



Married Syrian girl in IMAfraaq, Jordan @ Natalie Bertrams / GAGE 2019

Adolescents Realities During COVID-19: Syrian Refugees in Jordan

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Presentation Outline

- 1 COVID-19 and adolescents
- 2 GAGE overview
- 3 Findings focused on adolescent refugees in Jordan
- 4 Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

COVID-19 and Adolescents

Covid-19 has rapidly disrupted the lives of individuals across the globe.

- Direct health effects = largely among elderly
- BUT Virus will have multi-dimensional effects on young people

Particular concern around impact of school closures and negative economic shocks.

Our sample in Jordan:

- 75% in school (formal or non-formal/informal) when COVID-19 lockdown.
- 65% of households (66% non-Jordanian/57% Jordanian) report losing employment permanently or temporarily due to COVID-19
- 70% of households reporting some income loss

Concern that impacts may be particularly acute for adolescent girls in LMICs

Why Focus on Adolescent and Gender Specific Effects of COVID-19?

Preliminary global evidence suggests that adolescents who were enrolled in school when the pandemic hit may now:

- engage in paid work to supplement family income
- take on larger roles in the household, become pregnant, or face pressure to marry
- all factors that will constrain school return when the schools reopen

Broader impacts include:

- Compromised nutrition due to declining household consumption and inadequate social protection

The expected gendered impact of echoes previous evidence from crises:

- increased burden of care-work for women and girls
- disruptions in access to sexual and reproductive health services
- increases in domestic violence for women and girls

Broad challenges faced by adolescents further exacerbated by refugee status

GAGE overview



Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE):

A longitudinal research programme (2015-2024)



We are following 20000 adolescent girls and boys - the largest cohort of adolescents in the Global South

GAGE longitudinal research sample

Our research methodology

GAGE is employing a mixed-methods research and impact evaluation design, including:

Global: 20,000*

Jordan: **4,000**



Quantitative survey

- Surveys with adolescent girls and boys aged 10–12 and 15–17
- Surveys with their female and male caregivers
- Surveys with community leaders and school personnel

800*

250

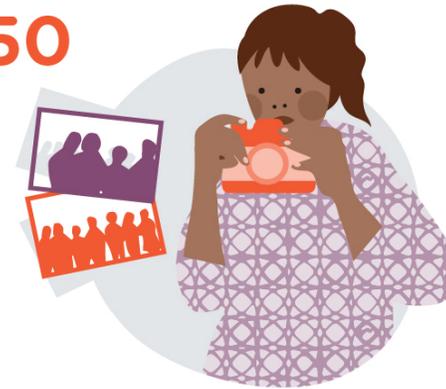


Qualitative research

- In-depth interviews with nodal adolescents, their siblings, caregivers and community leaders
- Key informant interviews and historical process tracing
- Policy and legal analysis to understand the politics of policy and programme implementation

200*

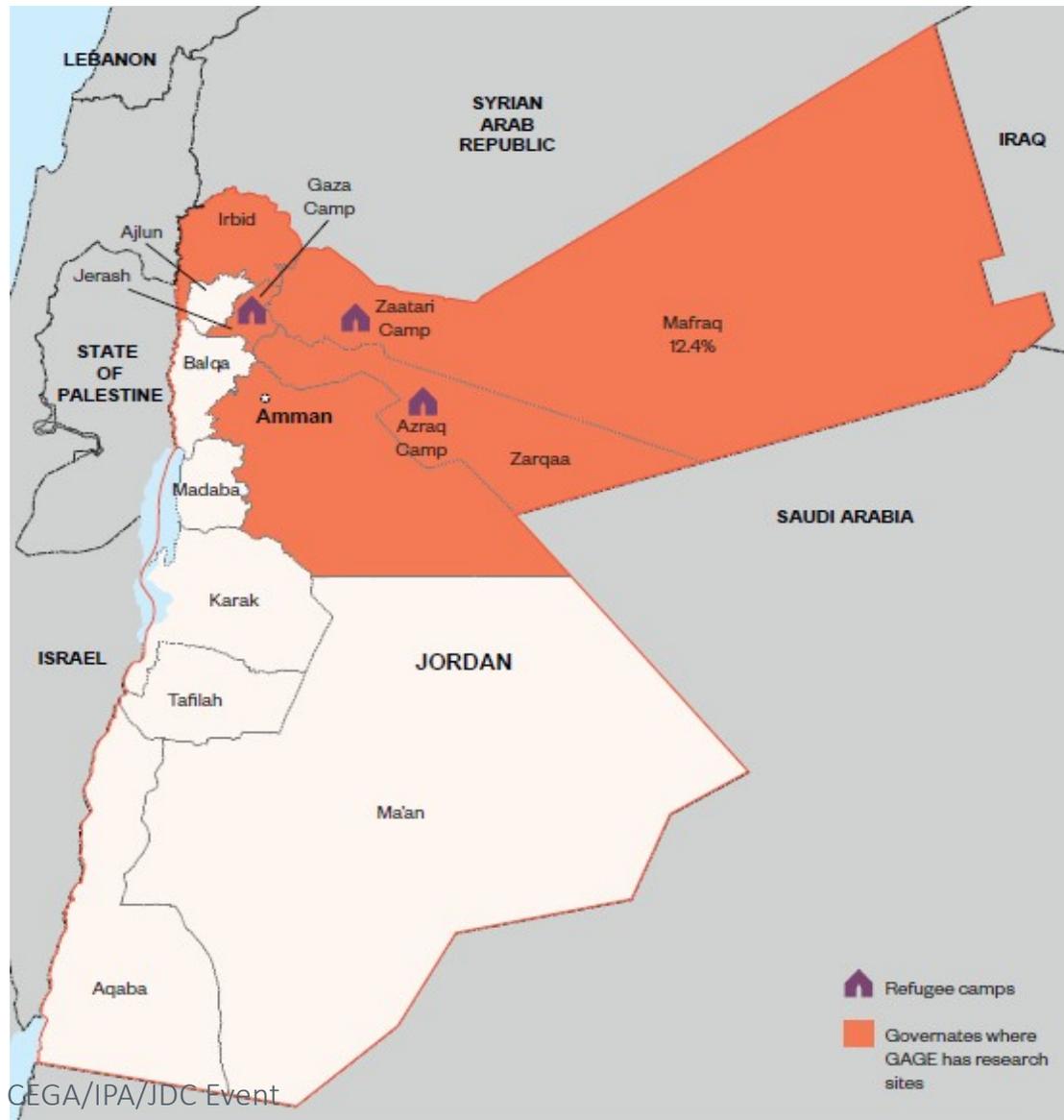
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Participatory research

- Peer research and participatory photography with adolescents and their peers to better pinpoint shifts in adolescent capabilities over time
- Social network analysis to understand the evolving influence of peer groups throughout adolescence

GAGE Jordan research sites and baseline sample breakdown



Nationality:

Syrian: 3,090

Jordanian: 642

Palestinian (Gaza Camp): 304

Other: 65

Location type:

Camps: 1,348

ITS: 308

Host communities: 2,445

Gender:

10-12 Girls: 1,108 Boys: 1,065

15-17 Girls: 1,006 Boys: 922

Vulnerable Groups:

Adolescents w/ disabilities: 417 (10%)

Married adolescents: 190 (5%)

Sample

4,100 adolescents surveyed face-to-face in 2018/2019

- Majority 10-12 and 15-17
- Also surveyed primary female caregivers

COVID-19 Virtual Survey took place between May 18 and July 21 2020.

- **Successfully surveyed 75% of the sample (3,067)**
- Look similar to the overall sample
- During the time data was collected for this survey, Jordan recorded a total of 594 new cases of COVID-19 and just 2 new deaths attributed to COVID-19

- **Currently in the field for second round of COVID-19 virtual surveys.**
- **Supplemented with 100 qualitative interviews**

Methods

Impact of COVID-19 on:

- i. Household food security
- ii. Adolescent education
- iii. Time use, mobility and social isolation
- iv. Violence

- Compare means of variables of interest, controlling for pre-COVID-19 covariates.
- Explore heterogeneity according to nationality and gender
- Will highlight a small sub-set of our overall findings.



GAGE COVID-19 findings

Findings: Food Security

31% of refugee adolescents **report being hungry** in the past four weeks, with 16% indicating this is higher since the onset of COVID-19

48% of refugee adolescents reported that **their meals were less likely to contain protein** compared to before the pandemic.

Primary female caregivers of refugee adolescents report **cutting back on food to boys (51%) and girls (47%)**

Findings: Education

73% of adolescent refugees enrolled in any school prior to COVID-19 (only 54% in ITS)

75% using internet or media to continue learning (Ministry of Education online service (Darsak.jo) and national TV channels)

67% of Primary Female Caregivers of refugee adolescents are concerned the adolescent won't return to school

'I used to go to school, now I only study at home. They sent us a message, and told us it is now through the internet... In our tent, only my dad has a phone. We do not know how to study alone, and I do not know if they stopped giving lessons or not'
(~12-year-old girl living in an informal tented settlement (ITS) near Amman)

'The lessons are very difficult and the teachers don't know how to explain things clearly for us. I can't understand the material and teachers don't provide enough detailed explanations.'

(~13-year-old Syrian Girl from Irbid)

Findings: Importance of Adolescent Programming

About 25% of refugee adolescents were attending Makani when COVID-19 hit. Of these:

- **40% received some support** from Makani
- **23% received messaging** about MoE online learning
- **33% received message about how to deal** with being stuck at home
- **32% of parents report receiving messaging** on WhatsApp

UNICEF's Makani program provided informal learning support classes combined with psychosocial support and child protection messaging through a network of community-based centers

Centers closed, but facilitators adapted quickly:

- disseminate info on virus;
- distribute hygiene kits to most vulnerable;
- learning support via WhatsApp and
- messaging to parents on how to support children

'[The support we are getting from Makani] is very helpful for us now. They tell us that we should eat healthy food ... And we eat everything that includes Vitamin C ... They also explained how to study through TV ... We talk through WhatsApp and Imo, too'

(~12-year-old girl living in Zadari Camp)

Findings: Time Use, Mobility, and Social Isolation

69% of refugee adolescents are doing more chores, and 62% are spending more time taking care of younger children

Among older adolescents, 72% report restricted mobility and 49% report restricted privacy

- Older males more access to technology than older females (68% vs 63%),
- Are more likely to have interacted with a friend in the last week (42% vs 31%),
- And are much less likely to have stayed home in the past 7 days (19% vs. 54%)

'We are ten people in the house, and I must help my mother-in-law with the housework. This additional work is really tiring...'

(~17 year old married Syrian girl)

'I feel sad and bored . . . I comb my sister's hair 10 times daily, change her trousers and dresses . . . I have nothing else to do. Before I had school and my after-school lessons . . . I used to feel happy when I met my friends.'

(~12-year-old Syrian girl from Azraq refugee camp)

Findings: Violence

53% of adolescent refugees report **increased stress in the household** as a result of COVID-19

and **47%** report that household members are getting angry quicker or arguing more often

'People fight a lot in the household... because they spend all the time with each other'.

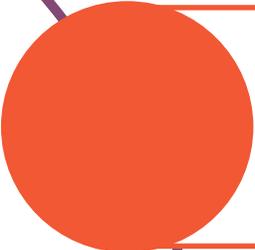
(16-year-old Palestinian girl with a visual disability)

Using vignettes given concerns around privacy, **47%** of adolescent refugees identified violence as a concern of adolescents like him/her

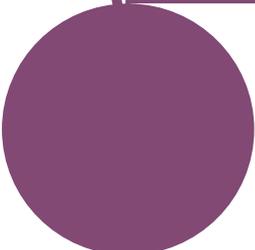
and **63%** of these said it had increased since onset of COVID-19

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

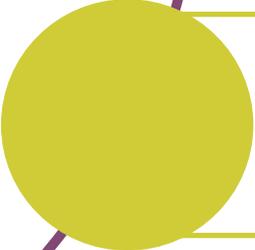
Findings highlight **the multi-dimensional and gendered short-run effects of the COVID-19 crisis** on Syrian refugees in Jordan, **and the possibility of long-run effects** that exacerbate existing inequalities:



Social protection: Many households rely on existing National Aid Fund and UN-implemented cash transfers; platforms that could be harnessed and expanded, and could also be used to distribute hygiene kits and public health information, especially in informal tented settlements (but challenged by funding limits/cuts)



Maintain learning: Build on the learnings of Makani to continue to innovate with online learning by expanding access to low-cost devices and providing mentoring either in person (socially distanced) or online, through platforms such as WhatsApp; and use structures such as Makani to manage school re-enrollment when schools open.



Promote psychosocial resilience: Using NGOs, religious leaders, community groups and social workers, provide information and virtual services to promote psychosocial resilience.

Contact Us

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About GAGE:

- Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) is a nine-year (2015-2024) mixed-methods longitudinal research programme focused on what works to support adolescent girls' and boys' capabilities in the second decade of life and beyond.
- We are following the lives of 18,000 adolescents in six focal countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

