ANNUAL REPORT 2016
MIDDLE EAST CHILDREN’S INSTITUTE (MECI) – JORDAN OFFICE
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2016: Enforcing Quality

I closed 2015 thinking what an honor and challenge 2016 was going to be. I had just received the news that the good work of our Institute in Jordan granted us the opportunity to upscale from 9 to 23 schools in the Kingdom.

I promised myself that this development would not be achieved at the expense of the quality of our work, but rather, would be the proof that our model is effective and impactful. And so we embarked on this great adventure, and now a year later, I can say that we made it, and we made it good.

MECI Jordan expanded to 2 more governorates, effectively reaching over 3,500 students, and thousands more family and community members. To do so, we had to target areas of great vulnerability, those infamous “poverty pockets” present in the Kingdom. A study conducted by UNICEF in late 2016 produced a multidimensional child vulnerability index which validated our school sites as being located exactly where pressing needs exist.

From there, MECI planted the seeds of its educational and psychosocial support program, and blossomed into an impactful model of opportunities and success. We maintained our panel of activities designed to address the needs of refugee and vulnerable children aged 6–14, enhanced our work benefitting students’ families and broader community members, all while increasing our standards of activities implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

We added new components to our work through extended capacity-building sessions for our devoted frontline workers in the field, more community awareness sessions for families to engage in their children’s learning and development, and social cohesion activities to promote peace, acceptance and understanding.

We also experimented throughout the year as opportunities presented themselves in the field of Play Therapy and Music. These have been learning curves and I look forward to continue on this path of growth.

All of this was made possible through the work of my trusted team. So many team members joined us this year to ensure our expansion would be a success. They are our Education Field Officers, our Education, Child Protection and Psychosocial Support Specialists, Life Skills Trainers, Data Entry and Monitors, and Drivers. They wholeheartedly poured their experience and expertise into the Institute and likewise grew by our side, sharing standards of transparency, quality and human values. I also have to especially thank my Assistant and my Programs Manager for their devotion and never ending capacity to lead, work and innovate.

My deepest gratitude naturally goes to our supporters and donors, private and institutional: those who carried on with MECI Jordan and renewed their support throughout 2016, UNICEF – our main donor since 2014, Polish Aid and the Polish Embassy in Amman, The Syria Fund, Katie’s Readers, and all those who joined our work and mission this year, including the République et Canton de Genève, the Austrian Government and the Malala Fund with whom it has been a privilege to work with.

Thank you also to our founder, L.N. Grace, our headquarters and supporting office in Switzerland and the US.

My appreciation also goes out to the Government of Jordan, and the Ministry of Education, for their sustained efforts to address the Syrian Refugee and Education Crisis in a way that has earned the admiration of the International Community.

Here is to a new year of growth and quality, 2017, we are ready.
Increasing Access & Quality: Changing Winds, Evolving Needs

“There are many problems, but I think there is a solution to all these problems; it’s just one, and it is education” – Malala Yousafzai

Following the Conference for Syria and the Region held in London early 2016, the Ministry of Education stated the necessity to accelerate access to quality formal education for Syrian refugee children.

Since 2011, Informal education (IFE) had indeed been the favored way to temporarily remedy to Jordan’s lack of capacity to accommodate all Syrian refugees without impacting the education system any further. As a result, hundreds of IFE programs were implemented across the Kingdom, and thousands of out-of-school children were given access to academic and psychosocial programs that all vary in content, curriculum and methodology used, instructional time, and as a matter of fact, reliability.

As the government pushes education for Syrians to the very top of its priorities, MECI witnesses the need to adapt the current educational response of hundreds of local and international organizations in order to support this move.

It is MECI’s belief that the educational needs of Syrian refugee children will not cease after they are given a seat in school. Rather, these students will require additional remedial and sustained academic and psychosocial support to catch-up on their missed years of education, along with keeping-up with their Jordanian counterparts in Formal Schools.

If not done properly and without placing each child’s best interest at the heart of our educational response, consequences on the development of Syrian refugee children will be tremendous, cultivating a generation of impaired learners, and further impacting the Jordanian educational system and performance rates.
MECI JORDAN: 2016 GROWTH & ACHIEVEMENTS

MECI – the Middle East Children’s Institute has been providing remedial and informal education to conflict-affected children for 9 years starting in the West Bank in 2007. In 2014, our newly established Regional Office developed an informal education program.

In order to address the needs of both developing Jordanian and trauma-exposed Syrian children, MECI’s model in Jordan is one of multi-integrated services beyond the sole education sector. Acknowledging the academic struggles of a trauma-exposed generation that was pulled out of school for sometimes more than 3 years, MECI Jordan developed an effective program providing education, psychosocial support as well as child protection and broader referral services, targeting children aged 6–14, as well as broader youth and community of parents.

Recognized for its leading expertise in providing education to vulnerable children, MECI engaged in fruitful partnerships with renowned international donors and UN agencies like UNICEF, UNESCO, and in 2016 the Malala Fund.

This year, MECI expanded exponentially, closing 2015 with 9 schools, and growing to 23 schools in 2016. Up to date, over 7,000 children were reached through academic and psychosocial programs.

“The quality of our programmes combined to the renewed trust from our partners helped us expand dramatically in 2016, while maintaining high achievement standards.”

– Lina Farouqi, Regional Director
**Meci: Middle East Children’s Institute**

**2016 Achievements**

- **95%** of teachers performing above standard quality of teaching
- **88%** of teachers reportedly improved through specialists’ observations and capacity building sessions
- 169 frontline staff members trained on education, child protection, psychosocial support, and life skills
- **100%** felt they benefited from the comprehensive 5-day training
- **99%** of students demonstrating progress on specific learning outcomes
- 94% of illiterate students demonstrated academic progress
- **95%** of students progressed in English
- **85%** of students progressed in Math
- **Over 8,500** individuals reached through 30 awareness sessions and ongoing campaigns promoting education and healthy lifestyle
- Over **3,500** students 6-14 provided with academic and psychosocial opportunities and 23 field trips, among whom **65%** refugees
- **23** centres established within public schools across 4 governorates
- Social cohesion events gathered over **600** participants across **20** communities
- **3** youth-led community engagement projects
- **210** Syrian and Jordanian youth reached through life skills training opportunities. Among these, **98%** demonstrated skills improvement

**SUCCESS!**
MECI JORDAN IN THE FIELD

In 2016 MECI Jordan reached more individuals than it had over the 2 previous years. This was done through the daily work of dedicated and trained frontline workers.

Capitalizing on Multiple Backgrounds & Experiences

At the end of 2016, MECI Jordan was employing 192 field-based workers, 85% of whom were women. They are our Schools’ Principals, teachers, outreach counselors, social workers and janitors.

Starting its work in Northern and Central Jordan, MECI became the first international organization to be granted access to public schools in order to implement education programs after morning shifts hours.

MECI continued to cooperate closely with the Ministry of Education by hiring accredited and experienced teachers for all subjects taught by the Institute; Arabic, English, math, Arts & Life Skills, and Physical Education.

Principals and teachers are recruited upon recommendation from the various Directorates of Education MECI works with, and through interviews assessing their knowledge, attitude and values.

Throughout program cycles, MECI’s team of Education, Psychosocial & Child Protection Specialists closely monitors teachers’ performances through regular class observations in order to gather quantitative and qualitative data and feedback regarding planning, classroom management, and teaching skills. As a result, 95% of all recruited teachers demonstrated performance above standard quality of teaching, and 88% had improved thanks to capacity-building recommendations shared during observations.

“In the end, I’m a father, and I want every child to have their right to education. We want to help build their future and be the ladder that paves the way for children so that they can contribute to their society.”

- Ra’fat Al Masalmeh, MECI Syrian Outreach Counselor

In order to reach the most vulnerable in the targeted communities, MECI employs Syrian Outreach Counselors to identify children in need of the interventions offered by the Institute. They are recruited for their strong inter-personal and leadership skills and rapidly become a main point of contact for families to discuss their children’s involvement at schools.
The Outreach Counselors are valuable advocates on the importance of education for children. They follow up on students’ attendance and encourage them throughout program cycles to give the best of themselves.

In 2016 and in partnership with UNICEF and other educational agencies, our team of counselors was instrumental in ensuring that Syrian refugee children were aware of opportunities to enroll in formal education.

Outreach Counselors also ensure the engagement of families and other surrounding community members by inviting them to attend various activities from awareness sessions to social cohesion events.

Offering Comprehensive Training and Capacity Building Opportunities

In each program cycle, MECI’s frontline workers are invited to attend a 5–days comprehensive and multidisciplinary training, gathering several schools’ principals, teachers in academic and psychosocial support subjects, outreach counselors, and social workers.

It is an opportunity for schools’ staff to meet and exchange on expectations and experiences, training sessions are very important in sowing the seeds for positive teamwork.

Trainees receive sessions introducing MECI in Jordan, its mission and values in implementing programs, and activities to be included in each program cycle.

Principals, Academic and Psychosocial Support Teachers receive several training sessions on MECI’s curriculum in each subject, learning outcomes to be reached each cycle, and teaching techniques to be used to ensure information is retained by all children and academic success unfolds.

Child–protection related topics are also covered to guarantee all program staff abide by international standards of child protection. Needs–based sessions are also organized to cover more specific needs, drawn from each participant’s own challenges.

In 2016, MECI incorporated its knowledge of trauma exposure and its effect on children’s ability to succeed academically. As professionals supporting the education process, all field staff members were trained to understand the particular context and situation Syrian students come from and evolve in, and given practical tools to identify and manage learning and behavioral disabilities resulting from trauma.

- 100% of participants reported positively on their knowledge of MECI’s program and their ability to implement
- 99% of assessed participants felt the training increased and developed their instructional knowledge and skills including their ability to deal with children affected by trauma
- 99% felt enabled to identify, deal and provide adequate services to children in need of protection
- 100% felt the 5–days training was useful to their work.
“At the beginning, teaching at MECI was just a job for our teachers. Now it has grown into a passion as they progressed and mastered active learning strategies that enable them to enjoy teaching, and their students to love learning!”

- MECI Education Specialist

**Ensuring Quality Performance of Educators**

Throughout program activities, MECI’s team of specialists provides on-site support and capacity-building observations. This ensures that educational and psychosocial activities are delivered according to the methodology of participatory learning that MECI advocates for, while following up on teachers’ progress through the curriculum and addressing challenges.

In 2016, MECI designed new observation tools in order to gather quantitative and qualitative data on teachers’ performances regarding planning, classroom management, and teaching skills. As a result of this close monitoring and capacity-building strategy, 88% of teachers reportedly improved through their work at MECI, and 95% demonstrated a quality of teaching above standards.

Most improved skills pertained to lessons planning and the setting of clear learning outcomes, the maintenance of proper discipline, and the consideration of students’ individual differences and needs.

“We all have to stand up to defend each child’s right to go to school and learn. Because of trauma caused by war, early marriage, difficult economic situation leading to child labor, some children are facing pressure to drop out of school. But it is our role to help them pursue their education and build their future.

Therefore, I would like to thank Dr. Lina Farouqi, Regional Director of MECI, that initiated the Girls’ Club, a training course for girls of the local community who dropped out of school. The course includes the development of skills in several fields: informatics, communication, cooking, painting and other life skills that are essential for our lives.

We can clearly see the impact of the Girls’ Club on the students, who are showing improvement in their behavior and their way to deal with others. They have developed their self-confidence, their ability to take decisions and they have extended their range of knowledge. They are now real actors among their communities.

Work and knowledge light up our lives and elevate ourselves to advanced stages of technology and progress.

Finally, I would like to thank again the Malala Fund and MECI that gave us this wonderful opportunity to do this Girls’ Club in our school.

Thank you.”

- Suheir Balawneh, Noor Al Hussein School’s principal, Irbid.
Since 2014, MECI has grown as an Institute amidst the Syrian Education Crisis, witnessing its evolution and effects on a generation of challenged learners, and taking clear action throughout program implementation.

**Becoming a Leader in Education: Building on Lessons Learned**

Since establishment in Jordan, MECI has always sought to be recognized for the quality of the education provided to its students.

MECI Jordan developed its own context-adapted curriculum in 4 levels (Arabic, math and English) covering 8 grades (1-8). Learning outcomes of these levels were aligned on the requirements set by the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom. The MECI curriculum takes into consideration the limited instructional time available to teach these students while ensuring foundational skills are mastered. Over the years, the teachers involved in MECI’s program along with various observers from the Ministry have acknowledged the value of this curriculum based on engaging teaching and learning strategies.

Out of school for sometimes up to 4 years, Syrian refugee students are often marginalized within their host communities and suffer a great deal in regular classroom environments that are frequently unfit to deal with their various degrees of impairments. One of the root causes of this phenomenon is found among missioned teachers themselves who lack the preparation and experience to manage challenging school and classroom environments and often misinterpret refugee students’ learning difficulties with a lack of interest in education.

"Beyond providing students with solid academic knowledge, the overall aim of our program is to enable all children, regardless of their background, to become better learners, and overcome academic and behavioral impairments."

After witnessing the academic and behavioral struggles of the majority of Syrian students, in 2016 MECI Jordan engaged in researching the potential impact of trauma exposure onto a child’s brain and ability to learn and behave appropriately. Lessons learned from the conducted research were integrated into newly designed academic tools and training materials.

MECI Jordan is now spreading the message that beyond providing its students with solid academic knowledge, the overall aim of our program is to enable all children, regardless of their background,
to become better learners, and overcome academic and behavioral impairments at an early stage. Combined with governmental efforts to ensure every child is given a seat into formal schools, MECI’s remedial education program enhances each child’s opportunity to adapt to the school environment, and succeed.

MECI Jordan has consequently upgraded its qualitative level of monitoring and evaluation in order to further tailor its programs to students’ needs and learning pace.

This methodology of ever-improving its educational response has truly been a key factor behind MECI Jordan’s exponential growth in the last 3 years. MECI Jordan is now confident in its ability to steadily scale up its intervention and services.

Looking into Students’ Exposure to Traumatic Experiences

Modern science has shown that when a child is exposed to a traumatic event – such as the war in Syria, the brain is directly impacted and can no longer develop and function normally. Through trauma, as brain waves are physiologically modified and sometimes damaged, the multiple areas of the brain no longer operate together.

Understanding the physiological effects of adverse childhood experiences onto a child’s developing brain helps us connect cascading traumatic events endured by Syrian refugee children to later learning and behavioral impairments.

Indeed, three different aspects of thinking are affected through traumatic events; attention, memory, and communication. And these are exactly the three skills required to be a successful student and learner, as the steps of learning are: paying attention to the lesson’s content, being able to retain the information and deliver it later on.

“Attention, memory, and communication (…) are affected through traumatic events. And these are exactly the three skills required to be a successful student and learner.”

In any group of children, up to a quarter will present brain abnormalities. This doubles/triples with groups of trauma-affected children.

A note on the idea of cascading traumatic events: the war is an initial event that creates a series of events that are categorized as traumatic as well, such as loss, displacement, fear and anxiety, shelter and food insecurity, etc.

Learning, science says, is all about creating routes between all key areas of the brain. Trauma interferes with the building of these routes.

Fortunately, science also helps in identifying a remedying methodology through educational programs targeting trauma-affected children. These multiply the types of learning supports and materials available to make sure the same information goes to all different areas of the brain (visual, auditory, logical, and kinesthetic) until it finds the area able to store this information.

Through diversified and engaging teaching methods focusing on the development of executive functions, students are guided to exercise parts of the brain to progressively clear the effects of stress and trauma. The same methodology can be used for both Syrian and Jordanian children, to enable them to be successful learners and functional beings.

As the children progress through these exercises, they are developing a more resilient mental immune system that will be beneficial throughout all phases of their lives.
Demonstrating Academic Achievements

Students joining the MECI program receive pre and diagnostic exams to assess their foundational knowledge and be placed in appropriate levels and groups. This thorough placement methodology allows them to thrive throughout the program cycle. MECI conducts assessments on a regular basis to monitor students’ progress against clear learning outcomes defined by the Ministry of Education in Arabic, math and English.

These learning outcomes provide a reading grid to the teachers as well as MECI’s team of Education Specialists to identify overall trends and areas necessitating particular attention for academic improvement. They include reading, writing and grammatical skills as well as number sense, operations, patterns, and geometry at various levels.

In 2016, 88% of students who received at least two assessments demonstrated academic progress, a positive indicator of MECI’s impact on the students. Progress evidence culminated at 99% of the student population when analyzed against specific learning outcomes for each subject. Among the assessed students, 37% were illiterate/had never received an education. 94% of them demonstrated progress.

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“MECI’s remedial education program enhances each child’s opportunity to adapt to the school environment, and succeed.”

Timid, Aya has difficulties to maintain eye contact. Her voice is soft and hesitant when she starts answering the questions. But while she spoke about her school and life in the Malala-MECI program, you can see the joy shining into her vibrant brown eyes and a gentle smile on her lips.

Back in Syria, Aya has only been able to attend school until 2nd grade, she was barely able to read or write. When she arrived in Jordan with her family, she spent 4 years without having access to education. She recalls boring days as she would just stay at home, having nothing to do, no school to go or friends to play with.

The Malala-MECI programs has been a chance for Aya to go back to school, meet children from different communities and make friends again. She likes practicing sport outside with her classmates, but what she loves the most is arts. She has particularly developed remarkable painting skills. She even started painting at home and often offers her pieces to her teachers, thanking them for making her feel so relaxed, calm and confident at school.

The first thing she does once she is home after school, is to tell her day to her mother, specifically her progress in writing and reading – something she is really proud of. Aya has been so inspired by her dedicated teachers from the Malala-MECI program that she now dreams of becoming a teacher herself.

“MECI’s remedial education program enhances each child’s opportunity to adapt to the school environment, and succeed.”

"Aya Mhamat al Dajher, 11 years old, Syrian student at Al’al School, Irbid."
CARING FOR EACH CHILD AS A WHOLE

The school environment plays an important role in the social, emotional, physical, and moral wellbeing of students. Children served by MECI receive psychosocial support through various classes and extra-curricular activities.

Creating Safe & Inclusive Environments

Each child comes to school every day with different circumstances. In fact, the majority of students enrolled in the MECI program have gone through a degree of traumatic experiences, be it the war in Syria and displacement, or academic struggles.

Pursuing an goal of trauma sensitivity for the schools it operates in, MECI guarantees the proper environment for the sound social, emotional, physical, moral and ultimately academic well-being of its students. This will support children in becoming adventurous, with creative minds and positive attitudes, so they can adapt to fast changing landscapes and develop resilience.

Similarly, MECI acknowledges the importance of fostering a positive community around children. Students can reach their full potential when teachers provide a physical and emotionally safe and orderly learning environment.

Science has demonstrated that emotions distract and even paralyze the learning process. Ensuring that children evolve in a protective but nevertheless nurturing space assists them in making the connections they need to grow as healthy individuals.

Launching Music Programs across three Schools

In 2016, we incorporated music into the list of activities in some of the program’s schools in collaboration with The Syria Fund and S’Cool Sounds. This came as an opportunity to explore the correlation between musical education and the sound behavioral and academic development of children.

“Learning a musical instrument requires focus and discipline, the development of which will translate to all of children’s endeavors”

- Nina Stern, S’Cool Sounds

Music became as an effective social and connecting tool as well, promoting teamwork through harmony, and collaborative learning.

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89% of students demonstrated behavioral progress after 3 months of exposure to the program

- MECI provides art and physical education classes coupled with a simple life skills curriculum
- Music programs were introduced across three schools

Overall stress of our student population was reduced by an average of 6%

Over 3,500 students ages 6 to 14 were reached through academic and psychosocial activities

65% were refugees
25% were previously out of school
Investigating the Potential of Play Therapy

“Play therapy is a child friendly way of helping children process trauma”
- MECI Play Therapist

In the Summer of 2016, MECI Jordan was joined by a certified Play Therapist to conduct a research on the potential impact of Play Therapy sessions on trauma-exposed and affected Syrian refugee children.

Building on the fact that children’s language and communication skills are not as developed as adults’, play therapy sessions were offered as an alternative activity for children to express their feelings and address their trauma within a safe environment. During war and other types of traumatic events, children often lose control over their lives. Play therapy gives them back the control they need over circumstances, by putting the child at the center of each session, therefore enabling him to lead his own way.

Play is a natural means of expression pertaining to every child. Using crafts, arts, musical instruments, puppets and sand trays, playing becomes an enactment of control, and teaches hyperactive children how to calm down and focus.

The experiment was conducted with 20 Syrian children over the course of 10 sessions. By the end of the project, every single child had demonstrated a reduction in their stress levels, and the majority demonstrated improved resilience.

Monitoring Students’ Behavioral Progression and Well Being

Unlike traditional educational programs, 40% of MECI’s program consists of psychosocial support activities in the form of Arts, Physical Education and Life Skills. Placing an emphasis on these types of activities is greater chance for students to connect with their peers and teachers. MECI also provides its students with field trips and open days, which become social and development tools too.

Active psychosocial support opportunities support the strengthening of executive functions, and the development of healthy brain routes to enable children to be successful learners and functional beings. As the children progress through these exercises, they are developing a more resilient mental immune system that will be beneficial throughout all phases of their lives.

In only 3 months of exposure to the program, 89% of MECI’ student population recorded an improvement in behavior and wellbeing. The overall stress of these children was also reduced by 6%. While maintaining cautious measures in the ways it addresses trauma, MECI succeeds in getting children back on a healing track.

1 Results obtained on the basis of clinical pre and post assessments conducted with children and their families.
For the past two years, MECI has increased the number of opportunities it provides to adolescent and youth throughout the Kingdom. In 2016, a number of Life Skills trainings and youth-led and community engagement initiatives were held, reaching 210 youth above the age of 14.

A Safety Net for the Youth

War and crisis affect people of all age and origins. Since the onset of the Syrian conflict in 2011, thousands of Syrian and Jordanian youth have suffered the consequences of an unstable region. The emergency education response in Jordan has focused on the needs of younger children at risk of delayed access to primary education. Not enough resources were invested early on in providing the youth with opportunities to remain on a relatively stable education trajectory.

It is however evident that the lack of learning opportunities further destabilizes the lives of young refugees and vulnerable youth, making them more at risk of various forms of exploitation and negatives ideologies. In Jordan, an alarming number of child labor and early marriage cases were recorded, as negative coping mechanisms to palliate against financial hardships.

In such a context, offering life skills training opportunities becomes a chance at stability and a protection factor. Life skills have a demonstrated impact on one’s economic and education status, as well as a transformative power on behavior and social attitudes.

MECI’s Life Skills Trainings

MECI’s life skills trainings include 30 hours of activities aiming to improve participants’ self-knowledge, management and esteem, communication skills through dialogue and body language, teamwork and leadership skills. Each participant submits a pre and post self-assessment at the beginning and completion of the training. In 2016, 98% of assessed trainees demonstrated skills improvement.

Trainings are conducted by a specialized trainer...
who ensures to adapt sessions’ content to each group’s profile and need. Jordanian and Syrian youth from the age of 14 are gathered together, and eventually jointly address issues related to their experience in Jordan in light of the Syrian refugee crisis. Because MECI operates in vulnerable communities, the majority of the youth enrolled has been affected by the crisis, be it by becoming an asylum seeker, or witnessing the impact of the influx of refugee in the Kingdom. An important goal of the trainings is to foster mutual understanding and build supportive connections between the youth.

Youth Initiatives

Upon completion of the training, participants displayed improved skills related to problem solving, critical thinking and analysis, as well as social responsibility and community engagement. MECI channels this new pool of skills and potential by encouraging each group of trainees to openly discuss challenges identified in their daily lives and communities and coming up with ways to address these issues through small projects referred to as youth-led community engagement activities.

This is an opportunity to apply an array of skills developed during the training through volunteerism, using problem-solving and teamwork skills. Over the past two years of implementation, MECI has found that such opportunities have had a positive effect in empowering youth within their communities, and helping each individual adapt to a period of their lives marked by changes and adversity.

“Life’s changes and series of events can critically impact any generation of youth. Providing Life Skills trainings to vulnerable and sometimes traumatized young adults serves a double purpose of empowering the youth and the society they live in. Life Skills have the potential to nurture positive thinking and problem-solving, all the while working on communication skills and building supportive networks. Life Skills trainings at MECI are a chance for youth to regain control over their daily lives and establish their role within their community.”

– MECI’s Psychosocial Support Specialist
In 2016, MECI expanded its interventions targeting families and other community members residing in areas around schools. This approach of community building is MECI’s answer to the increasing needs for social cohesion and empowerment.

Engaging Surrounding Community Members

Expanding from 9 to 23 schools in 2016, MECI had to gain the trust of thousands of new parents to allow their children to join afternoon programs. Through the work of entrusted Syrian Outreach Counselors, extensive outreach operations were conducted across 4 governorates of Northern and Central Jordan to communicate around the program, its components and impact.

MECI estimates that over 8,000 individuals were reached throughout this type of operations in 2016. These take the form of house visits, which allow for a personalized introduction and a comprehensive assessment of families and children to be served for the duration of the program. This culture of community is at the core of MECI’s values.

When joining MECI, students bring their families to also be a part of the learning process. Parents’ interest and participation into their children’s education and growth have a long lasting resonance on communities’ own development and resilience. In terms of accountability to the children MECI serves, this strategy is also an opportunity to receive feedback from the families on ways to improve daily interventions to maintain relevance and provide solutions.

“Parents’ interest and participation into their children’s education and growth have a long lasting resonance onto communities’ own development and resilience”

Learning Opportunities

The MECI program – while centered on providing academic and psychosocial support, serves the overall aim of empowering the local communities with knowledge on various topics to support their daily lives and the growth of their children.

Awareness sessions are held every cycle, covering various subjects from health and hygiene practices, to the importance of education and child protection. While broad, these subjects are
addressed through a relevant lens to the people MECI serves. Such sessions are extended to MECI students through engaging activities, to enable the diffusion of key messages.

In 2016, MECI reached over 1,100 adults and close to 3,200 children during awareness sessions, with a satisfaction rate peaking at a minimum of 95% for each session.

Fostering Social Cohesion

A new addition to MECI’s work with communities this year has been the integration of social cohesion-promoting activities across all areas.

Gathering over 600 children, youth, and adults, the events were highly attended, over 13% more than anticipated, a real marker of success and a confirmation that such activities are needed within Host Communities.

Events varied in nature and included sports competitions, games, artwork in the form of murals conveying peaceful and friendly messages, movie screenings and debates, and cohesion coaching activities.

“The Malala-MECI program is also about social cohesion, and if the students quickly develop more and more social interactions with each other, the same is also true for the parents. Through a group created on social media by a counselor of the program, pictures of the children and news from the school are shared. Parents are encouraged to share news and pictures with others as well. This process has enable to build a real community but it is also engaging the parents into their children’s education.”

- Ibn Zaidoun School’s principal, Irbid.
In 2016, MECI continued its partnership with the Polish Embassy in Amman and Polish Aid by obtaining a second grant through a local competition.

“It is one of MECI’s core characteristics to always promote an interactive learning environment. Our ultimate goal is to provide students with the skills and tools to enroll and better adapt in formal schools throughout the Kingdom.”

– Lina Farouqi, Regional Director of MECI Jordan
In December, Mag. Hans Peter Doskozil, Federal Minister of Defense and Sports was met by Lola Grace, MECI Founder, and Lina Farouqi, MECI Regional Director, upon his arrival in Jordan with a delegation of 16 Austrian diplomats and 8 journalists.

Minister Doskozil landed with two military planeloads carrying 12 tons/64 pallets of winter clothing and soccer balls contributed by the people of Austria in a collection for MECI led by the organizations Volkshilfe and Samariterbund, two large Austrian charities.

The delegation, which included the Austrian Ambassador to Jordan, the Austrian Military Attaché for the Middle East and representatives from the Volkshilfe and Samariterbund then visited one MECI school in East Amman where they were greeted by 150 MECI students ages 6–12.
شكراً!  

Thank you!
“In my opinion, Education is essential for a good life. Without knowledge, there is no life and no living. We are in a time when Education is necessary. A child who cannot read or write will face significant difficulties in the future.”

Fatima Taleb, Syrian Outreach Counselor at MECI, Amman, Jordan