



Holistic programming for homebound and working children in urban areas in Jordan

Photo: Plan International / Vincent Tremeau

This case study describes a holistic, community-level approach to supporting children in, and at risk of child labour in urban areas of Amman, Jordan.

Background

In 2018-2019 Plan International Jordan and the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD) have worked in partnership to support children in or at risk of child labour across the refugee and host communities. Plan International Jordan developed a project in Marka, north-east Amman, with JOHUD's local Social Support Centre (SSC), which is a community-based organisation with strong local ties and a reputation for supporting out-of-school children. The project involved a broad range of partners including the Ministry of Labour, the non-formal education provider Quest Scope and the vocational training provider Al-Faisal, in a multi-sectoral strategy to support children at risk of and in child labour in Marka.

Integrated programme approach

Marka is an area of Greater Amman Municipality, to the north-east of Amman proper. Marka has high levels of child labour, including the worst forms, among Syrian refugees and the Jordanian host community. The SSC has a standing agreement with the Ministry of Labour to prevent and address child labour through providing a one-stop shop for a range of key services including:

- **Education:** Certified alternative learning programmes are provided to working and out-of-school children (aged 6 to 10) and adolescents (11 to 17) with pathways to vocational training for young men and women (aged 18 to 24). Learning programmes are coupled with literacy classes and the provision of TVET start-up kits with equipment for the training course.
- **Early childhood development:** ECD for children aged 3 to 5 years old was provided in the SSC to enable parents to join livelihoods training, awareness activities or parenting sessions.

- **Child protection and psychosocial support:** Community-based psychosocial activities included recreational and sports activities as well as more structured life skills sessions for younger and older adolescents to strengthen their self-esteem and confidence to go back to school. Referrals were made for specialised mental health and child protection support.
- **Community outreach and awareness-raising:** Staff conducted door-to-door outreach to invite children to join the programme; this level of community mobilisation was central to building trust with families and raising awareness about the programme. The SSC organised regular community events and child-led awareness-raising campaigns and events to showcase their programmes and to gain trust of parents.
- **Gender equality:** The SSC and Plan International Jordan both placed emphasis on the right of girls to education and pathways to decent work. Syrian girls particularly were often kept at home, neither attending school nor working. To mitigate risks of child marriage for these girls, the SSC offered specific girl-focused activities for (adolescent) girls, starting with recreational and informal activities, with the aim of enrolling them back into school.

Successes

- **The strong reputation of the SSC within the community** and the trust that many parents and families had in the centre as a safe space, were the keys to a successful programme. Many parents, particularly the fathers of adolescent girls, who were initially reluctant to let their children participate in activities, were more convinced of the importance of social and recreational activities, as well as education for their girls.
- **The programme activities were tailored to working children**, with life skills sessions tailored to the specific needs and skills that working children and adolescents require. This contributed to high enrolment and attainment rated in both life skills and educational programmes.
- **The community mobilisation approach and parenting sessions** led to high engagement of parents and caregivers in the SSC activities. Caregiver knowledge, attitudes and behaviours were measured through pre-/post- surveys which showed parents' improved knowledge on parenting skills and their commitment to support and advocate for their children.

Challenges

- **Scheduling and attendance:** While the activities were tailored to working children, it was a challenge to develop a schedule that was appropriate for all working children as they all had different work schedules and responsibilities including domestic and caregiving responsibilities at home. The situation was similar for parents; the availability of parents and caregivers was dependent on their domestic responsibilities and work schedules. This led to irregular attendance at sessions among both children and caregivers.
- **Acceptance of training opportunities for girls:** Social and gender norms affected the participation of adolescent girls. For girls it was considered unsafe or unacceptable to join recreational activities in a community space, while for boys it was considered safe and appropriate. While community engagement activities, outreach and parenting sessions influenced how parents thought about girls' participation, the SSC noted that it would take longer than the project period to systematically change the harmful norms and address the barriers to education and recreation for girls.

Lessons learned

- **Added value of an integrated approach:** For families of working children, who are often not well connected to social services and education, the integrated approach provided a one-stop shop for multiple services. Families benefited from being able to access quality, multi-sectoral services in one central place as this removed financial, logistical and administrative barriers to accessing services.

- **Unique position of community actors to reach excluded children:** The SSC uses a community-based approach to tackle barriers to education for working and at-risk children. The SSC has built trust through strong outreach and engagement with parents. This, coupled with high-quality services, has built trust with Jordanian and Syrian parents alike and as a result, parents allowed their children (particularly girls) to enrol in education at the centre. This has addressed one of the main barriers to education for Syrian children, which is a lack of trust among parents in schools and public services.
- **Tailoring programmes to the most vulnerable families:** Recreational activities for young children and ECD activities, while not initially planned for, was an important component of the project. This allowed single mothers, adolescent mothers and parents with young children to have a safe place to leave their children while attending awareness-raising, life skills, parenting or educational activities.
- **Pathways to youth livelihoods:** Finally, a main lesson learned from the project is that it is important that Plan International and JOHUD's SSC will continue working with Syrian refugee and at-risk Jordanian adolescents until they graduate from the education programme and provide them with a pathway to TVET and ultimately access to decent work.

More information and resources are available at:

<https://alliancecpha.org>

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