UNESCO  
  
Today the world is home to more displaced persons than at any time in recorded history, leading to complex challenges for many countries as they try to manage these flows and successfully welcome these new citizens.  
  
Yet these challenges are made even harder by a lack of accurate, accessible information in the media, where myth and misinformation are prevalent. At best, coverage concentrates on refugees as victims and the wider humanitarian implications, and at worst focuses on the challenges involved or the imagined threat of a sudden influx of outsiders. Almost completely missing from media coverage are the multiple benefits for the host countries, and the countless stories of individuals, often highly educated and eager to work, seeking a new life and contributing positively to their new societies.  
  
UNESCO has created a course curriculum for journalism and media training institutions on Reporting Migration with a Focus on Refugees. The curriculum focuses on the fostering of partnerships to allow a more balanced view of the situation.  
  
Here are some of the most common and damaging media myths surrounding the issue of refugees:  
  
MYTH: Refugees are a European problem  
  
Actually, Europe is home to just 6% of global refugees, compared with 39% in the Middle East and North Africa, and 29% in the rest of Africa. Among Syrian refugees, the vast majority are in the bordering countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. While more than one million refugees arrived in Europe by sea in 2015, this represents just 0.3% of the continent’s total population. (Source)  
  
MYTH: Refugees are not desperate – they are choosing to migrate  
  
By definition, refugees are people that flee across borders to escape violent conflict or persecution. They are making use of their legal right to asylum, something included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a right that you also share if you were to ever need it in the future. The great personal risks refugees take in fleeing are testament to the seriousness of the situation they face.  
  
Migrants are a broader category which does include those moving for economic reasons, but also people fleeing environmental disasters, starvation and famine.(Source)  
  
MYTH: Most refugees are young, able-bodied men  
  
Actually, according to UNHCR, more than 75% of all Syrian refugees are women and children. Of refugees arriving in Europe, more than half are now women and children. (Sources 1, Source 2)  
  
MYTH: Refugees steal jobs from their host country  
  
Refugees create jobs. According to OECD research, refugees expand the domestic market and create a job for every one they occupy. In some countries, they were responsible for nearly one third of economic growth in the period from 2007 to 2013. (Source 1, Source 2)  
  
MYTH: Refugees are welfare cheats  
  
Most refugees pay much more into the public purse than they take from it. Research in the UK, Canada, Germany, Greece, Portugal and Spain shows that refugees are less or equally dependent on public funds than locals. (Source)  
  
MYTH: Refugees and migrants bring terrorism  
  
Of the major terrorist attacks worldwide in recent years, the vast majority have been perpetrated by citizens born in the countries involved. In the words of UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, “it is not the refugee outflows that cause terrorism, it is terrorism, tyranny and war that create refugees.” Creating divisions between people and fostering hatred between groups is part of the strategy of terrorism in the first place. (Source)  
  
MYTH: Developed countries are overcrowded and cannot take any more people  
  
The growth in native population in most developed countries is actually in decline, something that migration can be key to addressing. Refugees and migrants can sustain population levels and provide a base of working age people to support a growing number of retirees. (Source)  
  
For more information about the upcoming UNESCO event on Migration for Sustainable Development: Social Transformations, Media Narratives and Education, to be held on Wednesday 6 July, 2016 at UNESCO HQ in Paris, France, please visit the event website.

GOVERNANCE  
  
To make matters worse, the advent of humanitarian programming for Syrians has increased frustration among Jordanian citizens due to perceived inequities in the distribution of aid and services. Eighty-four percent of Jordanians believe Syrians are unfairly supported financially.12  
  
Politically, this is alarming for Jordanian officials because public perceptions of a government’s inability to deliver adequate services can undermine political legitimacy.  
  
The Syrian refugee crisis also provides an opportunity for Jordan to strengthen local institutions in cooperation with the humanitarian community. International donors and humanitarian implementers must provide targeted aid that can strengthen local systems of governance in Jordan, both enabling Jordan to respond to the refugee influx and leaving municipalities more effective in service provision than before the Syrian crisis.  
  
EDUCATION  
  
As public schools became saturated with Syrian refugees, host communities expressed concern about shortened class times, overcrowded classrooms, and double-shifting.13 Prior to the arrival of the Syrian refugees, Jordan was making advances in the education sector, leading to heightened public and government frustration over the recent stressors on public schools.  
  
Over half of the Syrian refugee population in Jordan is under the age of eighteen, placing large demands on educational capacity.14 Jordan has opened 98 additional double-shifted schools to alleviate pressures on classroom size.15 Consequently, the proportion of students attending double-shifted schools increased from 7.6 percent in 2009 to 13.4 percent in 2014.16 This has significantly set back the Ministry of Education’s ambition to reduce the number of double-shifted schools across the country. In Amman and Irbid, nearly one-half of schools suffer from overcrowding and have limited capacity to absorb additional students.  
  
HEALTHCARE  
  
Recent pressures from the refugee influx threaten healthcare delivery in Jordan. Prior to the crisis, Jordan established an impressive network of primary healthcare centers, supported by secondary and tertiary care facilities, to provide medical access to all citizens within 10 kilometers (about 6 miles) of their residence. With the influx of Syrian refugees, these centers face overburdened patient loads and a shortage of medicines and vaccinations, frustrating government efforts to remain on track with its health sector development goals.  
  
The Jordanian healthcare system has come under pressure in terms of both finances and service capacity. According to the Ministry of Health, the number of Syrian outpatient visits to primary care centers increased from 68 in January 2012 to 15,975 in March 2013. The number of Syrian refugee admissions to government hospitals also increased from 300 to 10,330 over that period.As a result of capacity burdens, Jordanians have been increasingly directed to private centers and hospitals to receive care.Thus, for some citizens, the influx of Syrian refugees has rendered healthcare less accessible and more expensive.  
  
SHELTER  
  
With over 80 percent of Syrians living outside of camps, refugees have had a major impact on the Jordanian housing market.26 The Syrian refugee crisis inundated Jordan amid a chronic shortage of low-income housing. The increased demand for housing stimulated by Syrians drove up rental prices in the six northern Jordanian municipalities and further stressed availability of affordable housing. In two towns heavily settled by Syrian refugees, Mafraq and Ramtha, some rental prices rose to six times their precrisis rates, while average rental prices nearly tripled.27 Stress on the housing sector displaced both poor Jordanians and Syrians from the housing market.  
  
Jordanians indicate competition over access to shelter is a major driver of tension. The increase in rent also imposes a social cost on Jordanian host communities; Jordanians report that the inflated housing costs force young people to delay their marriages, because they cannot afford new housing, further contributing to social frustrations stemming from the influx of refugees.  
  
  
ECONOMICS  
  
In conversations with Jordanian citizens and government officials, references to Syrian refugees as a critical factor responsible for Jordan’s economic woes are common. However, the Jordanian economy was already struggling with destabilizing elements before the Syrian crisis; indeed, much of Jordan’s economic malaise does not stem from the presence of Syrian refugees but rather from preexisting economic conditions.  
  
In fact, the influx of Syrian refugees has actually benefited Jordan in many ways: Syrians bolster consumer demand, increase foreign aid, and create jobs. These positive impacts are understated among the Jordanian public, but have contributed to the struggling Jordanian economy since 2012.  
  
Nonetheless, the Syrian refugee crisis exacerbates Jordan’s negative economic trends in three primary ways: the extension of public and social services to Syrian refugees strains government funds; increased demand inflates the prices of finite goods, like housing; and competition over jobs in the informal sector leads to the depression of wages and worsened economic situations for the poorest Jordanians.  
  
While the negative impacts of the refugee crisis in Jordan are overstated, the economic burden of hosting the Syrians accrues mostly to vulnerable Jordanian populations. This phenomenon exacerbates the perception of the growing gap between marginalized and elite Jordanians—contributing to a shift in the political discourse within the kingdom and raising concerns about the political viability of the current economic structures.  
  
ECONOMICS: POSITIVE IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES  
  
Although many analysts, government officials, and Jordanian citizens focus on the negative impacts of the Syrian refugee influx, the economy has also benefited from the population increase. Propelled by the influx of Syrian refugees, increased public investment along with growth in the manufacturing, construction, transport, communication, and service sectors led the real GDP growth rate to increase by 2.7 percent in 2012, according to the World Bank.51  
  
Private consumption continued to drive economic growth in 2013 and 2014 with increases in foreign direct investments and the relocation of Syrian business to Jordan.52 Real GDP grew by 2.8 percent in 2013 and 3.1 percent in 2014.53 Furthermore, the consumption of Syrian refugees contributed to economic growth, yet increases in Jordanian consumption also drove GDP expansion. The primary destabilizing economic factor was the deterioration of trade—an indication that economic malaise does not primarily stem from the refugee presence and that the conflicts in surrounding nations play a significant part. The reality of economic challenges in Jordan indicates restricting the number of Syrian refugees will not fix the country’s more insidious economic challenges.  
  
LEARNING FROM SYRIA  
  
Jordan should pay particular attention to the critical role that mismanagement of water resources played in the political destabilization of Syria during the Arab uprisings. From 2006 to 2010, Syria was struck by one of the most severe droughts in its history, and it caused mass internal migration and widespread malnutrition. The drought was the product not only of environmental factors but also of sustained mismanagement of Syrian natural resources over the course of fifty years.77  
  
The failure of the Syrian government to respond appropriately to the drought fueled grievances among the poor rural class and sparked the migration of nearly 1.5 million Syrians from the northeastern agricultural regions to the southern provinces.78 This internal displacement put pressure on urban areas and widened the gap between the elite and marginalized communities. In Syria, the mass population relocation followed the influx of Iraqi refugees after the outbreak of the 2003 war, which had already stressed urban areas. Notably, the first protests in Syria broke out in Daraa Province, which, as a result of the internal migration from northeastern Syria, experienced discontent in rural areas, population stress in urban areas, and an enlarging chasm between the elite and marginalized Syrian communities.  
  
It should not be lost on Jordanian officials that the water situation in Syria just before the Arab uprisings mirrors the current situation in Jordan. Many of Jordan’s practices regarding water resources are unsustainable, massive population inflows into urban areas are straining resources, and water depletion disproportionately impacts marginalized communities.  
  
The water shortage in Jordan is rapidly becoming a threatening political problem. Increased competition over the precious finite resource has sparked host-community tensions, igniting instability in the northern municipalities. The Yarmouk Water Company reported that between 2011 and 2013, complaints from Jordanian subscribers nearly quadrupled.79 In the summer of 2012, water shortages sparked multiple protests and riots in Mafraq Governorate. In 2013, the people of Thaghret al-Jub, a small village in rural Mafraq, ran out of water and subsequently barricaded the principal highway, burning tires and demanding affordable water. The situation escalated to the point that King Abdullah II personally arrived at the protest and promised to construct additional water pipelines to the village.  
  
SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS AND CITIZENSHIP  
  
Shifting demographics introduced by the Syrian, Iraqi, and Palestinian refugee populations also hold political implications for the kingdom.  
  
Jordan built its political legitimacy around the pillars of East Jordanian national identity. From the early years of the kingdom, the idea that Jordan might become an alternative homeland for Palestinians loomed large in the nation’s political psychology. Palestinians are by and large excluded from government, though they form a large percentage of the economic elite. The perceived threat of Palestinians to the East Bank’s political hegemony and Jordanian identity plays out in Jordan’s Syria refugee policy as the kingdom restricts the entry of Palestinian-Syrian refugees.  
  
As a means to bolster the traditional state identity, Jordan also has restrictive nationality laws. Legally, Jordanian women do not have the right to pass their nationality on to their children. Thus, if a Jordanian woman marries a foreigner (anyone without Jordanian nationality), her husband and children are not granted citizenship rights. However, it is likely that as the percentage of Jordanian-born noncitizens increases within the kingdom, Jordan’s much-criticized patrilineal citizenship law will become less tenable.  
  
The protracted nature of the Syrian refugee crisis carries further political implications for Jordan. A generation from now, Syrians who have made a life in Jordan will add to the demographic of non-Jordanian individuals, Palestinians and Iraqis among them, who live, unrepresented and as second-class citizens, within the kingdom. This shifting demographic threatens to raise future political questions about who deserves citizenship and will force the more challenging discussion of who actually is Jordanian.  
  
WFP  
  
Since the start of the conflict in Syria, Jordan has shouldered the impact of a massive refugee influx across its borders. Today, Syrian refugees account for nearly 10 percent of the kingdom’s population, placing substantial pressure on its over-stretched resources at one of the most difficult economic periods in the country’s history.  
  
More than 670,000 Syrians have been registered with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. The vast majority of these refugees—81 percent—live in cities and towns instead of camps, where they mainly rely on themselves to cover rent, transportation and medical costs. A limited number of refugees have work permits, thus most of these families rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their most basic needs.  
  
Right now, around 40,000 Syrians are stranded at the northeastern border between Jordan and Syria in an informal settlement called Rukban. The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP), along with other U.N. agencies and NGOs, have been providing food assistance to this population. Humanitarian access, however, remains difficult due to security risks and border closures.  
  
In November 2018, a convoy of humanitarian agencies, including WFP, reached Rukban with lifesaving food and supplies for the first time. Previously, it had reached the settlement only by two 230-foot cranes.  
  
Though most Syrian refugees in Jordan live in host communities, the country is now home to the second largest refugee camp in the world. Known as Zaatari, the camp first opened in 2012 less than 10 miles from the Syrian border and has since become Jordan’s 4th largest “city.” Today, 78,000 Syrian refugees live there in rows of prefabricated shelters provided by international relief agencies  
  
In Jordan, all eligible Syrian refugees receive a monthly cash or food voucher from WFP, which enables them to purchase food items in WFP’s 204 partner shops throughout the country. Families in refugee camps also receive fresh bread. WFP is currently providing food assistance to 500,000 refugees in Jordan.  
  
Half of all Syrian refugees in Jordan are children. To help keep these children healthy and in the classroom, WFP provides nutritious school meals that boost enrollment and attendance rates.  
  
In Spring 2016, WFP launched its first “Healthy Kitchens Initiative” in the Zaatari camp, in which Syrian women are employed to cook fresh, healthy school lunches for the camp’s boys and girls using locally grown vegetables, grains and fruit. These homegrown school meals provide children in need with the right nutrition and energy to focus in the classroom while supporting local food producers and providing jobs to primarily female-headed households in Zaatari.  
  
Since July 2016, The Jordanian government has granted more than 100,000 work permits to Syrian refugees, allowing them to work legally and earn an income for their families.  
  
By distributing cash and food vouchers instead of traditional rations, WFP provides a fresher and more diverse diet to Syrian refugees while supporting the country’s economy. As of July 2016, WFP had injected roughly $581 million into Jordan’s economy  
  
[CARE.org](http://care.org/)THERE ARE 70 MILLION REFUGEES IN THE WORLD TODAY  
  
Who is a refugee?  
A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.  
  
Right now, nearly 5 million people have fled the conflict in Syria, and there is no end to the crisis in sight.  
  
   
  
Who is an internally displaced person?  
An internally displaced person (IDP) is a person who has been forced to flee his or her home for the same reason as a refugee, but remains in his or her own country and has not crossed an international border. Unlike refugees, IDPs are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid.  
  
Examples include South Sudan, where a humanitarian crisis grips the world's newest country, and Yemen, where more than 2.5 million people have been displaced by ongoing violence.   
  
   
  
Who is an asylum seeker?  
When people flee their own country and seek sanctuary in another country, they apply for asylum - the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal protection and material assistance. An asylum seeker must demonstrate that his or her fear of persecution in his or her home country is well-founded.  
  
   
  
Who is a stateless person?  
A stateless person is someone who is not a citizen of any country. A person can become stateless due to a variety of reasons, including sovereign, legal, technical or administrative decisions or oversights.  
  
   
  
Who is not legally recognized as a refugee?  
People who leave their homes and cross international borders due to natural disasters, climate change or environmental factors are not considered refugees. In addition, people who leave their homes and cross international borders due to severe situations, such as a lack of food (including famine), water, education, health care and a livelihood, are not legally-recognized refugees. The United Nations states, "All of these emerging trends pose enormous challenges for the international humanitarian community. The threat of continued massive displacement is real, and the world must be prepared to deal with it. Recognizing this, the United Nations - and UNHCR in particular - have already begun reviewing priorities, partners and methods of work in dealing with the new dynamics of human displacement."  
  
Example of this is the current El Nino food crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa.  
  
  
  
  
  
  
WORLD BANK   
  
Since the Syrian crisis began, nearly 1.7 million people have fled to neighboring Jordan and Lebanon. To better understand the profile and welfare of Syrian refugees living in Jordan and Lebanon, the World Bank Group and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have worked closely together to produce The Welfare of Syrian Refugees: Evidence from Jordan and Lebanon (Executive Summary in English, French, and Arabic). The report explores the socio-economic profile, poverty, and vulnerability of refugees, evaluates current policies and discusses prospects for policy reforms.   
  
Prior to becoming refugees, many had suffered repeated shocks within Syria, leading them eventually to abandon their assets, property and capital to seek safety in the neighboring countries. Compared with pre-crisis Syria, the Syrian refugee population living in Jordan and Lebanon is younger (81 percent are under age 35, compared with 73 percent); comprises a higher share of children aged 0–4 (close to 20 percent versus 11 percent); and tends to be single (over 60 percent versus 40 percent).  
  
Given their low levels of education and low enrollment rates in public schools (less than half), school-aged Syrian refugee children are especially at risk.   
  
In 2014, seven in ten registered Syrian refugees living in Jordan and Lebanon could be considered poor, based on the UNHCR’s assistance threshold. This number increases to nine in ten refugees if the poverty lines used by the respective host countries are considered.  
  
Family size and housing are often the best predictors of poverty. In Jordan, for example, the poverty rate almost doubles if the size of the family goes from one to two members and increases by 17 percent from one to two children. Families renting or owning property and living in an apartment or house made of concrete with piped water or a proper latrine are less poor.  
  
Refugees are highly vulnerable, with a vast majority either poor today or expected to be poor in the near future.  
  
Although many Syrians are registered as refugees with the UNHCR and the authorities, they have few legal rights. While they are able to access public services, the availability of these services is severely constrained due to increased demand. Only a minority are housed in refugee camps where most of their essential material needs are met and financed by the international community.  
  
Current refugee assistance programs are very effective in reducing poverty, but are not sustainable and cannot foster a transition from dependence to self-reliance. For example, if administered to all refugees, the UNHCR cash assistance program and the World Food Programme (WFP) food voucher program can each cut poverty by half. These programs can also reduce poverty to less than ten percent if administered jointly and universally. However, they rely entirely on voluntary contributions and when funding declines, only the most vulnerable refugees benefit.  
  
Social protection on its own does not foster a transition to work and self-reliance if access to labor markets and economic opportunities are not available. The focus must shift beyond social protection for refugees to include economic growth in the areas hosting them so that refugees and local communities can share in economic progress. This will require continued close collaboration between humanitarian and development agencies and international partners in order to transform a humanitarian crisis into a development opportunity for all.  
  
CARNEGIE  
  
 Jordan is to confront its national challenges and continue to provide a safe haven for Syrian refugees, the country will depend on increased international support.  
  
Alexandra Francis was a junior fellow in the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Nuclear Policy Program in 2012–2013. She received a Fulbright research grant to study Syrian refugee impacts in Jordan from 2013 to 2014.  
  
The Syrian refugee crisis has exacerbated endemic political, economic, and resource challenges in Jordan. As the conflict in Syria enters a protracted state and public discontent and other tensions rise, Jordan has limited its humanitarian response. Yet, the roots of the kingdom’s challenges run deeper than the refugee crisis and if left unaddressed will be harbingers of instability. If Jordan is to confront its national challenges and continue to provide a safe haven for Syrian refugees, the country will depend on increased international support.  
  
JORDAN’S MANY CHALLENGES  
  
The Syrian refugee influx into Jordan has been massive. As of June 2015, more than 620,000 Syrians were registered with the United Nations Refugee Agency in Jordan. Eighty-four percent of these Syrians live in host communities as opposed to refugee camps.  
  
Syrian refugees have stressed economic and resource infrastructure in Jordan, which was already suffering from structural issues before the refugee crisis.  
  
The Jordanian public consistently overstates the negative impacts of the Syrian refugee influx, while the positive impacts receive far less attention, highlighting the politicized nature of the refugee crisis in Jordan. Public sentiment toward Syrian refugees has a deleterious effect on the government’s ability to respond productively to the refugee influx.  
   
Confronted with persistently underfunded humanitarian appeals, Jordan has lost confidence in international donor support. Without additional aid and a sustainable response to the refugee crisis, Jordan will continue to restrict the protection space for Syrians. Doing so will increase the long-term risks of instability in Jordan and the region.  
  
KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR JORDAN AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY  
  
Prioritize the integration of development and humanitarian aid. Jordan has historically viewed refugee influxes as opportunities to advance its national development. The international community must recognize this dynamic and prioritize the integration of national development aid and humanitarian aid in its response to the Syrian refugee crisis, which will benefit both host communities and refugees.  
  
Maintain protection space for Syrian refugees. As host-community tensions rise, Jordan should resist the political manipulation of protection space for refugees; it is imperative for the human security of Syrians that Jordan ensure asylum for refugees.  
  
Summary: If Jordan is to confront its national challenges and continue to provide a safe haven for Syrian refugees, the country will depend on increased international support.  
  
  
The Syrian refugee crisis has exacerbated endemic political, economic, and resource challenges in Jordan. As the conflict in Syria enters a protracted state and public discontent and other tensions rise, Jordan has limited its humanitarian response. Yet, the roots of the kingdom’s challenges run deeper than the refugee crisis and if left unaddressed will be harbingers of instability. If Jordan is to confront its national challenges and continue to provide a safe haven for Syrian refugees, the country will depend on increased international support.  
  
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Maintain protection space for Syrian refugees. As host-community tensions rise, Jordan should resist the political manipulation of protection space for refugees; it is imperative for the human security of Syrians that Jordan ensure asylum for refugees.  
  
Formalize access to livelihoods. Actors responding to the Syrian crisis in Jordan must shift their policy responses from an emergency basis toward sustainable long-term approaches. With the Syrian crisis persisting, formalizing the economic sector and enabling access to livelihoods in Jordan will mitigate refugee vulnerability, strengthen the Jordanian economy, and reduce emergency humanitarian appeals.  
  
Empower local governance actors. International aid should integrate capacity-building programs to strengthen the ability of Jordanian municipal actors to deliver services to their populaces and Syrian refugees.   
  
Introduction  
  
As massive population growth stresses host-community capacities, Syrian refugees have cast a light on some of Jordan’s greatest contemporary challenges. A plethora of reports point to the Syrian refugee impact on Jordan’s depleted resources, increased job competition, overburdened infrastructure, and strained social services, like healthcare and education. Notably, the challenges highlighted by the refugees all have deep roots in Jordan’s social, economic, and political fabrics. Indeed, the Syrian refugee population has merely exacerbated preexisting endemic challenges that could be harbingers of future instability.  
  
The negative public sentiment toward Syrians constrains the Jordanian government in its ability to respond to the refugee crisis. As host-community tensions rise, Jordanian citizens have called upon the government to limit competition from Syrian refugees. Since 2014, the Jordanian government has responded to increasingly vocal public frustration and growing regional security risks by narrowing its hospitality toward Syrian refugees. The once-cooperative relationship between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Hashemite Kingdom has grown tense as Jordan has restricted the number of Syrians who can enter the country, closed accessible border crossings, and attempted to confine more refugees to camps. In other words, it seems Jordanian officials have concluded that the initial political benefits of hosting Syrian refugees have diminished and that an increasing Syrian presence in the kingdom may threaten national stability, as Jordanian unrest centers on the pressures Syrian refugees place on host communities.  
  
Alternatively, Jordan should continue leveraging the Syrian refugee crisis as an opportunity to address problems that predate the conflict. The influx of refugees supplies Jordan with the heightened international profile necessary to draw the attention of international donors to the kingdom’s pervasive and deeply rooted national challenges. However, this requires the support of the international community. Jordan and international donors should act on the opportunities inherent in the Syrian refugee influx into the kingdom, to both enhance Jordan’s national development and provide for Syrians displaced by the most devastating civil war of the last decade.  
  
BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND  
  
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a barren, resource-poor nation.  
  
Jordan is politically vulnerable due to its resource impoverishment, externally oriented rentier economy, limited sources of internal revenue, and extreme population growth  
  
What is more, situated at the crossroads of a region in turmoil, Jordan has a long record of providing asylum to persecuted peoples. Throughout the kingdom’s history, it has adroitly leveraged refugee populations to obtain greater political and economic support from patron nations. Indeed, while the scale of the Syrian refugee crisis presents a difficult challenge, the Jordanian government’s response to the arrival of Syrian refugees must be understood as a continuation of its historical response to refugee inflows into the country, most notably those of Palestinian and Iraqi refugee populations. Increases in international aid have previously accompanied refugee influxes into the kingdom. Jordan is a country accustomed to negotiating its survival through foreign aid, and moments of refugee influx have provided opportunities for it to capitalize on international support.  
  
Unsurprisingly, Jordan has demonstrated the most sophisticated regional response to the Syrian refugee crisis of all the major neighboring host countries. Led by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan demonstrated its willingness to use the Syrian population as a lever to garner international development aid through the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis, which is described as “the first nationally-led response of its kind, joining refugee and development responses in one comprehensive national plan.  
  
Jordan has always viewed hosting refugees through a utilitarian political lens. The Syrian refugee influx has provided it with further opportunities to leverage international support to its benefit. While Jordan undoubtedly has been burdened by hosting an increasingly vulnerable Syrian refugee population, its responses to the crisis have demonstrated its understanding of the significant relationship between the hosting of refugees, increased international aid, and the opportunities provided for nation building.  
  
REFUGEE POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW  
  
Jordan faces an incredibly complex refugee situation, hosting the second-greatest ratio of refugees to citizens of any country in the world and the fifth-largest refugee population in absolute terms.3 Since the outbreak of political violence in Syria in 2011, more than 620,000 Syrians have obtained refuge in Jordan.4 Of these, nearly 84 percent live in host communities.5 The impact would be like the United States welcoming over 29.4 million refugees in the span of four years. Government estimates of Syrians living in Jordan are as high as 1.4 million, which includes those who had left before the war.6  
  
Despite hosting one of the largest refugee populations in the world, the Jordanian government has a remarkably underarticulated refugee policy. It has not signed any international conventions or protocols that govern the treatment of refugees, including the UN’s 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its additional 1967 protocol. Jordan’s lack of international obligations under these treaties affords the government a greater degree of agency in its policy responses to refugee influxes.  
  
Nonetheless, Jordan has a relatively progressive stance on refugees and generally upholds international standards on their treatment. Its 1998 memorandum of understanding with the UNHCR outlines the extent of Jordan’s refugee policy for non-Palestinians. Significantly, the document includes the major principles and standards of international protection for displaced persons, including the 1951 convention’s definitions of refugee and asylum seeker.7 The kingdom allows Syrian children access to public education and, until November 2014, facilitated Syrian access to subsidized medical care. The memorandum provides the parameters for cooperation between the UNHCR and the government; however, it does not constitute a legal obligation.  
  
The country also has a legal obligation to respect the principle of non-refoulement, which is widely considered a component of international customary law to which all nation-states must adhere.8 It is defined under terms expressed in the 1951 convention as “No Contracting State shall expel or return (‘refouler’) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”9 Beyond international customary law, Jordan has explicitly committed to not return persons through its ratification of the UN’s 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.  
  
Notably absent from Jordan’s memorandum are a variety of legal rights enjoyed by refugees in states that are signatories to the United Nations convention. These include the rights to housing, employment, public education, freedom of movement, and public relief and assistance. Moreover, Jordan has begun to restrict the protection space for Syrian refugees, terminating their healthcare provisions and limiting their freedom of movement. Indeed, the absence of the United Nations convention’slegal framework has sparked debates across the official Jordanian community and humanitarian sector about the rights of Syrians within Jordan, and the most contentious among them has been the question of the right to access livelihoods.  
  
As a consequence of Jordan’s limited obligations under international law, refugees within the country remain legally vulnerable. Jordan does not have a legal obligation to continue admitting refugees; thus, the human security of Syrians fleeing their war-torn country is at risk. The kingdom has increasingly turned Syrians away at its borders and reduced freedoms and services for refugees. The humanitarian community has also accused Jordan of repatriating refugees back to Syria, particularly unaccompanied men and Palestinians. Such actions amount to a violation of the principle of non-refoulement  
  
PATIENCE WEARS THIN  
  
As the Syrian war enters its fifth year, the Syrian refugee situation has morphed into a protracted crisis. The majority of Syrian refugees have settled into some of Jordan’s poorest northern municipalities, with the governorates of Amman, Irbid, and Mafraq hosting more than 76 percent of all Syrian refugees in Jordan.Patience and generosity in host communities have worn thin as refugees compete with Jordan’s vulnerable populations for scarce resources, employment opportunities, healthcare, shelter, and education.  
  
Though Syrians have stressed host communities, Jordan was already facing substantial challenges to its resource, economic, and social sectors before the influx. In the lead-up to the Arab uprisings, Jordan struggled with massive water scarcity, climbing youth unemployment, rural marginalization, and development deficits in sectors like healthcare and education. Syrians triggered a rapid increase in public frustration about these issues.  
  
Syrian refugees have impacted Jordan both in positive and negative ways, but the public narrative is overwhelmingly critical of the Syrian presence. According to a report by the International Labor Organization, 85 percent of Jordanian workers believe that Syrians should not be allowed to enter Jordan freely, and 65 percent believe that all Syrians should live within refugee camps.11 In a period of peak political instability in the region, this deleterious public sentiment has significantly undermined the government’s willingness to host additional refugees. Decreasing confidence in international support, a destabilizing security context, and pressure on resources have only served to enhance this attitude.  
  
The nature of negative public perceptions highlights a primary challenge facing Jordan: politically, how does the country negotiate the demands of its populace, while simult