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MOSD, UNICEF convenes experts meeting for a national strategy on foster care for children without parental care

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AMMAN, Jordan, 22 Aug 2017 – “While she sleeps beside me, I can’t stop gazing and admiring her beautiful innocent face,” said Amra (name changed). “I can’t believe I have a baby now!” Like any new mother, she is besotted with her baby girl. But unlike most mothers, Amra did not give birth to her child. She met her 13 month old daughter Ruba (name changed) through the foster care programme in Jordan.

With estimates of close to a 1,000 children in Jordan with no parents or family members, MoSD and UNICEF convened a meeting today with judges, legal experts and community based organizations to discuss strategies and plans aimed at strengthening and expanding the foster care program in the Kingdom.

“An important clause in the Convention on the Rights of the Child on early childhood protection programmes focuses on family protection, which also includes family foster care for children who do not have parents or relatives,” said the Minister of Social Development H.E. Hala Lattouf.

A 2011 study conducted by the Government of Jordan and UNICEF compared the wellbeing of children living in care centers and their peers who live in with foster families. Findings showed that children and youth living in institutions experienced emotional and behavioural difficulties at much higher rates than their peers living with families.

Based on the findings, MOSD and UNICEF, in partnership with Columbia University initiated the Community-Family Integration Team (C-FIT) programme, which has brought about a paradigm shift in adapting evidence and community based approach to child care and the prevention of institutional placement of children. The C-FIT programme has found homes for nearly 150 children but there are more than 600 children still waiting to find a loving home and a family.

Minister Lattouf noted that, despite the success of the programme to date, there are still challenges. These can be overcome by further enhancing knowledge and capacities of service providers and potential foster families, and strengthening partnerships and systems – pertinent measures that will ensure sustainability of the programme, as reflected in the Jordan Vision 2025 document, and in the MOSD’s 2017-2021 Planning Strategy.

“Children living in institutions, without the protection and care of parents or family member are often the most vulnerable in society,” said the UNICEF Jordan Representative Robert Jenkins. “UNICEF is committed to continue supporting the Government of Jordan in strengthening social care (including community-based activities) and the foster care programme, for the well-being of all vulnerable children without parental care in Jordan,” he added.

The outcome of the meeting held today will be translated into a concrete national strategy and action plan on foster care in

Jordan. UNICEF's alternative care programme in Jordan for vulnerable children without parents and relatives is funded by Canada, Germany and the UK.

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