

# **Finn Church Aid (FCA) Syria Response in Jordan 2012–2017**

Type of Evaluation: **Country Program Impact Assessment**

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Time of the Evaluation: **2017**

## **Executive Summary:**

As a response to the growing influx of Syrian refugees fleeing the violent conflict of the neighboring country, FCA launched a humanitarian operation in Jordan in 2012. Over the course of 5 years, the program has consisted of 11 projects providing informal (i.e. non-certified) education to conflict-affected young people. The activities provided by the program can be classified as:

- 1) basic skills (literacy & numeracy, English, ICT) developing academic skills of the target group
- 2) technical skills (e.g. mobile maintenance, hairdressing, agriculture, photography, handicraft, recycling, more recently also entrepreneurship) aiming to provide participants with skills needed for income-generation and professional life
- 3) remedial and Tawhiji classes aiming to connect students with formal education and to prepare them for the secondary education certificate
- 4) recreational activities (e.g. sports, circus) striving to support the psycho-social well-being of young people in vulnerable life situations.

This impact assessment seeks to gather and present a clear understanding of FCA's track record in Jordan between 2012-2017 in terms of impact, and to guide further strengthening of the impact of its program starting from 2018 considering changes in the context and arising trends. Through assessing the joint impact of the individual projects that FCA has/ is

implementing to date the assessment utilized the Outcome Harvesting methodology to identify outcomes that were influenced/ contributed to by FCA Syrian crisis response programme in Jordan. The assessment was performed between November and December of 2017. A mixture of qualitative evaluation methodologies was implemented using literature review, semi structured interviews (10), and focus group discussions (15) and site visits to Azraq and Za'tari refugee camps as well as in Amman. A total of 157 participants (48% girls and women) were consulted in the exercise. Target groups represented 91% of consulted informants.

## Main findings:

Since 2013, the assessment finds that FCA's interventions have overall contributed to improving well-being and resilience of the targeted refugee and host community young people in Jordan. Young boys and girls, men and women are constructively engaging in their settings and society and pursuing their rights to education and livelihoods. Elements that have contributed to FCA's impact have been 1) FCA's timely presence and response on the ground with 2) largely relevant, quality and effective activities centered around supporting target groups' rights to education and livelihood in complex environment and 3) FCA's interventions catalyzing an informal community support system to reinforce participants' overall wellbeing and resilience in camps. The main areas of impact that FCA has contributed to are:

- 1) Young boys and girls, are better prepared and motivated to continue their formal education and progress further down their educational path: FCA's timely presence with combination of Informal education, basic skills and PSS activities as well as incubating and safe environment through dedicated attention by facilities' trainers and teachers proved largely relevant and effective in camp settings to support Syrian students' wellbeing and reintegration in schools especially at the peak of the refugee influx. The continued (longitudinal) and offering of (progressive/advanced) courses also positively influence young students' motivation to continue their formal education that is facilitated by the ongoing scholarships scheme to Jordanian universities that is provided by the EU (realistic aspiration). In hosting communities, the impact is reduced due to late set up of IFE activities, non-application of clear selection criteria to prioritize those most in need, and FCA center acting more of an Academy; hence most students are already in schools whereas OOSC are not proactively reached or deliberately serviced by the FCA programs.
- 2) Through FCA interventions, young men and women acquired new skills and pursue utilizing them in employment and income-generation in their immediate surroundings with sense of dignity. Basic Skills were instrumental to employment of both men and women Syrian refugees in camps. Vocational skills and entrepreneurship courses were instrumental to catalyzing business startups and income generation in Camps and Amman, but gender variances are present in



terms of young women utilizing vocational/ technical skills in income generation rather than employment pursuit.

- 3) FCA has contributed to empowering Girls and Young women to challenge traditional gender norms and refugee-life hardships through more positive engagement in their households and in public life. This has been enabled by FCA's women empowerment approach that consisted of promoting not only their equal access to opportunities, but also addressing gender norms that hinder their participation. Also, FCA's deliberately challenged gender norms and cultural constraints through initiating niche activities where young girls increasingly took part in other spectrum of activities that promoted their welling and positively influenced communities' perception of their role and participation in public spheres.
- 4) Young women are demonstrating increased agency and empowerment and are actively seeking to reduce their household aid dependency through self-sufficiency and income generation ventures that were enabled through vocational/ technical skills. Their participation was also facilitated through introducing ECCD centers that rightly addressed traditional gender norms. Women are however challenged in terms of access to start up assets or capital and networks to take stronger and viable ventures.
- 5) Exercising the right to livelihoods within the Jordanian regulatory framework restricts refugee vocational opportunities, and especially women that are less mobile. It has however been magnified through 1) provision of startup assets (in the form of equipment) and 2) recent application of market-driven approach and provision of business coaching and matching grants benefiting business startups (albeit outside camps and not part of its response to the Syrian crisis).
- 6) FCA's partnership with Plan international in initiating the ECCD centers created catalyst partnership model that crowded in other actors to replicate joint programming partnerships in camps.
- 7) Aside from participating in group activities that promoted improved wellbeing through forming new relationships and friendships, participants' wellbeing, was promoted through the incubating and receptive environment through dedicated attention by facilities' trainers and teachers that attended to their individual PSS needs and problematics while elevating some FCA volunteers and teachers as local role models and source of hope and aspiration to the community at large. Also, the recent inclusion of adult men in some sports activities acted as informal support layer for younger children in a safe environment.
- 8) Sufficient evidence was gathered as to beneficiaries' participation in some aspects of FCA's Projects' cycles, but these are not systematically applied or structured and not across the entire cycle. Room remains for further rights-based empowerment



for target groups' engagement.

- 9) FCA's consideration to social differentiation is also found quite remarkable overall. In host communities, it can be argued that FCA's interventions were somewhat 'too accessible' in absence of clear targeting and selection strategy and criteria. Inclusion of PWD has trended a bit weak in terms of participation in activities. FCA is encouraged to reconsider its approach in proactive reaching and programming including across the PCM (assessments and design, delivery and M&E).

### Main overarching recommendations:

FCA's focus on the right to education and right to livelihood remain largely relevant and appropriate in Jordan's context. It's efforts to linking the two as pursued in strengthening it's 'linking learning to earning' can be expected to now magnify with the protracted nature of the crisis and the expectation for some refugees to remain in Jordan with increased poverty and reverting negative coping strategies and amidst shrinking humanitarian funding. The main theme for the way forward is for FCA is to continue its focus on its current framework (right to livelihood and right to education) but with stronger coherent strategy;

- 1) Amidst shrinking funds and to magnify impact, FCA is highly encouraged to build on its experience with Plan and pursue partnership with other INGOs in complementary programming. Likewise, FCA is advised to continue and (leverage higher coordination with national stakeholders at the level of GoJ) and with existing INGO networks such as INGO forum and ACT Alliance. This can be operationalized through development of a clear partnership and communications strategy.
- 2) FCA is advised to translate its country strategy in a defined Theory of Change and programs (rather than different individual projects) with a Monitoring and Evaluation system that is conducive of its programs. The M&E system should distinguish between intermediate vs. longer term outcomes that get measured and assessed overtime (impact pathway).
- 3) FCA is strongly advised to further empower target groups rights-based engagement in its programming, coordination and advocacy (representation). This can be operationalized through setting up community committees (that include center staff and community members). The camp community committee can be thematically organized and would have an elevated role in managing FCA's work in camps (design and planning, monitoring, etc.). One thematic committee can and should be an advocacy committee that is responsible to assessing and voicing community concerns at higher level in camps (for example in coordination meetings (if possible) or at least for them to feed FCA's participation in them (assessing and raising concerns, being the voice for their communities, and having the needed



information to communicate BACK to their communities about the plans and coordination updates, etc.)

- 4) FCA is recommended to further invest in building capacities of trainers and teachers. This should not only entail advanced technical capacities but also (and within FCA-wider approach and plan to capacity building), their exchange learning, engagement and role in supporting target groups' wellbeing and protection concerns (referral pathway, etc.).
  
- 5) In strengthening its linking learning to earning approach, FCA is advised to develop programs that support viable start-ups and income generation projects (individual and collective) and based on market-potential while not restricting these to 30 years of age. This should entail gender considerate market assessments that distinguish between employment vs. start up potential in viable sectors in both camps and hosting communities. FCA is also advised to explore partnership modalities with other actors that can support vulnerable groups' access to seed funding (such as MFIs, incubators) to initiate viable startups. FCA's business coaches can be instrumental in supporting beneficiaries not only identify opportunities but also manage their projects and link them with other support networks to increase chances of their sustained viability and profit making.

In camps: FCA is advised to continue supporting school and university students through accelerated and certified learning programs and support set ups.

- a. FCA is advised to continue offering English courses but sustain offering the advancement scheme (levels) and preferably through internationally accredited certifications.
- b. FCA is advised to explore provision of learning spaces outside its course modality such as a quiet study area and library for students.

In hosting communities: FCA is encouraged to consider sustaining local capacities that continue to support vulnerable communities' right to education and livelihood while also promoting social cohesion.

- a. Consider partnering with local NGOs and CBOs while (as needed and based on needs assessments) build their capacities in IFE and/or livelihood support programming.
- b. The above would require FCA's role to center around quality assurance and building institutional capacities and for FCA to exhibit organizational capacities in these fields with strong accountability system and grant compliance measures.
- c. Development of outreach and targeting strategy with clear selection criteria for participants/ target group.