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HOMEBOUND GIRLS IN JORDAN



Homebound Girls in Jordan

2013

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Executive Summary

Homebound girls are girls under the age of eighteen who withdraw, or are withdrawn, from school and spend their days as domestic laborers in their house. The issues surrounding them are multi-faceted. Homebound girls are denied their constitutional right to education and are potentially involved in exploitive child labor. In doing so, they are also denied their right to social integration and psychological development as a result of their domestic confinement.

The purpose of this qualitative research was twofold: the first was to explore the phenomenon of homebound girls in Jordan and to understand the reasons that led to their confinement. By shedding light on and investigating this phenomenon, the second purpose of this research, in turn, was to identify possible interventions to allow these girls access to education and strengthen their social development.

The research was based on in-depth interviews with 46 homebound girls and 40 mothers in four locations in Jordan: Marka, Marfaq, Ma'an, and Zarqa and was complemented by a literature and legislative review on children's rights focused on education and the issue of child labor.

This study is divided into six chapters:

Chapter 1 introduces the problem and outlines the research questions that were investigated in the study.

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology that the research adopted, including the design, sample, data collection techniques, data analysis, ethical considerations, data validation methods and the limitations.

Chapter 3 explores the literature available on child labor and education. It begins with a global overview of child labor and education indicators and then moves into the case of Jordan specifically. This is followed by an examination of the legal and social frameworks that homebound girls are subject to in Jordan.

Chapter 4 looks at the findings of the research. The key findings are presented in four sections: 1) The Life of Homebound Girls: Work and Leisure Time; 2) Internal and External Mobility and Social Interaction; 3) School and Education and 4) Dreams and Aspirations of Homebound Girls.

Chapter 5 provides the main conclusions of the study, and

Chapter 6 outlines interventions that could give homebound girls access to education.

It was found that the current definition of homebound girls does not encompass all of the characteristics of homebound girls in Jordan; it should also include those girls who are confined to their home and, as a result, are deprived of a healthy mental, intellectual and psychological development.

Furthermore, it became evident that the causes of the problems facing homebound girls originate from the same source: their limited mobility and domestic confinement which restricts girls' social interaction with those who could help them. For example, when seeking advice or help, homebound girls who were interviewed said that they turn to females who they can directly contact. The role models for homebound girls also tend to be females, thus illustrating their lack of interaction with male family members.

The mobility of a girl was found to be cyclical in accordance to her age and marital status. As a child, she has the freedom to move around and play. However, once she reaches puberty, she loses her mobility and becomes confined at home, unable to regain her freedom of movement until she is married with children. From a psychological perspective, restraining these girls' movements hinders their ambition and stifles their self-confidence as a result of educational deprivation, limited social interaction, and virtually no independence.

The problem is also linked to decision makers in the family who chose to withdraw girls from school, though this was not always the case given that some girls made the decision themselves. In either situation, there was no supportive environment emphasizing the significance of education that could have caused girls to re-evaluate their decision.

Finally, the study concludes by calling for specific interventions to: 1) generate further research on homebound girls and inequality in education, 2) improve the quality and accessibility of education, 3) raise awareness of the issue and contribute to social transformation.

Introduction

“I am 15 years old; my parents withdrew me from school 8 years ago when I was in the 3rd grade. I don’t know why they did this.”

(Anonymous, Ma’an, 15)

Homebound girls are **girls under the age of eighteen who withdraw themselves, or are withdrawn by their parents, from school and spend their days working as domestic laborers in their house.**

The problem of homebound girls is multi-dimensional; on the one hand, homebound girls are denied their constitutional right to education and are involved in exploitive child labor, and on the other, they are denied their right to social integration and psychological development as a result of their domestic confinement.

Homebound girls remain a poorly researched and protected portion of society because their plight lies outside the common definition of child labor. Child labor is often associated with productive labor, or work that produces a product. The economic value of reproductive labor – the household work done by girls and women – is unacknowledged. The gender-biased terminology of ‘productive’ and ‘reproductive’ labor prevents what is typically female work from receiving the acknowledgment that it merits.¹

Additionally, records available at the Jordanian Ministry of Education do not distinguish between school dropouts associated with the labor market and those who are homebound. As a result, it is difficult to obtain an official number of homebound girls in Jordan.

The purpose of this qualitative research thus becomes twofold. The first goal is to explore the phenomenon of homebound girls in Jordan and to understand the reasons that led to their confinement. By shedding light on and investigating this phenomenon, the second purpose of this research is to identify possible interventions that could give these girls access to an education and strengthen their social development.

¹ Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *The Case for Women’s Rights in Jordan: A Struggle from Childhood to Adulthood*, p. 91.

The research addresses the following questions:

- 1. What is the life of homebound girls like? What is the scope and extent of their work and leisure time?**
- 2. What are the boundaries of their internal and external mobility and their social interaction?**
- 3. Why were these girls removed from school? How was the decision made and by whom?**
- 4. What are the challenges faced by homebound girls and what are their aspirations and dreams?**

To investigate these questions, in-depth interviews were administered with homebound girls and their mothers in four locations in Jordan: Marka, Mafraq, Ma'an, and Zarqa. The collected data was then complemented by a literature and legislative review on children's rights focused on education and the issue of child labor.

Methodology

Design

This research adopted an emergent qualitative research methodology, meaning that the methodology was adaptable to the circumstances of the target group, the target area, and the research team. The tools used for collecting data were designed during the initial stages of the research, but were continuously developed and updated throughout the project to ensure that they captured the essence of the topic and yielded comprehensive responses. For example, the research team began by using both focus groups and one-on-one interviews, but completed the research with the latter based on the preference and comfort level of the girls and their mothers.

The following sub-sections will expand on the methodology adopted in this research project by going into detail about the research sample; data collection and analysis techniques; data validation methods; research limitations and ethical considerations.

Sample

Target Areas

The research took place in four target areas that were pre-selected by Save the Children International: **Marka**, **Mafraq**, **Ma'an** and **Zarqa**. Research started in the first three areas in the initial stages of the study, but due to difficulty in locating homebound girls, Zarqa was added in the later stages of the research to include as many homebound girls as possible within the study timeframe. All the families interviewed in Zarqa came from Hiteen refugee camp.

The families interviewed in **Marka** came from a poor, urban neighborhood in Abu Sayah with basic homes that were within walking distance of each other. Some neighborhoods in Mafraq were similar to those in Abu Sayah, while others had closely built houses in between narrow alleyways.

However, **Ma'an** was different in nature. The neighborhoods visited were in rural Bedouin villages with houses located far away from each other. Women in these neighborhoods worked on farms within a fifteen minute drive of their homes.

Finally, interviews in **Zarqa** were conducted in Hiteen refugee camp. The neighborhoods inside the camp were similar to some in Ma'raq, with closely built houses and narrow alleyways.

Although the families selected from these four target areas all came from low socio-economic backgrounds, it was still important to look at the similarities and differences between the socio-economic indicators of the target areas before conducting the data collection in order to contextualize the study.

The following table highlights several relevant socio-economic indicators of the four target areas. Note that not all official reports contained statistics specific to Marka- only those related to the capital.

Table 1: Socio-economic Indicators of Target Areas

Indicators/ Area	Marka	Ma'raq	Ma'an	Zarqa
Population (2011)	602,790	293,700	118,800	934,100 Hiteen Camp: 125,000
Poverty Rate (2008)	15%	31.9%	24.2%	11.2%
Economic Participation (2009)	Capital: 40.7%	36.7%	43.6%	41.1%
	Male 65.6% Female 15.7%	60.6% 12.4%	66.7% 19.3%	68.5% 12.4%
Unemployment Rate (2009)	Capital: 11.2%	13.5%	17.7%	12.9%
	Male 9.4% Female 19%	11.5% 23.5%	14.1% 30.8%	10.5% 26.7%
Number of Public Schools	144	199	138	651

Of the four target areas, Ma'raq has the highest poverty rate and lowest economic participation rate. Interestingly, although Ma'an has the highest unemployment rate, it has the highest female economic participation rate. Thus, the research team was only able to interview a few mothers in Ma'an because they spent long hours during the day working on farms.

Target Groups

The research sample was initially designed to include homebound girls and both of their parents. When the data collection started, it became evident that very few fathers were willing to take part in the research or speak openly about their daughters and families. Therefore, the sample was reduced to **homebound girls** and their **mothers**. Only two fathers agreed to be interviewed. The findings of their interviews can be found in text boxes in the findings chapter. The number of interviewed participants varied in each area according to the availability of the participants and their willingness to take part in the research. In total **46** homebound girls and **40** mothers participated.

The following table outlines the number of interviews that took place in each target area and the different characters of the target groups.

Table 2: Characteristics of Target Groups

Indicators/ Area	Marka	Mafraq	Ma'an	Zarqa
Number of girls interviewed	8 IDIs- 1FG	14 IDIs	11 IDIs	8 IDIs
Number of Mothers Interviewed	6 IDIs- 1FG	17 IDIs	7 IDIs	7 IDIs
Average Household Size	6.5 Family Members	6.2 Family Members	7.5 Family Members	5.8 Family Members
Average years out of school	1 to 5 years; majority 2 years	1 month to 4 years; majority 1 year	3 months to 9 years; majority 1	2 weeks to 8 years; majority 2
Number of Income generating	1 to 2 Father and/or Brother	1 to 2 Father and/or Brother	1 to 2 Father, Brother and/or Mother	1 Father and/or Brother
Education Level of Mother	Majority Primary Education 1 Illiterate 1 Secondary	Majority Primary Education 1 Illiterate 1 Secondary	Majority Illiterate	Majority Primary or Secondary Education 1 Illiterate
B r o t h e r s	27 out of 45 interviewed girls have elder brothers: 6 girls in Marka; 12 girls in Mafraq; 4 girls in Ma'an; 5 girls in Zarqa			

Interviewed girls and mothers from the four target areas share similar characteristics and circumstances. They all come from low socio-economic backgrounds, live in simple homes, and have access to basic infrastructural services such as electricity, water and sewage systems.

Data Collection

Approaching Participants

Due to the sensitivity of the topic and the conservative nature of the target areas, the research team was careful when selecting the right method to approach the community. This was important for two reasons: starting off on a good note by building trusting relationships with participants and ensuring that the research process progressed as smoothly as possible.

Each of the four target areas was approached differently. In Marka and Mafraq, the IRC research team, with the help of Save the Children International, conducted introductory meetings with the community. In Marka, the meeting was held in Mabarat Um Al-Hussein with active community members and Community Based Organization (CBO) representatives. In Mafraq, the meeting took place in JOHUD's Community Development Center with active community members and young adults who volunteered

there. As for Ma'an and Zarqa, the target groups were identified and approached through an active CBO in each area: Save the Children International linked the research team with Sayidat Al-Ashari in Ma'an and Nour Al-Rahman in Zarqa.²

In those four introductory meetings, the IRC team introduced the research topic, discussed the main objectives of the research and the possible benefits it could bring to the area. Finally, they consulted with community members on the best method to approach the participants and the most appropriate research tool to adopt.

Since no records of homebound girls were found at the Ministry of Education, the team relied on the word of mouth of community members to help identify homebound girls in their areas. Therefore, the introductory sessions were important because they introduced the research team to the community and identified possible members who could assist in locating homebound girls and their families.

The first visits to the homes of homebound girls were coordinated and conducted with community members and CBO representatives from the introductory sessions. These home visits would not have been possible without them. Further visits were later done by the research team alone.

The Interviewing Process

While focus groups were thought to be a useful tool in the initial stages of the research because of their probing of useful discussion, the research team later conducted only in-depth interviews with the participants. This was due to the restriction of movement placed on homebound girls and their inability to easily leave their homes to attend a focus group at a nearby CBO. Additionally, the sensitive nature of the topic and the discomfort it may cause participants while talking about it in front of their neighbors, families, and friends was another reason for the elimination of focus groups. Thus, visiting the participants in their homes and discussing issues privately was found to be the most appropriate and constructive approach.

In each interview, there was always one lead researcher asking the questions and one assistant researcher taking notes.

The Research team

Having worked on previous IRC projects that focused on gender and youth in Jordan, the research team had a good level of knowledge on the subject that enabled them to conduct research in a professional and ethical manner.

The core research team consisted of three female researchers; one lead researcher and two assistant researchers. The lead researcher was responsible for conducting the focus groups and interviews, while the assistant researchers took notes and transcribed the sessions. The entire team collectively reviewed the literature, analyzed and presented the data.

² The Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD); +96265560741; www.johud.org.jo .
Mabarrat Um Al Hussein; +96264892680; www.mabarratumulhussein.com .
Sayidat Al Asha'ari Association, Ma'an.
Noor Al Rahman Association, ZarqaHiteen Camp.

It was important to have an all-female research team as it was culturally unacceptable for male researchers to conduct interviews inside the homes of homebound girls. The participants were more comfortable and spoke freely with young researchers.

Data Analysis

After conducting the interviews, the research team transcribed them based on the notes they have taken down. The team was unable to use a voice recorder in the interviews, therefore verbatim transcripts were not produced. However, the lead researcher reviewed notes taken by the assistant researchers within 24 hours of interviews in order to verify the information and to add reflections and field notes. This allowed the transcripts to be produced as accurately as possible.

Preliminary themes were identified in the initial stages of the project, based on the research questions, objectives, and the literature collected during the desk review. The themes were then verified by and expanded on from the interviews. Consequentially, the responses were categorized by theme in two different workbooks, one for homebound girls and another for their mothers. This allowed for cross analysis of girls based on different research variables, including: area, age, number of years out of school, number of siblings and other socio-economic characteristics. Similarly, cross-analysis was conducted on the mothers' responses based on area, age, number of children, income generating members in the household, and level of education.

Ethical Considerations

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, there were several cultural factors that the research had to take into consideration.

First, the participants were approached with the help of community members. This gave the participants a sense of familiarity and trust in the research team, encouraging them to take part. The interviews were also conducted in the comfort of the girls' homes. This eliminated the risk of participants getting into trouble for leaving their houses. Additionally, the research team made sure to schedule visits in the morning when fathers and brothers were not home so as not to disrupt any family time, respect the conservative environment of the homes, and give the girls and mothers a chance to speak freely.

Secondly, because homebound girls being interviewed were below the age of eighteen, written consent to interview them was granted by their mothers via consent forms provided by the IRC team. These forms explained the purpose and objective of the research, asked for permission to interview daughters, and provided the option of anonymity when responses and quotations were used in the research findings.

Thirdly, the girls and their mothers were always interviewed separately. This was to ensure that both parties had the opportunity to speak openly without being overly influenced by the other. Mothers were also assured that nothing inappropriate was being discussed with their daughters and were given the freedom to check up on their daughters whenever they wished. In cases where there were multiple homebound girls in a household, they were given the option of being interviewed together if they preferred.

Validation

The data that was collected was validated on three separate occasions. First, the transcripts that were produced by the assistant researchers were reviewed by the lead researcher to ensure accuracy of the data. Second, the research team checked the consistency of responses by comparing those provided by daughters against ones provided by their mothers. Finally, after the data was entered into workbooks, a researcher from the IRC, not working on the research, checked the entered data against the original transcripts.

Limitations

Although the research process went smoothly and generated fruitful findings, there were some limitations and challenges. Specifically, the methodology had to be revised several times to cater to the conservativeness of the target groups and areas.

Interviews vs. Focus Groups: The research team had hoped to conduct focus groups in order to observe the extent of interaction between girls and to utilize creative group exercises, such as mind-maps and art collages. However, because the girls were not allowed to leave their homes and gather in one place, the team opted for in-depth interviews to collect data.

Interviewing Fathers: Initially, fathers were included in the research sample in order to illustrate a comprehensive picture of the situation of homebound girls. However, in the introductory meetings, it became apparent that conducting interviews with fathers would not be possible, thus reducing the sample to girls and mothers only.

Audio Recording: As mentioned in previous sections, mp4 (voice) recording was not allowed and, as a result, transcripts were based on field and interview notes and were not verbatim. While this would usually increase the degree of error, the IRC team was confident that, through accurate data collection and multiple validation techniques, the risk of error was eliminated as much as possible.

Parental Consent: The research team was unable to interview five mothers in Ma'an because they worked on farms all day and, as such, only their daughters were interviewed. Consent was granted by their adult family members who were over the age of eighteen.

Literature Review

Education and Child Labor: The Global Context

The 2010 Global Report on Child Labor states that there are an estimated 306 million children between the ages of 5-17 who are employed worldwide. Of these children, approximately 70% are classified as child laborers, thus amounting to nearly 215 million children in total. What distinguishes children in employment from child laborers is that the latter group is engaged in work that threatens their health, safety, morals, or subjects them to conditions of forced labor. Of all children engaged in child labor, 115 million children are working in hazardous conditions.³

A 2013 International Labor Office (ILO) report, entitled *Ending Child Labor in Domestic Work*, estimates that there are 15.5 million children around the world below the age of 18, the majority of whom are girls, who are working as paid or unpaid domestic laborers in the homes of third parties. These children carry out tasks such as cleaning, cooking, ironing, and looking after other children. Furthermore, two thirds of them are working in unacceptable conditions and have no, or insufficient, access to education. However, the report does not address the issues facing children engaged in domestic work in their own homes⁴, partially because it is very difficult to count them.⁵

As for education, the 2012 World Development Report argues that there are many reasons to feel optimistic about the educational equality of genders around the world. In general, the gender gap between boys and girls in primary and secondary education is closing and, in tertiary education, women are ahead of men in enrollment. However, there are still some areas of concern; the report further argues that, “in some countries and in some populations within countries girls are still the last to enroll and the first to drop out in difficult times. These severely disadvantaged populations face a host of different problems and the best solution to their problems will be context specific.”⁶

³ International Labor Office (2010), *Accelerating Action against Child Labor*, p.7.
http://www.ilo.org/global/resources/WCMS_126752/lang--en/index.htm

⁴ International Labor Office (2013), *Ending Child Labor in Domestic Work*, p.1.
http://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_207656/lang--en/index.htm

⁵ http://labour.weebly.com/uploads/6/1/4/9/6149309/question_abuot_child_labor.pdf

⁶ World Bank (2012), *World Development Report: Gender Equality and Development*.

While most countries around the world have achieved gender parity in primary education – the concentration of gender inequality remaining in some African countries – moving from primary to tertiary education has shown three patterns. First, enrollment in secondary education ranges from very low to very high in different countries. Second, in countries with low levels of secondary enrollment, girls are less likely to be enrolled in school, but at high levels, boys are less likely to be enrolled. Third, girls are more likely to be enrolled in tertiary education than boys. This difference increases with overall enrollment rates; the number of female tertiary students between 1970 and 2008 increased more than sevenfold.⁷

Education and Child Labor: The Case of Jordan

The population of the Kingdom of Jordan at the end of 2012 was an estimated 6,388 million.⁸ Around 48.3% of those are below the age of nineteen.⁹ Studies and official statistics show progress in gender equality in education. According to the Ministry of Education, 97% of children were enrolled in primary schools in the year 2011.¹⁰ Indeed, Jordan has managed to essentially achieve parity in primary education as of 2008.¹¹

Despite this achievement in gender equality in primary education, a gender gap in secondary education persists; secondary education is not mandatory, according to national education laws, meaning there is no legal obligation for a girl to continue her education up to the age of eighteen.¹² In addition, the Ministry of Education states concern over the incidents of school drop outs which, as of 2011, reached 3,500 students annually. The Ministry estimates this number to reach 35-40 thousand dropouts in the coming ten years.¹³

As for the economic participation of children in Jordan, a 2011 Labor Statistics Report states that 38,038 males between the ages 15-19 are economically active, while only 1,619 females from that same age group are.¹⁴

The International Labor Organization, in conjunction with the Department of Statistics, conducted a Child Labor Survey in 2007. The results of the study were released in a 2009 report entitled Working Children in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. According to the study, 62.4% of children between the ages of 6-17 were strictly involved with school, while 31.77% of children were attending school in addition to performing unpaid household services. The proportion of children ages 6-17 engaged in economic activity

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Department of Statistics, Statistical Yearbook (2012). <http://bit.ly/1cimWAI> .

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ministry of Education website: <http://www.moe.gov.jo/NewsDetails.aspx?NewsID=1351> .

¹¹ UNESCO (2011), *Regional Overview: Arab States: Education for all Global Monitoring Report*. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001915/191531e.pdf> .

¹² Nassir, Lamis (2006). "The Jordanian Experience in Respecting, Protecting, Promoting and Fulfilling the Right to Education." Presented at 11th Meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions. National Center for Human Rights – Jordan <http://www.asiapacificforum.net/about/annual-meetings/11th-fiji-islands-2006/downloads/right-to-education/rte-jordan.pdf>

¹³ Ministry of Education <http://www.moe.gov.jo/NewsDetails.aspx?NewsID=1351> .

¹⁴ Department of Statistics (2013), *Labor Statistics Report 2001-2011*. <http://bit.ly/19XMV0u> .

alone was less than 0.7% and that of children from the same age bracket engaged solely in household work was 2.04% with the majority of them being girls.¹⁵

On average, children who perform unpaid household work do so for 6.2 hours per week, with girls spending 3.5 hours more than boys on such work. The type of work performed by girls and boys differs as well; boys generally buy groceries and do repair work. Girls spend more time cleaning, washing clothes, and caring for children and elderly members of the household.¹⁶

A more recent survey conducted in 2008 by the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development used the term 'homebound girls' to describe a component of child labor in Jordan that had not yet been discussed in Jordanian literature. The survey sample included (2,150) working children aged 7-17 in East Amman.¹⁷

The study defined homebound girls as girls who are deprived of education due to social norms and shows that the percentage of homebound girls was (4%); the reason behind this low percentage was the inability or difficulty in allocating homebound girls.¹⁸

In 2011, Save the Children International conducted a Needs Assessment in Marka as part of their 'Promising Futures: Reducing Child Labor in Jordan through Education and Sustainable Livelihoods' project. The aim of the study was to increase understanding of child labor, education, and livelihood in Marka, an area identified with high rates of child labor and economic vulnerability. Part of the assessment was to conduct surveys of 406 households in Marka.¹⁹

The study showed that the proportion of children who have dropped out of school, or are on their way to dropping out, is high despite compulsory basic education. Although reasons for dropping out of school were provided in the answers, there remains a lack of understanding about the mechanisms that cause these children to drop out.²⁰

In terms of child labor and household work, the study shows a clear division of labor along gender lines. Girls spend more time, cleaning, cooking, and washing, whereas boys do the shopping and household repairs.²¹

Furthermore, the study found that most boys and girls do their chores after school with an exception of 30 children who worked in their homes on a full-time basis. 24 of these 30 children were girls. Moreover, 7 out of the 24 girls had not attended school in the past year and, hence, the study considers them homebound girls.²²

¹⁵ International Labor Organization, Department of Statistics (2009), *Working Children in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, p.27.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.25.

¹⁷ Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development, Ministry of Labor (2010).

http://labour.weebly.com/uploads/6/1/4/9/6149309/maidi_and_jawaher.pdf

¹⁸ Ibid. p.9.

¹⁹ Save the Children International (2011), *Marka Needs Assessment, Promising Futures Project, Jordan*.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

The study concludes that the phenomenon of homebound girls does exist. However, homebound girls are difficult to identify because they are isolated and because such domestic labor is not considered work in these societies.²³


It should be noted that while both the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development's 2008 study and Save the Children's 2011 Marka Needs Assessment are important in shedding light on homebound girls in Jordan, they are limited to East Amman only. On a national scale, there are no official records of homebound girls, yielding sparse literature or research on the issue of homebound girls in Jordan.

The remainder of the literature review is divided into subsections. The legal framework that protects children in Jordan is first examined from an educational and economic perspective. This is important for understanding the legal status of homebound girls in Jordan. The social and cultural dynamics of Jordanian families and societies are then examined so as to comprehend the intersecting factors that keep girls at home.

Legal Framework

In order to grasp the situation of homebound girls in Jordan, it is imperative to understand the legal framework defining their environment. Homebound girls are denied their constitutional right to education and it can be argued that they are involved in exploitive child labor by being kept at home for the purpose of carrying out household chores. The following table²⁴ summarizes the legislation outlined in the following review. The review starts by exploring Jordanian legislation relating to children, education and labor, followed by a review of international conventions relating to children ratified by Jordan over the years, and finally identifying the legal gaps that homebound girls fall in.

Table 3: Summary of Related Legislation

	Compulsory Education Age	16
	Free Public Education	Yes
	Minimum Age for Work	16
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Juvenile Working Hours	6
	Hazardous Work List	✓
	National Strategy for Combating Child Labor (2011)	✓
	Convention on the Rights of the Child	✓
	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Adapted from United States Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs, (2009) *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, Country Profiles, Jordan*.

Jordanian Legislation

There are several Jordanian laws that call for the protection of children's rights in civil and economic life and are spearheaded by the **Jordanian Constitution**. For example, Article 20 states that elementary education is a constitutional right to all Jordanian children and should be free of charge and accessible to all.²⁵

The **Jordanian Labor Law** stipulates that children below the age of sixteen should not be employed under any circumstances and prevents the employment of juveniles between the ages of 16 and 18 in dangerous or exhausting occupations. It also limits juveniles to a maximum of six hours of work per day with a guaranteed break for a period of at least one hour to be taken by the child every four consecutive working hours.²⁶ Article 74 states that dangerous or exhausting occupations shall be specified by decisions issued by the Minister after consulting the competent official authorities; Jordan's list of hazardous work can be found in annex (2).

International and Regional Frameworks

Jordan was amongst the first Arab countries to ratify international conventions on human and child rights. Among those that relate to child labor and education are the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1989); International Bill of Human Rights; ILO Conventions No. 138 and 182²⁷; and the Arab Charter on Human Rights.

Jordan ratified the **United Nation's Convention of the Rights of the Child** in 1991, which sets out the civil, economic, political, social, cultural and health related rights of children.²⁸

The CRC (1989) defines a child as every human being below the age of eighteen years unless the age of adulthood is set by the country's laws earlier. There are a number of articles in the convention which relate directly to education and child labour. The convention addresses all stages and forms of education. Firstly, it states that primary education should be compulsory and made available to every child at no cost. Secondly, secondary education should be accessible to all children in different forms, including general and vocational education. Thirdly, higher education should also be accessible to everyone. Furthermore, the convention calls for state parties to take measures to reduce school drop-out rates and to encourage regular attendance. Education, according to the convention, should be aimed at developing the child's personality and abilities, promoting freedom of expression and thought, and developing children's cultural and national identities. Finally, the convention calls for the protection of children from economic exploitation and hazardous work that may interfere in the child's education.²⁹

²⁵ Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/constitution_jo.html.

²⁶ Jordan Labor Law: <http://www.mol.gov.jo/Portals/1/labor%20law%20english.pdf>.

²⁷ <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/research/ratification-jordan.html>.

²⁸ United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>.

²⁹ United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>.

Such legislation reiterates provisions of the **International Bill of Human Rights** that was ratified by Jordan in 1975 and established that children have rights protecting them against economic and social exploitation, including employment that is likely to hinder their natural development.³⁰

In terms of ILO conventions, Jordan ratified **ILO Convention No. 138** concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment in 1997. The convention aims to eradicate child labour by setting a minimum working age that is not to fall below the age of compulsory education completion (at least 15 years old). It also sets a minimum working age of 18 for jobs that might jeopardize the health, safety or morals of children.³¹ In 2000, **Jordan ratified ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor**. The convention places the worst forms of child labor into four categories: i) all forms of child slavery; ii) the use of children for prostitution and pornography; iii) the use of children in illicit activities such as drug trafficking; and iv) any work which may harm the health, safety and morals of children.³²

These commitments are further reflected in the **Arab Charter on Human Rights**, adopted by the Arab League in 2004, which also affirms, “the right to the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from being forced to perform any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”³³

To implement the provisions of its international commitments, Jordan established a number of **national frameworks** including the following:³⁴

The Early Childhood Development Strategy in Jordan launched in December 2000 and the subsequent Plan of Action for the years 2003-2007

The National Strategy for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour 2002

The Government’s Social and Economic Development Plan 2004-2006

The Jordanian National Plan of Action for Children for the years 2004-2013

The National Strategy for the Jordanian Family 2005

The National Youth Strategy for Jordan for the years 2005-2009

The National Strategy for Jordanian Women 2006 - 2010

The National Health Strategy 2008-2012

The National Framework for Combating Child Labor 2011.

³⁰ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

http://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-

³¹ ILO Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. <http://bit.ly/19XN2ZP>

³² ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. <http://bit.ly/1dmLkSA>

³³ Arab Charter on Human Rights, League of Arab States, <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/loas2005.html>

³⁴ Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *To Be a Girl in Jordan*.

Child advocates around the world face similar challenges; certain issues are not limited to Jordan or the Arab world. Human rights lawyer Jacqueline Bhabha highlights the tensions between ‘childhood’ and ‘human rights’: if human rights belong to all humans based on certain shared universal features, but children exhibit significant differences from adults – in social, historical, and scientific understandings alike – how are universal rights to apply to their set of special capabilities?³⁵ Bhabha explains that the CRC defines and rests upon both the “best interest” of the child, which is the state’s responsibility to protect under international law, as well as a specific kind of “limited agency” that children have the right to exercise while within the care of their family and the state. She points out that these two concepts are both subjective and relative considerations.

Gaps in Legislation

While both the existence of national legislation that protects children in Jordan and the ratification of international conventions on behalf of children can be regarded as positive steps toward gender equality and child protection, homebound girls remain an unprotected segment in society due to several legal loopholes.

What is the economic status of homebound girls?

Homebound girls are confined to their homes in order to help with household chores such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for siblings. In its nature, household work is included under the term **reproductive labor**.

Reproductive labor describes activities necessary for the reproduction of human beings. Not only does this include the biological activity of giving birth, but also the activities necessary for sustaining a family unit, such as preparing food, cooking and cleaning, as well as providing emotional and social care for family members.³⁶

Household work, which is predominantly assigned to females in the Arab World, is undervalued because it is unpaid. Additionally unpaid work is excluded from economic activity and, as such, the work of homebound girls does not necessarily fall into the category of ‘economic exploitation’.³⁷

Consequently, homebound girls are not afforded protection by Jordanian legislation though they are highly susceptible to exploitation. For example, the labor law prohibits the hiring of juveniles under the age of 16 and stipulates a daily limit on the hours that they are allowed to work, but this only applies to productive work undertaken outside the home.³⁸

Moreover, the law stipulates that children between the ages of 16 and 18 should not be employed in dangerous or exhausting conditions.³⁹ Cases regarding unpaid occupations, however, are not drafted into

³⁵ Bhabha, Jacqueline (2006), *The Child: What Sort of Human?* PMLA, Vol. 121, No. 5, p 1526-1535.

³⁶ Pei-Chia Lan (2008), *New Global Politics of Reproductive Labor: Gendered Labor and Marriage Migration*, Department of Sociology, National Taiwan University

³⁷ Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *To Be a Girl in Jordan*, p.73.

³⁸ Jordan Labor Law, Article 73, <http://www.mol.gov.jo/Portals/1/labor%20law%20english.pdf>

³⁹ Ibid., Article 74.

the labor law and are placed under the jurisdiction of the minister in consultation with competent official parties. Thus, in the former example, homebound girls under the age of 16 are excluded from this law, and in the latter, homebound girls between the ages of 16 and 18 are similarly excluded from the law.

Contrastingly, the ILO Convention No. 182 supports the argument that the work of homebound girls should be considered child labor. The fourth worst form of child labor is defined as ‘work which by its nature or circumstanced in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children’ Article 3 (d).⁴⁰ Homebound girls miss vital years of their educational, social, and psychological development and, thereby, conform to this definition.

Much effort and attention has been put toward the eradication of the top three worst forms of child labor that are highlighted in ILO Convention No.182. This fourth form, which is harder to define, has received less attention. But, neglecting this definition means that it is left up to individual countries to do so via a commonly known ‘hazardous work list’.⁴¹

Social Framework

Aside from the legal frameworks governing Jordan, the social construction of the female gender role has far-reaching implications on the experiences of Jordanian girls. Social dynamics between males and females help shape decisions regarding girls’ mobility and education, including those that result in girls being kept home from school. Some experts go so far as to state that the greatest source of discrimination against girls in Jordan is not actually legal, but rather social.⁴² In particular, attitudes and beliefs about the relative importance of both marriage and education of girls, in addition to family dynamics, contribute to instances of homebound girls.

The Role of the Girl in Society

Trends show that the prioritization of a girl’s potential productive roles – domestic work, marriage and raising children – is unique in the Arab world. The region was labeled as a ‘gender paradox’ in a World Bank report because of its combination of high levels of female educational completion with low rates of labor force participation.⁴³ Adely, an anthropologist, highlights the tensions between the outcome of modern development and educational practice - lower fertility rates, increased female labor force participation - and the persistence of markedly different outcomes throughout the Arab world; “Women in the Arab world do not always follow the predictable patterns that have come to be viewed as a natural outcome of educating women,” she writes.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. <http://bit.ly/1dmLkSA>

⁴¹ International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), (2011) *Children in Hazardous Work: What we know, what we need to do*.

⁴² Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *To Be a Girl in Jordan*, p.44.

⁴³ World Bank (1994), *MENA Development Report: Gender and Development in the Middle East and North Africa Women in the Public Sphere*.

⁴⁴ Adely, Fida (2005), ‘Educating Women for Development: The Arab Human Development Report and the Problem with Women’s Choices’. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41 (2009), p. 105-122.

In some segments of Jordanian society, the role of a girl is shaped by deeply rooted attitudes and, despite achieving gender parity in primary education, the underlying societal values that justify why a girl should be educated, as opposed to a boy, still vary.⁴⁵

A 2012 study by the Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation shows that the majority of surveyed Jordanian parents believed that it is a girl's destiny to get married and over 15% felt that educating their daughters was not necessary.⁴⁶ In some cases, the value of education is circumscribed within the arena of marriage – that is, education is valuable to a woman insofar as it may improve her marriage prospects.⁴⁷ Given this attitude, it is not surprising that parents who feel that education may harm their daughter's marriage prospects may choose to keep her at home.

While rates of homebound girls are lower in Jordan than elsewhere in the region, Jordanian girls are subject to the same potential threats as their counterparts throughout the Arab world. A Population Council report discusses the situation in conservative Upper Egypt:

“As girls reach adolescence, especially if they are not in school, community norms dictate that they should be closely supervised until a husband can be found. Arranged and early marriages are far more likely for these girls, followed rapidly by successive pregnancies, thus perpetuating the cycle of illiteracy and poverty into the next generation.”⁴⁸

These attitudes are not simply the product of culture and tradition. They are also rooted in broader structural realities that help to reproduce and exacerbate them. For example, a 1999 study of textbooks used in Jordan's public schools showed that they perpetuated gender stereotypes and presented traditional role models for both girls and boys.⁴⁹ Therefore, notions about the importance of girls' education and their roles in society emanate, not only from personal convictions and family attitudes, but also from the media, state institutions, and society as a whole. Studies show that it is not just fathers, mothers, and brothers who hold specific perspectives regarding the importance of girls' reproductive roles – the girls, themselves, internalize these ideas at a young age in Jordan.⁵⁰ Thus, to understand the circumstances that lead to girls being kept home, it is important to keep in mind that factors beyond the family unit play an important role.

⁴⁵ Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *To Be a Girl in Jordan*, p.44.

⁴⁶ Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *The Case for Women's Rights in Jordan: A Struggle from Childhood to Adulthood*, p.29.

⁴⁷ Adely, Fida, (2012) *Gendered Paradoxes: Educating Jordanian Women in Nation, Faith, and Progress*, University of Chicago Press as cited in The Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *The Case for Women's Rights in Jordan: A Struggle from Childhood to Adulthood*, p. 29 and 30.

⁴⁸ Brady, Martha, et al, (2007), “Providing new opportunities to adolescent girls in socially conservative settings: The Ishraq program in rural Upper Egypt.” Population Council.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *The Case for Women's Rights in Jordan: A Struggle from Childhood to Adulthood*, p. 30.

⁵⁰ Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *To Be a Girl in Jordan*, p. 45.

Family Dynamics

In addition to analyzing the role of females in society, it is important to look at the relationship of girls with their parents and brothers in order to better understand household power dynamics and, accordingly, how decisions regarding a girl's life are made.

In terms of parent-daughter relationships, daughters are viewed as burdens by their parents in some segments of Jordanian society. An IRC survey found that the majority – over 60 percent – of surveyed Jordanian parents considered their daughters to be a burden to them. The answer was the same regardless of the parent's gender.⁵¹ A girl's movement outside of her house is seen as a potential threat to her family's reputation; her role within the home can be understood in the context of this burden. Also, aside from the socially mediated disincentives for limiting movements outside of the home, females have a socially constructed and well-defined role within their family structure that is often justified as a duty to their parents.

As mentioned, an important relationship is that of a girl and her brother. An IRF study found that, in cases when a brother commits violence against his sister, parents often refrain from intervening.⁵² Brothers also have considerable control over their sisters' everyday choices and behavior, such as wearing a hijab. An overwhelming percentage of parents in a 2000 household survey agreed that girls owed obedience to their brothers.⁵³ Given the extent of brothers' control over their sisters' mobility and behavior, often in the name of the family's respectability and honor, the role of the brother in contributing to the phenomenon of homebound girls should not be underestimated.

Within the household, social dynamics clearly shape family decisions to monitor or limit girls' freedom far more than boys,' further compounding the logistical and financial challenges that transportation to school may already present and intensifying the effects of those challenges for girls.⁵⁴

A girl's role within her home represents a particularly difficult issue to both assess and influence. Thus, the line between a child's household chores or responsibilities and child labor can be a fine one.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Ibid., p.41.

⁵² Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *The Case for Women's Rights in Jordan: A Struggle from Childhood to Adulthood*, p.58 and 9.

⁵³ Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *To Be a Girl in Jordan*, p. 56 and 51.

⁵⁴ See Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *To Be a Girl in Jordan* p. 53, in which two-thirds of respondents agreed that girls' freedom of movement was limited more than her brothers', as well as Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *The Case for Women's Rights in Jordan: A Struggle from Childhood to Adulthood*, p.31., for the transportation challenges facing girls in secondary school.

⁵⁵ Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (2012), *To Be a Girl in Jordan* p.77.

Literature Review Conclusions

The social framework elaborated in the literature review highlights important factors that contribute to biases against girls in society. These include the perception of a girl's role in society, which is one predominantly shaped by marriage and reproduction, as well as household power dynamics and the control of a girl by her parents and brother(s).

While the perpetuation of deeply ingrained social and cultural notions about the role of girls in society is at the core of the issue of homebound girls, both the state laws and institutions that comprise Jordan's legal environment are also to blame.

Because the work conducted by homebound girls is considered reproductive labor and is unpaid, it is not classified as economic activity and, as such, homebound girls are not afforded protection by Jordanian legislation which specifically targets paid productive labor.

However, even if homebound girls are not afforded protection by legislation according to their economic status as child laborers, they should be granted protection based on the fact that they are children being withdrawn from school at the compulsory age of education, given that primary education is compulsory and a constitutional right.

Additionally, there are several gaps that the literature did not cover and need to be addressed:

The first issue is the lack of official records on homebound girls in Jordan at the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education does not separate the data regarding school dropouts by those who are economically active in the labor market and others who are homebound. Without such records, the number of homebound girls throughout the country cannot be accurately estimated.

Secondly, little literature exists that explores the phenomenon of homebound girls in Jordan, thereby making it difficult to know the extent of their challenges. However, there has been research on social construction and family dynamics within Jordanian society, as mentioned above. While such research is not specifically about the households of homebound girls, it does offer some insight into the possible causes of confining girls to their homes.

This study is not quantitative and will not generate statistics of homebound girls on a national level. In its qualitative nature, the goal is to explore the lives of homebound girls in different regions of Jordan and to identify possible interventions that could help these girls gain access to their educational rights.

Research Findings

This section includes the research findings and has been divided into four themes: **The Life of Homebound Girls: Work and Leisure Time**; **Internal and External Mobility and Social Interaction**; **School and Education**; and **Dreams and Aspirations of Homebound Girls**.

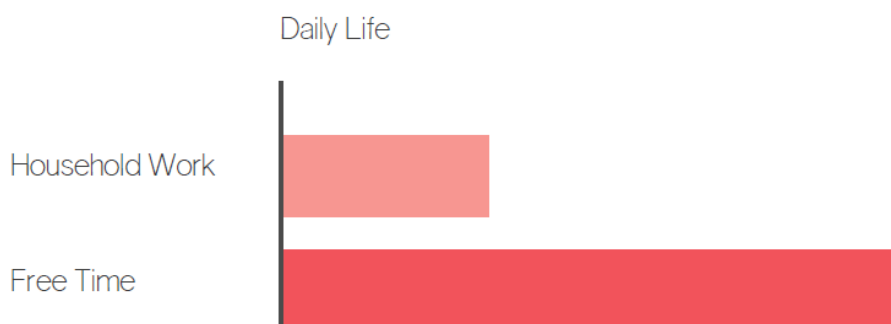
Each section begins by outlining the purpose behind the theme's investigation and the types of questions that the girls were asked. They are concluded by a summary of the overall findings.

The Life of Homebound Girls: Work and Leisure Time

The first research question looks at the daily routine of homebound girls through **the scope and extent of their work and leisure time**. The girls were asked a series of questions about their day-to-day life; how they spend their days; whether or not they have assigned household chores, and, if they do, what their household work entails and how long they take to complete it; whether or not they have any free time and how they spend this free time, doing what and with whom. The questions also investigated the division of work within the household. The responses of the majority of the girls were similar, with the exception of two girls in Mafrq.

44 girls said that they spend between half-an-hour to four hours a day performing household chores, with the remainder of their day being free time. **2** girls in Mafrq said they spend up to seven hours a day doing household work and rarely have any free time.

Figure 1: Girls' day-to-day life



"Our house has two bed rooms, a kitchen, bathroom and salon. The time I spend doing household work depends on the work I carry out the night before. If I work before I sleep, the next morning work takes me half-an-hour otherwise it takes up to a little over an hour. I work the night before so I can watch TV in the morning."

(Iman, Marka, 17)

"Household work takes me half an hour; cleaning, sweeping and doing the dishes. I sometimes help with the cooking, but not always."

(Fatima, Ma'an, 17)

"I spend most of my free time watching TV, and sometimes I play with my sisters, we play the school game [pretending to be a teacher and students] because we miss it so much. Sometimes I write poems"

(Rawan, Zarqa, 13)



The type of household work performed by the girls includes cleaning the living room, bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchen, and hallways, in addition to dusting, doing the dishes, laundry, and helping their mothers with cooking. Some girls added that they clean the front yard and help their younger siblings with their schoolwork.

In almost all cases, cooking is the responsibility of the mother, while buying the groceries is a task shared between the mother and father. It should be noted that none of the girls said that their parents buy groceries together. In some cases, younger siblings are sent to the nearby supermarket or the bakery with girls under the average age of 11 being the only female siblings sent outside the house.

Household work takes me half an hour; cleaning, sweeping and doing the dishes. I sometimes help with the cooking, but not always. (Fatima, Ma'an, 17)

As household chores do not take the girls much time to complete, they tend to have a great deal of free time on their hands – in some cases up to six hours - in which the majority of girls said that they like watching television. Their favorite shows and channels include Turkish soap operas, Indian movies, and music channels. Some girls mentioned other hobbies that they like to do during their free time, including: drawing, sewing, writing, putting makeup on their sisters, making accessories, using the computer, and visiting neighbors, relatives, and older siblings. The computer is mainly used to play games and, in some cases, to access Facebook.

The two previously mentioned girls in Mafraq who said that they rarely have any free time and, but when they do, it is only for half an hour to an hour in which they watch TV or help their mother sew.

What the majority of the girls had in common was their dislike of doing the dishes and the laundry. They said that these are their least favorite chores of the day because of the tediousness involved. Watching TV and visiting their relatives or neighbors are the activities in which they most looked forward.

Overall Findings

The interviews showed that most of the homebound girls do not spend all of the time that they would have typically spent in school performing household chores. On the contrary, household chores take up less than a third of their day. They do, however, spend the majority of their time watching TV and performing activities that do not contribute to healthy mental and intellectual growth, rather than going to school to read, write, play, and socially interact. What homebound girls watch on TV is also contextually important. Many Turkish TV series, which are translated into Arabic and aired on satellite channels, are dramas that involve romance, betrayal, crime, and wealth. Given the domestic confinement of homebound girls, the most social interaction that they have is through such television series which portray a lifestyle very different to their reality.

My name is Wafa' and I am 14 years old. I have 3 brothers and a sister. I used to love school, my friends, my teachers and studying, and I was very clever. My mom liked me because I used to get marks in the 90s. My favorite subjects were English and Arabic, but I didn't like computer, geography and history.

I left school a year and four months ago, when I was in the first

semester of the seventh grade. My mother withdrew me from school because she needed help at home. My father is unemployed and tired, so my mother cleans in other people's homes as we need this income. So while my mother is working I help at home. There is no point to continue. University is costly.

My father asked her 'what do you want to pull her out of school?' She said 'I can't do it alone, I need help, it is a big family'. My brother is 3 months old, so I am responsible for his care. I also carry out the household chores; laundry, cleaning and helping my brothers with their homework. Household work takes up all my time, and even if I did have free time, it is only for an hour, I watch

TV or draw with my brothers.

I like staying at home more; when I was at school the teacher used to ask us for projects and getting files and materials for projects costs a lot. Staying home does not cost a thing; it just requires me to clean in. I have not thought of going back to school since the day that I left. I like staying at home, I like my responsibilities and I got used to it.

My mother is the closest one to me, because she talks to me, guides me and raises my awareness on many things.

She makes me feel like I'm a grown up and tells me to take care of the house. I also love my

brother because he's very little and doesn't understand anything, he needs me, and I like that responsibility.

As for my friends, the last time that I saw them was a year ago. I occasionally visit my neighbors with my mother, but I don't like to go alone because they have guys in the house. The last time I went to the clothes market – with my mother of course – was last Eid, I bought some clothes. It is unacceptable in our society for a girl to go to the market alone and I hear that a girl should stay at home when she hits the age of 12 or 13, she can't go to the market or the shops. What are boys here for?

Also in our society, when the girl turns 14 or 15 she gets married. But I am not thinking of that. My mother won't marry me off anyway because she needs me here to help her.

I used to dream of becoming a police woman, because I don't want to be a nurse or doctor, people here don't like these professions. So I wanted to be a police woman. But this was a dream when I was in school, now I can't be one, I don't have the ability. I would like to be like my mother, every girl wants to become like her mother.

“I don't have the ability”

Internal and External Mobility and Social Interaction

The term 'homebound' implies that the interviewed girls are confined to their houses. Therefore it was important to investigate the extent of their mobility inside and outside the home. Thus, the second series of questions explored the boundaries of the girls' mobility and their social interaction, i.e. where they are allowed to go, with whom, and how often; who do they interact with; and family interaction and relations within the home.

Mobility

Internal Mobility

The majority of the girls said that they have no problem in terms of internal mobility; they have the freedom to move freely inside the house and to sit wherever they like. In most cases, their fathers and brothers are outside the house in the morning, so the girls have the most freedom during this time, especially with regards to watching TV. The girls are still able to move freely after their fathers and brothers return home, however, it is no longer up to them to watch what they like on TV. Rather, they must watch what their parents or brothers are watching.

Most girls also said that their favorite space in the house was the 'television room', primarily because they can watch TV there. A few mentioned that they preferred a quiet room in the house, like the kitchen or the guest reception room, where they have the space to sit quietly and think.

External Mobility

The interviews showed that all of the girls – with no exceptions – have limited, to very limited, freedom of mobility externally. The places at which they are allowed to go are restricted to a nearby supermarket, market, or the homes of relatives, neighbors and married siblings. This is only permissible under the condition that they are accompanied by a mother, father or elder brother.

The mothers and girls that were interviewed also said that a girl stops leaving the house unaccompanied around the age of twelve - the time when puberty begins and a girl becomes a woman.

The girls were asked about the frequency of their outings, albeit accompanied by their parents or siblings. Most girls said that they are generally allowed to go out once or twice a week. There were, however, some exceptions. In Marka, for example, several girls are only allowed to go out on annual occasion like Eid. In such extreme cases, mothers sometimes lie to their husbands, citing an excuse such as the need to visit a doctor, to take their daughters out. A similar case was found in Mafraq where one father does not allow this wife or daughter to step outside the house at all, including the garden or balcony.

"I am not allowed to go to the market alone, Eib. I am told that girls have to stay at home and not leave the house. We shouldn't stand in the street or go to the market. What are boys for anyway? Boys can go out and do these things, and girls stay at home. Once a girl is 12 or 13 she has to sit at home."

(Wafā', Ma'raq)

"Only the young girls are allowed to go, but us older girls have to stay home. We can only go to the neighbors or the supermarket, with our mother or father."

(Eman, Ma'an, 13)

"We don't allow girls to go outside because they are like glass; if it breaks it can't be fixed. Us older women can go anywhere, even to grocery shops that have men. But the younger girls are not allowed to go to shops with male shopkeepers, only to shops with female shopkeepers. After the age of 14 they are not allowed."

(Um Msiera, Ma'an, 50)



When asked whether accompaniment outside the house is a necessity, most girls indeed believed that it is important. Only a few said that girls could be trusted when given the freedom to leave houses alone. Their responses were similar and could be grouped into two main themes: i) customs and traditions and ii) protection and vulnerability.

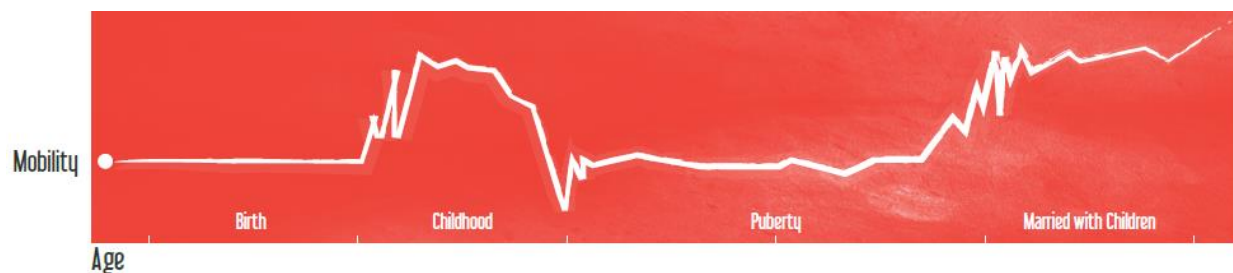
Customs and traditions: the girls said that a woman's place is inside, not outside, the home. After a certain age, girls should not be allowed to leave unaccompanied as this is what their customs and traditions dictate. A woman who walks around on her own will be talked about and her family shamed.

Protection and vulnerability: the girls expressed that the street is not a safe place for a girl to be alone for several reasons, including: the possibility of getting kidnapped, the fear of cars and dangerous driving, and the threat of men socializing in the street. If a girl happens to get into trouble for any of the previously mentioned reasons, then she would need somebody to help her out.

The mothers were also asked about their own mobility and how they perceived their daughters' mobility. With the exception of a few, most mothers said that they have the freedom to go to the market, buy groceries, and visit their neighbors and relatives. They believed that this freedom stemmed from their marital status and age. As for their girls' freedom of mobility, the mothers gave similar responses to their daughters, stating that a girl's freedom of mobility is limited by customs, traditions and conservative mindsets.

Therefore, the mobility of a girl was found to be cyclical in accordance to her age and marital status. As a child, she has the freedom to move around and play. However, once she reaches puberty, she loses her mobility and becomes confined at home, unable to regain her freedom of movement until she is married with children. This is illustrated in figure (2).

Figure 2: Level of mobility according to age and marital status



“One wishes that his children turn out better, and I wish that my daughters get an education and get married to good men”

I am a 70 year old father of five boys and four girls. I worked in the army for 27 years during which I took six courses in the hopes of learning to read but I couldn't. I was never promoted because I was illiterate.

My daughter Hajar (14) decided to leave school, she doesn't mind doing her exams, but she doesn't want to go to school. I personally think she is better off at school. Currently she is doing household chores because her mother forces her to do, in the hopes of her changing her mind and agreeing to go back to school.

My boys and I buy the groceries, but the girls don't, they are only allowed to go to their grandmother's house. Hajar is only allowed out with one of her brothers, but

the little ones are free to go wherever, there's no problem.

Education is very important. Life requires one to be educated and learn to read, in order to work.

A woman should work and help her husband, and should read in

order to read the Quran. I think girls should not get married before the age of 21.

One wishes that his children turn out better, and I wish that my daughters get an education and get married to good men.

"I don't talk to anyone, I just write. I love writing. I write about my day and what bothered me."

(Shoug, Mafraq, 14)

"I talk to my older sister, she understands, and she has gone through a lot. When I am upset, I talk to her."

(Razan, Zarqa, 13)

"My older brother; if I go on the balcony he tells me come in, if I turn on the radio he tells me turn it off. And I can't leave the house because my father doesn't allow it, I don't know why."

(Khawla, Mafraq, 14)

"My friends visit me at home, almost once a week. But recently they stopped coming because they have a lot of homework and exams."

(Reema, Marka, 15)

"No I don't have friends, when I left school I stopped seeing them."

(Esra', Mafraq, 14)



Social Interaction and Reaching Out

Family Relations

In terms of social interaction at home, the girls were asked about their relationship with their parents and siblings. Most of the girls said that they were closer to their mothers and sisters than to their fathers and brothers because they spend the most time with their mothers and sisters while carrying out work, socializing with neighbors and relatives, and watching TV. Older brothers were described, in most cases, as being either detached, busy with their own lives, or figures of control. Younger brothers were a source of nuisance because as they often make the house messy which, consequently, the girls have to clean up.

The majority of girls said that they were not very close to their fathers and that the extent of their relationship was limited to watching TV together.

Some girls said that they do spend time with their family as a whole. Family activities, however, are limited to watching TV or visiting relatives.

Conservativeness: Fathers vs. Brothers

The mothers were asked whether their husbands or sons were stricter on their daughters.

9 mothers said that the brothers were stricter and more controlling, **5 mothers** said that it was the fathers, and **8 mothers** said that it was they who were the strictest on their girls. The remaining mothers mentioned a combination of fathers, brothers and themselves.

The majority of mothers who said that their sons are stricter on their girls than fathers explained that this was a result of a generational difference and the fact that brothers know the intentions that most guys have toward girls, especially with those who are not considered 'good girls'.

As for the girls themselves, the researchers did not directly ask them about the extent of control that their mothers, fathers, and brothers exerted. Rather, the researchers tried to get such answers indirectly by asking other questions about freedom of mobility and social interaction. It was found that, while mothers tend to worry about their daughters, it was their fathers and brothers who are more protective.

My older brother; if I go on the balcony he tells me come in, if I turn on the radio he tells me turn it off. And I can't leave the house because my father doesn't allow it, I don't know why. (Khawla, Mafrq, 14)

Finally, one divorced mother said that she is strict with her daughters because she does not want people to talk about them. She explained that since she is divorced and a single mother, she does not want people to think that she is incapable of raising well-mannered and decent girls.

External Social Interaction

In terms of social interaction outside of the household, the majority of the girls said that they have friends who they can visit on a weekly or monthly basis. A third of the girls said that they either lost touch with their friends or they have friends who they rarely visit. As mentioned earlier, if these girls are to visit their friends, they have to be accompanied.

My friends visit me at home, almost once a week. But recently they stopped coming because they have a lot of homework and exams. (Reema, Marka, 15)

No I don't have friends, when I left school I stopped seeing them. (Esra', Mafraq, 14)

The girls were also asked about their means of emotional support. The majority of them said that when they are upset or have a problem, they keep it to themselves and wait until it wears off. Some girls said that they turn to their sisters, mothers, or other female relatives such as aunts. Only four girls said they talk to their friends when they have a problem and one said that she writes in her diary.

I don't talk to anyone, I just write. I love writing. I write about my day and what bothered me. (Shoug, Mafraq, 14)

I talk to my older sister, she understands, and she has gone through a lot. When I am upset, I talk to her. (Razan, Zarqa, 13)

Overall Findings

The interviews showed that homebound girls are free to move as they like when inside their homes. It should be kept in mind that, in all cases, girls' houses are small and not more than two to three rooms. Contrastingly, most of the interviewed homebound girls have limited, to very limited, mobility outside of their homes. They can only go to specific places with permission and a chaperon. Moreover, a girl's freedom of mobility is tied to her age; she can no longer leave the house unaccompanied when she becomes a young woman, whereas her mother has more freedom given her age and marital status. Homebound girls explained that girls in their society are portrayed as vulnerable, fragile, and needing protection. These factors, in addition to conservative mindsets and ingrained traditions, are reasons for limiting a girl's mobility and freedom.

Therefore, the mobility of homebound girls can be seen as a cycle, with its peak in early childhood years. Rather than gaining more independence with age and maturity, girls lose their freedom. In some cases, they lose their freedom completely and are cut off from any opportunity for healthy mental and psychological development through social interaction. Girls regain some of their freedom of mobility once they are married and have children of their own. However, once that happens, they inflict the same restrictions on their daughters, thereby perpetuating the cycle of homebound girls.

Furthermore, family activities were found to be limited to watching TV or visiting relatives. When faced with problems, most homebound girls said that they keep it to themselves, while some talk to their sisters, mothers, or female relatives.

As a result, the boundaries of a homebound girl's mobility, social interaction, and outreach tend to be confined to the walls of her home. **This means that the same individuals that potentially cause her problems are the only people who she can turn to for help.**

I am a 16 year old girl. I have two brothers and three sisters. My father passed away. In my house, we all help each other with the household chores. I am responsible for cleaning the two rooms, which takes up to an hour of my time in total.

In my free time, I like to watch TV, especially cartoons and Turkish soap operas. Sometimes I play with my brothers and sisters;

we play badminton, draw and

color, and play in the garden. When I feel upset or have a problem I usually talk to my older sister, we get along, and she understands and helps me. I have friends; I see them once a week or every two weeks. They are all still in school. I also see my neighbors, we usually gather in our front yard and play. I don't go out alone because in our society it's unacceptable for girls to leave the house alone, they have

to be accompanied by someone; there are lots of guys in the street who try to flirt with girls.

I loved my school, my studies and my friends at school. I was very clever too. My mother and brothers told me that they don't want me to go to school because there are a lot of guys in that area. I really wanted to stay in school and I tried to convince them

“ In my free time, I like to watch TV, especially cartoons and Turkish soap operas. ” several times, but they didn't

change their mind. I've been out of school for almost two months now; I left when I was in the 8th grade. If I had to choose between staying at home and going to school I would choose school for sure.

My dream is to become an artist and specialize in beauty. I wish grow up to be like my step sisters, they did not finish school, but they did what they wanted and are working in cosmetics.

School and Education

The third research question looks at the **reasons behind withdrawing these girls from school and making them homebound**: it is important to know if these reasons are rooted in economic or social problems so as to identify the necessary interventions. Therefore, the third series of questions looked at the reasons why these girls withdrew or were withdrawn from school, how the decision was made and by whom, their state at home and whether or not they were happier at school; if they had the chance, would they go back to school and for what reasons, and, finally, how mothers perceive and value education for their girls and boys.

Withdrawing from School

The first question that the girls were asked was regarding the **decision to withdraw from school**. Half of the girls said that it was their own decision and the other half said that the decision was made by their family. **20** girls said that it was their own **personal choice** to leave school, while **12** girls said it was their **father's decision**, **5** said it was their **mother's**, **2** girls said it was their **brother's**, **3** girls said it was their **mother's and father's joint decision**, and **1** girl said it was her **mother's and brother's joint decision**.

In both cases where brothers made the decision to withdraw their sisters from school, their fathers were alive and involved with the household. In the case where the mother and brother made the joint decision to remove the girl from school, the father had passed away.

The girls and mothers were then asked about the reasons behind making such a decision. There were no discrepancies in the responses they provided.

When other family members made the decision to withdraw a girl from school, the stated reasons were social, economic, or a mixture of the two. The top four reasons were:

Transportation: in all of the target areas, the primary and secondary schools are separated into two different buildings. In most cases, the primary school is close and within walking distance from the house. The secondary school on the other hand is further away and requires transportation by bus or car. This constitutes a problem because securing a car or bus to drive a girl back and forth is costly. Additionally, parents do not feel comfortable with the idea of their daughter being driven by a male stranger to school.

Her father decided to withdraw her from the school. It is in another village and needs transportation which costs 20 JDs. Because he is not working, we don't have the money. I cried and cried, but he won't send her. (Um Rasha, Marka, 48)

The girl's capacity: many mothers said that their girls were not clever at schools and were not high academic achievers, so there was not point of keeping them at school.

She doesn't read very well. If there was someone to help her read I will send her back. I decided to withdraw her. (Um Shoug, Mafraq, 43)

The girl got ill: in some cases it was found that the girl got ill and missed a few days or weeks of school, during which time her parents decided to keep her at home..

She got sick and the doctors told me that there is no medicine for this illness. I thought she will not stay alive until now. I used to stay with her at the hospital and decided to withdraw her from the school. I also withdrew her sister to stay at home while I am at the hospital with Ala'a. (Um Ala'a, Zarqa, 40 years)

The girl has a feminine body: a girl's physical appearance was found to be one of the top reasons for withdrawing her from school. Some mothers expressed that the father decided to withdraw his daughter from school because she started growing into a woman and, as a result, it was best if she is kept at home. When there were two sisters who are homebound, the interviews showed that some sisters were withdrawn before others because they were taller, looked older, and were more developed.

Her father and brothers decided to withdraw her from school because there is a lot of boys in front the school and she is looks like a grown lady. (Um Rawan and Razan, Zarqa, 40)

"The school was far and my mother was sick and there was no one to stay with her so I decided to leave the school"

(Eman, Mafrq, 17)



"My mother and brothers didn't want me to go the school because there are a lot of boys around it"

(Ikhlas, Mafrq, 16)

Other reasons stated by mothers was the perceived indecency of their daughters walking in the street on their way to school seeing as it was full of boys. This was combined with a father's conservative nature and mindset resulting in the withdrawal of his daughter from school simply because he wanted to.

Their father said 'if you want to send them to school, go back to your parent's house and take them with you'. He thinks that school breeds bad girls. (Um Eman and Esra'a, Mafraq, 37)

As for the reasons stated by daughters for making the decision, the top two reasons were i) **they wanted to help their mothers at home**, and ii) **their parents encouraged them to leave school**. Other reasons were that school was boring, a far distance, or that they preferred to be with their family. One girl mentioned that she was too shy to walk the street leading to school because it was full of boys.

The school was far and my mother was sick and there was no one to stay with her so I decided to leave the school. (Eman, Mafraq, 17)

The findings show that a significant number of girls interviewed have made a personal choice to withdraw from school. However, these choices must be examined within the context of these girls' lives. One of the top reasons that the girls stated for leaving school was the nonexistence of a supportive environment that encourages the attendance of school and educational achievement. Some girls decided to leave school because they did not want to do their school work or were not getting along with their female peers. Parents directly approved these decisions and did not analyze the problems facing their daughters in order to find a solution.

Furthermore, because education is not valued by some of the societies of these families, it is not a priority for females regardless of their age. This attitude makes it acceptable for girls to decide to stay home without a challenge by their families or communities.

Table 4: Reasons for withdrawing from school

Mothers	Girls
Transportation to secondary school is costly and insecure	Mother needs help at home
Our girl is not clever, there is no point to keep her at school	Parents encouraged me to leave
Our girl got ill, stayed home, and never went back	School is boring
Our girl has a feminine body, and it is best if she stays home	School is far
Street leading to school is full of boys and is not an appropriate place for a girl	Street to school is full of boys, I'm shy to walk through
Girl had lots of problems with teachers	Girls at school are bad and fight a lot
Conservativeness of father	I like being home with my family
Father fought with mother, and in a moment of anger and swore the girl stays at home	
School is a bad place for girls, a waste of time	



"Her father decided to withdraw her from the school. It is in another village and needs transportation which costs 20 JDs. Because he is not working, we don't have the money. I cried and cried, but he won't send her."

(Um Rasha, Marka, 48)

"She doesn't read very well. If there was someone to help her read I will send her back. I decided to withdraw her."

(Um Shoug, Mafraq, 43)

"She got sick and the doctors told me that there is no medicine for this illness. I thought she will not stay alive until now. I used to stay with her at the hospital and decided to withdraw her from the school. I also withdrew her sister to stay at home while I am at the hospital with Ala'a"

(Um Ala'a, Zarqa, 40 years)

"Her father and brothers decided to withdraw her from school because there is a lot of boys in front the school and she is looks like a grown lady"

(Um Rawan and Razan, Zarqa, 40)

"Their father said 'if you want to send them to school, go back to your parent's house and take them with you'. He thinks that school breeds bad girls."

(Um Eman and Esra'a, Mafraq, 37)

Home vs. School

The girls were asked about their feelings towards school; if they are happier at home, and if they would go back to school if given the opportunity. **33** girls said that they liked school. This was mainly because they loved their teachers, friends, and liked playing on the playground during break time. The remaining **13** girls said that they did not like school because they disliked studying, their teachers' approach to education, or the subject material. Some did not feel that there was purpose for going to school and preferred learning a craft. Several thought that they were not clever enough to stay in school.

When asked whether they were happier at home or school, the responses varied. **30** girls said that they were happier at school, the majority of whom said this was because going to school gave them a chance to go out every day and socialize with their friends and teachers. Some of them said that school was less boring than staying at home, while others expressed that school was the means through which they were achieving their ambitions. The remaining **16** girls said that they are happier at home due to the lack of school work, the limited rules to abide by, the ability to watch TV, sleep at home, and encountering less problems.

Asking mothers whether they are happier with their daughter staying at home or going to school produced interesting results. **29** mothers said that they were happier when their daughters were at school because they were getting an education and were surrounded by their friends and teachers. Others said that, in school, the girls were growing and maturing properly. The remaining **11** mothers said that they are happier with their daughters at home because it is more comfortable for their girls. Also, daughters can be properly supervised and trained to become good housewives while at home.

Finally the girls were asked if they would go back to school if they had the opportunity, while mothers were asked whether they would send their daughters back to school. **20** girls said they would go back to school for two main reasons: to get an education and to see their friends again. They did, however, express uncertainty as to whether their parents would allow them to go back. The remaining **25** girls said they wouldn't go back to school for three reasons: they don't want to go back and get placed at a younger grade (and thereby not be with their friends), they believe that crafts are better than getting an education, and their father/parents won't agree to send them back. Only one girl said that she was not sure if she wants to go back to school.

A correlation between their willingness to go back to school and the number of years that they have been homebound was examined but not found. The reason for doing so was to see whether or not the girls were more influenced by their parents' mindset the longer they have been home.

As for their mothers, **20** said that their girls can go back to school if they wanted to and if transportation was available. **15** said that they wouldn't send their daughters back to school because their husbands would not approve, there are transportation roadblocks, there is no purpose for school given their daughters' incompetence, or there are problems at school which dictate that the girls are better off staying at home. **5** mothers did not answer this question.



"I would like to go back to school and see my friends"

(Khadija, Zarqa, 15)

"Home is better than school because I don't have homework or studying"

(Samar, Ma'an, 15)

"I liked school better because I spent time with my friends. Staying home is boring"

(Khadija, Zarqa, 15)

"No I won't go back because my friends would already be in a higher grade and I won't be with them in class"

(Samar, Ma'an, 15)

"School is better than sitting at home because you can go and have a good time there while at home you are just handcuffed"

(Manal, Marka, 17)

"It's important for both. Whatever the future holds for a girl, in the end she can work with her degree, and the guy can also find a job using his degree and work."

(Khadija, Mafraq, 37)



"Their father won't return them to school, not under any circumstance. Even if Palestine is free or things in Syria settle down. No way."

(Um Reema and Eman, Marka, 38)

"Education is more important for girls because a guy can work in any profession, he will find a way, but a girl cannot work in construction."

(Um Hajar, Ma'an, 49)

"I just want her to go back and take her Tawjihi exam, whatever it takes."

(Um Lina, Mafraq, 46)

"Of course it's [education] more important for boys, for girls it's not important because a girl will end up hanging her degree on the wall. Her place is in the kitchen."

(Um Faris, Marka, 38)

Value of Education

The mothers were asked whether they thought education was more important for their sons or for their daughters.

22 mothers said that education is important for both boys and girls as it is an asset that they need in the future.

13 mothers said that education was more important for girls for several reasons. First, the type of jobs available to girls generally necessitate an education: boys can work in construction or as drivers which does not require a degree, whereas girls typically work as teachers or in desk jobs. Girls also have to be educated so they can teach their own children. Third, the nurturing nature of females generally yields their willingness to financially help their parents. In contrast, boys tend to have their own families to care for. Finally, it is important to consider a woman's financial reliance on her husband; should she be in a situation requiring her to provide, a degree can be incredibly beneficial.

5 mothers said that education was more important for boys as it enhances their social status. It also helps those working in the army or public sector to get a promotion. They added that girls will end up married and at home anyways, thus there is no point for them to receive an education.

Figure 3: is education more important for boys or girls?



Gender Equality and Education

The mothers were asked about their sons' levels of education to explore whether withdrawing girls from school stems from a gender bias or from the familial economic situation.

12 mothers said that they have sons who left school before completing the 10th grade, and only (5) of those boys are economically active. On the other hand, 5 mothers said that they have sons who completed their university education.

When asked about the reasons behind not finishing school, some mothers said that because of the economic situation of the family, it was necessary for their sons to help generate an income. The remaining mothers, however, said that their sons were not ambitious and were not motivated to finish school. Those boys do not attend school nor do they work and are currently doing nothing.

Overall findings

Half of the girls said that it was their choice to withdraw from school, while the other half said that it was their family's decision. The reasons stated by mothers for pulling their daughters out of school were social, economic, or both. For example, some parents did so because of the cost of public transportation or the idea of sending their daughter to school with a male driver. For others, it was because of their daughter's physical development. It was found that, although half of the girls made a personal choice to leave school, this was often because of the lack of support which is essential for academic success.

When the girls were asked if they liked school, most said that this was the case because they were able to see their friends, teachers, and play on the playground. When asked whether they were happier at home or school, most answered that they were happier at school for the same reasons.

At the same time, many girls said that they would not return to school if given the chance because they are self-conscious of being placed in a class lower than their normal grade or because of their strong conviction that their father/parents would not allow it.

Finally, the mothers were asked about the value of education for their girls and boys. The majority said that education was important for both girls and boys, while some said that it was more important for girls. A few said it was more important for their boys. This data contradicts the finding that half of the girls were pulled out of school by their father, mother, brothers or all three. It also shows that, although the majority of mothers stated that education was more important for their daughters, this was not actually the case given that their daughters were withdrawn from school.

I am 38 year old father of two girls and three boys. I stayed in school until the second grade and then left, and this is something I regret until this day. A person who does not read or write is like a blind person. In our society, when a girl turns 13, 14, or 15 we like to keep her at home to help her mother, that's the only reason that would make us withdraw our girl from school. Actually there are two reasons, the first is to help her mother and the second is that we are unable to educate our girls beyond secondary school. For example, if my daughter finishes 7th grade and even Tawjihi and graduates from school, we do not have the resources for her to go to university in order to get a job after. We can barely make ends meet. School itself does not cost money, it's free, and children only take a JD or two allowance. But it is continuing after school that we cannot afford.

We withdrew

Wafa' from school two years ago in the first semester of the seventh grade. The main reason for pulling her out was to help her mother; her mother was sick and we had a new born baby. It was her mother's decision; I personally wanted her to stay in school. Her mother said that she was under a lot of pressure and needed help with the baby and the household work, cooking, cleaning, dish washing and things like that. I wanted wafa' to finish school and go to a police academy. But I was told priority is given to the children of people who were in the army, so I decided not to. She was very smart at school. Her teachers came to the house four

"I hope that she finds a husband to make her happy and 'yostorha'."

or five times to talk us into taking her back. But what's the point? At this point she can read and write which is good. We can't afford for her to continue and no one in our family has ever finished school and graduated from university. We didn't ask for her opinion to be honest, and even if we did, she's young, she doesn't understand. Currently Wafa' is responsible for the entire house. She takes care of her younger brothers and sisters, she carries out the household

work, and she is given the household allowance and buys the groceries. She takes care of everything. Her mother cleans in other people's

homes, because I am unemployed due to my work injury. We don't mind if she works like her mother or works in the public sector. But it's unacceptable to work in a doctor's or lawyer's office, or in a factory. That unacceptable and we try to stay away from places were genders mix.

I hope that she finds a husband to make her happy and 'yostorha'.

Dreams and Aspirations of Homebound Girls

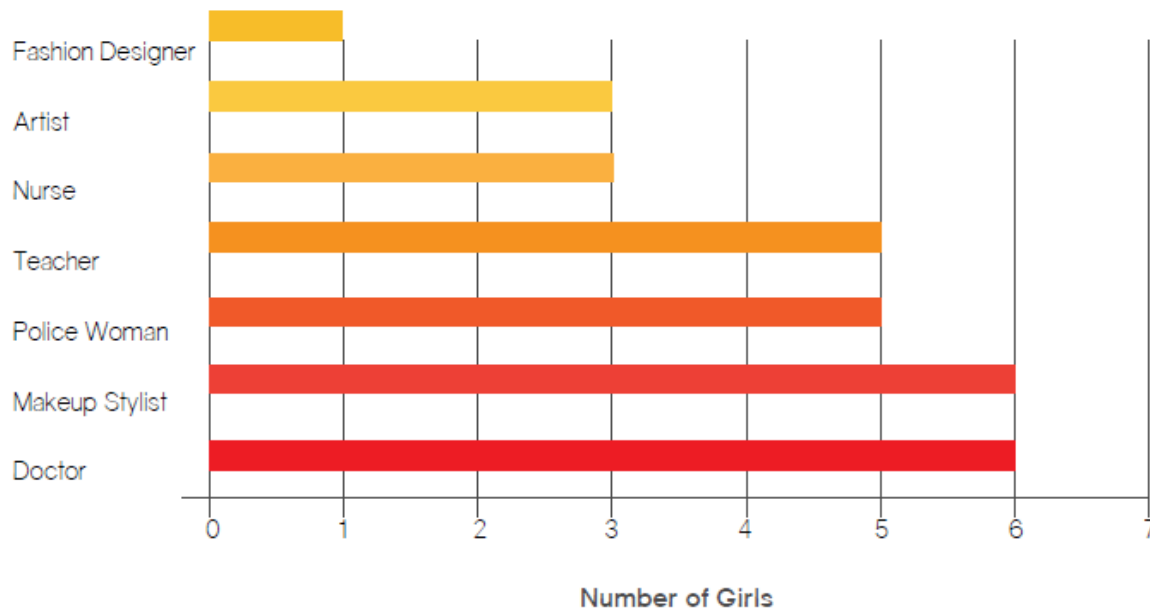
The last series of questions explored the **dreams and aspirations of homebound girls**. It was important to see how they perceived their futures and to gauge the extent of their ambition despite domestic confinement. The questions focused on the challenges or obstacles they might face if they sought to achieve their goals.

The responses of the girls varied. Some of them dream of becoming doctors, teachers, nurses, and police women. Others dream of becoming artists and makeup stylists.

Though some yearn for professional careers, a few simply want to finish their education, learn a craft like sewing, or learn how to play the piano. Other girls described their simple desires, such as going to a theme park, buying an Islamic dress, going to the mall, visiting the city to see the city lights, going to the pilgrimage, and being rich.

The top professions stated by the girls were as follows:

Figure 4: Dreams and aspirations of homebound girls



A few girls said that they have no dreams or ambitions and were indifferent when asked about their wishes. It was important to look at the number of years these girls were confined at home and the extent of their mobility in order to see whether there is a correlation between lack of dreams and the degree of confinement. It was found, however, that the length of confinement varied between 8 months and 3 years, but that these girls all had limited to very limited mobility. **1** girl said that she aspires to stay home.

As for the girls who discussed their dreams and ambitions, some of them did so passionately with smiles. They spoke with a lot of excitement, though it waned when they started talking about the challenges they would face in order to achieve their dreams.

The challenges that the girls mentioned were either i) customs and traditions/conservative mindsets, ii) the lack of financial means, iii) or both. Girls who spoke about 'big' dreams - such as becoming a nurse, doctor, or fashion designer which require an education – said that there was no way for them to achieve these given that they are not in school. If they were allowed to go back to school, many recognize that going to a university is forbidden due to the customs and traditions of their father, family, and society. As for aspirations that require education less than a university degree – such as vocational training – the girls said that it requires money unavailable to them.

I dream of becoming a fashion designer. I told my father that I wish to be a designer on the cat walk, he told me 'in your dreams' (Reema, Marka, 15)

Ever since I was a little girl I dreamt of becoming a lawyer or doctor. But I have to learn languages to become one of those. I'm sure my father will stand in my way, because he doesn't want me to take and finish Tawjihi. (Lina, Mafraq, 16)

I want to work as a stylist in a hair salon, but I need to take training and that costs 50 JDs for the course. I don't have this kind of money. (Doua'a, Zarqa, 15)

Finally, the girls were asked about their role models. Many of the girls said that they do not have any. **5** girls said that their mother is their role model because she is a good housewife and mother. **4** girls said that they have neighbors who are role models; in those cases the neighbors were working females (policewoman, teacher). **2** girls said that their sisters are their role models because they are studying or working. The rest mentioned their teachers or female relatives. Only **2** girls said that their brothers are their role models; one said because he stays at home like her and the other said because he goes to university, which is where he met his girlfriend - she, too, wants to go to university so she can meet a handsome man.

"I don't have any role model, they all the same – no one is educated" (Esra'a, Mafraq, 14)

"I want to be like my brother because he is staying at home and doing nothing" (Hajar, Ma'an, 14)

Mothers' Aspirations for their Children

Mothers were also asked about their dreams for their children's future. The responses for girls and boys varied.

The majority of mothers want their boys to get an education and/or a job, while some of them just want their boys to be happy.

On the other hand, the majority of mothers would like their daughters to be happily married. Some of them wish that their girls would get an education or learn a craft, while a few specifically desire for their girls to be both happily married and working.

"I want my boys to be educated and intellectual, and girls to be happy and comfortable in their lives."

(Fayza, Marka, 34)

"I wish for the boy to be educated and the girl that God sends her a good man to marry. I also wish that she gets a job that will be useful to her"

(Najah, Mafraq, 43)

"I wish for my boys to finish their education and reach the highest levels of education possible and for my girls to finish their education first and then think of marriage."

(Amal, Mafraq, 46)

"I wish that my boys turn out to be good boys and get jobs; and my girls to be sent good husbands."

(Farha, Ma'an, 32)

"Boys to get an education that will benefit them, and girls to be strong and to be sent good husbands."

Khaldiea, Zarqa, 40)



Overall Findings

In terms of their aspirations, the girls' dreams range from being doctors, teachers and artists to going to the mall, a theme park, or the city. They mentioned that they cannot achieve such dreams because of certain challenges, including customs and family traditions, which restrict their education and their finances. A few girls said they did not have any dreams at all. Moreover, a large proportion of the girls said they do not have any role models in their lives. A few said that their mothers are their role models primarily because they are caring and good housewives, while the remaining girls mentioned sisters, neighbors, and teachers. No male role models were mentioned except for two brothers.

Mothers were also asked about their aspirations for their sons and daughters. The majority said that they want their boys to be educated with a job and their girls to be happily married. Some mothers, on the other hand, said that education for females is important and wanted them to be both married and working.

My name is Lina I am 16 years old and have three brothers and four sisters. My mother and father recently got divorced. I am responsible for the household work, which takes me up to two hours to finish. My mother works; she cleans other people's homes. I also help her with sewing at home. My two sisters are still studying, one is in

help at his shop, so I used to go after school and help him. Then my teachers told my mother that I am falling behind in my studies. I did not want to fail in front of my friends and teachers, and I knew that my father needed help at the shop. Seeing that my sisters were far along in their studies – university and Tawjihi – I didn't want them to stop, so

I sacrificed for them and left school.

A girl should be allowed to go out alone

“ A girl should be allowed to go out alone so that she doesn't feel like a prisoner. ”

Tawjihi and the other is in university. I don't have much free time, if I do I watch TV, sew, or just memorize English words from the dictionary. I like talking to my older sister when I am upset, she listens to me.

I used to love school; my teachers, friends and studies. I have been out of school for seven months now; I left in the second semester of the 9th grade. There were lots of problems between my mother and father. My father needed

so that she doesn't feel like a prisoner. She must feel that she can do what she wants to and that people trust her. I visited university with my brother and sisters once, it was really nice. I sometimes go with my mother to buy groceries. As for my friends, I see them when I go to visit my father. Between school and staying home, I choose school, because it gave me a sense of accomplishment and purpose.

Conclusions

Based on its findings, the study came to a number of conclusions:

The definition of homebound girls

This research started by defining homebound girls as girls under the age of eighteen who withdraw themselves, or are withdrawn by their parents, from school and spend their days working as domestic laborers in their homes.

The definition of homebound girls should be revised to **girls under the age of eighteen who withdraw, or are withdrawn by their parents, from school for economic or social reasons and are confined at home, resulting in hindered mental, intellectual, and psychological development.**

The research shows that this issue is not a matter of domestic labor as it has been perceived. Rather, it is a problem of depriving girls of their education and their chance for development by keeping them homebound.

Outreach and channels of communication

Both the cause of the problems and the impetus to solutions of homebound girls originate from the same source. Because of their limited mobility and domestic confinement, the issues of homebound girls tend to stay within the walls of their homes as they are limited to certain individuals for any advice, exposure, and integration.

Freedom of mobility

A girl's freedom of mobility was found to be cyclical and is connected to her age and marital status. A young female who has not yet undergone puberty has the ability to move freely at most times of the day. Once a girl enters her teenage years and begins to physically develop, she is then confined to her home with limited mobility. When a woman gets married and has children of her own, she then regains some of that freedom.

Power Dynamics

Brothers were found to be more controlling of their sisters than their parents. This is because they are considered to be more aware of boys' intentions with regard to 'free' girls. However, in most cases, brothers are not the ones who make the decision to remove their sisters from school: it is often the father, mother, or both.

Withdrawing from school

The reasons for withdrawing girls from school stem from traditional customs and social norms or harsh economic conditions. In many cases, homebound girls make the decision themselves, though this is primarily due to little academic encouragement.

Circle of trust

It was found that girls turn to their surrounding females for advice or help and their role models tend to be women, showing that there is minimal interaction and trust in male family members. Girls will grow up to be like their mothers and raise their daughters in a similar fashion, thereby continuing the cycle of homebound girls.

Dreams and ambitions

Limiting girls to their houses is crushing their ambition and self-confidence as a result of educational deprivation, minimal social interaction, and virtually no independence.

Value of Education

Although the highest educational attainment of mothers was Tawjihi, most of them recognized the need and value of educating their daughters. However, the greatest aspiration that most mothers had for their daughters was comfort and happiness in their marriage.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings and conclusions, a number of recommendations presented themselves that could potentially grant homebound girls access to education and negate the overall phenomenon of homebound girls in Jordan.

Research, Information, and Legislation

- Initiate further research on the situation of girls and their education in Jordan, specifically targeting rural and urban-poor areas;
- Integrate the results of such research with policies, programs, and national strategies;
- Disaggregate information available at the Ministry of Education of school dropouts by sex, age, area, and reason for dropping out to produce annual estimates of homebound girls in Jordan;
- Link poverty reduction strategies, such as minimum household income subsidies, to school attendance;
- Enforce legislation concerning the withdrawal of children below the age of 16 from school;
- Conduct meetings between school administrations, parents, and children who are considering withdrawal so as to find out the reasons behind the decision. This should be followed by an intervention displaying the advantages of education and the ramifications of dropping out;
- The school should report back to the Ministry of Education with withdrawal details in order to maintain accurate records of school dropout rates and their causes;
- A follow-up system with these children both six months and one year after dropping out to find out what happened to them and if they are likely to go back to school.

Quality of and Access to Education

- Make the school system more flexible so as to help homebound girls who would like to go back to academia by providing them with 'bridge courses,' such as summer classes, to make up for what was missed;
- Find cost efficient transportation systems in rural and urban-poor areas to take girls to and from school;

- Develop safe and confidential services for psychological support to assist girls who are homebound and want to go back to school, but are having difficulty with reintegration;
- Develop home and distance learning programs;
- Identify useful vocational training alternatives with the purpose of linking new skills to locally available jobs or opportunities;
- Identify educational programs that could transform girls' outlook on life and are run in a friendly manner in order to ensure that learning is seen as a useful and desirable activity
- Look at alternative adult education programs around the world and introduce applicable models to Jordan e.g. contracting female teachers to home school homebound girls.

Awareness and Social Transformation

- Produce materials (written and visual) on the importance of education for girls and boys for each of the following target groups: girls, their mothers, their fathers and their brothers;
- Change legislation pertaining to early marriage and amend the Personal Status law so as to eliminate the exceptions for underage marriage (i.e. under 18 years old).

Annex 1 – Jordan’s Hazardous work list ⁵⁶

THE OFFICIAL GAZETTE – NO 2618, JUNE 26 201115

A decision by the Minister of Labor on hazardous, tiring or harmful work for children in accordance with the rules of Article 74 of the Labor Law No. 8 for year 1996 and its amendments.

Article 1

This decision is called: a special decision on types of work that are hazardous, tiring or harmful to the health of children for year 2011, to become effective as from the date of publication in the Official Gazette.

Article 2

Taking into consideration the rules of article 73 of the Labor Law No. 8 of the year 1996 and its amendments, a child under 18 years may not be engaged in work that includes the following risks:

1- Work with bodily risks

- a. Work with explosive or flammable materials or in the preparation, filling or exploding mines.
- b. Work in mines, caves or stone cutting be over or under the ground
- c. Work that requires controlling doors or ventilation to workers in mines or divers
- d. Work that cannot be performed without wearing personal protective gears against direct or temporary risks
- e. Guarding people or properties at security or protection firms
- f. Work at places where moneys or jewelries are exchanged, stored or moved.
- g. All kinds of work that involves protecting others or preventing them from possible harms (like swimming observers)
- h. Work the nature of which would require dealing with machines parts of which are not protected with special devices or works on winches or belts of monotone cycles or machines with rotating particles used for cutting or threading
- i. Work the nature of which requires running and operating self-operating machines
- j. Work the nature of which requires exposure to traffic, driving or operating any machine used for the production or industry of petrol and gas
- k. Work in heat or pressurized gas stations

⁵⁶ Source: Save the Children International (2011), Promising Futures Project, Marka Needs Assesment, Jordan.

- l. Work that involves managing or operating lifts at factories, sea or airports
- m. Work that requires signaling, or tying loads or giving lifting signs to lifters
- n. Work in high rising places like rooftops or building borders or windows and balconies
- o. Work the nature of which requires collecting scraps or garbage for recycling
- p. Work on sliding roofs or stairs and ladders that may cause the child to slip
- q. Work in construction, including demolishing, building or sand cleaning and where earthmovers and drillers are used
- r. Work in confined places
- s. Work in sea hunting or by using rifles or work in slaughterhouses or in dealing with wild, poisonous or dangerous animals
- t. All kinds of work in stone cutting places, tile making factories and rock cutting places
- u. Work in racing tracks for horses and camels
- v. Mechanical works (maintaining and repairing machines and engines)
- w. Welding and blacksmith works
- x. Carpentry work
- y. Work that requires physical fatigue like uploading and downloading
- z. Work that may result in exposure to electric shocks
- aa. Agricultural work that involves:
 - i. Driving tractors or other agro-machines
 - ii. Mixing or spreading fertilizers or pesticides
 - iii. Cutting or touching poisonous plants
 - iv. Climbing on high trees or high ladders
 - v. Using sharp tools
 - vi. Manual harvesting

2- Work involving psycho-social risks:

- a. Work in houses
- b. Work in any place where sleeping over or residing outside family house is required
- c. Work on the roads and streets
- d. Work in preparing and burying dead corpses
- e. Work in elderly homes with addicted, injured, mentally or physically or handicapped old people requiring certain responsibility from the child to help, assist, supervise and guide
- f. Any work by which the child is subject to violence

3- Work involving moral risks:

- a. Any work where the body of the child is used for sexual pleasure
- b. Work in hotels, public entertainment places, nightclubs, coffee shops and Internet cafés.
- c. Any work involving the sale of or the offering of tobaccos and wines as well as all that is prohibited under other laws for children less than 18 years of age
- d. Unsupervised work

4- Chemical risks:

- a. Works the nature of which require exposure to:
 - i. Dust, fibers, steam and smoke
 - ii. Organic dust resulting from cotton and weaving industries
 - iii. Non-organic dust leading to asbestosis or clotting
 - iv. Heavy elements and poisonous, burning and other chemicals
 - v. Cancerous materials
 - vi. Materials that cause impotence or physical deformities
 - vii. Materials that lead to allergy
 - viii. Materials that are harmful to the nervous system or mental growth
 - ix. Materials that lead to serious diseases if exposure is prolonged
 - x. Paint spraying
 - xi. Cleaning animal skins and coloring them
 - xii. Melting, pouring and metal covering
 - xiii. Dry cleaning of clothes

5- Physical risks:

- a. Work where the child is exposed to noise exceeding 85 decibel
- b. Work by which the child is subjected to atomic radiations
- c. Work by which the child is subjected to non-atomic but infrared and electro-magnetic radiations or fields
- d. Work at which there is an exposure to differences in air pressure
- e. Work that involves diving
- f. Filling pressurized gas cylinders
- g. Work that subjects the child to vibrations
- h. Works that exposes the child to excessive heat or direct sun rays
- i. Works related to fire extinguishing or elimination of risks
- j. Works under which the child is subjected to cold weather conditions
- k. All works of metal formation, melting pouring, blowing glass, making ceramics and glass works at industrial ovens and bakeries
- l. Works involving electrical, gas, water and steam lines or piping
- m. Works at places that do not abide by acceptable conditions of lighting, ventilation, humidity and heat as per defined criteria both nationally and internationally

6- Biological and bacterial risks (viruses, bacteria, parasites and others):

- a. Work that may cause exposure to directly transmittable risks through a carrier like flies and rats or indirectly through touching or dealing with animals particularly with cadavers
- b. Work in hospitals or health centers where the child might risk coming into contact with patients and body fluids and medical wastes and the risk of transmittable infections.
- c. Work in cleaning, separating and collecting garbage and in waste canals or dumps

7- Ergonomic risks:

- a. Work in positions that are not suitable to the spine, joints and muscles for long periods
- b. Use of unsuitable tools or items to the size of the hand or body in general
- c. Pushing, pulling or carrying weights (in consideration to the contents of article 15 from the special instructions on protection of workers and establishments against work environment risks)
- d. Work that requires repetitive hand movements or positioning of the body not requiring extra bodily effort like fixing tiles and ceramics or printing or carpet weaving

8- Other risks:

- a. Work on ships
- b. The minister may decide to consider any other works that have not been mentioned in this decision as hazardous or tiring or harmful to the health of the child based on a report from a specialized body reporting the unsuitability of the work to the child in question or that it does not suit his age or capabilities be it physical, mental or psychological. (To be decided by the legal department.)