



Beyond Basic Education: Promoting Opportunities for Transition to Secondary Education and Preventing Child Marriage among Syrian Refugee Girls in Urban Settings in Amman – Jordan

Post Assessment Report 2020

Contents

Background	1
About the project	2
About the assessment	4
Methodology	5
Assessment design	5
Limitations	5
About the quantitative sample	6
Findings	8
1. Targeted adolescent girls	8
1.1 The academic performance of adolescent girls shows noticeable improvement	8
1.2 The psychological wellbeing of adolescent girls is enhanced	9
1.3 Adolescent girls are more aware of the reasons and consequences of child marriage	11
1.4 Undergraduate female students are competent academic mentors for adolescent girls	13
2. Targeted caregivers	14
2.1 Families of Syrian girls have more opportunities to become economically active	14
2.2 Families of Syrian girls are more aware of the importance of education and give it priority	14
Conclusions	16
Recommendations	18

Background

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, hundreds of thousands of Syrian men, women, girls and boys have sought refuge in Jordan, making it one of the countries most affected by the crisis. Jordan hosts over 650,000 registered Syrian refugeesⁱ - 51% of them children.ⁱⁱ Around 83% of Syrian refugees live in urban centers, particularly in Amman and northern governorates including Irbid, Mafraq and Zarqa.ⁱⁱⁱ The remaining refugees live in refugee camps. Many refugees remain unregistered.

Syrian refugees who live in urban areas and are registered with UNHCR have access to services provided by UNHCR and UN agencies. These refugees are also required to obtain a Ministry of Interior (MoI) service card – through which they can access public services.^{iv} Despite this, the majority of refugees living in host communities face a highly uncertain future. With depleted savings and barriers to employment, 80% are living below the poverty line^v and 67% are in debt.^{vi} While United Nations (UN) cash assistance programs are in place to help refugees make ends meet, the majority of refugees remain highly vulnerable.

The majority of Syrians living in Jordanian host communities came from rural areas in Syria. They constitute a younger and less educated population than their Jordanian counterparts. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), 60% of Syrian refugees above the age of 15 have never completed basic schooling, and only 15% have completed secondary education.^{vii} The government has allowed registered Syrian refugee children – with a valid Ministry of Interior service card - free access to public schools.^{viii} It is estimated that in the 2016/2017 school year, 167,000 Syrian children were enrolled in formal education.^{ix} While considerable efforts have been made by the government and the international community to make education more accessible to Syrian refugees, many are at risk of non-attendance and the gap between male and female enrollment is growing.^x

It is estimated that school attendance rates for Syrian children aged 6-11 are around 70% for both boys and girls. This then drops to approximately 50% for boys and 55% for girls aged 12-17.^{xi} Several barriers were found to impede children's school attendance. Many families reported distance to school, transportation costs, cost of school supplies, and the inconvenience of school shift timing as main reasons for pulling their children out of school. There are other reasons that are specific to boys and girls. Girls tend to leave school because of their families' concern over their physical safety, exposure to boys and early marriage. Boys on the other hand tend to leave school because they are needed to work and earn money and because of increased bullying, discrimination and violence faced in public spaces and schools.^{xii}

Looking specifically at child marriage, research shows that it increases during humanitarian emergencies, driven by social and economic pressures such as poverty, lack of alternatives, gender stereotypes roles, limited access to equality education etc. Since 2011, child marriage has increased from 12% to at least 32% for Syrian marriages registered in Jordan. Most married girls stop going to school.^{xiii}

Ending child marriage is a target under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. According to Economic Impacts of Child Marriage Report published by the World Bank and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), ending child marriage would have a large positive effect on the educational attainment of girls and their children. Also, it will increase women's expected earnings and household welfare and will lead to substantial reductions in population growth overtime. In addition, it will reduce rates of under – five mortality and delayed physical development due to lack of appropriate nutrition.^{xiv}

About the project

Between November 2018 and February 2020, the King Hussein Foundation and its sister organizations, the Institute for Family Health, the Jubilee Center for Excellence in Education, and the Community Development Program worked on a pilot project that aimed to contribute to the promotion of opportunities for the transition of Syrian refugee and Jordanian girls aged 14-16 to secondary education and reduction of the problem of child marriage among them.

Prior to the project, a pre-assessment was conducted by the King Hussein Foundation's Information and Research Center with 503 Syrian and Jordanian girls to assess their perceptions, behaviors and attitudes towards education and child marriage. Of those, 410 girls were selected as beneficiaries. Girls who were targeted by this intervention had to fit at least 1 of the following 6 selection criteria in order for this project to have the best impact on them:

1. Plan to drop out of school before the age of 18 (for whatever reason)
2. Plan to get married before the age of 18 (whether they plan stay in school or not)
3. Have a physical disability
4. Have a learning disability
5. Do not plan on continuing to higher education
6. Doing poorly in school/poor grades

During the course of the project, several girls dropped out of the project for several reasons mainly because they moved out of Jordan to Syria or other countries. Therefore, the total number of beneficiaries was **314 girls**. The intervention included the following components:

- **Training of mentors:** 15 female university students (10 Syrian and 5 Jordanian) received a training of Trainers (TOT) by the Jubilee Center for Excellence with a focus on personal competencies, problem solving and managing conflict and healthy behaviors. These girls became mentors.
- **Education and psychosocial support:** 314 girls received different components of educational and psychosocial support by the trained mentors. Those who were facing challenges in education received weekly tutoring classes. The girls also received training on "Science, technology, engineering and mathematics" (STEM) as well as life skills and competencies. 43 girls received a robotics training and 31 of them took part in a robotics competition.
- **Combating Child marriage:** the girls also received awareness raising sessions on the risks and consequences of early marriage. Mentors also conduct household visits to the families of the enrolled girls to educate their parents about the hazards of child marriage and the importance of girls' education.
- **Economic Empowerment of caregivers:** home visits by the mentors identified households where economic problems represented a major threat to discontinuation of the girl's education and the potential for child marriage. Caregivers from these households were given vocational training

workshops and orientation workshops to introduce them to opportunities for self-employment and help them utilize the work permits offered by the Jordanian government.¹

The following table outlines the interventions, implementing partner, and beneficiaries:

Component	Description	Target group	Implementing partner
Training of Trainers (TOT)	mentors were trained on psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable students (young girls) to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.	15 female university students (10 Syrian and 5 Jordanian)	IFH
Academic tutoring	Weekly tutoring classes for students were giving Academic training in all subjects (English, mathematics, physics , chemistryetc.) according to the Jordanian curriculum.	323 girls	IFH – Mentors who received the TOT
Life skills training	students were trained on life skills education that aims to prepare individuals to make decisions and take positive actions to change behaviors and environments to promote health and safety and to prevent disease.	314 girls	IFH – Mentors who received the TOT
Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)	Students were trained on STEM and its principle, how to use it in everyday life, and their study	314 girls	Jubilee & Mentors
Robotics training	After completing the STEM training a group of students has the interest to participate in the Robotics competition, and they received the robotics training	43 girls received a robotics training 31 of them took part in a robotics competition	Jubilee & Mentors
Psychosocial support	PSS counselor provided psychosocial need for risk support to the girls in	40 girls	IFH

¹ It should be noted that usually this training by the Community Development Program is followed by a selection (if not all) of those trained receiving a small grant in order to start a small home-based business, in order to be mentored while implementing the skills of the training. Due to budget constraints, at the request of the donor, this was not the case for the purpose of this pilot project.

Child marriage awareness	project mentors were giving direct and indirect awareness messages about the riskiness of child marriage for girls and mothers	323 girls 80 mothers	IFH – mentors
Start your business training	families received training to start their business and to increase their opportunities finding jobs after that 50 mothers received a vocational training according to an assessment done to measure their need	75 92% of Mothers and sisters	CDP

About the assessment

In order to capture the impact of the intervention on the adolescent girls and their families, the Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (IRCKHF) conducted a pre – assessment during the start-up period of the project to assess the beneficiaries’ perceptions, behaviors and attitudes towards child marriage.

This assessment is the post – assessment which aims to capture the impact of the intervention and to measure the change in perception, behaviors and attitudes towards early marriage as a result of the participation in the intervention. The assessment aims to:

- To capture the impact of the educational intervention on the adolescent girls and their perceptions and aspirations for the future.
- To assess the impact of the combination of both education for the adolescent girl as well as the economic empowerment of the family.
- To document lessons learned and evidence-based recommendations of the pilot.

Findings of the assessment are based on the project’s outcomes and indicators:

Outcome	Indicator
<p>Outcome 1: the performance of refugee girls shows noticeable improvement; their psychological wellbeing is enhanced, and they are more self-confident about their ability to complete their education.</p>	<p>Indicator 1: By the end of the academic year, academically challenged Syrian girls are more focused on their education; they make academic progress and complete their school year successfully.</p> <p>Indicator 2: Mentors complete their TOT successfully and are able to provide young girls with the help they need.</p>
<p>Outcome 2: Families of Syrian girls have more opportunities to become economically productive. They now give priority to their girls’ education and are more aware of the hazards of early marriage and the impediments it poses to girls’ education and participation in public life.</p>	<p>Indicator 1: More and stable sources of income for families of Syrian girls become apparent. More parents are concerned with the education of their girls and want to keep them in school.</p> <p>Indicator 2: Parents of girls have more skills and practical knowledge; they open their own business or access legal work opportunities</p>
<p>Outcome 3: Model for girls’ education and prevention of child marriage is documented and widely disseminated among policy makers.</p>	<p>Indicator 1: IFH shares intervention and project results with senior and high-level policy makers and international organizations. They show interest in learning from the model and upscaling it.</p>

Methodology

Assessment design

In the pre and post assessment, IRCKHF conducted the following research activities:

	Quantitative Research	Qualitative Research
Pre assessment	503 surveys with adolescent girls in the targeted public schools in order to select 300 to be the pilot beneficiaries	6 focus groups with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Syrian adolescent girls• Jordanian adolescent girls• Mothers who will receive the “Start Your Business” training• Mothers who will not attend the “Start Your Business” training• Mentors• Teachers
Post assessment	270 surveys with adolescent girls in the targeted public schools who participated in the interventions	6 focus groups with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Syrian adolescent girls• Jordanian adolescent girls• Mothers who received the “Start Your Business” training• Mothers who did not attend the “Start Your Business” training• Mentors• Teachers

Limitations

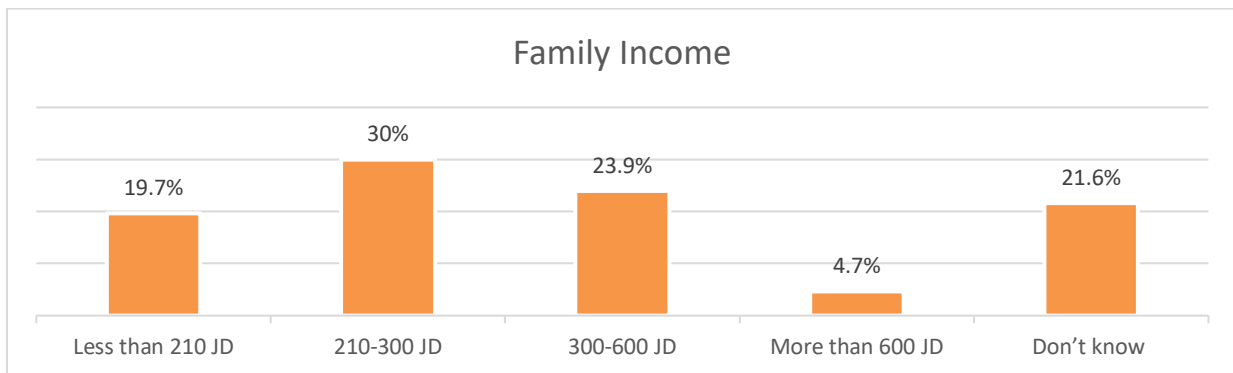
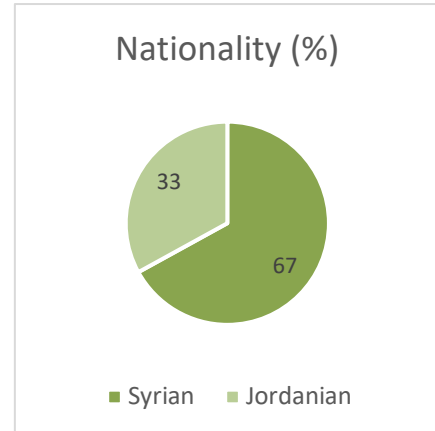
Sample variances: the research team contacted the 314 girls who were part of the intervention to be surveyed for the post assessment. The team faced several challenges in contacting them and were only able to reach 270 girls, as some have left Jordan and moved back to Syria or Turkey, and others have moved schools. Some lines were disconnected and, in some instances, parents did not want the research team to contact the girls for a survey. Also, IFH selected 57 girls to participate in the pilot after several had dropped out according to the selection criteria, however it should be noted that these students were not in the pre-assessment sample, only the post-assessment.

Phone surveys: the schools were unable to ensure student participation and the timing of the post assessment coincided with the school examination period. Due to the time limitation and challenges contacting the girls through the schools, the team had to resort to conducting phone surveys instead of face to face surveys, so that they do not influence the girls’ exams and studying schedule.

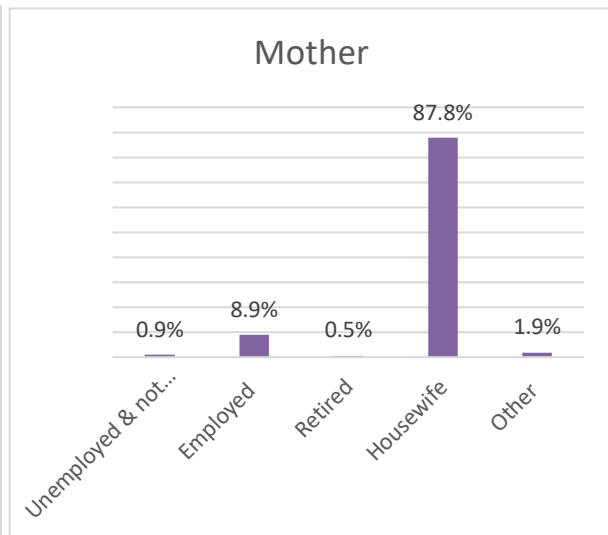
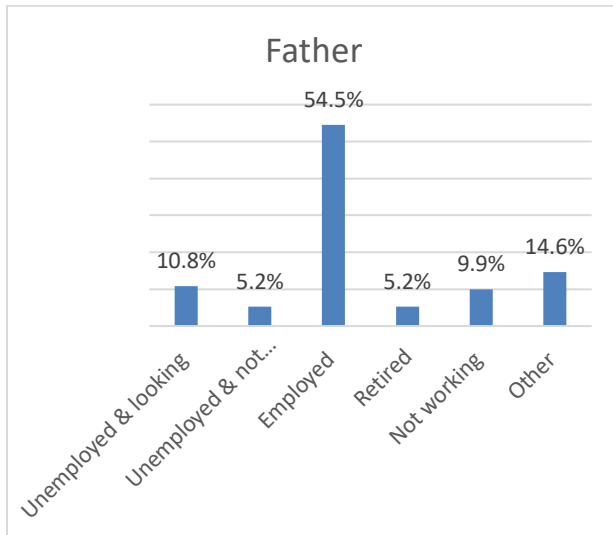
About the quantitative sample

A total of 270 of the 314 beneficiary girls were surveyed in the post assessment. Of those 213 were surveyed in the pre assessment. Therefore, **the quantitative data compares the responses of the 213 girls who took part in the pre and post assessments.** Of those surveyed, the majority of girls were 16 and 17 years of age at the time of the survey. 68.5% were Syrian, and the rest were Jordanian.²

As for the economic indicators, 49.8% of girls stated that their family income is less than 300 JDs per month. The majority of girls (80.3%) live in rented houses and 74.2% indicated that their father is the main income provider.



The charts below show the economic status of the mothers and fathers of the girls.



² All grants in Jordan targeting Syrian refugees as the main beneficiaries require that Jordanians and vulnerable groups be at least 30% of the beneficiaries and therefore not more than 70% be refugees. These percentages have been determined by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation as an unwritten rule and are enforced by the Inter-ministerial Coordination Committee when applying for approvals or grants that include Syrian refugees.

Findings

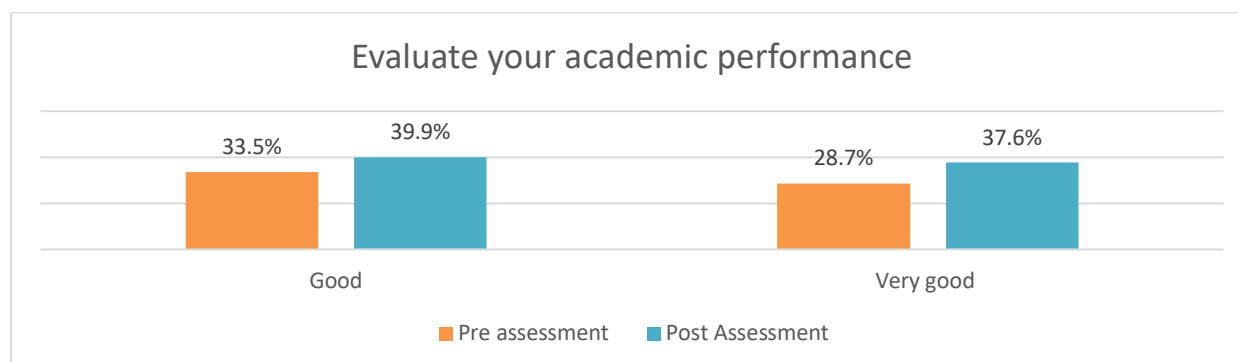
1. Targeted adolescent girls

The first outcome of the intervention focuses on the targeted adolescent girls and their ability and competencies in completing their education.

1.1 The academic performance of adolescent girls shows noticeable improvement

As part of the intervention, the 314 targeted adolescent girls were provided with weekly tutoring lessons in different academic subjects such as math, Arabic and English based on the Jordanian curriculum. Additionally, they were trained on “science, technology, engineering and mathematics” (STEM) concepts which were simplified and customized by the Jubilee Center for Excellence. The results show that the intervention was successful in improving the academic performance of the girls as the school records of targeted adolescent girls indicate significant improvement. **The academic performance of 281 out of 314 girls increased by an average of 3.6 grades.**

In the survey, the girls were asked to evaluate themselves academically. The graph shows that the percentage of girls who evaluated their academic performance as ‘good’ and ‘very good’ increased in the post assessment.



Most of the adolescent girls stated that their academic performance improved and that they achieved higher grades especially on the subjects in which they were tutored. They mentioned that the tutoring sessions were useful and helped them complete their school year successfully. Additionally, they mentioned that the simple tutoring methods used by professional and supportive teachers and mentors made a considerable difference.

“The tutoring was very useful. In a way, the tutoring classes and the school’s classes complemented each other... what I was not able to understand at school, tutoring classes helped me understand better.” (Syrian adolescent girl)

This was in line with the feedback provided by the girls’ mothers, who confirmed that the academic performance of their daughters improved remarkably. As mothers, they were pleased because the improvement in their daughters’ performance encouraged them to study harder in order to get better grades. One Syrian mother explained: *“my daughter’s academic participation at school improved, she used to stay silent in class; she wasn’t able to respond to teachers’ questions because of her weak academic level but now all of this has changed.”*

Mentors also added that as the girls' academic performance improved, this in turn enhanced their self-esteem and confidence: *"the girls got higher grades; it was amazing. They were happy and I was very happy and proud of their achievements. Honestly, I did not expect that"* (Syrian mentor).

All of the adolescent girls received STEM training sessions and most of them mentioned that these sessions were not only beneficial but also very enjoyable. 31 of them (6 Jordanians and 25 Syrians) even chose to build on this by participating in a robotics competition in which they were trained on how to design a robot and for the first time how to play chess.

The results of these trainings indicated the need for continued support. Both girls and their mothers mentioned that they are still in need for tutoring sessions in math, English and biology to help them pass their secondary education in particular (Tawjihi).

"I had a shy personality, but after participating in STEM training, I became stronger and felt that I have more responsibility. I participated in the robotics competition and met people from different countries." (Jordanian adolescent girl)

Teachers who took part in the focus group discussions indicated that they were not involved in the design or implementation of the project. They said that they heard about this project from the girls themselves. Despite this, the teachers indicated that they noticed an improvement in the academic performance of the girls. They also added that the girls became more confident, less shy or less afraid to express themselves as well as more aware of the consequences of early marriage.

1.2 The psychological wellbeing of adolescent girls is enhanced

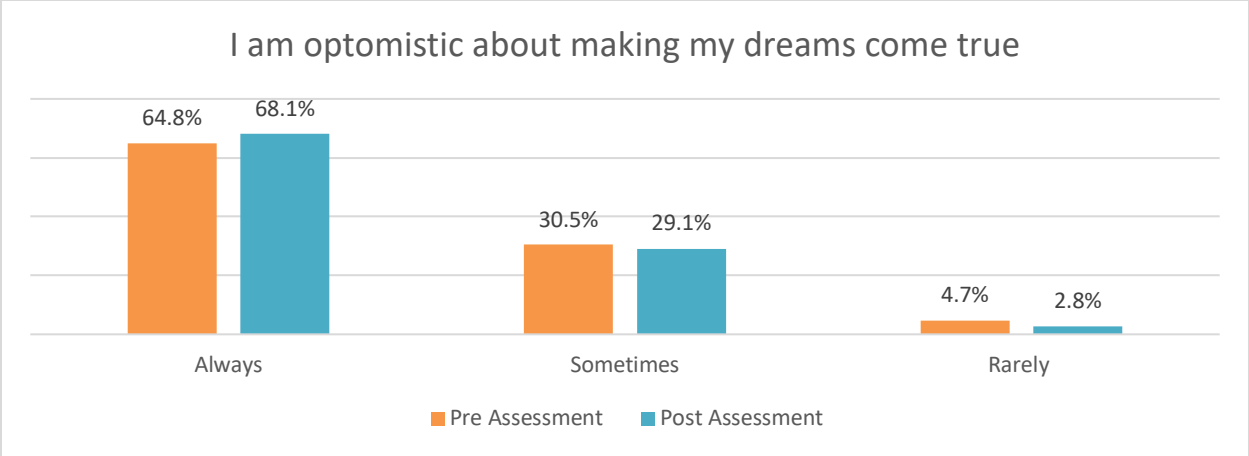
"We become friends... The project helped in creating a safe space for girls to express their selves and communicate their challenges and problems freely. Girls have changed for the better." (Syrian mentor)

As part of the intervention, adolescent girls were trained on personal life skills and competencies. The results showed that **the intervention succeeded in strengthening the agency of the adolescent girls and contributed positively to their psychological development and active participation.**

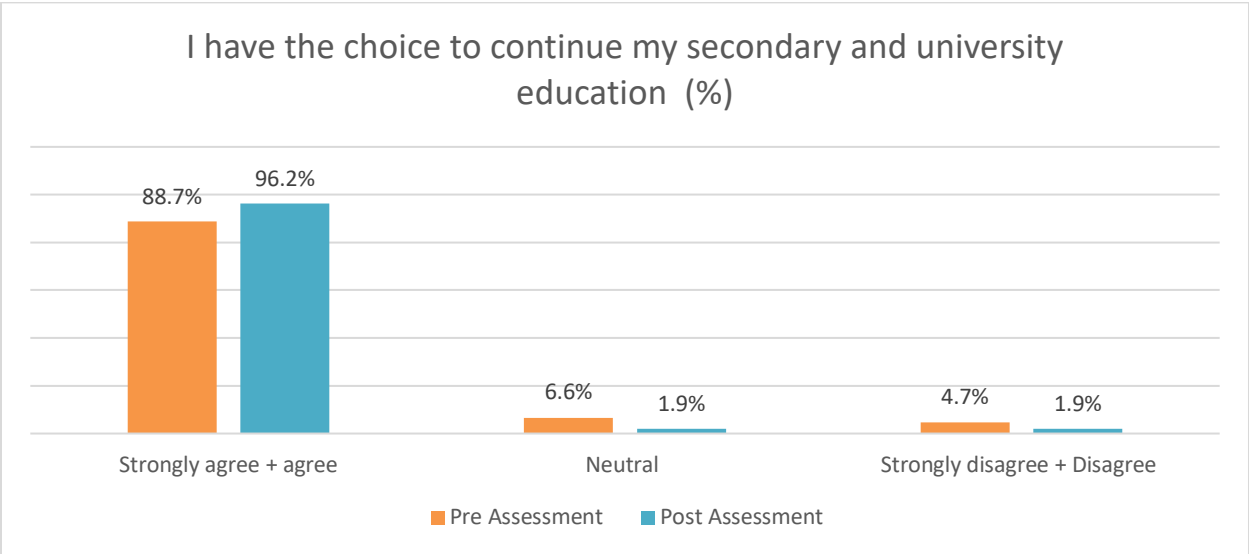
Most of the adolescent girls stated that the life skills course was the most beneficial to them for different reasons. Some of the girls stated that they gained new knowledge and skills on how to make their own choices and decisions. Others mentioned that they learned new communication skills and how to interact with other people. Also, some mentioned that as a result of the training they learned how to prioritize things. They all agreed that their problem-solving skills and time management skills have remarkably improved. One adolescent girl stated: *"I learned how to say no. And my communication skills improved"*

As a result, **most of them felt that they were now more confident about their competencies and that their aspirations for the future have been developed**, making them more focused on their dreams and hopes to complete their secondary education successfully.

In the survey, the girls were asked about how often they feel optimistic about achieving their dreams. The graph below shows that in the post assessment, more girls indicated always being more optimistic, and less girls reported rarely feeling optimistic.



Additionally, the post assessment showed that more girls believe that they have the personal choice to complete their secondary and university education.



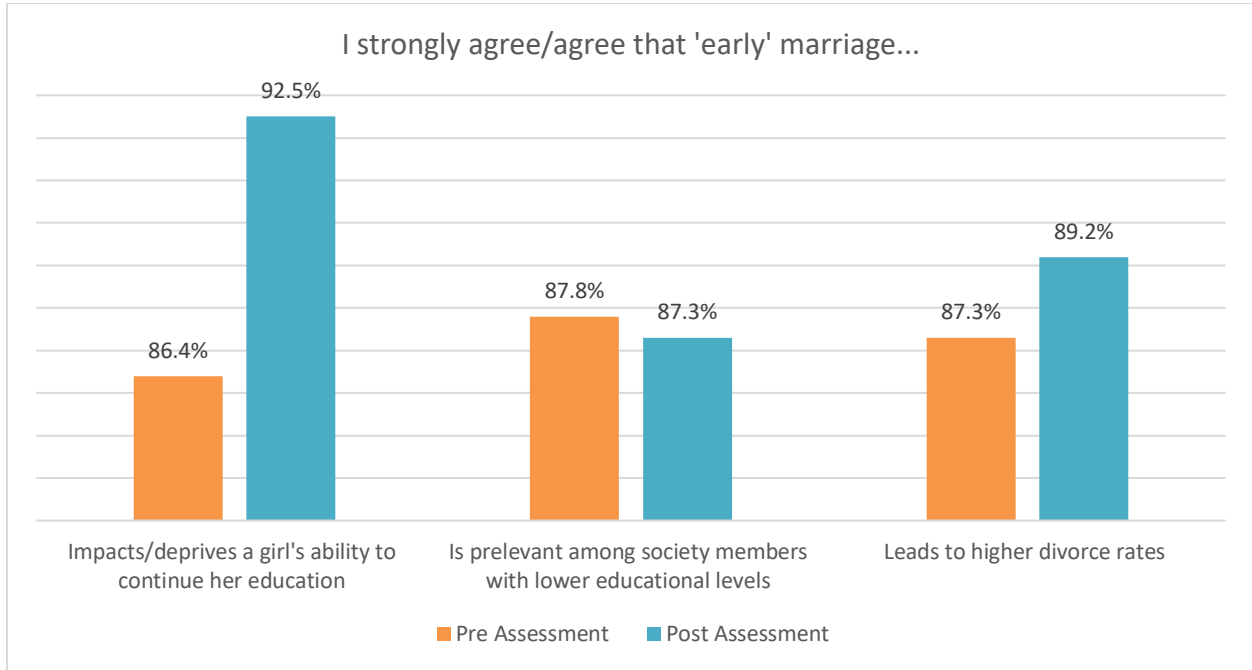
Similarly, the mothers stated that as a result of the intervention, they observed their daughters becoming more confident. They said that their daughters were more aware of the importance of completing their secondary education and that their aspirations and dreams for future changed.

Consistently, all mentors interviewed indicated that soft skills sessions had a significant impact on the girls’ personalities including their behaviors and attitudes. They noted that the girls became more confident to speak up and are more willing to ask for help. They became more interactive with others and less shy. Also, some of mentors stated that as a result of the intervention, girls became less anxious and less stressed. Some mentioned that some girls who suffered from psychological distress from trauma, social pressure, and exposure to violence, bullying and harassment were provided with psychological support sessions to address these problems and most of girls showed improvement.

The girls and their mothers also mentioned the need for additional life skills support – addressing new topics.

1.3 Adolescent girls are more aware of the reasons and consequences of child marriage

In the survey, the girls were asked several questions about 'early marriage' and its consequences. Specifically, they were asked whether early marriage has an impact on a girl's education, whether early marriage is more prevalent among society members with lower education levels, and finally if early marriage results in higher divorce rates. The graph below shows that more girls agree with these statements and thereby aware of the negative consequences of early marriage.



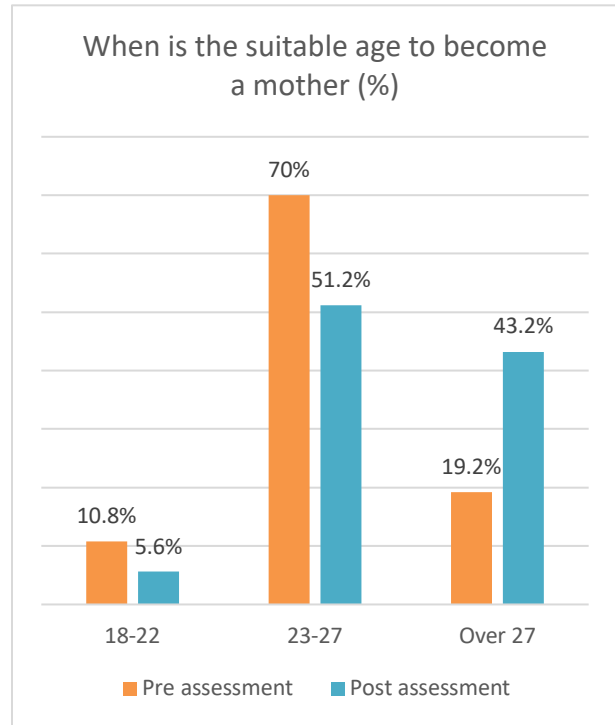
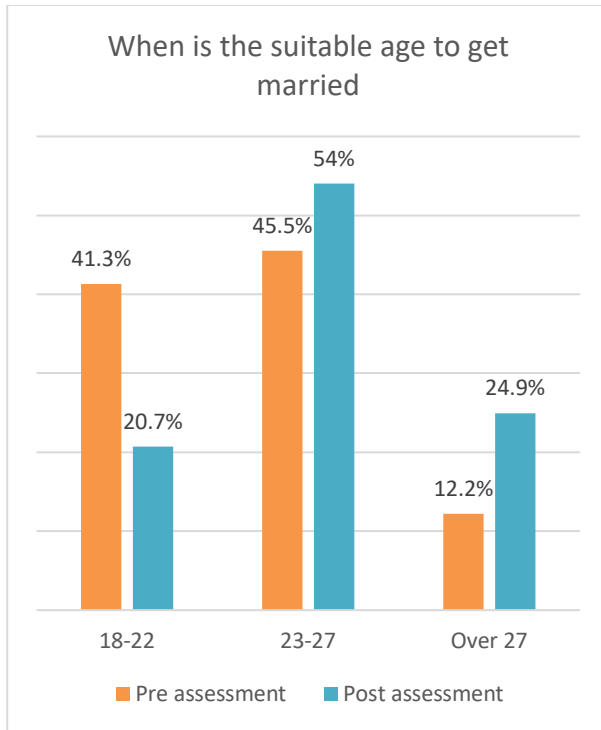
Findings from the focus groups discussions show that adolescent girls are more aware of the reasons and the consequences of early marriage. Also, they stated that as a result of the intervention, they can educate their peers on the consequences and the hazards of early marriage. Most of adolescent girls stated that the reasons of early marriage are often linked to poverty, customs and traditions, pressure from parents or relatives, and low academic achievement of the girl. Moreover, most girls agreed that early marriage not only has negative consequences on girls including divorce and health implications, but also it has a negative impact on society.

In the survey, the girls were specifically asked about the suitable age to get married and to become a mother. The charts below show that more girls believe that suitable age for marriage is 23-27 and over 27. Similarly, more girls have indicated in the post assessment that a suitable age to become a mother is over the age of 27.

“The training opened our minds about the appropriate age for marriage. One of the girls was thinking of getting married changed her mind after these sessions.” (Jordanian girl)

Figure 1 - Drawing by adolescent participant





The mothers confirmed that their daughters are becoming more aware of the reasons and hazards of early marriage. Also, they stated that their daughters are now perceiving early marriage negatively.

Most mentors interviewed also stated that adolescent girls were impacted positively by the awareness sessions and developed positive self – perception, attitudes and behaviors towards continuing their education. One mentor stated: “two girls got engaged before joining the project, after they received the awareness raising session on early marriage, they faced their families and expressed their desire to continue their education and to dissolve the engagement, and this is what happened.”

“Not only is my daughter is more aware, she is happier. She is more engaged in family discussions and conversations than before” (Mother)

Figure 2 - Drawing by adolescent



Figure 3 - Drawing by adolescent



1.4 Undergraduate female students are competent academic mentors for adolescent girls

Over the last eight years, the Jubilee Center for Excellence has been managing in Jordan a global program funded by UNHCR– DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) which provides higher education opportunities to refugees and asylum seekers. As part of the intervention, 10 female students enrolled in undergraduate studies through the DAFI program, and 5 Jordanians, were recruited and received a Training of Trainers (ToT) program with a focus on three main topics: personal competencies, problem solving and managing conflict and healthy behaviors, which aimed at instilling in young girls the will and understanding of the importance of completing their secondary and tertiary education.

The mentors who received the training stated that they became knowledgeable about the psychological characteristics of adolescence and how to deal with adolescent problems, basics of the learning process and handling learning disabilities as well as academic mentoring. Additionally, they were trained on facilitating support groups for girls to help them overcome social barriers to pursuing education.

In the mentors' focus group discussion, **all participants confirmed that the ToT program was useful as they felt that their knowledge and skills have improved** on topics such as understanding and managing emotions, developing confidence in the self and others, standing up for yourself (learning how and when to say NO), responding to stressful social situations, stress management and self-relief techniques, problem solving techniques, etc. As one mentor stated: *"I used to be nervous, life skills sessions helped me to become calmer and to control my temper"*

Moreover, mentors were trained on data collection tools including fill out questionnaires. They were trained on how to conduct field visits and how to choose the beneficiaries based on specific criteria. Also, they were trained on monitoring techniques which were used during the implementation phase. In addition, they also received training on STEM concepts which they found interesting.

Good practice: The mentors, the girls and their mothers believed that there were several 'good practices' which contributed to the success of the intervention with girls. First, the activities were conducted after school hours and on weekends. Second, transportation to and from the venue was secured and mentors accompanied the girls – which helped in building trust between the mentors and the parents. Third, in order to keep communication channels open and the parents up to date on the progress of the activities, a WhatsApp group that included the mothers and the mentors was created. One of the mentors mentioned that they are still in touch with the girls (personally) and their mothers (via the WhatsApp group), even after the completion of the project, *"We are still in contact through the WhatsApp group. Sometimes, they share questions that they want answers to. They also share their grades and their life updates."*

2. Targeted caregivers

The second outcome focused on empowering caregivers. This was done by providing 75 caregivers training on starting their own business and enhancing their sewing skills as well as awareness raising on the consequences of early marriage.

2.1 Families of Syrian girls have more opportunities to become economically active

The training was initially going to target mothers and fathers of adolescent girls, however, the trainings were conducted in the morning and most fathers were at work, and so only mothers took part in the training. The results show that **this component of the intervention was not enough to economically empower the participants**. It was clear that providing training without linking the participants with employment opportunities or providing them with grants to start their own business was insufficient. Most mothers explained that due to the harsh economic conditions of their families, they are barely able to cover their daily costs, let alone finance starting their own business.

*“My husband is unemployed; we can barely pay the rent. I need money to start my sewing project. At the same time, I cannot take a loan because I do not have enough to pay it back.”
(Mother)*

Some expressed that the training motivated them, but then they were disappointed that they could not put what they learnt into practice, as one mother stated: *“I was excited to start my sewing project, we thought that they will finance our projects. This did not happen... I was disappointed.”*

Finally, since most of the participants in the training were illiterate, many found the concepts too complicated.

2.2 Families of Syrian girls are more aware of the importance of education and give it priority

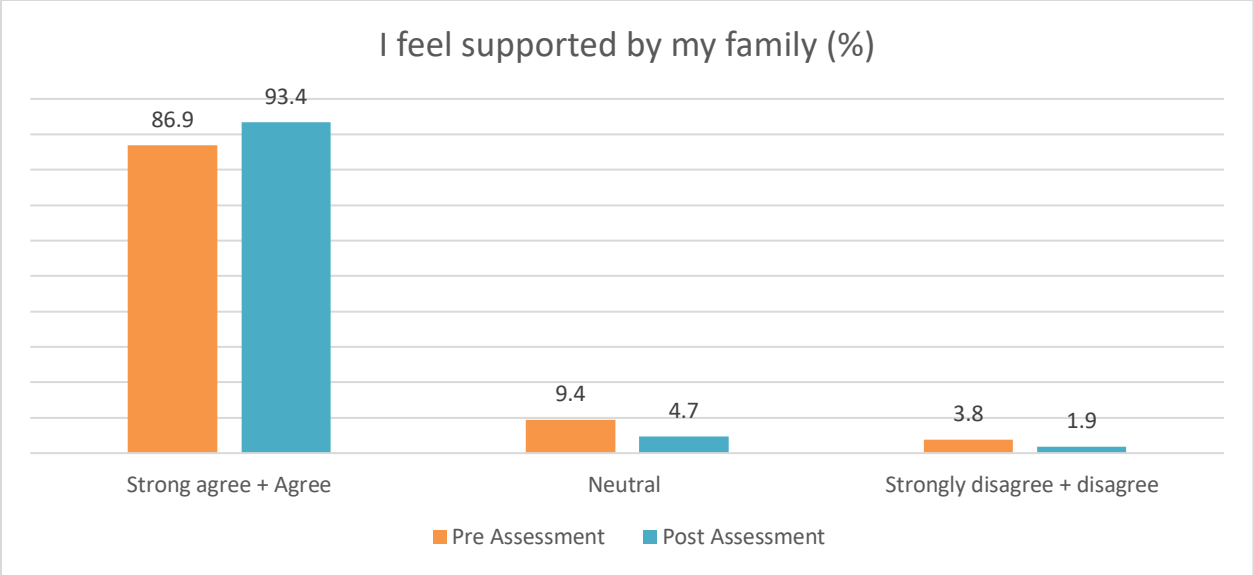
As part of the intervention, mothers of adolescent girls attended awareness sessions on the negative social and health consequences of early marriage and on the importance of girls' education.

The mothers stated that as a result of the intervention, they are now more aware of the reasons and negative consequences of early marriage and are more mindful of the importance of girls' education.

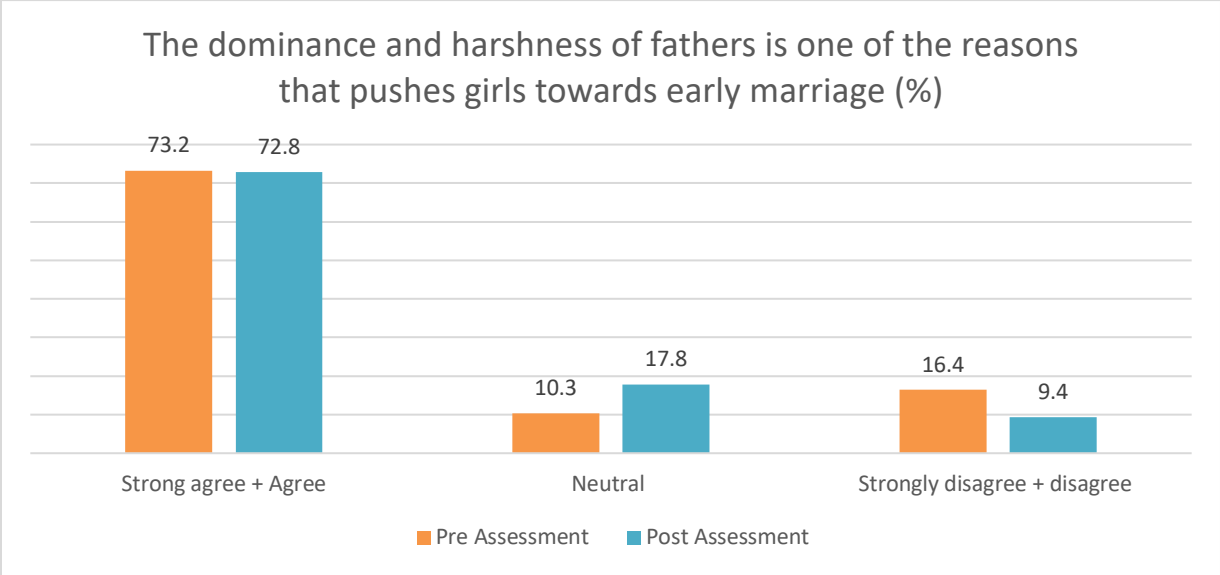
It is important to note that some of the mothers were married-off in early age themselves. They shared their experiences and challenges that they faced because of early marriage. Some of mothers pointed out that child marriage - which is driven by ignorance and traditions - deprived them from their childhood and from continuing their education. Therefore, they believe that they will not marry-off their daughter before they at least finish secondary school.

“My father married me off when I was 14 years old. At that time, I didn't know what marriage means, I grew up with fear” (mother)

Furthermore, in the survey, the girls were asked whether they feel supported by their families. The graph shows that slightly more girls indicated feeling supported which may be a result of the engagement of families in this project.



Finally, in the survey, the girls were asked whether one of the reasons that pushes girls to resort to early marriage was the dominance and harshness of fathers over their girls. The results show that a high percentage of girls still believe that this is true. This is an indication of the role of fathers in such issues and the importance of involving them in similar programming.



Conclusions

This pilot project has shown great potential as a comprehensive model for the prevention of child marriage. Even with its limitations, the pilot succeeded in strengthening the voice and agency of the girls, improving their academic performance, and delaying their perceptions on suitable ages for marriage and having children. This confidence was recognized by the girls, mentors, mothers, and teachers.

What can be considered a true success to illustrate this impact, as mentioned by the mentors, are the two adolescent girls who were engaged and confronted their families to dissolve their engagements. The mentors felt that the girls did this as a result of the trainings and knowledge they gained from this intervention because the intervention succeeded in strengthening the agency of the adolescent girls and contributed positively to their psychological development and active participation. As a result of the life skills training and psychosocial support, the assessment showed that the girls become more confident to speak up and are more willing to ask for help.

In addition to preventing child marriage, the assessment showed that the academic intervention – namely the tutoring sessions, STEM, and robotics training – was successful in improving the academic performance of the targeted girls. Not only was this noticeable by the mothers and teachers, but the percentage of girls who evaluated their performance as good or very good increased in the post assessment.

The assessment shows that the awareness raising component of the project was also successful in making the girls and their mothers aware of the negative consequences of early marriage. For example, prior to the intervention, 41.3% of girls stated that 18-22 was a suitable age to get married. This percentage dropped to 20.7% after the intervention. More girls now believe that ‘early marriage’ impacts a girl’s ability to continue her education and leads to higher divorce rates.

It was highlighted in post assessment that there were several ‘good practices’ which contributed to the success of the intervention with girls. First, the activities were conducted after school hours and on weekends. Second, transportation to and from the venue was secured and mentors accompanied the girls – which help in building trust between the mentors and the parents. Third, in order to keep communication channels open and the parent’s up to date on the progress of the activities, a WhatsApp group for the parents was created.

This pilot however was unable to examine the relationship between the economic empowerment of the family to determine whether or not this had an impact on girls entering a child marriage, as was originally intended. This requires an increase in household income which did not happen, which if was in the form of a business would need time to develop. The results show that this component of the intervention, the Start Your Business training, was not enough to economically empower the mothers and families. It was clear that providing training without linking the participants with employment opportunities or providing them with grants to start their own business was insufficient.

Furthermore, the model was only able to draw in mothers, not others especially, and especially male family members who often are the decision makers for a girl entering a child marriage. Therefore, in order

for this model to be truly comprehensive, more focus and resources are needed for the economic empowerment and involvement of other family members.

In order to be a comprehensive and holistic intervention for the prevention of child marriage, as was the objective of this pilot, more focus, time, and resources need to be given to the other family members in order to raise their awareness, lessen their economic frustrations, and change their attitudes and practices towards child marriage. Because as it is now, child marriage is seen used as a method for poverty alleviation, and improving their economic situation even slightly in addition to increasing the family's value of a girl's education must include this change in perceptions towards child marriage in all family members, not just the girls and their mothers.

Nevertheless, the significant impact on the girls themselves should not be diminished. Her increased awareness about the risks of child and early marriage, value for her education, aspirations for the future, and confidence to speak up for herself have unquestionably increased. Empowering her is the first step, alongside creating an enabling environment for her that allows her to excel without the barrier of a child marriage.

Recommendations

- **Distinguishing the difference between child and early marriage.** Oftentimes ‘child marriage’ and ‘early marriage’ are used interchangeably, however there is a significant difference. According to the Convention for the Rights of the Child (CRC), child marriage is when a girl is married before the age of 18. And while the CRC does not blatantly address ‘early marriage’, it does refer to the consequences often associated with it such as protection from violence, rights to health, education, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, etc. And since ‘early marriage’ is subjective, it can often be ambiguous. Therefore, the project goal should be framed to prevent child marriage and in addition to that, delay early marriage. The intervention activities already raise awareness on the risks and consequences of child marriage, and therefore just need to be translated to advantages of delaying early marriage.
- **Start Your Business training should include small grants or loans in order to implement learned skills.** The Start Your Business training by the Community Development Program usually includes some small grants for a select few of the trainees to continue to implement the skills while being mentored by the trainers. This motivates all those who attend the trainings to try their best, in addition to actually having a tangible economic impact on those who receive the grants. If small grants cannot be obtained through the project grant, then partnerships with the private sector and micro-finance companies should be considered in order for them to play this role. Once an economic impact is seen, the effect it would have on child marriages will also be seen.
- **Child marriage prevention interventions should start no later than the 8th grade.** It should be noted that originally this project was aimed at targeting 10th graders only, as agreed in one of the initial project meetings with the Ford Foundation and organizations of the King Hussein Foundation in 2018. However, during the preassessment it became clear that 10th grade was too late, in fact 2 girls were identified as having already been married and divorced. For this reason, it is highly recommended that any future interventions to prevent child marriage should start no later than the 8th grade, but can actually start even earlier than that.
- **Extend the duration of the project.** It was clear that more time was needed for the programs themselves but also for a greater impact to be apparent. This would be applicable to the adolescent girls as well as for the economic empowerment of their families. A major component of this project is not just preventing child marriage through improving life and academic skills but also changing attitudes and practices, which takes longer to truly be seen. The fact that an improvement could be seen with the adolescent girls within the span of a year is commendable, and an indicator that if give more time more can be done with other family members.
- **Role of boys and men.** The project was originally designed so that the Start Your Business Training by the Community Development Program would bring in the participation of both male and female adult family members interested in economic empowerment initiatives. However due to work obligations, fathers and brothers did not participate, only mothers did. While it is still extremely important to economically empower them as well, the more significant aspect is to

raise their awareness about their role in the cultural and gender norms that contribute to, as well as their role in the mitigation of, child marriage.

- **Have an orientation session with the teachers prior to the start of the project and an ongoing mechanism for communication with them.** The focus group discussion with the teachers showed that they were aware of the project via the girls themselves. Even though the project partners communicated directly with the Ministry of Education for approvals and with the senior administration of the schools, it would be beneficial to all to have an orientation session for the school teachers so that they hear about the project directly from the partners as opposed to from the students. Also, opening this channel of communication provides an opportunity for teachers to give their feedback and recommendations to the project implementers on a regular basis.
- **Enhance and scale-up life skills training.** Of all the trainings received by the adolescent girls, the one that they felt had the greatest impact on them was the life skills training. For future interventions, if resources allow, perhaps a second more advanced life skills training could be included, which may further develop their creative thinking, critical thinking and problem solving, decision making, and financial management skills, as well as life skills in the form of soft skills for job-seekers. In the long run, it should be discussed with the Ministry of Education to include life skills as a compulsory component of the educational curriculum for all adolescent students.
- **Include awareness sessions for adolescent girls about human rights.** It was clear that the girls had more confidence in themselves and were more assertive especially when it came to their aspirations for the future, and that their overall voice and agency improved. It is also worthwhile informing them about what are their rights as children, as girls, and as women as laid out by the international conventions that Jordan has signed, as well as by national policies and laws. This can easily be tied to child marriage, as the consequences of child marriage often hinder those human rights.
- **Consider a social impact assessment that highlights the social return on investment.** There is no doubt that the project had a positive impact on the girls, whether in regard to raising their awareness and delaying marriage or enhancing their voice and agency. In order to monetize the social impact from their perspective, in addition to pre and post assessments, or monitoring, evaluation, education, and learning, consider assessing the social impact of the project from the perspective of the beneficiaries, mainly the girls and their families. A ratio can then be calculated to monetize the value of this change for every dollar spent on empowering girls to prevent child marriage. Furthermore, it would show which of the activities and trainings had the greatest impact in the intervention, in order for project partners to further develop this, hence creating a multiplier effect. This could also be a strong tool for fundraising for future child marriage prevention projects and advocacy.

END NOTES

- ⁱ UNHCR (2018), [Jordan 2018 Fact Sheet](#)
- ⁱⁱ European Commission (2018), [European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations Jordan](#)
- ⁱⁱⁱ MOPIC (2016), [Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis \(2016-2018\)](#)
- ^{iv} Amnesty International (2016). [Living on the Margins: Syrian Refugees in Jordan Struggle to Access Health Care.](#)
- ^v UNHCR (2018), [Jordan 2018 Fact Sheet.](#)
- ^{vi} European Commission (2018), [European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations Jordan](#)
- ^{vii} International Labor Organization (2015). [Impact of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian labour market.](#)
- ^{viii} UNICEF (2016), [Running on Empty: The Situation of Syrian Children in Host Communities in Jordan](#)
- ^{ix} Overseas Development Institute (2017), [A promise of Tomorrow: The Effects of UNCHR and UNICEF Cash Assistance on Syrian Refugees in Jordan.](#)
- ^x UNICEF (2016), [Running on Empty: The Situation of Syrian Children in Host Communities in Jordan](#)
- ^{xi} UNICEF (2016), [Running on Empty: The Situation of Syrian Children in Host Communities in Jordan](#)
- ^{xii} Overseas Development Institute (2017). [A promise of Tomorrow: The Effects of UNCHR and UNICEF Cash Assistance on Syrian Refugees in Jordan.](#)
- ^{xiii} From proposal
- ^{xiv} Economic Impacts of Child Marriage Report, the World Bank and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), 2017