YEARNING TO LEARN: Behavioral barriers and enablers to inclusive education in Jordan

Understanding the behavioral determinants that impact Jordanian and Syrian refugee parents’ decisions to send their children with disabilities to school on a regular basis

February 2022
I. OVERVIEW & METHODOLOGY

Understanding the behavioral determinants impacting Jordanian and Syrian refugee parents when striving to ensure their children’s regular school attendance is key to identify the barriers and enablers that continue to impact children with disabilities’ inclusion in the classroom.

For this reason the No Lost Generation (NLG) initiative – with the support of World Vision and Mercy Corps – conducted an extensive behavioral barrier analysis among more than 250 Jordanian and Syrian parents of children with disabilities in the host community and camp settings.

Focus group discussions were also held with more than a dozen teachers and disability experts to better understand the challenges faced with inclusion in the classrooms, in addition to the lessons learned from remote learning during the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

The thematic findings were primarily related to (1) disability category, (2) social norms and support networks, (3) values and beliefs surrounding education and future prospects, including religion, (4) perceptions on inclusive education versus access to specialized facilities, (5) concerns related to bullying and stigma, and lastly (6) financial and physical barriers such as transportation, personal escort and daily allowances.
The main findings are detailed in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ENABLERS</th>
<th>BARRIERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Disability categories and their impact on inclusion</td>
<td>More likely to have a child with a hearing or speech disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social norms and support networks</td>
<td>Much more likely to benefit from strong support networks at the family and community levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Values and beliefs surrounding education and future prospects, including divine will</td>
<td>More likely to value their children's education while also holding a more positive outlook on their child's future. They also believed their religion promoted a commitment to education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Perceptions on inclusive education versus access to specialized facilities</td>
<td>More likely to have faith in inclusive education while also being confident that school establishments would be able to address their children's specific needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Concerns related to bullying and stigma</td>
<td>Less concerned about bullying and more invested in their child building social connections at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Physical and financial barriers to regular school attendance</td>
<td>More likely to live at proximity to the educational establishment, and have access to tailored transportation or personal escort services for their child to travel to and from school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## II. MAIN FINDINGS

Overview of survey and samples per location and parents’ classifications:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category group</th>
<th>Number of surveyed parents</th>
<th>Number of parents who sent their children with disabilities to school regularly</th>
<th>Number of parents who did not send their children with disabilities to school regularly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jordanian parents of children with disabilities</td>
<td>31 fathers 59 mothers</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian parents of children with disabilities in host communities</td>
<td>30 fathers 59 mothers 1 related caregiver</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian parents of children with disabilities in Azraq camp</td>
<td>35 fathers 34 mothers 2 related caregiver</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAND TOTAL</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The overarching thematic findings were as follows:

**a. Disability categories and their impact on inclusion**

**ENABLERS**

- Syrian parents in host community who sent their children to school regularly were **three times more likely to have a child with a speech disability** and;

- close to **five times more likely to have a child with a hearing disability**.

**BARRIERS**

- Jordanian parents who did not send their children to school on a regular basis were **twice as likely to have children with intellectual disabilities**.

- Syrian parents in the host community who did not send their children to school regularly were **six times more likely to have a child with an intellectual disability** and;

- those residing in Azraq camp were **close to four times more likely to have a child with an intellectual disability**.
b. Social norms and the importance of support networks

**ENABLERS**

Jordanian parents who sent their children to school regularly were **twice more likely to say**, “Most parents in my community ensure that their child with disabilities attends classes every day.”

They were also close to four times more likely to say that most people in their community were supportive of their child attending school.

Syrian parents in the host community who sent their child to school regularly were **more than twice more likely to say**, “Among parents that I know, most ensure that their child with disability attends classes regularly.”

**BARRIERS**

Jordanian parents who did not send their children to school regularly were **more than four times more likely to say** that very few parents in their community ensured that their child with disabilities attended classes daily and;

close to five times **more likely to say** that most people were not supportive of their child attending school, and six times more likely to say that “no one” was supportive in these efforts.

Syrian parents in the host community who did not send their child to school regularly were **twice more likely to say**, “I do not know any other parents of children with disabilities.”
c. Values and beliefs surrounding education and future prospects, including religion

**ENABLERS**

Jordanian parents who sent their children to school regularly had a more positive outlook on their child’s educational future and were more than five times more likely to say, “It is easy [to send my child to school] because my child likes to go to school and wants to learn.”

Syrian parents in the host community who sent their children to school regularly were more than three times as likely to say that sending their child with disability to school was easy because they understood the benefits of learning and education for their child.

Regarding religious beliefs in particular, Jordanian parents who sent their children to school regularly were close to three times more likely to say, “Yes, I think that my religion promotes a commitment to education.”

**BARRIERS**

Jordanian parents who did not send their child to school were close to eight times more likely to say, “It is not likely at all that my child will finish his or her education,” and close to five times more likely to say, “It would not be serious at all if my child did not complete his or her education.”

Syrian parents in the host community were more than six times more likely to say, “It is not likely at all that my child will complete his or her education” and three times more likely to say, “It is not likely at all that my child will complete his or her education even if he attends classes every day.”

Syrian parents in the camp setting who did not send their child to school regularly were more than nine times more likely to think their child did not get any benefits from attending school.
d. Perceptions on inclusive education versus access to specialized facilities

**ENABLERS**

Jordanian and Syrian parents who sent their children to school regularly were respectively **more than three and four times more likely** to say, "Access to educational facilities is about the same for children with disabilities and children without disabilities."

Jordanian parents were also **twelve times more likely** to mention that teachers were well equipped to manage children with disabilities and **six times more likely** to say that their child had access to a resource room and assistant teacher at school.

**BARRIERS**

Paradoxically, both Syrian and Jordanian parents who did not send their children to school regularly were respectively **four and three times more likely** to say that access to educational facilities was easier for a child without disabilities.

Jordanian parents were **five times more likely** to say that teachers were not very well equipped to manage children with disabilities in their classrooms, often stating that the school did not have an integration system or support mechanisms.
e. Concerns related to bullying and stigma

**ENABLERS**

Jordanian and Syrian parents from the host community who sent their children to school regularly were respectively **close to three and four times more likely to say**, “It is not likely at all that my child will be bullied at school.”

Syrian parents were also close to **six times more likely to say**, “It is easier [to send my child to school] because my child interacts with other children, makes friends, and experiences the social benefits of school.”

**BARRIERS**

When it came to bullying Jordanian parents were **more than ten times more likely to say**, “A disadvantage of ensuring that my child attends classes every day is that my child will be bullied at school.” They were also more likely to believe that both teachers and students would have a lack of consideration for their child’s needs.

Syrian parents in the host community who did not send their children to school regularly were also **close to ten times more likely to say**, “It is difficult because teachers and students have a lack of consideration for children with disabilities.”

Interestingly, Syrian parents in Azraq camp were **more likely to say**, “My child can misbehave and hurt others.”
f. Physical and financial barriers to regular school attendance

**ENABLERS**

Both Jordanian and Syrian parents who sent their children to school regularly in the host community were respectively more than twice and three more likely to say, “It is easy because we live only a short distance from the school.”

Parents in all three category groups including the camp were more likely to say that their child had a personal aid to escort them to and from school, often referring to a family member, neighbor or other student who accompanies them.

**BARRIERS**

Jordanian and Syrian parents who did not send their children to school regularly were respectively close to three and four times more likely to say, “It is difficult because we need a bus due to distance to the school and my child’s disability.”

When it came to financial barriers, both Jordanian and Syrian parents in the host community who did not send their children regularly to school were more likely to mention that their family faced difficulties in paying for school items such as stationery and daily allowance.
III. CHALLENGES & POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOLLOWING THE PANDEMIC

Challenges with Remote Learning: During focus group discussions, teachers in camp and host communities reflected on their remote learning experiences during the strict lockdown periods imposed in Jordan as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to adapt to this new reality, teachers from both camp and host communities filmed their lessons and sent them to parents of children with disabilities via WhatsApp as part of their programs. On the one hand, this provided teachers with the opportunity to follow up bilaterally on the needs of children with disabilities by communicating with parents over the phone and sending tailored videos for each child. On the other hand, this also entailed challenges as not all parents were able to regularly follow up on their children’s learning needs, particularly if their children had severe intellectual or developmental disabilities requiring support from experienced teachers. For these reasons, the HCD had recommended the continuation of face-to-face learning for children with disabilities as early as September 2020 in order to avoid regression.

A POSITIVE OUTCOME: Despite some challenges with internet connection particularly in the camp setting, the videos filmed by teachers to support remote learning for children with disabilities were very popular among parents and children alike and could be tailored to their needs. Teachers expressed eagerness to continue with similar initiatives even after the end of lockdown periods.
IV. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

4 key recommendations can be taken out from this behavioral barrier analysis:

1. Develop strong support networks for parents of children with disabilities to enable them to value their child’s education and support his or her regular school attendance.

2. Engage directly with children with disabilities and their parents to identify and address behavioral barriers to their school attendance, ability to set learning goals, and capacity to create a supporting learning environment in the home.

3. Address disability-related bullying and stigma through community-led approaches that challenge negative norms towards disability and foster an inclusive environment.

4. Increase funding to support inclusive education in both camp and host community settings in line with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and The Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’ (HCD) 10-year strategy for inclusive education.