



مؤسسة نهر الأردن
Jordan River Foundation



Position Paper Strengthening Climate Resilience and Social Protection in Jordan: A Call for Donor Agencies

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Introduction

The study *“Investigating the Impact of Climate Change on Household Dynamics in Jordan: A Special Focus on Women, Children, and Youth”* makes one reality clear: climate change has evolved from an environmental issue into one of Jordan’s most pressing development challenges; disrupting livelihoods, increasing poverty, and testing the resilience of communities already under economic strain. As water scarcity worsens and jobs become less stable, families are adapting in ways that often compromise their long-term well-being. Yet, the study showed that communities are ready and willing to act if provided with the right support.

This position paper, developed by the Jordan River Foundation (JRF) for donor agencies, translates evidence from JRF’s study into actionable recommendations. The findings reveal a clear link between climate stress, income insecurity, and negative coping mechanisms, and in contrast, a strong readiness among communities to adopt sustainable and green practices.

These findings are grounded in a participatory and multi-stakeholder research design, as the methodology included a desk review, the formation of two Research Reference Groups (RRGs) of 20 experts representing different entities, to guide and validate the research process, 22 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with experts, and a household-level survey of 1,000 respondents across 28 districts in 10 governorates. The findings in this position paper reflected diverse perspectives and community realities.

The paper outlines how climate-induced income loss, employment instability, and reduced access to essential resources are driving harmful coping strategies, such as child labor, early marriage, and unsafe informal work, while institutional and financial barriers continue to limit community adaptation.

The survey showed that climate-induced livelihood losses correlate strongly with rising poverty (92% of surveyed households below the national poverty line), employment instability, and harmful coping mechanisms such as child labor (12%), early

marriage (49% of communities), and hazardous informal work (78% of women). These outcomes reveal a clear causal chain: climate stress reduces income → household strain rises → protection risks escalate.

The correlations are evident as follows:

Table 1: Correlations

<p>Climate Change → job and income loss</p>	<p>Climate change is directly contributing to job and income loss, with 15% of households reporting job loss or change of their household members and/or themselves due to climate change. Also, sectors affected by climate-related job loss: 55% agriculture, 19% industry, 6% transport, and 4% tourism.</p>
<p>Environmental degradation → livelihood insecurity</p>	<p>Environmental degradation is linked to livelihood insecurity, as 82% of households observed climate impacts in their daily lives, 15% report job loss tied to climate factors, and KIIs highlighted declining yields, rising production costs, and increased instability in natural-resource-dependent sectors.</p>
<p>Livelihood insecurity → protection risks as coping mechanisms</p>	<p>Economic strain has intensified family stress and conflict, with 88% reporting increased household tension and 38% noting a rise in domestic violence linked to financial pressure. Limited income opportunities have also contributed to 39% reporting workplace exploitation. Children are affected, with 12% of households reported school dropout due to financial hardship, 11% noted older siblings taking on caregiving roles, and 7% indicated children are left unsupervised. Also, 49% of respondents said early marriage is being considered in their communities as a coping mechanism.</p>

<p>Limited awareness and education → weak adaptation capacity, constraining behavioral change and uptake of green practices</p>	<p>Limited awareness and education weaken adaptation capacity, this was showed by 40% of households who were unfamiliar with climate change, only 50% engaged in any green practice, and KIIs highlighted gaps in technical knowledge, training, and access to information. Although 97% of respondents are willing to adopt environmental-friendly practices, the lack of awareness and guidance hinder meaningful behavioral change and uptake of sustainable adaptation measures.</p>
<p>Access to green finance and skills → improved household resilience</p>	<p>Access to skills and environmentally friendly practices play a role in enhancing household resilience, with 97% of respondents expressing readiness to adopt sustainable measures if supported, and 50% already engaged in green practices or employment.</p>

Therefore, these interconnected patterns showed how climate-driven livelihood pressures could shape household behaviors, limit adaptive choices, and cause broader social shifts. As male migration increases, women are assuming decision-making roles within 70% of surveyed households, yet remain excluded from finance, training, and market systems. Children are also bearing the impact of livelihood pressures, with households reporting school dropout (12%), older siblings taking on caregiving responsibilities (11%), and children being left unsupervised for long periods (7%) as income sources shrink. Additionally, economic strain contributes to negative coping mechanisms such as early marriage, with 49% of respondents stating that it is being considered within their communities as a way to reduce household expenses. Youth, though increasingly vulnerable to joblessness, demonstrate high adaptive potential through innovation and green entrepreneurship readiness. In parallel, agricultural decline, tourism losses, and industrial disruption expose the limits of short-term coping and the absence of institutional safety nets.

For donors, this evidence highlights a critical inflection point, for instance, isolated humanitarian or sectoral interventions are insufficient to break the

climate-poverty-protection cycle. Therefore, multi-year, flexible funding that integrates climate adaptation, social protection, and livelihood diversification is important to stabilize vulnerable households and foster a *just green transition*.

Investing in resilience could achieve triple dividends: it protects vulnerable populations, strengthens national stability, and accelerates alignment with Jordan’s National Adaptation Plan (NAP), updated NDCs, and Economic Modernization Vision (EMV). Therefore, this position paper calls on donors to leverage the study’s findings to design their funding to unite climate action with inclusive economic growth to ensure that adaptation efforts are socially equitable and locally grounded.

Key Findings from the Study

Livelihoods and Economic Impact

The study reveals that climate change in Jordan is directly undermining household economic stability and livelihood security across sectors, particularly agriculture, tourism, and informal employment. As it was found that there is a strong causal link between environmental stress, declining income, and rising poverty.

Income and Employment Loss:

Fifteen percent (15%) of surveyed households reported job loss or change in employment due to climate-related factors, and over half of these cases were in agriculture (55%), followed by industry (19%), transport (6%), and tourism (4%). Also, respondents noted that these job changes were overwhelmingly negative because it caused reduction in income, sectoral shifts to less stable work, or complete loss of livelihood.

Poverty & Financial Strain:

Ninety-two percent (92%) of surveyed households live below the poverty line, with both employed and unemployed respondents struggling to maintain basic living standards. The average household income was only 398 JOD per month for an average household size of 5.7 members. The KIIs confirmed that climate shocks are amplifying an already fragile economy, which pushes both rural and urban families into deeper poverty and dependency on informal work.

Sectoral Disruption:

In agriculture, survey showed that 89% of agricultural respondents reported declines in crop yields, 52% mentioned increased irrigation needs, and 48% noted higher pest incidence. KIIs highlighted that farmers face collapsing incomes and rising costs, with limited access to financial and/or technical support.

In tourism, 63% of respondents working in tourism observed a decline in visitors, which driven by heatwaves, extreme weather, and environmental degradation. Interviewed experts emphasized that these impacts threaten seasonal employment and small business viability.

In industry and services, KIIs noted that increased operational costs especially energy and water are constraining productivity and profitability in manufacturing and food processing sectors, which reducing job security and wages.

Informality & Labor Conditions:

Employment has shifted towards unstable jobs, with 57% of workers cited low wages that do not meet their living needs, 41% reported high working hours, and 26% lacked social protection or health insurance. KIIs highlighted that informality is a survival strategy for households excluded from formal labor markets; however, it leaves them unprotected.

Adaptive But Unsustainable Coping Mechanisms

Households are engaging in reactive coping mechanisms to face and offset income loss, with 78% reduced spending, 15% relied on aid, and 10% took extra work. Some resorted to harmful response, including child labor and unsafe informal jobs. Also, KIIs warned that these mechanisms reflect adaptive exhaustion, where communities are adjusting under pressure and without structural support.

Social Dynamics

The study showed that climate change is playing a role in reshaping social structures, household roles, and community cohesion in Jordan.

Shifts in Household Roles & Decision-Making

Climate-related economic stress has triggered changes in household roles, where 78% of surveyed respondents reported women have taken on more

hazardous or labor-intensive work, and 70% stated that women have become the primary decision-makers in managing household resources.

Male Migration & Family Reconfiguration

Eleven percent (11%) of respondents reported that fathers or male guardians had migrated in search of work. As KIIs highlighted that this migration is often temporary but has long-term implications for family stability, with women effectively managing households in men's absence, which in turn increases women's workload.

While the majority of respondents (75%) stated that relocation is not an option, 18% stated that while they had not relocated, they will consider doing so if conditions worsen. A small percentage reported already taking action: 1% relocated temporarily for seasonal work, 3% moved permanently to seek better opportunities, and another 3% described other approaches.

KIIs confirmed that migration is viewed as a coping strategy when local adaptation options are limited, and they noted that. They also noted that some households have already moved to urban centers after agricultural incomes collapsed, while refugee families often migrate seasonally between the Jordan Valley and Mafraq, following crop cycles and temperature changes.

Community Cohesion & Social Tension

Eighty percent (80%) of respondents reported changes in family relationships and community interactions and 44% noted disputes with neighbors and within communities over shared resources such as water, grazing land, and financial aid. KIIs confirmed that economic stress and livelihood loss are reshaping social interactions and contributing to rising tension at both household and community levels.

Protection and Well-being Risks

The study revealed that climate change, while it is not a direct cause of protection risks, it intensifies existing vulnerabilities and pressures within households and communities. When livelihoods are lost and resources become scarce, families face increasing tensions, instability, and harmful coping mechanisms.

Household Strain and Social Pressure

A large majority of respondents (80%) reported noticeable changes in family relationships due to climate-related economic stress. Among these, 88% cited increased household strain and tensions, 77% reported serious conflicts among family members, and 22% mentioned domestic violence. KIIs confirmed that poverty, unemployment, and debt are heightening household stress and weakening family stability, particularly in areas already facing economic hardship.

Child Protection Concerns

Children are among the most affected by the economic consequences of climate change, for instance, 12% of households reported school dropouts due to financial hardship, while 11% said older siblings were caring for younger ones, and 7% indicated that children were left unsupervised for long hours.

Respondents also noted increased exposure of children to unsafe work and irregular attendance in school, particularly among refugees and rural households dependent on seasonal labor. Interviewed experts described these trends as early indicators of child labor and educational disengagement, warning that prolonged exposure to economic stress could deepen child vulnerability and hinder long-term development outcomes.

Early Marriage as a Harmful Coping Mechanisms

Nearly half of surveyed respondents (49%) indicated that early marriage is being considered in their communities as a way to reduce household economic pressure. KIIs described early marriage as an emerging coping response linked to poverty and insecurity rather than social norms, which further reinforcing gender-based vulnerabilities among girls.

Respondents also linked early marriage to education disruption and child protection risks, as girls are more likely to drop out of school once marriage discussions begin. KIIs warned that this practice perpetuates cycles of vulnerability, limiting girls' opportunities for education and employment while exposing them to increased health and social risks.

Mental Health Issues & Well-Being

Both survey and KIIs showed that environmental and economic stressors are affecting physical and mental health issues. Respondents reported an

increase in respiratory illnesses (83%), heat-related conditions (36%), and stress or anxiety (29%) attributed to changing climate. KIIs noted that outdoor workers, low-income families, and refugees are the most affected groups, often lacking access to quality healthcare and psychosocial support.

Community Adaptation and Resilience

The study highlighted that while households are experiencing increasing economic and social pressures due to climate change, many are also adopting coping and adaptation practices to manage its impact. However, these responses are largely reactive and short-term, which highlighted the absence of sufficient institutional, technical, and financial support to sustain long-term resilience.

Community Awareness & Participation

The study revealed that awareness of climate change among surveyed households is still limited but growing. Only 38% of respondents were familiar with the term "climate change," while 23% were somewhat familiar and 40% were not. Yet, most who lacked familiarity (92%) were still able to associate the concept with changes they observe in their environment, such as heat and drought. Overall, 82% reported noticing climate impacts in their daily lives. Awareness, however, remains largely experiential rather than informed by structured education or outreach efforts.

Despite this limited understanding, communities show high willingness to engage in positive environmental action. Half of respondents (50%) reported involvement in green practices or employment, and 97% expressed readiness to adopt environment-friendly behaviors if given proper support or training.

KIIs confirmed that while awareness is gradually increasing, it remains uneven across regions and often disconnected from formal programs. Experts emphasized the importance of transforming this readiness into sustained participation through local engagement, technical support, and capacity-building initiatives that link awareness to practical climate adaptation.

Readiness for Climate Adaptation

The study found high levels of willingness to adapt among communities, where 94% of respondents expressed readiness to adopt practices that support

environmental protection and resource management if proper support and resources are available. KIIs noted that this reflects growing awareness of climate challenges but also highlights a gap between willingness and capacity, as many communities lack access to technical knowledge, funding, and institutional support to implement adaptation measures effectively.

Local Perception of Green & Sustainable Practices

The study found strong willingness among communities to engage in environmentally friendly and sustainable practices when adequate support is provided. Ninety-four percent (94%) of surveyed respondents stated that they are ready to adopt practices that contribute to environmental protection and resource management, while 6% said they were not ready.

However, KIIs revealed that while awareness and willingness exist, implementation capacity remains weak. As respondents described adaptation mainly in terms of daily or household-level practices, such as reducing waste, saving water, and managing

resources more efficiently, rather than broader community-based or institutional actions. Also, they emphasized that this gap reflects limited access to funding, training, and information on climate adaptation technologies.

Institutional Support & Barriers to Resilience

The study showed that institutional and structural limitations continue to hinder community adaptation and resilience to climate change. KIIs indicated that there is a lack of coordination between the different government institutions, local authorities, and implementing partners working on environmental and climate-related issues. This weak coordination reduces the effectiveness of interventions and limits their sustainability. Also, experts added that climate change is still addressed through separate projects and initiatives rather than through a unified or integrated national system.

Respondents further highlighted that limited financial resources, low awareness, and the absence of sufficient technical guidance are among the main barriers that prevent households and communities from effectively adapting to climate change.

Call for Action & Recommendations to Donor Agencies

JRF invites donor partners to strengthen their engagement in advancing Jordan's climate resilience; because sustainable progress requires long-term, coordinated investment that builds on community capacities and promotes inclusive growth. Donors are encouraged to support multi-year flexible funding, empower local actors and small enterprises, expand green job opportunities, and reinforce institutional coordination.

Aligning funding with adaptation, protection, and economic empowerment will strengthen household resilience and safeguard the impact of donors' investments, as it will ensure that progress in poverty reduction, gender equality, and economic inclusion is not lost to climate shocks.

JRF proposes the following recommendations to guide donor agencies in strengthening Jordan's climate resilience through inclusive, locally driven, and sustainable approaches:

Recommendation #1: Financing and Long-Term Commitment

Donors and financing institutions should allocate predictable, multi-year funding for social protection and climate adaptation programs. Sustained financial commitments would enable partners to implement integrated, development-driven resilience approaches, providing stability for vulnerable communities and supporting national adaptation objectives.

Recommendation #2: Climate-Resilient Infrastructure and Green Livelihoods

Donor agencies and development banks should expand investments in climate-resilient community infrastructure and green livelihood opportunities, such as water management systems, renewable energy, and

climate-smart agriculture. They should also support innovation, advocacy, and entrepreneurship programs that promote green jobs, especially for youth and women, thereby contributing to inclusive economic growth and Jordan's green transition agenda.

Recommendation #3: Inclusive and Sustainable Green Market Systems

Donors should promote the development of inclusive and sustainable green market systems, focusing on strengthening local supply chains, facilitating access to finance for MSMEs and green entrepreneurs, and encouraging environmentally friendly production models. This should be complemented by co-creation with government, civil society, and private sector partners to design programs that generate employment, reduce environmental degradation, and foster long-term community ownership.

Recommendation #4: Evidence-Based and Protection-Focused Programming

Donor agencies should prioritize protection-focused and resilience-oriented programs that address the intersection between climate change and household vulnerability. Aligning future interventions with the findings of this study will enhance evidence-based design, targeting, and coordination, ensuring that supported projects effectively reduce climate-related risks and strengthen community-level resilience.