

Sama



Early Childhood Care and Development in Jordan: A Summary of Learnings

Content

1	<u>Introduction</u>
2	<u>ECCD Policies in Jordan</u>
4	<u>ECCD Indicators</u>
6	<u>The State of the Sector</u>
10	<u>Supply of ECCD Services</u>
15	<u>Demand for ECCD Services</u>
19	<u>ECCD Best Practices</u>
23	<u>Recommendations</u>

INTRODUCTION

In 2024, Sama uncovered key insights into Jordan's Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) sector through various research efforts. This report highlights the most significant findings, offering fresh insights and practical lessons to inspire broader learning and dialogue across the sector.

In Jordan, focused and strategic attention to early childhood development began in the early 2000s, with the launch of the National Strategy for Early Childhood Development, following the National Symposium on Early Childhood in 1993. This was followed by the National Plan for Childhood in Jordan (2004-2013), the National Action Plan for Early Childhood Development (2003-2007), and the Second Action Plan for Early Childhood Development (2011-2015). These efforts were integrated into the Human Resources Development Plan (2015-2025), which dedicated special emphasis on early education and childhood development.

Despite growing recognition of the importance of ECCD for children's long-term development, Jordan still faces significant challenges in providing equitable and high-quality ECCD services. While demand for maternal and child health services are high in Jordan, the demand for ECCD services in other areas, such as formal childcare, developmental, and educational services, begins to decline. This reduction is driven by several factors, including limited awareness of the long-term benefits of these services, financial constraints, and low accessibility to quality programs in these domains.

As Jordan strives to meet Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 4.2 by 2025, challenges persist in expanding infrastructure and ensuring equitable access across all regions. These challenges are most acute in rural and marginalized areas, where limited resources hinder efforts to provide comprehensive ECCD services.



ECCD POLICIES IN JORDAN

2002

The Jordanian Action Plan for Children 2004-2013 was created to support the implementation of the national ECD strategy. It aimed to provide a general framework and direction for action in all child-related fields and to strengthen public and private cooperation, increase access to quality services, reduce gender and geographical disparities, and attract financing.

2017

The 10-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education was launched in 2017 by the Ministry of Education and targets people with disabilities. The ECD priorities identified in this strategy focused on introducing inclusive education policies, raising awareness of the importance of implementing inclusive education programs, conducting a needs assessment to identify the needs of children with disabilities, improving school curricula, and promoting research.

2000

The National Early Childhood Development Strategy was introduced to achieve balanced and comprehensive child development. This strategy tackles various dimensions of ECD including maternal health during pregnancy, education, child health, and community awareness. The strategy also focuses on addressing the needs of children with disabilities.

2016

The National Strategy for Human Resource Development was introduced to achieve universal coverage of quality early childhood learning and development, ensure equitable and quality primary and secondary education, increase the number of people who have technical and vocational skills for employment, and increase accessibility to affordable, relevant, and quality university education. The strategy positions Early Childhood Education and Development as one of its main components and calls for a comprehensive approach to policies and programs for children from birth to 8 years of age.

2018

NCFA established the National Team for Early Childhood Development in 2018 with the support of Plan International. This initiative highlights NCFA's role under Law No. 27 of 2001, which includes monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy for Early Childhood Development.

2019

The National Social Protection Strategy (2019-2025) of Jordan emphasizes the importance of early childhood development and the well-being of children through several key initiatives: the strategy highlights the need to increase enrollment rates in early childhood education, particularly for children from low-income families. It addresses the quality of education provided to children, noting challenges such as inadequately trained teachers and outdated curricula. The strategy emphasizes the provision of comprehensive social services to support children's development.

2022

Jordan introduced the Child Rights Bill, which aims to further strengthen the legal framework for protecting children's rights and ensuring their well-being. The law guarantees a range of rights for children, including the right to education, health, protection from abuse and exploitation, and social care. It emphasizes the government's responsibility to provide equitable opportunities for all children, safeguard their best interests, and ensure their participation in decisions affecting their lives.

2020

The Social Protection System Related to Maternity Insurance (Regulation No. 93 of 2020) was established under the provisions of the Social Security Law No. 1 of 2014. Article 42 of the law was amended to allow the SSC to use up to 25% of the maternity fund resources to support maternity-related social protection programs. Based on this the Reaya program was launched in 2021, to support insured mothers of children under age five. In addition to supporting maternity leave, the program supports subsidizing childcare services.

2022

The Economic Modernization Vision (EMV) in Jordan was also launched in 2022, outlining a comprehensive 10-year roadmap to transform Jordan's economy by 2033. It envisions that "by 2033, all children in Jordan to have an integrated, equitable, just, and child-centered system for the development of healthcare and early childhood education within the framework of effective governance to enable them to unleash their potential, be able to adapt, and to be positive, happy, and productive citizens."

ECCD INDICATORS

A comprehensive understanding of key demographic, health, education, and safety indicators reveals both progress and persistent challenges in the ECCD sector in Jordan.

Demographics



Population
11,516,000

Children under 5	9.8%
Registered births	172,000
Under 5 mortality rate	15/1,000
Birth registration	99%

[1] Department of Statistics (2024), Jordan in Figures 2023

Health and Nutrition

97% of pregnant women receive antenatal care from a skilled provider. 64% of pregnant women reported having at least eight antenatal visits. 83% of women go for a postnatal check-up 2 days after birth, and 77.3% of mothers and their newborns receive a postnatal check-up. 92% of children aged 12-23 months are fully vaccinated against basic diseases. 34% of infants under the age of 2 are breastfed within the first hour of birth, and 24% of infants under the age of 6 months are exclusively breastfed. 15% of newborns in Jordan have a low birthweight (less than 2.5 KG) and 8% of children under the age of 5 suffer from stunting.[2]

Vaccinated children under 2

92%

Low birth weight

15%

Stunted children under 5

8%

97%

of pregnant women receive antenatal care

77.3%

of mothers and their newborns receive a postnatal check-up

Violent Disciplining

75% of children aged 1–14 experienced at least one form of violent discipline (in the month preceding the survey). 72% experienced psychological aggression (shouting or screaming at the child, or calling the child dumb, lazy or a similar term), 53% experienced physical punishment (shaking, spanking, slapping on the bottom, hitting with a belt, hairbrush, or stick, hitting or slapping on the face, hitting on the hand, arm or leg, beating the child up), and 10% experienced severe physical punishment (hitting, or slapping the child on the face, head or ears and/or hitting the child over and over as hard as one can).[2]

75%

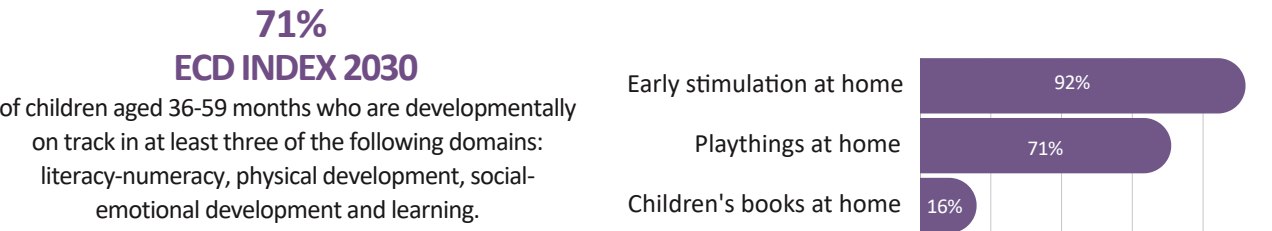
of children aged 1–14 experienced at least one form of violent discipline (in the month preceding the survey).

[2] Department of Statistics (2024), Jordan Population and Family Health Survey 2023.

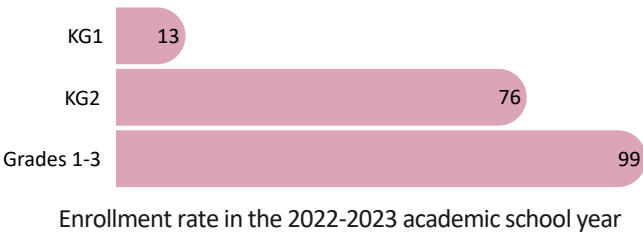
ECCD INDICATORS

Home Environment

According to the ECD Index (ECDI2030), 71% of children in Jordan are developmentally on track in at least three of the following domains: literacy-numeracy, physical development, social-emotional development and learning. The index also shows that while 92% of children receive early stimulation at home, and 71% have access to playthings, only 16% of children have access to books at home.[3]



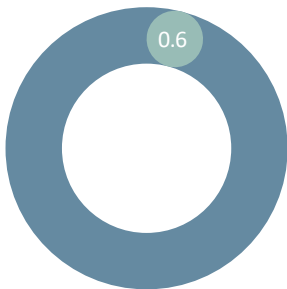
Education



12.8% of children aged 4-5 were enrolled in KG1, and 76.4% were enrolled in KG2 in the 2022-2023 academic school year. 98.7% of children aged 6-8 were enrolled in primary education (grades 1-3) in the 2022-2023 academic school year. [4]

Children with Disabilities

6% of children aged 5–17 years have a mild to severe disability and 1% have an acute disability.[5] The majority of school-aged children with disabilities are excluded from any form of schooling, often due to a lack of specialized programs, resources, and the persistence of social stigma.[6]



Data from the MoE shows that only 0.6% of the total children enrolled in KG1-third grade in the 2022-2023 academic school year were children with disabilities (4,112 students).[7]

[3] Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development. [Jordan Country Profile 2023](#).

[4] Information retrieved from an interview with the Ministry of Education.

[5] WHO (2023), [Breaking barriers: Jordan's pursuit of child well-being through inclusion](#)

[6] Humanity & Inclusion (2022), [Disability-Inclusive Education in Jordan](#)

[7] Information retrieved from an interview with the Ministry of Education.

THE STATE OF THE SECTOR

Strengths

- **Jordan benefits from a robust legal framework rooted in child rights, providing a solid foundation for policy development.** Jordan has demonstrated leadership in policy formulation. The enactment of the Child Rights Bill serves as a cornerstone in safeguarding the rights and well-being of children across the country. As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Jordan has committed to upholding international standards for child protection and development. Notably, Jordan has also pioneered inclusive policies, such as the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 10-Year Inclusive Education Strategy, further emphasizing its commitment to equity and accessibility for all.
- **Jordan possesses a strong foundation of technical expertise, established programs, partnerships, and frameworks that offer significant potential for further development and innovation in the ECCD sector.** There is a significant opportunity to amplify the impact of these resources through robust strategic coordination and leadership. For example, Jordan has established model workplace and home-based nurseries that can be replicated, has developed a quality assurance system to monitor the quality daycares, and has successfully implemented the Raeya program. By unifying efforts under a clear framework with defined roles, Jordan could better align funding, expertise, and programs to national priorities.
- **Jordan has a wealth of Jordanian-based cultural and educational resources and online platforms targeting ECCD.** Jordan has developed several high-quality ECCD resources, programs and centers that serve as models of excellence in the region. These include QRF's Iqralli.jo platform, which provides evidence-based literacy resources for children, and the Jordanian developed منصة كتيبي and اقرأ بالعربية platforms, now widely used in schools across the region. While largely limited to Amman, Jordan does have a number of advanced ECCD facilities with highly trained staff. Jordan also has a vibrant publishing industry that supports the production of early childhood and children's books. Publishing houses in the country focus on creating high-quality educational and entertaining literature to inspire young readers and promote a culture of reading.
- **High demand for health services in early developmental stages offers a chance to boost parental awareness and engagement,** which can increase demand for ECCD in later stages. There is significant demand for child and maternal health services during the early years, especially through primary healthcare facilities (77.3% of mothers and newborns receive postnatal checkup; 92% of children aged 12-23 are fully vaccinated).

THE STATE OF THE SECTOR

Weaknesses

- **The lack of clear leadership and a unified vision, results in inconsistent and fragmented collaboration among stakeholders.** While successful partnerships demonstrate the potential of coordinated efforts, broader challenges persist. Many initiatives lack role clarity and alignment with national priorities, resulting in inefficiencies and missed opportunities. Clearly defining responsibilities and establishing mechanisms for coordination are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder collaborations.
- **The lack of professional standards and decent working conditions for ECCD caregivers affects the quality of services in the sector.** ECCD caregivers in Jordan often face poor working conditions, limited training opportunities, and low wages, undermining the quality of care and discouraging skilled individuals from entering the workforce. This threatens both the sustainability of the sector and its ability to deliver high-quality services. Improving caregiver training and safeguarding their rights is essential to elevating service quality while addressing the undervaluation of caregiving roles. Without significant investment in training, career pathways, and rights protections for caregivers, the sector risks perpetuating low standards and high turnover.
- **The lack of private sector involvement and weak public-private partnerships (PPPs) limits ECCD's scalability and innovation.** The minimal role of the private sector in ECCD service provision, limits opportunities to expand access, improve quality, and introduce innovative solutions. Regulatory barriers, such as lengthy licensing processes and a lack of incentives like tax reductions, deter private sector participation at both the micro and macro level. Without clear guidelines and accountability mechanisms, public-private partnerships remain an underutilized avenue for scaling ECCD services in Jordan.
- **Access, availability, and quality of childcare services remain inconsistent across Jordan, leading to significant disparities among governorates.** For example, urban areas such as Amman and Zarqa tend to have more childcare facilities with relatively higher standards, while rural and underserved regions face limited availability and often lower-quality services. This uneven distribution underscores the need for targeted interventions to ensure equitable access to quality childcare services throughout the country.
- **The integration of disability-inclusive practices in ECCD remains limited.** While Jordan has raised awareness and acceptance of disabilities, systematic challenges persist in integrating disability-inclusive practices into ECCD systems. Limited access to services, insufficient training for educators and caregivers, and a shortage of specialized professionals, such as child psychologists, undermine the capacity to support children with disabilities effectively within early childhood frameworks. Furthermore, early identification and intervention mechanisms for developmental challenges are inadequate, leaving many children with developmental delays or disabilities undiagnosed. This lack of support prevents these children from integrating effectively into educational and social systems, often resulting in long-term disadvantages.

THE STATE OF THE SECTOR

Opportunities

- **Political interest in ECCD has noticeably increased, driving momentum and a strong push for improvements in the sector.** Over the past two decades, Jordan's ECCD sector has made notable strides in awareness and national policy support. Additionally, policies such as the Child Rights Bill reflect a more structured approach to addressing early childhood needs. These measures illustrate the sector's gradual progress in building a foundation for sustainable development.
- **There is an opportunity to amplify ECCD impact through strategic coordination and strong leadership.** Jordan has a wealth of ECCD resources, including innovative tools, expertise, international partnerships, and ongoing projects. However, these assets are often underutilized due to fragmented efforts and unclear directives. There is a significant opportunity to amplify the impact of these resources through robust strategic coordination and leadership. By unifying efforts under a clear framework with defined roles, Jordan could better align funding, expertise, and programs to national priorities.
- **Substantial efforts have been made in the childcare sector, providing a strong foundation for further development.** For example, NCFA introduced a Quality Assurance System to evaluate nurseries based on comprehensive standards, ensuring improved service delivery. The ILO and SADAQA developed the National Framework for Daycares (2024–2026) to improve access to high-quality childcare and support women's economic participation. Additionally, the VTC, in collaboration with NCFA, established accredited training programs to enhance the skills of childcare providers, supporting the growth of licensed home-based daycares. Future efforts should be built on existing ones, to enhance resource effectiveness and sustainability.
- **Jordan's wealth of cultural and educational resources, including its vibrant publishing industry producing high-quality early childhood literature, presents a unique opportunity to enhance parental engagement and societal awareness around ECCD.** By utilizing these resources in national awareness campaigns, parental engagement programs, and community outreach, stakeholders can equip parents with tools and knowledge to support ECCD at home while fostering a culture that values and prioritizes high-quality early childhood education. Collaborating with publishers, educators, and diverse sectors such as health and education can further address barriers in beliefs and knowledge gaps, driving positive practices and maximizing the impact of ECCD initiatives.
- **Leveraging Jordanian digital platforms offers an opportunity to expand access to ECCD resources, enhance parental engagement, and deliver innovative solutions for early childhood education and care.** Jordan has demonstrated innovative use of technology in ECCD. These platforms offer accessible, interactive, and evidence-based resources to children and families, particularly in areas where physical access to high-quality ECCD services may be limited. The ability to scale such technology-driven solutions provides a promising avenue for expanding the reach and impact of ECCD services across Jordan.

THE STATE OF THE SECTOR

Threats

- **ECCD in Jordan is currently heavily reliant on short-term external donor funding, inability to diversify funding is a threat to long-term stability and growth.** This reliance creates uncertainty, restricts forward planning, and increases fragmentation across the sector. There is a need to establish a dedicated ECCD fund that consolidates resources and ensures a continuous flow of financial support. Changes in international priorities may divert funding and attention away from ECCD. This could stall progress in developing the sector.
- **Inability to recognize, nurture, and take advantage of local talent and expertise poses a risk of brain- and resource-drain to other countries.** Jordan has local talent and expertise in ECCD, including educators, program developers, and innovators. However, the inability to fully recognize, support, and integrate this talent into the ECCD sector risks brain drain, as professionals seek opportunities in neighboring countries that offer better incentives, infrastructure, and recognition. This trend not only reduces the local capacity for innovation and service delivery but also increases reliance on external expertise, which can be unsustainable in the long term. Addressing this risk requires investing in professional development, creating career pathways, and fostering an environment that values and retains local talent.
- **The Impact of regional crises and geopolitical instability could further strain Jordan education and childcare systems, particularly in areas hosting refugees.** Limited resources and infrastructure could be further stretched if external crises worsen, reducing the capacity of ECCD services to meet the needs of both local and refugee populations.

SUPPLY OF ECCD SERVICES

Jordan's ECCD landscape is characterized by a mix of public, private, and non-governmental services, with growing efforts to improve access, quality, and inclusivity.

Formal Childcare Facilities



Licensed childcare facilities in Jordan can serve less than 3% of children under five. These facilities have a combined capacity of about 33,400. The number of unserved children varies between governorates, from around 16,000 in Tafileh to over 500,000 in Amman, which has the highest number of unserved children. To fully meet demand across Jordan, over 44,000 more childcare facilities are needed, each with a capacity of 32.[8]

Considerable efforts are underway in Jordan to enhance the supply and quality of formal childcare services, driven by a multifaceted approach involving various stakeholders. These are summarized in [box 1](#).

Services offered by primary health centers

Primary healthcare services in Jordan are provided through health centers across all governorates. In 2021, there were 121 comprehensive health centers, 366 primary care centers, 187 subsidiary centers, 502 mother and child clinics, and 440 dental clinics across the kingdom. The maternal and child health services provided by the MOH in Jordan include:

- Antenatal care services and postnatal care services.
- Immunization
- Health check-ups and growth monitoring.



In recent years, efforts have been dedicated to integrating ECCD services through existing health infrastructure. Given that health centers are widely accessible in Jordan, particularly by families of newborns and young children, efforts are being focused expanding health services to cover certain ECCD topics. This is done by training healthcare providers on ECCD tools and skills and integrating ECCD services in maternal and child health services. Among notable examples are the Ahlan Simsim project implemented by the International Rescue Committee and the First steps big step (FSBS) project implemented by Plan International Jordan.

[8] World Bank Group (2024), [Formal Childcare in Jordan: Limited Services and Unmet Demand](#).

SUPPLY OF ECCD SERVICES

Cultural Centers



Cultural centers across Jordan aim to create an inclusive environment where children can learn about their heritage, explore new interests, and develop important life skills. These centers often collaborate with schools, community organizations, and international partners to offer diverse programs that include art, theater, music, language learning, and science. Jordan is home to several cultural centers including The Children's Museum, Haya Cultural Center, Zaha Cultural Center and Abdul Hameed Shoman Cultural Center.

Play Areas



Public play areas are integral to children's development, offering spaces for physical activity, social interaction, and cognitive growth. However, the availability and quality of these play areas vary significantly across the country. The shortage of creative and play spaces limits children's developmental opportunities. Play areas are essential for fostering children's social, emotional, and cognitive growth, yet they are often overlooked in resource allocation and urban planning. Without such environments, children are deprived of safe and stimulating opportunities to learn and grow.

Centers for Children with Disabilities



The supply of services for children with disabilities is significantly low. According to an interview with the MOSD, there are 27 public and 15 private centers that serve children with disabilities between the ages of 0 and 6. These centers provide early intervention services as well as specialized services tailored to their needs, including education, therapy (physical, occupational, and speech), psychosocial support. They are mostly found in Amman. This highlights a significant gap in service provision, with extremely limited options available. The predominance of higher quality services among private centers further limits accessibility, as many families are unable to afford the high costs associated with these services.

Initiatives offered by Civil Society Organizations and International Partners



Efforts to promote ECCD in Jordan involve a wide array of actors, including civil society organizations (CSOs), royal NGOs, and international donors. These stakeholders lead and collaborate on initiatives in various thematic areas such as research, early education programmes, literacy, healthcare, and support for children with disabilities. Their collective work has significantly contributed to addressing critical gaps in services and ensuring greater inclusivity for vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Educational and Cultural Resources



Jordan has a vibrant publishing industry that supports the production of early childhood and children's books. Publishing houses in the country focus on creating high-quality educational and entertaining literature to inspire young readers and promote a culture of reading. Some notable examples include: Al Yasmine Publishing House, Kalilah wa Dimna, Majdalawi Masterpieces, and Al Salwa Books.

Jordan has also made significant strides in developing digital content aimed at ECCD. Some examples include:

- I Read Arabic: "I Read Arabic" is an award-winning digital reading platform designed to improve Arabic literacy among children. It caters to learners from early childhood through primary school, providing an interactive and engaging way to develop reading skills.
- Kutubee: Kutubee is a digital reading platform that provides access to an extensive library of children's books in Arabic and other languages. It offers a diverse range of stories that are curated to support various educational levels and interests.
- <https://iqrali.jo/> ('Read to Me') is a national initiative, launched in 2024, aimed at enhancing Arabic literacy among children from birth. Addressing a significant gap where only 6% of Jordanian parents read to their children under six, and six out of ten children lag in literacy development, Iqrali.jo offers free, evidence-based resources such as age-appropriate books, videos, and activities to support diverse parenting needs.
- Adam Wa Mishmish: "Adam Wa Mishmish" is an educational cartoon series and multimedia platform developed in Jordan. It uses engaging animated content to teach Arabic language and various educational concepts to young children. The platform incorporates songs, animated stories, and interactive content designed for children under the age of six.

SUPPLY OF ECCD SERVICES

Box 1: Efforts to enhance supply and quality of formal childcare

- **Flagship programs:** The Reaya Program, implemented by Jordan's Social Security Corporation (SSC), is a childcare assistance initiative designed to support working mothers. Launched in October 2020, the program provides financial aid to female SSC subscribers earning less than JD1,000 per month. Eligible beneficiaries receive monthly assistance ranging from JD25 to JD60 for up to six months, which can be used to cover daycare expenses or support home-based childcare. This initiative aims to alleviate childcare costs, thereby encouraging women's continued participation in the workforce. In addition, the Reaya program supports the operational costs of private sector center-based nurseries (up to JD 10,000 per year). By July 2023, a total of 15,208 mothers and 317 nurseries had benefited from this program.[9]
- **Training and Qualifications:**
 - To elevate the qualifications of childcare providers, The Vocational Training Corporation (VTC), in partnership with NCFA, worked on institutionalizing the Early Childhood Care and Development training at the VTC. This is a 6-month program which covers childcare technical skills, working with children with disabilities, basic financial literacy, business management and labor law education. It also provides a practicum placement through partnerships with a wide range of private and institutional nurseries.[10]
 - More recently, NCFA, in collaboration with the International Rescue Committee, completed the "Question Bank" for childcare licensing exams under the Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission (TVSDC). This milestone is part of the outcomes of the "Early Childhood Development - Ahlan Simsim Program," which aims to establish a quality system for nurseries, equip training halls and nursery laboratories, and develop professional standards for the childcare profession.
 - Sadaqa, a civil society organization in Jordan, also provides training that targets both managers and caregivers from various governorates and from various models of daycares. The program aims to upgrade knowledge and skills in daycare management and childhood development, reinforcing knowledge in up-to-date childcare support and working holistically on enhancing skills across the sector. The training program also includes labor rights awareness sessions as well as first aid training.
 - Recent efforts have been made by MOSD to professionalize the sector. The qualifications for obtaining a license have been adjusted to include individuals with an education level as low as the tenth grade, ensuring accessibility while maintaining a standard of professionalism. To further enhance the quality of care, a structured 100-hour training program is being developed to replace the previous 600–700-hour vocational training, which was considered too time-consuming. Conducted under the supervision of MOSD, potentially in collaboration with the Skills Authority, and with a licensing platform set to launch soon, these measures aim to standardize caregiving practices, elevate the status of caregivers, and improve the overall quality of early childhood services in Jordan.

[9] World Bank Group (2024), *Formal Childcare in Jordan: Limited Services and Unmet Demand*.

[10] Conducted as part of the WE LEAD project, a 7-year project covering the years 2017-2024, designed and implemented by World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and Canadian Leaders in International Consulting Inc. (CLIC) in collaboration with key Jordanian partners and is funded by Global Affairs Canada.

SUPPLY OF ECCD SERVICES

Box 1: Efforts to enhance supply and quality of formal childcare

- **Expanding supply of home-based nurseries:** The expansion of home-based nurseries is being pursued as an effective solution for increasing childcare availability, particularly in areas where formal childcare services are limited. NCFA is leading efforts in this domain. As part of the WE LEAD project, NCFA worked on equipping and establishing 20 home-based nurseries (17 of whom were VTC graduates of the ECCD program). The endline evaluation of the project highlighted the profound positive impacts of supporting such businesses. The availability of affordable and quality childcare options was found to have a positive domino effect on other women. Additionally women who started home-based nurseries served as role models for other women in their communities. They were able to make independent decisions, pursue their passions and overcome societal barriers.[11]
- **Improving quality standards of nurseries:** Efforts to improve the quality of private nurseries are reinforced through multi-stakeholder collaboration. The Quality Assurance System developed by the NCFA and IRC, the “Accreditation Quality Management System,” and the “Standard Operating Procedures Manual for Quality Management” developed by SADAQA are the first attempt at monitoring the quality of daycares in Jordan. Their importance lies in providing a model for the standards that must be met in daycares for children from birth to five years of age. These efforts aim to improve the level of services provided to children in daycares.[12]
- **Expanding workplace nurseries:** several stakeholders in the private and public sectors are also working on expanding institutional nurseries. One example of such efforts is work conducted under the Decent Work for Women (DW4W) Programme of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The programme collaborates extensively with the Ministry of Labour (MoL) among other national stakeholders to tackle gender and decent work challenges, particularly among women and vulnerable groups. The Programme has played a crucial role in the rehabilitation of three nurseries at Social Development Centers under the MoSD and the MoL’s nursery. The technical support provided extended beyond financial aid, including capacity-building initiatives for caregivers and nursery managers. This strategy was designed to establish model government-run childcare facilities, specifically tailored to the unique requirements of individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, the ILO collaborated with the MoL to revitalize its daycare center, originally established in the 1970s. This partnership sought to redefine the standards of government-operated childcare services in Jordan, with the ILO’s financial support facilitating essential renovations. [13]
- **Research and Data:** Research and data collection are critical to informing policy and service improvements in the childcare sector. QRF and the Mashreq Gender Facility have conducted instrumental research on ECCD sector, providing insights into the needs of families and the impact of childcare on women’s employment. Several stakeholders also conduct research on the care economy, the childcare sector, and ECCE in Jordan including civil society organizations and research consulting firms.

[11] WE LEAD Endline Evaluation conducted by Sama Consulting in 2023-2024. Unpublished.

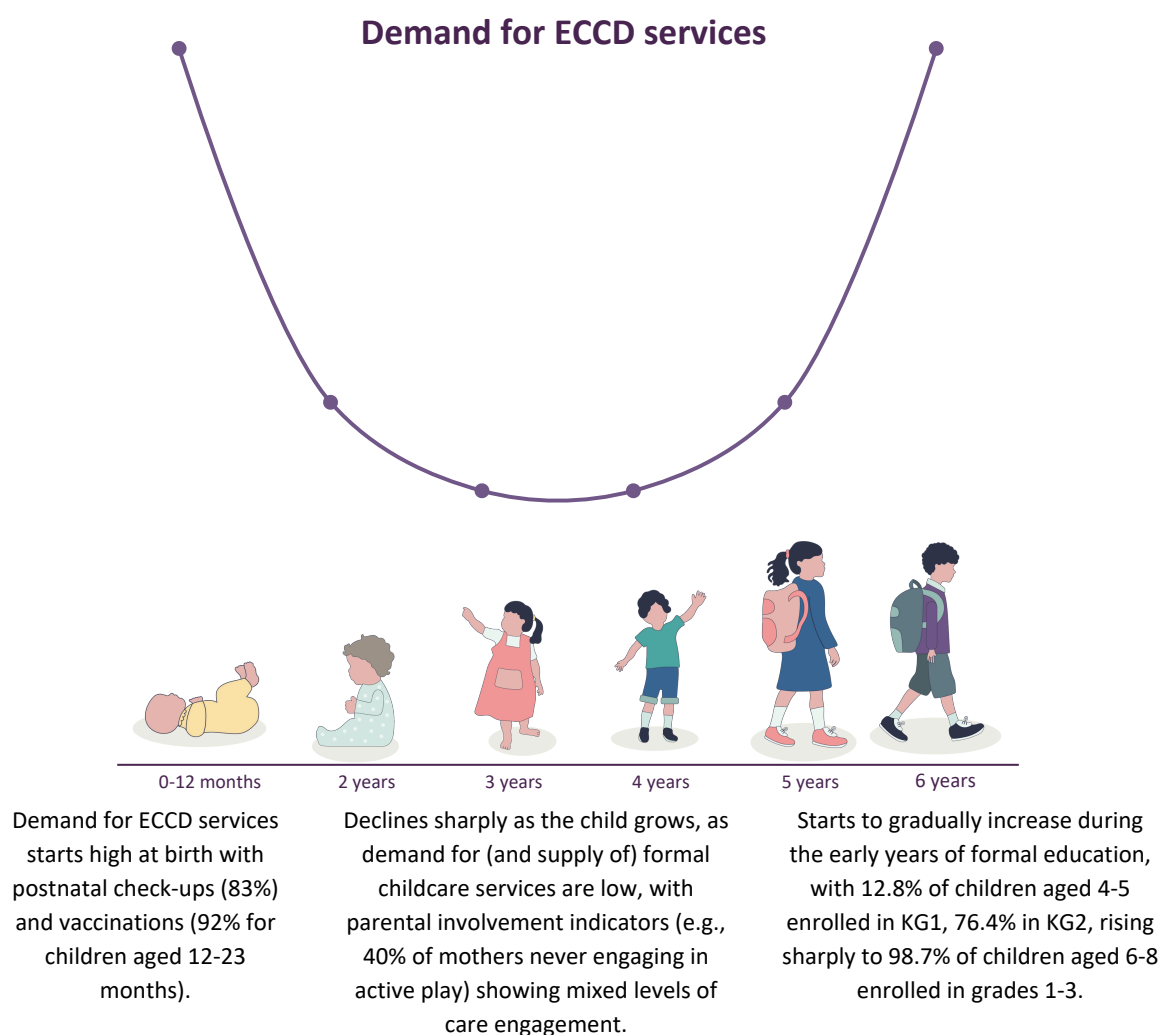
[12] The National Framework for Daycares (2024-2026). Draft. ; IRC, (2024), [The IRC and NCFA launch nationwide initiative to enhance children’s access to quality nurseries in Jordan.](#)

[13] ILO (2023), Decent Work for Women Program in Jordan 2022-2023. [Biannual report.](#)

DEMAND FOR ECCD SERVICES

Data suggest a high demand for maternal and child health services, as indicated by rates of antenatal and postnatal care, and immunization of children under the age of 2. Over the years, the government has invested in primary healthcare centers, maternal and child clinics, and dental clinics, contributing to improved healthcare access. Jordan's Ministry of Health, along with Royal Medical Services, university hospitals, and private sector facilities, provides a wide network of healthcare services across the country. NGOs and international agencies, such as UNRWA and UNHCR, provide healthcare services to refugees and underserved populations, enhancing access for non-Jordanians and low-income groups.

After the initial health check-ups, immunizations, and basic health screenings, the demand for ECCD services in other areas, such as formal childcare, developmental, and educational services, begins to decline. This reduction is driven by several factors, including limited awareness of the long-term benefits of these services, financial constraints, and potentially low availability or accessibility of quality programs in these domains.



DEMAND FOR ECCD SERVICES

Factors Impacting Demand

Looking specifically at formal childcare services, several factors hinder the accessibility to ECCD services in Jordan. These include deeply ingrained cultural and gender norms that assign women the primary responsibility for childcare, limiting the perceived need for formal services, economic barriers, such as the high cost of services and transportation, the shortage of ECCD services, especially in rural areas, and concerns over the quality of available programs. Together, these factors create substantial challenges in meeting the growing demand for reliable and affordable ECCD services across the country.

Cultural and gender norms

Cultural and gender norms heavily influence the demand for ECCD services in Jordan. Traditional gender roles often assign women the primary responsibility for child-rearing, limiting the perceived need for formal ECCD services.[14] Research shows that mothers spend twice as much time as fathers on direct care (looking after dependents). Childcare was found to account for the bulk of their care responsibilities (accounting for 80% of time spent on care work). On average, mothers in Jordan spend around 3 hours per day more than fathers in taking care of children.[15]

Qualitative research conducted by Sama with 158 community members through 17 FGDs conducted Amman, Zarqa, Irbid, Ajloun, Madaba, Karak and Maan offers the following insights:[16]

Children
aged 0-2

For children aged 0-2, the general consensus among both men and women, particularly in urban areas, is that mothers should be the primary caregivers. In rural areas, while mothers are also seen as the ideal caregivers, relatives like grandmothers and aunts are considered acceptable alternatives when the mother is employed. Among Syrian refugees, despite some free childcare services being available, there is still a strong preference for children aged 0-2 to stay at home with their parents.

Children
aged 2-5

When it comes to children aged 2-5, views are more diverse. In urban areas, women often prefer diverse care arrangements, including nurseries, relatives, or personal care, valuing nurseries for the social and developmental benefits they offer to children, particularly those with working mothers. However, economic constraints limit access for many, such as refugee women, and some still view maternal care as the best option. Rural opinions are split, with some women open to using nurseries, while others prefer family-based care. Generally, men believe that nurseries are suitable only if mothers are working.

CwD
aged 0-5

Women with children with disabilities (CwD) prefer to personally care for their children aged 0-5 and are open to utilizing specialized centers for CwD, but they are hesitant to leave their children with relatives. They view maternal care as the best option but recognize the benefits of specialized centers in fostering independence and social development among CwD. Concerns about relatives' ability to manage specific disabilities discourage their use as caregivers.

[14] UN Women (2020), [The Role of the Care Economy in Promoting Gender Equality](#).

[15] World Bank Group (2023), [Who Cares? Care work and women's labor market outcomes in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon](#).

[16] Sama Consulting (2024), [Early Childhood Care in Jordan: Community Perceptions and Practices](#)

DEMAND FOR ECCD SERVICES

Affordability

Economic factors influence the accessibility to ECCD services. Higher-income families are more likely to afford private ECCD services, while lower-income families rely on limited public provisions or do without formal services altogether. Increasing female labor force participation has driven demand for reliable childcare, yet economic barriers, such as yet high costs and limited availability of affordable ECCD services, pose significant challenges.[17]

The cost of daycare services in Jordan varies widely. According to the Mashreq Gender Facility, center-based nurseries typically charge about JD 85 per month, which is 2.5 times the cost of workplace-based providers and 3.5 times more than public school nurseries. In contrast, home-based facilities offer more variable rates, averaging around JD 30 per month.[18]

Qualitative research conducted by Sama found significant imbalances in family power dynamics, with employed mothers often bearing a disproportionate responsibility for childcare and related expenses. While decisions about using nurseries are typically made jointly by parents, fathers in urban areas such as Amman, Madaba, and Zarqa frequently make the final financial decisions, often viewing nurseries as unnecessary. A mother's role in decision-making is largely influenced by her employment status and the availability of alternative childcare options. Financially, the burden of nursery fees usually falls on working mothers, although fathers may help based on their financial capacity and willingness. In some regions, fathers cover childcare costs or require mothers to quit their jobs if their income does not suffice, whereas in other areas, expenses are shared depending on the couple's financial situation and employment status. [19]

The prevailing norm is for the mother to take on the bulk of the childcare responsibilities, in terms of making the decision, or persuading the father to agree, looking for the suitable nursery, and making the financial contribution if she was working.

[17] Jordan Times (2022), [“Study highlights correlation between childcare services and women’s workforce participation”](#)

[18] World Bank Group (2024), [Formal Childcare in Jordan: Limited Services and Unmet Demand](#).

[19] Sama Consulting (2024), [Early Childhood Care in Jordan: Community Perceptions and Practices](#)

DEMAND FOR ECCD SERVICES

Quality

Inadequate supply of quality ECCD services, particularly in rural areas, leaves many children without access to essential early childhood care and development.[20] This shortfall in supply is compounded by concerns about service quality, which often deter parents from enrolling their children. Many parents opt for informal care arrangements, such as family-based care, due to trust and familiarity.[21] Studies, including one by SADAQA, point to inconsistent standards and a lack of regulation as major barriers, making it challenging for families to find reliable and high-quality ECCD services.[22]

The Mashreq Gender Facility Study reveals notable variations in infrastructure, caregiver qualifications, and service quality across different types of nurseries.[23]

Spaces Center-based nurseries generally provide more indoor and outdoor space per child compared to public school facilities, although public school nurseries still meet minimum requirements due to less rigid licensing regulations. Public school nurseries typically repurpose existing school spaces, which contributes to these differences.	Caregiver qualifications Caregiver qualifications also vary widely. While caregivers in public school nurseries often have a high school education paired with extensive experience, those in private and workplace-based nurseries tend to hold university degrees. Despite these differences, parents who participated in this study emphasized that skills like passion for working with children, effective communication, and the ability to respond to children's behavior were more valued than formal qualifications.	Wages and job security Quality indicators, such as wages and job security, further highlight disparities. Caregivers in public school nurseries typically earn the minimum wage of JD 260, work under temporary contracts, and lack social security coverage. In contrast, staff in private and workplace-based nurseries enjoy better wages, permanent contracts, and higher rates of social security coverage, particularly in Amman.
Learning opportunities When it comes to learning and developmental opportunities, center-based and workplace-based nurseries outperform public school facilities. The majority of these nurseries (covered in the study) offer structured learning curriculums (80% and 67%, respectively), while only 9% of public-school nurseries provide similar programs. Provisions for children with special needs are also more prevalent in private and workplace-based nurseries, although public schools lead in engaging parents through involvement initiatives. Parental preferences reflect a strong emphasis on the developmental aspects of childcare. Families highlighted the importance of programs that build life skills, such as communication and interpersonal abilities, alongside regular updates on their child's progress. While some parents prefer private nurseries for their perceived credibility, others value the diverse activities offered by home-based nurseries. Across the board, parents expressed a desire for modern child development techniques but noted that current nursery fees are higher than what they are willing to pay.		

[20] World Bank Group (2023), Who Cares? Care work and women's labor market outcomes in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon.

[21] SADAQA (2021), Daycares in Jordan in Relation to Women's Economic Participation.

[22] SADAQA (2023), National Framework of Daycares 2024-2026

[23] World Bank Group (2024), Formal Childcare in Jordan: Limited Services and Unmet Demand.

ECCD BEST PRACTICES

This section explores global best practices across four critical components of ECD policies:

- Parental leave and benefits
- Subsidies for childcare and childcare services
- ECCD for children with disabilities and marginalized communities
- Public-private partnerships for ECD

Parental leave and benefits

- **Global Standards:** The ILO sets global standards for parental leave through its conventions and recommendations. The Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), stipulates a minimum of 14 weeks of maternity leave, while the accompanying Recommendation No. 191 suggests extending this to at least 18 weeks.
- **Impact on ECCD:** Research indicates that parental leave policies have significant potential to foster children's development and enhancing national well-being. Paid parental leave contributes to improved maternal and child health outcomes, including reduced infant mortality rates and increased breastfeeding duration, and improved development outcomes.[i] Additionally, countries with comprehensive parental leave policies often experience higher female workforce participation and greater gender equality, positively impacting economic growth.

Sweden

- **What:** Parents can choose between a longer leave (59 weeks at 80% salary) or a shorter leave (49 weeks at 100% salary) which need to be taken over a period of 3 years. Of this, 15 weeks are reserved for fathers (father quota) and 15 for mothers, with the remainder being shared. Adoptive parents eligible.
- **Why:** To allow families flexibility in balancing caregiving and financial needs, while promoting gender equality and parental involvement in early childhood care.
- **Funding:** Funded by the national social insurance system through employer contributions and taxes.

Finland

- **What:** All new parents receive a free “baby box” containing clothes, bedding, diapers, toys, and essentials for newborns. Alternatively, they can opt for a €170 cash grant. The baby box can be used as a crib, and its contents meet babies’ basic needs for their first months.
- **Why:** To promote child health, reduce infant mortality, and ensure all families, regardless of income, have access to essential supplies for newborns.
- **Funding:** Covered by the Finnish Social Security System.

ECCD BEST PRACTICES

Subsidies for childcare

- **Global Standards:** The Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), and its accompanying Recommendation No. 165, advocate for policies that support workers with family responsibilities, including the provision of childcare facilities.
- **Impact on ECCD:** Research indicates that high quality early childhood education enhances cognitive and social skills, leading to better academic performance and improved health outcomes. Moreover, affordable childcare enables parents, particularly mothers, to participate in the workforce, thereby boosting household incomes and contributing to economic growth.

Norway

- **What:** Kindergarten fees are capped at \$272 per month per child, with reductions or waivers for low-income families (they are eligible to receive 20 hours/week of free childcare).
- **Why:** To ensure equitable access to affordable childcare services, reduce financial stress on families, and promote early childhood education.
- **Funding:** Funded by national and municipal budgets, with parental fees covering part of the costs.

Denmark

- **What:** Municipalities provide universal daycare for children aged 26 weeks to 6 years, including nurseries and kindergartens. Municipalities pay a minimum of 75% of costs while the parents pay the residual childcare costs. Low-income earners can apply for additional financial support from the municipality to reduce their costs and, in some cases, even have the municipality covering 100 percent of the childcare costs.
- **Why:** To ensure equal access to early education, support parental employment, and reduce inequality in child development opportunities.
- **Funding:** Funded by municipal taxes, with capped parental fees covering up to 25% of operational costs.

ECCD BEST PRACTICES

Policies supporting inclusion

- **Global Standards:** ILO's "Policy Guidelines on the Promotion of Decent Work for Early Childhood Education Personnel" advocate for the inclusion of children with disabilities in early education settings and emphasize the need for adequately trained staff to support diverse learning needs. These guidelines align with the broader international framework established by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- **Impact on ECCD:** Research indicates that children with disabilities who participate in inclusive ECD programs exhibit improved cognitive, social, and emotional skills, leading to better educational attainment and increased economic participation in adulthood. Inclusive early childhood development initiatives not only enhance individual developmental outcomes but also contribute to societal progress reducing disparities and promoting social cohesion.

Australia

- **What:** This initiative offers early detection, developmental assessments, and support services for children aged 0–6 with disabilities. It includes access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) grants, helping families secure tailored support plans for their child's needs. Local organizations act as intervention partners for direct services.
- **Why:** To ensure children with disabilities can access early intervention services, promoting developmental outcomes and preparing them for school readiness.
- **Funding:** Primarily through federal taxation, with contributions from state and territory governments. Eligibility is based on the child's age and the presence of a developmental delay or disability. Services are provided at no cost to eligible families.

India

- **What:** A national health program focusing on early identification and intervention for 4Ds: defects at birth, deficiencies, diseases, and developmental delays, including disabilities. All children aged 0–18 are eligible, with services provided free of charge.
- **Why:** To reduce the prevalence of childhood disabilities and provide timely interventions.
- **Funding:** Central government funding, with contributions from state governments.

ECCD BEST PRACTICES

Public-private partnerships (PPPs)

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) offer a powerful mechanism for expanding access to quality ECD services, particularly in contexts where public resources alone are insufficient to meet demand. By leveraging the resources, expertise, and innovation of the private sector, PPPs can enhance the reach, efficiency, and quality of ECD programs. Common models or areas for PPP in ECD include:

- Infrastructure development
- Service provision
- Voucher systems
- Operations
- Management support

Kazakhstan

- **What:** Kazakhstan's PPP initiative includes removing licensing barriers for private preschools, introducing per-capita funding for both public and private institutions, and enabling private kindergartens to accept children under state contracts. Parents are responsible for food costs and optional services, while education is subsidized by the government.
- **Why:** To address preschool facility shortages, increase enrollment rates for children aged 3–6, and promote competition and diversity in early childhood education.
- **Private partners:** Private preschool operators and kindergarten owners.
- **Public partners:** Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Science and regional governments.
- **How the partnership works:** The government provides per-capita funding for both public and private preschool institutions. Private partners operate kindergartens, adhering to state quality standards and accepting children referred through government contracts. Parents co-finance costs by paying for meals and optional services. Equal per-capita funding for public and private institutions ensures a level playing field.
- **Funded by:** Public funding allocated through regional budgets, supplemented by private sector investments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Centralized and Unified Governance for ECCD

- **Establish a Unified ECCD Council:** Create a dedicated governing body to oversee ECCD services, ensuring streamlined coordination, policy coherence, and efficient resource allocation. This council should involve all key stakeholders, including government entities, civil society, and private sector partners.
- **Integrated Policy Framework:** Develop a comprehensive ECCD policy that integrates health, education, child development and social protection services.

Professionalization and Capacity Building

- **ECCD Workforce Accreditation:** To ensure a cohesive and high-quality ECCD workforce accreditation system, Jordan should build on the existing efforts of the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) while integrating contributions from the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD), private sector, and professional organizations. A unified accreditation framework, anchored in VTC's expertise, can standardize training requirements, certify programs, and maintain curriculum alignment with global ECCD best practices. Leveraging private sector innovation and professional expertise will ensure training remains up-to-date and addresses advanced topics like inclusivity and digital tools. Establishing a tiered certification system linked to career pathways will promote continuous professional development and reward ECCD practitioners with opportunities for advancement. By fostering collaboration across stakeholders and introducing mechanisms for periodic review and monitoring, this system can create a future-ready ECCD workforce that is resource-efficient, inclusive, and aligned with Jordan's national development goals.

Inclusive and Equitable Service Expansion

- **Target Marginalized and Underserved Groups:** Introduce mobile and flexible care units to extend services to remote areas.
- **Leverage Public-Private Mechanisms:** : Collaborate with private entities for funding and operational support to leverage their resources, expertise, and innovative approaches in expanding and enhancing Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) services. By adopting proven models such as Kazakhstan's Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in preschool education and Hong Kong's voucher system, Jordan can address challenges related to funding gaps, service accessibility, and quality improvements in ECCD.
- **Incentivize Private Sector Investment:** Offer tax incentives and grants for businesses investing in ECCD infrastructure, such as constructing childcare centers or supporting workplace childcare facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Innovate Funding Mechanisms

- **Create an ECCD Trust Fund:** Create an ECCD Trust Fund: Establish a trust fund to pool resources from government allocations, international donors, and private investors. This fund would ensure long-term financial sustainability and provide targeted support for underserved areas and vulnerable populations, enabling equitable access to ECCD services across the country.
- **Introduce Incentive Models:** Offer tax breaks, grants, and CSR incentives to companies investing in ECCD infrastructure and workplace childcare. This strategy encourages businesses to support ECCD while addressing workforce needs, particularly for working parents.
- **Leverage Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Collaborate with private entities to provide funding and operational support, drawing inspiration from Kazakhstan's PPPs in preschool education, which involve per-capita funding and streamlined licensing for private preschools. These approaches encourage private sector participation while maintaining quality standards and affordability for families.

Digital Transformation of ECCD

- **Expand Digital Learning Tools:** Utilize platforms like Iqra' bil Arabiya and Adam Wa Mishmish to promote remote learning and engage parents in their child's early education. These tools can integrate multimedia content and interactive lessons tailored for young learners.
- **Enhance Parental Education through Technology:** Develop mobile-based parenting initiatives, to provide parents with accessible guidance on nurturing care, nutrition, and child development.
- **Introduce AI-Enabled Tracking:** Build a national AI-powered system for real-time tracking of ECCD indicators, enabling data-driven decision-making, timely interventions, and improved service quality.

Foster Parental and Community Engagement

- **Empower Families through Education:** Introduce a program inspired by Finland's baby box, tailored for Jordan, which includes essential educational materials, books from local publishers, and parenting guides. This "Family Learning Box" can support early literacy and promote family involvement in a child's learning journey.
- **Promote Community-Based Models:** Encourage community-driven childcare solutions, where families and local organizations collaboratively establish and manage home-based childcare facilities..
- **Capitalize on Jordan's Publishing Industry:** Leverage the country's strong publishing sector to produce culturally relevant children's books and parenting resources. Distribute these through the "Family Learning Box," public libraries, and digital platforms.