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NetCorps Jordan/Mother and Child Program: Final Assessment Report

AMIR II Achievement of Market-Friendly Initiatives and Results

July 2006

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JORDAN AMIR II

Achievement of Market-Friendly Initiatives and Results

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Abstract

This report is a summary of the implementation of NetCorps Jordan's Mother and Child Program over the past four months. It covers the results of the assessment process, successes and challenges for the future, and tells the story of the program's implementation and the impact upon the participants, partners, and communities. From the shy child who blossomed with a mouse in his hand to the illiterate mother who learned to type a letter, from the communities that grew in ICT awareness to the interns who planned out every lesson and continued working with eager mothers long after class hours had finished, this is the story of NetCorps Jordan's Mother and Child Program.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
NetCorps Jordan.....	6
Mother and Child Program	6
MACP goals.....	7
Summary of successes and challenges.....	8
Success stories	9
Conclusion	11

Executive Summary

Over the past four months, NetCorps Jordan has successfully implemented an ICT education and awareness program in eleven locations throughout the south of Jordan. Through a grant from the USAID-funded AMIR program, and in cooperation with the Jordan Hashemite Fund for Development, local Knowledge Stations, and Rubicon, an educational software development company, the Mother and Child Program brought young children from JOHUD Center kindergartens into government-sponsored Knowledge Stations, teaming NetCorps Jordan interns with kindergarten teachers in order to provide an enriched educational experience to almost one thousand students. The program also incorporated mothers, bringing them into the classes to work with their children, encouraging direct involvement with their children's educations while simultaneously developing the mothers' own computer skills.

This report is a summary of the Mother and Child Program implementation over the past four months. It covers the results of the assessment process, successes and challenges for the future, and tells the story of the program's implementation and the impact upon the participants, partners, and communities. From the shy child who blossomed with a mouse in his hand to the illiterate mother who learned to type a letter, from the communities that grew in ICT awareness to the interns who planned out every lesson and continued working with eager mothers long after class hours had ended, this is the story of NetCorps Jordan's Mother and Child Program.

The successes achieved and the challenges discovered throughout the process can be used as a basis for the discussion of a range of possibilities for innovation and expansion of the program for future implementations.

NetCorps Jordan

NetCorps Jordan (NCJ) aims to involve Jordanian youth in the socio-economic development of the country through the use of ICT education and experiential opportunities. NCJ's programs integrate ICT education with solid internship experiences, resulting in an increase in skills and opportunities for all involved individuals.

“[My son has] has increased his confidence in himself and his knowledge.”

Begun in 2002, and officially established as an independent organization in January 2005, NetCorps Jordan is a non-profit, Jordanian-owned company working in partnership with USAID, the Ministry of ICT, and the Canadian Digital Opportunity Trust. NetCorps Jordan was developed through the cooperation of USAID's Achievement of Market-Friendly Initiatives (AMIR) program and the Queen Zein al Sharaf Institute for Development (ZENID).

Mother and Child Program

NetCorps Jordan's Mother and Child Program (MACP) aims to introduce kindergarten-age students and their mothers to basic ICT awareness, with the long-term goal of increased ICT-integration into the needs of both groups and increased economic opportunities for mothers, communities, and other program participants such as interns. Using locations in which a Knowledge Station and a JOHUD kindergarten are housed in the same facility, the program increases the capacity of both by bringing the two together. MACP aims to broaden community use of the Knowledge Station while simultaneously expanding the range of educational experiences available through the kindergarten.



The pilot phase, which was implemented between January and June 2005, in Ajloun and Madaba, suggested that such ICT exposure better prepared the children for future ICT education, participating mothers were more likely to continue with ICT education, and the greater community became more ICT aware. The current implementation of MACP increased the focus on mothers, including the funding of mothers who showed particular dedication to the program in continued computer classes at their local Knowledge Stations

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The current implementation, which concluded on July 15, 2006, included 22 interns (two per Knowledge Station), four field support (one per region), and 38 kindergarten teachers. The program worked with over 960 students in both KG 1 and KG 2 (*bustan* and *tamhidi*) and over 250 mothers.

Instructed by local NetCorps Jordan interns, and using software developed by Rubicon, mothers and children worked together to master basic computer skills, such as turning the computer on

and off, using the mouse, basic use of the keyboard, and navigation of familiar software. The children also received the benefit of increased exposure to Arabic language, English language, and math lessons.

“Discovering a child’s ability, teaching him how to use the computer, and encouraging families to buy computers all led to developing my child’s abilities.”

Participating mother

MACP goals

The Mother and Child Program aims to increase community exposure to ICT and the integration of ICT into the classroom setting at a young age. It also aims to increase community awareness of ICT possibilities already available within the community, such as at the local Knowledge Stations. The internship aspect of the program endeavors to create a link for young adults between education and the workplace by providing a solid work experience.

The goals of the Mother and Child Program are strongly in line with national ICT and education sector goals, for example:

- Introduce ICT awareness into early childhood education, ensure access to ICT resources within schools, and increase the ability of educators to utilize ICT resources within the classroom setting.
- Use ICT awareness and literacy to increase economic opportunities for mothers.
- Promote utilization of Knowledge Stations as community access points to ICT opportunities and increase the variety of ICT development programs offered through the Knowledge Stations.
- Provide experiential opportunities to interns in order to increase economic opportunities available to this group.



Students and mothers from Tafila.



Husseiniyeh

Summary of successes and challenges

The Mother and Child Program was highly successful in implementing its ICT education and awareness program during the spring of 2006. Satisfaction levels were very high among all participants, partners, and community members surveyed. All parties voiced enthusiasm for the program and encouraged NetCorps Jordan to continue implementation. Those surveyed also made useful suggestions that may be incorporated into future implementations.

The following is a summary of the major successes, challenges, and recommendations from the current implementation of the Mother and Child Program. These findings are discussed in greater detail in the “NetCorps Jordan/Mother and Child Program: Final Assessment Report.”

Major successes

- MACP increased ICT awareness in 11 communities, working with over 960 students, over 250 mothers, and 38 kindergarten teachers.
- MACP provided a solid experiential opportunity to 22 interns and 4 field support interns.
- NCJ funded 137 mothers to continue their computer studies through the local Knowledge Stations.
- MACP increased economic opportunities for mothers and other community members by increasing computer literacy and ICT skills.
- MACP increased the range of educational opportunities available through participating kindergartens.
- MACP increased students’ readiness for the integration of ICT into the classroom setting and future ICT education.
- MACP helped multiple women battle illiteracy.
- MACP increased direct parental involvement in their children’s educations.
- MACP received very high levels of satisfaction from all participants, partners, and communities involved in the program.

Major challenges

- Keeping program implementation in line with the school year calendar and allowing sufficient time for program implementation.
- Increasing ICT training for teachers and increasing the focus on preparing teachers to continue using ICT in the classroom.
- Increasing efforts to ensure post-internship opportunities for interns.
- Increasing economic opportunities for participating mothers.
- Increasing overall program sustainability.

Major recommendations for future implementations

- Teachers should receive increased ICT training.
- If MACP continues to use the Rubicon software, the program should be implemented over a longer period of time to cover the material contained in the software, and teachers should have greater control over the timing of individual lessons.
- Interns should receive further career support and internships should be linked more closely with educational background or the higher education system.

- Efforts should be made to increase economic opportunities open to mothers who graduate from MACP.
- NCJ should increase the focus on overall program sustainability.

Success stories

Perhaps the most important impact the program had was on the individual level, captured in the stories and words of the participants and community members who experienced and witnessed the changes that the Mother and Child Program brought to into their lives. From the flowering of a withdrawn child to the illiterate women who learned to read and write, and from the increase in participant self-confidence levels to the new-found purpose of the interns in their quest for careers, these stories relate the personal impact the Mother and Child Program had on the women and children whose lives were touched over the past four months.

The following are several of the many success stories captured during the Mother and Child Program.

Afaf, a mother from Kerak, has always wanted to sign up for a computer course, but never had the chance to do so. “By participating in the Mother and Child Program, I learned to use the computer....I am more self-confident now, since I realize that computers are the language of this century. I hope to buy a home PC, paying in installments, so that I can encourage my children at home to learn to use the computer.”

But Afaf notes that the most rewarding part of the program came in the increased involvement she felt in her daughter’s education. “[The program] afforded me the chance to bond and communicate with my daughter, Fatima.”

Participant mother, Kerak

Recalls a mother from Kerak, “One of our relatives bought a computer. One day, when he switched it on, my daughter started reciting the main parts of the computer and telling the family about the icons on the desktop and the various toolbar functions. Everyone was stunned [that she knew so much] and asked me where she had learned it all. I told them about the Mother and Child Program, and now they all wish that their children could join such classes and learn the same things.”

Kerak

“I am an illiterate woman from Qatraneh (Kerak). Due to my continuous visits to the JOHUD center, I happened to hear about the computer class being offered [through the Mother and Child Program]. The two interns encouraged me to join and I now have the determination to learn Arabic and English by using the computer. I am also looking forward to learning about the internet. I thank all of those involved for what they have given me.”

Participant mother, Qatraneh

“There were a lot of challenges that we faced every day. Working with NetCorps Jordan helped me to reshape my abilities to confront these challenges and work on solving them.”

Buthaina, MACP intern

Upon the initiative of a local, Kerak-based computer business, women who participated in the Mother and Child Program were given discounts in the purchase of home computers. Multiple women took advantage of this opportunity, which increased their, and their children’s, regular access to computers.

Kerak



Presentation of gifts to participating mothers at the Husseiniyeh graduation and community event.

Conclusion

The Mother and Child Program has been a great success. It has increased community awareness of ICT opportunities, prepared almost one thousand students for the incorporation of ICT into the classroom, and has taught basic computer skills to over 250 mothers, over half of whom are continuing with their computer educations through their local Knowledge Stations. MACP has allowed 26 interns and field support to develop solid professional skills and has strengthened community participation in early childhood education.



The Mother and Child Program has brought ICT into the lives of young children, giving these students a head start and a solid basis for future ICT growth and education. It has brought a new measure of creativity into the classroom, expanding the educational possibilities available through kindergarten classrooms.

However, there is always room to grow. The Mother and Child Program has challenges to tackle as it grows and expands its impact throughout the country. Increased sustainability and a greater concentration on ICT education for teachers are areas to focus on for future implementations. Successes from the current implementation also point to potential for growth and to increase the program's impact. Possibilities include the incorporation of computer sales to participating mothers, expanding economic opportunities for mothers, and increasing career counseling for interns.

The success of the Mother and Child Program brings opportunities for innovation and expansion. NetCorps Jordan has the capacity to build upon this current implementation to bring the Mother and Child Program to an even wider circle of students, mothers, teachers, interns, and communities.