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## Collective Offers Hope and Skills to Urban Refugees in Jordan

- Celebrating the industry of refugees on World Refugee Day

*By Allyson Hawkins, 2016 Peace Fellow*

**Amman, Jordan:** Samira, from Syria, is one of roughly 4 million refugees who have sought safety in Jordan from some of the world's most brutal conflicts. She is also a member of the Hope Workshop, a collective of 20 refugee women in Amman which teaches skills and provides emotional support to its members.



**Using their talents: refugee women learn skills through the Collateral Repair Project**

The workshop has made a big difference in the life of women like Samira, who attends regularly and has learned to make clothes for her family and her community. As well as providing her with a skill, crocheting has also given her purpose. "This is something I can benefit from as well as help others with the clothes I create," she says.

The Hope Workshop is an initiative of the [Collateral Repair Project \(CRP\)](#), which was launched in 2006 to provide services to Iraqi refugees in

Jordan but has since expanded in response to the influx of Syrians. CRP's distinctive name is intended to contrast with the "collateral damage" inflicted on civilians in today's wars.

"CRP creates a space where [refugees] can put their creativity to use," said Zayneb Al Asadi, Director of Staff Development and Partnerships at CRP. "People want to be proactive and productive." She added that classes in computers and English are among the most popular programs offered by CRP.

As a country where nearly 1 in 3 people is a refugee,



**[Allyson Hawkins](#), from the Fletcher School, is working with CRP as a Peace Fellow.**

Jordan is at the epicenter of the global refugee crisis and with Europe closing the door the pressure shows no sign of easing. Indeed, the burden on countries of first asylum, like Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey is one of the themes of [World Refugee Day \(June 20\)](#).

Adding to the strain, only 18% of Jordan's refugees registered by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) are living in camps. The rest, like Samira, live in urban areas where aid is less accessible and they depend on family, friends and informal work.

With resources stretched to breaking point and tensions growing between Jordanians and refugees, the Jordanian government makes it hard for refugees to find work. Non-Jordanian workers are required to obtain permits from the Ministry of Labor, but this requires proper documentation and can cost up to \$1,270. Unable to obtain a work permit, most refugees turn to the informal economy, where they often work in harsh conditions for little pay.

In April, Jordan's Labor Ministry eased this policy for Syrian refugees, and waived application fees for Syrians until July 5. Those that are accepted will be issued a one-year permit to work - and official recognition. In addition, the government now allows Syrian refugees to use identity cards issued by the Ministry of the Interior and UNHCR when applying for permits, instead of passports and legal proof of entry. UNHCR estimates that 78,000 refugees could benefit from these new regulations.



**Refugees wait to receive food vouchers at CRP something I had not done before."**

While these moves are welcome, the CRP is also committed to serving the diverse community of East Amman. This includes Syrians, Iraqis, Palestinians, and Jordanians who are under extreme pressure.

Neam, a Palestinian from Gaza and Hope Workshop member explained that working together builds a sense of community and solidarity: "I attend the crochet classes and women's empowerment.... I use the things we discuss in the sessions to resolve issues at home in my family. It has helped me see things from different peoples' perspectives and become a mediator. I have also been able to meet and befriend people from different countries here at the center,

*CRP and the Hope Workshop are hoping to build on their success and produce embroidery for advocacy quilts, with help from Allyson Hawkins, an AP Peace Fellow who is studying at the Fletcher School (Tufts University). The quilts will be assembled in the US. Allyson has launched [an appeal on Global Giving](#) to pay for materials. We need your help!*

- [Click here for more on the Collateral Repair Project](#)
- [Click here for the Advocacy Project's Peace Fellow blog](#)
- [Click here for statistics on Jordan's refugee crisis](#)
- Get involved - email us at [info@advocacynet.org](mailto:info@advocacynet.org).

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