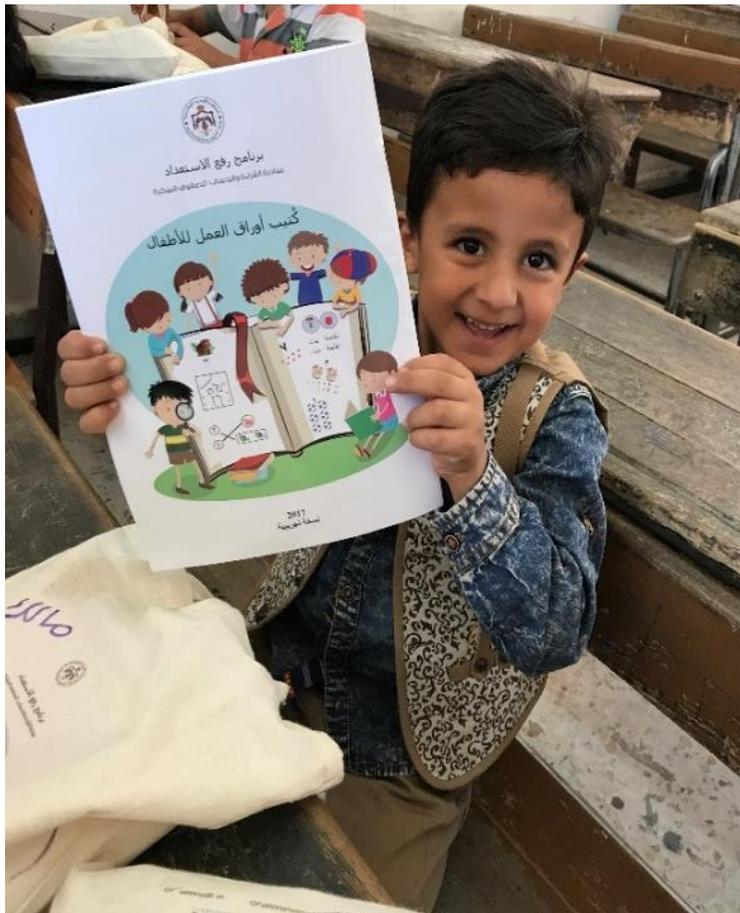


SUCCESS STORY

School Readiness Program prepares children for grade one



A student in Zarqa is excited to receive his new workbook!

The kindergarten class in Qadisieh School is filled with enthusiastic five-year-olds. Outlining Arabic numerals and characters, singing, crafting, and reading stories – this is their first experience in a classroom.

Unfortunately, thousands of children across Jordan don't have access to kindergarten. Nonetheless, they are expected to arrive at their first-grade class, ready to hold a pencil and learn.

USAID's Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Project (RAMP) launched a two-week kindergarten initiative, the School Readiness Program, to help prepare children who do not have the opportunity to attend kindergarten for their first year of primary school. The program spans the Jerash, Zarqa, and Mafraq governorates, including two Syrian refugee camps, covering 29 schools and reaching 1200 students their 1100 parents.

School readiness not only helps children prepare for school, but it also prepares schools and their communities to receive the children. During the two weeks of the program, while the children attend kindergarten, their parents attend class with a Parent Involvement Coordinator from the Ministry of Education who guides them through a variety of child development and early learning topics. The schools do provide the space for the program if possible – while a few schools do have kindergarten classrooms, other schools use any class space available. The parents are introduced to the same content their children are learning, so that they may encourage and support learning activities at home. "I used

to struggle with teaching my kids but now I am enjoying doing this because this program told me what to do and how to do it," says a mother attending the readiness program. Parents also learn about proper nutrition and hygiene for their children as a part of the readiness program.

RAMP provides "Readiness to School Kits" to each classroom, which contain toys and games that promote social-emotional, cognitive, and motor skills development. Children also receive a school bag that contains an activity book, a reading log, coloring pencils, and pencils. Children and parents are thrilled with their new bags and school materials. They have created an environment conducive to learning and children eagerly participate in class. One parent commented on her daughter's enthusiasm for the program, "I tried to send my child to a KG last year but she kept crying and refused to go. Now, with this program, she gets up before me and urges me to hurry to go to school."



A child in Zarqa plays with the Arabic numerals from her classroom's Readiness to School Kit

During their summer break, RAMP trains teachers how to use the materials and provides them with a manual to guide the program. RAMP expects that students who complete the program will be familiar with spending time in a classroom and equipped to transition successfully into grade one. Parents think it is well worth it. "This period is not enough, we want more time," one said.

Next year, RAMP plans to implement the School Readiness Program at an even larger scale, providing support to greater numbers of students and their parents.