



MARGINALIZED GIRLS IN JORDAN

OUTPUT 1: BASELINE RESEARCH BRIEF
2020

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OVERVIEW

At the end of 2019, it was estimated that children made up more than 40% of the population in Jordan.¹ With rising rates of poverty and unemployment and substantial pressure on services and infrastructure, it is becoming difficult for Jordan to protect all children and safeguard their rights.²

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), children and adolescents from poor socio-economic backgrounds are among the most vulnerable groups of children in Jordan. This is because they are at a higher risk of being out of school. Dropping out of school has a negative ripple effect which they experience throughout all stages in their lives.³ UNICEF has identified school dropouts as a main concern for children in Jordan in 2018 – a growing challenge that is affecting all children regardless of nationality.⁴ There are several reasons that cause children to drop out of school, including poverty, conservative social norms and protection concerns. As a result, there are different groups of school dropouts, each facing a unique set of challenges.

Girls are also among the most vulnerable groups of children in Jordan and are facing a variety of barriers that prevent them from realizing their full capabilities.⁵ While girls are more likely to go to school than their male peers, the mobility of many girls in Jordan is largely restricted, due to conservative social norms. Many also have limited agency over personal choices such as marriage and work. Research shows that the experiences of adolescent girls in Jordan remains largely unexplored.⁶

This report is the first publication of a five-year project titled 'From Marginalized Girls to Empowered Women' by the Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation and IM Swedish Development Partner. It presents the baseline research findings of interviews with 62 marginalized girls living in Amman and Irbid.

*This report reflects the views of the authors and IM Swedish Development Partner cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

‘From Marginalized Girls to Empowered Women’ is a five-year project by the Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (IRCKHF) and IM Swedish Development Partner (IM). The project aims to enhance the social protection of some of the most vulnerable young women in Jordan by carrying out research and advocacy in cooperation with the community based organizations (CBOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) that support them.ⁱ

Over the last decade, IRCKHF has carried out research and advocacy concerning the overall situation of the girl-child and different vulnerable groups in Jordan. While all uniquely vulnerable, IRCKHF took this opportunity to research the different groups of vulnerable girls in Jordan in order to study the differences and similarities in the challenges they face.

Building on the impact goals of IM, which focus on the most vulnerable girls and young women in Jordan, IRCKHF will work closely with other CSOs to enhance the social protection of vulnerable girls and young women in their transition to adulthood. This will be done by: identifying their needs; providing access to services; the use of national and international advocacy mechanisms; and a longitudinal study of the process over 5 years using participatory action research.

By working closely with and providing information to local stakeholders and policymakers about some of the most marginalized girls and young women, it is hoped that future programming and policies will be more informed for all girls and young women in Jordan to better enable them in their transition to adulthood.

ⁱ An advisory committee comprising civil society experts and organizations was formed with the aim of providing input at the different project stages. Marginalized girls identified during the research will be referred to these organizations as needed. Committee members can be found in annex 1.

METHODOLOGY AND TARGET GROUPS

In 2019 and early 2020, IRCKHF conducted qualitative participatory research with 62 marginalized girls (aged 14 – 19) in Amman and Irbid. Overall, 33 girls were out of school at the time of the research. The majority of the girls came from poor socio-economic backgrounds and many had intersecting vulnerabilities (e.g. girl with disability and out of school). *Figure 1* outlines the groups of girls interviewed.ⁱⁱ

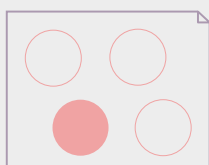
The interviews were based on three in-depth participatory tools:



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF: a narrative tool where participants are asked to describe a typical day in their life, to understand and assess roles, mobility, access and use of services, restrictions and use of time.



FLOWER MAP: a tool used to explore participant's views on who they seek and gain support from during times of conflict, difficulty or distress and the kinds of support they do and/or do not receive.



VISION BOARD: an exercise to construct a future scenario that the participant aspires for, or think would be a real improvement to the current situation. The purpose of the exercise is to provide the participants with the space to consider an alternative to their current situation and think of a future that they want.

ⁱⁱ Syrian and Palestinian refugee girls (except for Syrian girls living in informal tented settlements) were not interviewed in this research as extensive research is being conducted with refugee children and adolescents. An overview of the challenges faced by refugee girls in Jordan is included in the following section.

Figure 1 – Groups of Girls Interviewed

GIRLS LIVING IN POVERTY	9 girls <i>1 out of 9 girls was out of school</i>	Aged 12 to 18
GIRLS MARRIED AS CHILDREN	11 girls <i>6 out of 11 girls were out of school</i>	Aged 14 to 19
NON-CITIZEN GIRLS OF JORDANIAN MOTHERS	7 girls (Jordanian mothers and Egyptian fathers) <i>2 out of 7 girls were out of school</i>	Aged 14 to 18
GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES	8 girls <i>3 out of 8 girls were out of school 5 physical disabilities, 2 visual impairment, 1 hearing impairment</i>	Aged 12 to 18
GIRL CHILD LABORERS	10 girls (6 Syrians in ITS; 4 Jordanians) <i>All girls were out of school and working on a farm</i>	Aged 15 to 18
OUT-OF-SCHOOL GIRLS	7 girls <i>Highest level of education attained ranged between 2nd and 10th grade</i>	Aged 14 to 18
GIRLS LIVING IN CARE CENTERS	10 girls <i>5 girls in school and 5 girls in vocational training</i>	Aged 15 to 17

WHO ARE THE MOST MARGINALIZED GROUPS OF GIRLS IN JORDAN AND WHAT DOES EXISTING RESEARCH TELL US ABOUT THEM?

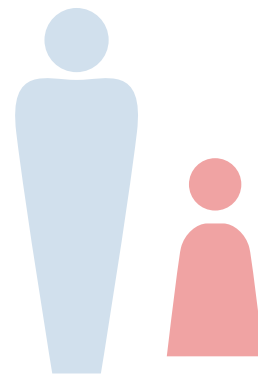
GIRLS IN CHILD MARRIAGES

According to the Supreme Judge Department's annual statistical report and based on registered marriages, 0.4% of marriages included a male under the age of 18 and 11.6% of marriages included a female under the age of 18 in 2017.⁷ The percentage of registered marriages involving underage girls has been somehow constant but started to decrease in 2018: from 13.35% in 2015 to 13.40% in 2016 to 13.43% in 2017 to 11.6% in 2018.⁸

The minimum legal age of marriage in Jordan is 18 years, but some exceptions are made for children as young as 15 years of age, if a judge deems it in their best interest.⁹ In 2019, the House of Representatives raised the minimum age for marriage in these exceptions from 15 to 16.¹⁰

A policy brief by the Higher Population Council explored the causes of child marriage in Jordan and found that poverty was a main driving force. Child marriage is a negative coping mechanism that many families living in poverty resort to; by marrying off their daughters, they reduce their financial burdens. Social norms, including the need to protect the honor of girls, are also drivers of child marriage in Jordan.¹¹

In the case of displacement, research shows that families marry off their daughters to protect family honor, increase their daughters' economic opportunities, or protect them from sexual violence and assault.¹²



**11.6 %
OF REGISTERED
MARRIAGES IN
2018 INCLUDED
A GIRL UNDER 18
YEARS OF AGE.**

..... Who are the most marginalized groups of girls in Jordan and what does existing research tell us about them?

HOMEBOUND GIRLS

Homebound girls are ‘girls under the age of eighteen who withdraw, or are withdrawn by their parents, from school for economic or social reasons and are confined at home, resulting in hindered mental, intellectual, and psychological development.’¹³ Given their confinement, their interaction with the outside world during their adolescent years is very minimal and in some cases non-existent – thus limiting their access to all kinds of services.

A 2013 study on Homebound Girls in Jordan found that the reasons behind school withdrawal were social and economic. The girls’ top two cited reasons for leaving school were ‘my mother needs me at home’ followed by ‘my parents encouraged me to leave.’ The mothers of homebound girls cited several reasons including the cost and safety of transportation to school, the limited value of keeping girls in school when they have low academic performance, and social norms around a girl’s honor and role in society.¹⁴

The study found that homebound girls spend a third of their day performing household chores and the rest mostly watching television. Therefore, these girls are deprived of activities that contribute to their mental, social and intellectual growth. They have limited mobility outside of their homes and are only allowed to go to specific places like a nearby supermarket or a relative’s home with permission and a chaperon.¹⁵

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GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

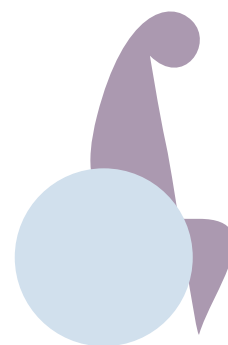
Research on the situation of children and people with disabilities in Jordan is scarce. Girls with disabilities are less likely to complete their education in comparison to boys, and only 4.8% of females with disabilities (aged 15 and older) are economically active.¹⁶ Research shows that there is inadequate accessibility to many schools, insufficient qualified teachers to accommodate students with disabilities, and limited educational budgets to provide resource rooms in schools and educational centers.¹⁷

Despite legal reforms, social stigma surrounding people with disabilities continues to obstruct efforts to mainstream disability and improve their inclusion in society. Many children are still being hidden away at home and are regarded as shameful. There is also a lack of understanding regarding the potential that disabled children and people have once they are given access to the right opportunities and services.¹⁸

Research suggests that adolescents with disabilities are at higher risk to suffer emotional distress, compared to their peers without disabilities, due to social isolation, high levels of bullying and stigma and limited parental support. Exclusion from school and limited access to child-focused programming are also factors that prevent them from building friendships.¹⁹

41% of people with disabilities in Jordan are females. Girls are less likely to complete school and university than boys and only 4.8% of females with disabilities (aged 15 and older) are economically active. Girls with disabilities are also at risk of various forms of discrimination and harmful practices such as hysterectomies. Despite the General Ifta'a's decision to prohibit the removal of wombs of girls with disabilities, such actions continue to take place in society in Jordan.²⁰

**GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES
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BOYS WITH DISABILITIES.**



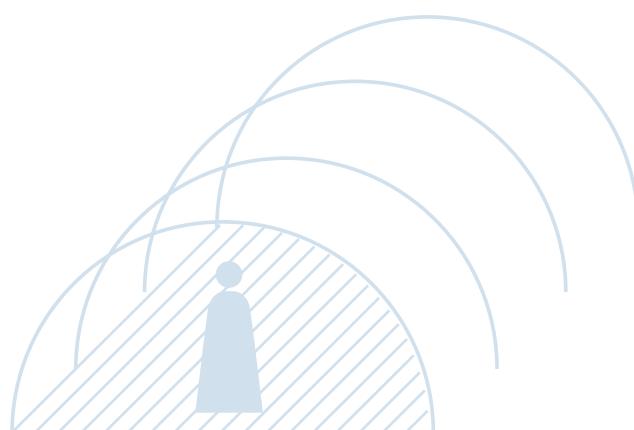
..... Who are the most marginalized groups of girls in Jordan and what does existing research tell us about them?

GIRL CHILD LABORERS

Child labor in Jordan has doubled in the last decade.²¹ The influx of Syrian refugees since 2011 has aggravated the situation in terms of scale and complexity.²² The most recent National Child Labor Survey was conducted in 2016, by the University of Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies and in collaboration with the ILO and Ministry of Labor. Covering around 20,000 households from across the 12 governorates, the survey found that around 75,982 children (or 1.9% of children) aged 5 – 17 are working (88.3% boys; 11.7% girls). Of those, 22% combine school and work, 32% work and do not go to school and 45% work, help with household chores and attend school. Common household chores cited include cooking, cleaning, washing, caretaking and shopping. Girls were more likely to engage in household chores than boys. Child labor was found to be more common among Syrian refugee children. The survey also found that a large number of Syrian children were neither working nor attending school (almost one fifth of Syrian children).²³

Boys in Jordan are more likely to be engaged in child labor than girls. Child labor negatively impacts the physical, mental, and social development of children. Children working in hazardous work are also at higher risk as they are exposed to physical and health related risks.²⁴

**ACCORDING TO THE
2016 NATIONAL CHILD
LABOR SURVEY,
1.9% OF CHILDREN
AGED 5- 17
ARE WORKING.
(88.3% boys; 11.7% girls)**



..... *Who are the most marginalized groups of girls in Jordan and what does existing research tell us about them?*

GIRLS BORN TO A JORDANIAN MOTHER AND NON-JORDANIAN FATHER

According to the Jordanian Nationality Law, a Jordanian woman married to a non-Jordanian man cannot pass her citizenship to her children. In 2014, the Ministry of Interior stated that there were over 355,000 non-citizen children of Jordanian women.²⁵ With lack of Jordanian citizenship, these children face a variety of problems, including limited access to employment, subsidized education and affordable healthcare services, as well as social exclusion. Being treated as foreigners impacts the overall wellbeing of these children as ‘the multiple forms of exclusion and discrimination they face often lead to severely diminished prospects for their future and place undue economic and social burdens on their families.’²⁶

In 2014, a decision was issued by the government to ease restrictions on the access of non-citizen children of Jordanian women to several areas including employment, education, public healthcare, acquiring a driver’s license and investment. This was done following negotiations with a legislative bloc demanding civil rights for the children of Jordanian women married to non-Jordanians.²⁷

While this was welcomed by the families of Jordanian women as a positive step forward, the promises made by the government have not been entirely fulfilled as only 20% of non-citizen children of Jordanian women have been issued identification cards between 2014 and 2018. Many have been unable to obtain the identification cards due to overly restrictive application requirements. Additionally, those who obtained the cards reported no significant improvement in their situation. Many still face legal and regulatory barriers to obtaining employment or feel that their jobs are constantly at risk. Those who failed to meet the requirements to obtain identification cards are still treated as foreigners – facing multiple barriers that prevent them from living productive and secure lives.²⁸

While all non-citizen children of Jordanian mothers are vulnerable, females can acquire the nationality within a few years after marrying Jordanian men – a pathway not available to males.

ONLY 20% OF NON-CITIZEN CHILDREN OF JORDANIAN WOMEN HAVE BEEN ISSUED IDENTIFICATION CARDS BETWEEN 2014 AND 2018.

..... Who are the most marginalized groups of girls in Jordan and what does existing research tell us about them?

GIRLS DEPRIVED OF FAMILY TIES

Many orphans and youth deprived of family ties live in residential care centers in Jordan up to the age of 18, after which they leave the center and become care leavers. While the quality of residential care centers has somewhat improved over the years, some still fail to provide children with basic needs such as nutritious food, proper clothing and hygienic facilities, and most centers lack sufficient psychological and emotional support, individualized care plans, and academic and vocational support.²⁹

Children in care tend to experience social exclusion in schools and by community members. They also go through several transitional points – such as being separated from their peers at around the age of 12 and sent to new sex-segregated centers – which adds or creates a sense of abandonment inside of them.³⁰

**GIRLS DEPRIVED
OF FAMILY TIES
ARE VULNERABLE
TO ABUSIVE AND
EXPLOITIVE MARRIAGES
AS THEY APPROACH THE
END OF THEIR
CARE EXPERIENCE.**

After spending the majority of their lives being dependent on care, they are discharged – usually at the age of 18 – and expected to transition into a life of complete independence. At this young age, and without the support of family, they are expected to find accommodation, continue education, earn a living, and start a family of their own, in a society that marginalizes them. The disadvantage of orphans and youth deprived of family ties starts and stems from their particular circumstances: ‘they are youth who have experienced hardships such as abandonment, neglect, abuse, violence or poverty from a very young age. Such circumstances play an integral role in their stigmatization as children, youth and adults in different stages and areas of life.’³¹

While all orphans and children deprived of family ties are considered highly vulnerable, girls tend to face an additional set of challenges. Research shows that female care leavers are often encouraged to marry as a ‘safety-net’ as they approach the end of their care experience. However, being born out of wedlock or coming from ‘troubled’ circumstances makes them vulnerable to abusive and exploitive marriages.³²

..... *Who are the most marginalized groups of girls in Jordan and what does existing research tell us about them?*

REFUGEE GIRLS

As of 2019, there were over 2 million Palestinian refugees,³³ 654,568 Syrian refugees, 67,266 Iraqi refugees and 23,276 refugees from other countries in Jordan.³⁴ UNHCR identified several child protection risks for refugees living in Jordan including: exposure to physical, emotional and sexual violence, neglect by family members and caregivers, exposure to child labour and exploitation, and early marriage affecting girls between 15 – 17 years of age.³⁵

In Jordan, considerable efforts are being made to research the situation of refugee children and adolescents. Research revealed that refugee girls and boys face different challenges with the severity of these challenges depending on their residency, refugee status and level of empowerment.³⁶

School enrollment of refugee children varies by age and gender. Young adolescent refugees are more likely to be in school than their older peers and adolescent girls more likely than their male peers.³⁷ Refugee girls tend to drop out of school for several reasons including distance to school, social norms, fear from harassment and early marriage.³⁸

Early marriage constitutes a real danger for refugee girls in Jordan. In 2013, 17.6% of all marriages involving female Palestinian refugees were to girls under the age of 18. Poverty was found to be one of the main drivers of child marriage among Palestinian refugees. Similarly, Syrian refugee girls are also vulnerable to child marriage as many families resort to child marriage to protect the family ‘honor’ and protect girls from violence and sexual abuse.³⁹ According to the 2015 Population and Housing Census, 4 out of every 10 Syrian married females were minors in 2015.⁴⁰

The Gender and Adolescence Program finds that many of these marriages end up in separation and divorce. Divorced girls reported experiencing social stigma on a daily basis as well as exclusion from services and programs that rarely mix unmarried girls with married girls – as the latter group is considered to have knowledge about sexual relations which may constitute bad influence on unmarried girls.⁴¹

Research finds that while there is not much research about the psychosocial wellbeing of Palestinian refugees, the wellbeing of Syrian refugee girls is at risk – as many girls have lost their homes, witnessed or experienced violence, live in poverty and have restricted mobility and agency.⁴²

CHILD PROTECTION RISKS IDENTIFIED BY UNHCR FOR REFUGEES LIVING IN JORDAN INCLUDE:

**// EXPOSURE TO PHYSICAL,
EMOTIONAL, AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

**// NEGLECT BY FAMILY MEMBERS
AND CAREGIVERS**

**// EXPOSURE TO CHILD LABOUR
AND EXPLOITATION**

**// CHILD MARRIAGE AFFECTING
GIRLS AGED 15 – 17**

..... Who are the most marginalized groups of girls in Jordan and what does existing research tell us about them?

GIRLS IN SHELTERS

According to the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD), there are four shelters in Jordan that provide women and girls who are exposed to gender-based violence, and are at a threat of being killed by their families, with protection and rehabilitation services. Some provide shelter for girls under the age of 18 and others for women over the age of 18. Additionally, there are 19 social services offices distributed in all the governorates that belong to the Family Protection Department.⁴³

According to an MOSD spokesperson, 4,527 women and girls were victims of gender-based violence in 2019. Through these shelters, 449 women and girls, and 67 children accompanying their mothers, were provided with protection and rehabilitation services in 2019.⁴⁴

These women and girls are subject to several forms of abuse and in some cases are at risk of so-called honor crimes. In 2018, 3,847 women and girls were subject to physical abuse, 393 to sexual abuse, 1,814 to neglect and 654 to psychological abuse by family members.⁴⁵

4,527
WOMEN AND GIRLS
WERE VICTIMS OF
GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE IN 2019.

FINDINGS

In this research we aim to identify the different groups of vulnerable girls in Jordan and explore the differences and similarities in the challenges that they face.

Education

Regardless of the identified vulnerability, our research found significant differences between girls who are in school and those who are not, with the former group faring much better than the latter. Girls who are in school have a higher degree of mobility, use their time doing productive work like homework, attending workshops, and are more likely to have access to friends and individuals beyond their immediate family. In their free time, most girls watch television, visit friends and family and use mobile phones to play games, watch YouTube and navigate social media platforms. 9 out of 29 in-school girls attend workshops at different community-based organizations (CBOs). Girls who are in school generally have high aspirations – with most wanting to attend university.

Of in-school girls, three groups were found to most likely face challenges in continuing higher education. With limited financial resources, girls from poor households have to maintain very high academic performance to get into the competitive stream in Jordanian universities. Girls residing in care centers face the same challenge and many lack appropriate educational support and guidance as they transition into young adulthood. Due to the lack of citizenship, the daughters of Jordanian mothers face a compounded challenge as

they cannot afford ‘foreign fees’ of higher education.

Girls who are out of school, dropped out for three main reasons: the need to work and support their family; low academic achievement coupled with a lack of supportive environment; and customs and traditions. Girls who are out of school had very limited access to services and social networks. Almost all of them were primarily responsible for household chores, including cleaning, cooking, and taking care of siblings and parents. Sleeping and as a way to pass time was found to be common across out-of-school girls who do not work. Those involved in child labor were also expected to conduct household chores – placing immense pressure on their wellbeing. Our research found that girls who are engaged in paid work were obliged to help their parents financially, despite their preference to be in school instead.

***“To be honest, I don’t like farming. I am forced to work; nobody likes this type of work. It’s very hot inside, it hurts the body and the back.”
(Girl child laborer, 17)***

Mobility

Our research found that girls' mobility was restricted for two main reasons. The first is **conservative social norms** which heavily govern the mobility and actions of many of the girls interviewed. The majority of out-of-school girls were not allowed to leave the house alone because it was socially unacceptable.

“Honestly my biggest challenge is my parents... our problem is that we live with our relatives so everything is shameful.”
(Girl child laborer, 15)

The second reason was **safety concerns**. Some girls stated that they do not go out alone because it was unsafe for them. Parents are concerned about their daughters walking alone in the streets as they could be subjected to verbal, physical or sexual harassment. This is especially true for girls who come from poor socio-economic neighborhoods, as well as girls who live in ITS.

“My parents are worried about me from crimes. If I go visit my sisters, they keep calling me.”
(Out of school girl, 17)

As mentioned above, girls who are in school generally had better access to the outside world. The majority (with the exception of two) had a relatively better degree of mobility than out-of-school girls. They went to school with siblings, relatives or friends, on foot or by bus. Many took learning support classes, training or workshops at nearby CBOs. Most of them were also allowed to visit friends and relatives.

On the other hand, out-of-school girls had very restricted mobility. Almost all girls were not allowed to leave the house without permission or without the company of the mother or a male sibling. Those who are unmarried tend to be confined at home, and the mobility of those who are married only extends to visiting their in-laws. Only 3 out of 33 girls mentioned going to nearby CBOs. 7 out of 33 had no access to social media platforms.

Given their circumstances, girls who reside in care centers were not allowed to leave the center alone, and thereby the mobility of in school and out-of-school girls was limited. For protection concerns, these girls go to and from school by bus, and go out on excursions on national holidays.

Agency and Decision Making

Our research found that overall, fathers were the primary decision makers when it came to mobility and other decisions relating to school, dress code (including putting on the veil), and whom the girls may visit. This was especially true for girls who were out of school. In some cases, the mothers shared the same views as the fathers, while others tried to help their daughters enjoy some degree of freedom. Brothers, uncles and aunts were also found to interfere in girls' decisions and choices, as one girl stated:

“My brothers comment on me so so much, regarding clothes, makeup and everything! I mean everything I do, why are you wearing this? Why do you have that on? But at the same time deep inside I am thrilled about it.”
(Out of school girl, 18)

Many girls justified this behavior by parents in general and siblings in particular as they believed girls and women are at danger in society, some describing the world as a scary place and others referring to the harassment that they face.

“The world is scary, girls and boys on the streets are not natural, if you are walking down the street with a girl and she laughs out loudly people will gather, people will talk... people talk about everything.”
(Out of school girl, 18)

Child laborers had very limited agency, especially when it came to school and work; they did not choose to work but were forced to drop out of school. Child laborers particularly working on ITSs and married girls spoke about the culture of shame and social norms that put various restrictions on them.

Lack of agency and decision making was most notable amongst married girls and young mothers. Decisions which were made by fathers and other family members were shifted to the husbands and their families after marriage. Due to the proximity of living quarters, or spending the majority time with in-laws, many girls stated that they faced problems with mothers and sisters in-law, who seemed to interfere in personal decisions. One divorced girl reflected on her time with her husband:

“I was only allowed to visit my parents once a week, and I couldn't spend the night there. Even my relatives, I couldn't visit them. I once got sick, he [husband] didn't care and didn't allow me to go to the doctor.”
(Girl married as a child, 19)

Girls residing in care centers also had limited agency, as they are considered minors and under the protection of the center. As a result, care givers and the center's administration were responsible for making decisions on behalf of these girls.

Social Relations and Support

Our research found that girls across all vulnerable groups (except for girls in care centers) mostly relied on immediate family members for support. This was especially true for those who had limited mobility and interaction with the outside world. Additionally, we found that the different groups of girls faced specific challenges in terms of acquiring support.

Girls who were engaged in child labor, especially those who lived in ITS had very limited support networks, they lived in a confined space and their relationships were limited to their families. Other than parents, siblings and cousins were a source of support. They did not mingle much with the outside world because their movement was restricted particularly as girls, and that is why their relationships were limited as well.

“We cannot go out, not even to the supermarket, everything is shameful... My brother goes, he is a boy.”
(Girl child laborer, 15)

Our findings are in line with previous research on child marriage in Jordan which demonstrated that girls who marry early find it very difficult to adapt to the marital life, mostly because of the continuous interference by the extended family of the husband. As for married girls, due to living with their in-laws, most had problems with their husband’s families and their interference in the couple’s decision making and marital relationship. Additionally, many girls spoke about problems with other family members like sisters in-law or wives of brothers in law, who tend to interfere in personal issues and bad-mouth the girls to their husbands.

“I was afraid to wake up late because of his sister, otherwise she would go and tell her mother who would then tell me, ‘Why are you still asleep? Someone might come over.’”
(Girl married as a child, 19)

We found that girls with disabilities heavily relied on their immediate family for everyday activities; most got their support from their mothers, some from both parents and others from siblings as well.

“I sometimes need my sisters; they help me get dressed... I can’t do it on my own.” (Girl with disability, 18)

Some girls with disabilities seek support from CBOs, especially for equipment.

Girls from poor households who were interviewed in this research were the most who cited teachers and CBOs as a source of support. Many go to neighboring CBOs to receive financial support but also for recreational activities which provide them with the chance to interact and bond with other girls. While friends were a source of support to mostly all the girls across vulnerable groups, girls from poor households had challenges regarding transportation costs for visiting friends or relatives, thus limiting their support networks.

“We do not visit relatives much because my dad can’t afford transportation costs” (Girl living in poverty, 17)

Finally, the social networks of girls in care centers were mostly limited to those within the centers. They reported being close to their care givers and other social workers and they have friendships with their peers inside the homes. Most girls reported not being close with their biological families as most of them came from broken homes with a history of abuse and neglect. Because of their past experiences with their families, these girls exhibited the most psychological distress and trauma.

“My friend and I went through the same circumstances; my mother was killed, and her brother was killed.” (Girl deprived of family ties, 16)

“I love my twin brothers and I really miss them. I took care of them as babies when their mother left them... now they are 13. When I call them and their mother answers, she tells me how much they are suffering from being beaten, and this takes a toll on me.”

(Girl deprived of family ties, 16)

Dreams and Aspirations

Our research found that girls who are in school had big aspirations. 23 out of 29 in-school girls aspired to complete their secondary education and enroll in university. Their fields of interest included medicine, nursing, child education, accounting, computer engineering, translation, psychology and social work. Additionally, the 3 married girls who had completed the Tawjihi examination also aspired for higher education and were interested in accounting, law and English literature.

Girls who were out of school gravitated towards work and vocational training. Many mentioned their desire to work, and to gain some degree of financial independence. Several girls recognized that it was too late for them to go back to school, and thereby learning a vocation or skill, was more beneficial to them. While some girls wanted to take cosmetology courses, others wanted to learn cooking, and a couple mentioned their interest in joining the general security forces.

Girls who are engaged in child labor were the most who demonstrated a desire to go back to school to finish their education, to work in a different profession.

“I have to go back to school, I wish I could go back. I dream of becoming a teacher when I grow up, to teach. But if I want to teach, I have to study first.” (Girl child laborer, 17)

The research clearly showed that girls engaged in child labor were living a very rough reality and dreamed of an entirely different life. In their vision boards, many aspired to be living in a house instead of a tent, to have their basic needs met, to be in school, and to live a much more comfortable life.

“I wish I can sit there [the beach], and be comfortable and happy, without work or anything. I would love to have a house, instead of this tent, to be happy, and have a better future than this one.” (Girl child laborer, 17)

Overall, girls with disabilities also expressed their desire to complete higher education. One girl aspired to establish her own business in the future in order to be self-dependent and afford physical therapy.

“I would like to have a salary to depend on myself... I would like to get physical therapy at least to stand on my legs and help myself... there’s no need to keep depending on my parents.” (Girl with disability, 18)

The majority of girls – both in and out of school and across the different vulnerabilities – expressed their desire to buy material things. Some mentioned basic items such as clothing and accessories, others wanted mobile phones, and some dreamed of owning a house and car. We also found that travelling was a common desire, as many aspired to travel to places such as Palestine, Turkey and France.

The desire to marry or have children was mostly expressed by out-of-school girls. One married girl conveyed her eagerness to have a child, in order to occupy her time and improve her standing with her mother-in-law. While many girls were also interested in getting married and having a family, they explained that this would happen only after completing school and university. Some girls spoke about the qualities that they would want to have in a future partner – highlighting their desire to find love rather than marry traditionally.

“If I get married, I want there to be love between him [my husband] and I, I saw what traditional [marriage] means and it’s not great.” (Divorced girl, 18)

“I want to find someone who is a bit free, my ex-husband drove me crazy when it came to clothes, he made me wear the jilbab, and wanted me to wear only black and not put any make-up on.” (Girl married as a child and separated, 19)

The main challenges apparent across different vulnerabilities and the two groups of participants (in and out of school) were the lack of resources and the cost of living. Poverty affected movement, access to resources, freedom to make decisions, access to education, access to trainings or services, and many other aspects of life. Girls engaged in child marriage and child labor particularly mentioned how hard the financial situation is for them and for their families.

“Sometimes when I think about having breakfast, I don’t find anything to eat at home. We are not the kind of people who get food especially for school times.” (Girl living in poverty, 16)

“I’m not in a position where I can tell you, yes I want to get married, or no I don’t want to. I have aspirations, I have dreams. There are a lot of things I want to do. Maybe I didn’t live the life I wanted, or didn’t live the childhood that normal people lived, but I would like to build a nice future for myself.” (Girl living in poverty, 17)

Girls residing in care centers expressed their concern about the future and their ability to live alone upon leaving care – at the age of 18. While some were worried about finding a place to live, others hoped that their biological families would take them in. Girls who aspired to continue education were aware of Al Aman Fund – a non-profit organization providing educational support to orphans – and hoped to secure university education and accommodation through this fund. Most girls aspired to become financially independent and effective members of society.

Annex 2 for selected vision boards.

Conclusions

This research aimed to identify the different groups of marginalized girls in Jordan and explore the similarities and differences in the challenges that they face. It finds that while all uniquely vulnerable, many girls face similar challenges, including lack of resources, limited access to opportunities and services as well as limited mobility and agency. However, those at the intersection of these vulnerabilities were found to be the most disadvantaged – with dropping out of school being one of the main variables contributing to this disadvantage. Regardless of age or vulnerability, dropping out of school was found to affect all other aspects in the girls' lives including social networks, mobility, well being, access to services, decision making power, and future pathways.

In order to ensure that girls have access to the resources and services that they need, policymakers, practitioners, and civil society need to take into consideration these unique and intersecting vulnerabilities when designing policies, programs, and interventions in order to provide them with their basic needs and improve their social protection.

ANNEX 1 – STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Member	Organization
Adham Khader	Sakeena
Ala’a Zeidan	USAID Takamol – Gender Program
Ali Al-Metleq	Higher Population Council
Areej Sumreen	Institute for Family Health – Noor Hussein Foundation
Aseel Abu Albandora	Jordanian Women’s Union
Esraa Alshyab	West Asia-North Africa Institute (WANA)
Lana Abu Saneh	Land of Peace
Noora El-Wer	Madrasati Initiative
Suhad Sukkari	Justice Center for Legal Aid
Suhaib Khamaiseh	Arab Women Organization
Rand Mohammad	I-Dare for Sustainable Development

ANNEX 2 - VISION BOARDS OF SELECTED PARTICIPANTS

Picture 1

Girl child laborer, 16



ANNEX 2 - VISION BOARDS OF SELECTED PARTICIPANTS

Picture 2

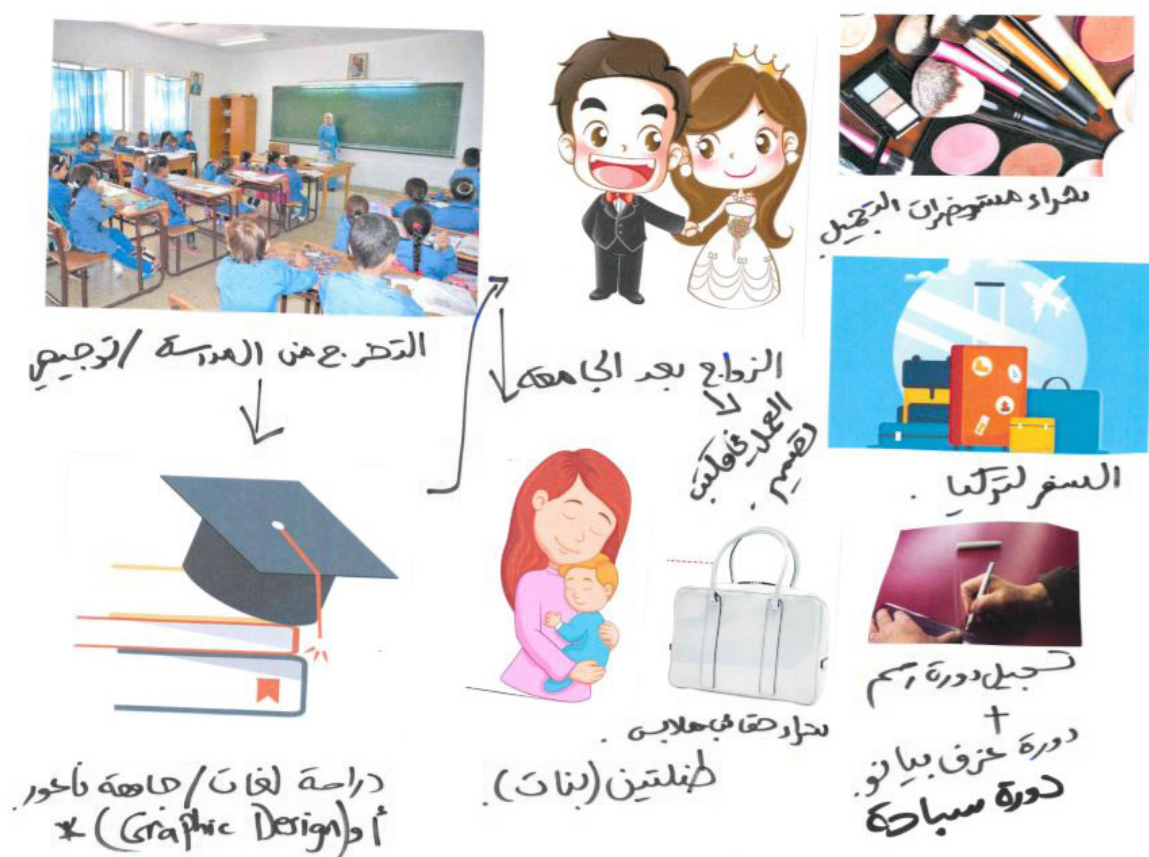
Girl married as a child, 18



ANNEX 2 - VISION BOARDS OF SELECTED PARTICIPANTS

Picture 3

Girl with disability, 13



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