



# Labour Rights In Protracted Refugee Crises: Forging An Evidence Base on Economic and Social Cohesion Outcomes In Syrian Refugee Host States

**Goal:** To promote refugee self-sufficiency and mitigate dependence on host state and donor assistance through the development of predictive models for harnessing refugees' economic potential.

**Duration:** July 2016 - January 2019

## **Situation Analysis:**

The coordination framework that has evolved to respond to refugee crises is structured around a 'partnership' whereby host states (principally low and middle income countries) shelter the displaced and donor states offset the associated costs through humanitarian funding. This framework is proving inadequate to deal with the scale and complexity of current displacement trends. Today more than half of refugees live in protracted situations. The absence of binding rules on burden sharing to balance the preemptory norm of non-refoulement mean that donor states tend to scale-back aid once the emergency phase has passed, leaving host states to assume an increased proportion of the costs and exacerbating social cohesion challenges.

The framework also fails refugees. Protracted displacement coupled with humanitarian assistance and prohibitions on labour market integration restricts autonomy, is widely perceived as an affront to dignity, and risks de-skilling. It is now realized that if donor states are not willing to host refugees (at least at a comparable scale as first country asylum states), opportunities need to be created to discourage refugees from secondary movement and host states need more and better options to enable this. A broader re-conceptualization of refugee response is thus needed, towards approaches that recognise (i) host state needs (ii) refugee self-sufficiency, skill retention and skill acquisition and (iii) more efficient utilization of scarce donor funds. A lynchpin in such a transition will be how labour rights are accommodated. Access to livelihoods opportunities is vastly preferable from the perspective of most refugees. Host state economies also often benefit from refugee labour, through diversification, innovation and skill transfer.



# Project Components

To promote refugee self-sufficiency and mitigate dependence on host state and donor assistance through the development of predictive models for harnessing refugees' economic potential

Moreover, host states become well positioned to negotiate a rechanneling of funds earmarked humanitarian assistance towards infrastructure and investment, re-negotiated trade agreements, concessions, loans etc. From a social cohesion perspective, it is also desirable that refugees be perceived as contributing to host state economic goals as opposed to being socio-economic burdens and drivers of unemployment.

Finally for donors, stimulus investments to secure working rights is a more productive use of funds vis-à-vis humanitarian assistance; such approaches may also respond to calls for a better joining-up of humanitarian and development assistance, and the emerging emphasis on resilience.

For this shift to materialize, both international stakeholders and host states require an evidence base that maps the outcomes that accrue when host states elaborate labour rights. To build such evidence, the WANA Institute will undertake an empirical research project to track economic and social cohesion outcomes and assess economic integration approaches in Jordan.

Drawing on quantitative and qualitative data collected over a 3-year period, a projection model will estimate the hypothetical impact of labour inclusion on Refugee welfare and economic performance indicators in the context of refugee flows. The findings will not predict future outcomes, but rather they will provide for a new way of thinking about refugee contributions to host state economies, efficient uses of donor aid and improved structuring of worker rights' policies on a global scale.

Activities	Objectives	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed experiment design</li> <li>• Selection of host states and identification of gain ethical and workable access to key groups, including control groups</li> <li>• Baseline assessment (focusing on economic and social cohesion parameters)</li> <li>• Data collection and analysis</li> <li>• Dissemination of findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence on labour market integration influences host state policy regarding the elaboration of refugee labour rights</li> <li>• A more evidence-based understanding of the impact of refugee labour market integration is integrated into social cohesion, donor engagement and labour market-social policy in host states</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings cited in policy discourse (international and domestic)</li> <li>• Transition in agency refugee policy approach vis-à-vis livelihoods and host state engagement</li> </ul>