



Adolescents and gender norms in Jordan: what are we learning from the GAGE study?

Consultative Workshop on Gender Transformative Approaches in Makani

Prof. Bassam Abu Hamad, Dr Nicola Jones and Elizabeth Presler-Marshall, Amman, May 2023



Presentation Outline

- 1 GAGE overview
- 2 GAGE findings on adolescent skills development
- 3 GAGE findings on positive parenting and community engagement
- 4 GAGE findings on UNICEF programming
- 5 Implications for programming
- 6 Questions and discussion



GAGE overview

Please note that the photographs of adolescents DO NOT capture GAGE research participants and consent was gained from their guardians for the photographs to be used for GAGE communications purposes.

Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE):

A longitudinal research programme (2016-2026)



We are following 20,000 adolescent girls and boys - the largest cohort of adolescents in the Global South

GAGE longitudinal research sample

Our research methodology

GAGE is employing a mixed-methods research and impact evaluation design, including:

Global: 20,000*

Jordan: **4,000**



Quantitative survey

- Surveys with adolescent girls and boys aged 10–12 and 15–17
- Surveys with their female and male caregivers
- Surveys with community leaders and school personnel

800*

250



Qualitative research

- In-depth interviews with nodal adolescents, their siblings, caregivers and community leaders
- Key informant interviews and historical process tracing
- Policy and legal analysis to understand the politics of policy and programme implementation

200*

50

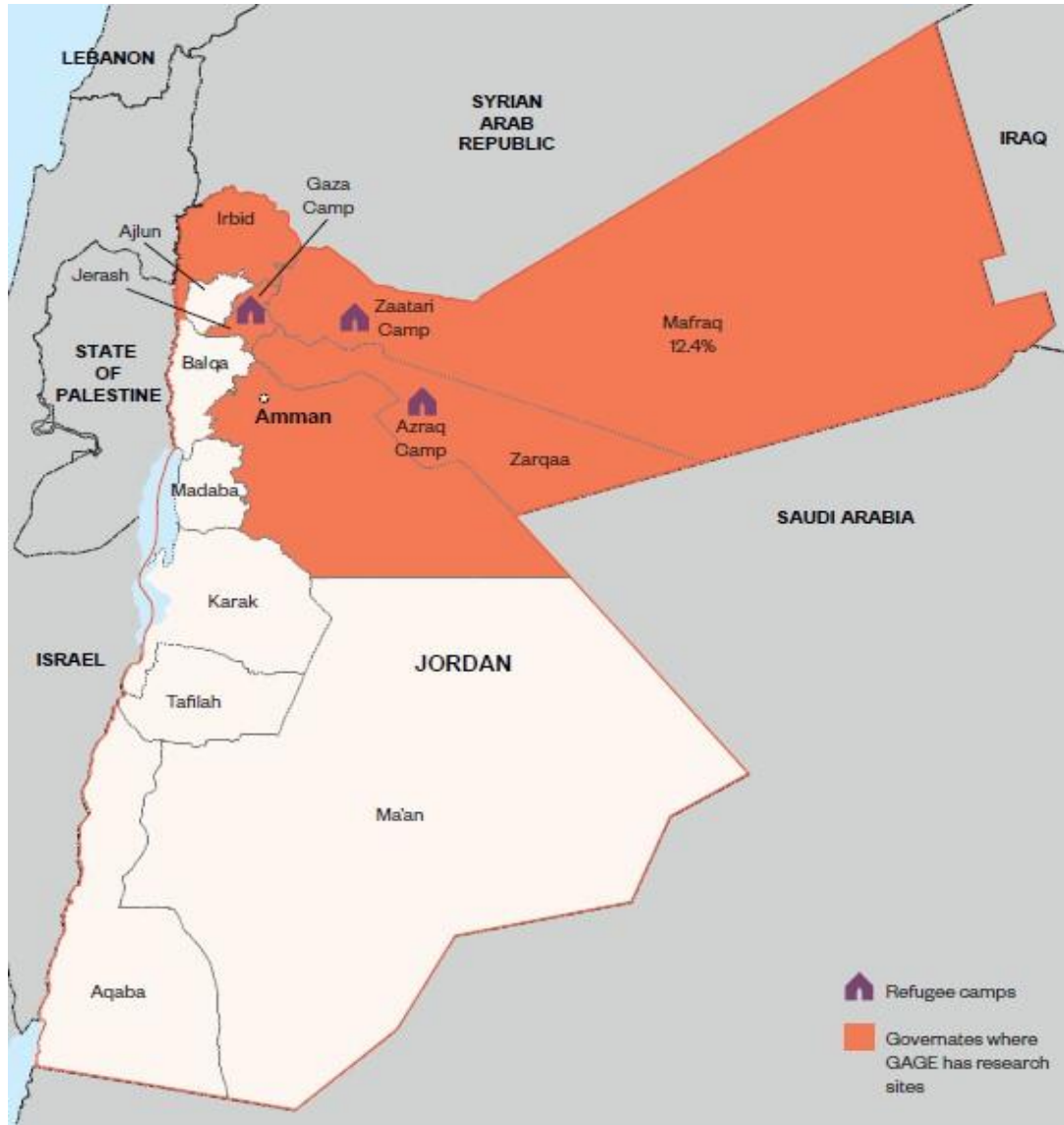


Participatory research

- Peer research and participatory photography with adolescents and their peers to better pinpoint shifts in adolescent capabilities over time
- Social network analysis to understand the evolving influence of peer groups throughout adolescence

* Rounded to the nearest 100 to take attrition into account. For the most up-to-date figures please refer to the GAGE website.

GAGE Jordan research sites and baseline sample breakdown



At baseline (2018-2019):

Syrians	Jordanians	Ex-Gazans
3,090	642	304
Host communities	Camps	ITS
2,445	1,348	308

- ½ girls ½ boys
- ½ 10-12 years old ½ 15-17 years old
- 10% adolescents with disabilities
- 10% girls who have already been married


✓ Added in Dom adolescents and additional Makani sample in early 2022

✓ Lost approximately 28% of adolescents to follow-up

At midline (2022-2023):

Syrians	Jordanians	Ex-Gazans	Dom
2,811	1,120	275	114

- At midline the mean age of all adolescents is 16.3 years
- Mean age of the core GAGE sample is 17.2 years
- Mean age of the Dom sample is 14 years



GAGE findings on adolescent and youth skills development

School enrolment favours Jordanians and girls

- **At baseline, when the average adolescent was 13.4 years old and the sample did not include Dom adolescents, the enrolment story is primarily about nationality:**
 - ✓ Approximately 75% of girls and boys were enrolled
 - ✓ Approximately 90% of Jordanians and Palestinians were enrolled
 - ✓ Approximately 70% of Syrians were enrolled
- **At midline, when the average adolescent in the core GAGE sample was 17.2 years old and the average Dom adolescent was 14 years old, the enrolment story is shaped by both nationality and gender**
 - ✓ Jordanians (87%) and Dom (75%) are more likely to be enrolled than Palestinians (63%) and Syrians (56%)
 - ✓ Girls (68%) are more likely to be enrolled than boys (61%)

Many adolescents—especially boys—leave school while quite young

At midline and looking at out-of-school adolescents:

Jordanian adolescents left school at an average age of 16

Boys left school nearly a year before girls

Boys were twice as likely as girls to leave school before 6th grade (14% vs 6%)

Dom adolescents left school at an average age of 12

Boys left school a year before girls

(Our Dom sample is smaller and younger—so this is all we can say so far)

Palestinian adolescents left school at an average age of 15 ½

Boys left school ½ year before girls

Boys were twice as likely as girls to leave school before 6th grade (15% vs 6%)

Syrian adolescents left school at an average age of 14 ½

Boys left school ½ year before girls

About ¼ of girls and boys left school before 6th grade

Boys' more common—and earlier—drop out means fewer opportunities to reach them with school-based courses and messaging on reproductive health and gender equity.

Adolescents' learning outcomes are poor

The GAGE survey includes two simple measures of adolescent learning:

1. Can the adolescent read a short story written at the second-grade level?
2. Can the adolescent do triple digit subtraction with borrowing?

At midline, when the average adolescent (except for Dom) was 17 years old, **many do not have these basic literacy and numeracy skills**

Jordanian

73% could read
57% could subtract

- Girls' reading outcomes are much better than boys
- Girls math outcomes are moderately better than boys

Dom

42% could read
31% could subtract

- Girls' learning outcomes are much better than boys in both

(recall these adolescents are only 14 years old)

Palestinian

62% could read
51% could subtract

- Girls' learning outcomes are much better than boys in both

Syrian

65% could read
48% could subtract

- Girls' learning outcomes are moderately better than boys in both

Tawjihi outcomes also show limits on access and learning

A minority of adolescents sit the exam

- ✓ At midline, of those age 18 or older (either had taken or were scheduled to take):

65% of Jordanians

Girls were moderately more likely than boys to sit the exam

41% of Palestinians

Girls were more than twice as likely as boys to sit the exam

33% of Syrians

Girls were moderately more likely than boys to sit the exam

Exam failure rates are high

- ✓ At midline, of those who had taken the exam:

18% of Jordanians fail

Boys were much more likely to fail than girls

35% of Palestinians fail

Failure rates were similar for girls and boys

34% of Syrians fail

Boys were much more likely to fail than girls

(The Dom sample is too young to sit the Tawjihi exam)

Gender norms shape adolescents' development of academic skills

Girls are seen as future wives and mothers who will be dependent on their husbands for upkeep.

In many families, **formal education is not seen as important in and of itself.**

School is a placeholder for girls until they are old enough to marry.

Education is important primarily because it helps girls become better wives and mothers.

Teaching is one of the few occupational pathways for women—and female teachers tend to enjoy their jobs.

VS

Boys are seen as independent breadwinners.

In many families, there is a **tension** between boys' immediate breadwinning—as adolescents--and boys' future breadwinning—as adult men.

Even when households do not require boys' income—**boys can be pushed towards independence when young**; they are often required to provide their own pocket money.

Teaching is not a high status occupation for men. It is also more poorly paid than many other 'more masculine' jobs.



Girls are more likely than boys to have access to quality education.

But drop out rates are still high, due to restrictive gender norms.

Supporting girls to stay in school will require **addressing** those **norms**.

In the short-term, benefits of doing so will accrue to individual girls.

In the medium- and long-term, benefits will accrue to girls' communities and future children.

Limits on girls: Protecting honour

- In some families, girls are made to leave school at puberty

'Here, the little girls are raised with a shattered heart, because they know that they will leave school in the 6th grade'. (16 -year-old Palestinian girl)

- In other families, girls are made to leave school due to sexual harassment

*'My sister quit because there are boys who gather around her school.'
(17-year-old Dom boy)*

*'Many girls were forced to leave school because of the young men... 70% of girls who leave school [do so] because of the young men.'
(19-year-old Syrian girl)*

- Critical is that girls' reputations are not harmed--because this reflects on family honour

'The important thing for them is that people do not talk [gossip] about them.' (Palestinian mother)

'People talk about girls...and we don't like people talking about our daughter.' (Syrian father)

Limits on girls: Child marriage

- Child marriage pulls many girls—especially Syrians—out of education
- At midline, of girls over the age of 18, nearly a third had married before age 18:
 - ✓ 21% of Jordanians
 - ✓ 10% of Palestinians
 - ✓ 34% of Syrians
- Of ever-married girls, only 3% were enrolled in school at midline

*‘There are many girls in our school who got engaged and their fiancés have said: since I got engaged to you, you have to stop going to school.’
(16-year-old Palestinian girl)*

‘There was an agreement to complete my education... I wanted to be a lawyer... I love justice and I like to behave fairly among people... He refused to let me go to school... I made a fight, but in the end I knew that he had the right.’ (18-year-old Syrian girl)

- At baseline, the average married girl in Jordan had not completed 6th grade.

Limits on girls: Education has limited utility

- **Girls and women have very limited access to paid work in Jordan**—which means some families see investment in girls' education as not worth it
- The midline survey found that **only 8% of girls and young women** (vs. 44% of boys and young men) **had had any paid work in the past year**
- **Most girls and young women know that work is not for them**—even if that is what they would like

'Males, like my father and brothers, are the only ones who work... I am a girl and I must not work.' (13-year-old Dom girl)

'Many parents do not allow their daughters to enter university. Most girls here marry directly after high school. Parents here frustrate girls and do not allow them to work after graduation.' (19-year-old Palestinian girl)

- Some girls and young women report that their **families are willing to invest in their brothers schooling—but not their own**

'I saw that all the support is towards my brother and his studies, for his future.'
(20-year-old Syrian woman)

'My parents say...the girl, why should she go to study at the university?!'
(19-year-old Palestinian girl)

Limits on girls: Socialisation for compliance

- **Parents admit they do not allow girls to make decisions**—even over whether to pursue education

*'The girl will accept our decision...
she does not talk.'*
(Palestinian mother)

*'My daughter is forced to listen,
against her will. She tries to discuss
with her father, he shouts at her...she
surrenders.'* (Jordanian mother)

*'We have no principle that the girl
should make her own decision.'*
(Syrian father)

- **Girls learn to accept parental demands**—because they are trying to be 'good' daughters and because they have no option

*'I used to play football. My mom made me stop.
Then there was a photography class. My Mom
made me stop. I said "Okay, as you like." Then there
was a painting exhibit. My mom said I could not go.
I didn't say anything. I kept silent and went inside.'*
(16-year-old Syrian girl)

*'There is no way I could oppose my mother. I don't like to tell
her anything...she is doing everything for my own sake.'*
(17-year-old Syrian girl)

*'Girls are not allowed to act freely while the boys are allowed
to do whatever they want.'* (17-year-old Palestinian girl)



Gender norms are at the root of boys' educational disadvantage.

Because of gender norms that limit women's access to paid work—and make men responsible for providing—**shifting the gender norms that limit boys has cascading impacts on girls and women and across generations.**

Limits on boys: Child labour

- **Boys in Jordan often work for pay**—sometimes starting in early adolescence—to help support their households and to earn their own pocket money
- **Paid work is primarily very part-time, but has additive costs over time**

At midline—44% of boys had worked for pay in the past year:

- 21% of Dom boys (slightly younger)
- 31% of Jordanian boys
- 40% of Palestinian boys
- 50% of Syrian boys

At baseline-- boys' paid work was intermittent:

- Jordanian and Palestinian boys had worked 9 days in the past month
- Syrian boys had worked 11 days in the past month

'I am a young man... I want to complete my studies, but there is a problem, which means that I have to attend one or two days a week... I want to help my family, there is no one to work for them.'

(16-year-old Syrian boy who left school after attending part-time for a year)

'The situation here at the house... is not helpful. There was no money. We, as guys, grew up and it is not right that we stay unemployed.'

(15-year-old out of school Palestinian boy)

'It is a wonderful feeling... I felt that my family knew that I had become a man and that I should rely on myself.'

(15-year-old out of school Syrian boy)

Limits on boys: Violent and poor quality education



- **Corporal punishment is very common at boys' schools**—at midline, 31% of enrolled boys reported experiencing violence from a teacher in the past year.
- **Violence pushes many boys out of school.**

'My son doesn't dare go to the school. The teacher keeps beating him.' (Syrian mother)

'The teacher told me, "The boy will be spoiled if he is not hit!"' (Jordanian mother)

*'There is a student, when the teacher cursed him, he cried, and he is in the 9th grade, and it is difficult for the student to cry in the 9th grade'.
(15 -year-old Jordanian boy)*

- **The quality of education at boys' schools is also poor.**

'We see what the girls study and what they are taught... The teacher is paying attention to the girl students. Honestly, when we boys go to our teachers they don't care.' (21 -year-old Syrian man)

*'There are some students who have reached grade 8 or grade 19 but they still do not know how to read ... The student is lazy but teachers at school don't give him much attention.'
(18-year-old Palestinian boy)*

Limits on boys: Labour market constraints and peer pressure

- **High youth unemployment also drives boys' school drop-out**, because boys see no point in investing their time and effort if it will not translate into better paid work
- This is **especially acute for ex-Gazans**, who have been shut out of professional work for decades

'During the current times, the one who have finished their university education are sitting at homes. They are doing other odd jobs.'
(Dom father)

'My son topped in law...and wants to join as a lawyer...but there are no jobs...he will be preparing tea & coffee over there, just like a clerk.'
(Palestinian mother)

- **Some boys also drop out due to peer pressure**—they spend more time playing games and socialising than studying.

'My friends say to me: "This is better for you! You are comfortable!"'
(14-year-old Syrian boy of his friends' encouraging him to leave school)

'You feel the boy is not balanced (immature) ... I mean that his mind is smaller than his age.' (Syrian father)

'Boys leave school in the 7th grade because they are bored.'
(15-year-old Jordanian boy)



GAGE findings on parenting and community engagement

Home is not a haven from violence

- At baseline, **16% reported experiencing physical violence at the hands of caregivers in the past year.**
- **Boys were at higher risk** than girls: 20% vs. 13%
- **Caregivers reported more violence**—37% admitted to hitting or slapping their child *in the last 30 days*.

'I have no solution except beating them... it is like emptying and a release.' (Syrian mother)

- At midline, **when adolescents were older and many girls are no longer living at home because they are married**, only 8% of adolescents reported experiencing physical violence at home in the past year.
- **Boys were at higher risk than girls:** 9% vs. 6%

'I do not beat my daughter because this will affect her but when I beat my son, he will be better. Girls can hear the speech, but you must hit boys in order for them to obey.'
(Syrian mother)

Fathers are too rarely involved in parenting

- Most adolescents report limited interactions with their fathers.

'We only talk to our mothers and not our fathers.'
(14 -year-old Jordanian girl)

'My mother is the one who raised me and knows what makes me upset and what makes me happy... She understands me.'
(15 -year-old Syrian girl)

The baseline survey found that **adolescents are more likely to talk to their mothers than their fathers, that girls talk to their mothers more than boys, and that adolescents talk to their parents less as they grow up.**

- Most mothers report limited parenting by fathers.

'The father does not have time to sit with his children.'
(Palestinian mother)

'Men do not know how to communicate well with their sons.'
(Syrian mother)

'A father doesn't talk to his son thinking that he will ask for money and a son is scared to talk to his father.'
(Syrian mother)

Girls' honour is valued over girls' well-being

- At baseline, **older girls were 38% less likely to leave home every day** than older boys.
- At baseline, **older unmarried girls were half as likely to have a phone for their own use** as older boys: 35% vs. 73%

'The virtue of a girl is much more important than the virtue of a boy.' (Dom mother)

*'Parents take too much care about the girl...
The girl is under the microscope.'*
(Makani KI)

- **Girls are cut off from their friends and the world around them**—due to parental restrictions on their behaviour and due to fear related to violating expectations.
- At midline, **only 62% of girls had a trusted friend**.

*'When I was young... my life was sweet...
When we were girls, we used to take a walk
and go together to the shops, to amusement
parks, wherever we wanted... But now we
have separated and each one of us has
become our own country.'*
(18 -year-old Syrian girl)

*'I don't allow my daughters to leave the house. They
may look from the door for 5 minutes and then I ask
them to close it.'* (Palestinian mother)

*'I was strong when I was little...Now I fear a
lot.'* (16-year-old Syrian girl)

Boys often feel under significant pressure by expectations that they contribute to household income

- As noted above, **at midline 44% of boys had worked for pay** in the past year.
- Boys often feel **parental expectations are crushing**—especially when work costs them education
- Boys are crushed further by **high youth unemployment** that prevents them from living up to expectations

'My eldest son was going to get a heart attack...we were obliged to send him to work...the school principal made them fail because of not attending classes.' (Syrian mother of a 9th grade boy)

'I was happy in my childhood... I didn't complete my childhood... My parents even wanted me to pay for the whole house!'
(16-year-old Syrian boy)

'My son does not eat and remains psychologically complicated. He says: "you have sent me to work and be sad".'
(Syrian mother of a 13 -year-old boy)

'He tells me every day ... I want to commit suicide. I want to die...There is no job, there is no need to live.'
(Palestinian woman of her adolescent nephew)

Boys are socialised into unhealthy masculinity

- **Boys are shown that men wield power through violence.**

'The problem with the fathers is that they are too strict... Everything is only about fights... If my son is in front of my husband, my husband might hit my son with anything.' (Jordanian mother)

'When I see my father, I run away.'
(14-year-old Palestinian boy)

'My older boy wanted to control the younger one...I felt that he wanted to imitate his father.'
(Syrian mother)

- **Boys are encouraged to be stoic about violence**—because reporting can invite more violence.

While boys are more likely than girls to experience violence at home—they are less likely than girls to seek support for it: 11% vs 21% at midline.

'When the father hits his son, the son doesn't tell anyone and he stays away and he feels sad.'
(11-year-old Syrian boy)

'Sometimes, he doesn't tell me when boys hit him. Recently, he tell me when boys hit him. I hit him to tell me what happened with him.' (Palestinian mother)

- **Substances become boys' way of coping**—because they see this modelled by the men around them.

At midline, 22% of boys are daily smokers (vs. 2% of girls).

'I go to any place and drink, that's all. If I am upset, I go and drink. I take things ... pills and marijuana.'
(17-year-old Dom boy)

'One of my neighbours told me "Your son smokes". I told him, "Let him smoke. What can I do?" He told me "Smoking causes cancer". I told him "Cucumber is more carcinogenic than smoking".' (Jordanian father)

Many boys lack limits—and girls are blamed for boys' bad behaviour

- Adolescent boys and young men are often seen as uncontrollable

'A guy can do whatever and the society won't hold him accountable for it.'
(16-year-old Syrian girl)

'I am not able to tell my son "no".'
(Dom mother)

'At this age, a teenage son will not accept anything.' (Jordanian father)

'They are adolescents...these bad boys...all the problems are in them.' (Syrian mother)

- But girls are blamed for boys' negative actions

'Our community is unmerciful ... If anyone violates any girls, the community thinks that the girl likes to do that, and she wanted this action.'
(15-year-old Syrian girl)

'If a daughter will come and say that she was harassed or the son comes to say that to his father, the father will beat his daughter.'
(Syrian mother)

Child marriage—and child brides—are valued

- As noted, at midline, 29% of young women over the age of 18 had married before age 18.
- **Parents emphasise girls' safety and honour as a reason** for preferring child marriage over adult marriage

'Everyone is looking to have their daughters married before the age of 18, to have peace of mind and take her responsibility off their shoulders... There are many bad guys around here, and getting her married is safer for her.' (Syrian father)

'The neighbours say, "Do you want her to sit with you? Do you want to bear her sin?" So, you will be convinced by their talk and you will say to yourself: "It would be wrong to NOT marry her. It is very important that I marry her now!"' (Syrian mother)

- **Girls' reasons for agreeing to child marriage are complex**, but largely reflect their lack of options

'Marriage is about destiny.'
(14-year-old Syrian girl)

- **Young men—and their mothers—often prefer adolescent girls over adult women**

'I raised her, knew everything about her, and made her know everything about me while she is still young. ...It's like the doll you can move it as you like....It's better than getting a mature girl who already have other things.'
(husband of a 15-year-old girl, host community)

Girls are unprepared for the realities of marriage by parents and the wider community

Some girls are completely unprepared for sexual debut

'My husband came after me to the bedroom and we sat for some time. He asked me if I knew what was going to happen. I told him no. Then he explained slowly to me... I was shocked and I started crying.'

(18-year-old Syrian girl)

Some girls do not realise how pregnancy happens

'I knew that there will be a marriage and God will bless me with a child... I was too young and didn't understand anything... even my mother... she told me nothing.'

(16-year-old Dom mother)

Most girls are unprepared for the emotional complexities of married life

'I was shocked. There were many things that changed... I was unable to deal with the problems, to deal with my husband or to deal with my mother-in-law.'

(17-year-old Syrian girl)

A minority of adolescent girls know about contraception

- At midline, 33% of unmarried girls age 15+ could name a form of contraception.
- At midline, 75% of married girls could name a form of contraception.

Intimate partner violence is rampant—and girls are not supported by parents and the wider community

At midline, **64% of girls and 85% of boys** believe that a wife owes her husband total obedience.

At midline, **34% of girls and 51% of boys** believe that IPV is private and should never be discussed outside the home.

- **Husbands see violence as their right**

‘Wrong is wrong. I used to correct her when she did something wrong.’
(Syrian husband of an adolescent girl)

‘I am her husband, and I will beat her whenever I want.’
(Palestinian husband of an adolescent girl)

- **Girls are afraid to report**—because they fear they will be blamed, will make the violence worse, or will lose their children

‘There isn’t one woman who dares to say that my husband beats me... I couldn’t tell my own family. Why? Because we only have the one thought: “If the girl is returned to her family after only two months it is because her husband found out something about her.” Those are the beliefs of the community we’re in.’ (19 -year-old Syrian girl)

- **Girls’ parents often admit they refuse to intervene, even if girls report**

‘I told my daughter, this is the marriage of your life... if you have problems with him, if you have problems with your father-in law family or if you have problems with your mother-in-law and brothers-in-law, it is impossible to back to us’. (Syrian mother)



GAGE findings on UNICEF impacts

Makani supports the development of academic skills

- Centres **help out-of-school students enrol / re-enrol**
- **Facilitators inspire students to invest in education**
- Learning support courses deliver content in a way that makes **learning fun**
- Makani learning support was **especially critical during pandemic-related school closures**

'We are learning Arabic and mathematics, this was so helpful to me, because I didn't understand anything from my teacher, I always ask my teacher here, and he always explains them to me.' (15-year-old Dom girl)

'If it were not for the Makani Centre, my kids would have been lost.'
(Palestinian father, speaking of support for distance education)

'It is more useful than what I study at school. Here they take better care of us than in school.... They focus on giving us a better future and on encouraging us and motivating us.'
(16-year-old Syrian boy)

55% of Makani participants reported that their facilitators helped them study and keep up with school during distance education

Makani supports the development of practical life skills

Digital literacy

'They taught us how to download and upload files, how to install and uninstall different files... They taught us a lot of information about computers.'
(14-year-old Syrian boy)

'At Makani they teach us how to use the computer to create projects and things related to real life.'
(17-year-old Jordanian girl)

Financial literacy

'We spoke about our daily or monthly allowance, how we can save it, and where we can save it... We talked about the central bank, what is its duty, for cheques, deposits, things of the sort.'
(Dom mother)

'They expanded my point of view and how to consume money effectively even if the income is low... if you have a small business you have to work on the networking and as long as you are being noticed more you will get to improve your business. You have to work on the marketing side to get to the maximum number of peoples.'
(14-year-old Jordanian girl)

Makani supports the development of 'soft' life skills

- **Life skills courses** support confidence, perseverance, and communication skills

'Self-confidence is the most powerful skill we benefited from, as it raised our awareness and increased our confidence.'
(18-year-old Jordanian boy)

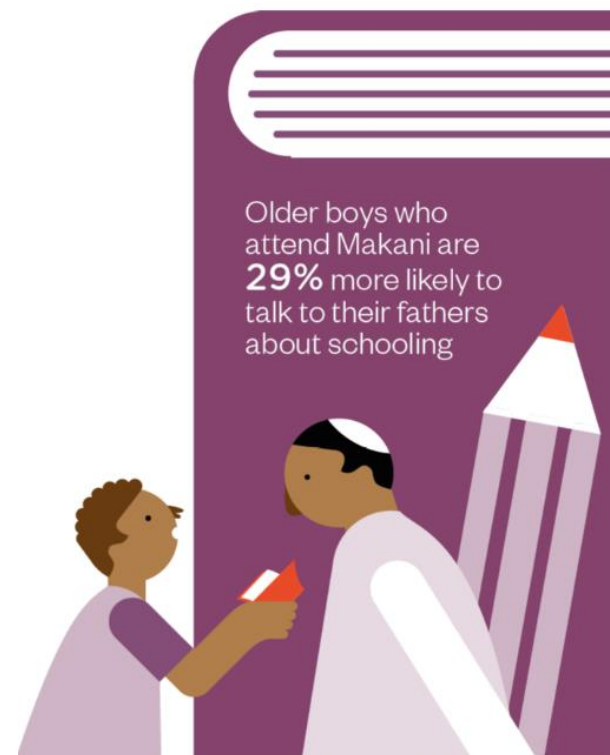
'We learn if we face a problem, we shouldn't feel that is a difficult problem... We should face the problem.'
(10-year-old Syrian girl)

'I am confident now, before, I didn't do anything without asking people, now I am more confident.'
(13-year-old Syrian boy)

- **Social Innovation Labs** offer hands-on opportunities to do and lead

'One of the projects created by the girls ... was a distributor fan inside kitchens [to remove smells]. They made it from simple materials and presented their project in front of community members and leaders ... They comfortably received and answered their questions.' (Makani KI)

At baseline



Older girls who attend Makani were 33% more likely to hold a leadership position at school.

Makani's 'soft' life skills are especially important for girls

Makani life skill courses enhance girls' interactions within the family and community

'Makani taught me how to be strong and taught me the sense of responsibility, Makani taught me good leadership skills and how to be a useful woman in the community.' (15-year-old Dom girl)

'I became very confident in myself, and if someone said a word to me, I would reply to him 10 words. I started talking to people, interacting with them, and dealing with them, and anyone who harms me, I repay him. I became a bold, daring person.'
(15 -year-old Syrian girl)

'I used to be scared or reluctant to talk for fear of making mistakes. But we learned that it is ok to make mistakes and that we should always try again. I was too shy to take the bus by myself but with time I got used to taking the bus by myself.'
(14-year-old Jordanian girl)



Makani life skills help adolescents—esp. girls—obtain advanced skills

‘Previously, I didn’t like to go out so much, but the programme encouraged me to go out and to do many things. It encourages people to get out of home and to think about new things. I benefited from life skills so much... I go wherever there is an opportunity.’

(17-year-old Syrian girl enrolled in a tailoring class after developing confidence)

‘My daughter changed completely at Makani...She became more self-confident. She discovered her character. She has an ambition now. She wants to be a doctor. She is at university.’

(Dom mother)

‘My mother told me about [the mobile phone repair course], but she did not really expect that it would go very far. ... But I insisted on it, because I loved the idea so much. You as a girl will be able to fix your own phones or even others’ phones... I did not listen to them, and went on with the training.’

(19-year-old Palestinian girl enrolled in a mobile phone repair course after strengthening her ability to negotiate with her parents)

Makani facilitators can be inspirational role models

'My teacher [Makani facilitator] was the only girl and her father did not want to educate her, while her mother encouraged her to study. When she got a high grade overall her father said 'you won't study at university'. She felt disappointed in the beginning but after many discussions with him he allowed her to study. She finished her education and worked as a teacher and now she is helping her parents with their daily expenses now that they are old. Her father is saying he is proud of her and it was a great decision that he allowed her to study. This taught me to be determined and accomplish my dream. She is my role model. I know that some families do not accept or change their mind and it is challenging for other girls but all girls should keep on and not give up.'
(20-year-old Palestinian woman, now at university)



Makani Center in Baqa © Herwig UNICEF 2015

Some but limited Makani engagement on gender norms

- A few girls and boys report **learning about gender equality**

'I had a different, wrong, perspective about kids and women, that we are men, we are better than them...we took a whole course... how we can support equality between men and women since our rights are exactly the same.' (17-year-old Syrian boy)

- A few boys report **learning to resist peer pressure to engage in sexual harassment**

'We learned it is inappropriate and a mistake to harass and taunt people in the street.' (15 year old Jordanian boy)

- Some girls report **lessons on child marriage**

'We performed a play (for Women's Day). Some people prepared stories. Some prepared some audio messages about violence against women and about early marriage....I felt like I was defending women and I was taking her side.'
(13-year-old Syrian girl)

Makani parenting courses are changing mothers' beliefs & behaviours

- Mothers are learning about adolescent development—and how to keep adolescents safe.

'I participated in courses ...about teenagers...you have to understand and keep an eye on the children who are 14, 15 or 16 years old.' (Syrian mother)

- Mothers are learning to avoid violent discipline

'They told us not to hit our children and to talk to them only.' (Dom mother)

- Mothers are learning to avoid child marriage

'I was mentally programmed that females should get married at a young age because of the traditions, but my mindset has changed after attending the parent course at Makani Center.' (Syrian mother)

- Some Makani staff report significant engagement with fathers, but we do not see it in our sample

'No one has ever invited us to attend anything of that sort.' (Syrian father)

'I know that they study and do other things. I do not know what else they do at Makani. I have never asked.'
(Syrian father)

- A Makani KI admitted there is little staff can do with fathers and child marriage

'Our role is to raise awareness...That is what we can do. We cannot sit them the girl's father and try to convince him.' (Makani KI)

UNICEF cash transfers support academic skill development



- They help adolescents buy school supplies.

'I bought stationary for school. I buy some tools for geometry or some stuff I need for a project.'

(13-year-old Syrian girl)

- They help adolescents obtain private tutorial support.

'I wanted remedial classes... I improved at school and started to participate in classroom activities more. It made me feel happy. The teacher gave me extra credits because I came to class preprepared. There are many lessons that I couldn't understand but the platform made them clearer for me.'

(13-year-old Jordanian boy)

- They help students—especially girls—afford school transport.

'Schools in our areas do not have high school programmes. The children have to move to Ahsrafieh and transportation costs 3 Dinars per day to get to school.' (Dom father)

- They improve adolescents' attendance—because they help them fit in with their peers.

'When the child is 14 to 18 years old, they feel ashamed to go out wearing poor clothes...I swear by Allah, my daughter didn't go to school yesterday just because her trousers were torn.' (Dom mother)



UNICEF cash transfers keep girls in school (and reduce child marriage)



'I was engaged before the cash...My family was going through difficult financial conditions and pressure, so I thought I had to get married to alleviate the pressure ... my family couldn't bear with the expenditure of my learning ... I broke up with my fiancé because I wanted to continue my learning.' (16-year-old Syrian girl)

'Before the support my friend was about to get married and her father wanted to take her out of school. When they started receiving financial support, she delayed her marriage and she stayed in school.'

(13-year-old Syrian girl)

UNICEF cash transfers keep boys in school—by reducing child labour



Boys working on an olive farm water ©Herwig/UNICEF/2018

'The cash transfer programme is effective and direct. Families ... force their children to leave school so they can work to help the family financially ... but the regular cash to vulnerable households helps to offset this... Everyone supports the continuity of the programme.'
(Makani KI)

Implications for programming



Expand engagement with adolescents

1

Scale up cash transfers for education, ensuring that students are supported through the end of secondary school.

2

Expand learning support through the end of secondary school and work--especially with boys--to develop aspirations and study skills.

3

Help out-of-school young people access informal learning pathways that are linked with routes back into formal education (if desired).

4

Fold into existing life-skills curriculum more focused attention to gender norms and the ways in which they shape and limit girls' and boys' beliefs and behaviours. Ensure that adolescents are provided with opportunities to role-play how to discuss sensitive topics with their caregivers and to resist pressure to engage in damaging gendered behaviour (e.g. child marriage or substance use).

5

Alongside efforts to encourage girls to report violence and resist child marriage, ensure all boys are taught that they have a right to bodily integrity, that violence towards girls and women is wrong, and that adult women make better marriage partners.

6

Work with parents and religious leaders, to ensure cultural appropriateness, develop a reproductive health education course that could be delivered at Makani centres.

7

Scale up Social Innovation Labs in order to provide more older adolescents and youth with hands-on opportunities to do and lead.

Expand engagement with parents and other adults

1

Scale up efforts to promote Makani, providing communities with information about courses and how they benefit young people—as well how centres and facilitators are working to reduce known parental concerns.

2

Expand parenting education courses, making special efforts to include more fathers, addressing not only the importance of education, non-violent discipline and open parent–child communication but also how gender norms shape parenting and parent–child interactions and ultimately damage young people’s broader well-being.

3

Continue and scale up efforts to raise parents’ awareness that girls are not to blame if they experience sexual harassment, about the multiple and intersecting ways in which child marriage puts girls at risk (in the short term and longer term) due to gender norms, and about parents’ continued responsibility to protect girls even after marriage.

4

Develop a parenting education module focused on how parents—mothers and fathers—can guide adolescents through puberty and sexual maturity. This must include focused attention on what girls need to know prior to marriage.

5

Reach out to religious leaders and mukhtas to begin conversations on how they might use their positions in the community to shift the gender norms that are hurting adolescent girls and boys. This should include promoting closer father-child relationships, stepped up efforts to eliminate child marriage, and encouraging bystanders to intervene when they witness (or overhear) sexual harassment or intimate partner violence.

6

Invite teachers—especially male teachers—to observe learning support sessions for ideas on how to creatively engage students.

Policy Brief

May 2023



A Jordanian adolescent living in Amman, Jordan © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2023



How do gender norms shape adolescent trajectories in post-pandemic Jordan?

Authors: Elizabeth Presler-Marshall, Erin Oakley, Nicola Jones, Sarah Baird, Sarah Alheiwidi and Agnieszka Malachowska

Introduction

Over the past decade, adolescence has come to be seen as an age of opportunity. This is in part because of the physical transformations wrought by puberty, which are considered second only to those experienced in infancy and early childhood in terms of their scope and speed, and in part because of how children's place in the family and broader community shifts as they mature (Dahl et al., 2018; Viner et al., 2015; Steinberg, 2015; Sawyer et al., 2012; UNICEF, 2011). Many of those shifts are deeply gendered, meaning that girls and boys are typically expected to follow different paths (Mimari et al., 2017; Perry and Pauletti, 2011). Alongside this, the pandemic has highlighted the untapped potential of adolescents. The current cohort of adolescents is the largest in the history of the world (Ki-moon, 2016).

Capitalising on this youth bulge affords national and international actors the opportunity to make progress towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. In Jordan, where nearly one-third of the population are refugees and nearly two-thirds of the population are under 25, improving the life chances of adolescents and youth through education, skills training, and employment is a key priority (UNICEF Jordan, 2022; Higher Population Council (HPC), 2020; National Youth Strategy and the National Action Plan to Limit the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, n.d.; HPC, 2018), as well as donor efforts, such as UN Women's 'She's the First' initiative.

Suggested citation: Presler-Marshall, E., Oakley, E., Jones, N., Baird, S., Alheiwidi, S., & Malachowska, A. (2023). How do gender norms shape adolescent trajectories in post-pandemic Jordan? Policy brief. London: Gender & Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE).

'How do gender norms shape adolescent trajectories in post-pandemic Jordan?'
(policy brief)

Policy Brief

September 2022



A group of young girls at the Makani Center in Jordan © Herwig/UNICEF 2019



UNICEF Jordan's Makani programme: supporting students, building resilience

Authors: Elizabeth Presler-Marshall, Nicola Jones, Agnieszka Malachowska and Erin Oakley

Introduction

UNICEF Jordan's Makani programme has evolved considerably since it was launched in 2015. It was initially designed to provide informal education and child protection services to Syrian refugees fleeing war in their country. Today, it provides a wide array of age-tailored services for vulnerable Jordanian, Palestinian, Syrian and Dom (a marginalised ethnic minority group) children, adolescents and youth living in host communities, formal refugee camps and informal tented settlements (see Box 1). During the 2021–2022 school year, UNICEF piloted a cash transfer programme providing 65 Jordanian dinars (JOD) a month (~\$92), on condition that children attend school. This brief, which draws on mixed-methods baseline research, explores the early roll-out of this cash transfer and the broader implications for adolescent well-being. Future research rounds (in late 2022 and in 2024) will assess the impact of the programme on adolescent well-being.

- 1 The Makani programme and the broader GAGE research sample include adolescents and youth living in host communities, formal refugee camps and informal tented settlements.
- 2 To put this amount in context, the minimum wage in Jordan for 2022 was 245 JOD per month (~\$345). <https://www.jordanpress.com/news/local/minimum-wage-increase-deferred-to-2023>

Suggested citation: Presler-Marshall, E., Jones, N., Malachowska, A., & Oakley, E. (2022). UNICEF Jordan's Makani programme: supporting students, building resilience. Policy brief. London: Gender & Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE).

UNICEF Jordan's Makani programme : supporting students building resilience
(policy brief)

LESSONS FROM LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH WITH ADOLESCENTS



March 2022

Adolescent lives in Jordan: what are we learning from longitudinal evidence?

GAGE consortium

Jordan is a small, highly resource-constrained country situated in the heart of the Middle East. Long a haven for refugees fleeing regional conflict, over one-third of Jordan's 10 million residents are not Jordanian. Jordan is home to approximately 1.5 million Syrians, half of whom are registered as refugees with UNHCR. Jordan is also hosting 2.5 million registered Palestinian refugees. Most Palestinians living in Jordan have Jordanian citizenship and access to its attendant benefits. The remaining 20% – like the Syrian population – do not. Non-citizens have only limited access to a struggling labour market. Nearly all are poor and most are extremely so. Some of Jordan's ethnic minorities, including the Dom and the Turkmen, are also likely to be excluded from the labour market and to be poor, due to discrimination, language barriers and self-imposed social isolation.

Background to our research

The FCDO-funded Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) research programme is generating evidence about the diverse experiences of adolescents (10–19 years) living in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). It is exploring the myriad challenges and opportunities young people are facing, identifying the supports they have and need, and highlighting ways in which international and national actors can better promote adolescent agency and voice and fast-track adolescent well-being. The GAGE sample includes those most at risk of being left behind, including girls who are (or have been) married and young people who have been forcibly displaced or have disabilities.

As the world's largest longitudinal study focused on adolescents in LMICs, which is simultaneously evaluating a range of programmes aimed at supporting the development of adolescent capabilities, GAGE is contributing to the practical evidence that FCDO and its partners need to meet core development objectives, including the Sustainable Development Goals, and to build back better after the covid-19 pandemic.

In Jordan, GAGE has collected mixed-methods baseline data (between mid-2018 and early 2019) with approximately 4,100 Syrian, Palestinian, Jordanian



Adolescent Syrian refugees in Jordan © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE

'Adolescent lives in Jordan: what are we learning from longitudinal evidence?'
(policy brief)

More resources: <https://www.gage.odi.org/publications/>

Questions and discussion



Contact Us

WEBSITE

www.gage.odi.org

TWITTER

@GAGE_programme

FACEBOOK

GenderandAdolescence

About GAGE:

- Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) is a decade-long (2016-2026) mixed-methods longitudinal research programme focused on what works to support adolescent girls' and boys' capabilities in the second decade of life and beyond.
- We are following the lives of 20,000 adolescents in six focal countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

