

## **Research Report**

### **Service providers' perspectives on working with Syrian women refugees in Germany and Jordan**

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Project Financed by DAAD under the Programme Hochschulkooperationen mit Jordanien und dem Libanon zur Unterstützung von syrischem Hochschulpersonal (2021-2022); for the project 'Transnationalism and Localisation in Social Work: Focus on Syrian Refugees'.

Report published in Jan 2023

Report published through open access through the publication server of Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences WIPS (Wissenschaftlicher Publikationsserver der Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences)

Suggested Citation:

Das, C., Nashwan, A., Jaber, A. A. and Sader, I. (2023). *Service providers' perspectives on working with Syrian women refugees in Germany and Jordan*. Research Report. Wissenschaftlicher Publikationsserver der Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences (WIPS): Frankfurt.

## **Introduction**

As part of the DAAD funded project on ‘Transnationalism and Localisation in Social Work: Focus on Syrian Refugees’, under the programme ‘Hochschulkooperationen mit Jordanien und dem Libanon zur Unterstützung von syrischem Hochschul-personal (2021-2022)’, activities were planned towards increasing capacity for Syrian persons in the fields of research and social work in Germany and Jordan. When the initial plan of two research fellowships for Syrian researchers in Jordan did not materialise, the project was adapted to conduct data collection and research into service provision for Syrian refugees in Frankfurt-Germany and Jordan. This report outlines the key findings of the research in Germany. The report is divided into three parts. Part 1 outlines the background to the study, methodology, and main conclusions. Part 2 outlines the key findings in Germany. Part 3 outlines the key findings in Jordan.

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## PART 1

### **Background and context of the study**

The overarching project was aimed at capacity building of Syrian persons in research and teaching as well as to develop state of the art knowledge and competencies for working with Syrian refugees.

Initially a research stay for two Syrian researchers from Jordan was planned. It could not be realised for multiples reasons. Subsequently, it was decided that service providers' perspectives on providing services to Syrian refugee women would be sought.

The context of refugee seeking by Syrian persons since 2015 has generated much development in the context of service provision in Germany as well as Jordan.

Germany has been a country of some significance in terms of providing refuge in Europe (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2021; BMAS, 2016; Lyck-Bowen et al. 2019). In 2015, 1.1 million refugees arrived in Germany (Hersch and Obser, 2016; Hillman and Toğral, 2021; Berg, 2021). In 2016, Germany received 376,122 Syrians as refugees and 100,527 Syrian asylum seekers (Hagues et al., 2021). More than 500,000 girls and women have sought refuge between 2012 and 2016 (Worbs and Braulina, 2017). This has led to much development of services for refugees (BMAS, 2016; Bonin, 2021) Initially Germany welcomed refugees with huge mobilisation of resources and many refugees were housed in temporary accommodations with little privacy, no access to kitchen facilities and crowded housing conditions (Hartmann, 2019; Birger and Nadan, 2022). While the law previously outlined that refugees were to spend up to 6 months in reception centres, current arrangements of so called Ankerzentren require most refugees, without families, to spend up to 1.5 years and up to 6 months only for refugees with families (Hartmann, 2019; Funk, 2016). These living conditions are spaces of liminality where refugees wait in limbo (Hartmann, 2019). Hartmann (2019) concludes that the living conditions of women in reception and accommodation centres exhibit structural, cultural, and direct violence against women. Berg's (2021) study also seems to confirm that even in terms of access to information and media, women living in flats experienced lower levels of precarity. Furthermore, bureaucratic delays meant that refugees were often waiting in limbo for months on end. These conditions often resulted in heightened vulnerabilities of women and many researchers have pointed out the high cases of gender-based violence that are not appropriately recorded, in part due to inadequate mechanisms for reporting (Hartmann, 2019; Hersch and Obser, 2016). Rolkel et al. (2018) also points out that access to primary health care for refugees under the Asylum Seeker Benefits Act remains restrictive. Women refugees

also have difficulties in accessing educational opportunities, integration in society and jobs in the labour market on account of cultural and structural barriers, and discriminations (Hartmann, 2019; Worbs and Baraulina, 2017). Even though many volunteers supported the arrival of refugees in Germany with language classes and support to deal with the bureaucracies (Hartmann, 2019; Schmid, 2019; Funk, 2016), many women with childcare responsibilities could not take advantage of these supportive services in Germany (Schmid, 2019). This context presents additional challenges for female refugees who are trying to exercise active citizenship (Menke and Rumpel, 2022). Furthermore, the changing laws and policies create opportunities for some refugees but not for others (Hartmann, 2019; Hillmann and Togral, 2021; Schmid, 2019; Funk, 2016; Kontos et al. 2006; Hinger, 2020; Engler, 2019; Deutscher Bundestag, 2016). For example, the initial welcome for Syrian refugees, since 2015, has significantly changed and access to refuge is increasingly difficult for Syrians as Syria is no longer deemed a country of risk. The decision to lift the ban (that was operational from 2012 - 2020) on deporting Syrians (TRT World, 2021), de-prioritisation of asylum applications from Syrians and the end of many family-reunification programmes that were in place for Syrians indicate pressing consequences for Syrian refugees because of the new laws and policies (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik, 2022).

Recently, there has also been some research on the impact on social workers providing services to refugees as a vulnerable group. This in turn highlights the distress and helplessness that social workers face and the strategies they use to deal with this situation (Hagues et al., 2021; Birger and Nadan, 2022; Mette et al., 2020).

In Jordan, the context is similar but on a different scale. Jordan has also been one of the countries that have received a significant number of Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2022). Jordan has received 760,000 refugees, of which 670,000 are Syrians (UNHCR, 2022a). Several services were developed in response, that included services at the intersection of social work (AlMakhamreh & Hutchinson 2018), such as health (Al-Rousan et al. 2018; Amiri et al. 2020; Rizkalla, N., & Segal), employment (Şahin Mencütek, Z., & Nashwan 2021), education (Al-Mabuk & Alrebh 2018) and the protection of unaccompanied children (AlMakhamreh & Hutchinson 2018) and elderly (Nashwan et al. 2022).

The context of refugees in Jordan has been challenging, however, there have also been significant changes in laws, policies, and service provision (Alshoubaki, 2018; Lenner & Turner 2019; Sahin Mencutek & Nashwan 2021b) over time. While 78.5% of refugees in Jordan live outside of camps and around 140,000 live in camps (UN Women Report, 2018),

the situation for Syrian refugees remains precarious. The UN quarterly report for 2022 suggests that vulnerabilities have increased for Syrian refugees in Jordan with more persons relying on debt to meet essential expenses, not being able to access health services, and living in substandard or informal settlements (UNHCR 2022b). UN Women Report (2018) on 'Unpacking gendered realities in displacement: the status of Syrian refugee women in Jordan' outlines how women refugees are also vulnerable in such contexts on account of gendered violence that they face both while living in camps or outside of camps. The report adds that lack of employment opportunities aggravates this situation as they must rely on the informal economy for economic opportunities thus exposing them to verbal, sexual and physical violence. There has been much research that has focussed on women's issues such as entry into the labour market (Almakhamreh et al. 2020) or psychological/mental health (Ali 2020; Brooks et al. 2022) or reproductive health (Amir et al. 2020; Gausman et al. 2022). However, research on service providers' perspectives has been more limited (Anabtawi, M. F., & Al Amad 2019; Shaw and Funk 2019; Wells et al. 2022). Furthermore, even though there has been an acknowledgment of the ways in which women's experiences are decidedly different than men's, research in terms of how or what service provision regards this or adapts to this is even more limited (Şahin Mencütek, & Nashwan 2021a; Shaheen et al. 2022).

This research attempted to look at a range of service providers and seek their views and experiences of working with refugee women in terms of challenges, opportunities, needs and chances. This field of research is constantly changing, and this study adds to the contemporary contexts as it serves as a marker for the context in 2021 and 2022.

This report presents the analysis of the data collected from both countries.

### **Aims of the study**

The research aimed to explore perspectives of social workers working in organisations that catered to Syrian women refugees by providing services to them in Frankfurt-Germany and Jordan. The research sought to uncover the context in which service was provided (legal, financial, political), what kinds of services were provided, the opportunities and challenges in such provision as well as possible training needs or adjustments required to deliver services to Syrian women refugees.

## Ethics

Ethical approval was sought to carry out the research in Germany and Jordan. Informed consent was sought from all participants in the form of signed informed consent (attached in Appendix) as well as verbal consent prior to the interviewing.

## Data collection

**Participants:** The study sought to collect the perspectives of service providers and the criterion for participation was involvement in direct delivery or management of services for refugees (in particular Syrian women refugees). Contact was sought with different organisations in Frankfurt and around as well as in Jordan (specifically Amman and Irbid) to request participation in the study.

**Data collection in Germany:** six interviews were held with nine participants from six organisations in Germany. All the participants in Germany were women. The organisations covered by the interviewers in Germany provided a good representation of the various services that are offered to refugees in Germany and included women's organisations, temporary accommodations, education services. All the organisations interviewed were based in and around Frankfurt.

Data collection in Jordan: eight interviews were held in Jordan, representing eight organisations. All the interviews were conducted in the organisational premises. 5 of the participants were male and three were female. Of the participants, three were from public relations, two from Human Resources, one was the law officer of the organisation and two were project coordinators. All the organisations interviewed were based in Amman and Irbid in Jordan.

**Method of data collection:** Data was collected using an interview guide (attached in Appendix). Of the interviews in Germany, four were conducted in person and two were conducted online, via Zoom. Three interviews were held in the organisational premises and one interview was held at the university. Participants were given the option to choose the location (their organisation or the university, in-person or online). All interviews were audio recorded. The interviews in Germany were conducted in German. All the interviews in Jordan were conducted in-person in Arabic.

## Analysis

All the interviews were subsequently transcribed in the language in which the interview was conducted. The data from Germany was transcribed in German by a transcribing company. The analysis was also conducted in the German language. The data was later translated into

English prior to publication. The data from Jordan was transcribed and translated into English by the persons who had conducted the interview.

The data was analysed thematically (thematic analysis). Based on the interview guide and data collected, categories (services provided, effectiveness of services, difficulties experienced by clients, difficulties experienced by social workers, and so on) were identified and data was then analysed to identify emerging themes (language and integration, motivation, culture, racism, policy directives, and so on). Each case was analysed to identify themes. Subsequently the key themes across all the interviews were identified and they form a crucial or fundamental part of this report. NViVo and Atlas-Ti were used to aid the analysis of the data.

The data presented has been anonymised and the data from different sources have been indicated. Thus S1, S2, S3, S4, S5 and S6 are the different sources/interviews from where the data have been drawn. Numbers next to the sources are the page numbers of the transcript where the quote is drawn from. Thus 1S. 6 means that the data are drawn from interview no. 1 and page 6 of the transcript.

The transcription and analysis in Jordan are more general and the sources of the data are not noted. This is done to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants/organisations within the Jordanian context.

The data from each country has been analysed independently of each other and there has been no attempt to compare the two countries as not only is the context of service provision in both countries different, data collection as well as the kind of data collected is also different. For example, in Jordan, access to organisations and participants very much depended on personal contacts. Issues of trust are also expressed differently in the two countries. Finally, even the scale of service provision, the resources available and the type of service provision is also significantly different.

Nevertheless, based on the analysis in the two countries, some issues of convergence and divergence are summarised here.

### **Note on limitations**

This report is collated based on data collected from six organisations in and around Frankfurt. Some of the issues, such as housing, may not be a problem in contexts beyond Frankfurt. Furthermore, the study is based on service providers' perspectives of providing services to refugee women – it is likely that refugee women themselves perceive the situation differently. In addition, the services and the contexts described here often refer to refugee women and not

specifically Syrian refugee women. It may be likely that data collected specifically with regards to Syrian women refugees might have been different.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, this study does not aim to generalise these findings. Nevertheless, the findings are transferable as these findings have found congruence across the in-depth interviews in Jordan and in Germany, and the broader literature available on the topic. The involvement of two researchers across the data collection as well as analysis indicates efforts taken to ensure reflexivity and also to ensure that the data is credible and confirmable (Lewis, 2009).

### **Researchers involved**

Data in Germany was collected by Postgraduate Student, Ms. Freya Köster and Prof. Dr. Chaitali Das. The data were analysed by Mr. Abd Alkareem Jaber and Prof. Dr. Chaitali Das.

- Chaitali Das first immigrated to Germany in 2013 from Belfast Northern Ireland. She is of Bengali ethnicity and was born and raised in India. Chaitali is a trained social worker with interests in international and transnational social work.
- Freya Köster is German and is a qualified social worker. She is interested in research and has worked on various research projects focussed on vulnerable persons, including persons without homes.
- Abd Alkareem Jaber is of Syrian ethnicity and moved to Germany during the crisis. He is a lawyer by training with a successful legal practice before he moved to Germany. He currently works with refugees in a residential setting.

The data in Jordan were collected by Ms. Waad Mohammed Hussein Al Khaled and Ms. Majedah Al Smade. The data were analysed by Ms. Israa Sadder and Prof. Dr. Ayat Nashwan.

- Ayat Nashwan is Professor of Social Work at Yarmouk University. She is interested in issues that have an impact on women who are refugees. Her family comes from Palestine and she has done substantial work on Iraqi and Syrian refugees in Jordan and in the USA.
- Waad Mohammed Hussein Al Khaled and Majedah Al Smade are both Jordanians and are social workers in Jordan, having completed a course in social work with an integrated internship. Ms. Waad and Ms. Majedah are interested in research on women's issues.
- Israa Sadder has a master's degree in social work. She is of Syrian origin, living in Jordan. Her research interests also include the refugee contexts in Jordan, and she is very active in various projects that aim to work and empower refugees in Jordan.

## Commonalities and differences

**Legal and political framework:** Organisations in Jordan and Germany outlined the legal and policy context of their work and their limited influence on these, even though the political context played a significant role in terms of enabling or limiting access to refugees to various services. The German organisations talked about the changing laws and policies of dealing with refugees and different categories of refugees that determined the services that would be available to them. The Jordan context also outlined that political will and decisions have a significant impact on their funding sources and ability to provide services. It is known that political context of Jordan is quite important for all types of refugee policies designed to respond to the needs of Syrians, the same applies to other countries hosting Syrian refugees like Turkey and Lebanon (Içduygu & Nimer, 2020; Tsourapas 2019).

Both contexts outlined administrative hurdles that can present significant barriers of access for refugees as well as for organisations in meeting the needs of their clients. This has also been the case for other service sectors of Jordan like health (Dator et al. 2018; Lupieri 2020) or labour market integration (Lenner, & Turner 2019; Şahin Mencütek & Nashwan 2021a).

**Integration:** Organisations in both contexts outlined the resistance towards accepting refugees, particularly at the cost of national citizens, as in Jordan (al-Shar, S., & al-Tarawneh 2019; Lupieri 2020). Participants in Germany reported the difficulties of integration, often related to language (Scheible and Rother, 2017; Brücker et al., 2019) and adapting to the new culture the legal and administrative culture, and demands in Germany (Tissot and Croisier, 2020). Furthermore, there was also a comment on how the public in Germany might misunderstand the situation and believe that much more resources are spent on Syrian refugees without the refugees showing any commitment to adapt (Kösemen and Wieland, 2022). Participants in Jordan also highlighted the resistance from host communities that perceived Syrian refugees to be taking away resources that should be allocated to them. Furthermore, despite common language and religion, participants in Jordan highlighted the differences in legal culture, particularly in terms of marriage laws in Jordan and Syria as well as cultural differences such as early marriages. Syrian refugees were expected to adapt to their new context in Jordan and Germany and subsequently services in both countries focussed on awareness trainings and enabling Syrians persons to adapt to the system.

**Difficulties in accessing work:** difficulties in accessing the labour market were also an issue for both countries. However, the two countries differed in terms of how these difficulties manifested. In Germany, the difficulties revolved very much around learning the language

and engaging in formal vocational/educational systems to get appropriate qualifications to get a job or else the only option was to opt for low paid precarious jobs (Holger et al., 2021). The path towards language acquisition and training was noted as arduous and long. In the Jordanian context, there were legal issues that prevented women from accessing jobs in the labour market, however business opportunities were more viable, and many organisations focussed on economic/entrepreneurial skill development.

***Gender aspects and vulnerabilities:*** Both organisations also highlighted the issues of domestic violence as well as different expectations from home and host communities. While the host communities often expect Syrian women to work and become economically viable, this conflicted with the familial cultures/values of some Syrian families where women are expected to be responsible for the home and rearing of children. While the new context presented new opportunities for many Syrian men and women to redefine their roles in the family and adapt to new ways of life, this also threatened many families and communities that resisted this; particularly by restricting outside access for women. While it is acknowledged that mental health issues are significant for refugees, the associated stigma of accessing mental health services as a barrier was also noted by participants in both contexts.

***Social work goals and approaches:*** Participants in Germany and in Jordan outlined the importance of human rights as well as working in the best interests of the client and enabling the client to make decisions for themselves rather than imposing solutions on them. However, participants in Germany focussed on providing individualised services while the approach in Jordan was very much community based. Thus, the access to organisations for Syrian women was often direct as the organisations conducted field visits and led community-based projects. Many women came directly as they found out about the organisations by other clients of the organisations who reported on having positive experiences with the organisations. The access to organisations in Germany was often through referrals from other organisations or administrative units that also funded the work of the organisations. Thus, even though the goals and the attitude of the work was similar, the approach and the systems in both countries were significantly different.

***Suggestions for improvement:*** Participants in Germany and Jordan commented on the importance of clear and decisive policy decision making that is consistent and non-discriminatory. Participants from both contexts also outlined the need for secure funding to provide services.

## Concluding remarks

The study highlights the complex political social and economic field of service provision for refugees, who present complex needs. The study also indicates that women's issues are particular and different, and many systems are not necessarily able to consider their positions as a group but either deal with women as individuals or in the context of a group to address specific problems like domestic violence and/or reproductive issues. It may be argued that issues of women are not really addressed at a structural level. While there are an increasing number of programmes with families that address men, to enable access for women, these are not universal. This is not surprising given that the service provision is still very much provided within the framework of a patriarchal system and focussed on outcomes, defined by a capitalistic system rather than on feminist relationship-based principles.

The system thus places demand on women but makes it very difficult for women to meet these demands. For example, in Germany; women are required to achieve B2 to join vocational training; however, government funding is mostly available till B1 level only. One participant in Germany also noted how this access is also difficult as the government does not provide day care for children during the courses, making it very difficult for many to even attend the courses that are on offer (Tissot and Croisier, 2020). This is the case for integration in the job market as well. For example: refugee women are often pushed to integrate and to work outside the home but work that is high paying and secure is often out of reach for many women. Systems in place, labour laws, educational requirements or even the economic systems in place present barriers to access jobs for which women might have skills. Many refugee women, with some exceptions, can only aspire to precarious paid jobs to address dire economic situations both in Jordan and Germany. Why should refugee women want to engage in low paying jobs of cleaning someone else's house or providing care for other children and persons; when they could do so for their own family members? Women are required to invest an immense amount without necessarily gaining significantly for it but stand to lose the connections/links that they may have. It is hardly surprising that women are unwilling to go against their communities/families that they may regard as sources of support rather than rely on laws and systems that they experience as unclear and bureaucratic, both in Germany and Jordan. However, when women resist or do not commit to do so, they are regarded as problematic by the host society.

The system also introduces fear due to unclear, complex structures for asylum seeking, which become even more complex and difficult when issues of child protection or domestic violence come to the fray. Refugee women thus must exhibit very high levels of commitment to sift

through this system and fear eventually becomes a key governing factor in their lives. The fear of deportation and uncertainty also reigns in both countries; even though currently there is no deportation policy in Jordan.

All this plays out in a context of refuge-seeking, where women are probably in extreme psychological stress. In Germany, single women now must spend up to 1.5 years in a temporary accommodation without access to private spaces or a kitchen. For families, the time period is shorter at six months. This accommodation scenario is bound to bring about stress and conflict. To contain this conflict, security personnel are employed. Under such conditions, integration is not really possible (Bekvol and Bendel, 2018).

Social workers working in such a context, try to make the most of the situation and provide services that are meaningful and enable women to create chances and possibilities out of this. This is a very difficult task as is evident in terms of the time that social workers invest to build trust and accompany women through very difficult situations. Social workers also see the ambivalence and the tensions that they are tied up with and as outlined, attempt to make the most of the situation. All participants outlined their commitment to work from a human rights framework in order to enable self-determination and emancipation of their clients. To what extent this is possible in the given system, is a different question. Whether social workers are co-opted to support a problematic system or whether they can carry out emancipatory work is not a simple question to answer. Social workers are navigating a complex field and have aspects of both in their everyday work and decision making.

Refugees and refugee women are most likely to remain in the country they have migrated to rather than return to their home countries. Addressing policy issues to enable quick decision-making in terms of asylum in Germany and enabling them access to services and citizenship in Germany and Jordan might be the best and easiest way to enable their integration in the countries they find themselves in. This is not unprecedented. Germany has responded to refugees from Ukraine that enabled much easier access (Bohm, 2022). Jordan has also enabled citizenship for Palestinian refugees. This not only makes the situation for current refugees easier but also for the children, who represent the next generation, involved. This, of course, is a political question and depends on political will.

## PART 2

### **Perspectives of service providers in Germany**

The analysis presented here outlines the key findings from the interview data available from 6 organisations and 9 participants who participated in the study.

The organisations were varied and included organisations that provided temporary accommodation, advisory services, services for women as well as educational services. More details of the organisations are withheld to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. All participants were directly involved in work with refugees and/or directly involved in the planning of services for refugees. We have thus considered them as experts in the field. Participants were all social workers or had long term experiences of working with refugees in the capacity of a social worker.

#### ***1. Services independent of nationality***

Most organisations outline that their work is independent of nationality.

*The work is independent of nationality, status, religion (p.1), independent of age (intergenerational) (1p. 2)*

With respect to services for women, some organisations did offer particular services for women, when this was their key focus, such as support and protection from domestic violence. However, three of the organisations reported that there were no specific services for Syrian women.

*There are no special offers for Syrian people /for Syrian women. For this it would have to be founded a Syrian organization like an association - founded by Syrian people (4S. 1)*

#### ***2. Services offered***

Most organisations nevertheless did make provisions to consider women's needs and provided a range of services to women.

Four of the organisations offered 'Frauen Cafes' to enable women to network with each other. Also, organisations recognised that women with children needed support to take advantage of the services offered:

*Women with children and family are less likely to attend language classes and work, develop more slowly compared to single women (6S. 24)*

Four of the organisations explicitly provided support for childcare to enable participation of women.

Almost all organisations provided advisory services that meant providing orientation, psychosocial support and/or addressing presenting problems.

*Counselling<sup>1</sup> and support of clients with concerns e.g., asylum applications, dealing with the immigration authorities, with the youth welfare office, taking children into custody, dealing with the police, women's shelters, referral to lawyers (5S. 2)*

*On-site social counselling (6S. 7), education, providing information, orientation (6S. 8).*

Language acquisition was also recognised as a key to integration within policy with various policies ranging from mandatory requirements and referrals for refugees to attend language classes to motivating refugees to learn the language. Almost all organisations provided language courses or fostered language learning through referrals to courses.

*Support in finding the language courses (4S. 4); language is seen as the key to people's independence*

In addition to language learning, training offers were made to enable women to understand the German system, value frameworks and norms.

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<sup>1</sup> Counselling (Beratung) refers to advisory services that social workers offer, throughout the report. This is not to be understood as psychological counselling as offered by psychologists. Psychological counselling is explicitly mentioned when counselling is referred to.

*Training and awareness-raising workshops on the relevant topics, e.g., women-specific reasons for fleeing, violence in the name of honour and how to deal with it - the authority employees are invited to the workshops in each case (5S. 10)*

*Raising awareness among women through events on various topics, such as health, sexuality, contraception (6S. 14)*

*Cultural education offerings, such as art workshop (1p. 6), "Time Travel" project - women's rights in DE (1S. 17)*

*Seminars on value education (e.g. women's health and family planning), arriving in Germany, basic rights, basic laws (2S. 13)*

Four organisations also stressed on the issues of health and mental health for refugees.

Two organisations also offered online courses during Corona but both organisations reported that these were not successful.

Online German courses have failed during Corona times (3S. 6)

### **3. Complexity and effectiveness of offers**

Despite the range of service offers, the work with women refugees is highly complex and participants stressed on the need to offer appropriate individualised advice and services according to needs. The services are also dependant on the scale of persons seeking refuge.

*No distinction is made as to what nationality people are, but with what problems they come and what support they need (4S. 1)*

*The offer must always be adapted over time, e.g., the number of refugee women has risen sharply since 2015. This social group is more in need of help and are vulnerable compared to other groups due to the refugee experience and the complexity of the problems (5S. 5)*

For many women, it is difficult to accept the difficulties of the living situation, the uncertainty of the refugee status and the difficulties of integration.

*Differences in expectations and perceptions about arriving in DE versus reality (first 2 weeks of quarantine; the feeling of being in prison) (2S. 11, 12); little understanding that quarantine is the first step on the road to freedom (2S. 12); some then want to return home when life in DE completely fails to meet expectations (2S. 25)*

*There are women who never find a connection - orientation after the initial reception (everything is new) (1S. 7)*

The issues of mental health are often acute, particularly for persons living in short term accommodation with issues such as depression as well as frustration on account of the living conditions in different contexts (often sharing tight spaces with family or unknown persons or in temporary accommodations where there is little privacy).

*Women with depression and frustration no longer participate in services. (2S. 26) but there is no care for sick, mentally ill residents (2S. 7,8)*

*Dealing with frustration: male frustration is directed outward, female inward (2S. 26); in young men - self-injurious behaviour; women withdraw and develop depression (2S. 27)*

*Violence is an important issue in the shelters (6S. 16)*

*People from different cultures brought together - great potential for conflict (2S. 2)*

Some are often provided medication to deal with mental health issues or sleep related problems that can also lead to dependency on drugs.

*The weaning off of medication dependence among psychologically distressed residents is a challenge for staff (6S. 19)*

Even though there is recognition that language is key to integration, for many refugee women achieving language competencies to enable integration was difficult. Lower levels were easier to achieve than the higher levels that are necessary for work/vocational training.

*...up to B1<sup>2</sup> it is easy to pass the exam; B2 is more difficult, depends on courage and motivation (1S)*

*Learning the new language means a big hurdle for the women (6S. 17).*

Nevertheless, women who are motivated do learn the language and achieve school certificates to enable vocational training and gain access to employment. It seems dependent on personal motivation or those who already have achieved significant educational degrees in their home countries.

*Many women are motivated enough to catch up on their school-leaving qualifications (3S. 11). Women with a higher level of education manage the path to integration (language, education, work) faster and often without outside support. They can also do their own research and negotiate with the authorities much better (3S. 9)*

Participants listed different factors that limit acquisition of language and integration, ranging from dependence on husbands that limit access to the outside world, women's perception of their role as rearing children and even financial hurdles as often learning the language to higher levels are not funded by the government.

*After the end of the course, women stay at home, do not speak German anymore and forget a lot (3S. 8). Many women/families transfer the patterns from the home countries: the women (with less education) stay at home and take care of the children and men attend the German courses. They speak German faster afterwards and represent the family to the outside world (3S. 6).*

*Women with children and family attend language courses less often and work less often, develop more slowly compared to single women (6S. 24)....*

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<sup>2</sup> The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment provides 6 reference levels for language learning with A1 the first beginners level (Basic) and C2 as the level of Mastery (proficient user)

*Women's dependence on the man in terms of support when there are children in the family and in terms of language skills, as men are more often faster in mastering the language (6S.20)*

*There are 900 hours of integration course paid by BAMF. After that nothing more (3S. 8); B2 is further paid in justified cases*

Language is also an essential component to find work and further connections in the German society. There are women who can do this.

*There are women who reorient themselves and find a connection. Connection to the profession they learned earlier (e.g., with B2 in childcare). Examples: Educator training, nursing, sales (1S. 7).*

However, for many women, the attitude or perception of working outside the home does not seem to have much importance

*Young women with children do not think about what they want to do professionally, have no idea about it; for them the profession is to be a mother (3S. 7);*

*Women rarely have professional ambitions (4p. 16).*

Furthermore, in Germany, many women experience a devaluation of skills that they have or professions that they are familiar with and are only offered precarious work without appropriate qualifications.

*Most of the women have not completed their education; many are illiterate. In such cases, the language course is very difficult. Women without education are mostly in the precarious jobs (4S. 16)*

*In some developing countries, there are still professions that are almost extinct here in the West, e.g., dressmaker. In these cases, the job centre does not cover the cost of training (3S. 11)*

Integration is closely linked to language acquisition and access to the job market. Participants acknowledged that integration is a long process with various incremental steps, as the quote below illustrates.

*Integration process takes a long time; it takes a long time to become aware of one's own rights (4S. 9). Steps on the way to integration: residence, housing, registering children in school (4S. 10).*

Participants note that some women may not be able to integrate fully and are aware of this but want to remain in Germany to secure the future of their children.

*Integration is very difficult, "many women say it is a different life here. But when they have children, they say but for my children the better choice is this country" (1S. 20).*

Under this context, ethnic communities of women can be a significant resource. While these communities are important, they can also isolate women from the broader society, if they are not able to learn the language.

*Strong cohesion/connectedness within own ethnic group (2S. 31). Breastfeeding women stay together in a group; older women support them (2S).*

*Sometimes the meetings of the own community (own: in terms of nation or language) can have a negative effect for the women. They can get the feeling that they are slowed down on the way to integration and are always brought back to their own culture... especially for the women from the patriarchal countries. This is about certain ideas, stereotypes that prevail in these communities and the group dynamics that result from them (4S.6).*

In addition, participants reported that women also fear this community as this community can also be restrictive

*The compatriots - social and cultural observation and judgments of the compatriots; no privacy guaranteed (2S).*

*Fear that members of one's own community will find out about one's problems/difficulties, that one will be virtually exposed (4S. 6)*

*Fear of own community is greater than fear of authorities and offices (5S. 8)*

With regards to fear, participants also report that women often fear the German official systems as well as the fear of deportation.

*The formal level makes it difficult to cooperate with the clients, e.g. mandatory reporting to the youth welfare office (5S. 9)*

*Fear of deportation (4S. 23) (1S. 25)*

#### ***4. Difficulties and frustrations for service providers (and clients)***

Along with the difficult context, multiplicity of issues as well as diversity within the refugees in terms of education, family context, resources etc, that have an impact on the effectiveness of services and the outcomes for refugee women, there are several additional systematic issues that make the work with women refugees particularly challenging for service providers. A key issue that service providers and clients face in terms of achieving positive outcomes is racism among the administrative units as well as in the public.

*Sometimes the stereotypes that the woman can stay at home and the man should study and go to work are maintained by the employees in the authorities (Jobcentre) (3S. 27).*

*Difficulties with some case workers who have racist ideas; they can delay some processes, e.g. approval for own apartment (4p. 7). The system is very bureaucratic; some caseworkers are discriminatory and racist (4S. 4)*

*The general reception/evaluation in society regarding the multiple participation in measures and further education by the refugees is misunderstood. People think people get increased state funding for learning without having worked for it. (3S. 14)*

*Difficulty in dealing with authorities, immigration office, job centre; sometimes racism and discrimination (5S. 11)*

*Women don't get jobs because of the headscarf (6S. 20)*

*Children are not allowed to speak their mother tongue in German schools; they are admonished for this (1S. 23)*

Discrimination at the level of policy is also felt at the level of practice, where different rules apply for different refugees. Syrian refugees were treated differently than refugees from Afghanistan and refugees from Ukraine are treated differently than other refugees. Thus, while service providers aim to not discriminate, at the level of policy, different refugee groups have different levels of access to resources that have a significant impact at the level of practice. One participant notes how refugees from Ukraine were given travel tickets while others were not. Other refugees were often punished (through fines, community service etc) for travelling without tickets,

*Unequal treatment of the "old" refugees and the "new" ones from Ukraine (6S. 21) the example with the train ticket.*

*There was a difference on the legal level between the refugees from Syria and the other refugees, for example, from Iraq or Afghanistan. Syrian refugees have been granted subsidiary residence much faster, actually immediately. The others have not had a secure residence status (4S. 2)*

The bureaucracy and associated rules also made it very difficult for clients as well as service providers to provide services in an effective manner. The bureaucratic system seems difficult even for service providers to understand.

*Even for the employees it is difficult to understand all the bureaucratic processes; between the benefits under the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act and then the change to the Job Centre and all the applications (4S. 3)*

In addition, decision making is slow that leads to frustration.

*Unclear decisions in the allocation of German courses - tied to the right to stay, sometimes decisions take a very long time (3S. 4)*

*Information systems between authorities do not work well (4S. 21)*

There is a lack of interpreters/translators as well as staff that makes communication very difficult

*There is a lack of interpreters; the translation work cannot always be covered by the volunteers. (3S. 25)*

*Lack of professionals in the field of social work and of native-speaking professionals (6S. 17)*

The Corona situation made communication even more difficult

*Communication on the phone is a barrier to understanding for both participants (3S. 18)*

Many offers are standardised activities that have little positive impact for women.

*The measures of the job centre and the employment agency are standardized. The women sit out the time and do not learn. (3S. 13) They complete several measures and end up back at the job centre (3S. 14)...The placement in the measures is often automated and not individualized. It is often due to the system and the employees who run the system. Some staff are more accurate, some are not, some are more accommodating and allow further training, some do not. It leads to a disparity. (3S. 14)*

All this has an impact on the advisory functions that social workers perform, often leading to helplessness on part of the service providers, when their support offers are rejected or when the advice does not reflect the reality for the women and frustration for the clients

*Feelings of powerlessness during counselling (3p. 28). Possible development chain in counselling: counselling - then frustration of clients - counselling again - achievement of goals (3S. 17).*

*Breastfeeding room offer (made by social workers) was not accepted; women preferred to organize themselves alone in a room (2S. 31)*

*Sometimes same-language therapy offers were not accepted because the therapist came from own community and is not trusted or caused sham/fear (4S. 6)*

Resources seem rather limited as compared to the complexity of the problems and even for women facing domestic violence, alternative accommodation is not always easy.

*For victims of domestic violence there is only an internal transfer. External transfer to women's shelters is also possible - but must be very well justified (2S).*

Given this context of work, establishing trust with the client group is often challenging.

*Employees try to communicate the system; sometimes they are not believed (6S. 8).*

*The employees first explain the difference between the counselling centre and offices and authorities and the importance of data protection. This way they can build trust (5S. 8).*

*Establishing contact with residents and gaining trust is not easy (6S. 17)*

*Counselling over a longer period - trust is built up (1S. 6)*

## **5. Ambivalence and attitudes of social workers**

*Work with refugees is "a field full of ambivalences" (1S. 28), There are many areas of tension*

Participants outlined the importance of high amount of resilience for social workers to work with very vulnerable persons with highly complex needs.

*It is very difficult to support and accompany women who are in violent partnerships. (5S.1)*

*Dealing with people who have experienced trauma; they need to be caught up (1S).*

*Accompanying the separations due to domestic violence results as a difficult process, as the women separate and then may want to come back (6S. 18)*

For many social workers, this work also requires dealing with and confronting issues that are not the norm in Germany.

*Threat of violence in the name of honour, forced marriage, child marriage (5S.2), Islamic marriages without civil marriage (5S.7), Female circumcision (5S.9).*

In addition, this is also a field of work that is full of ambivalence and balancing various agendas.

*One is in a conflict of loyalties between the client and the state: according to the principles of the work of a social worker, one works as a quasi-advocate of the client; sometimes one comes into conflict with the legislation (example deportation: one must not reveal any information about it to the client). (2S. 23, 24)*

*Conflict of social workers between data protection/trust and obligatory reporting to authorities in case of endangerment of children's well-being (5S. 9)*

Finally, social workers must accept the political realities and decisions of the administrative units, even when this may not be the right decision, in their opinion, and in worst case scenario renders all the work that they have done as futile

*One moves in a field of tension between what politics decides and what one thinks is right. This is not always compatible (2S.22).*

*There are cases of hardship, where people are asked to leave the country after several years, where they have mastered the language and completed school and are working, not receiving social benefits - even after several years (4S. 23) It does not seem motivating*

*A lot of effort is made for the people, and it is always possible that people will be deported; the employees always have to expect this (1S. 25)*

Participants highlighted the key ideas of professionalism to deal with these difficulties and ambivalences. They stressed that social workers need to be idealistic and do their job to the best of their ability.

*(...) a prerequisite as a social worker to be able to work in such an area. You have to have conviction (...), you have to be idealistic" (1 p. 22). ... when we take on a case, we always really try to exhaust the maximum of possibilities that we have.*

At the same time, social workers must remain professionals and work in the interests of the clients as they see their situation and in terms of what they want to do.

*Social care workers must be able to maintain a professional distance. They must be able to refer correctly to appropriate specialized counselling services (e.g. therapies); one must recognize one's own limitations: one cannot be a specialist in every field (3p. 18). Counselling should be based on what clients want, what goals they are pursuing at the moment, and not on what you yourself think is good for them (3S. 19)*

## **6. Chances and possibilities**

However, the difficulties and challenges faced are also opportunities for growth.

Organisations, social workers, and even administrative units are often actively working to find new and creative solutions to new problems.

*There are opportunities for offices to open up to new cultures and to develop innovative solutions (example with the housing office) (4S. 14, S. 15)*

Many social workers also reflect on the ways in which the coping of problems is different in this context, where alcoholism and violence is relatively less compared to the past. They credit this to the different cultures and orientation of people arriving here.

*Back in the 90s, there were mainly problems with alcohol and drugs and thus with violence; nowadays, this problem has smaller scale (2S. 35, 36). The reason for this may be Islam.*

Many social workers are also adapting their work to enable appropriate support to be available within their work forces, indicating cultural competence within teams.

*The most spoken languages in the shelters are: Farsi, Arabic, Tigrinja, Amharic, Pashtu, Urdu, Somali (6S. 9) there are individuals from Nigeria, Ghana and lastly from Bulgaria, Romanians. The most spoken languages are covered by the language skills of the staff (6S. 9)*

Furthermore, in spite of the challenges of migration for refugees and integration in a new society, for many refugees, this also presents opportunities for growth and a different future.

*Society gives the opportunities for development (among others professional development) for all members of the families (4S. 18)*

*A chance for women to start a new life (6S. 15), for example after separation. An opportunity for men to take on more responsibility in the family (6S. 25)*

*A chance for men and for women to break away from old dependencies (4S. 9)*

*A chance for unwillingly married men or women to break free from marriage (2S. 32)*

*Through the Corona, the will to learn and pursue a professional activity has developed in women. (3S. 7)*

## **7. Policy and practice issues: suggestion for improvement**

In view of their practice experience, participants offered a range of suggestions for improvement in their work and better outcomes for refugee women. These suggestions included anti-racist policy, simplification of administrative processes, more culturally competent services, development of services and infrastructure and better financing of organisations.

Participants called for addressing issues of institutional racism in policy and social contexts.

*No discrimination and no racism at the institutional level (1p. 26, p. 27) Sensitization of politics for this social group (1p. 26)*

*Media images should report more rationally and less emotionally (6S. 27)*

*Migration policy should provide more protection for people who integrate (4S. 23)*

*Speed up the asylum process (5S. 19)*

*Equal treatment of all refugees (6S)*

*Easier access to integration courses for all refugees, including those from safe countries of origin (6S. 21)*

Simplification of administrative systems and processes was also identified as a key area to improve service provision and accessibility.

*Internal simplification of strict rules (2S. 29).*

*The system is very bureaucratic compared to other countries (4S. 3); e.g., in Denmark there is one relevant authority responsible for everything, not several offices*

*Simplify processes at offices especially for those without language skills (1S. 13, 1S. 25), easier access to basics*

*Educated people with university degrees should not do the helper jobs (3S. 26) The recognition processes should be made easier*

Culturally Competent Services were also identified as an important element to provide relevant services. Cultural competences include knowledge, values and skills of social workers to engage with clients and provide appropriate services (Weaver, 2004).

*Competent employees in the authorities; employees with intercultural competences; employees with empathy (1S, 12).*

*As a suggestion to improve the interaction with the authorities in the framework of understanding the fears among the clients from the officials, the joint trainings about the difficult issues of the officials and NGO social workers could help well. (5S. 10) Massive overburdening of the authority employees, as they do not know how to deal*

*with people who are themselves so overburdened; support for the authority employees is needed (5S. 12)*

Access to better services and infrastructure.

*More offers for women, more language courses, more apartments in the Frankfurt area (p. 24, p. 29), more affordable apartments for refugees (3S, 1S).*

*It would be good if there was a rapprochement between Jugendamt (Department of Child Welfare) and parents, where children could get better support without being afraid of Jugendamt with parents. (5S. 10)*

*A multilingual counselling centre, where cultural, religious and social characteristics are also understood, means a great support for the women and for the offices (5S. 4)*

Better financing of organisations

*Sustainable funding and simplification of application processes for associations and foundations (5S. 14, S1).*

## **Discussion and conclusion**

This report highlights the context of service provision for refugee women by practitioners in the field who work directly with refugees. The data highlights the complexity of the work and the various ways in which policy, practice, community ideas as well as individual resources interact in the ways women interact with service providers as well as the outcomes of these services offered (Kolbe, 2021).

The data also highlights the various ambivalences that social workers must deal with and the ways in which they recognise the problems and attempt to work with clients to ensure best outcomes for them without compromising the self determination of their clients. The different mandates that social workers must navigate emerge very clearly from the data (Staub-Bernasconi, 2014). In view of their work, practitioners have also made a range of suggestions

that acknowledge the difficulty of the structural nuances of service provision and suggest changes in the system to enable better access for women refugees.

The policy set up as well as the institutional resources also highlight contradictions that refugee women and service providers deal with. While on the one hand, integration is expected, it is really assimilation that is expected. Even though entry in the job market and language acquisition is demanded, policy and administrative units contradict this goal when resources are not made available for further learning of the language (eg B2) or when qualifications are not recognised (Schmidt et al., 2018). Furthermore, issues of racism and discrimination that are visible across policy, institutional and operational level of the administrative units require significant work and attention (Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes 2016). Racism and discrimination might well be one of the reasons for lack of resources available to address the complex needs of refugee women as well as the difficulties in accessing these resources (Teigler et al., 2020; Mohammed et al., 2022).

While the participants did not exclusively work with Syrian women, they had experience of working with Syrian women and highlighted issues that affect Syrian women.

Women face particular issues of access to systems and are often dependent on others eg: husbands, interpreters, social workers etc (Schmelcher, 2017). Cultural norms and expectations both in Germany as well as from their own communities place particular burdens of adjustments for women (for example, traditional expectations are child rearing and caring for the family while in Germany, the expectation is to find work). However, women do not have the access to resources to fulfil either of the expectations laid on them (it is difficult for them to integrate and find work in Germany (Kosyakova et al., 2021; Bonin et al., 2021) and the support from their own communities is also not to be trusted always) (Goßner and Kosyakova, 2021). Thus, women are often trapped between structures of patriarchy and racism from their home and host cultures. The intersectionality of these different positions shape the varied experiences of exclusion for these women which becomes evident in different aspects of their experience in terms of domestic violence, access to services (application for asylum seeking in Germany are made in the name of the husband and not the wife – in addition, social support received by families are given to the male member with only the male member holding the bank account/bank card) (Tissot and Yimmer, 2021).

Nevertheless, women are not without agency and depending on the resources that they have, many women are able to create new opportunities for themselves and adapt to the new situation that enables them more freedom. The new context also enables women resources and opportunities to leave violent marriages and nurse new ambitions (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 2018). Many other women, use their familial resource and see their migration in Germany, as difficult as it may be for them, as an opportunity and a resource for their children. The migration to Germany changes many aspects of the familial and cultural lives of refugees, such as changing gender roles and relational dynamics in the family with different family members undertaking roles that are different from traditional roles (Hanika and Pfeffer, 2022).

The study demonstrates that persons working with refugees have a very good and clear insight into the work they do as well as the needs of refugee women. It is hoped that further policy and legal developments will take the perspectives of service providers on the ground as well as refugee women directly in terms of improvement and further development of laws and services.

## PART 3

### **Perspectives of service providers in Jordan**

The analysis of the organisational perspectives from Jordan was informed by data collected from 8 organisations in Amman and Irbid, that work with refugees. Given the extent of professionalisation of social work in Jordan and because professional social work is a relatively new profession there, it is not just social workers who were interviewed. Interviewees were Human resource persons, legal officer and/or project coordinators. Nevertheless, their responses provided an insight into the context of service provision and their perspectives of services and client needs.

#### *1. Political context*

Organisations are organised around the laws and policy directives of the government.

*Through politics and law, Organizations can conduct work and provide services to refugee women in an ethical and legal manner. All political and legal decisions are constantly reviewed, and organizations act in accordance with the dictated course of action.*

Many organisations outlined that their work is politically neutral. This political neutrality seems important to ensure support of the government and ability to provide services.

*Some of the organizations are politically neutral group that does not intervene in politics and have no political ambitions in order to provide services to immigrant women.*

*Other organizations acknowledged that it is necessary to not mix work with the government so that their work does not interfere with the political and legal context.*

Only, one organisation was politically active as they deemed it necessary to engage politically to address issues of empowerment. However, other organisations were also neutral in terms of their political orientations.

*One of the service providers stated that they have no political orientation, and the fact that they are neutral, but at a certain point because they work with women's political empowerment, which is required for them to empower politicians, they have obstacles and limitations that pressurize them.*

While their work is independent of politics, politics and presiding government do have an impact on their work and there is also coordination of services with the government agencies.

*There is constant coordination between the organization and government agencies to support the work of the organization and to see the progress of its work in*

*coordination with the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Planning... For example, they have a national plan approved by the National Committee for Women, in which many stakeholders (institution, organization and public security) participated in order to increase the participation of women in the security forces for both Jordanian and Syrian women.*

Governments, however, can interfere and this affects the funding of the projects.

*Government can affect financing. We get projects, but if the government wants in some way to disrupt it, they can do so by creating economic blocks and economic consequences. For example, the organisation has employees. If a project is disrupted, they won't get their salaries, and this is a contribution to unemployment.*

*The most evident consequence of government interference is a lack of funds and material assistance. Public policies, on the other hand, have had an impact on the lack of funding for programmes and the constriction of our economic activity in refugee services.*

## **2. Needs of service users**

The participants identified various needs that need to be met. Many organisations worked in the communities and did field surveys as well as case management studies to enable them to identify these needs. Many identified the difficult economic situation for refugees, as a significant challenge for refugee women.

*Economic empowerment for women before any crisis or problem occurs, so that if she faces difficulties, she will be able to adapt and deal with the situation. Many women were forced to go out and deal with administrative procedures and transactions on their own because they lost their husbands in the war or came to Jordan without them. The lesson is to empower women economically and politically.*

*One of the most important reported needs are economic empowerment through financial assistance which is critical to refugees' stability and survival.*

*Financial assistance, once financial issues are resolved, it is easier to move on to other issues. Material stability, according to refugee women, is the most vital method to survive, and adapt in society.*

In addition, health services were also identified as important in the context of meeting needs of refugees.

*Every single day, there are many clients who ask for health services, they ask for medicines, laboratories, and other health services.*

*The medical aspect/issues present a great burden for refugees*

Empowerment and awareness of rights were also consistently identified by organisations.

*Economic empowerment, because Syrian refugees have very difficult circumstances, they left everything behind...empowerment focusses on vocational training, empowerment for continuity, and most importantly following up with women in addition to raising awareness in all fields.*

*Awareness of the importance of science, birth control, dealing with children, awareness about harassment, violence, lack of fear of silence, psychological treatment, especially because of suffering, psychological disorders, violence, rape, sexual violations and cases of loss suffered by refugee women.*

*Numerous cases of sexual blackmail against refugee women have come to light via social media, as have divorce cases between refugee women and their husbands. It is necessary to educate and inform refugee women about their legal and legitimate rights.*

### **3. Provision of services and access**

As a response to recognised needs of refugee women, a range of different services were offered ranging from legal advice, support for physical and mental health, awareness programmes, to training programmes and other services.

#### *Legal service*

This included support to help women understand issues of rights as well as deal with cases such as family reunion or divorce.

*Some organizations are concerned with refugee women's right to survival and stability, and is actively involved in reunion problems, having successfully reunited families in several cases in collaboration with UNHCR.*

*Legal services are provided free of charge to refugee women. Organizations continue to provide legal representation until the case is resolved. The organization takes on between five and six legal cases per year on behalf of refugee women.*

Organisations were also active in advocating for change of laws and creating systems for protection of women refugees

*Amending labour laws so that refugees are not subjected to injustices and threats at work and amending laws regarding violence and abuse to guarantee the rights of refugees. Punishing those who abuse refugee women and not mitigating punishment under any condition.*

#### *Raising awareness*

Organisations also work towards raising awareness of women with regards to early marriage as well as their rights and the legal and administrative context of Jordan

*Since most of them are headed for early marriage, and they try to educate refugee women about the dangers of early marriage and the extent of its impact on their mental and physical health as much as possible.*

*The most critical services for refugee women are legal support services, given their ignorance of Jordan's legal system. Organizations provide legal education to refugee women for them to understand the law and their rights and responsibilities in cases of early marriage, divorce, and alimony.... dealing with the High Commissioner, and learning about Jordan's Personal Status Law, marriage and divorce laws, and birth certificates are all important aspects of our organization's work.*

*Legal awareness sessions for refugee women in terms of work and workers on their rights in this area and other related to cybercrime, especially as cybercrime has increased significantly in the corona period and a large segment of Syrian refugee*

*women are threatened and blackmailed through social media, which prompted organisation of legal awareness seminars in this context.*

### *Services*

In addition, a range of services were provided by organisations to meet the needs of refugee women. These included development of training programmes to enable entrepreneurship and skill development for economic empowerment, health and mental health services.

*Sewing, confectionery industry, soap industry, beauty, and cell phone maintenance are some of the classes offered by the association (opening special projects for the confectionery industry products have become comparable to high-quality products).  
Entrepreneurial and vocational training.*

*Training and rehabilitation programmes and the preparation of educational skills.*

### *Monetary support*

*Support/Psychological Empowerment Programmes and psychotherapy sessions for women and children*

### *Medical and health services*

*Case Management for Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Cases. Protection and rehabilitation: removing them from the violence that surrounded them and placing them in housing that ensures their protection and safety.*

### *Referrals and networking*

Organisations also cooperated or referred cases to other organisations and department:

*We cooperate with organizations that have judicial representation, such as the Justice Centre, the Legal Aid Centre and the Norwegian organization, as it is free*

*If there is a woman who wants a divorce and does not have the money for the case costs, the organization send her to another institution which it has cooperation with to help the wife to sue for divorce and follow up the case.*

*Organisations try as much as possible to provide the service requested by the refugee, but if this service is not available, they cooperate and coordinate with other organizations and transfer the refugee to get the service they need and keep in touch with them and make sure that they get it to the fullest.*

*Referrals to Family Protection Unit*

#### **4. Access to organisations**

Many of the organisations seem to work at the level of community and rely on community-based organisations to ensure that women are aware and have access to services offered by the organisations. Organisations also used various online means to inform women of their services and contact their service users.

*Organizations tried to ease access through the field survey, which is the most effective method, then through social media such as Facebook, and through associations and organizations, also through the refugees themselves when they tell each other about the services they receive.*

*Social networking sites are very important, because they are a well-known media institution, a civil society, and a feminist institution. Refugees' women know who provide the services from the beginning of the crisis through our Facebook page and through field surveys.*

Furthermore, because the organisations work at the level of community, women also become aware of services through word of mouth.

*Through social cohesion between refugee women and their hearing about the services that refugee women receive.*

In addition to community outreach, another strategy employed to enable access to service users is access to services in multiple locations.

*Additionally, the deployment in multiple locations makes it easier for refugee women to visit and communicate with us.*

*The community' centres have extended throughout Jordan's governorates in towns and villages, as well as through field trips and training courses in all parts of the country, from north to south, and through local groups that send many cases to us.*

Finally individual effort is made to contact clients through home visits or to provide transportation costs to enable women to access the organisations.

*Home visits have a team that informs refugee women of the services provided.*

*Field work and ongoing meetings with women and associations active in this field and our visits to cities, villages and places where refugee women live.*

*The turnout was higher when our group paid for refugee women's transportation.*

## ***5. Difficulties for refugees and service providers***

One of the key issues that refugees face is animosity or reluctance from the host society to accept them. One of the key issues of dissent is the perception that refugees take away jobs or that more resources are directed towards refugees than Jordanians.

*The refugee who has opened a project or company does not think of returning to his/her country, he/she has become part of Jordan. Though society says he/she took their jobs and services.*

*At first, the community did not accept the Syrian refugees, as they competed with the Jordanians in jobs, services and infrastructure, with time and projects, there has been integration and adaptation for both parties. The services are provided to both Jordanians and Syrians and projects are originally presented in the name of Syrian refugees, in lectures, for example, the number is (15) so they try to benefit the Syrian women more, because the projects are presented in their name but as a result, the service is open to all.*

While Syrian persons should have no fear of deportation as there is no legal pressure or arrangements in place for deportations, many women fear this possibility.

*Syrian refugee women are not forced to migration, voluntary return, or deportation, except in rare cases of security threats.*

*Although Jordan has signed an agreement that prevents refugees from returning to their country, women fear the idea of deportation in the event of any problems.*

Women refugees, however, face additional barriers and difficulties due to the double burden of caring for the family as well as supporting the family economically.

*From a gender perspective, women must perform all roles within their families, including caring for families and children, performing domestic work, entering the labour market, increasing income, and seeking an economic source of livelihood. The burden placed on refugee women has exacerbated their psychological imbalance and instability, as well as the violent behaviours to which they are subjected.*

The context of refugee also presents additional challenges as new gender roles have to be negotiated. These new gender roles also cause tensions and insecurities, and women often face the brunt of these. This also makes the work of the organisations with women difficult.

*Men feel that their work, their entity, and their role are threatened by the refugee woman because of her access to work and not relying on her husband or one of the male relatives. Communities and families believe that they are to change the traditional role of women, to destabilize the family, and perpetuate the idea of racial discrimination by providing work and support to women, without giving the same support and assistance to men.*

There are also cultural differences between Jordanians and Syrians that need to be addressed.

*For example, socially, in Syria, the marriage contract is called “katab Al kitab” while in Jordan it is directly registered in the court, and the age of marriage in Jordan is 18 or more, while in Syria the age of marriage is below 18, and this point is a huge obstacle, in addition to the difference in legislation and cultures between the two countries. Thus, while organizations provide the refugee women lectures about early*

*marriage and its biological effects on the female, however, the acceptance by the refugees is weak because the culture of society prevails more.*

These barriers that women face also present challenges for organisations.

Some refugee women live in camps or in remote villages, so the distance is one of the obstacles, in addition to husband's resistance. Fathers were accompanying their daughters. But with time, the trust and confidence have been generated as a result of the projects we carried out for teenage girls.

For many women, economic hardship also makes it difficult to access services such as transportation costs. Furthermore, despite economic empowerment programmes, many labour laws do not allow women to engage in work.

*The economic dimension of refugee women, many working refugee women, when they want to go for service, the labour laws do not allow them to leave.*

However, stigma also has a significant impact on access to services.

*The stigma or societal culture of psychological service. Oftentimes, shame plays a significant role in this, as refugee women refuse to apply for assistance despite the critical need for others to know about it, particularly their acquaintances and those in their immediate vicinity.*

*Providing psychological services is difficult because it requires confidential procedures and sensitivity in dealing with women, unlike other community services.*

*Another impediment involves refugees themselves, who view their request for psychotherapy as a source of embarrassment, social humiliation, and poor moral standards.*

Finally, for many organisations project based funding or bureaucratic demands/approvals present difficulties or delays for organisations.

*There are instructions and laws that require certain approvals, these procedures take time and delay our work and activities.*

*The difficulty lies in the services that need funding as they are not provided permanently. These services are affected by the support and donations to the organization, which are sometimes inadequate.*

*Some activities require approval and procedures, the approval delays the activity, such as International Women's Day and for us, approval is an obstacle.*

Building trust is essential in such work and organisations in Jordan also highlighted this.

*One of the most difficult challenges the organization faces is the interaction of refugees with the work of the organization and acceptance of its efforts on raising awareness.*

Finally, the context of Corona also presented difficulties due to the restrictions that were in place.

*Corona presented a second problem as a result of the difficulties of precautionary measures and restrictions that had happened, exacerbating the issue in assisting refugee women.*

## **6. Adaptation by refugees and organisations**

Participants noted that with passage of time, various adjustments have taken place by host communities as well as refugees, that have improved the context of refugees.

*Initially, the local community was opposed to the issue of asylum; however, as the community began to accept refugees and refugee women, the concept of community integration grew among them, as did the number of marriages, jobs, personal relationships, and friendships between Jordanian women and refugee women.*

*At the beginning of the asylum, there was a gap of understanding, because the refugee women had different fears and ideas from humanitarian work, and through daily interaction with them in the beginning, it was clear, while now, with the passage of time, that has changed and there is an adaptation. The cultural mentality is different, the refugees have recently begun to respond and integrate with Jordanian society.*

*At the beginning of the refugee influx, there was a gap, because the refugee women had different fears and ideas from us, and through our dealings with them in the*

*beginning, it was clear, while now, with the passage of time, that has changed and there is an adaptation.*

### **7. Training and competencies**

Given that social work is not a strongly established profession in Jordan, views of participants were sought in terms of need as for training and their attitudes in terms of work are concerned. Participants outlined that various trainings were provided to their staff to enable them to work with service users in a culturally competent manner.

*There are constantly training courses and workshops for employees to raise efficiency and quality and to provide optimal service, where some specialized training courses are held outside Jordan.*

*All of social workers are trained to work with refugees. They do hold training sessions and seminars for staff on a regular basis to help them enhance their performance, abilities, and efficiency.*

Participants also emphasised on their empowerment based and anti-oppressive approach to service provision.

*The services are codified according to the culture through which the woman accepts the subject, and we will not talk about framework and examples outside the acceptance of refugee women in awareness sessions, or offer solutions outside the usual cultural framework, we try as much as possible to be in the best interest of the woman, child or man we are dealing with, Because if there is no acceptance, they will not benefit or return again.*

*Social skills are necessary to welcome refugee women, understand their needs, and the employee's capacity to listen properly is vital for working with a refugee. Social Workers have the necessary behavioural skills and, most importantly, do not address or speak to them in a condescending or racist manner.*

There was also an acknowledgement of the need to understand Syrian culture and recognise the value of matching Syrian staff with Syrian service users.

*The fact that some of the service providers' nationality is Syrian and from the same culture can help better meet the needs of refugee women. However, the specialists also have no difficulty because Jordan and Syria have a cultural, social, and economic similarities. Language is one, so is religion, in addition to the work experience that bridge the gap over time and establish a better understanding about the cultural factor.*

There was also acknowledgement that training was necessary to accommodate the complex needs of clients and regular training was essential.

*Necessitates training and equipping staff with the necessary skills to deal with refugee women's issues in a practical, rational, and flexible manner*

*As for the competencies, the academic specialization has an important aspect in one of the psychological services so that the social workers know how to deal with the clients, in addition to periodic training, the last training was a year ago on a new type of psychotherapy for children exposed to trauma called (narrative therapy). Internal trainings in the organization through supervisors or external with organizations and associations.*

## **8. Current gaps and ideas for further development**

As outlined earlier, economic hardships and inability to meet transportation costs was a barrier for refugee women to access services that organisations sought to meet by providing transportation costs, however, this presents an additional burden for organisations.

*(transport) organization stated that the main challenge is how to access the service, because many people can't reach it, so organizations have to provide ways to facilitate their access or provide a financial allowance, but it is a burden for the organization since they don't have a lot of resources.*

Participants also suggested ideas for further development of service for refugees, through better networking as well as integration of services, particularly in areas.

*As for access, the service distribution should be greater, and there should be coordination between organizations and associations, and the cadres should be trained and qualified, and be in more than one area, especially rural areas, because the focus is on cities such as Irbid and Amman.*

*Focusing and stressing on the importance of cooperation between all organizations*

Participants also mentioned issues of fundings and thought that increasing the length of funding period and reducing bureaucracy/procedural requirements would be very useful making the work more sustainable. There was also mention of providing funding for allowances and costs such as transportation, as well as to enable initiation of economic projects by women.

*Offering transportation allowances, providing transportation, as well as undertaking field awareness initiatives to alleviate the refugee's financial burden.*

*Women can also be supported by providing financial support to start their own company. Women can demonstrate their ability to support their family and tackle life's challenges. Women should have a complete understanding of life skills and how to assimilate into the culture in which they live.*

Participants also mentioned the political context of the two countries, to create policies and laws that are stable.

As an institution, we do not interfere with decisions, for example, the opening of the borders between the two countries but this is fluctuating; sometimes it's open and sometimes it's closed, depending on the security situation.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

Jordan has been one of the key countries that have hosted a large number of Syrian refugees in proportion to its population. This has caused some tensions in the country and between host and home populations even though Syrians and Jordans share much in common (religion, language). However, these commonalities should not underscore the cultural differences that

are also present, particularly in terms of organisation or family and the social and legal laws that have governed family contexts in Syria.

Nevertheless, there has been adaptation from the host society as well as refugees to integrate in Jordan.

Most participants have identified these economic hardships to be dire and the most pressing issue for Syrian refugees. In addition, it seems that there are many more single women and mothers as refugees in Jordan as compared to Germany. These women have found themselves in very precarious situations, without the support of their male partner, in a foreign country, with little access to economic means. Syrian refugees have also required services to meet various needs in terms of health, subsistence, access to legal services and so on. Syrian refugees have also been particularly vulnerable in terms of their economic context and have also been taken advantage of through scams. Participants have noted, how organisations have worked toward providing appropriate services and meeting the various pressing needs from health to awareness training to legal support and advice. However, like in Germany, there seems to be a gap in terms of policy and practice. While economic hardships have been identified and Syrian women are provided trainings, their access to the labour market is however limited not only on account of culture but also labour laws that seeks to protect the job security and access for Jordanians.

The service provision has also provided a basis to develop professional social work with respect to service provision that is very much anchored in government policy and regulations. There is a development of professionalisation through trainings that promote a human rights approach as well as ideas of self-determination and cohesion; these are key ideas in social work. Social work in the Jordanian context is very much community based and this has been the basis on which trust is developed as well as needs are identified to develop subsequent services.

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## Appendix 1

### Information and Consent Form

Service providers' perspectives on working with Syrian women refugees in Germany and Jordan

Dear Participants,

I am writing to you to request your participation in the current research project. The project is funded by DAAD to develop capacity for work with Syrian persons. As part of the research, viewpoints from organisations that work with Syrian women refugees in Jordan and in Germany are sought.

***Why participate and outcomes of the study:*** The expected outcomes of the project may provide a better understanding of the context of work with Syrian Refugees. This may enable possibilities for further development and networking.

***Who will have access to your data:*** Only the research team will have access to the interviews and interview transcript. Your data will be anonymised completely before making it available for access to anyone else.

***What will be asked:*** We have a brief interview guide to support the interview process. You may request to view this guide prior to the interview. However, this guide is only meant to support the interview and the interview process may also result in the exploration of other issues that the interviewer and interviewee find of interest with regards to the topic under discussion.

***Requested Permission and consent:*** We would like to audio record the interviews but we will not do so unless you give us your informed consent. We will also not conduct any interview unless we receive your explicit consent, preferably written consent.

***Risks:*** There are no foreseeable risks to the participants. Your data will be handled sensitively and with respect. The analysis will not aim to problematize organisations but to consider the context of work and to further consider possibilities for further development and networking.

***Anonymity and confidentiality:*** No personal information will be used or published at any point in time. If any reports or papers are published, they will be anonymised and personal details, if any, will be deleted or disguised. We will store your data in an anonymised form.

***Right to withdraw:*** Should you change your mind regarding participation, you may simply contact me, and I will remove your data from the analysis, as long as no reports/papers have been published. If you withdraw after any publication, your report will be removed from any further analysis of the data or in any other publications that are in progress or planned. You do not have to give any reason for withdrawal.

***More Information:*** You are welcome to get in touch with me (chaitali.das@fb4.fra-uas.de), and/or Freya Köster (freya.koester@fb4.fra-uas.de), should you have any further questions or would like further information.



## Appendix 2

### Interview Guide

- **Service provision**
  - What kinds of services are available for women refugees?
  - Are services only available for refugee women or also for other women in the community?
  - What kind of services do you focus on? Why?
  - Are there particular needs/services that you deem necessary for refugee women?
  - How do you assess needs of refugee women?
  - What kind of organizations/community groups and others do you network with in terms of providing services for refugee women?
  - Is community an important aspect of working with refugee women? How important is outreach work?
  
- **Access**
  - How do women find out about the service? How do they access the service?
  - Which services are readily taken up and which ones not?
  - What do you believe are barriers for women in accessing services?
  - What factors ease accessing services for refugee women?
  
- **Political context**
  - How has the political context shaped your work?
  - What kind of political decisions/support would you wish for in terms of services for refugee women?
  - Are there economic implications associated with the political context for your organization?
  - Has your organization had to react to the dynamic political and legal field in terms of service provision for refugee women?
  - Are there political beneficiaries in this field of work? Who benefits from this work at political levels.
  
- **Legal context**
  - To what extent does the legal context impact your work
    - Rights of refugee women- what they can have access too
    - Right to stay
    - Right for family reunion
    - Forces that push for voluntary return migration/deportation
  
- **Challenges and opportunities**
  - What kinds of challenges has the organisation had to face and overcome in terms of their work in this field?
  - What are the limits to service provision? If you could dream and had the freedom to choose – what kinds of services or support would you wish to provide for refugee women? What kinds of gaps exist in service provision for refugee women?

- If you could do things differently from the start – what would you change?
- In your opinion, how do you see the further development of this field of work? If you could decide, what would you implement and who would need to support you?
  
- **Training needs and adjustments**
  - What kinds of changes/adjustments were necessary for service provision to refugee women?
  - What were the key lessons learned through experience since the refugee crisis?
  - To what extent are the service provided culturally competent? What would you consider as key competencies to work with refugee women?
  - Training opportunities for staff?
  - What personal qualities and what professional skills do staff need? What skills have proven to be supportive and why?