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INNOVATIVE APPROACHES AND TOOLS IN HOLISTIC EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES: EXPLORING EIGHT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

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By

Dr. Bassel Akar
Center for Applied Research in Education
Notre Dame University – Louaize, Lebanon

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

According to the UNHCR, 1,183,327 Syrian refugees had registered in Lebanon by 7 May 2015 (www.data. unhcr.org). The government has halted all registration of refugees as of 6 May 2015. Indeed, the real number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is estimated at above 1,500,000. The quarterly snapshot (January – March 2015) indicates that less than 20% of the half million Syrian refugee children have access to education. Figures of Syrian refugee children out of school are rapidly increasing as Syrian families grow in Lebanon. These children are not only in dire need of access to education, but a holistic approach to education to address developmental needs that stable homes and social services normally provide for. Moreover, their experiences of war and migration require additional support for managing trauma, instability, loss, violence and change. More specific concerns include:

• Children refugees lack provisions of support for human developmental needs and learning languages to enter public schools is only one fraction of what is considered urgent.
• Public schools do not offer critical psycho-social support for Syrian children

• Organizations implementing educational programs that try to support learning of content knowledge and provide support for other developmental needs are not being reviewed according to education for human developmental frameworks.

• Civil society lacks a framework for designing a "whole" or holistic approach to education for children refugees.

Approaches to education often evolve to enrich learning experiences and meet demands of changing environments. Holistic approaches to education attempt to define all areas of human development and aim to support learners in achieving their full potential in these areas while preparation for vocations becomes secondary (Forbes 2003). Pragmatism and existentialism are philosophies of education that are most likely to foster a holistic educational experience. However, the formal schooling systems we are mostly familiar with have transpired from essentialist schools of thought. Under essentialism, for example, schooling trains learners to master content-knowledge that is selected and deemed as essential by higher authorities – typically governments (i.e. content-based national curricula) and school enterprises (i.e. SABIS) – for particular vocations. In almost stark contrast, existentialist approaches view learners as individuals who create their own paths, paces and purposes. Under holism, learning activities are responses to students' developmental needs and teachers view learners as individuals with individual developmental needs and processes rather than as parts of a whole class or age group. Hence, dominant models of schooling may either be futile or even harmful to children affected by armed conflict.

This report aims to inform the development of a framework of concepts, aims and approaches for a holistic educational program for Syrian refugee children. First, a literature review identifies basic indicators of holism in education, which will be examined in existing programs for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Then, eight educational and psychosocial support programs were selected and examined through interviews and reports. The findings outline a number of challenges and success indicators that for ensuring an inclusive, appropriate and sustainable educational program for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to produce a framework of holistic approaches to education to critically review educational programs for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. This framework organizes elements of holistic education described in research and practice. In finding these elements, we drew on the paucity of literature that explicitly attempts to operationalize holistic education. We examined evidence-informed literature on effective learning, learning to live together and education for human development. We also explored characteristics of holistic approaches to education in schools that are reputed for focusing on the whole development of the child.

Holistic approaches in education

The literature that examines specifically holistic approaches to education is rather scarce. Furthermore, some elements and principles presented in literature on holistic education appear overly abstract (e.g. creating oneness with the cosmos (Forbes, 2003), lack scientific rigor (e.g. primarily personal observations, spiritual readings (Miller, 2007), and seem quite radical (e.g. strong criticisms against technology and assessment). We have also avoided reviews of character education because of the risks in having certain schools and governments set narrow and conservative definitions of 'good' character. So, we have selected elements that (1) have been either demonstrated through practice at school, (2) present clear implications for practice, or (3) corroborate with other evidence-informed literature. They are organized below in (1) areas of development and need, (2) relationships and spaces, and (3) values and practice.

Areas of development and need

Holism in education means identifying the areas that concern the child's human development. Even with intentions to create a complete framework of human development, particular contexts can determine more specified areas of development. Typically, holistic education aims at supporting the child's intellectual, emotional, social and physical areas of development (Lee, Hong, & Niemi, 2014). In addition, we see advocacy for moral (Carnegie Task Force, 1996) and spiritual (Hare, 2006; Miller, 2007) development. In reviewing the holistic framework of the Middle Years Program of the International Baccalaureate, Hare (2006) identified four areas of personal growth: (1) interpersonal awareness, (2) self awareness, (3) disciplines & inter disciplinary knowledge and understanding, (4) cultural and intercultural awareness. Teachers and school leaders are also key stakeholders in holistic education. Through increased self-awareness, they can reach their full potential as individuals and working professionals (Hare, 2006).

Relationships and spaces

Nurturing areas of children's human development and needs takes place in spaces connected, directly and indirectly, with the school and classroom. These include communities outside the school grounds such as municipalities, trade unions, local businesses, government offices, social services (i.e. orphanages and elderly homes), and peers and organizations in other countries. Holistic education suggests that all these spaces are interconnected. Moreover, these spaces comprise individuals whose connections, or relationships, also determine the degree of holism in children's educational experiences. Below are some of the relationships and spaces highlighted in the literature on holistic approaches to education.

• Between teachers and children
• Among children of all abilities
• Between children and parents

- Between children and grandparents
- Between school leaders and children
- Among teachers, teachers and school leaders
- Among children, the school and the community
- The self (teachers, children, etc.)

Values and practice

Values determine the selection of areas of development to support and the manners by which that are supported. Through holistic education, humanistic values such as social inclusion, equality, differences and dignity are consistently and unconditionally practiced through all aspects of schooling. They can be supported through social pedagogy or the consideration of children's well-being and personal growth in approaches to learning and teaching (Petrie et al., 2009). The school environment or climate can also foster social inclusion, protect children from harm and ensure that individual needs are addressed, such as special emotional and behavioral needs of refugee children (Pinson & Arnot, 2009). Below are more specific practices discussed in the literature that also show interconnectedness.

Familial support

Teachers and parents can better understand and more appropriately support their child's growth, development and academic achievement (Miller, 2007). Both parties would work on sustaining regular conversations about the child's experiences and progress and encourage proactive inquiry about how to further support their child. A school in Finland welcomes grandmothers who volunteer their time to provide additional support in the classroom (Lee et al., 2014).

Collaboration

Collaborating with people from diverse backgrounds and abilities enriches the processes and outcomes. Such differentiated and diverse learning climates can promote active listening, open mindedness, "care, empathy, compassion and consideration" (Hare, 2006, p. 314)

Play

Play enriches children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development areas of development through self-expression, collaboration, creativity and motivation (Wood & Attfield, 2005). Through unstructured play, children find their own routes to stimulate curiosity and inquiry in learning and allows them to use all areas of development when interacting with others and solving problems (Lee et al., 2014). In contexts of diversity and marginalized groups, structured play is more likely to show explicit purpose to learning values and encouragement to intercultural understanding in culturally diverse settings but in some cases limited curiosity (Lee et al., 2014).

Sustainable living

Different schools of holistic thought advocate for the common mission of sustainable living. One aims for strengthening the cosmic relationship between the child and the universe (Miller, 2007) while another aims to ensure that all resources on Earth are used in a responsible and sustainable manner (Hare, 2006). One school that adopted a holistic approach had recycled old computers by upgrading them and reinstalling them in classrooms (Lee et al., 2014).

Active listening

Listening carefully to children allows teachers to better understand the child's struggles and successes in their learning, relationships, motivations, and other aspects of development (Miller, 2007). In addition to children feeling dignified when actively listened to, teachers would be more informed when designing the next learning activity (i.e. formative assessment) or giving pastoral support. During group work, children actively listening to each other, which helps foster mutual respect (Carnegie Task Force, 1996).

Integrity and maturity

Children can confidently present their work, invite and use critical feedback, and acknowledge input received (Hare, 2006). Teachers model values of integrity and maturity through learning and teaching activities (Lovat, 2011). By showing maturity in learning, teachers can share uncertainties in knowledge and collaborate with other teachers as peer mentors. Teachers can also model professionalism and integrity in their work and behaviors that show care and attention to children's individual needs (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006).

Community engagement

Engagement with the community supports children to become proactive agents of change and enforcers of rights (Lee et al., 2014). Through community service programs, children at the school choose volunteer service activities such as supporting work at elderly homes, orphanages or local events and schools can open their facilities like the library, playground and recreational center to community members like pre-school children and their parents (Lee et al., 2014). Children can extend their reflections, sense of solidarity, empathy, disciplinary knowledge and proactive engagement to communities across the region and around the world (Hare, 2006). Sometimes, when refugee or underrepresented children are integrated in a school, tensions arise between school and the community. In these cases, the school leaders and teachers are responsible for raising awareness of entitlements of children and negotiating tensions between local families, the school and refugee children (Pinson & Arnot, 2009).

Safe school environment

Schools would need to establish broad definitions of safety (Benninga et al., 2006) that would allow children to report trauma, pain and anything else that violates well-being, fairness and other basic children's rights.

Self awareness and responsibility

Teachers and children, at their own pace, reflect on their experiences and lessons learned to better realize purposes in various aspects of life (including schooling) (Hare, 2006). Refugee children, for example, would require extra support in reflecting on resilience (Pinson & Arnot, 2009). Becoming aware of how one learns, thinks, grows, manages emotions and responds to other developmental needs requires continuous critical self-reflection (Forbes, 2003). Through meta-learning, children become independent and responsible learners, or lifelong learners. As responsible and independent learners, children decide, plan and carry out activities that can best address challenges in learning and development (Hare, 2006).

Learning for life

Although not directly making reference to holism, a number of educational frameworks bring together elements of learning for social cohesion, lifelong learning and active citizenship.

Learning to live together

Delors et al. (1996) produced four pillars of knowledge for learning to live together as a UNESCO report on education for development, peace and justice. Below is a description of each of these pillars:

1. Learning to Know – Learning how to learn is a lifelong skill. Knowing about how we learn allows us to improve methods of learning and apply what we know to our work.
2. Learning to Do – By dealing with many types of situations, we are able to work in teams in different contexts.
3. Learning to Be – Through self-awareness, we learn how to develop our personality, autonomy and sense of personal responsibility.
4. Learning to Live together – In diversity, we learn about other people and work with others on projects that enhance co-existence and conflict management.

Dimensions of effective learning

Holistic education places a great deal of emphasis on liberating children to become independent, responsible and lifelong learners through collaboration, meta-learning and making choices. Watkins, Carnell, and Lodge (2007) underscore the same pedagogies in four dimensions of effective learning. Students across the age levels demonstrate significantly high levels of participation, motivation and assessment outcomes when they:

1. Produce work based on feedback (Active learning)
Learners first produce work, are provided feedback on how they can improve and then given the opportunity to try again. One important outcome and element of this is to allow the learning of the material to transpire from the process rather than telling the learners from the start. This has also been referred to as a Do-Review-Learn-Apply cycle.

2. Collaborate with others (Collaborative learning)
Learners produce individual or group work that can only be done with the continuous input of peers. Be careful not to confuse this with cooperation, which is typically done when members of a group each does a part of a project individually and then collate them in a sequence. When working with small groups, activities can have several designs, like Pyramids, Jigsaws and Fishbowls.

3. Make choices about their learning (Learner-driven)
When learners have a say in what they learn, how they learn it and how they think would best assess their learning, motivation to learn transforms from extrinsic (i.e. grades) to intrinsic (i.e. curiosity, will to improve and discover).

4. Monitor and review how they learn (Meta-learning)
Learners first reflect on what helped them learn best and the barriers that made learning difficult. Second, they think of things they can do to address the barriers and, then, take action. In practice, we can facilitate meta-learning through four elements[1]:

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1 Watkins, C., Carnell, E., Lodge, C., Wagner, P., & Whalley, C. (2001). Learning about learning enhances performance. NSIN Research Matters(13), 1-8 .

1. Noticing learning: Pausing in the middle of an activity
2. Conversations about learning: Sharing experiences and observations
3. Reflection: Making connections with past experiences and finding patterns
4. Planning and experimenting with learning: Experimenting with learning by using the Do, Review, Learn and Apply cycle.

Ladder of participation

Educators must remain cautious when facilitating opportunities for children to engage in activities because participation can come in various degrees from passive to active. Hart (1992) illustrates these degrees as a ladder of eight steps (see figure 1). The bottom three – manipulation, decoration, tokenism – are the lowest levels of participation. Under manipulation, children receive no information on why they are doing something and how their ideas are being used. As decoration, the initiative is explicitly from adults, but children participate for emotional appeal. And participation becomes tokenistic when children communicate with others but the subject was not their idea, nor was the way of communicating it.

Figure 1. Hart's Ladder of Participation
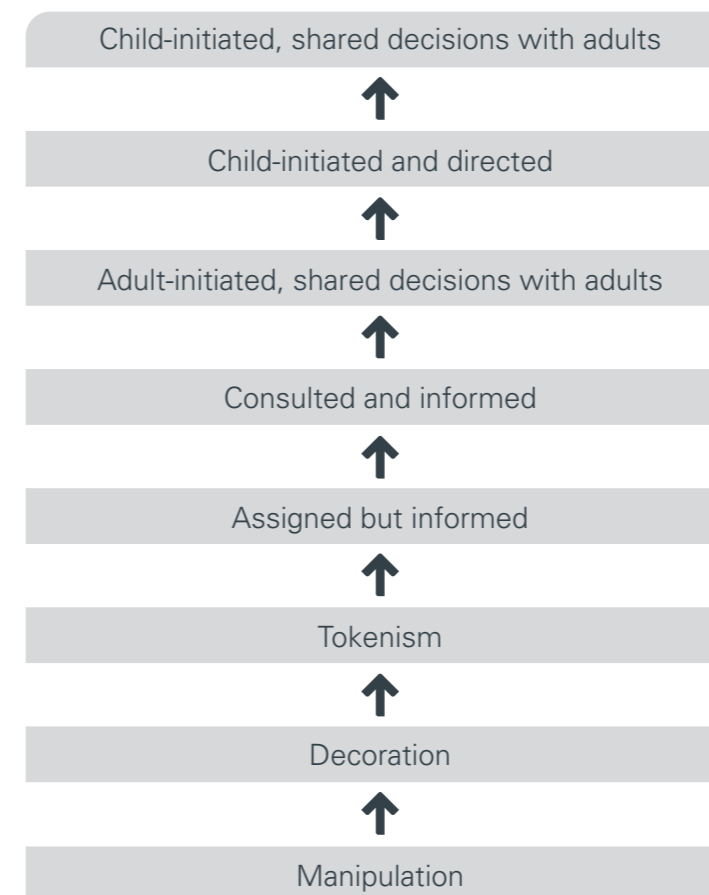
Source: Hart (1992).

The following degrees of participation are considered real or genuine. Rather than aiming to achieve the highest degree, we aim to give children the choice of where to participate.

Assigned but informed.
Young people understand the purposes of the project, how they were selected and choose to participate in the project after it is explained to them. Their roles are more meaningful than decorative.

Consulted and informed.
Adults run the projects but consult young people who then see how their feedback is being used.

Adult-initiated, shared decisions with adults.
Adults have ideas and want to carry out a project or activity, but will involve children in the planning processes.

Child-initiated and directed.
Young people come up with great ideas and carry out projects or activities to see them through. This is commonly done through play. Adults may have a role in facilitating by giving equipment, providing the space to come up with ideas or even share an idea that they have.

Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults.
Young people get inspired and start to create something or organize an activity. They either approach adults for support. In more fortunate circumstances, caring and energetic adults spot these activities and offer insight and support.

Schools and child development

At the turn of the twentieth century, a number of educators succeeded in designing schools that focus on the emotional, social, cognitive and other areas of development. Below are highlights of four selected philosophers and their schools of holistic approaches to education.

Maria Montessori and the Montessori Method (Montessori, [1912] 2013)
- Furniture is safe and accessible and can easily be moved by children
- Teachers adopt the position of an observer and facilitator so that children discover
- Classrooms comprise age differences of up to six years
- Teachers do not interrupt children when they are working or concentrating
- Interventions are limited to teaching difference between good and bad, asking questions and facilitating activities
- Discipline combined temporarily isolating the child, conversing with him/her and showing affection
- The child's independence is central to growth and development
- Part of the curriculum focuses greatly on the senses, including music and silence

Rudolf Steiner and the Waldorf School (de Souza, 2012)
- A child's will is a starting point for teachers to start guiding into constructive and beneficial activities
- The first seven years are dedicated to physical and social development through play
- After seven, teachers focus mostly on children's feelings and creativity
- Storytelling is a key activity that encompasses emotional, social and moral development

- The curriculum dedicates a great deal of time for learning to play instruments, foreign languages, physical education, chorus, woodworking, cooking, dance, knitting, art and crafts.
- Nurture spirituality by expressing appreciation to mother nature and recognizing the interconnectedness found in nature, including ourselves
- The same teacher stays with the same class for approximately eight years

John Dewey's pedagogic creed (Dewey, 1959 [1897]):
- Learning for social living requires all pedagogical activities to be designed as collaborative and dialogic
- Understanding the psychology of each individual child enables teachers to better support the child's needs
- The school and its functions must represent a social community
- The school and home need to be consistent and synchronized
- Disciplinary knowledge is best learned when children first examine daily life rather than separate subjects
- Real growth and development happens when children actively discover, follow their interests, reflect on action, express themselves and connection emotions with actions

Emerging elements of holism in education

Characteristics of holistic education vary in scope according to what is considered "whole" to the discipline or area of development. Forbes (2003) argues that holistic education is best defined as a collection of characteristics rather than the specific elements that would constitute a holistic approach. Below, we identify recurring elements, groups of characteristics, or family resemblances, a term Forbes (2012) borrowed from Wittgenstein to describe the heterogeneity of characteristics shared across holistic approaches in education. These three principles or family resemblances serve as cohesive agents to the following characteristics that recurrently emerge in understandings of holistic education.

- Diversity (in how we learn, what we learn, who we learn with, areas of development, etc.)
- Humanism (dignity, care for the individual, respect for autonomy,)
- Interconnection (or cosmic citizenship: mind, body, soul; hand, head, heart; physical, affective, spiritual, cognitive…)

METHODOLOGY

This project aims to produce a framework for the design of educational programs for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon. First, we drew elements of holistic approaches in education. These will allow for a more in-depth and critical review of selected non-formal educational programs in Lebanon intended to support the development of children through holistic approaches. The findings along with selected elements of holistic education aims to inform the curriculum design and development of education for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon.

This study reviewed eight programs designed and implemented for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The programs were selected based on three criteria:
1. Beneficiaries included Syrian refugee children
2. Activities included objectives for social and emotional support
3. Programs were already in implementation phase

Based on these criteria and our network of contacts in the field, we selected eight programs. Table 1 lists the name of the organization, the program in cases where they have named it, and information about the individual who was interviewed. Information was also gathered from unpublished reports. Conversations from the interviews and report readings aimed to gather information on the following:

- Program concepts and objectives
- Program activities and target groups
- Processes of designing the program
- Technical and logistical issues in implementing
- Successes
- Challenges
- Lessons learned

The subheadings under each program depended on the information gathered. Once the report was drafted, sections were revised for accuracy by re-communicating with the individuals interviewed.

Table 1. Names of selected organizations and programs

Organization	Program
NGO 1	Peace education, non-formal school support
NGO 2	Literacy and psychosocial support
NGO 3	Non-formal school support
NGO 4	Non-formal school support
NGO 5	Non-formal school support and vocational training
NGO 6	Psychosocial support through art and therapy
NGO 7	Psychosocial support through art
NGO 8	Psychosocial support through sports

NGO 1

The main objective at NGO 1 is to prepare students academically to pass entrance exams into the Lebanese public school system while helping them deal with the traumas they have experienced through creativity and expression in a safe environment.

NGO 1 started with a peace education summer camp to help Syrian refugee children in Shatilla Camp deal with their traumas. The program ran for two weekends of each month with trained facilitators who worked with the children through conflict resolution, arts and drama therapy. The assumption was that the children would be provided with a safe place to explore and express their feelings. The organizers were very encouraged when they saw children's drawings evolving from showing mainly tanks and violent images to more "normal" scenes throughout the program. The success of this program and the realization that many of these children were on the streets once the school year started led B & Z to think bigger. They believed that they could support children academically so they could eventually join the Lebanese school system while continuing with their psychosocial support activities in a safe and secure environment.

There are currently 500 students registered at the NGO with an additional 300 on a waiting list. These numbers are increasing year by year, although not as a result of additional refugee families moving into the area. Rather they are an indication of the length of the war in Syria as those who arrived as babies are reaching school age. The organization anticipates these numbers will continue to grow as families are continuing to have children despite their circumstances.

Program Design

The general program at NGO 1 has four main components. The first is built on the peace education summer program. This focuses on conflict resolution, self-expression and helping children deal with their traumas through activities such as drawing, the use of puppets, play, arts and theatre. Facilitators workshops and training sessions by another local NGO. A social worker oversees the running of the program.

The second, the academic component, is based on the Lebanese curriculum and aims at helping the children catch up to their Lebanese peers in order to be able to keep up in school. The non-formal educational program teaches the core subjects of English, Arabic, Math, and Arabic and seeks to make classes and activities enjoyable in order to encourage the children to attend. The school runs a morning shift five days a week made up of six 45-minute lessons with a half hour break, and an afternoon shift three days a week. They currently work with children from the ages of 6 to 15.

The third component enables mothers to be entrepreneurs. NGO 1 offers courses for mothers aimed at teaching basic business and entrepreneurship skills. The assumption is that the more able mothers are to help provide for their family, the less pressure there will be on the families to send their children out to work or marry.

The fourth is a component of recreation and leisure. When possible, NGO 1 take the children out on field trip to broaden their horizons and give them crucial albeit temporary escape from the gloom they may feel in the camps. These trips depend on donations or invitations by organizations or charitable groups. NGO 1 also operates a "Saturday Fun Day" made up of activities or game days. This is also largely dependent on the availability of volunteers and what activities or workshops they would like to conduct with the children.

The program director observed that children above 10 who enroll in the school and show low levels of reading and writing capacity have either never been in school before or have been out of school for a long time and started to forget what they have learned. NGO 1 then transfers them to its independent literacy program where they undertake intensive courses before rejoining the school.

Success Stories

The conversations with the program director and the social worker suggested a number of successes, which we have highlighted below:

• Working with families to find alternatives to sending the children out to work or marrying them off instead of attending school
• A renovation program that renovates homes for free while hiring men who are out of work which relieves the pressure on the children in terms of going out to work and making money for the family
• They have developed good relationships and trust with the children and families
• Working with an eight-year-old on impulse control through teachers, the social worker and coordination with the parents – he is now very well adapted and at the top of his math class
• Working with families to prevent drop outs
• Working towards providing children with a cohesive framework for discipline and behavior both at home and at home
• Seeing a great decrease in students being sent out of class after implementing a simple, consistently implemented, school-wide set of classroom rules using clearly stated incentives and punishment. Students are reminded of class rules at the beginning of every class.
• There is support for the teachers and the environment at NGO 1 was described as being warm and familiar. This was evident from the relationships between the students and teachers and the comfort with which the students moved throughout the school and interacted with each other and the staff.

Challenges

Limitations and difficulties emerged in areas of academic support, emotional support, technical and logistical issues and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE).

Academic Support

NGO 1 faces certain challenges from an academic perspective. First and foremost is that many of the children they deal with have missed varying amounts of schooling. Some, despite being well past school age, have never attended school. This leads to increased pressure on teachers as they are dealing with children who have not necessarily learned appropriate classroom behavior, or have forgotten it. This can slow down the pace of learning for a whole class and be very disruptive. Also, those who have had schooling may have forgotten much of what they learned in their time away from class. Helping students remember foundational skills and concepts must also be taken into consideration by teachers.

Teachers are also dealing with relatively large class numbers in quite small classrooms. It is difficult to create a collaborative environment with children working actively in such confined environments. Additionally, the behavior issues can be very disruptive to the class as many students tend to deal with conflict in a way that very much mirrors the environment they are living in – with violence or verbal abuse. For example, anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers are sometimes sworn at in class.

This leads on to the next academic challenge which is supporting teachers to deal with these issues. Most of the staff are Syrian and some are teachers by necessity. A social worker described the difficulties of working with teachers who are (1) passionately opposed to teaching in ways other than the traditional rote methods, and (2) those who are not well suited to teaching and find dealing with the children very difficult. This latter group of teachers tend to form more adversarial relationships with students which goes against the organization's philosophy of creating close, trusting relationships between children and their teachers.

Dealing with a wide range of educational needs also involves the difficulty of supporting children with special education needs. For example several children have been labeled with ADHD and whether or not this is an official diagnosis, it does manifest in certain behavioral problems that teachers can find difficult to deal with. In these, and other behavioral cases, the social worker works closely with both the teacher and the parents to provide a systematic approach to dealing with the child while working with the child one on one.

Many of the children have absentee fathers who are either working all day, unemployed and seeking work or, in many cases, dead as a result of the war. This can lead to parents wanting to pull their children out of school to work and help provide for the family. The schools works hard to provide parents with alternatives to sending their children out to work in order to free up the children for school and to work in parental support for the children's education. At the same time, NGO 1 tries to ingrain the importance of education in their students.

Emotional Support

The children at NGO 1's program live in very harsh and challenging realities. In addition to their traumatic experiences in Syria, Shatilla Camp offers virtually nothing in terms of open space, play areas or even personal privacy. The children and their families live in cramped quarters, surrounded by the incessant noise of other people's lives, conflicts and the pollution and violence of the camps. Additionally, many are in poor health conditions and malnourished, which interferes with their ability to learn.

The inability to provide the students with onsite psychologists because of the cost is seen by the NGO as a large obstacle in their working with the children to help them overcome trauma. In addition to the children, the staff themselves feel they, and their work with the children, would benefit enormously from both training in psychological aspects but also as a therapeutic process for themselves.

Technical & Logistical Issues

Donor challenges tend to come in the form of restrictive donor policies and an inability to plan ahead based on the unpredictability of funding. This causes a great challenge in preparing for the number of children they would like to plan ahead for. They also lack the funding to hire the experts they feel they need while trying to deal with the different educational, behavioral and psychological needs of their students.

From a hiring perspective, the staff are mostly from Syria. Although there is the desire to hire more Lebanese teachers to expose the children to the Lebanese community, it is very difficult to find Lebanese people willing to work in Shatilla.

Cooperation with the Ministry

Their greatest challenge in dealing with MEHE is that the ministry does not deal with organizations like NGO 1 at all. There is the sense that ministry plans to integrate Syrian students into the Lebanese school system are unrealistic in terms of human resources, existing infrastructure and a general misunderstanding of the needs and challenges of the Syrian community. Also, non-formal education programs at NGO 1 are not accredited so they cannot give students official certification.

Many parents are afraid to send their students to public schools because of anticipated intolerance from Lebanese children and potentially violent incidents. Additionally, few parents can afford the public transportation required to send their children to schools. There have been some examples of students who have left B & Z to attend public school but were unable to keep up or felt uncomfortable in the experience and left shortly after arriving. In addition, the rising tensions and hostility against Syrians in the areas surrounding the Shatilla camp, especially after the kidnapping of Lebanese soldiers in Ersal, has forced many parents to refrain from sending their children to public schools out of the camp.

Lessons Learned

NGO 1 outlined the following as the lessons they have learned so far through the implementation of their program:

- Integrate basic needs (health care, relief, nutrition) of children into programs
- Create a safe place to express their feelings and discuss their experiences
- Education is not enough, trained psychologists are needed for both students and children
- Consider the individual situations of different families and students and find for them feasible alternatives to work through their problems
- Providing families with alternatives to taking their children out of schools
- Design activities based on the importance of permanence and creating a nurturing environment
- Implementing change in children requires consistency, patience and working with them over time
- Paying attention to the drawings and dialogues they create during their activity sessions allows us to learn more about the children's individual needs

NGO 2

NGO 2 has a remedial education program for in-school children and another program for out-of-school children.

The in-school remedial and out-of-school children's programs target:

1. Host communities' underprivileged Lebanese children
2. Out of school Syrian refugee program
3. In school children who need remedial support
4. Syrian refugee parents
5. Lebanese parents
6. Public school teachers

The children are mainly 4 to 6-year-olds, but the project includes up to 14-year-olds. The two programs currently reach 10,000 children (2014-2015), and aim to meet the proposed target of 12,000.

The programs are provided in the Bekaa, Beirut, Mt Lebanon, South Lebanon and North Lebanon governorates.

Program design for out-of-school

The program for the out-of-school children contains a literacy component that is based on a "balanced literacy approach" and a psychosocial support (PSS) program that was developed by the NGO. The balanced literacy approach (1) encourages children to read and write about topical issues, (2) fosters rituals and routines as part of the learning environment, and (3) engages children in in book-discussion groups, maintaining reading logs and writer's notebook, and collaborating with peers in various stages of the writing process.

The PSS program includes awareness on verbal and physical violence, preventive health training, hygiene and nutrition. Additionally, the program has a parental awareness component made up of sessions with parents on verbal and physical violence and positive parenting. Other activities include:

- Good behavior: How to stay on line, how to say good morning
- Group activities through art. After discussion on a topic (i.e. health, violence) they decide how to express the topic, divide roles, apply what they have learned, and then present to the class the topic they addressed and how they decided on it
- Arts activities on cloth
- Drama: If there is a book with a relevant topic, they prepare a play about topics they read about
- Outdoor activities run by volunteers from university students

This literacy and PSS are integrated into a single program that connect topics and issues covered with each other. The program aims to:

- Improve Syrian and Lebanese' reading and writing skills
- Motivate and facilitate children's enrollment in the formal Lebanese education system
- Increase children's awareness of personal hygiene
- Increase social inclusion of Syrian refugees
- Support children with psychosocial activities
- Increase parent's support of children reading and writing habits
- Increase parents' awareness on hygiene issues & malnutrition
- Increase children's adoption of non-violent verbal approaches
- Change public teachers attitude and practices and enhance pedagogy

The program was designed to promote and support children's enrollment in the formal education center and to cater to needs observed in most schools, which was health related. The program takes place in rented private schools or centers.

The program runs for 12-weeks or 175 hours, which includes 24 hours of PSS, 6 hours of awareness for children, 6 hours for parents on health, and 144 hours on basic literacy.

The remedial program

This program is for already enrolled students in the first shift school. The objective of the remedial program is for supporting children in becoming independent in studying and providing homework support.

Successes

Staff involved in the out-of-school program have identified the following observations as successes:

- Motivating students to be in a school environment. When kids arrived, they were not used to being in a school setting so the program had a component of "How to go back to school", "how to enter a classroom", which helped students find structure and organization.
- Motivating students to become engaged readers. When it was story time, all the children had ideas about what story they wanted to read. As they were listening to the teacher reading the story, they raised their hand to ask a question. The questions were either a clarification to a part the teacher read or to remind of the importance of that page of the book.
- Many children entered into the mainstream public education system
- Inclusion of parents. They kept parents engaged with what students are doing in the program by inviting parents to school for events and the training sessions for parents.
- Promoting children's self-image. One of the PSS classes observed was the art class where children were finishing off the "this is me book" they had drawn. The "this is me book" is one where children draw how they see themselves given a specific topic they had learned that is relevant to children's lives. Children were to draw how they see themselves in the mirror and write their name. During the observation, the children showed their drawings and asked their peers and teacher for their opinions. They took their time to color and seemed very happy with their own creations.
- Discipline and structure in the classroom made learning more effective. In one of the Arabic literacy classes observed, students had posters of class rules (raise your hand before you speak) hung over the walls. Students usually raised their hand before speaking or asking a question. If students did not speak while raising their hand, the teacher would point to the poster on the board reminding them to raise their hand before speaking. This helped the lesson float smoothly and in an organized manner.
- Rituals and routines encouraged reflection. The balanced literacy approach is one with structured rituals and routines that student learn like starting the day with an "open circle" to reflect on the previous day or a question the teacher poses that is relevant to their learning.
- Participating public school teachers receive training

Challenges

While the program focuses quite heavily on literacy and PSS, there is great concern over not having enough physical activities. Moreover, there are neither physical education teachers nor proper conditions to carry out activities in centers and schools. Also, parents and children seem to struggle to understand at times that the 12-week program will end. Parents and children are keen to continue.

The needs of many refugees have changed from when they arrived. When they first arrived, certain aftermaths were more noticeable. Some had speech issues, trauma, urinary incontinence, shy, and quiet. With time, one member of the organization noticed that some have started to become more violent and unstable because of the difficult living conditions.

Lessons learned

- When including children from the Lebanese community, remember that some Lebanese children are just as vulnerable as the Syrian refugee children
- Clarify to parents expectations of the program (so they do not expect certificates) and their roles in supporting their children in finding schools
- Develop a clear strategy that requires continuous review of the program
- A public health background helped prepare for wider ranges of individual needs
- When parents are involved, they feel better when they know kids are safe

NGO 3

NGO 3 works towards opening schools for Syrian refugee children. Jusoor is extremely successful in fundraising activities around the world. Their objective is to provide schooling for Syrian refugee children so that they can be better prepared to enroll in public and private schools and study for a written qualification, namely the Lebanese Baccalaureate. Although in a non-formal setting (neither recognized as a school by the government nor able to award certificates), they do consider that their students are receiving a formal education.

To date, the organization has opened three schools: one in Beirut (200 students), and two in the Bekaa (300 students in one and 700 students in the other). In partnership with Al Maqasid, a Lebanese NGO that runs schools and hospitals, NGO 3 pays service fees to use the school facilities in Beirut. In Bekaa, their tented school was built by another Lebanese NGO. The third school, also in the Bekaa, was a factory-like place that they renovated. The three schools are run by a total of 45 staff members, of which Syrians are a majority with a few Lebanese and Palestinian teachers. Each school has two operating shifts: morning and afternoon. Each teacher teaches six sessions maximum per day. The schools host three parental meetings annually.

The students' ages range between 5-15. Students are organized in classes according to their level of ability, not age. Classes, however, have a maximum of a three-year age difference.

Program Design

Creating the program required six months of research on education and needs of Syrian refugees. The school follows selected parts of the national Lebanese curriculum in order to prepare students for potential enrollment in Lebanese schools. They teach Math in Arabic but using the English technical math terms. Science is also taught in Arabic. The school teaches a life's skills class that is based on values such as the importance of sharing and accepting others. The school year has three terms and three weeks of summer activities where volunteers run drama, dance, outdoor social games for all the students. Each term comprises 56 days of classroom learning and teaching. In addition to academics, the schools provide art, physical education, and the UN peace education program. Only the Beirut school provides psychosocial activities at least once a week. It is more feasible in Beirut to partner with an NGO to help them with psychosocial and recreational activities.

For psychosocial support they partnered with an organization that facilitates activities of art, drama and storytelling two periods a week. During the site visits, the partner NGO facilitated the following two activities:

1. In pairs, one student was blindfolded and the other classmate stood infront of him/her. The blindfolded student tried to touch the other student and figure out his/her identity. They were allowed to check height, touch hair, etc. Everyone in class participated in this activity either as the blindfolded student or the other. Students were giggling as the person was trying to guess the other person's identity. Sometimes, they would cheat either by telling the blindfolded person wrong information or revealing their identity. Teachers would address the student by reminding him/her how it was defeating the purpose of game.

2. During another activity, students would blindfold a classmate and then alter things in the room. Once the blindfold was removed, the student had to guess what was altered.

Challenges

- The schools are in need of more extracurricular activities especially physical activities. It is challenging to also have art and other fun activities in the remote areas of Bekaa due to transportation costs.
- Syrian refugees have a difficult time learning English as they attempt to prepare for the formal education sector that teaches math and sciences in English and French.
- For parents' meetings, only mothers attend. However, it was difficult to get mothers involved if the meetings didn't offer anything in return.
- The program that Jusoor offers does not give an official certification.
- Half of the funding goes to transporting students to and from school

Success stories

- They have helped close to 400 Syrian refugee children enroll in public schools.
- They were piloting an English program that had a physical response for teaching the language (not "b" for bat but to act what they are learning). This worked well for the student's quick acquisition of English.
- Teachers showed some changes in beliefs and attitudes during their work at the NGO. They appeared to be very collaborative and open to learning. If they are struggling, they would invite the program manager to classes and ask, "What can we do better? Am I doing this right?"

Lessons Learned

- It is important to be flexible and malleable to create a program that fits needs of students and one that also caters to the formal education sector's requirements.
- In order to have a cohesive psychosocial program or set of activities, they have to be ongoing and structured.

NGO 4

Launched in December 2012, the non-formal education program provides psychosocial and educational support for Syrian refugee children in Shatila, Beirut. All children participate in psychosocial activities; only a number receive educational support.

During the first year, 200 children between the ages of 7-15 registered. After the first year, 150 were admitted into public schools. The children were categorized into three different age groups: 4-7 years; 8-11 years; and 12-15 years). In 2014, the center registered 190 children: (4-7 years, n = 75; 8-11 years, n = 59; 12-15 years, n = 56). For the second year, they provided educational support only to children ages 5-7 because NGO 1, started

providing children above 7 an educational program, which is situated in the same building.

The teachers who provide academic support are Syrian and Lebanese volunteers. Teachers have received training from an on-site psychotherapist on understanding and supporting refugee children's psychological needs. This NGO is also dependent on volunteered services. For example, a Syrian theatre group, helped children produce plays. Although their work was unpaid voluntary service, NGO 4 used to pay the theatre group minor expenses like travel.

Program description and objectives

The main objective of the program is to support children in processing the emotional traumas of war (i.e. fleeing homes, losing family members, living in poor conditions, etc.) and re-creating a sense of stability and normalcy. Through the activities, children will be able to manage their emotions by expressing themselves. The activities also aim to develop a strong sense of self-confidence by children feeling accomplished in what they produce. Secondary objectives include preparing Syrian refugee children for school entrance exams.
Many of the activities address themes. Some themes that the children have covered include (1) personal hygiene, (2) citizenship-related concepts (e.g. democracy, acceptance of others, equality).

The program comprises five main activities:

1. Therapy sessions
A psychotherapist who works closely with teachers and volunteers in providing children most in need with therapy sessions. Between 1 April 2013 and 1 Jan 2014, he provided 15 children diagnosed as "serious cases" with psychotherapy and 37 children of milder cases with counseling. The number of cases received depends on funding.

2. School support program
Four teachers provided Syrian refugees already in schools with English language learning sessions and homework support. During school hours, they supported children who have dropped out with language learning with the intention to return to school.

3. Arts workshops
Along with theatre production groups and artists, they have organized workshops on theatre, creative writing, gardening, calligraphy, painting and drawing. They NGO tries to ensure that all creative outcomes are disseminated to the public. For example, the children have presented their paintings at the UNESCO Palace and gallery in Solidere.

4. Recreation and leisure
Children have had the chance to enjoy leisure time by playing sports, engaging in physical activities, watching movies at the "movie club", and trips to green spaces.

5. Day-care center
Children ages 4-7 can attend the day care for 2.5 hrs a day.

The program was originally conceptualized by the co-founder of the NGO during his social work with refugees in Germany. Once the organizationt was established and the program was brought to Shatila, Lebanon in 2012, he worked closely with a psychologist from Syria living in Lebanon and tailored the program for Syrian children.

Success stories

Many of the success stories and challenges listed below were drawn from a tracer study on published by an external researcher.

The co-founder recalled when they took an open space in a building and recruited a group of 12 and 16-year olds to build the foundations of the center. They drew up a floor plan and created a construction site of three weeks where they designed a floor plan, measured wall and window frames, and cut and installed materials. This was the first workshop of the center.

From the Tracer Study, children in focus groups expressed appreciation of the center as an alternative to playing computer games in internet cafes and hanging around on the streets. When describing the activities, many expressed happiness because of time spent with peers; pride from performing plays; and relaxed after drawing, listening to music and travelling to new places. Some shared their most memorable moments:
- The workshop on planting, which one said she now plants at home
- A public sit-in at ESCWA because they watched a play and rap performance by other children from another center about Syria and food shortages and illnesses
- The painting workshop because they were going to present their work in an exhibition (which had not taken place at the time)
- A moving film about peace that they watched at a film festival
- The bus trip to Roweitni Garden in Saida because they went on a bus and were able to run around in an open space
- Doing the rap activity because it was new and they felt they were being challenged
- The drawing workshop because they felt more privileged than other children to learn new things and
- They learned English and how to set-up an email account during the school support sessions
- Learning how to brush your teeth, which some said they have now started doing
- Feeling liberated after learning how to use the internet.

Many children described the school support sessions as among the most important activities because they:
- love learning and studying
- felt someone (teacher and peers) was there to help them whenever they came across something difficult
- learned English, which they did not learn in Syria
- felt prepared to return to school in Syria

All the children felt safer in this center. One girl reported that she knew of sexual abuse in another center. Many explained that talking with friends and being involved in social activities really helps them cope with what they experienced from the war.

The teachers and program director also shared parent's observations, which included:
- More time to manage the home
- Gives peace of mind when children are in a safe environment
- Children's behaviors have changed at home (e.g. less violent, individual condition improved through therapy)

They also found that sharing their work with the public was critical.
Each project or workshop had a dissemination plan. For example:
- UNESCO palace (theatre)
- Drawings were exhibited at the Francophone cultural center and then Solidere. They were then published into a book.

NGO 4 felt that producing outcomes to share with the public was a new standard of work with refugees. NNI described the work with Iraqi refugees in Syria as quite ad hoc and, thus, felt that sharing artistic work with the public is a great example for others to follow.

Challenges

The tracer study found that
- Children who show no signs of improvement through therapy sessions have parents who choose not to be involved in the diagnosis and treatment. Indeed, these parents often counter the intervention provided by the therapist.
- One child said he got into a fight during one of the workshops and another didn't like that she couldn't keep a beat during one of the music workshops. Some felt lonely when activities were not organized.
- During school support, some children found it difficult to concentrate, felt shy to ask for help, and saw that teachers were sometimes too busy to help.
- Some children were concerned about not receiving any written qualification for their work, which could make going back to school more difficult.

Interviews with managers at NGO 4 revealed identified a number of risks in trying to achieve the objectives of providing quality education for Syrian refugee children through the operation of a non-formal elementary school in the Bekaa.

Security. At times, the armed conflict in the Bekaa limits mobility. For example, last year they closed the road in Dahr el Baidar. Closing roads in the future would mean that teachers and children would have to stay home on those days. At NGO 4, they feel that there is very little they can do in such situations. Still, they identify this threat as low probability.

Stability. Refugees are in danger of having to shift location of the camps by orders of the Lebanese Army. They know of an incident where the army has come to a camp and given them two weeks to move to another location because they were either too close to the military bases or overlapping with military roads. The NGO can help the refugee families establish new camps when they move by finding new land and negotiating with the local municipality. They would also need to coordinate with Oxfam who have designated areas that are safe and liveable; they have already done this with one of the camps.

Legal permits. Every six months, teachers are required to update their residency permit. Teachers may not have updated documents when crossing checkpoints. New laws have made renewing visas more difficult, although tourist visas are easier. Prices changed from 200 USD per year to 200 USD six months. The most that NGO 4 can do is support in paying. They organization cannot renew their visas because their involvement will require them to register the teachers as working employees and this is either not possible or extremely difficult.

Financial. No funds have been secured to run the school for the second year. NGO 4 plans to set up a Board of Trustees with patrons who commit to annual donations. They plan to partner with other organizations who could possibly provide some of the services.

Support or recognition from MEHE. UNICEF and UNHCR are working to prepare students for public schools and Accelerated Learning Program. The ministry, at the moment, does not recognize educational efforts and programs provided through non-formal (unofficial) means. One implication is that students would not be able to sit for the Lebanese Baccalaureate exams.

Lessons learned

- Educate parents about importance of education and therapeutic interventions so that (1) there is more continuity between program activities and living practices at home and (2) parents continuously inform teachers of children's progress and needs.
- Facilitators would require training on managing disruptive behaviors (like fights), which would include calling for and facilitating interventions. In some cases, this would involve seeking permission from parents.
- Provide open and accessible space for children to freely carry out activities (e.g. library, arts room, music hall, etc.).
- Build network of volunteers

Some children gave recommendations to have cleaner areas and more toys.

NGO 5

Their non-formal education program aims to help out-of-school and vulnerable 14-18 year olds learn basic literacy, numeracy and life skills to improve potential to find work and/or enter a formal educational or vocational program. The program reaches out to 11,000 beneficiaries. The targeted age group of 14-18 is significant because "this is the category that is least served." All the commitments of the government and, consequently, most of the NGOs focus on basic education, which ends at 14 years. At the NGO, they believe that this age group is even less served than early childhood.

Vulnerable children include: Syrian refugees, at-risk Lebanese in host communities, Palestinians in Lebanon, and Palestinians from Syria. They are also children who "who were pushed out of the system" (e.g. a child was paralyzed and in a wheelchair and couldn't access school and traumatized by being teased at school when wetting his pants; another was diagnosed with cancer and had to skip school for treatment and couldn't go back because they missed so much). Although the program aims to serve out-of-school youth, exceptions are made for few students identified as at-risk for dropping out in UNRWA and Lebanese public schools.

Many of the 14-18 year-old youth have been out of school for a number of years and a large population of them are working or wanting to work. So, they have an outreach program to inform out-of-school children about how to return to school and the importance of an education. The outreach also targets parents, not just for recruitment but for anticipated challenges, especially addressing conservative views marginalizes females from participating.

The program runs in 21 locations: 12 villages in Akkar and 3 Palestinian refugee camps (Ain el Helweh, Beddawi, and Nahr el Bared).

Objectives

To help youth find pathways either (1) back to education:
- Take the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP)
- Sit for school entrance exam

or (2) better work:
- Improve potential to find work (employability skills),
- Enter vocational institute or take non-formal vocational training

Technical and logistical details

The program was funded by UNICEF for one year only, which started in November 2014. The entire curriculum was designed in four months and launched the end of March 2015. The program ends in November 2015. There are collaboration agreements with other organizations. These partners provide the center of work. They also refer youth to each other. For example, those in wheelchairs are referred to accessible centers.

MEHE does not allow this NGO to work in schools or use public or private school facilitates to run the program because they are a non-formal educational program.

Program design and activities

The organization had only four months to produce a curriculum, hire staff and reform classroom infrastructure. Curriculum design was led by an education program manager, an MA-holder in education who has at least six years of experience in educational programs for development. She started with a needs assessment to find out what Syrian refugee children (14-18 year-olds) need and learn more about their challenges through discussions with youth. Based on the findings, a list of criteria were drawn for an educational program suitable for this target group. For the math curriculum, they consulted curricula from the UAE, Syria, Palestine, Jordan. Module times are often set according to the work schedules of the youth.

The program is a set of modules where each comprises Arabic, Math, English and Life skills. Each of these subject areas is developed into five levels of ability. The skills in these modules are derived from the grades 1-9 Lebanese curriculum. The Math is in Arabic with three tracks "that spiral up". Each level is approximately 25 contact hours. One module is 72 hours of instruction over six weeks (3days/wk 4hrs/day or vice versa). Each module has 20 hrs English, 20 Arabic, 20 Math and 12 Life skills. Life skills includes health and psychosocial themes.

The program also comprises a sports component, which primarily serves as a method of outreach for youth in the area. "Many of the youth enter the program" through sports activities. All the sports coaches get life skills training to design sports that improve communication, build teamwork and bring people together.

In this center, youth in the area take a placement test and the level is set based on the majority of students so that "you're in your learning zone". When there are larger numbers of students, they cluster more.

1. Duration: It's very difficult for youth in this age group to commit to a program (e.g. nine-months). So, each module runs for six weeks.
2. Applicable skills: The focus is on how the subjects are applicable rather than theory

The program does not have an explicit psychosocial or emotional component. Children who have psycho-emotional needs are referred to other centers that have a psychosocial program. Other times, psychosocial workers are brought in.

Successes

Motivating youth to sit for placements

Only 536 sat for ALP in the north. Despite the one-week notice, 336 were referred, oriented and transported from the centers to take the placement. The success indicator is them just going to take the ALP. In one center, 150 youth, the coordinator said no one wants to go (maybe fear of losing numbers and then funding). So, the education program coordinator had to go and give a presentation to convince them to take the ALP. It was difficult because many of them had already been to a public school and pushed out of the system because of poor treatment. "You know how difficult it is to get a mechanic who's 16, 17 coming to do an afternoon class to learn how to read and write – cuz he knows that it's important for him to read and write – to sit for a test?"

Motivating youth to attend program

Between the end of March 2015 and 12 May 2015, the program had a 97% retention rate. For out of school youth, this is a huge indicator of success. "These are kids who left school. They come with oil between their nails". "Even these kids we can reach". One child makes 10,000 a day at a supermarket. When he misses a day of work to go to this program, he doesn't get paid, but "it's very important for him because it represents an opportunity".

Inclusion of girls

In the program, 60% of the youth are girls, which "is huge, especially for the areas of the programs we are working in".

Support from women's NGOs

Working with women's organizations helps. Parents feel safer. Then, once a parent sends her daughter, other parents get encouraged. The woman's organization also decided to keep the lesson on puberty and physical changes while other centers decided to take them out. The youth who took this lesson "appreciated this so much because nobody had ever talked about it to them before" and the parents were ok.

Continuous teacher professional development (Collaboration between the centers)

When trying to facilitate focus groups with teachers, some did not want to cluster and travel to another school. Two centers met, 5km apart (from the same social context); one tore the pages and the other did not. If they had not met together, they would not have learned that "this is possible in Michmich, then it can be possible in Fnadiq". Even though they did not appear to have declared a change of approach, "I'm sure that [the other school] re-questioned themselves".

Youth

Youth in a center in Akkar received training on developing a personal strategic plan for their lives. This was really interesting.

Challenges

There was only one week notice to take ALP placement test.

In such an emergency-based project, there is no time to reflect. This is not development, it is emergency work. You have multiple things happening at the same time. First three months: developing curriculum, identifying teachers, training teachers, identifying partners, setting up agreements with each of the partners. "Sometimes, what you really need is a little bit more time to be able to reflect and plan and strategize. So, whenever I sit down to think about it, I can always think of a million things that could have been done better but the objectives, when you're doing something like that, are to actually get it done." The main indicator becomes: "did I reach these kids?" At the second level, or higher level: "How was the quality of the program? I don't always have the luxury to do this".

Classroom pedagogies (or quality of implementation) vary according to teachers. The NGO invested a great deal of resources in producing the lesson plans, but teachers prefer to use the learner's books instead because they are fewer pages (e.g. 6 pages lesson plan vs 1.5 pages learner activities).

A great deal of time is spent on negotiating with parents. For example, two girls dropped out because the classrooms were not gender segregated (there were males present).

Lesson learned

Not to worry about things not working out as planned. Instead, note them for how you're going to revise the second round.

For future teacher training and mentoring, have lessons selected and apply them during the workshops.

Plan the lesson plans backwards. Rather than writing pages of ideas for the teacher's guide, do a fleshed out learner's book integrated with guides on how to facilitate the lesson.

NGO 6

NGO 6 aims to provide psychosocial support to cope with trauma and build relationships by focusing on strengths. Their core rhetoric is "We are not victims, we are survivors".

The organization has a team of therapists that facilitate a program of 6-8 sessions, one session per week. Their work in Lebanon started in 2007 with Iraqis and migrant workers. The team developed the psychosocial support program in 2013, mostly as a response to the Syrian conflict. There are currently 10 centers around Lebanon including Qoura, Dekweneh, Burj Hammoud, Tripoli, Rmayleh, Mrayjeh, Saida, Bekaa. Between their different centers, the NGO currently works with about 50 different groups. The groups are generally based on age bracket. They work with children from 5 to 11 years old, mothers or any other women between the ages of 20 and 60 and groups of adolescents. Groups of adolescents tend to be female because, at that age, most boys are working to help provide for their families. Sometimes, they have a few men, but they mainly participate in individual sessions.

Sessions take place once a week in the centers. They work on both a group and individual basis with groups numbering up to 10, however there are cases where they work with bigger groups.

The therapy program

NGO 6 does not work from a strict curriculum. Rather, they employ a set of techniques such as drawing and theatre therapy, puppetry, games and tolerance based dialogue to meet the needs of different groups.

Design and activities

The organization employs a variety of techniques to help participants cope with their environments and traumas. One of the approaches is a psychosocial program developed by an international NGO that uses puppets to promote peacebuilding and other strategies for dealing with traumatic events. They show puppets as a non-threatening medium to expose participants to notions of trauma healing or peace building. The international NGO works in many countries around the world including Lebanon, Turkey, Syria and Jordan and conducts in country workshops and trainings.

They have also developed videos aimed at being culturally relevant to the areas in which they are utilized. These videos are used to introduce a trauma or difficult situation. They generally form the basis of further activities which help participants project their feelings through the use of puppetry, role playing, or drawing. The movie also serves as an introduction to the organisation's key messages. These messages include:

- Hope
- Friendship
- Focusing on the positive despite what is going on in life
- Positioning participants as survivors – not victims. This is a key component of No Strings' approach

Additional activities include teaching children how to make puppets out of sticks, socks, newspapers or the use of shadow puppetry. Puppets are used at NGO 6 typically when working on cohesion and tolerance projects between Syrian and Lebanese children.

Facilitating the sessions

The first of the six sessions is generally aimed at setting objectives and discussing participant expectations of the program. This process is very collaborative and participant-led. Based on the needs and/or expectations identified by the participants, the therapist at the NGO sets the program objectives and activities to meet those objectives. The tools used to set objectives and identify needs include discussions with the participants or Likert-scale type surveys. For example, they worked with a group of women who identified as their main problem the difficulty of saying 'no' to their husbands. Another identified dealing with children as their main focus.

In addition to the techniques employed by the therapists, there is scope for the groups to operate almost as support groups with participants giving advice and support to one another. This results in a dynamic, participative environment that is very relevant to, and representative of, the participants themselves.

Working with puppets is generally immediately engaging for children. The women tend to be resistant initially, however gradually start to enjoy the activities. Participants are encouraged to work collaboratively and in groups.

Logistics

Some of the therapists are trained psychologists. Also some undertook training in Turkey. Training is long and in-depth. Transportation is usually provided to the participants.

Success Stories

One of the groups worked with was a group of women who identified 'dealing with children' as their main issue. In this case, one woman discussed how she would resort to beating her children in order to deal with her own personal frustrations. Through the advice of her peers, and the use of techniques given to her, she began finding other, more effective ways of dealing with her emotions. She came back several weeks later (in mid-May 2015) to say that she has completely stopped beating her children and is enjoying her relationship with them because they are actually speaking and sharing things with her.

In a center that provided after school support, tensions grew between Lebanese and Syrian children (8-11 years old). Immediately, parents were contacted and an intervention was in place. The therapist worked with the children on various activities involving playing little games and finding common ground between the two groups when the children realized they were fans of the same football teams. The children also produced a play that showed they can work together despite differences.

Challenges

One of the main issues that the NGO 6 deals with is the impact of the conservative, traditional Syrian patriarchal traditions. This manifests in several ways:

Husbands control over their wives
Husbands frequently do not allow their wives to attend sessions. Some may send their wives to the center thinking, initially, that the center may be giving out free things. However, once they realize this is not the case, they will stop their wives from attending. In these cases, the therapist will generally call to find out why they have stopped attending. The women will either say their husbands are no longer allowing them to attend, or the husbands will pick up and make excuses about their wives' lack of availability to come to the phone or the sessions.

Lack of support from parents

A similar case applies to adolescent girls where their fathers, or both parents, do not allow their teenage girls to attend the sessions. In some cases, girls attend without the knowledge of their fathers.

Early marriages

Many of the teenagers want to get married in order to have the freedom to express the more adult type of love they are capable of. This craving for intimate relationships, coupled with the lack of freedom to fulfill it, leads them to early marriages.

Professional needs

Psychologists and social workers themselves deal with and process the emotionally draining impact of working with the participants. They, too, require continuous care and counseling.

Funding and Donor Relations

The lack of funds for transportation for beneficiaries impacts the length of time the this organization can run programs with different groups.

Donors often want the groups to be larger than the therapists deems to be effective. In this case, the social workers need to double up on a group in order to cater for the larger number.

There is not enough money going into supplying underserved communities with their basic needs. This affects their work because, without these basic needs being met, attendance can remain low.

Lessons Learned

- Using the key message of 'we are survivors' to help empower beneficiaries
- Be assertive with donors who tend to approach programs with the mentality of spending less on more
- Invest efforts in trying to provide for basic needs

NGO 7

NGO 7 has developed a circus-theme education program aims at creating sustainable social change by engaging children to in circus activities that serve as psychosocial support and edutainment. By using the circus as an arena for targeting different issues, skill sets and facets of development, cec works with children and adults and focuses its work on creating sustainable social change.

The circus program began as a pilot project by the NGO in 2002 and has since developed a social enterprise model that affords it a degree of independence in terms of its curriculum and policies at work. Since 2002, they estimate that the beneficiaries of the work (both direct and indirect) number at roughly 37,000.

The circus program

The curriculum for the circus program is based on a holistic framework where they aim to activate different facets of development through the teaching of circus skills. Those interviewed at the NGO reported how the activities addressed various areas of child development and community cohesion:

Cognitive development

The program teaches physical skills however aims to teach children about how the body works, the physics behind acrobatic movements, understanding relationships between moving objects and shapes, weight, speed and momentum and the mechanics of movement.

Physical development

teaching skills such as juggling and acrobatics reportedly works on developing motor skills and coordination.

Psycho social development

The activities, places great emphasis on developing self-esteem, self-control, discipline, teamwork, respect, collaboration skills, equality and tolerance. They aim to provide a creative space for children to discover how their bodies work and how to hone their skills while expressing themselves very freely through the unrestrictive medium of circus skills (for example: clowning and miming). They also tried to foster leadership skills through group work.

Collaborations with NGOs

They are often is called in by other organizations as an addition to a project in progress. They are first is briefed on the needs of the community and the scope of the project. They have done quite some work with UN agencies and international NGOs in Lebanon supporting vulnerable children.

Independent community projects

NGO 7 first identifies an area they would like to work in and spend some time creating their own needs assessment. They do this through observation and interviews with stakeholders such as camp or village 'elders', and in many cases, through a very informal process. They show up at a site and begin performing. This attracts an audience who begin to participate with cec members and create an organic group of members. They teach them skills and how to create circus tools from recycled trash or garbage materials. This, they feel, adds to the sustainability of the work. They also leave behind toys and tools for the children to use. They will work at a site for a short period of time.

Non-formal education

The NGO runs an education program that works with a specific group of children all year round and teaches them circus skills. They believe they may also be providing them with a vocational skills. This is provided free of charge and students are selected based on their backgrounds and needs. Many of the children are identified as vulnerable from underserved communities.

Social enterprise

The NGO has managed to promote their program as a fee-based extra-curricular programs at schools. Currently they are working with a number private schools who pay for their services to be delivered to the school children. It is also in this environment where they many of the ideas that they later use in their social work. Ideally, they would like to see the French embassy incorporate a circus module into the French Baccalaureate curriculum so they can expand their work with schools. The circus module is apparently a standard component of the French Baccalaureate program in France.

Logistics and training

The members were trained initially by Cirque du Monde which is Cirque du Soleil's social work arm. Some have a background in education while others are trained in social work. They aim to put more of their members through social work training. While they sometimes work with severe cases on a one-to-one basis, they do not cross their remit in terms of providing psychological care. In cases where they feel a child needs more focused

counseling, they will refer them to one of the NGO's they have worked with. Otherwise, their members come from different backgrounds and often learn social working skills through on the job experience.

Success Stories

Key successes for them have been the progress made with vulnerable children that they have taken on as formal circus trainees. This sustained contact with the children has resulted in increases in the children's self-esteem, skill sets and social relationships. Oftentimes, these children will cycle back into the social work process by getting involved with the programs, which has been the case with three of the main trainers.

Another indicator of success comes in the form of sustainability. In one of their ad-hoc camp visits, they worked with children on basic juggling skills using objects from the children's environment (old water bottles, random objects). After working with the children over several weeks, the project ended and they left. After four months, they paid a surprise visit and found that the children had continued to practice juggling skills using the materials around them. Although the children did not necessarily progress extraordinarily in terms of skill, the time and energy going into practicing those skills was keeping them off the streets.

Challenges

Parents

Through their work, they found that parents who would rather send their children to work is a large obstacle for them. Sometimes it is difficult convincing them of the relevance of their children attending workshops related to learning circus skills. Additionally, many of the Syrian children they work with come from rural backgrounds; in these cases, explained how difficult it has been convincing parents to send their children to formal education, let alone circus school. At the moment, the NGO rarely interacts directly with parents as most of their work is either organized by the NGOs that hire them, or through the more organic, ad-hoc group settings they work in.

NGOs can be uninformed

The organization feel's that many of the International NGOs on the ground have a lot of gaps in their understanding of the communities and their needs. The lack of organic, or from the ground (bottom up), movements means that a amount of funding is going into programs that are not necessarily being effective. Also, when they work with other NGOs, the partner NGOs use a strict contract that specifically defines the circus program activities, which undermines the organic nature of developing the activities bottom-up with the community.

Cooperation with the Ministry

During the time of the interviews, NGO 7 had no ties with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. However, as mentioned earlier, they are planning on working with the French embassy to formalize circus skills as a part of the French Baccalaureate In this case they may run into some challenges when it comes to licensing; however, they are hoping that working the embassy will help them bypass this.

Funding and Donor Relations

The organization runs a social enterprise model which means they are not heavily reliant on donor funds. Their nonformal circus education program helps fund the other programs. They also sell toys and have a touring circus troop. They have a sales and social media presence and actively try to raise money through their work.

Lessons Learned

- A self-sustaining model which frees them from the restrictions often set by donor agencies.
- The most underserved need they currently see in children is the lack of attention and care they receive.
- NGOs are supplying too much "stuff" and not enough care
- Future programs should focus more on vocational training or programs on farming and land rehabilitation. This would be more effective than trying to push everyone into formal education These programs may also prepare them to rebuild Syria should they be able to go back.
- It is vital to address the needs of the host community as well.
- Not enough is being done in terms of teaching children how to cope with trauma and change.
- The social enterprise model has really helped the organization retain its independence in terms of generating income and setting curricula. They also turned to social media for funding when staging a crowd-funding campaign in 2014.

NGO 8

NGO 8 is based in Europe but has a chapter in Lebanon. It aims to strengthen the life skills of children and young people to help them deal with the challenges they face, as well as improve their understanding of, and attitudes toward, other ethnic and religious groups in Lebanese society. In the context of social cohesion, the NGO works on two programs. One through organized sports activities aimed at promoting social cohesion, and another focusing on promoting proactive attitudes and practices of peacebuilding of children at school.

The program

Understandings of concepts

The concept of social cohesion is wide and encompasses numerous notions overlapping with active and democratic citizenship. War Child activities in social cohesion aim to:

- Target children first and foremost
- Bring together host and refugee communities in specific locations
- Include support of parents, support of broader community

Elements of program design

- Creativity: Drama, visual arts, music, dance, sports and games, social media and ICT stimulate children's creative skills.
- Participation and Inclusion: They actively influence decision-making, and the design and implementation of our projects and activities.
- Conflict sensitivity

Psychosocial support focuses on resilience, strength and confidence. Activities aim to
• Support children to cope with struggles
• Promote trust
• Recognize and manage emotions
• Build skills of professionals and structures to support children

Child Protection involves close and continuous discussions of issues with parents, teachers and policy makers.

Program 1: Sports for social cohesion

War Child worked with eight municipalities to create football teams and with parents to follow up with the children. The children are 10-14 years of age. They have reached a total of 600 children, or 20 teams. They try to ensure that each team is gender balanced, which is sometimes difficult.

Each team has two coaches, one Syrian and one Lebanese. The coaches are trained on "Soccer Deal", which is based on the psychosocial support (PSS) Ideals methodology. Through football games, they facilitate 12 cycles of PSS, which focus on children openly discussing their relationship with peers. This methodology has developed to address different contexts. The focus is always on helping children address conflict and how to relate to peers inthe contexts of host communities.

The children engage in discussions 30 minutes before and after a football match. At the end of the cycle, there are a number of indicators which the results of program are matched up against. They do focus groups, interviews and pre and post tests to measure the impact of the program.

Some strengths of the program include (1) normalizing diversity when engaging municipalities in nominating coaches and (2) using sports debriefs to address conflicts and communication

Program 2: Yalla Peace

The program is based on the methodology of "Peace Deals". Peace Deals is a tool based on structured psychosocial support. Yalla Peace rests on the Peace Deals and ultimately aims to get children to design a peace action plan that involves host and refugee communities. This second project works with 300 Syrian refugee children in public schools. The themes that emerge become a theatre performance. The Peace Deals methodology helps children address important themes related to conflict and integration.

Peace Deals is a structured psychosocial support program that aims to get children to design a peace action plan that involves host and refugee communities. This second project works with 300 Syrian refugee children in public schools. The themes that emerge become a theatre performance. Typical issues of a peace program that children came up with include:

• Discrimination
• Isolation
• How to integrate in host community

Through Peace Deals, children also engaged in light recreational activities intended to be educational such as playing games around the alphabet or playing with a ball to learn about numbers. Other slightly more structured

activities followed a cycle that had to be implemented over a period of three months with clear measurable objectives.

Successes

• Observed children integrating into the community.
• The programs regarded as child-centered.
• The NGO engages the community and local institutions like municipalities. For example they asked municipalities who in the community Syrian and Lebanese can be coaches for the football social cohesion project.
• They work through partnerships with local institutions like the Ministry of Social Affairs for institutional backing of their programming

Challenges

For a short period of time, NGO 7 covered costs for 6000 second shift children at 600 US dollars per child across 13 schools. They monitored with MEHE's regional offices how the school spent the money. This has changed now. This year, the money goes directly to MEHE without any external review or monitoring.

Currently, the NGO is not working on educational programs because nearly all funding has now been channeled to the Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) program. Most of the donors are putting money in formal education. The ALP programs now fall under RACE. Thus, the organization is shifting towards a new program they are creating, "Advocacy and Awareness". Through this program, they meet parents and children and ask questions about their experiences in non-formal and formal education hoping to address issues and challenges like dropout and managing hostile or difficult environments.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Information in this report is susceptible to change when:

• The government comes up with a new law or policy that can influence donors' decisions to fund certain activities or change direction from non-formal to formal educational programs.
• Teachers leave or get replaced quickly when funding immediately stops or their personal situations change.
• Parents find work, especially when both parents work and depend on their children to care for the babies at home.
• Costs are incurred and parents can no longer afford transportation.
• Donors decide to leave projects and fund others resulting in loss of human resources and change in activities for children.

Each community faces unique challenges based on their cultural make up (e.g. differences exist between different groups of Syrians), relationships with the host community, area of living in terms of environment, access to resources, and weather conditions.

SUMMARY OF SUCCESS INDICATORS

The success indicators can reflect progress of a single child/parent/teacher or group of children/parents/teachers.

1. Change in expressions through art (painting, writing, etc.)
   Children's drawings in some projects evolved from images of violence and war to scenery of mountains and family.

2. Communicate with wider number of parents

3. Communication with parents leads to alternative solutions or changes at home
   Continuously working with parents to find alternatives to sending children to work or marry. Parents can also learn to prioritize education once they learn more about their children's progress and achievements.

4. Decrease in behavioural problems
   Creating a set of norms or rules and consistently implementing them

5. High attendance rate, low dropout rate
   Attendance can include showing up at the Accelerated Learning Program placement exams, consistently attending the program's activities.

6. Good rate of feedback on learning and teaching
   Feedback on quality of learning activities can come from observations and feedback from children. Indicators can be drawn from concepts of effective learning and active participation.

7. Needs identified by children and parents are addressed and change over time
   Periodic surveys show that individual needs are aligned with activities and show degrees of progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish continuous and bilateral communications with parents.
   - Send out weekly/biweekly progress reports per child
   - Visit parents at home if they cannot come to school
   - Organize a monthly parent-teacher day to show their child's work
   - Support a parent's committee that is led by parents.
   - Focus most efforts on involvement and dialogues with father

2. Establish norms
   - Facilitate activity that allows children to draw up norms to follow
   - Children to take and post pictures of ideal set-ups (classroom clean-up, queuing, etc.) to follow

3. Distribute learners according to ability, not age
   - Determine placements using entrance and end-of-year exams
   - Highlight additional social skill involved in working with various ages

4. Invest in continuous teacher education, professional development and counseling
   - Enforce competitive qualifications for job hiring
   - Facilitate regular circle sessions, workshops and access to counseling
   - Encourage teachers to produce portfolios to capture their work and progress

5. Integrate provisions of basic needs (health care, therapy, nutrition, etc.)
   - Develop network of service providers (special needs, therapists, etc.)
   - Establish directory and relationships for services not offered in the program

6. Create a social enterprise strategy for program sustainability
   - Expand beneficiaries to the private sector
   - Plan to sell services or products

7. Facilitate spaces of diversity through services provided
   - Ensure that teachers and students come from various religious and national backgrounds
   - Train staff on facilitating activities with children from diverse backgrounds, especially after incidents of conflict

8. Provide day care for children under 4 years because older siblings are asked to care for babies when both parents have work
   - Seek out volunteers in families to run the day care
   - Communicate to parents that the objective of day care is to improve their children's attendance

9. Establish mechanisms of continuous program evaluation, review and development
   - Ensure that feedback is open-ended and elicited from children and parents
   - Involve children and parents in using the feedback to improve the program

10. Advance advocacy efforts at the government level to recognize non-formal education
    - Create union of civil society organizations to recognize Syrian refugee schools
    - Lobby for Syrian refugee children to sit for official exams without condition

11. Develop an outreach program that encourages young people to prioritise education and seek support or learning opportunities

12. Create mechanisms to track progress of individual children
    - Use evidence of progress to indicate success
    - Ensure that individual files are easily accessible by the children and their parents
    - Ensure that individual reports include qualitative input

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