TIME TO BE A CHILD: Play, learning and child-centred development for children affected by the Syrian crisis

War Child UK

Location: Zarqa, Mafraq and Zaatar refugee camp in Jordan
Target population: Syrian refugees and host community
Intervention type: Early Childhood, Care & Development (ECCD) Education in urban and refugee camp settings
Date started: July 2016
Number of beneficiaries reached: Over the programme cycle, 4,320 learners will have access to ECCD

Written by Jessica Oddy
From July 2016 to July 2019, War Child UK, through its ‘Time to Be a Child’ programme will provide 4,320 children in Jordan with Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCD).

The learning outcomes covered in the baseline and endline surveys and in the War Child-developed ECCD curriculum are contained in the five domains: social behaviours and skills, perception of self and environment, cognitive skills, language and communication skills and physical development. The assessment consists of 66 items completed in exercises (embedded in the curriculum led by the teacher while the child engages proactively either by reading cards, drawing, colouring, and counting objects. The data from ECCD Level one in the first cycle of 418 children indicated the highest percentage of progress compared to all other activities, with 98% of children demonstrating improvement.

It is critical to support parents to build strong early learning foundations. Through our complementary ‘Positive Parenting’ and ‘PARENTS DEAL’ interventions, 1,728 parents and caregivers have been supported to develop skills and knowledge in child development principles and how to reinforce these learnings at home.

We are ensuring children follow a structured scheme of study in both the camp and host community settings. Central to this has been the provision of an early childhood facilitator training and the development of structured multi-level Life Skills education materials in conjunction with the Early Childhood Education department in Jordan.
INTRODUCTION

Educational opportunities are shaped long before a child enters a classroom. The linguistic, cognitive, and social skills they develop in early childhood are the foundations for lifelong learning. Child development research highlights that early childhood covers three main age periods, each with its own characteristics and requirements: 0–3 (including the period of conception to birth), 3–6 and 6–8 years. All children up to 8 years need multi-sectoral support to enable their growth and development.

Early Childhood, Care & Development (ECCD) programmes, help children transition to school and promote retention and success at school. Integrating ECCD activities and services also has a multiplier effect; reducing poverty and increasing national productivity over time by lowering health and education costs.

ECCD programmes have a specific role to play in emergency settings. Evidence demonstrates that young children in emergencies are prone to ‘toxic stress’ – a condition caused by extreme, prolonged adversity in the absence of a supportive network of adults, or by being in contact with deeply stressed or incapacitated caregivers. An accumulation of toxic stress becomes detrimental to a child’s development and evidence demonstrates that without interventions to mitigate the effects, children have a greater likelihood of starting school late, developing aggressive behaviour and having lower achievement in school and at work, in addition to poor physical and mental health.

For parents in crisis situations, evidence suggests that parents and caregivers may find that they have conflicting priorities, stress, and face a daily struggle to cover basic services, which in turn impacts upon their parenting practices.

In 2015, War Child UK conducted an in-depth needs assessment of education provision for refugees in Jordan. Findings demonstrated that whilst there was a plethora of organisations providing informal education for displaced Syrian children, there were very few organisations working in ECCD in emergencies. ‘Time to be a Child’ is a three-year programme that will deliver play, learning and child-centred development activities to children affected by the Syrian crisis in Jordan and Lebanon.

Psycho-social support, life skills, recreational activities and ECCD will be provided to children through a series of ‘safe spaces’. Psycho-social support (PSS) is also be delivered to parents and caregivers, supporting the maintenance and creation of safe and nurturing home environments. Child protection committees formed of local adults keep children safe and build awareness of child rights. ‘Time to be a Child’ is a joint initiative of the War Child family; activities in Lebanon are led by War Child Holland and in Jordan, the programme is delivered together by War Child UK and War Child Canada.
Education and displacement in Jordan

According to UNHCR’s latest statistics, there are currently 655,732 Syrian refugees living in Jordan. Nearly 82% of registered Syrian refugees live in host communities, of which 52% are children under 18. The vast majority of Syrian refugees live outside of the refugee camps.

The situation of refugee children deteriorated significantly in 2015, mainly driven by the prolonged nature of the crisis and increasing unemployment and underemployment amongst the refugee workforce. UNICEF data shows a sharp decrease in the capacity of Syrian families to generate income in 2015. In early 2015, the percentage of Syrian refugee families living below the national poverty line of 68 Jordanian Dollars per month was as high as 69%, peaking at 86% in urban areas. Left without income and having exhausted their savings, families are increasingly unable to meet their children’s basic needs including feeding them regularly, paying for transportation to school and accessing healthcare. Financial constraints represent the most significant barrier to refugee children’s enrolment in schools and the major determinant for school dropouts. Approximately 15,400 Syrian refugee children are not enrolled in formal education due to financial constraints and 5,300 Syrian refugee children have been withdrawn from education since their arrival for the same reason. In 2016, at least 40% of refugee children in Jordan aged 12-17 were not attending education.

To date, Syrian refugee children’s access to early education has proved challenging. Whilst there is a formal ECCD curriculum in Jordan, ECCD provision is predominately private and expensive fees make these services out of reach for the majority for Syrian families. Despite the growing body of knowledge about the benefits of investment in ECCD, INGOs, NGOs and civil society organisations, often due to funding constraints, have also been unable to address all the gaps.

In February 2016, at the Supporting Syria and the Region conference in London, donors and host countries, including Jordan, pledged to ensure that all Syrian refugee children in the region were enrolled in school in the 2016-2017 school year. At the time, the UN estimated that 715,000 Syrian refugee children aged 5 to 17 were not receiving any education in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. The latest UN estimates indicate that 536,000 Syrian children are still not in school in these countries, which host the largest number of Syrian refugees in the region. Furthermore, as of September 2016, Jordan reported that its funding shortfall was US$171 million, and it was still US$71 million short by the end of December 2016.

Despite this, in its ongoing efforts to further improve its holistic response to the impact of the Syria Crisis, Jordan took yet another pioneering initiative by signing the Jordan Compact. Jordan is already providing public education services to 90% of registered Syrian boys and girls founded on their aim to ensure No Lost Generation. Jordan has also been working hard to mobilise sufficient resources to provide educational catch up programmes to a remaining 25,000 Syrian children by the 2016/2017 school year.
Photo: Syrian refugee children’s access to early education has proved challenging © War Child
INTERVENTION

War Child UK’s early education approach promotes teaching and learning to ensure children’s ‘school readiness’ and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life. Currently, War Child UK is supporting ECCD across three areas in Jordan, Mafraq, Zarqa and Zaatari refugee camp. The ‘Time to Be a Child’ programme is open to children aged between 3 to 6 years of age and both Syrian and host community children are eligible to attend.

In urban areas, the ECCD programmes take place in Community Based Organisations (CBOs). The ECCD intervention has several components:

1. Structured learning and play for children

Each child attends an ECCD centre 3 times a week for 3 hours. In 2016/2017 War Child UK worked with national experts to develop a multi-level Life Skills based curriculum - Level one and Level two. In 2017, War Child UK will develop level three, enabling children to benefit from cumulative learning, through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. The Life Skills Curriculum promotes teaching and learning to ensure children’s ‘school readiness’ and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

War Child UK’s Life Skills Education curriculum addresses the following areas of learning and development.

- physical, social, personal, emotional and cognitive development; (this includes early literacy and numeracy)
- creative and aesthetic skills and knowledge through engaging in dance, music, drama and visual art activities;
- knowledge of personal health and safety;
- understanding of the relationship between people and the environment;
- awareness of social relationships.

All areas are interconnected and are particularly crucial for igniting children’s curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. Life skills, such as taking turns, following directions and articulating thoughts and feelings are incredibly important for young children to learn. Life Skills education is integrated into the daily classroom practice to expose children to a range of knowledge, skills and values that strengthen their learning and development.

War Child UK also drew upon international pedagogical approaches, such as Montessori, to ensure that the classroom is a “living room” for children. Within the centres, each classroom has four distinct work areas—on tables or on rugs on the floor, where children work in small, mixed groups to complete tasks. The sensorial materials enable the child to order, classify and describe sensory impressions in relation to length, width, temperature, mass, colour, etc.

The numeracy curriculum, through concrete manipulative materials, allows the child to internalise the concepts of number, symbol, sequence, operations and memorisation of basic facts. The language work includes oral language development, written expression, reading, and the study of grammar, creative dramas and children’s literature. Basic skills in writing and reading are developed using loose alphabet letters and various presentations allowing children to effortlessly link sounds and symbols and to express their thoughts in writing. Each child has an individual file, where homework sheets and classwork are stored. Children will receive their file at the end of their cycle and attend a graduation ceremony with their parents and caregivers, giving them a sense of achievement.

During the sessions, children are also provided with a nutritious snack. War Child Jordan has taken a considered approach to providing children with nutritious snacks in all its ECCD centres, with the rationale that giving children a short break to allow them to eat a healthy snack can help to encourage concentration and reenergise tired students. The INEE guidance note on school feeding and WFP provides specific recommended calories in a school feeding programme. It recommends for children ages 6-14 about 550-700 calories (1/3 of daily calorie requirement) and mentions micronutrients like vitamin A, iron, iodine. As children War Child’s spaces are attending for 3 hours a day and they are younger (age 4-6 requires fewer calories), the programme aims to provide the following, which totals 200 calories per day:

- Piece of vegetable (carrot or cucumber) on average 36 calories
- Piece of fruit (banana or apple) on average 100 calories
- 125 ml of milk 70 calories

2. Teacher Training for Early Childhood Facilitators

Within the centres, there are two ECCD facilitators per 20 children (1:10 ratio). This enables the facilitator to consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child and to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all the areas of learning and development. Where possible, War Child has attempted to recruit both male and female ECCD facilitators, however male practitioners remain a rarity in early years education.

All ECCD facilitators have been trained on the curriculum and methodology and have reported that they have found the teaching and learning materials comprehensive and easy to use in the classroom. Supporting facilitators through providing technical expertise, joint classroom observations and feedback has been an integral part of the ECCD programme. A quality learning experience for children requires a quality workforce.
3. Positive Parenting and PARENTS DEAL training for caregivers

During early childhood, children spend the most time with their parents, therefore parents are their number one teacher. By providing parents with the tools, resources and knowledge, they will be better equipped to prioritise and support children’s learning needs. As part of the ‘Time to be a Child’ programme, War Child incorporates several caregiver support approaches; namely International Rescue Committee’s Positive Parenting, and War Child Holland’s PARENTS DEAL, which seek to improve the skills of children and parents to better deal with challenges of everyday life in conflict-affected areas. They learn how to express their emotions, communicate and confront difficult situations, and build relationships with peers, family members and other adults.

- Positive Parenting sessions provide adults with the skills, knowledge and materials to continue educating their children outside of the classroom. Involving caregivers is an integral part of any successful ECCD programme. The sessions cover child and adolescent development, enabling parents to understand their children’s different needs.
- The Parental Education training can also be delivered as a standalone training, applicable for parents and families who may not be able to access formal ECCD centres.
- PARENTS DEAL help parents and caregivers to build skills to provide children and young people with appropriate and effective care and psycho-social support. Through PARENTS DEAL caregivers explore concepts of child development and wellbeing, child rights and parental responsibilities. Together caregivers find solutions for the challenges they face, and enhance their ability to care for their children in a practical and relevant way.

The table below highlights the range of services and beneficiaries across the different programme sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War Child Canada</th>
<th>War Child UK</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 centres</td>
<td>2 centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>960 children (0-4)</td>
<td>960 children (0-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>480 children (5-6)</td>
<td>480 children (5-6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,800 children (7-15)</td>
<td>1,800 children (7-15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 youth (16-24)</td>
<td>300 youth (16-24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>576 caregivers</td>
<td>576 caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 community members</td>
<td>600 community members</td>
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<tr>
<td>= 4,716 beneficiaries</td>
<td>= 4,716 beneficiaries</td>
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**Total ECCD beneficiaries: 14,148**

**Implementation & Monitoring**

War Child has worked to ensure equity through a focus on inclusion and participation as cross-cutting themes. In communities hosting refugees from Syria, the programme is equally benefitting host communities and refugees. Furthermore, we ensure the most vulnerable children have access and actively participate in programme activities by utilising vulnerability criteria when registering beneficiaries. The beneficiaries were targeted through outreach activities, in which War Child staff made house-to-house visits and phone call follow-ups in the targeted communities. During the outreach, staff met the families of the children to introduce the ‘Time To Be A Child’ programme and give a brief description of the programme’s components and activities. Staff also completed a registration template which includes vulnerability criteria, allowing staff to calculate a vulnerability score for each child. The profile of a highly vulnerable child includes those with disabilities, those who dropped out of school, those who are currently out of school, and those who are enrolled but not regularly attending school.

After reviewing each child’s vulnerability score and placement test result, the most vulnerable children were prioritised for enrolment to our programme.

Programme teams use a variety of tools and approaches to monitor and document programme progress. To ensure effectiveness, we have used participatory monitoring mechanisms such as the Child Safety Report Card and have established Community-based Child Protection Committees (CBCPCs) in each centre. These aim to increase ownership by the community and thus the relevance and the effectiveness of the Child Safety Report Cards are used to better understand children’s perceptions of their own safety. This War Child methodology is child-centred, training children to lead surveys that use a child-friendly rating scale to determine how safe their peers feel at home, in school and in their communities. Report cards are then produced to present the findings, along with children’s recommendations for change.
KEY MILESTONES AND OUTCOMES

Relevance
Over the past year, ECCD has been increasingly recognised as a critical gap in the humanitarian response in Jordan. Recently an initiative to map and coordinate efforts in ECCD has begun, led by the No Lost Generation Initiative (NLG). War Child UK has been identified as a key ECCD provider, and Education Advisors will be involved in the efforts to create a regional community of practice and establish coordination mechanisms on ECCD.

Building upon principles of good practice and recognising the need to work with not just children, but also caregivers and the wider community to address their various needs in a challenging context, the programme is holistic in nature, working with a wide range of stakeholders. The table below demonstrate the number of beneficiaries, with bespoke interventions ensuring that the content is relevant and contextualised.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beneficiary groups</th>
<th>(Target)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children aged 3-4: ECCD, Kindergarten, referrals</td>
<td>2,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children aged 5-6: Basic Learning, referrals</td>
<td>1,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community members: CPCs, training, awareness events</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female caregivers: ECCD/positive parenting, Parents DEAL, referrals</td>
<td>1,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male caregivers: ECCD/positive parenting, Parents DEAL, referrals</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall caregivers = 1,728</td>
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Innovation
War Child UK partnered with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to engage the nation’s leading ECCD experts in developing a high-quality emergency education ECCD Level one and two curriculum both adhering to international ECCD standards and adapted to the local Jordanian context. The undertaking was a great success and built strong relationships between War Child and the MoE ECCD team. The ECCD Level one & two curriculum, accompanying teacher’s guide and resource cards were finalised in 2017. This will allow the first intake of ECCD beneficiaries to continue attending the centres for an additional 4-month cycle so that they will benefit from a total of 8 months (two cycles) of ECCD sessions. War Child UK is seeking full MoE approval on this methodology as an official curriculum so it can be shared for use by other NGOs working on ECCD programming.

Furthermore, War Child UK developed a pilot ECCD Parental/ Caregiver Education Component. The rationale behind developing a Parental Education component builds upon the success of Positive Parenting and PARENTS DEAL sessions and provides adults with the skills, knowledge and materials to continue educating their children outside of the classroom. Involving caregivers is an integral part of any successful ECCD programme. The sessions cover child and adolescent development which means that parents can understand their children's different needs and that ECCD programmes support and help parents cope with their own reactions to stress. Programmes should strive to support families and children together.

This add-on activity to the ECCD component is designed to help parents/caregivers reinforce their children's learning and development at home. Through a two-day workshop, parents:

- Gain a clear understanding of ECCD and be made aware of their important role in their child's development
- Develop stronger positive parenting skills including how to support behaviour change
- Gain practical knowledge and tools to support early literacy and numeracy
- Receive a learning resource kit to support their efforts with children at home.
Impact

Of all the activities in the ‘Time to Be a Child’ programme, ECCD was the most in-demand in all the communities we work in, with some centres having over 100 children on the waiting list to register for activities. The data from ECCD Level one in the first cycle of 418 children who completed the baseline and endline, indicated the highest percentage of progress compared to all other activities, with 98% of children demonstrating improvement. These children continued taking sessions in ECCD Level two during the second cycle of the programme.

The learning outcomes covered in the baseline/endline surveys and in the War Child-developed ECCD curriculum are contained in the five domains: social behaviours and skills, perception of self and environment, cognitive skills, language and communication skills and physical development. The assessment consists of 66 items completed in exercises led by the teacher while the child engages proactively either by reading cards, drawing, colouring, and counting objects etc.

The overall improvement across the five domains was 36%:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECCD Skills</th>
<th>% of Children Demonstrating Progress</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Behaviours &amp; Skills</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Self and Environment</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Skills</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and Communication Skills</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Development</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents and caregivers have improved parenting skills and ability to cope positively with stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Parenting Skills and Practices</th>
<th>% of Parents Reporting Progress</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caregiver’s Psychological Health</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices of caregiving to children who have experienced traumatic events</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Discipline</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>65%</td>
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</table>

87% of parents report improved ability to cope positively with stress
65% of parents report increased adoption of positive parenting techniques including positive discipline
87% of parents report improved ability to cope positively with stress

Parents and caregivers benefitting from the PARENTS DEAL methodology showed improvement in their Psycho-social wellbeing and ability to better cope with stress and play a positive and supportive role in their children’s healthy development. War Child conducted an assessment with older groups of children whose parents had attended the positive parenting programme. These children were engaged in other activities at the centre and had
younger siblings enrolled in the ECCD programme. Children were asked 24 questions related to their caregiver’s behaviour including the ability to cope with stress and their parenting skills. ECCD Skills % of Children Demonstrating Progress. Because these questions were not grouped by domain as the other surveys above, all the questions are shown individually in the table below. Of the children surveyed about their parents or caregivers, 87% reported progress on their parenting skills and ability to cope with stress. The average improvement that children reported for their caregivers across the questions was 37%.

Parents and caregivers also benefitted from the Positive Parenting training that focuses on improving parents’ and caregivers’ parenting skills, including positive discipline to support parents in managing the challenges of raising children and helping their children cope with challenges. To assess the impact of these programmes on parents, two pre- and post-intervention surveys were conducted with the parents themselves but also the children of the parents taking part in the programmes.

Parents and caregivers also benefitted from the Positive Parenting training that focuses on improving parents’ and caregivers’ parenting skills, including positive discipline to support parents in managing the challenges of raising children and helping their children cope with challenges. To assess the impact of these programmes on parents, two pre- and post-intervention surveys were conducted with the parents themselves but also the children of the parents taking part in the programmes.

The caregivers were asked questions across five domains: caregiver’s psychological health, social support, adaptation, practices of caregiving to children who have experienced traumatic events, child discipline. It should be noted that the PARENTS DEAL programme content overlaps on some topics with the Positive Parenting programme, as reflected in the survey questions. However, most staff gave feedback that the programmes complement and reinforce one another and many caregivers elected to take both trainings, one after another.

Of the 139 parents surveyed, 65% reported progress in at least one of the five domains. The average self-reported improvement among parents reported across the five subscales was 31%. The average improvement that children reported for their caregivers on their parenting skills and practices across the five subscales was 82%.

The third domain witnessed a significant improvement because it had the lowest base value of all other domains of only 0.01 on average and a post value of 0.18 on average. Statistically speaking the lower the base value the more potential for demonstration of change.

Participation:
The Child Safety Report Cards process at field level involved child led planning, training, tool piloting, data collection, data entry, analysis, and validation workshops. In Quarter 4 of 2017 War Child will also host a research student to conduct research on best methods for child friendly feedback mechanisms to ensure accountability to beneficiaries throughout the programme. Other organisations have expressed interest in utilising the newly developed War Child ECCD Level one and two curricula in Jordan. War Child is focusing on piloting and fine-tuning the curriculum to be later shared with other actors, in addition to offering training, minimum standards, monitoring tools and lessons learned for the larger emergency education sector in Jordan. Internally, the curriculum has recently been shared with the War Child team working in Iraq, to consider how they can use the curriculum in their emergency response work across Northern and central Iraq with children displaced from Mosul or Falluja.

Sustainability
Our parental education training is crucial to ensuring sustainability of the programme, with parents continuing to impart learning during and after a child’s cycle at an ECCD centre. One of the successes of the programme has also been conducting joint training and classroom observations with Education Advisors from the MoE. They conducted technical support visits to each of the six Community Based Organisations (CBOs) to provide technical advice and guidance to ECCD teachers to promote programme quality. This form of support was highly appreciated by the ECCD teachers at the centres, as it provided them with focused recommendations and documented feedback on the technical visits, which helps guide the monitoring visits for programme staff. This has enabled all parties involved in the curriculum development to see its practical application and have proven to be fruitful in terms of sustainability and capacity building.
CHALLENGES

Capacity building

There have been a number of challenges during the pilot stage, mainly in finessing the monitoring and evaluation tools for children. Children are not tested; however, they are assessed throughout the year through classroom observations and structured activities based upon the Life Skills Curriculum. Each child’s level of development must be assessed against the early learning goals. Feedback from the teacher after each cycle suggested that more guidance and time was needed to support teachers in assessing whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are exceeding expected levels, or not yet reaching expected levels.

During Year 1 of the programme, we faced challenges with the capacity of some of the CBOs implementing this programme. These challenges were mainly regarding the technical capacity of some of the hired staff, as well as financial systems and staff management. To address these issues, individually-tailored capacity development plans were developed in collaboration with the centres and with support from War Child Human Resources, Finance, Procurement, and M&E departments to help them identify their weaknesses and detail a plan for improvement. War Child will continue to support and follow up with all CBOs’ capacity development plans and for centres demonstrating higher capacity, War Child will unroll a plan to delegate more responsibilities to the field and conduct more advanced capacity building trainings.

Low enrolment of men in the Positive Parenting and PARENTS DEAL sessions

The target enrolment for men is lower than expected. War Child plans on conducting Focus Group Discussions to further understand why and how the activities can be tailored to attract more Jordanian and Syrian men.

Regression in baseline to endline

War Child plans to conduct Focus Group Discussions and individual interviews to investigate areas where regression was reported, and to ensure that our data analysis approaches accurately reflect the findings.

LESSONS FOR PROMISING PRACTICE

As detailed earlier in this case study, ECCD in emergencies is a critical education response in any protracted, acute and displacement setting. Children who attend quality ECCD programmes are exposed early on to quality teaching and resources that can support their learning over the long-term. Children are better prepared to start school and continue making timely progress up to secondary education. They will have better social and emotional skills, which increase their general achievement levels, particularly in reading and mathematics. Parents of children who regularly attend ECCD programmes can see the difference it makes on their behaviour and performance in primary and secondary schools. Our approach demonstrates that parents who have access to parenting interventions are more prepared and empowered to build strong early learning foundations outside of the classroom. There are a number of recommendations we can draw from War Child UK’s ECCD intervention in Jordan to inform future approaches to refugee education:

- Developing tools and resources when possible with local education authorities to build long term relationships and increase understanding of the approach.
- Providing nutritious fruit snacks has proven to be popular with children, despite initial hesitation from other early years providers, who pressed that children were only interested in cookies or sugary snacks.
- Resources should be open sourced—there is a plethora of materials available and there is no need to reinvent the wheel. For the positive parenting interventions, War Child UK uses International Rescue Committee’s Positive Parenting resources, War Child Holland’s PARENTS DEALS, in addition to the Parental Education component developed by the country office. All materials are available online.
- Where possible, recruit both male and female Early Childhood teachers / facilitators. A diverse workforce provides children with a more accurate reflection of the gender mix of their community and the world around them. Male early years practitioners can provide the experience of a positive male role model and have the potential to play an influencing role in supporting fathers in their involvement and understanding in initiatives such as PARENTS DEALS.
Enas, mother of four boys and a girl aged between 19 and 6 years old. Enas is originally from Homs, Syria. The family house was bombed several times as they lived in the middle of ongoing exchange of fire.

“With lots of fear I decided to run out of my house to save my children’s lives, back there my children couldn’t go to school, couldn’t go out to play, simply we had no life. I’m divorced and I take care of my children, the only choice I had is to escape to Jordan with them. It was a huge responsibility and a long trip to take, but again I had no choice. In the war, our house was always under shooting and lots of bombs around, it never stopped. I managed to collect some money to leave Syria. My family are still there my brothers, sisters, all people I care about, and we rarely have any communications nowadays”.

Enas and her children arrived to Za’atari camp in Jordan in mid-2014. After a few months, they decided to leave the camp as her child has health issues to be taken care of outside the camp. Now they are renting a house in Zarqa host community. “Coming to War Child’s PARENTS DEAL programme, I learnt how to listen, accept and deal with my children. I realised hearing them and their needs creates a different life at home”.

Enas’s son is also part of War Child’s ECCD programme, she said that before joining the programme he had aggressive and troubled behaviours, but after every session he attended he changed, becoming more social now.

“Honestly, I see the change within me and my children, I offer them more of my time with joy”.

Enas expressed that the fact War Child’s programmes are targeting the children and their families is a beneficial.

“I enjoy my time coming to the centre, I also get to hear other people’s needs and problems which makes it easier for me accept and deal with mine. The most important thing I learnt is my children rights, now I spend at least three hours a day with each one of them. We play football together, I take them out to parks or for a walk together, we go together to the market, and thank god the smile is always there now.

“For me I never lose hope, I always want to improve myself and my family for a better life. Now I’m taking care of my children’s studies, they all have good grades. I’ll make sure they’ll continue their education for a better future for them. You’ll always see me and my children in your centre and other centres, attending courses and sessions to learn more how to improve the quality of my life with my children. Yes, I’m 42 but it’s never late to learn and thankfully my family has been always supportive.

Photo: Syrian refugee children’s access to early education has proved challenging © War Child
Bilal, four-year-old Syrian refugee

Bilal was born in Syria five months before his family had to flee the war in Syria to Jordan. He lives with his father, mother, three brothers and two sisters in Za’atari camp. “We ran from a village to another because of the heavy bombing everywhere we went in Syria, from Dara’a to Sewana city where I was seriously injured” Father says.

After his father’s injury, the family had no option but to migrate to Jordan. His father added: “The road to Jordan in the middle of the desert was one of the worst experience me and my family ever had; my fresh injury, the heat of days, the cold of the nights and my mother death on the way”. The family seems to be still in big shock of their migration to Jordan, the grandmother of Bilal fled with them but did not make it to Jordan and died on the way.

Bilal and his family now are neighbors of War Child’s site in the Za’atari camp, and they look really happy about that. Bilal is part of War Child’s ECCD programme.

Mahmoud, War Child’s ECCD facilitator explained that Bilal in his first weeks of the programme looked confused, not willing to participate in the class, he didn’t know where his books were, and sometimes he was aggressive with other children.

“Day after day with the flow of our programme, Bilal is now one of the best students I have in the class. He’s talented and takes part in all our activities, he even encourages other children in the class to participate and play with us” Mahmoud confirmed.

When we asked Bilal about what he is learning in the class he said: “I know the letters; O, M, A and E. I also know two songs; the Bird and Week Days songs” and he started happily singing them out loud. “Few months ago, Bilal was my naughty and disorganised son, now he wants everything to be clean and organised. The moment Bilal comes back from class he quickly eats and brings me his bag to show me and his mother what he took in the class” his father said.

Bilal’s family and facilitator agree on the points of transformation that they witnessed with Bilal. He comes every day to the class with all his books, pencils ready in place with a big smile on his face. “I want to come every day to play, study and paint. I want to become a Pilot” Bilal said.
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War Child Holland I DEALs and PARENTS DEAL
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APPENDIX

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5 https://www.unicef.org/jordan/Running_on_Empty2.pdf
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Promising Practices in Refugee Education is a joint initiative of Save the Children, the world’s largest independent children’s rights organisation, UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, and Pearson, the world’s learning company.

Launched in March 2017, the initiative set out to identify, document and promote innovative ways to effectively reach refugee children and young people with quality educational opportunities.

This case study is one of more than twenty promising practices that were selected as part of the initiative.

The practices have been grouped under one or more of six themes.

- **Equity**
- **Access**
- **Learning**
- **Wellbeing**
- **Technology**
- **System Strengthening**

The practices and the experience of implementing partners have been used to identify ten recommendations, grouped under three overarching pillars, aimed at improving refugee education policy and practice. They are:

**Approaching the immediate crisis with a long-term perspective:**
1. Strengthen inclusive national systems
2. Commit to predictable multi-year funding for education in refugee responses
3. Improve collaboration and develop innovative partnerships

**Understanding different contexts and meeting distinct needs**
4. Adopt user-centred design and empowering approaches
5. Establish diverse pathways that meet distinct needs
6. Use space and infrastructure creatively

**Improving outcomes for all**
7. Support teachers to help ensure quality
8. Prioritise both learning and well-being
9. Use technology as an enabling tool in pursuit of education outcomes
10. Build a robust evidence base

Our reflections on all of the promising practices that we identified and documented and their implications for policy and practice are available in a separate Synthesis Report.

More information including case studies, the Synthesis Report and a series of articles from thought leaders in the field can be found at

www.promisingpractices.online