

MAKING CHILDREN OUR PRIORITY

WORLD VISION CANADA
FRAGILE CONTEXTS
CASE STUDY

JORDAN



THE CONTEXT FOR CHILDREN IN JORDAN

Jordan is a relatively stable country in a very fragile region. But Jordan is also home to a large refugee population, having welcomed **656,000 refugees** fleeing the devastating war in Syria since 2011.

80% of these refugees live in urban settings and live below the national poverty line.¹

1/2 of all Syrian refugees in Jordan are children, many of whom are vulnerable to threats like abuse, neglect, child marriage and child labour. Many suffer high levels of psychosocial distress.

Moreover, Syrian refugee children in Jordan continue to have limited educational opportunities.

The influx of refugees to urban areas of Jordan has required new approaches to humanitarian and development programming given from the strain on local resources and infrastructure.

In addition, donor funding is decreasing as the crisis continues while Syrians are unlikely to return home in the near future.



OUR WORK IN JORDAN

World Vision began working in Jordan in 2008, initially to respond to the needs of Iraqi refugees in the country. Over the past decade, World Vision Jordan's operations have expanded to address new urgent needs resulting from the Syrian conflict. In Jordan, World Vision works to support those affected by the crisis, including vulnerable host community members, with programs for food, water, sanitation and hygiene, livelihood support, early childhood education and remedial classes as well as psychosocial support.

Addressing Drivers of Fragility

Lack of trust between communities and a weakened social fabric are key drivers of fragility. World Vision Jordan's NOUR project, funded by Global Affairs Canada, is a good example of how World Vision works on fragility, not just in fragility. NOUR, meaning "light" in Arabic, was a three-year project (2016-2019) supporting education, child protection and economic resilience for Syrian refugees and Jordanians. Inviting children from the Jordanian host community and Syrian refugee community together via **Child Parliaments** and **Child-Friendly Spaces** to play and learn together broke down barriers between the two communities and built trust and social cohesion. Similarly, providing opportunities for both Jordanian and Syrian families to participate in the project's renewable energy efforts reduced

tensions within the community while decreasing household expenses related to expensive utility bills.

Children's Voices at the Centre

Amongst other activities in the NOUR project, World Vision created Child Parliaments where nearly 700 children from the Syrian refugee and Jordanian host communities worked together to learn about their rights and voice their concerns to policymakers, government officials, civil society members and donors. We know that when girls and boys develop the skills to become advocates in their communities, they are better able to hold to account their local and national institutions.

An Integrated Programming Approach

NOUR is a good example of **cross-sectoral programming** that spans humanitarian-development nexus programming, helping to achieve Jordan's long-term development objectives while strengthening the country's response to the refugee crisis. Integrating education with child protection has been particularly important. Since children and their families continue to be vulnerable after fleeing violence, supportive learning environments are key to enabling children to feel safe and develop their emotional, cognitive, and social skills.



WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

Children who receive opportunities to learn about civil participation and child rights demonstrate improved learning outcomes and proactive engagement in their communities.

Initiatives which empower children, like Child Parliaments, may have long-term positive impact on children's participation in community decision-making.

We need to break cycles of violence and poverty by fighting exclusion, disempowerment, and mistrust.

In a context like Jordan, we must remember that fragility isn't restricted to the country where the conflict is happening, "over there". If unaddressed, fragility can take hold in places that might appear stable – like a host country. Programming that brings host and refugee communities together can bridge divisions and build trust.

The solution to fragility is not linear. Fragile contexts don't trace a neat trajectory from relief to recovery to development. Rather, their characteristics can shift unpredictably and constantly. Syrian refugees in Jordan are currently "safe from conflict". But the changing nature of the region, threats of forced returns, and cycles of violence make the situation unpredictable. We need to invest in the needs and dreams of children now to prevent instability in the future.

THE CHANGE WE'RE SEEING

- NOUR achieved significant results in terms of empowerment and education of children. Of the 700 children who participated in **Child Parliaments**, 91% demonstrated increased knowledge of civic participation, child rights as well as decision-making. This increases their power to create impact in their communities, now and in the future. Teachers also observed increased academic performance by these students.
- Offering children safe places to learn and play has a significant impact on learning outcomes, child protection, and empowerment. World Vision's **Child-Friendly Spaces** delivered Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) services to refugee children in safe, supportive and

welcoming environments. These Child-Friendly Spaces were operated by local community-based organizations, increasing their experience and capacity to respond to needs in their own communities. Of the children who attended these centres, 98% demonstrated improved learning outcomes, while 80% of attending caregivers reported increased promotion of reading readiness for young children in their care. An impressive 99% of children participating in ECCD transitioned to formal education. We trained 200 teachers in child-friendly methodologies and ways to engage students, schools, and communities in civic participation, with 94% of male teachers and 96% of female teachers demonstrating increased knowledge on the specific needs of girls and boys.

ABOUT WORLD VISION

World Vision is a global relief, development and advocacy organization working in nearly 100 countries and in partnership with 650,000 Canadian supporters. We have 65 years of experience working alongside communities across development, fragile and humanitarian contexts. We seek to ensure that girls and boys are healthy, educated, protected and empowered to be change agents for more equal, inclusive, peaceful societies. World Vision is committed to gender equality as foundational to life in all its fullness for every child.

This is a series of four case studies, each highlighting World Vision's work in a fragile context, developed to accompany our white paper: [Making Children Our Priority: How Canada Can Do Better For The World's Most Vulnerable Girls and Boys \(2019\)](#).

