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Mobile child-friendly spaces for working children and home-bound girls in Jordan

This case study describes how mobile child-friendly spaces supported children in child labour and home-bound girls in vulnerable communities in Jordan.

Background

The mobile child-friendly spaces (CFS) pilot was developed and implemented by Save the Children in Jordan between 2016 and 2017. The pilot aimed to bring CFS activities closer to the homes of “hard-to-reach” children who faced considerable barriers in accessing traditional community centres and child protection services because they were working or home-bound (i.e. restricted in movement outside the home). An initial assessment was undertaken of the vulnerability, demographics and available services in an area. Save the Children with help from communities and children identified suitable and safe locations for the mobile CFS activities, with the aim of reaching the two principle target groups of children – “homebound” girls and working children.

Mobile child-friendly spaces

Key components of the approach included the following:

- **Assessing needs to tailor mobile activities to specific communities and children**, using a range of mixed methods such as individual interviews; talking with children and caregivers; facilitators’ observations; community organisation/mobilisation assessments.
- **Developing a CFS schedule based on children’s needs and times** which also operates outside regular office days/ hours. The team is only present at the location during the times on the schedule, allowing for any necessary follow-up and discussion after the session. Outside scheduled times, parents and caregivers can access further support by telephone or at the Mobile CFS Community Hub (a centre used as a base by mobile teams to access intervention locations).
- **Determining how long and how often a mobile CFS should be active for in a specific area** depending on the needs, demand, level of additional support required by the girls and boys who participate, and the cycles of psychosocial interventions that are planned.

- **Staffing each mobile CFS** with a child protection team including a CFS coordinator who provides monitoring and management, a facilitator and volunteers who run the activities and a community mobiliser who gathers participants and provides information for the community to support activities.
- **Providing a range of activities.** All children can attend general sessions for recreational and creative activities. If children have additional needs, identified through assessment, vulnerability criteria and registration, they can access further support through a selection of structured programmes:
 - a package for home-bound girls, developed locally covering life skills, sexual and reproductive health, financial literacy and discussions about protection and gender-based violence (GBV) (locality-specific);
 - **HEART (Healing and Education Through the Arts)**, which uses art and creative expression to help children process, express and communicate their feelings and experiences with trusted adults;
 - a resilience package for working children and out-of-school children, developed as a hybrid from Save the Children Packages “Safe you Safe me”, the “Child Resilience Programme” and the “**Youth Resilience Programme**”, and adapted to the context for working children and those at risk of child labour;
 - each package is for between 20 to 30 children, and for generally 20 sessions spread out on average over a two-month period.
- **Encouraging parents and caregivers** to attend sessions on positive discipline training and parenting.
- **Inviting employers** to attend sessions that are designed to raise awareness on the labour law and on preventing child labour. Information is also given on improving children’s work environment, health and safety in line with the law.
- **Engaging with community-level Child Protection Committees**, where present and functional, to strengthen children’s protection at the local level.

Lessons learned

- Mobile CFS have helped children in child labour to access activities closer to their homes or workplaces.
- In informal settlements where services are also often informal, mapping to identify suitable locations for mobile CFS can be challenging. It is vital to speak with and respect families, children and community leaders’ opinions on where and how services are allocated.
- It was important to recognise the cultural factors and constraints facing home-bound girls, many of whom were involved in heavy chores or domestic labour. Facilitators found that working with mothers and other important females in the household to implement a similar range of activities in the home-bound package helped to support girls’ access and attendance at the CFS.
- When teams first meet children with additional vulnerabilities, particularly working children who have many competing demands, it was difficult to predict their capacity to attend the planned number of sessions in a cycle. Children who had a broad range of commitments (work, family, etc.) were frequently unable to sustain attendance of structured sessions over an extended period.
- During the pilot, a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was used to assess children’s needs, completed by facilitators for each child and considering their age. Teams found the tool challenging to use in the context of mobile activities, overly clinical and unreliable. Mixed methods were instead used after the pilot.
- Twenty sessions were in general considered the right length based on the vulnerabilities of children and protection concerns they face. However, further effort was required to reassess children’s needs during the cycle, particularly towards the end of the cycle to identify children who require further referral and follow-up.

- How to better plan for and conduct more in-depth referral and follow-up in the longer term, given the nature of mobile CFS, remained a challenge. In some communities, such as informal settlements, where many children require specialised psychosocial support, referrals have proven challenging and CFS teams had to be proactive in their follow-up. Organising a local NGO to provide specialised services in the settlements and having mobile CFS volunteers from the local area both supported the referral process, by bringing services directly to hard-to-reach children and ensuring adequate levels of follow-up.
- While Save the Children has not provided case management services in the response, there was a growing need to move towards case management and specialised services to provide follow-up for children identified with additional needs.
- Although the programme has helped to link children to services, raise awareness and support children's psychosocial wellbeing, food security and livelihoods remained a challenge. Parents/ caregivers continuously reported this as the biggest barrier to effective care of their children. The programme was strengthened to include a livelihoods component and small grants for sustainable micro businesses for working children and home-bound girls after the pilot.
- Staff reported seeing a sizable difference in the number of children attending mobile CFS who were previously unable to attend or who came from under-served areas. As activities were closer to home, attendance is reportedly safer which for many families is a key concern, and it reduces the need for transport, which for families on low incomes minimises additional financial burden.

More information and resources are available at:

<https://alliancecpha.org>

<https://alliancecpha.org/en/child-protection-hub/child-labour-task-force>