

Rebuilding sustainable communities after disasters: Integrating sustainable development goals in refugee camps in the Middle East

Summary

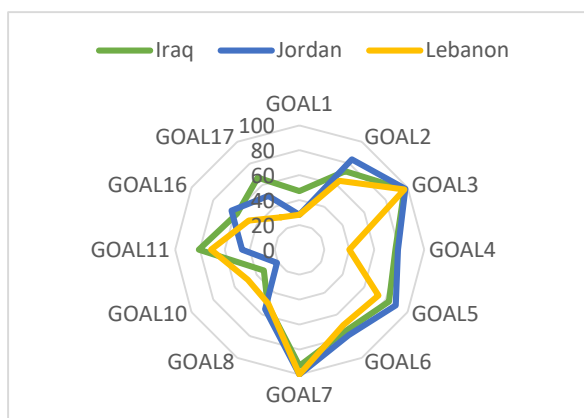
The phenomenon of refugees and the existence of refugee camps are often perceived as temporary solutions. However, the average lifespan of refugee camps spans approximately seventeen years, leading to inadequate planning and neglect of sustainability, resulting in compromised dignity for refugees and substandard quality of life.

This study aims to comprehensively examine the procedures implemented in refugee camps to evaluate their alignment with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and their success in ensuring that no refugees are left behind. Additionally, it explores the interconnectedness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the context of refugee camps, with a particular emphasis on urban sustainability. To achieve these objectives, a comprehensive methodology was employed, including a systematic review and meta-analysis, and a comparative case study using empirical data collected through a questionnaire distributed in various locations in the Middle East, primarily in Arab countries bordering Syria, supplemented by interviews. The research sheds light on multiple dimensions of refugee camps, encompassing sustainability, interventions, SDG implementation, and the provision of essential services. The study primarily focuses on spatial sustainability, specifically addressing SDG11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), four thematic areas were explored: spatial urbanization (11.3.1), housing (11.1.1), public transport (11.2.1), and water (6.1.1) and sanitation (6.2.1). Recognizing the complexity of urban areas due to their subjective nature, it is crucial to acknowledge the significance of various elements within refugee camps that contribute to an accurate assessment of urban sustainability, such as camp planning, access to adequate housing, infrastructure, and mobility options.

The findings reveal varying degrees of progress across different locations, emphasizing the pressing need for improved practices and a comprehensive approach to address the challenges faced by refugees. The study argues for a paradigm shift in perceiving refugee camps as forms of urbanization and advocates for the implementation of sustainable strategies during the planning and design process. It highlights the urgency of adopting alternative, sustainable approaches that prioritize refugees' dignity and quality of life while fostering a better future for both refugees and host communities. The study underscores the vital role of stakeholders in accelerating progress toward the SDGs and emphasizes the importance of forging strong partnerships among them. In conclusion, this study offers actionable recommendations for policymakers and practitioners to enhance sustainability in refugee camps, foster inclusivity and equity, and contribute to the well-being of the affected populations. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve the overall impact of intervention provided to refugees to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its commitment to leaving no one behind.

Keywords

Humanitarian settlement, Middle East, refugee camp, sustainable development goals, urbanization.



Overall Index of different SDGs in three different Middle East countries.



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Period

2018-2023

Funding

APGES scholarship