

THE SYRIAN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS: THE IMPACT ON JORDAN'S LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN AND GIRLS



Findings from the CARE Learning Tour to Jordan

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From left to right, Jennifer mason, Michael Gerson, Stephanie Chen, David Ray, Ariane Casalotti, Nicole deBrabander, Dotti Hatcher, Rep. Lois Capps, Robert Roche and Rob Walker

List of Participants:

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- **Representative Lois Capps**
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- **Dotti Hatcher**
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Introduction:

The civil war in Syria has left more than 2 million people externally displaced and that figure is expected to reach 3 million by the end of 2013. More than 500,000 refugees, who are fleeing violence and insecurity in Syria, have come to Jordan – a small country of just 6 million people. In recent weeks, allegations of chemicals attacks on civilians in Syria and the possibility of U.S. military intervention are making headlines. With tensions escalating in the region, the CARE Learning Tour to Jordan focused on the Syrian refugee crisis, and the impact the influx of refugees is having on the host country's long-term socioeconomic development, especially for women and girls.

In August 2013, a group of high-level policymakers and experts, including Rep. Lois Capps, D-Calif., traveled to Jordan to learn how U.S. investments are helping the country address both its long-term development as well as the refugee crisis. The delegation gained an understanding of why programs that emphasize women's empowerment and economic security matter. Other participants included: Nancy Lindborg, assistant administrator for the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance at USAID; Megan Bradley, foreign policy fellow at the Brookings Institution; Dotti Hatcher, executive director of Gap Inc. P.A.C.E. Global Initiative; Adriane Casalotti, legislative director for Rep. Capps; and Jennifer Mason, Senior Technical Advisor at USAID Bureau for Global Health. Journalists Michael Gerson from The Washington Post and Dan Sagalyn from The Washington Post and the PBS NewsHour also joined the delegation.

Jordan faces a number of daunting challenges to achieve its development priorities. The country is recognized for its tradition of hospitality toward asylum-seekers and refugees, first with the Palestinians, then the Iraqis and now the Syrians. However, this favorable environment is under stress as the country confronts its own social and economic problems, which have been compounded by the recent arrival of Syrian refugees.

In addition to a rapidly growing population, Jordan has gaps in the quality of basic education, a low-level of citizen participation in governance and politics and high gender disparities. Water is also scarce, and the country relies on expensive, imported energy. Additionally, the World Bank reports that 13 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

The first day of the trip explored the day-to-day life of a female Syrian refugee. Women and children account for nearly 80 percent of the refugees who have fled Syria. Even in times of peace, it is usually women who look after children, the sick, the injured and the elderly. When emergency strikes, this burden of care can multiply. The vulnerability and responsibilities of women are further increased by the loss of husbands and livelihoods and the need to secure essential items for family survival. The delegation heard how many international NGOs, including CARE and UN agencies, are advocating for more resources to assist refugees with the distribution of food and other aid items.

First, the delegation visited Za'atari refugee camp, which currently houses a reported 144,000 refugees, making the camp the fourth largest "city" by population in Jordan. To contrast this experience, the delegation then saw CARE's Syrian refugee response work in Amman, which provides emergency cash vouchers and case management support to the less-visible group of urban refugees. The delegation met with several urban refugee families with children to hear about the obstacles facing life outside the camps. Challenges included a lack of employment and social support. Similar to the camps, many of these families suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.

With a majority of the Syrian refugees living in Jordan's urban settings, this has placed a strain on many major cities such as Amman and Mafraq, near the Syrian border. Syrian refugees have arrived with little or no savings and battle rising rental and living costs. They are often forced to live in vacant buildings and makeshift shelters, lacking access to water and sanitation, and

they are at risk of contracting diseases. Many children have potentially dangerous chest infections, including measles, and diarrhea is common because of dirty water and poor sanitary conditions.

"The family that stuck out to me was the urban refugee family because they were one example of thousands of people who are invisible," said Rep. Lois Capps. "They have gone through these experiences [fleeing Syria] and now are trying to fit into a new life without much support."

The last two days were dedicated to understanding the long-term investments in Jordan. The delegation visited CARE and partner programs that work to strengthen communities by empowering women and girls. The delegation saw a Jordanian public hospital that serves pregnant mothers and a job training program for youth, with a focus on young women.

The visits also featured CARE's signature Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) Program and CARE's Women's Empowerment through Stage Animated Awareness and Lobbying (WESAL) Program, which tries to reduce violence against women in Jordanian communities by challenging social and cultural norms.



Ghofran, 15, quit school for the past year because of the war in Syria. She now lives in Jordan in a cramped apartment with her mother and sister. She read some of her poetry she wrote to the delegation.

Jordan Overview

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a small country wedged between Israel, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Jordan has played a pivotal role in the Middle East particularly as a buffer between adversaries, and also serving as a symbol of moderation and stability in a region.



Unlike Arab states to the south and east, Jordan has no oil of its own. Its resources are limited to phosphates and agricultural produce. The economy depends largely on services, tourism and foreign aid. Since Jordan cannot do this alone, the government has turned to the IMF (\$2.38 billion loan), the United States (\$660 million a year in bilateral aid), Europe and the Gulf States (\$5 billion multi-year aid package) to keep Jordan afloat until the overall political and economic situation improves.

While Jordan is on track to meet several of its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), achieving gender equality has been challenging. Women are still largely excluded from economic participation, property ownership, and civil service – a clear sign that there is still work to be done. Traditional attitudes and inequities also limit women's participation in civil society, political life and the economy. Women are underrepresented in leadership positions, including in the Cabinet, professional unions and political parties.

In addition to these challenges, there are more than 500,000 Syrian refugees living in Jordan with an average pace of 70,000 new arrivals per month. Most of these refugees are women and children with approximately 55 percent under the age of 18. In July 2012, the Za'atari refugee camp in northern Jordan opened. The camp now houses over 144,000 refugees. Due to the overcrowded living conditions in Za'atari, a new camp, Azraq, will open in this fall.

Humanitarian actors have been providing increased levels of assistance across the country, but the needs continue to outpace response. CARE's trip explored how U.S. investments in Jordan are helping the country address these many challenges – both on the humanitarian relief side and by implementing long-term development programs that emphasize women's empowerment and economic security.

► Day One: Meet with Syrian Refugees

The trip began in Amman, Jordan where the delegation met with Andrew Harper, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative, Maha Shomali, American Bar Association (ABA) country director, and Salam Kanaan, CARE Jordan country director. Andrew Harper provided an overview of the refugee crisis and emphasized Jordan as the “keystone to stability in the region.”

He talked about the heavy influx of refugees in just one year since Za'atari camp opened and the need for agencies such as CARE and the UN to receive more resources. However, the number of Syrian refugees crossing has slowed in recent months. The agency is unsure of the cause. Mr. Harper went on to talk about the condition of the refugees fleeing. Many of the refugees have been traumatized, bombed and raped over the last two years, he said.

Mr. Harper talked about the improvements Za'atari Camp has made with safety and healthcare support. He said that they plan to implement a biometric program so that they can better track the refugees coming in.

“Syria has been destroyed,” said Mr. Harper, UNHCR Representative. “We need to look at sustainable programs so that those people fleeing can be protected.”

Maha Shomali focused her discussion on the improvements that have been made to the legal system for women. Despite Jordan’s ratification of the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and other positive regulatory reforms, families, society and the state continue to tolerate the violations of women’s rights because of weak enforcement and fragmented advocacy efforts. Over the last few years, the American Bar Association has trained women judges and lawyers and encouraged them to advocate for women’s rights.

A Visit to Jordan’s Refugee City: Za’atari Camp

After the meeting, the delegation traveled an hour north to the rural Mafraq Governorate of Jordan to visit the Za’atari refugee camp. During the car ride to the camp, the delegation could see Syria in the distance,



A family walks through Za’atari refugee camp. With no end in sight for the war, many families have tried to make their makeshift tents more permanent homes.

just a few miles away. There are an estimated 144,000 refugees living in Za’atari, and women and children account for the majority of refugees. Officials said that the husbands may even help their family cross and then return back to Syria to take a role in the war. Women and children who have fled the violence without a male head of the household are particularly vulnerable.

The visit began with a briefing from the Kilian Kleinshmidt, UNHCR camp manager. The group sat in a small trailer where colorful maps of Za’atari’s neighborhoods hung on the walls. Mr. Kleinshmidt pointed at the different neighborhoods that have surfaced. In many ways, Za’atari is like a normal city.

He discussed the nature of the camp, and how the environment and people differ from many other refugee camps. For example, many of the Syrian refugees in Za’atari are still very connected to their family back home. They speak to family members in Syria by cell phone. They even have Facebook groups for different villages in Syria to send each other updates. The refugees in Za’atari can also hear the heavy artillery fire every night, a reminder that this is a “very fresh and present conflict,” he said.



Rep. Lois Capps, Megan Bradley and other meet with Kilian Kleinshmidt, UNHCR camp manager, to discuss the changing nature of Za’atari. Za’atari is located only a few miles from Syria. At night, the residents can hear artillery and gunfire.



Rep. Lois Capps walks through a World Food Programme distribution center. Za'atari now houses more than 140,000 people, making it the fourth largest city in Jordan.

Mr. Kleinshmidt said that initially when Za'atari opened a year ago, many families in the camps felt isolated and did not invest in relationships with others because they expected to return home. But now, people are starting to realize that the war is ongoing. The camp itself has changed.

Driving through the refugee city, the delegation could see the camps evolution, the upgrade from tents to pre-fabricated one-room caravans. The delegation drove along the "Champs Elysees" of Za'atari, a lively dirt road full of small businesses from falafel shops to wedding dresses and DVD stands. Many Syrians who are operating these businesses were entrepreneurs in their home country so transferring their skills to Za'tari has come naturally.

"People are really taking initiative to make this a city," Mr. Kleinshmidt said. "These are human beings and they want to have their own homes and be able to cook at home and live a normal life."

One challenge the camp faces is getting refugee children to attend school. UNHCR cited that among the 60,000 children in the camp, only 4,000 are going to school. Some families suffer from post traumatic stress disorder, which is a reason why they are nervous to let their children go. Other families are worried about the security situation in the camps.

Next, the delegation visited the World Food Programme's distribution center in Za'atari and met with Jonathan Campbell, WFP emergency coordinator in Jordan. They walked through stacks of WFP boxes of dried goods. Here, the group learned how the refugees receive their food ration vouchers.

"Going to Za'atari was my most memorable moment," said Adriane Casalotti, legislative director for Rep. Capps. "It's an incredible privilege to be able to come across the world to really witness what's going on in the lives of so many people who have already been through so much – and also to see the resiliency of people who walked to get to someplace to keep their family safe."

Syrian Urban Refugees

While the media has covered the refugee camp situation extensively, it was surprising for many of the delegates to learn that only 25 percent of the Syrian refugees in Jordan live in the camps. The untold story has been the struggles of the Syrian refugees living in Amman and other non-camp areas.

As the needs of the refugee and host communities grow, the delegates met several Syrian refugee families. Many of these families have arrived across the desert with nothing. They often have no money and sometimes not even the paperwork they need to register as a refugee. These families have been forced to take refuge in poor and sometimes dangerous neighborhoods. Many of them are also disconnected from the Jordanian community and stay confined within their apartments because they are unable to go to work or attend school.

"I learned from talking to Syrians in Jordan not living in refugee camps that although they felt safe, they could not legally work, and had a hard time sending their kids to school because, either the schools were full, or the costs of sending their kids to school was too high," said Dan Sagalyn, a deputy senior producer at PBS NewsHour.



Adriane Casalotti, Michael Gerson and others listen to urban refugees tell their stories of crossing the Syrian border into Jordan. These families have been forced to take refuge in poor and sometimes dangerous neighborhoods.

Kate Washington, who oversees CARE's Syrian refugee response work, discussed the grim situation of the urban refugees. The delegation learned how important it is for organizations to help Syrians build support within their host communities. Groups need to continue working on instilling a sense of integration to avoid potential tension, she said.

“Without any income and hopes to go home any time soon, the refugees are trapped in a twilight zone of poverty, traumatic memories and fear for their future,” said Salam Kanaan, CARE Jordan country director.

Half of the delegation met a 49-year-old widow named Mona Alhamid Alhummada, who fled Syria after her husband was killed. In November 2012, she traveled with her two teenage daughters, now ages 15 and 17. She said they left Syria because they received threats from soldiers in their neighborhood. Ms. Alhummada was worried for her daughters' safety.

Once the trio arrived in Amman, Ms. Alhummada said she has not been able to find a job despite her previous work experience as a nurse in Syria. She said her oldest

daughter, Heba, illegally works at a clothing shop to support the entire family, but she does not always get paid.

The family lives in a cramped apartment on the fourth story above a bakery. They warmly greeted the group of Learning Tour visitors with tea and sweets. Ms. Alhummada's youngest daughter, Ghofran, had to quit school for the past year because of the war. She told the delegation she misses school, especially spending time with her friends and being a part of poetry club. She read a poem for the delegation that she had written. She plans to go back this fall, but what she really wants is to return to Syria.

Rep. Capps and several other delegates met with Rakan Maheushsheuty, a Syrian father with five children under the age of 11. He lives with his pregnant wife in a dusty and dimly-lit two-bedroom apartment in Amman. His family left Syria in January of this year because he didn't want his children to witness the violence. He says their home in Syria is a pile of rubble.

Mr. Maheushsheuty received 150 Jordanian Dinars (approximately \$212 USD) in emergency cash assistance. He said he used the money to purchase medicine for his headaches. He was beaten in Syria last year and suffers from extreme dizziness. His condition has left him unable to work.



Rep. Lois Capps walks through a neighborhood with Syrian refugees living in Jordan. Many of these families have arrived across the desert with nothing.

The family waited two days in Za’atari in a cramped tent with dozens of other families waiting to be processed. Mr. Maheushsheuty said they left the camp because they felt like “people were on top of each other.” But they admit living in the city on their own hasn’t been much easier.

While the situation remains bleak for urban refugees, humanitarian aid organizations are stepping up to the challenge. But it won’t be easy. UNHCR reports the number of Syrian refugees has topped the 2 million mark and expects that number to balloon to 3 million refugees by the end of 2013. It’s also possible that the refugee crisis will persist regardless of the political outcome of the conflict. The U.S. government and international community will need to ensure the protection of refugees, particularly women and children.

► DAY 2: A Day in the Life of a Jordanian Woman

The delegation traveled to Jordan University to see one of CARE’s programs that aims to raise awareness and curb occurrences of violence against women. One in three females around the world will experience gender-based violence (GBV) in her lifetime. Women and girls are often the targets because of social norms and beliefs that perpetuate their second-class social status.

Violence against women remains a problem in Jordan that is often shunned from being discussed in public. Ninety-one percent of adolescent girls believe that domestic violence is justified in certain circumstances. Gender inequality persists in other areas. In civil courts, a woman’s testimony is equal to that of a man, while in Shari’a courts (Islamic law) the testimony of two women is equal to that of one man.

CARE’s WESAL Women’s Empowerment through Stage Animated Awareness and Lobbying (WESAL) Program enhances the ability of civil society organizations to bring that discussion to the public. The program works with young men and women to put on theater performances that raise community awareness on the issue

and engage with advocacy initiatives. The program has facilitated dialogue between communities and policy-makers around GBV using innovative techniques and through the direct engagement of civil society.

The group watched three performances on violence against women. One skit that told the story of violence against the wife by her mother-in-law and husband because she was not fulfilling her daily house work. In the second performance, the actors and actresses highlighted what could go wrong in a household where violence is tolerated: a woman was killed after her brother struck her too hard.

The last performance depicted how one family overcame traditional gender norms in Jordan. The participants showcased the story of a granddaughter who was born blind. This would normally cause a Jordanian family to be upset. The performance showed how effective dialogue helped the family cope with their granddaughter’s gender and medical condition. Rep. Capps was moved by the performances and related the issue to violence against women in her own district.

“Now you are empowered,” Rep. Capps said to the group of performers. “Now you can teach empowerment to others.”



Members of CARE’s WESAL acting group perform a skit on violence against women. Ninety-one percent of adolescent girls in Jordan believe that domestic violence is justified in certain circumstances.



Rep. Lois Capps and Adriane Casalotti visited a public hospital in Jordan, which was recently renovated with the support of USAID. This program is focused on renovating and equipping the emergency rooms, and obstetric and neonatal wards of selected hospitals.

The group then headed to the Jordan University Hospital, which was recently renovated with the support of USAID. This program is focused on renovating and equipping the emergency rooms, and obstetric and neonatal wards of selected hospitals. The more recent phase of USAID's work supports improvements in the quality of services at the hospital and primary health care levels.

The project continues to work at the community level to raise client awareness and demand for high quality services. In an effort to reduce maternal and neonatal mortalities in hospitals, the program institutionalizes best practices embraced by the international health community. Dressed in blue hospital scrubs, the delegation visited various wards of the hospital and met with several mothers who had recently delivered.

Next, the delegation continued their trip to the International Youth Foundation's Youth for Future program to understand the current socioeconomic challenges facing young adults and teenagers in Jordan. Unemployment remains a major problem for the younger generation, especially for women because they often cannot leave the house alone or move to different places alone.

Youth under the age of 30 comprise as much as 70 percent of the population in Jordan, and the unemployment rate among working-age youth is estimated at nearly 60 percent. Youth have few safe outlets for social or recreational activities, and are not adequately engaged in positively shaping the environment around them. Girls in particular have restricted mobility and opportunities. Their situation is worsening and compounded by a variety of factors such as increasing economic inflation.

At this program site, the group saw how at-risk Jordanians between the ages of 16 and 24 are going through a service training program to improve their English skills and other hospitality services, such as food preparation and housekeeping. The group met with a half-dozen girls who talked about how the program has helped them not only gain new skills but also confidence. One girl with a bright smile discussed how she built entrepreneurial skills in the program. She would like to start her own business. Another girl, who works as a receptionist at a resort in the Dead Sea, chimed in and shared how the program gave her a sense of responsibility.



A young woman from the International Youth Foundation's Youth for Future program explains how she learned to start her own business. Unemployment remains a major problem for the younger generation, especially for women because they often cannot leave the house alone.

“When given the opportunity and taking the opportunity, those girls are phenomenal,” said Ms. Casalotti, legislative director for Rep. Capps. “It might be a high bar but once they get there, they thrive and that’s very encouraging.”

With two full days of site visits completed, the group headed to a one-on-one meeting with the U.S. Mission Director for Jordan, Beth Paige to discuss the overall context of development in Jordan. Ms. Paige told the delegation that Jordan USAID mission focuses on governance, education, family planning, water and gender equality in Jordan.

The USAID portfolio also focuses heavily on youth since there is a large youth population bulge with 70 percent of the population under 30. The country faces a 40 to 70 percent unemployment rate. Ms. Paige also echoed the concerns over Jordan’s ability to juggle such a large influx of refugees and what it could mean for the country’s capacity and resources.

The delegation ended their day with a dinner with Dr. Hamad Al-Hajri, the Saudi Arabia Ambassador to Jordan to discuss the current humanitarian and development issues in Jordan and the importance of coordinating with other partners, particularly when it comes to development and women’s empowerment in the region.

The history of Gulf donors, its trajectory and underlying motivations, continues to be an understudied aspect of foreign aid. While the Gulf Arab states are not new donors, their manner of regional coordination, branding and aid management are distinct. Often they help fellow Arab and Muslim countries.

One the second day, the delegation explored the gender challenges that remain for Jordanian women and girls. Despite Jordan’s success achieving most of their MDGs, they still have a long way to go toward achieving gender equity. The group heard how empowering women and girls can lead to better health and financial outcomes. As Jordan remains under duress from the growing refugee population, investing in women can be one of the best ways to lift the country out of poverty and remain a source of stability in the region.

► **Day Three: A Day in the Life of an Empowered Woman**

The third day of the trip was dedicated to understanding the positive outcomes of a woman who is empowered. To kick off the day, the group met with a charismatic Jordanian leader, Dr. Rula Al-Hroob, who is a member of the Jordanian Parliament. She was formerly an outspoken popular television anchor, who currently owns JoSat satellite TV channel with her husband.

During the meeting, Dr. Al-Hroob discussed her path to being a female elected official, which resonated with Rep. Capps. Dr. Al-Hroob has stressed that her political platform includes measures to empower women’s participation in public affairs and calls for universal free higher education in Jordan. She believes all Jordanians have a right to education.



The delegation meets with Beth Paige, USAID mission director of Jordan. The mission focuses on education, family planning, water and gender equality.



The group spoke with Rula Al-Hroob, a member of the Jordanian Parliament. Dr. Al-Hroob has stressed that her political platform includes measures to empower women's participation in public affairs and calls for universal free higher education in Jordan.

To see how CARE is increasing access to markets for women, the group visited CARE's Village Savings and Loans (VSLA) program. Despite high education enrollment rates, only 15 percent of women in Jordan participate in the labor force compared to 69 percent of men, making it one of the lowest rates across the Middle East and North Africa region.

CARE Jordan began its VSLA activities in January 2013. The VSLA programs are implemented through four community based organizations in East Amman and Zarqa. They have reached out to 1,000 women.

These member-managed groups of about 20 to 30 people offer basic financial services to people who are excluded from the formal financial services system. Every group receives one year of intensive financial literacy training to make sure they understand savings, profit and loss, and financial bookkeeping. They also learn about the selection and management of income-generating activities.

A key aspect of the VSLA program is its focus on creating economic self-reliance and empowerment and enables women to become more involved in the decision-making processes at all levels of their lives. This particular VSLA

group's weekly meetings take place after a religious studies class run by a community based organization. For many women living in more conservative households in Jordan, they are not always able to leave their homes freely to meet with other women.

The delegation met with about two dozen women, who formed their own savings group. Around the room, the delegation could see the outcome of the women's participation in the savings group. Some women were selling brightly-colored necklaces and bracelets. Others featured hand-embroidered jackets and silk tablecloths. A few of the participants were selling homemade sweets and snacks.

Several of the VSLA women shared with the delegation how the program has helped them gain new life skills. Amaal Hassan, a young mother who has two children, discussed how her five-year-old child is currently suffering from cancer. Ms. Hassan used her VSLA funds to buy an oven for her snack business and a fan so that her sick child could be more comfortable. She also talked about the close bonds she has formed with the other women, saying that without the group, she "wouldn't have hope for her sick child."



Dotti Hatcher meets with women who are part of CARE's VSLA program. A key aspect of the VSLA program is its focus on creating economic self-reliance and empowerment.



Amaal Hassan, a CARE VSLA participant, talks about how she has formed close bonds with the women in her group. She said that without the group, she “wouldn’t have hope for her sick child” who is suffering from cancer.

Another participant who spoke was, Hamida Dahrooj, a Syrian refugee who welcomed the delegation with poetry. In Syria, Ms. Dahrooj stayed at home while her husband worked. She explained that in her community, staying at home was common for women. Over the last year, the VSLA has helped her build marketing skills to start her own business selling traditional Syrian deserts. At first, her husband did not want her to work. However, the VLSA group encouraged her to talk to her husband and change his mind and he eventually did.

“Their simple, yet hugely profound support system (financial and social) clearly made a great impact on their lives,” said Jennifer Mason, senior technical advisor for family planning and HIV Integration at USAID’s Bureau for Global Health.

“Such a small intervention helped them and others to maintain their dignity by enabling them to support themselves and their children. The woman who stated that the activity helped her to not have to beg for food and money touched me. To me, this is the point of development programming- to help people empower themselves to change their lives in a positive way.”

The delegation continued their day to The Jordan River Foundation, founded by Queen Rania. With the hum of the sewing machines in the background, the delegation saw women participants at work, stitching new garments, home furnishings and bags sold through the foundation. Many refugees in Jordan have trouble getting work permits, so this offers them another alternative for earning income.

Initially, the program was set up to assist Palestinian refugee women in Jordan with extra income. The project continues to work to maintain and promote traditional Palestinian heritage using a traditional cultural technique. As the project grew, other women from surrounding areas joined the project, introducing different embroidery techniques from the various areas of Jordan. Since inception, over 1,500 women have benefited from the project.

The day ended with a meeting with Mohammad Momani, minister of information, political development and parliamentary affairs, and Reem Abu Hassan, minister of social development. Ms. Hassan talked about the need to integrate women into the workforce in Jordan. While the percentage of women receiving education is one of the highest levels in the Middle East, economic



Adriane Casalotti makes cookies with the women at The Jordan River Foundation, founded by Queen Rania. Since inception, over 1,500 women have benefited from the project that helps women create baked goods and embroidery.



The delegation has a meeting with Mohammad Momani, minister of information, political development and parliamentary affairs, and Reem Abu Hassan, minister of social development, of Jordan.

participation is among the lowest. But both pointed out that more women are becoming empowered politically in recent years, as the country sees more female parliamentarians and senators.

On the last day, the delegation saw the positive outcomes that occur when a woman is empowered, whether she was participating in a micro-savings group or running for political office. They saw the need for the U.S. government to continue to play a leadership role in encouraging governments in developing countries to include women in financial policies and economic opportunities. As the crisis in Syria worsens and refugees enter Jordan, policies promoting political and economic empowerment of women will be more important than ever because they help ensure stability.

Conclusion

With no clear sign of an end to the Syrian civil war, Jordan must be prepared to continue to respond to the influx of refugees while remaining a beacon of stability in the region. Despite the growing instability in neighboring states such as Syria, Egypt and Iraq, Jordan has not experienced mass unrest. The Jordanian government remains arguably the most reliable partner for the U.S. in the Arab world.

The looming threat of a potential international intervention in Syria has caused a sudden and increasing number of Syrian refugees fleeing to neighboring countries in search of safety. Jordan has continued to demonstrate their hospitality as a significant number of Syrian refugees enter their country. The host community has generously helped this new wave of refugees with shelter, food, water, sanitation and other basic services. However, the resources of the host communities are limited and will likely be exhausted in the coming months.

This Syrian population growth has also strained the Jordanian health and educational system. Meanwhile, many delegates heard how aid organizations need more resources and support to adequately deal with the rising number of refugees. Within the urban context, many of the refugee children – who are unable to access an adequate education – are forced to instead work to support their families. This situation is particularly perilous for women and girls. Many Syrian women are in Jordan without their husbands and lack previous work experience. They often find it hard to support themselves and their children.

CARE's Learning Tour to Jordan explored how U.S. investments in Jordan are helping the country address these many challenges through emergency relief work such as Za'atari camp and urban refugee services. It was equally important to discuss the long-term socio-economic development and the economic security of Jordan, particularly what is happening with women and girl's empowerment.

“I am excited to share with my colleagues, family and friends what’s happening with the Syrian refugees,” said Dotti Hatcher, executive director of Gap Inc.’s P.A.C.E. Global Initiative. “I plan to take home with me these amazing learning experiences.”

The knowledge gained from this trip will help participants and CARE continue to advocate for support and funding for these initiatives in Jordan and throughout the developing world.

Policy Recommendations

Support Women and Girls Empowerment Programs

CARE advocates for the U.S. Government to integrate gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment throughout its foreign assistance programs, including strong policies and robust resources to promote girls’ education and leadership, prevent child marriage, and combat gender-based violence.

Inside camps and out, funding should be scaled up for programs that prevent and respond to violence against Syrian refugee women and girls. This includes providing clinical care and emotional support for sexual assault survivors, improving safety for women and girls in camps, working to minimize forced marriage, survival sex, domestic violence and exploitative labor, and ensuring case management for separated and other vulnerable children.

Place women’s rights at the heart of development efforts across the region. Give women rights actors and youth activists a voice in decision-making institutions and processes. The Arab Spring was driven by calls for a new kind of politics, a ‘civil state’ which embodies fairness, dignity, equality and social justice. There was a rejection of dictatorship, oppression, violence and patronage politics. It is also unclear how far donors are willing to make a priority of women’s rights. Such attempts are complicated by the fact that work on gender is often



A young woman is participating in the International Youth Foundation’s Youth for Future. The delegation learned about the current socioeconomic challenges facing young adults and teenagers in Jordan.

perceived as an illegitimate foreign imposition; but CARE’s research uncovered a range of ways in which a smart approach to women’s rights in aid policy can make a difference.

Humanitarian Emergency Response

CARE advocates for the U.S. Government to focus on ensuring the protection of women and children in global emergency responses, building linkages between short-term humanitarian response and long-term development, and providing humanitarian access to vulnerable communities. CARE advocates to ensure that issues like violence against women and girls and humanitarian access are addressed. Lastly, CARE supports bipartisan introduction of the Women, Peace and Security Act.

CARE also advocates for the following policies specifically for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region:

- **We urge donors** to ensure that flexible, predictable, longer-term funding is available to enable aid agencies to plan for the growing and changing needs of those affected by the crisis. This will include humanitarian support to new refugee and asylum seeking populations and support to those impacted by long term displacement.

- We call on **donor governments** to fund the expansion of registration capacity in host countries and expand the outreach of services to displaced populations in the region, including non-registered refugees.
- We encourage **host governments** to keep their borders open to ensure that all those that flee the violence are safe and protected, regardless of their nationality, in line with the 1951 UNHCR refugee Convention.

Increase humanitarian aid. Donors must meet urgent funding appeals to address the critical needs of uprooted Syrian civilians and assist overburdened host countries struggling to cope with the influx. Failure to do so could endanger the willingness and capacity of host countries to accept more refugees or shelter existing ones. Periodic donor meetings should be held to address funding needs throughout the region.

Prepare for a protracted humanitarian emergency. The international community must quickly plan for a displacement crisis that could last well beyond the conflict and persist regardless of the political outcome. Intensive diplomatic and financial support will be critical to mitigate tensions that could lead to further instability across the MENA region.

Expand assistance inside Syria. The international community must step up efforts to provide lifesaving assistance to civilians inside Syria through Syrian partners who can reach hard-hit areas. It is also essential that international aid organizations gain better access to Syria in order to address immediate and long-term humanitarian needs.

Prioritize urban refugees. Sufficient attention and resources must be committed to meeting the needs of the refugees who are living outside of camps – about 70 percent of the total – including health care, cash assistance for food and rent, and protection and education

services; and to bolstering the infrastructure of host communities inundated by refugees.

U.S. Foreign Assistance Matters

U.S. foreign bi-lateral programs are critical to building a stable and secure world. U.S.-funded programs produce real change in the lives of children and families living in extreme poverty, while at the same time strengthening U.S. economic security, defending against global health threats and creating the basis for respect and good-will toward the U.S. in countries around the world.

By emphasizing self-reliance and sustainability, U.S. foreign bi-lateral programs help people help themselves. Over the past six decades, in the developing world, child mortality statistics have plummeted, literacy rates have risen, and household income has tripled. Yet much remains to be done. Over 1 billion people struggle on less than \$1.25 a day to build a life of hope and dignity for themselves and their families.

International actors should shift their aid strategies, and wider political and economic relations, in the MENA region away from short-term stabilization towards addressing root causes of the uprisings, including good governance and human rights.

One of the most important things the United States can do to fight global poverty is devote sufficient resources to these programs. U.S. foreign assistance has contributed enormously to the lives of millions of people throughout the world by helping them take better care of their families, educate themselves and build peaceful, democratic societies. CARE advocates for a robust International Affairs budget which contains funding vital to international development and humanitarian assistance and addresses the underlying causes of global poverty while meeting basic human needs in the developing world. We oppose further cuts to the International Affairs budget.

The CARE Learning Tours program introduces policymakers and other influential individuals to the importance of U.S. investments, particularly as it relates to family health outcomes for women and girls. The goal is to utilize these individuals in ongoing advocacy efforts and help inform recommendations for a long-term U.S. strategic approach to these issues.

We are deeply grateful to the many individuals who generously gave of their time to make this visit to Jordan a success. CARE specifically thanks the Bill and Melinda Gate Foundation for its generous financial support to the Learning Tours.

If you are interested in CARE's Learning Tours program, please contact:

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