

CASE STUDY

Jordan: Early Childhood Development

January 2009

Save the Children established the Jordan Country Office in 1985 with a special focus on children and families. Since then, our programs have contributed to both social and economic development, and have positively impacted the lives of more than one million Jordanian children and women. Our efforts to improve health care services and education and create economic opportunities for poor women result in real and lasting change for them and for their children.

Families coping with loss experienced a day of joy, *Yaoum Al Farah*, organized by local volunteers and teachers at Save the Children-supported kindergartens in Jordan. The event was held at the Nuzha Kindergarten, where Iraqis and Jordanians played games and shared creative activities. Mothers clapped their hands and sang traditional Iraqi folk songs as their young children danced.

Souad, 38, was among the mothers to participate. She is raising her two girls, age 4 and 1, alone. Souad and her husband arrived in Jordan in 2006, but she has not heard from him since he went to Sweden in 2007.

Like many displaced Iraqi families, Souad is uncertain of what will happen in the future. Hope for a better life pushes many husbands, like Souad's, to seek protection for their families in Europe or America. In the meantime, while they wait for permits or their husband's financial security, mothers struggle to keep their families together.

Souad's daughter, Rouqaya, "has changed for the better since joining the kindergarten. She goes to school happily every day." Souad has also benefited because she can look for other ways to support her family while Rouqaya is at school. Souad hopes that some day her younger daughter can benefit from the Khatawat Program as well, perhaps through a kit sent home with clothing or developmental toys. With all their money going to meet basic needs, these items become luxuries they cannot afford.

Um Nader faces even greater challenges. After the family arrived in Jordan in 2006 to escape the violence in Iraq, her husband returned there to find work. Since then, he has been refused permission to return to Jordan. Um Nader chose to work as a domestic servant to cover living costs for her two young children rather than follow her husband. However, an injury at work forced her to quit her job. When she visited CARE for medical assistance, she heard about Save the Children's Khatawat program providing free early childhood education to Iraqi children.

"I never even considered the possibility of being able to afford sending my son to kindergarten," says Um Nader of her four-year-old. "Now I am happy to say that Nader is making friends. He loves playing with all the toys and playground equipment that he would otherwise never have known."

Save the Children's Khatawat program supports 600 vulnerable Iraqi and Jordanian children with tuition at 10 community-based kindergartens.

"We never seem to enjoy anything anymore, but my son's excitement must have been contagious," says Um Nader. "He insisted that I attend this event today, and it has been good for me to see him happy, playing with his new friends at the kindergarten."



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