



**SHIFTING SOCIAL NORMS:
A GENDER ANALYSIS OF TIME POVERTY,
PAID WORK AND MASCULINITY IN JORDAN**

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All the photos in this document taken by Chris de Bode, design by Edgars Rudziks.

The situation

In 2018, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) assisted over 120,000 Syrian refugees and low-income Jordanians to access healthcare, protection, education and income generation opportunities. One of the recent changes that IRC staff have noticed is that Syrian women are taking on more of an income earning role than was the norm back in Syria and that this is creating changes in household dynamics.

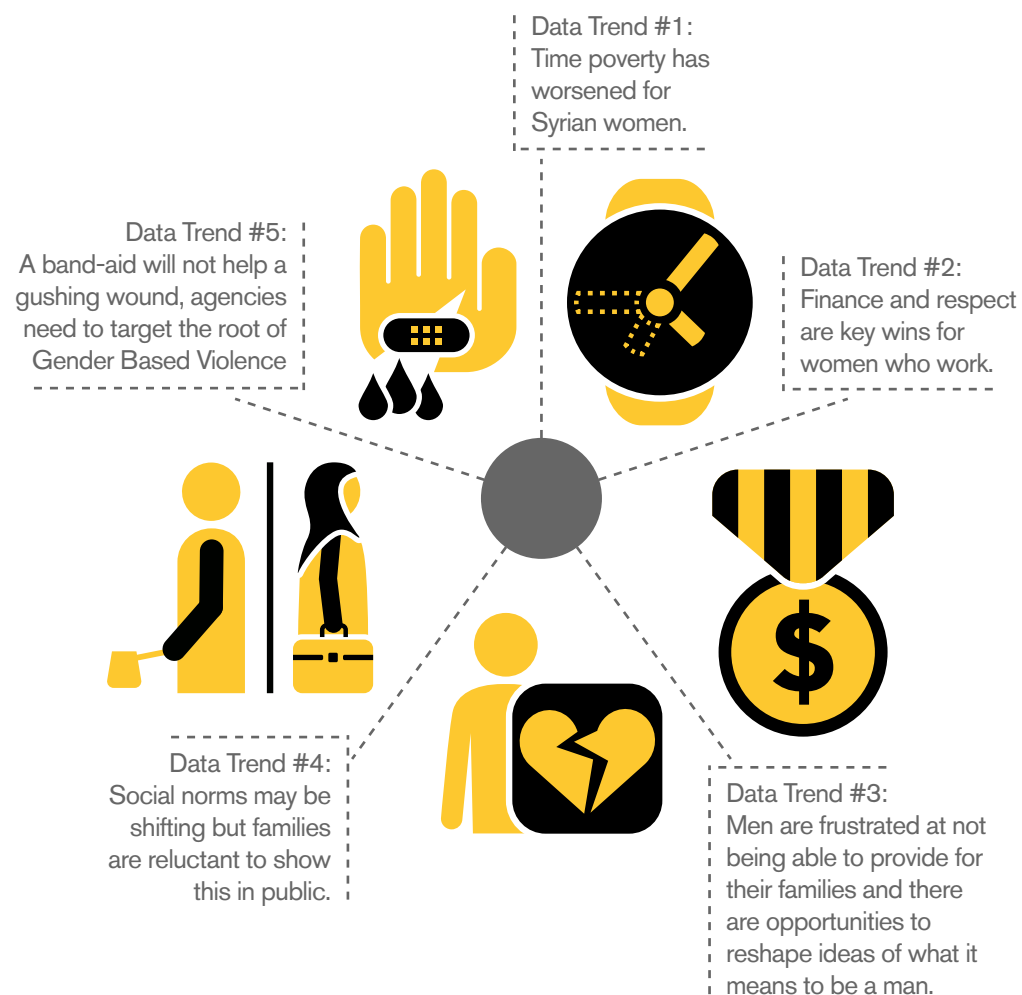
To assess changing gender norms and understand how this affected programming, IRC commissioned consultancy firm *Gender Insights* to lead a research study in partnership with IRC's field team in Jordan

Methods

Between May to September 2019, 21 IRC male and female Arabic-speaking staff and two Consultants collected data in urban areas of Amman, Irbid, Mafraq, Ramtha and both Azraq and Za'atari refugee camps using IRC's Gender Analysis Toolkit. In total, 245 Syrian refugees, community members and stakeholders were consulted through a qualitative methodology that used Focus Group Discussions, participatory drawing exercises, visualization techniques and interviews.

At the heart of IRC's new Gender Analysis approach is the need to use INGO staff, rather than external enumerators as data collectors. From IRC's experience of having tested this approach in three countries – Jordan, Myanmar and Tanzania – we have discovered three main benefits. First, and most importantly, it maximized staff participation and buy-in, a vital, but often missing component of traditional gender analysis. Second, it draws together a multi-sectoral team, encouraging staff to work to tackle gender inequality. Third, it means that the team has a deep understanding of in-country gender norms.

Summary of data trends





Key Finding:

The IRC has now tested a new approach of gender analysis across three countries – Jordan, Myanmar and Tanzania. The methodology deploys staff, rather than external enumerators as data collectors and has proven to be effective in maximizing staff buy-in, a vital, but often missing component of traditional gender analysis.

To kick-off the work, the IRC data collectors joined a three-day training workshop and pilot phase in Amman before embarking on the fieldwork. Once the qualitative data was collected, coded and analyzed, it was crosschecked by 25 IRC staff in a two-day validation and program design workshop held in Amman in July, 2019. Throughout the process the Greater Amman Municipality provided valuable technical and logistical assistance. Finally, a selection of key findings in this brief were validated with beneficiaries in East Amman. What follows is an article that outlines some of the key findings of the study.

Recommendation:

Train and utilize development agency staff in the data collection process. This could involve using an entirely in-house team, or drawing on a mixture of INGO staff (e.g. as facilitators) and external enumerators (e.g. as transcribers).

Big picture

Since the Syrian refugee crisis started in March 2011, over half of the Syrian population have fled their homes. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has taken in a considerable number of Syrian refugees, with the most recent figures from April 2019 showing that over 660,000 registered Syrian refugees reside in Jordan. The number of unregistered Syrian refugees in Jordan is considered to be much higher at around 1.4 million.ⁱ As families fled the conflict, household structures and gender norms began to shift.

On one other side, women's role in earning and income has increased, while men's role as the main income earner has now reduced considerably, compared to before the conflict. Household structures have changed as many men were killed, injured or disappeared during the crisis. Others made the treacherous journey to migrate North to Europe, while women, often accompanied by children have more limitations on their movement and are more likely to migrate to neighboring countries. Today, almost a third of Syrian refugees live in Female Headed Households and Syrian women are now more likely to be in paid employment (30 percent) than compared to before the crisis (19 percent).ⁱⁱ

These changing household dynamics have meant that Syrian women are more likely than Jordanian women to be in the labor market. Due to responsibilities at home, time poverty, social norms and concerns over their safety Syrian women are also more likely to prefer home-based work than Jordanian women. What this means for the international community is that roles and responsibilities in the home have shifted significantly and given the current economic climate, the situation is unlikely to reverse anytime soon. Humanitarian actors now need to reflect on this shift, before planning what action needs to be taken. For gender-transformative programming, this presents a unique opportunity to affect social norm changes.

Recommendation:

As household dynamics have changed there is an opportunity to accelerate a more gender equitable balance of roles and responsibilities in the home. This can be achieved by smart programming that aims to affect both easy to change (e.g. husbands support with their children's school work) and harder to change behaviors (e.g. husbands take on more household and childcare).



Key Finding:

Almost a third of Syrian refugees live in Female Headed Households and Syrian women are now more likely to be in paid employment (30 percent) compared to before the crisis (19 percent).ⁱⁱⁱ While Syrian women's role in earning and income has increased, men's role as the main income earner has now reduced considerably.

Key Finding:

Syrian women felt they were more time poor than ever before. Being overworked meant they had no time, or space for themselves and this negatively affected their emotional health and well-being.



Data Trend #1: Time poverty has worsened for Syrian women

By the end of the analysis, what clearly emerged was that Syrian women felt incredibly time stretched. Findings from ten Focus Group Discussions with Syrian women revealed that women felt overburdened, that they were working “from dawn to dusk” and described the challenges in needing to juggle their traditional role as “a devoted and caring mother, daughter or wife” with their newfound role as financial provider. Even if an older daughter, or a daughter-in-law was available to take on part of the unpaid labor, social norms around housework had not changed, men and older boys rarely shared the household work burden as Jana^{iv} from Mafraq explained:

“We are still expected to do everything we used to do, cook, clean, look after the children and the family. But now we also need to earn an income and support our families. It was never like this before.”

All of this came at a cost. For men in particular, allowing women to work was seen as a “deficiency in the home” and a coping mechanism in times of adversity.

Recommendation:

Design new gender transformative programs that address women’s time poverty. These need to get to the heart of why women experience significant time poverty issues. Moving services closer to women and holding services at appropriate times are all good practices, but do not get to the real issue. Men have a critical role to play in reducing women’s time burden. In particular, behavior change work that focuses on men’s active role in the home and shared workload is key to reducing time poverty. As traditional masculinities are at a cross-road there is potential for roles and responsibilities in the home to become more equitable. Funds and programs now need to be directed at women’s economic empowerment and behavior change interventions.

While for women, being overworked meant they had no time, or space for themselves and this negatively affected their emotional health and well-being as Leen asserted:

“This double role has a negative effect on our body and mind and pushes us beyond our limits.”^v

As the most vulnerable women have reduced access to psycho-social support this creates cyclical challenges where time poor women have few opportunities to access support or services for themselves.

Data Trend #2: Finance and respect are key wins for women who work

Attitudes towards women working were not clear cut. While all ten Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with Syrian women showed that Syrian women felt pushed by their double-burden of responsibility, in seven FGDs women relayed many benefits of working outside the home. When imagining themselves in the future, girls in particular, listed finding a decent job as one of their top life goals, along with finishing their education and delaying marriage. Women recounted three main benefits from paid work:

- **Access to finances.** The primary gain from working outside the home was financial. Importantly, women noted that even if a husband had influence over his wives' earnings it was shameful for him to use this money for the main household expenditure (e.g. rent, furniture). This presents a number of opportunities and questions for women's economic empowerment programs. First, this works to safeguard women's decisions over their income and what it is spent on. Second, this can make men feel their masculinity is affected when economic instability pushed the family to use women's income for high-value items. Third, and connected to this, when women's income is used to support the family it grants her greater control over life-changing decisions (e.g. where to work, where to live, whether to re-locate to Syria).



Key Finding:

Bringing money into the home brought women newfound power, respect and influence. Additionally, having a woman working in a respected job could raise the status of the entire household.



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- **Access to power and respect.** Bringing money into the home brought with it newfound power, respect and influence. In this vein, supporting existing and new businesses for women has the potential to raise women's agency as they gain greater self-efficacy skills, and higher-social status if their businesses are successful. Noor from East Amman put this succinctly:

“There is an old Arabic saying that the one who makes the money decides how to spend it.”^{vi}

- **Access to networks and freedom of movement.** A greater range of social and professional networks were available to women who worked outside the home. This is especially important given that women overall reported having less access to public spaces. It is also important given what we know about how networks can help stimulate women's enterprise development.

Recommendation:

Focus on women's economic empowerment programming as a key gateway to gender equality. In these programs there needs to be an emphasis on bundled services that help women to expand their businesses and include – access to finance, business training, self-efficacy training, mentorship and support and changing the enabling environment. Women's economic empowerment programming should have a two-pronged approach that affect and track women's access (e.g. to income and a job) and agency (e.g. ability to control income and decisions). Men cannot not be forgotten in the process. They have a vital role to play in supporting their wives to succeed and to reducing their time poverty and work burden.

Even if women wanted to work, not all women had the same access of opportunity. Marriage, age, job status, family wealth, location and education affected women's ability to take part in the labor market. One key finding was that the perceived status of the job affected women's ability to work.

A higher status job for a woman filtered down to the entire family, benefiting the husband and parents-in-law alike as Sarah explained:

“If you are not in a good job your husbands’ family will be bitter against you and will say – she is an uneducated person and that is why she got this job.”

Data Trend #3: Men are frustrated at not being able to provide for their families and there are opportunities to reshape ideas of what it means to be a man

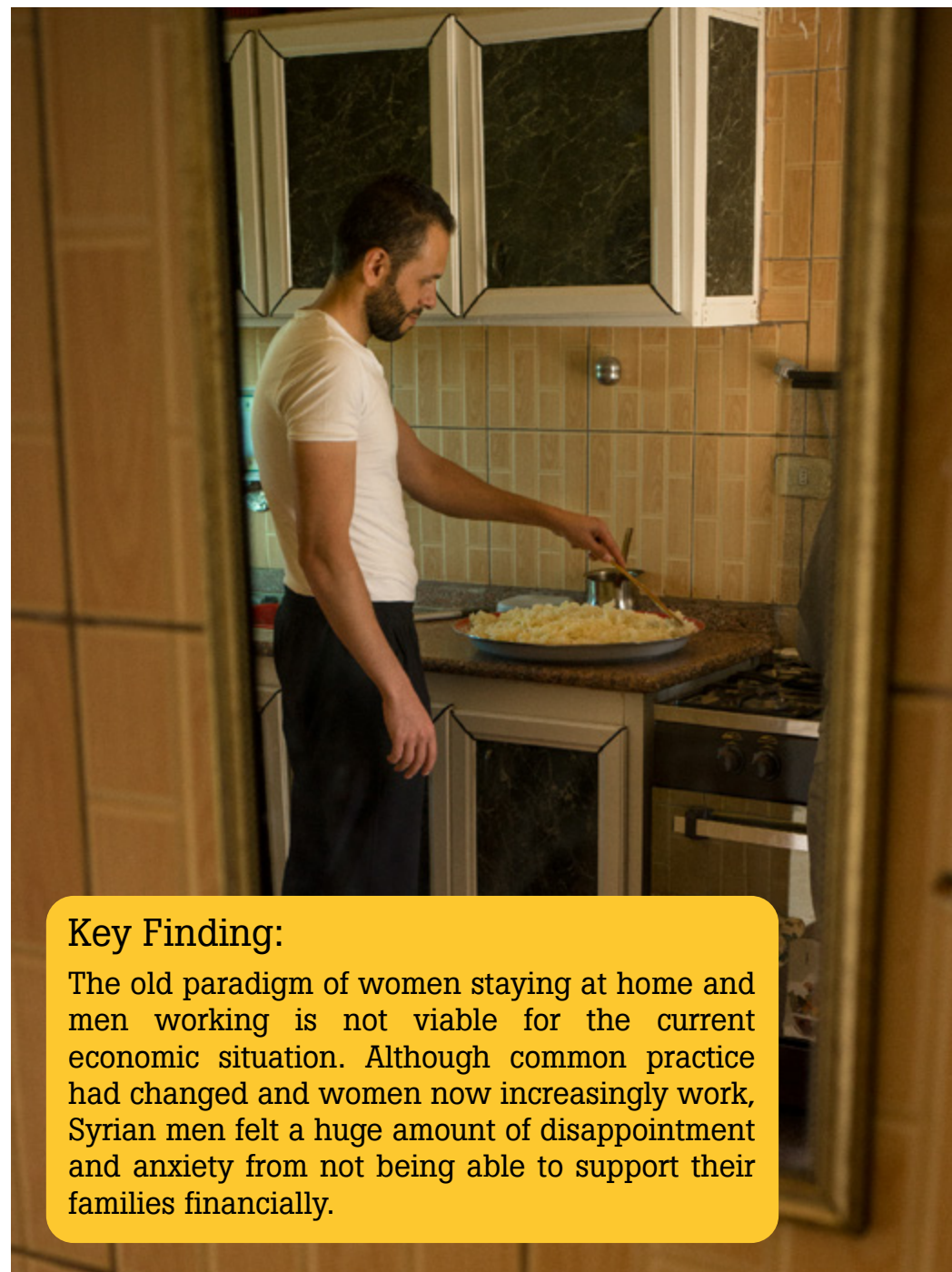
Another strong trend in the data was that a majority of the 42 Syrian men we consulted with, felt a huge deficit and a “heavy heart” from not being able to support their families financially. For men in the camps, finding work was often more difficult. One young Syrian man, Mohammed from Za’atari described the situation: “The man is nothing in the camp, because the woman became everything and works, and the man stays in the house without a job.”^{vii} Another Syrian man, Omar from Mafrag told us how financial responsibilities had shifted:

“We men began to encounter hard things such as unemployment. Having no money influences a man’s psychology. The man began to feel as if he is zero since he can’t spend on his home. Because after the war the financial responsibilities have gone to the woman.”^{viii}

In particular, men with disabilities reported reduced decision-making power:

Recommendation:

Agencies cannot bury their heads in the sand about how men feel. Development bodies need to target men’s frustration and distress head-on. While IRC still views Women’s Economic Empowerment programming as critical to affect gender equality. What is now needed, more than ever before is to work directly with men and boys in WEE programs that focus on positive masculinities.



Key Finding:

The old paradigm of women staying at home and men working is not viable for the current economic situation. Although common practice had changed and women now increasingly work, Syrian men felt a huge amount of disappointment and anxiety from not being able to support their families financially.



“If I didn't have a disability and I wasn't a cripple they would respect me. They consider the disabled man to be of a lesser status than them. My brothers don't even see me, they no longer consult with me and won't take my opinion.”

While younger Syrian men were more accepting of their wives working, they still felt that men's role had reduced now, compared to before the crisis.

It is not necessarily true that if a man does not work then he feels emasculated. However, what was clear is that the existing social expectations were not in line with what is needed to survive the current economic situation. With most Syrian refugees being in the lowest wealth quartile, two-thirds being in debt and both women and men experiencing challenges in accessing work permits and decent jobs, this old and more traditional paradigm is not viable for the current situation.

Data Trend #4: Social norms may be shifting but families are reluctant to show this in public

As the team explored the topic of masculinity in more detail, the importance of being seen to conform to social norms emerged as a repeated point of discussion across consultations with 245 Syrian women and men. While most younger people were open to social norms shifting, a major concern was how this change would be interpreted by the wider community.

Recommendation:

Women's Economic Empowerment programming that focuses on positive masculinities should showcase respected male role models who actively speak out about joint decision and the positive impact of shared responsibilities. Programming should take place in targeted areas to achieve a critical mass of behavior change agents and make the behavior normalized, rather than spreading programming too thinly over a wider area.

A major concern was that men and boys would be ostracized, called sheep or laughed at for not being a “real man” if they did household work. On the opposite side, women were called masculine, scolded or branded as sexually promiscuous when they worked outside the home. The importance of appearing to keep up social norms featured heavily in a number of scenarios, namely:

- **Men must appear to be leading business, even if their wives were successful business women.** Successful female business owners reported creating important sounding titles and positions for their husbands even through, in reality their husband played no real role in the business. Even if their husbands did little real work in the business it was important that he be seen to have a significant role.
- **Men and grandparents need to appear to be the main decision-maker on whether to relocate to Syria, or not, even if women had influence behind the scenes.** Women said that it was important for men and grandparents to be seen to be running the show on relocating, although behind the scenes women had influence over the decision.
- **Men should not be seen to be doing even “light” housework, especially in the sight of guests, even if, in reality they had little problem with doing some housework.** Families that had no problem with men doing small household tasks like cleaning the table after food or making coffee, or tea, when their wife was at work were reluctant to display such behavior in front of guests for fear of being ostracized.

In short, strong social norms required households to appear to have a strong male decision maker, even if, in reality, men’s role was changing. On this topic, Jana from East Amman noted the need for roles to change:

“We have to let go of our traditions and traditional work.”

Key Finding:

Because community acceptance mattered deeply to people, and because of a lack of positive role models’ people were reluctant to exhibit a change in social norms, even if this change was already taking place.





Data Trend #5: A band-aid will not help a gushing wound

Syrian women and girls experience extremely high levels of sexual harassment in their day-to-day life with around 75.9 percent^{ix} experiencing sexual harassment in their lifetime.^x Women from the lowest wealth quartiles, women with no education and women who live in the Northern Governorate (such as Irbid and Mafraq) report the highest levels of violence. Women said that what is now needed is action that “treats the men, as they are the root of the problem.”^{xi}

Consultations with 70 Syrian women and interviews with primary health workers revealed that continuing to only treat the survivors of violence put a band-aid on a wound without addressing the real issue, which was discriminatory social norms.

On the response side, social stigma, a lack of adequate screening tools and mandatory reporting of sexual violence reduced reporting, limited referrals and prevented women from accessing services. Primary health facilities are not being used as a place to make GBV referrals. On this, one Syrian woman asserted:

“Of course, the health center should be the main place for the (GBV) referral. Your husband will beat you, you will be bruised and they – the health service provider – will not ask you why you have this, or that bruise. No, they just give you the treatment and just go about their job.”^{xii}

Key Finding:

Discriminatory social norms continue to be the root cause of GBV and women noted that continuing to only treat survivors of violence will act as just a band-aid on a wound without addressing the real issue. While at a systemic level, primary health facilities were not being used as a place to make GBV referrals.

Recommendation:

Target men and boys as allies in Gender Based Violence prevention work. Inter-agency work is needed to develop adequate screening tools at primary health facilities, train staff on how to use these tools and create a referral pipeline between primary health and GBV services.

Next Steps

Based on the results, additional consultations and a validation and design workshop, the IRC is designing further transformative programs to focus on positive masculinities in Jordan. To launch this work, we will be holding a Gender Photo Story exhibition in Jordan.

Recommendation:

To host the exhibition or get involved, please contact asma.salaimeh@rescue.org

ⁱ Jordan Migration Policy Centre (2019), Jordan Refugee Flow: <http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/profile-jordan/>

ⁱⁱ UKAID (2017), Syrian refugee women and the workforce in 2017: http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/Publication_WomensLabourParticipation_English_0.pdf

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^{iv} All names have been changed.

^v FGD with Jordanian women in 6 Mafrq,

^{vi} Validation FGD with Syrian men in East Amman, Jordan 25 July 2019.

^{vii} FGDs with 18-35 year old men Syrian men in Za'atari, 23 June, 2019.

^{viii} FGD with 18-35 year old men from Mafrq, 20 June, 2019.

^{ix} Jordanian National Women's Commission (2017), Sexual Harassment in Jordan: <https://womeninleadership.hivos.org/assets/2018/12/يزي لجن اة س اردل ا ص ل م.pdf>

^x Jordanian National Women's Commission (2017), Sexual Harassment in Jordan: <https://womeninleadership.hivos.org/assets/2018/12/يزي لجن اة س اردل ا ص ل م.pdf>

^{xi} FGD with Syrian women from Mafrq.

^{xii} Validation FGD with Syrian women in East Amman, Jordan 25 June 2019.



Key Finding:

IRC is continuing to push towards gender transformative programming. Part of this work includes holding a moving Gender Photography Exhibition in Jordan. If you would like to host the exhibition at your office, business or place of work contact IRC for your free package of materials including – printed photographs, invitation flyer and printed advocacy brief.



From Harm to Home | [Rescue.org](https://www.rescue.org)