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ADOLESCENT
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ACCELERATING
RESULTS

SEPTEMBER 2020

Preparing Adolescents in Jordan for Productive, Engaged, and Resilient Adulthood



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Preparing Adolescents in Jordan for Productive, Engaged, and Resilient Adulthood

Programming Objective:

Contribute to long-term social development and economic growth in Jordan by investing in adolescent education and civic engagement opportunities. Specifically, ensure that the most vulnerable adolescent girls and boys are equipped with a comprehensive set of diverse skills that allow them to transition into a productive, engaged, and resilient adulthood.

UNICEF Jordan's Approach:

Support all adolescents to develop and reach their full potential, including acquiring new skills for employability and personal empowerment—especially girls, refugees, and adolescents with disabilities who are most at risk of long-term unemployment. This can strengthen their economic resilience, thereby contributing to a more inclusive national economy.

Context

Jordan is a youthful country. In 2020, nearly two million of the 10.5 million population are adolescents between age 10-19.¹ They are growing up during a time of great change where more than 1.3 million Syrians have sought refuge in the country since 2011.

Currently, Jordan is experiencing austerity measures and an economic decline that has strained basic services and systems, weakened social cohesion, and increased socio-economic disparities and tension. The short- and long-term impact on adolescents is dramatic. While nearly three-fourths of all adolescents in Jordan complete lower secondary school, their long-term prospects

for employment and for choosing their own career path are restricted, especially for girls, refugees, and adolescents with disabilities.

The country's rate of adolescents and youth who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) is nearly 50 percent for adolescents age 15-19 and nearly 39 percent for youth age 20-24.²



This case study series shows how to accelerate outcomes for adolescents in support of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Inclusive Education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), and Peace and Justice (SDG 16).

Female unemployment is triple of that of males over a lifetime. The educational and financial exclusion of girls and women causes low access to education, income-generation, and labour force participation,³ and contributes to the country's ranking as number 138 out of 153 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index.⁴ Closing this gap and reaching all adolescents will be critical for growing the national economy in the short and long-term.⁵ This includes finding ways to reach and support the more than one-third of Syrian school-age children (5-17 years) out of school, and seventy-five percent who fail to attend upper secondary school⁶ to return to formal learning or gain the skills they need in adulthood. Such efforts are as critical since significant geographic and socioeconomic disparities often affect school access and learning outcomes. Boys often attribute their low school attendance to a high prevalence of violence and bullying and having to work to support their family.⁷ Girls cite non-attendance due to early marriage, concerns about violence in route to school, and other challenges related to domestic responsibilities; especially for Syrian refugees.⁸

UNICEF Response: Key Programmes and Outcomes

In 2018, the Ministry of Education (MoE) evolved its strategy from a targeted emergency, refugee response to one that promoted inclusivity for the most vulnerable children and adolescents nationwide. In response, UNICEF Jordan developed an inclusive approach for adolescents that focused on advancing gender equality; strengthening the life skills they need to be employed and engaged in their communities; and creating supportive learning environments—with a focus on adolescent girls, refugees, and those out of school. With the vision that every young person is in education, learning, training, or employment by 2030,⁹ UNICEF Jordan developed the Pathways to Youth Engagement 2018-2022¹⁰ strategy that promotes:

In 2019, 32,022 adolescents and youth engaged in designing, planning, supporting, and implementing **1,735 community-services initiatives.**

70% of the participants believed they were able to solve community issues.

- 21st century skills trainings programmes that build adolescents' life and employability skills for a successful transition to a productive, engaged, and resilient adulthood. This includes technical and vocational skills-building for formal employment and social entrepreneurship training for self-employment;
- Innovation and civic engagement programmes that strengthen their confidence, agency, and ability to engage in the workforce and as active citizens;
- Mentorship and coaching activities that increase their skills and networks for social and civic engagement and access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities; and
- Financial literacy courses that build independence in navigating their own finances.

Since 2015 more than 400,000 adolescents and youth have received UNICEF-supported training in life and employability skills; 270,000 have participated in civic engagement activities; and 250,000 have worked together on community projects and social innovation programmes aimed at building social cohesion between host and refugee communities. In 2019 programmes, more than half the participants were female, three-fourths adolescents (10-19 years); and approximately three percent adolescents with a disability. In its programming, UNICEF Jordan prioritized gender equality and the empowerment of girls and boys as such efforts can stimulate growth, increase GDP per capita, allow society to better adjust to socioeconomic and demographic challenges,¹¹ and help reduce all forms of violence that are shown to have long-term impacts on education and wellbeing.

Strengthening Life Skills for Employability, Citizenship, and Social Cohesion

In Jordan, more than 1.4 million children and adolescents are in the formal education system (97 percent for primary and lower secondary schools).¹² Attendance alone, however, has not consistently translated into job readiness in Jordan. Its high adolescent and youth unemployment rate has been partially attributed to a mismatch between their capacities and the life skills needed in the labor market in areas such as collaboration, communication, financial and technical literacy, problem-solving, and other transferable skills. In 2018, the Ministry of Education (MoE) recognised this gap in its Education Strategic Plan 2018-2022 and allocated 20 percent of student's learning time in formal education systems to complementary extra-curricular activities that focus on developing 21st Century skills.¹³

In response, UNICEF Jordan has been supporting the MoE directive to schools to include extra-curricular activities in formal education that can advance empowerment and employability. For adolescents, it developed curricula and training based on the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE)¹⁴ framework's theory of change. Foundational to LSCE is a rights-based and transformative vision of education that promotes 12 life skills that aim to help adolescents to succeed in the workplace, as well as enhance academic and personal development social cohesion. The holistic, humanistic LSCE approach includes a focus on learning to know (cognitive), do (instrumental), be (individual), and live together (social). For instance, adolescents learn the value of caring for and respecting other human beings and strategies to minimize or prevent all forms of violence, including how to navigate fears of bullying or being physically attacked at school.

Nashatati: Social Cohesion and After-School Activities Programme

In 2017, as part of the above mentioned directive, the MoE launched the Nashatati¹⁵ programme for public school students age 6-16 to develop life skills by providing access to 60 hours of quality after-school activities. It did so in partnership with Generations for Peace and UNICEF. Games- and sport-based activities were designed to increase psycho-social wellbeing, a greater tolerance and appreciation of diversity, inter-personal acceptance, emotional intelligence, teamwork, a shared sense of belonging, and social cohesion.

The programme includes a national curriculum based on the LSCE framework, an operational framework and measurement tools, and training material that support its gradual institutionalization across all schools under the MoE. In 2019, 150,000 students—including more than 50 percent girls and 4 percent with disabilities—were enrolled in the extra-curricular activities in 1,000 schools' grade 7 to 10.

Following the MoE decision to allocate 20 percent of school time to co-curricular activities, UNICEF advocated with MoE to implement Nashatati during school hours as part of this time allocation. Accordingly, Nashatati was integrated in more than 1,000 schools by 2020, reaching nearly 200,000 students with training and quality assurance being fully led by MoE. In 2020/2021, the programme will be further expanded nationwide, while continuing to build the capacity of field coordinators on the provision of mentoring support to schoolteachers.

A 2018 participatory evaluation of Nashatati with 300 students found a

33% increase in confidence in speaking to others

34% increase in their ability to deal calmly with confrontation and not resort to violence

34% willingness to play and work with other students of different ages and nationalities



UNICEF Jordan is also developing an online version of the training towards full institutionalization of the programme.

Adopting Nashatati into Jordan's education system is partially attributable to its scalable approach that aimed to seamlessly integrate with differing school and community needs and requirements. Furthermore, the curriculum provides teachers with adaptable options to deliver the sessions as per the identified needs of specific student groups of different grades or schools.

Maharati: My Skills Programme

Since 2017, UNICEF's close partnership with the Ministry of Youth (MoY) and Generations of Peace helped to streamline UNICEF's LSCE framework for adolescents to adopt healthy lifestyles and enhance their active participation in their communities and the national economy. Integrated into all 150 MoY youth centres nationwide, Maharati¹⁶ follows UNICEF's Life Skills Manual¹⁷ that offers key life and employability skills, financial literacy, social innovation (UPSHIFT¹⁸), and human-centred design through 160 hours of training (30 hours per module) for adolescents and youth.

The life skills and civic engagement component focuses on enhancing youth empowerment. It enables youth to use their voices and participate

In 2019-2020, more than **600 facilitators** were trained and implemented the full Maharati programme

100,000 learners in-person and online (more than 90% adolescents; over half female; and approximately 5% with disabilities).

more actively in their communities, think creatively and critically about themselves and their roles in society, make informed decisions, and discover the untapped resources that exist within themselves. Based on robust pre- and post-tests, participating adolescents and youth were shown to have an increased sense of belonging, improved communication and teamwork skills, and increased engagement in community activities.

The Ministry of Youth is institutionalizing the Maharati programming into their centres nationwide, with UNICEF Jordan support. Its technical team—along with partners who offer training, facilitation, management, and mentorship—are working with MoY to develop sustainable operations adaptable to each context. System strengthening and building the capacity of MoY staff and frontline workers is a priority to ensure the Maharati teachers and youth trainers can innovatively respond to emerging needs for adolescents and youth, such as for digital access and literacy. In the programme, they focus on three key learnings that:



Abdul (wearing green and black), age 12, with his friends at a UNICEF-supported Makani centre in Irbid. "I learn Arabic, English and Maths here. If I'm tired I go to the life skills classroom and play games that help me focus better," said Abdul.

- Training alone will not lead to impact: but if followed up with an ongoing relationship of mentoring and support, impact can be multiplied;
- One-off inputs will not deliver lasting impact. The inputs must be a series of ongoing activities sustained over several months to allow behavior change impacts to emerge and sustain; and
- Continuous advocacy and communication is vital, and not just at the outset; it must be sustained.

More than **40,000** Registered Volunteers; **90,000** Volunteer Opportunities; and **300** Registered Partners.

100,000 Volunteers Hours | www.nahno.org

Nahno: The National Youth Engagement and Volunteering Movement

Once adolescents gain citizenship and life skills, having a place to apply them can improve their knowledge and competence, build citizenship and additional skills, and advance social cohesion. With this in mind UNICEF Jordan, the MoY, Naua, and the Crown Prince Foundation launched Nahno¹⁹ in 2018 to link adolescents and youth with meaningful opportunities for engagement and participation within their communities. Through an open source online tool, the volunteers are matched with partners that are carefully vetted and assessed on basic requirements, such as their legal status as well as practices conforming to UNICEF child protection policies. Once a person registers on the portal and creates a profile, they can begin to accumulate points that are gained through volunteer activities/work and act as a participation incentive. Each time they complete an assignment, the partner verifies their hours and provides them with confidential feedback. Volunteers can also provide feedback on the opportunity—which helps the programme monitor the quality of the provided experiences—as well as bring forward their own programmes through innovation labs or youth networks.

Transitioning from Learning to Earning

UNICEF Jordan's Pathways to Youth Engagement 2018-2022²⁰ is foundational in its learning-to-earning activities. The activities aim to equip adolescents and youth with the technical, vocational, digital, and soft skills necessary for the workplace; provide quality work opportunities through apprenticeship, formal employment, and digital micro-employment; and foster entrepreneurship as a mindset and livelihood through social entrepreneurship training and the support of sustainable social enterprises.

The Amaluna Economic Engagement Programme

The Amaluna Economic Engagement Programme aligns with UNICEF's Generation Unlimited²¹ vision for adolescents and youth to develop as productive and engaged members of society. It does so by equipping them with market-driven and accredited skills for meaningful employment through job matching, apprenticeship, and social enterprise development, especially for girls, refugees, adolescents with disabilities, and minority groups. Amaluna is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Digital Economy, local academic institutions (i.e., Luminus Technical University and College) and other national partners.

The programme has three components. In one, UNICEF sponsors 3-6 months of technical or vocational college courses for students who are matched with potential employers upon graduation. The second places each enrolled student in a three-month, on-the-job apprenticeship where a certified trainer provides theoretical and technical guidance valuable for working at the same business long-term. The third supports older adolescents to start or lead their own social enterprise, including home-based businesses.

The focus on creating new businesses is especially valuable for young entrepreneurs from the most remote areas in Jordan that have little private sector presence. The training thus multiplies its benefit by strengthening local economies and creating employment opportunities within rural communities. Since 2017, the Amaluna Economic Engagement Programme has reached more than 3,000 adolescents and youth, half of them female. In 2020, of the nearly 1,000 participants in vocational training, 70 percent engaged in income-generating activities following graduation. This injected over \$2.5 million USD in cumulative income into their communities, which was a lifeline for many vulnerable households.

Lessons Learnt

To increase learning and engagement long-term, UNICEF Jordan found it was important to:

Prioritize System Strengthening in Education

Strategically incorporating a system strengthening approach meant that programming moved from a service delivery focus to strengthening capacities and skills strengthening of local and national government partners (i.e., in gender equality, programme design and implementation, and cost efficiency and sustainability). This approach aimed to better support the Ministry of Education as it moved from an education strategy focused on ensuring learning for the refugee population, to one aimed at reaching all vulnerable children. Here, efforts included strengthening government capacity in designing strategies for inclusive education, establishing a teacher certification system, and developing a nationwide evidence base on the numbers of out of school children and adolescents. The UNICEF Jordan and MOE collaboration proved influential in Jordan's adoption of the National Youth Strategy 2019-2025²² and the National Employment Charter²³ as milestones for young people's employment and empowerment.

Connect Life Skills to Long-Term Citizen Engagement

Early participation in life skills and citizen education in childhood and adolescence was shown to increase the potential for girls and boys to remain engaged in education and employment, especially those experiencing high vulnerability or marginalization. For instance, the Nashatati and Maharati programmes led to an increase in girls' confidence and sense of belonging through showing them how to be an active community citizen and a daughter, wife, or mother. Of all the boys and girls who completed the programmes, more than 60 percent were later involved in or led civic engagement initiatives that addressed issues important to them and their communities.

Involve Families in Adolescent Learning

Understanding and overcoming barriers that hinder adolescent girls' attendance and retention in life skills programmes proved critical for more inclusive education. For instance, involving girls' families in skills-building and job-matching processes helped prevent high drop-out rates. In response, programmes were designed to include time and resources to raise awareness in communities about their benefits, build relationships, and encourage parents and families to enroll their girls. Life skills programme coordinators intentionally held activities in MOY-supported youth centres and UNICEF-supported Makani centres as they are perceived by the community to be trustworthy and safe spaces for girls. It was additionally clear which activities would be organized in mixed groups, and where the girls could attend female-only sessions with women trainers and facilitators. Facilitators also invited families to visit potential locations of employment in vocational training programmes so they would be assured of a dignified workspace respectful of cultural norms.

Strengthening the Digital Ecosystem Critical for Transition from Learning to Earning

In Jordan, the Information and Communication Technology Sector accounts for 12 percent of Jordan's GDP.²⁴ This area thus holds great potential to support the most vulnerable adolescents in their future employability using impact sourcing platforms with task-based assignments. The flexible schedule and employment structure of digital skill access could especially benefit young people with disabilities and enable girls and young women to learn and work from home and manage any additional responsibilities, such as childcare. In response, UNICEF Jordan and partners have committed to learning from expanding its current digital literacy and technical skills training and mentorship programmes (such as the Bridge. Outsource. Transform. [BOT] programme²⁵), especially for building capacity for small, internet-based jobs that underpin the gig economy.

Conclusion

Supporting the most vulnerable adolescents in Jordan in their transition to a productive, engaged, and resilient adulthood is a complex undertaking. Strategies require a multi-faceted approach and symbiotic partnerships that not only increase the availability of educational opportunities, but also formalize commitments to inclusive and equitable environments for learning and long-term employment. This includes through policies and programmes across sectors, such as education, IT, labour, and child protection. Leveraging established partnerships across sectors, and supporting capacity-building, was a foundational strategy for scaling effective adolescent programming nationwide, including on e-learning during the COVID-19 response and for the future. These relationships will continue as UNICEF and its partners look to expand digital learning as a long-term strategy through the Learning Passport Platform²⁶ and other technologies.²⁷

UNICEF Jordan and its partners' experiences also highlights that considered actions are often required to shift cultural norms and harmful environments that may hinder learning. This included implementing actions to create safe learning spaces for girls that families can trust, developing multi-sector programmes that help reduce violence in schools, and scaling workable solutions through nationwide formal and non-formal channels. In other words, a commitment to *Every Child Learns* calls for more than providing traditional educational pathways. It requires gender-sensitive processes, inclusive learning environments, context-responsive skills training and 21st Century-focused curricula to reach the most vulnerable young people. A forward-thinking, strategic approach can equip adolescents with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities they need to become active, resilient citizens who are socially, civically, and economically engaged.

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Additional Information

- Analytical Mapping of the Life Skills and Citizenship Education in MENA
- Jordan Case Study: Girls' Journey towards Economic Empowerment. A study of UNICEF Jordan's learning-to-earning interventions through a girls' lens. UNICEF, Forthcoming 2020
- Reimagining Life Skills and Citizenship Education in the Middle East and North Africa: Conceptual and Programmatic Framework. A Four-Dimensional and Systems Approach to 21st Century Skills
- UNICEF Programme Guidance for the Second Decade
- UNICEF Jordan Geographic Multidimensional Vulnerability Analysis
- UNICEF Jordan Multi-Sectoral Rapid Needs Assessment: COVID-19 Jordan
- UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19
- Learning Passport

Endnotes

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