
JORDAN

WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS¹

Date: 22 to 25 November 2021 (in-person)

Hosted by the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) with support from the IRC.

Financial support provided by IRC and Plan International.

Participants

- This four-day workshop was championed and organized largely by the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA), an independent national institution that works as a supportive umbrella to coordinate and facilitate the work of partners working with families including national governmental and non-governmental institutions, international institutions, and the private sector. The aim is to achieve a better future for the Jordanian family, to contribute to setting and amending policies, legislation, programmes, strategic plans, and procedures related to families in Jordan, in addition to promoting children's rights and well-being in national policies and legislation.
- There was wide participation from governmental and non-governmental entities, UN Agencies, national, and international institutions in this workshop. The 75 attendees represented the following stakeholders:

Governmental entities: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Ministry of Social Development, Juvenile and Family Protection Department / Public Security Directorate, Anti-Human Trafficking Unit / PSD, Greater Amman Municipality, Jordanian Standards and Metrology Organization, National Council for Family Affairs, National Centre for Human Resource Development, Social Security Corporation, the Vocational Training Corporation, and the Department of Statistics.

Academia and National Organizations: Hashemite University, Al-Balqa University, Hashemite Fund for Development (JOHUD), Islamic Charity Association, Jordanian River Foundation, Queen Rania Award for Excellence, Queen Rania Foundation for Education and Development, the Royal Health Awareness Society, the Queen Rania Teacher's Academy, Institute for Family Health, Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Iman Early Learning Center, and the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA).

International Organizations: UNICEF, UNRWA, World Bank, Save the Children, Relief International, Plan International, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Humanity and Inclusion, War Child, and the International Rescue Committee.

¹ For information on other workshops in the series visit: <https://nurturing-care.org/events/nurturing-care-for-children-living-in-humanitarian-settings/>.

Opening Session

Day one: The first day included presentations from NCFA and representatives of governmental institutions on the most important strategic objectives, programs, interventions, and future plans in the early childhood sector, in addition to challenges within their respective organizations and ECD more broadly. Specifically, the following was presented:

- National Council for Family Affairs
 - » Dr. Mohammad Miqdadi, Secretary General, talked about the national efforts of the early childhood sector in Jordan, and the attention and development this sector needs at the national level, and the strengthening of partnerships between the stakeholders in the EC field.
 - » Ms. May Sultan, Director of Early Childhood, presented the most important achievements and projects on which the National Council for Family Affairs has worked over the past 20 years.
 - » Dr Haytham Al-Zoubi, Director of Studies and Planning at the National Council for Family Affairs, asserted that this workshop aims at unifying the various efforts between institutions and stakeholders in the field of early childhood in providing and exchanging information and agreeing on common national strategic goals and priorities within the five components to advance nurturing care in Jordan, according to executive action plans that identify the relevant institutions and entities
- **Ministry of Social Development** - Dr. Mohammad Al-Jbour, Assistant to Secretary General for Technical Affairs, presented the most important objectives, strategies, programs, and plans for early childhood on which the Ministry of Social Development is working in the nurseries and early childhood sector.
- **Ministry of Education** - Dr. Alia Arabiyat, Director of the Early Childhood Directorate, referred to the educational programs and future directions for early childhood in the Ministry of Education.
- **Ministry of Health** - Dr. Hadeel Saeh, Mother and Child Health Directorate, presented the health strategic programs and objectives for the child and mother implemented in the Ministry of Health.
- **Social Security Corporation** - Ms. Khuloud Ghuneimat presented future plans and interventions for the working mother and child in the Social Security Corporation.
- There was an additional presentation that showcased preliminary findings from a World Bank funded study (under the Mashreq Gender Facility) that explored the childcare economy in Jordan and its effect on female labor market participation.

Day two: The participants worked in groups to identify the most important national strategies, gaps, priorities, policies, regulations, and legislations in the field of early childhood, within the five areas of health, nutrition, early learning, responsive care, and security and safety.

Day three: At the end of the workshop, the participants came up with a comprehensive national matrix of strategic priorities for early childhood in Jordan resulting from the five working groups. This was identified in addition to the most important interventions, roles, and responsibilities in early childhood for the years 2022-2024 in Jordan.

Context

- Perhaps what distinguishes this workshop from the other workshops is that there already was a blueprint for the development of ECD in the country (through the National Strategy for Human Resource Development (NSHRD 2016-2025). The discussions therefore were framed as complementary (and in some cases revisionary) activities to what had already been established through the NSHRD and other policy directions taken on ECD (in the past).
- To this end, the discussions through this workshop addressed ECD from a technical/operational lens guided by the vision set for ECD through the NSHRD (2016-2025).
- Unlike other workshops as well, working groups were divided along the lines of the nurturing care components - as opposed to the strategic actions recommended by the NCF. This approach reflects the technical/operational nature of the discussions that took place.
- The resulting “matrix of activities” from the discussions highlights priorities for 2022-2024 with a view towards embedding activities into the NSHRD or endorsement by the Prime Minister as a stand-alone cross-sectoral action plan for ECD.

Workshop Outputs and Priorities

- The workshop included time for participants to identify priority actions for advancing the five components of nurturing care: i) Health, ii) Nutrition, iii) Early Learning, iv) Safety and Security, and v) Responsive Caregiving. Overall, the discussions in the Jordan workshop was an insightful and crucial strategic step toward scaling up work and coordination with key ECD actors to institutionalize ECD efforts.
- The participants agreed on setting a general goal for nurturing care and that is to “advance the early childhood system in Jordan in the sectors of health, early learning, nutrition, safety and security, and responsive care”, in addition to identifying goals and activities for each component, as follows:

Health - Goals:

- Raise the level of healthcare services for children from birth to 5.
- Improve pre-pregnancy, prenatal, during childbirth, and postnatal care services for mothers and children.
- Improve access to high-quality family planning services.
- Improve growth and development services, and early detection of developmental delays and types of disabilities and ensuring the necessary referrals.
- Ensure children get the necessary immunization against infectious diseases.



Health - Proposed priority activities:

- Revise and develop health registration card forms for use in nurseries.
- Expand provision of child healthcare services in all health centers and hospitals.
- Develop and implement a behavior change campaign that raises awareness on healthy practices for children.
- Implement child-friendly budgeting approaches in the health budget.
- Develop a consolidated database and platform that houses early childhood data at the national level.

Nutrition - Goals:

- Decrease the rates of malnutrition and anemia among mothers.
- Promote breastfeeding.
- Decrease the rates of malnutrition and anemia among children.
- Ensure that mothers have access to sufficient quality and variety of nutrition, micronutrients, and supplements.
- Promote appropriate supplemental nutrition for the child and transition to a holistic and integrated diet for the mother and child.

Nutrition - Proposed priority activities:

- Increase the rate of (exclusive) breastfeeding through awareness campaigns.
- Ensure healthy nutritional intake for women and children by promoting positive consumption patterns.
- Improve nutritional awareness and positive eating behaviors among children, caregivers, and families.
- Improve access to basic nutrition services by all children in Jordan.
- Improve alignment of national policies on nutrition with the relevant Sustainable Development Goals, as well as ensuring congruence between national commercial and nutrition policies with the goal of developing a healthy national food system.
- Establish standards to promote healthy nutritional practices.

Early Learning – Goals:

- Children achieve adequate developmental progress across different growth areas.
- Parents learn about the developmental characteristics of the age group from birth to 5 years and how to develop them.
- Service providers have adequate resource and skill capacity to provide adequate teaching and learning experiences in line with national standards.
- Children have access to safe, stimulating, and inclusive teaching and learning environments.
- An early learning curriculum that develops children's skills holistically and that responds to the rapid changes in society is set and activated.
- Activating necessary policy and legislation that protect children's right to - and in - education.
- Identifying and implementing creative approaches to expand financing and funding of early learning services.
- Ensuring that children are prepared for future educational stages by developing their basic skills (cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and motor).

Early Learning – Proposed priority activities:

- Ensure quality of kindergarten teacher and nursery caregiver pre-service/ preparation programs through the establishment of a quality assurance unit housed at the NCFA.
- Revise selection and appointment criteria for nursery caregivers, along with revising vocational training programs for their pre-service preparation.
- Improve coordination with post-secondary educational institutions to embed a practicum component in early childhood degree specializations.
- Organize and implement an awareness campaign to spur demand for enrolment in early learning (nurseries and kindergartens).

Safety and Security - Goals

- Ensure that local communities are provided with the services necessary for children to thrive in healthy and clean environments.
- Leverage data available on violence against children to develop policies, legislation, and strategies that ensure children's protection, safety, and security.
- Improve coordination between actors in the space to provide an adequate level of services by the sector as a whole.
- Facilitate the access of children and families in rural and urban areas and camps to recreational and cultural programs.
- Strengthen services that protect children from violence.
- Coordinate a culture of social responsibility in providing services to the childhood sector by using the available legislative, economic, educational environment and infrastructure.



Safety and Security – Proposed priority activities:

- Activate proposed legislation for children’s safety and protection from physical and emotional harm.
- Ensure high quality support services are being delivered through building capacity of workers in the sector and development of needed monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Improve coordination between different actors working in the safety and security space for children.
- Foster and support social responsibility in providing child protection services in the sector.
- Raise awareness around existing child protection and abuse-reporting systems and implementing the necessary interventions that are in the best interest of children.

Responsive Caregiving – Goals

- Improve capacity of caregivers to provide adequate nurturing care to children.
- Build the capacity of caregivers in identifying and recognizing early childhood diseases and the appropriate responses needed.
- Ensure caregivers have access to adequate and balanced nutrition.
- Improve media education for caregivers.
- Improve the social environments in which children from ages 0 to 5 are raised.

Responsive Caregiving – Proposed priority activities

- Develop and implement a strategy for raising awareness on positive and responsive caregiving practices.
- Develop a consolidated database for ECD data across sectors that would support in promoting policies and programs that support responsive caregiving.

The partners and stakeholders agreed on a matrix of strategic priorities and the most important challenges faced by each sector in order to advance the childhood system, as follows:

THE HEALTH SECTOR	STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and update policies, strategies, programmes, and impact assessment. 2. Achieve sustainable financing. 3. Ensure the quality of the services provided. 4. Comprehensive and free health insurance for children under six years old.
	CHALLENGES
	<p>1. Supportive policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak implementation of policies that support early childhood and budgets that support early childhood programs • No electronic national database platform • Weak coordination between the relevant authorities • Weak crisis response policies • Lack of incentive or training programmes for new cadres • Non-participation of the private sector and adoption of unified protocols • Weakness of policies for evaluation, follow-up and sustainability <p>2. Services provided</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult access to services in some regions • Low rate of using services • Increasing demand for government sector services • Poor quality of services and infrastructure • Lack of evaluation, follow-up, and sustainability policies • Failure to develop and update health forms of early detection services for developmental delays and disabilities and early childhood services <p>3. Societies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness of the services provided, of their availability, and of the fact they are free of charge • Societal attitudes and behaviours • Little knowledge of the developmental, health, and psychological characteristics of children • Poor culture regarding preventive services <p>Service providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of cadres and large turnover among the supporting cadres • Weak continuous training • Weak follow-up, monitoring, and evaluation systems • Not enough specialized training programmes for early childhood • Lack of needed attitudes and behaviors (communication skills especially with the most vulnerable groups such as “disability” and others)

THE EARLY LEARNING SECTOR

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Form a unit for accreditation and quality control of training programmes for EC workers and caregivers
2. Review the criteria for selecting and assigning qualified caregivers
3. Review and develop professional programmes to prepare and qualify caregivers and EC specialists
4. Coordinate with universities and other educational institutions in order to expand practical training programmes for early childhood specialties
5. Organize a media awareness campaign on the importance of early childhood education in coordination with all the relevant authorities within a clear-vision media plan

CHALLENGES

1. Not enough attention given to early childhood as a national priority, which affects budgets
2. Delayed ratification of the Child Right Law (to Education) by the concerned authorities
3. Poor infrastructure for nurseries and kindergartens in terms of coverage, access, quality, and technology (lack of financial support)
4. Limited human resource efficiency (preparation and qualification) - (desire to pursue a career)
5. Failure to review regulations, laws, and legislations periodically: lack of updates, of following-up developments, and of commitment to implement the available ones
6. Lack of databases availability and updating
7. Weakness of the monitoring and evaluation system
8. Weak coordination between the concerned authorities and the private sector (institutions, associations, organizations)

SAFETY AND SECURITY

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Implement the legislations proposed to protect the child from physical dangers, emotional pressure, and environmental risks, and develop them to ensure safety and security and achieve the best interests of the child
2. Raising the efficiency of human resources and developing them professionally to ensure the quality of services for early childhood and to maintain security and peace for children
3. Develop a monitoring, follow-up and evaluation system to ensure the quality of services
4. Activating coordination between the concerned authorities to maintain the safety and security of children
5. Develop and support a culture of social responsibility in providing services to the early childhood sector
6. Raising awareness about the prevention system, reporting cases of abuse against children of all groups, and conducting safeguard interventions to achieve the best interests of the child

CHALLENGES

1. Poor implementation of the legislative system to ensure safety and security and achieve the best interests of the child
2. Weak monitoring, follow-up, and evaluation systems to ensure the quality of services
3. Poor system of prevention and reporting of cases of abuse and violence against children, and weak interventions to achieve the best interests of the child (Prevention, Communication of Response, Intervention)
4. Absence of some roles of relevant entities to maintain the safety and security of children
5. Limited budgets allocated to early childhood
6. Lack of child-friendly and safe places to ensure the child's well-being and physical and mental development and unfair geographical distribution
7. Inability of vulnerable families to carry out their responsibilities towards their children
8. Low awareness of the importance of societal responsibility to create a safe and secure environment for children and their families

NUTRITION

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding.
2. Ensure access to healthy nutrition and promoting healthy food systems for women and children.
3. Raise the level of nutritional awareness for families, caregivers, and children by providing them with means to ensure education for them and their children.
4. Access for all children in Jordan to a basic level of services in the nutrition sector.
5. Promote better alignment of public policies with the Sustainable Development Goals.
6. Create homogeneity in trade and food policies in order to promote a healthy diet.
7. Establish standards to promote healthy food practices.

CHALLENGES

1. Lack and discrepancy of parents' and service providers' knowledge of the correct nutritional patterns for mother and child nutrition and their application.
2. Lack of equal opportunities in nutritional knowledge among children, based on geographical differences, income levels, and knowledge of parents.
3. Discrepancy of access to sufficient quantities of food, depending on geographical differences, income levels, and knowledge of the people.
4. Consumption of large quantities above the permissible limit with regard to salt, sugar, saturated fats, and additives by children.
5. Incompatibility of the current policies with the completion of breastfeeding for the working mother.
6. Lack of supportive trade policies to promote healthy food.

RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Building the capacity and developing the skills of NC for EC providers.
2. Improving the social environment for children from the age of one day to 5 years.
3. Improving the content of media education programs for early childhood.

CHALLENGES

1. Low average income of the families.
2. Lack of local experts and specialists capable of bridging the gaps of responsive care.
3. Insufficient knowledge and skills of caregivers.
4. Difficulty in accessing some target groups (long distances, cultural reasons...).
5. Lack of financial resources allocated at the public and civil society organizations levels.
6. Poor general framework and standards for the best environment for nurturing early childhood.
7. Poor distribution of resources between geographical areas in the three regions.
8. Weak implementation of policies related to the fair distribution of financial aid and linking it to the number of children and their needs.
9. Low awareness of caregivers within responsive care programmes.
10. Poor content of media education programmes for early childhood.

Priority Actions

In Jordan, the workshop was part of a process to build a national strategy for early childhood. Few activities of this extensive strategy were selected in this report:

GOAL 1: TO IMPROVE THE LEVEL AND READINESS OF THE HEALTH SECTOR TO PROVIDE CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Brief description of relevant activities	Responsible entity	Target date for completion	Source of funding and technical support needed	Partners
1.1 Building a supportive environment for EC by activating relevant policies and involving actors from other sectors	National Council for Family Affairs Ministry of Health Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Ministry of Social Development	2022-2023	Relevant organizations	Relevant ministries & organizations
1.2 Increasing the number of personnel & building staff capacity by training EC workers on the science of ECD & developing new specialized programs	Ministry of Health Ministry of education Civil service bureau	2022-2024	Organizations related to childhood	Relevant ministries & organizations
1.3 Improving the quality of preventive and remedial services by providing EC services in all health centres, activating relevant protocols, increasing the budget, and developing educational materials related to referrals.	National Council for Family Affairs Ministry of Health	2022-2024	Organizations related to childhood	Relevant ministries & organizations

GOAL 2: TO IMPROVE THE LEVEL AND READINESS OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR TO PROVIDE CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Brief description of relevant activities	Responsible entity	Target date for completion	Source of funding and technical support needed	Partners
2.1 Increasing the number of early learning educators / care givers and employment of certificates holders	Ministry of Higher Education National Council for Family Affairs The Association of Queen Rania Award for Excellence in Education	2022-2023	Relevant organizations working to early childhood The World Bank The private sector	Relevant ministries & organizations
2.2 Ensuring sustainability of pre-service and in-service training for staff	Ministry of education Civil service bureau	2022-2024	Relevant organizations related to childhood	Relevant ministries & organizations
2.3 Creating a credentials unit that monitors the quality of training programs for EC staff.	National Council for Family Affairs Ministry of Education	2022-2024	INGOs UN Agencies	Relevant ministries & organizations

GOAL 3: TO ENHANCE INFORMATION DATA MANAGEMENT IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR

Brief description of relevant activities	Responsible entity	Target date for completion	Source of funding and technical support needed	Partners
3.1 Enforcing laws & legislations related to child protection	Ministries concerned with child protection	2022-2023	Relevant organizations	Relevant ministries & organizations
3.2 Providing places, materials, and nutrition that are child friendly ensuring all children wellness & growth.	National Council for Family Affairs Relevant ministries	2022-2023	Relevant organizations	Relevant ministries & organizations

GOAL 4: TO STRENGTHEN HEALTHY NUTRITIONAL SYSTEMS FOR CHILDREN AND WOMEN

Brief description of relevant activities	Responsible entity	Target date for completion	Source of funding and technical support needed	Partners
4.1 Encouraging breastfeeding by awareness, laws, and legislations	Ministry of Health WHO	2022-2023	Relevant entities	Relevant ministries & organizations
4.2 Decreasing women & children malnutrition through awareness, laws, and legislations	Jordan Food & Drug Administration Relevant ministries	2022-2024	Relevant entities	Relevant ministries & organizations

GOAL 5: TO IMPROVE THE LEVEL AND READINESS OF THE RESPONSIVE CARE SECTORS TO PROVIDE EARLY CHILDREN SERVICES

Brief description of relevant activities	Responsible entity	Target date for completion	Source of funding and technical support needed	Partners
5.1 Ensuring through laws & legislations that all care givers attend nurturing care programs	National Council for Family Affairs Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2022-2023	National EC team Relevant entities	TBD
5.2 Building capacity of responsive caregivers in relevant ministries, NGOs, and the private sector.	NCFA HCRPD	2022-2024	Relevant ministries & organizations Consulting institutions & experts	TBD