

Developing a Measurement and Learning Framework for Durable Solutions among Refugees Living in Jordan

NRC Jordan



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Written by: Samuel Hall and NRC Jordan

Owner: Norwegian Refugee Council

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Norwegian Refugee Council – Jordan Country Office

Cover photo: Norwegian Refugee Council

Bara'a holds her newly acquired birth certificate.



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1 Introduction

NRC's Global Strategy for 2022–2025 has prioritised self-reliance and durable solutions for the people NRC works with as one of its global strategic objectives. The NRC Jordan country office, in line with this objective has made durable solutions for refugees the foundation of its country strategy. In advancing this agenda, NRC Jordan recognised the need to have a measurement and learning framework to assess progress towards self-reliance and durable solutions as understood and defined by refugees in Jordan. Developed through a participatory and incremental approach, this framework provides a visual model which is pathway-neutral. The model has been accompanied with a toolkit (comprising of an indicator library with 117 indicators, as well as tools and guides for measurement) to measure and monitor progress towards and identify barriers to durable solutions for refugees in Jordan.

1.1 Context

More than a decade after the start of the Syrian conflict, Syria's refugee crisis has evolved into a protracted situation, with no viable conclusion in sight. Jordan has become a site of refuge for more than half a million of displaced Syrians, as well as displaced communities from Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and many other countries. While there has been significant attention paid to the future of Syrian refugees given the reduction of funding, limited resettlement opportunities available, and continued barriers to a voluntary, safe, and dignified return, the voices and aspirations of Syrian refugees themselves are rarely considered. Similarly, existing efforts to measure and analyse progress towards durable solutions have not been based upon the priorities of refugees, nor the contextual specificities found in Jordan.

Within this context, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Jordan has made securing progress towards durable solutions for refugees the foundation of its country strategy for the current strategic period. In working towards this strategic commitment, NRC Jordan commissioned a study to **develop the first refugee-led framework for measuring progress towards durable solutions**. The framework is unique in the durable solutions space for its centring of refugees' own perspectives, wishes, and needs in the identification of the key milestones and barriers which represent signs of progress or continued obstacles in the pursuit of durable solutions.

The measurement and learning framework discussed in the following pages has been developed to understand how Syrian refugees in Jordan see self-reliance and durable solutions according to their own understandings and preferences, and what barriers to progress they identify. This understanding will be used to inform NRC's programming and advocacy efforts, including the types of assistance and resources provided and how they are delivered, and advocating for changes to existing policies and practices.

1.2 A measurement and learning framework

Building on its commitment to deliver with rather than for refugees, NRC Jordan's measurement and learning framework has been developed through a participatory model for visualising and tracking progress according to the understanding, preferences, and aspirations of refugees themselves. This approach was preferred rather than applying established definitions and programming goals, or focusing on a predetermined durable solutions pathway. In order to ensure this primary focus on refugee voices, the study methodology was designed through a participatory lens, detailed in Section 2.

The central question at the heart of the development of the framework was the following:

How can progress towards durable solutions be understood and defined in a way that meaningfully reflects the priorities and perspectives of refugee communities in Jordan?

To address this research question, three research themes were identified at the project outset, including:

- (1) refugees' perceptions of self-reliance and durable solutions, which assessed refugees' understanding of and preferred durable solutions and their needs and priorities to reach these solutions;
- (2) barriers to achieving durable solutions, which identified barriers to durable solutions milestones identified by refugees; and
- (3) measuring progress towards durable solutions, which considered the relative significance of the durable solutions milestones, and how to incorporate them into a measurement and learning framework.

The visual model at the foundation of this framework is presented in Section 3 of this document. The visual has been developed around the concrete milestones indicating progress towards durable solutions that were identified by refugees through the study. The framework is pathway-neutral, meaning it does not prioritise or endorse one durable solutions pathway over others.



I have a sick daughter. If I immigrated, I would get better treatment for her.

Female respondent, Amman

The most important thing for the future is to have peace of mind, to have a good job, and for kids to get a good education. Something like this should be all covered so you can start living with some peace of mind. If I want to imagine a good life, it should be without worrying about those basic life needs; as a start we would need support from organisations.

Male respondent, Al-Mafraq

The essential thing, as everyone said, is working opportunities for every family member, which is the most important thing.

Male respondent, Al Azraq



2 Approach

2.1 Methodology

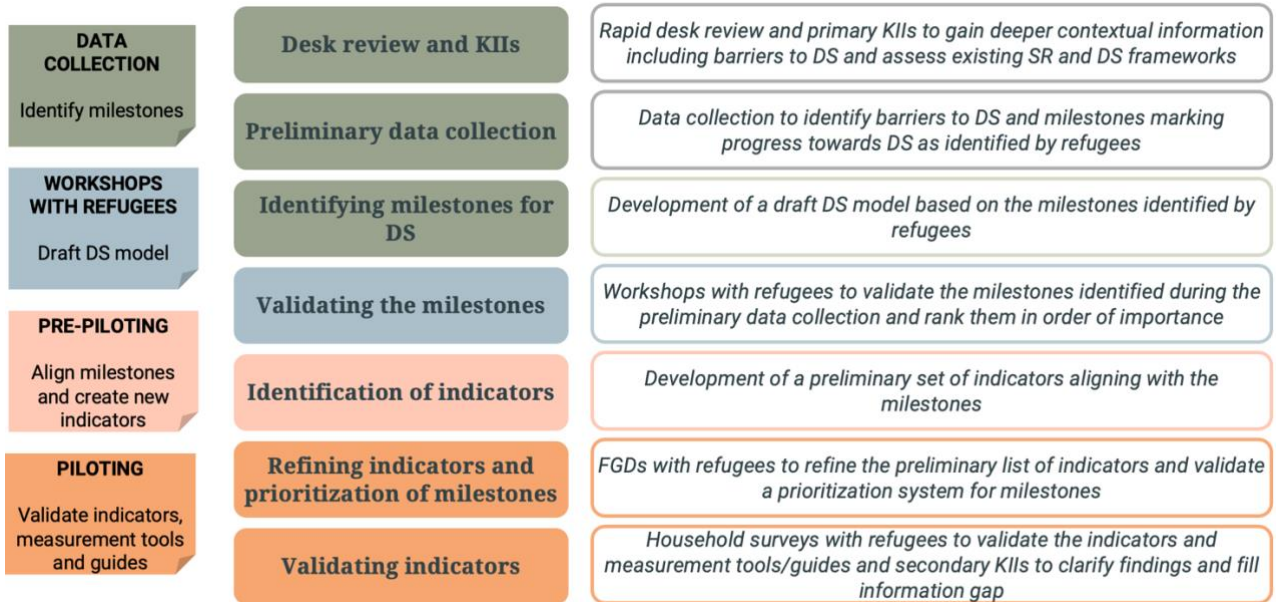


Figure 1: Incremental approach followed to develop the measurement and learning framework.

The study to develop the measurement and learning framework built on existing frameworks and best practices and adapted them, using the perspectives of refugees themselves to define durable solutions in their own words, with their own priorities and objectives in mind. This approach allowed the research team to develop and validate a pathway-neutral model for visualising and tracking progress according to the understanding, preferences, and aspirations of refugees themselves.

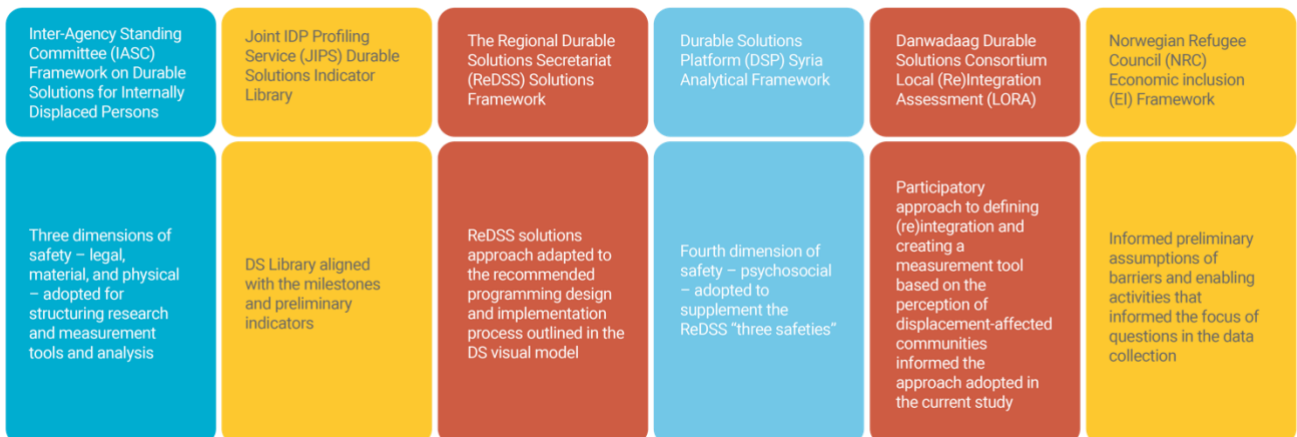


Figure 2: Existing framework elements adapted to the study.

In developing the framework, the research team carried out a thorough literature review to assess and learn from existing durable solutions and self-reliance frameworks and participatory studies. Six relevant frameworks were identified, summarised in Figure 2, including which aspects of each framework that helped to inform this framework's development. Grounding the measurement and learning framework on these pre-existing frameworks ensured that the model would not be built from scratch but based on existing and best practices.

Primary data collection prioritised the voices and inputs of refugee respondents through an incremental, participatory approach. Fieldwork was conducted in three phases across six locations, over ten weeks between February and June 2023. Study participants included refugees living out of camp settings in the governorates of Amman, Al-Mafraq, Irbid, and Az-Zarqa governorates, and refugees living in the Az-Za'atari and Al-Azraq refugee camps for Syrians. Districts included in the fieldwork were selected in agreement with NRC Jordan, in areas where NRC has presence and ties with the community.



Figure 2: Map of research locations

To place the voices of refugee research participants at the core of the framework study was structured following best practices in participatory research. Centring refugee voices and perspectives, the preliminary data collection upon which the durable solutions milestones and accompanying indicators was developed was purely qualitative, including semi-structured interviews (SSIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with refugees in Jordan. Additionally, key informant interviews (KIIs) with NRC staff and thematic experts were held to inform the localisation of the framework's focus and to identify further social, economic, and policy barriers to durable solutions progress. The resulting milestones and barriers to durable solutions identified in the preliminary data collection were validated through a series of in-depth workshops with refugee participants.



We do not follow specific plans, because we've tried to make plans to follow, but circumstances always are the ones that rule us.

Female respondent, Az-Za'atari

My dream is to live independently, with a secure home and a car. I don't want my children to share the same day dream mentality. I want them to have higher ambitions for themselves, and better life goals.

Male respondent, Al-Mafraq

A fixed salary is the only solution to living a stable life.

Male respondent, Amman



The measurement tools accompanying this framework — a qualitative FGD tool and a quantitative household survey (HHS) tool — were piloted to assess the tools’ ease of use, understandability, as well as relevance to refugees. In addition to Syrian refugees this included refugees of one other nationality with Iraqi refugees included in the HHS piloting. Altogether these tools provide the basis for the measurement framework. They have been tested, improved, and included in the main report and framework.

Through the incremental approach to fieldwork, a total of 218 respondents were interviewed in Jordan; 207 of them were refugees residing in Jordan and remaining 11 were key informants with subject area expertise.

This study faced several limitations which should be considered in drawing inferences related to the framework. First, due to the project’s timeline, while intensive consultation was done with residents of both camps for framework and tool development, the piloting of the tool was conducted only in host areas. Secondly, piloting was carried out with a limited number of iterations, and further iterations in both host and camp settings may be needed to test the tools’ broader applicability. The length of the original quantitative tool piloted — 146 questions — may also have caused respondent fatigue and thereby impacted the quality of data collected.

2.2 Principles

As the framework has been developed by and for refugees in Jordan, it builds on strict ethical and practical guidelines. Nine principles, outlined in Table 2 below, articulate the foundations of the study’s approach and resulting framework.

Principle	
Refugee-centric and participatory approach	Refugees’ voices have been incorporated throughout the research process, including data collection, analysis, validation, and the development and refinement of the framework, model, and tools.
Co-design	Co-design between refugees, researchers, and practitioners was a central feature of the framework’s development. Developing the study’s approach and framework components has been a process of continual adjustment and collaboration between refugees, the Samuel Hall research team, and NRC.
Incremental	Incremental refinement (four rounds of fieldwork and three rounds of validation) of the tools during data collection and piloting allowed for the correction of any issues with the questions raised by respondents, and allowed for better information-targeting.
Learning-centred and evidence-based	From the outset, the study approach has been learning-centred and flexible, informed by existing practices and global frameworks. Additionally, learning from refugees has been the primary aim of this study, impacting its approach and tools.
Coherent, tailored, and based on local knowledge	All phases of the study have been tailored to the particular context of Jordan, at both urban and camp levels where NRC Jordan operates. The indicator library and

	associated measurement tools included in the framework have been localised, and may not be suitable for wider application without adaptation or revisiting the study process.
Informed consent	Informed consent is the cornerstone of ethical research, and is all the more important when working with vulnerable populations who may be harmed by the sharing of their personal or identifiable information. The study followed best practices in informed consent, including training the facilitators and enumerators on securely collecting and storing data, and explaining the study objectives and expected outcomes prior to interviewing.
Do no harm	The principle of do no harm applied to every research phase to ensure that research with displacement-affected individuals not only brings no harm but also creates a respectful relationship between the researchers, the refugees, and practitioners involved.
Neutral approach	To allow refugee voices and perspectives to guide the result, fieldwork was approached to involve as few preconceptions as possible. Rather than applying standard definitions of durable solutions to refugee respondents and asking for their perspectives on these pathways, respondents were asked to think of what a durable solution would be to them, and to imagine their “best-life scenario,” whether in Jordan or elsewhere.

Table 2. Key principles.

3 Durable solutions framework components

The framework is designed to allow NRC Jordan to take periodic measurements of progress towards durable solutions on an individual, household, or community level.

The framework includes a pathway-neutral visual model categorised by the 'four safeties' of durable solutions, depicting the trajectory of milestones representing progress as identified and ordered by refugees in Jordan. Each milestone has one or more supporting indicators. The framework is accompanied by the following tools:

- **An indicator library** with 117 indicators for non-camp refugee residents and 133 indicators for closed refugee camp residents.
- **A quantitative tool** that has been piloted with Syrian and Iraqi refugee respondents in Jordan to assess the relevance and acceptability of the questionnaire.
- **A qualitative FGD tool** that can be used by NRC Jordan to periodically assess changing perceptions and needs regarding durable solutions progress.
- **A practical user guide** for NRC Jordan to employ the tools and extend or re-evaluate the framework as circumstances and perceptions may shift.

The framework and its tools are structured according to four dimensions of safety articulated by existing frameworks.ⁱ Three “safeties” — namely, legal safety, material safety, and physical safety — have been adopted from the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) Solutions Framework.ⁱⁱ The remaining safety, psychosocial safety, was drawn from the Durable Solutions Platform (DSP) Syria Solutions Analysis and refers to the social cohesion, mental health, and wellbeing of persons affected by displacement.ⁱⁱⁱ The research team used the four safeties to structure the data collection, analysis, and the final measurement tools.

The foundation of the measurement and learning framework is a durable solutions model that has been developed as an easy-to-read visual to guide durable solutions monitoring. The full model, presented on the next page, consists of four parts, one for each dimension of safety. Each dimension of safety includes the milestones identified and validated by refugees as indicating progress towards durable solutions.

Milestones were identified in the analysis of refugees’ descriptions and stories relating to future aspirations, current needs, and perceived barriers. Milestones were categorised into the four safeties according to the definitions of each safety provided in the ReDSS and DSP frameworks. In the visuals, the milestones are presented in the order of priority determined by refugees through the workshops. However, the milestones for material safety have not been ranked, due to the dubious ethical value of requesting refugees to select between basic material needs like food and access to health care.

Figure 3: Psychosocial safety

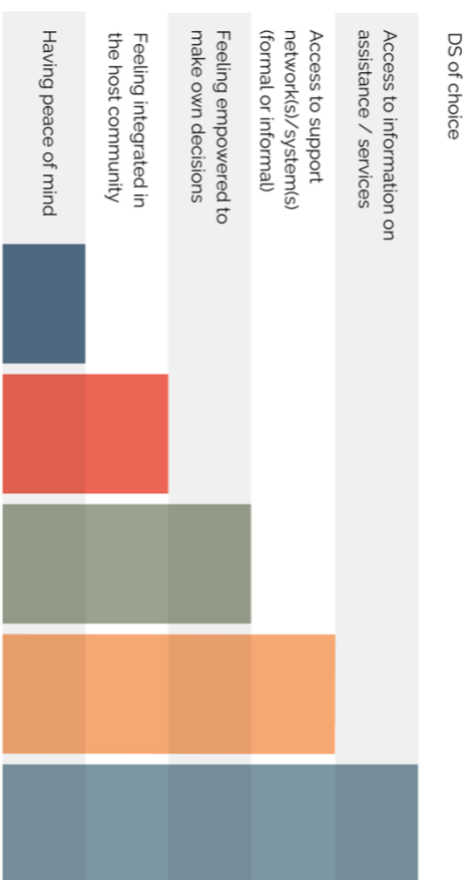


Figure 4: Physical safety

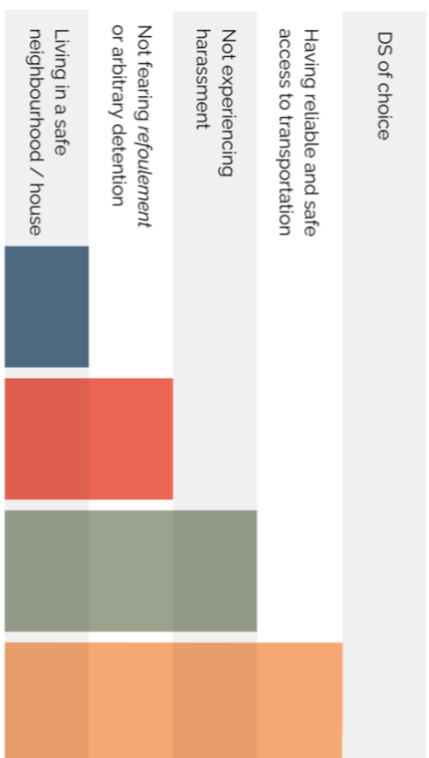


Figure 5: Material safety

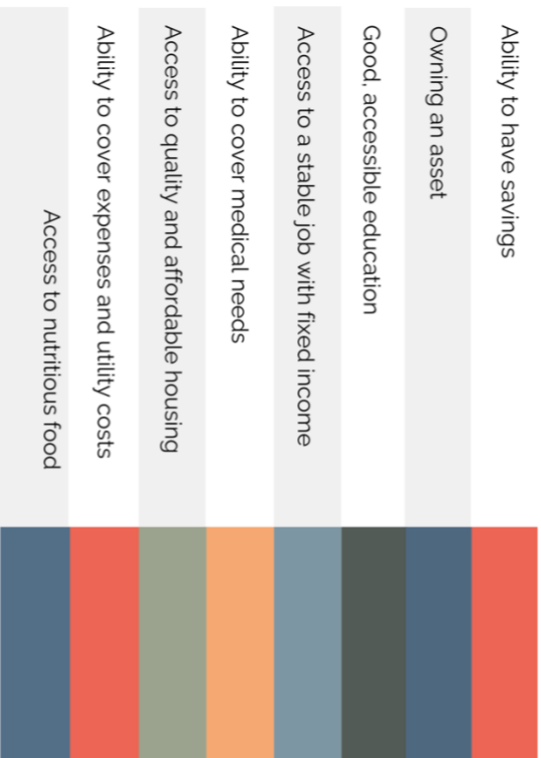
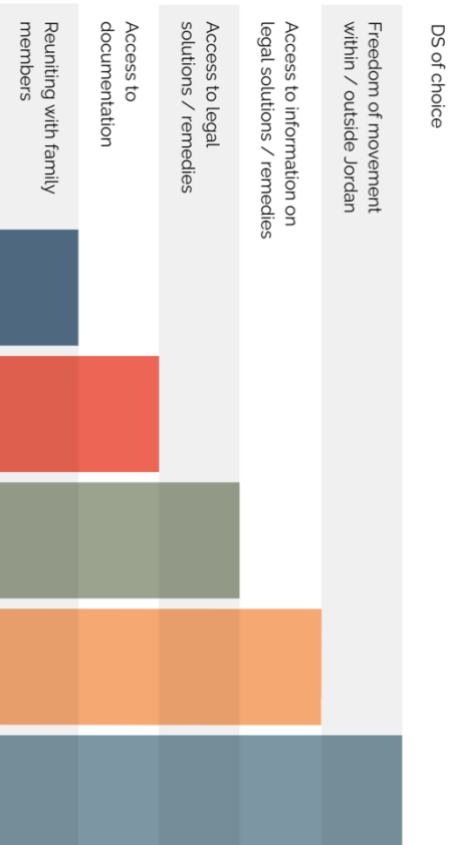


Figure 6: Legal safety



4 Conclusions and next steps

4.1 Lessons learned

Through the process outlined in this document, NRC Jordan was able to arrive at a trajectory towards durable solutions defined and visualised by refugees. The study served as a learning process in framework development for both the NRC and Samuel Hall research teams.

The preliminary data resulting from the study and the framework piloting indicate that durable solutions feel out of reach for many refugees in Jordan, and do not look the same for everyone, with particular differences found between refugees living in camps as opposed to refugees in host areas. Certain guarantees of stability — like having a contracted job with a fixed income — were repeatedly brought up as important milestones towards durable solutions.

“Now we are refugees... There is no solution. A refugee is a refugee.”
– Female respondent, Al-Mafraq

When the study participants were asked to consider different aspects of their “best-life scenario,” the vast majority of respondents were able to identify specific aspects of their lived experiences that would enable them to approach an integrated, more stable, more durable, life in the long term. It was also found that while discussions related to durable solutions for displaced populations in Jordan regularly occur amongst operational actors, refugees felt that their voices are not included in shaping these discussions. This framework, which has been built on the voices of refugees, represents an important step in this direction.

4.2 Next steps

Over the coming months, NRC Jordan will use the measurement tools to begin gathering baseline assessments of progress towards durable solutions among its programming participants. Once the baseline has been gathered, NRC Jordan will continue to use the framework on a periodic basis to gauge progress towards durable solutions for refugees in Jordan. Further reports on the framework’s findings, applicability, and recommendations for further extension are forthcoming.

While the framework has been built for NRC Jordan's operations, it was envisioned to contribute to the work of a broader community of practice. NRC Jordan and Samuel Hall recommend that this framework can be further contextualised and adapted, so that it can be used based on the views of displaced populations in other settings.

5 Endnotes

ⁱ For more information on legal, material, and physical safety, please refer to the ReDSS Solutions Framework: Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat. 'ReDSS Durable Solutions Framework: A Guidance Manual', May 2018. For more information on psychosocial safety, please refer to the Durable Solutions Platform: Durable Solutions Platform. 'Syria Solutions Analysis: An Assessment of Durable Solutions Conditions in Northeast Syria', November 2021.

ⁱⁱ ReDSS. 'ReDSS Durable Solutions Framework: A Guidance Manual', May 2018.

ⁱⁱⁱ Durable Solutions Platform (DSP). 'Syria Solutions Analysis: An Assessment of Durable Solutions Conditions in Northeast Syria', November 2021.