assessment of the effects of the Jordan Compact on labor market participation of refugee women is approximated by issuance of work permits. Using work permits as the quantitative threshold however obscures the actual percentage of refugee women in the Jordanian labor market in that work permits have been used for mobility rather than employment purposes (mainly refugee women in camps) and in that the informal labor market is excluded from this measurement for economic inclusion. The following findings are based on the issuance of work permits and must thus be understood within these limited parameters for making claims about labor market participation.

Findings: Drawn from a total of five interviews with international humanitarian and civil society organizations, the following challenges were named to explain the low number of work permit issuance to refugee women (Question: How do you explain the low percentage in issuance of work permits for women?). The challenges are ranked in the quantitative order of mention:

- Employment options (mentioned in all five interviews)
- Employment history (mentioned in three interviews)
- Government interference (mentioned in two interviews)
- Harassment (mentioned in three interviews)
- Transportation options (mentioned in three interviews)
- Trauma (mentioned in one interview)
- Work conditions (mentioned in one interview)
- Childcare (mentioned in one interview)

These challenges can be categorized into institutional challenges and socio-cultural challenges:

Institutional challenges → employment options, government interference, transportation, and work conditions
Socio-cultural challenges → employment history, harassment, trauma, and childcare

Policy recommendations: Based on these findings, I make the following policy recommendations to optimize the labor market participation of refugee women in Jordan. I divide these recommendations into institutional and socio-cultural recommendations. This two-fold structure of recommendations corresponds with political and social practice concerning economic access (institutional) and economic empowerment (socio-cultural).

Institutional recommendations:

- Open / ease work permit issuance to "female-friendly" sectors / all sectors of the Jordanian labor market
- Open / ease access to education and other professional development services (i.e. vocational training)
- Open / ease regulations regarding business / home-based business
- Provide safe transportation services
- Provide legal awareness training

Socio-cultural recommendations:

- Provide legal awareness training plus empowerment workshops
- Provide one-on-one mentoring services
- Create "Best Practice" / "Role Model" awareness campaigns

Labeling and Geopolitics within the Context of the Jordan Compact

Emma Letcher

The fieldwork intensive which took place in Jordan was intended to explore the Jordan Compact as a means of assistance and as a mechanism for population management. A recurrent conversation which emerged from our dialogue with local and international NGO's, along with government affiliated organizations; was the distinction between populations living within Jordan and the particular emphasis that is currently being placed on displaced Syrian people. Following these discussions Ian Hacking's, *Making Up People* (2006), came to mind as he alerts the sometimes organizational and helpful motive of labels, while other times notes they are used as a means of control. The labels instilled on vast groups of people are mechanisms of bureaucracy which perpetuate a single narrative that seeks to encompass a heterogeneous group of people with very different life experiences.[13] Inevitably, despite best efforts, this grouping will fail based on the lack of context and nuance of an individual's life and story. As Hacking takes a philosophical approach and Malkki psychologizes the essence of labeling of populations, these concepts must return to the ground where they are being applied in very real ways. The constructions of humans which emerged on our research trip to Amman, focused on the difference in access to certain protections, visa access, and general resource accessibility between "migrant workers" and "refugees". Through these labels new boundaries are formed surrounding these groups of people with help from the humanitarian aid industry, which instill a hierarchy on to their classification of vulnerable people.

Throughout our discussions with organizations; a recurring theme that emerged was one of distinguishment between the foreign populations that live and work in Jordan. This separation between those working in Jordan from South East Asia and displaced Syrian people seeking work will be discussed in greater depth later on. The legal stratifications within these groups were another focus amidst our discussions particularly when considering registered and unregistered workers in both realms. This sub-group adds another layer of precarity onto the situations of workers from South East Asia and displaced Syrian people. The apparent "safest" population, or the populations which are least likely to be deported within this context, are registered Syrian refugees who are often grouped into initiatives which simultaneously target vulnerable Jordanian nationals, solidifying the prominent place they are regarded within this hierarchical structure. On the other end of this spectrum, unregistered migrant workers and unregistered displaced Syrians are most deportable and are at highest risk for exploitation at the hands of their employers and deportation from the Kingdom of Jordan. Currently there are about 650,000 displaced Syrian people registered with UNHCR while estimates of the total displaced population residing in Jordan climb past 1.5 million. This vast discrepancy between registered and unregistered places the nearly 1 million unregistered Syrian people in a state of limbo as they are forced to find work informally, cannot live in designated camps, and need to remain inconspicuous within urban environments.

[13] Malkki, Liisa H. 1996. "Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization." *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (3): 377-404.

The varying legal categories that humans are funneled into may be rooted in good or malicious intentions. In the case of workers in Jordan, those intentions mean little when one sees the larger and more vast problem, which also encompasses Jordanian nationals, as one of a workers struggle for rights and fair, equitable, workplace conditions and benefits.

New Practices: Local Refugee Cooperations

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As time goes on it becomes clearer that displaced persons, seeking refuge in Jordan only temporarily, are now looking at a much more permanent stay. According to UNHCR, there are currently 1.4 Syrian "persons of concern" living in Jordan. Now displaced persons must navigate how to begin anew, while generating stable income and maintaining balanced livelihoods. There are very few industry sectors that are open to refugees, including, agriculture and construction, male-dominated fields of work, excluding women from creating stability within their lives. Poverty levels are rather high, according to UNHCR, 86% of refugees live below the poverty line. Overall unemployment rates stand at 18.5%, but reaches 30% for women.[14] People have begun to utilize their previously learned skills, enact on their personal agency, and form businesses of their own, however, this has proved to be more difficult than expected. According to labor laws in Jordan, the 1954 Constitution states clearly that the right to work in Jordan is reserved solely for Jordanian citizens.

In order for non-Jordanian workers to establish a business, one must look to the Minister of Labour and partner up with a Jordanian citizen. By enforcing refugees to collaborate with Jordanians, potential exploitative situations could occur. For instance, a female business owner in Amman, who will remain anonymous in this report, decided to establish an all Syrian female business, where they produce body oils, perfumes, lotions, crochet items, etc.. The executive of the business moved to Jordan in 2012 when the war in Syria intensified. She wanted to generate jobs for Syrian women, to create stability within their lives. When she first opened up shop, she partnered up with a Jordanian who helped her rent a small office space, the partner seemed promising, but as the business began to create revenue, the partner fled, stealing items and money. The executive decided to start up once again, partnering with a trusted Jordanian family friend, and has been successful ever since.

Building pathways towards secure entrepreneurship is extremely important to promote and enhance positive livelihoods for refugees living in Jordan. However, there are restrictions on refugees' abilities to own, register, and run small and home-based businesses and to access financial assistance. The International Rescue Committee has supported Syrian refugees running home-based businesses sell to larger Jordanian retailers further supporting diversity and quality in local markets.[15] In October, 2017 the Jordanian government created a new set of regulations for refugees to start home-based businesses, but it is difficult for people to fully adhere to these new rules. The regulations allow for Syrians to register in the intellectual sector, which includes, mobile maintenance, interior design, and consulting; the government still prevents them from registering. The Jordan Response Plan for 2017-2019 capped its appeal at a mere $4.2 million in 2017 to support Syrian home-based business.[16]

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[14] https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/36 . UNHCR

[15] *Still in Search of Work.* International Rescue Committee. https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/2686/stillinsearchofworkjordancompactupdatebriefapri l2018.pdf . Pg.9. April 2018.

[16] *Still in Search of Work.* International Rescue Committee. https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/2686/stillinsearchofworkjordancompactupdatebriefapri l2018.pdf . Pg. 10. April 2018.