

FUNDER LEARNING VISIT TO AMMAN, JORDAN

PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING FORCED MIGRATION: THE ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS PHILANTHROPY

Key Takeaways

Background and Funding Landscape:

IHRFG and Ariadne's 2016 Funder Learning Visit brought a group of 25 funders to Amman, Jordan, for three days of critical exchange with local, regional, and international practitioners. The visit focused on the question, "What are effective funding strategies to ensure that the rights of refugees and internally displaced people are respected?"

According to IHRFG's [Advancing Human Rights](#) research, between 2009 and 2014, **\$1.38 billion** in human rights grants went toward work focused on immigrants and refugees worldwide. **Less than 2% of this funding focused on the Middle East** although funding to the region increased as the refugee crisis gained more attention. Between 2011 and 2014, only 30 human rights grants went to migration and displacement in Jordan.

Key Human Rights and Funding Challenges in Jordan:

Closing Space for Civil Society

Restrictions on foreign funding are increasing. Multiple government agencies must approve any foreign funding. Proposed constitutional amendments will make it harder for new organizations to form, and provide more grounds for the government to refuse registration. The Ministry of Social Development can reject registration and foreign funding requests for NGOs and can disband objectionable organizations.

Livelihoods for Refugees

The government has promised 200,000 work permits for Syrians, but as of October 2016 only about 20,000 have been approved. Despite many Syrians having advanced academic degrees, they are often not able to access jobs in relevant sectors. Many Syrians are hired informally and therefore vulnerable to exploitation. Meanwhile, Jordanians face double-digit unemployment, creating tension in host communities.

Access to Education

Over 1/3 of Syrian refugee children in Jordan are not able to access education. Those that are face overcrowded schools separated into two shifts: Jordanian children in the morning and Syrian children in the afternoon. Obstacles to education include the requirement of government-issued documentation and barriers to formal employment for parents, which may force children to enter the informal labor market.

Gender and the Refugee Crisis

Displacement and difficult humanitarian conditions heighten the vulnerabilities of refugee women and girls to gender-based violence and to early marriage. One in four Syrian refugee households is headed by women.

International Responses

Many international responses to the refugee crisis, such as those of the EU and the United States, are grounded in national security, rather than in human rights. When refugees reach Europe, for example, the European leaders focus on terrorism and security concerns, rather than defending the human rights of the individuals.

What Can Human Rights Funders Do?

- **Address obstacles to civil society.** Encourage the government to revise its proposed constitutional amendments that will restrict foreign funding and limit civil society organizations' operations in Jordan.
- **Partner with local intermediaries and Jordanian civil society** to develop context-specific responses to new civil society restrictions.
- **Consolidate grants to specific organizations.** This will make it easier for grantees to operate under increasingly restrictive funding laws, as well as reduce the reporting burden on grantees working on refugee issues.
- Work with the government to **open more sectors of employment to Syrian refugees** and **encourage the private sector to implement inclusive business practices.** Advocating for a blanket right to work for refugees in Jordan might be hard to achieve, but it is possible for funders to support advocacy for legal status, increased access to health and protection, and increased access to work permits.
- **Renew commitment to support legal assistance for refugees** as there is very limited understanding of legal rights among this vulnerable population.
- **Keep funding flexible** to enable organizations to provide services and legal aid to refugees most at risk, regardless of their country of origin.
- **Play a larger role in bridging networks,** fostering connections between silos and sectors.
- **Support or facilitate exchanges between NGOs/refugee communities and the media.** This can help change perceptions of refugees and shift negative narratives through messaging based on facts from case-studies and from refugee and migrant experiences.
- **Look at short-term, intermediate, and longer-term risks holistically.** Address immediate needs, while also looking toward longer-term structural change. While the importance of immediate humanitarian services is undeniable, the sheer number of affected populations necessitates that the international community shift its approach towards refugees from one of service provision to one where the development of agency, leadership, and sustainability is at the heart of all efforts.
- **Focus on urban settings in addition to refugee camps** as undocumented refugees living in urban areas face many barriers to inclusion and aid, and are at great risk.
- **Support women's participation in the public sphere** to ensure that they have a voice in their present and future and are not voiceless recipients of aid.
- **Support sharing of lessons from working with refugee populations across the region.** While the specific challenges vary from Jordan to Lebanon to Turkey, there is transferable learning.