



Children in Amman, Jordan participate in HEART activities in their school where the program has been integrated into the regular curriculum from kindergarten to Grade 9. *Photo: Sara Hommel/Save the Children*

## **The Bokra Initiative and Save the Children Healing and Education Through the Arts (HEART)**

**Final Report – May 2015**

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## Executive Summary

Save the Children is pleased to present this final report to the Bokra Initiative on the progress we have made in our Healing and Education through the Arts (HEART) program. HEART has not only helped children heal through artistic processes that allow them to express emotions and develop resiliency, but has also helped them to learn through creative artistic activities that engage them in areas such as math, language, history, and science.

In 2014, funding from the Bokra Initiative continued to support HEART programming in both Jordan and the West Bank, building on the work initiated in 2013. In both countries, HEART has been a big success. The popularity of the program with children, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders has led to increased demand for program expansion that is continuing in 2015.

## Country Reports

### The West Bank

In 2014, HEART programming in the West Bank supported a total of 30 kindergartens, 60 teachers, 3,453 children and 450 mothers. Major activities to support this work included on-site teacher training for 30 teachers from 15 new kindergartens and refresher trainings for the 15 kindergartens that started in 2013. In addition, two-day group retreats were organized to bring together teachers from different kindergartens for group training and an opportunity to share their experiences implementing HEART in their classrooms. Teachers and technical trainers also organized parent sessions that included 450 mothers who learned about the HEART program their children participate in at school, as well as arts activities they can do at home with their children.

The kindergarten teachers have had very positive reactions to HEART both from children in the kindergartens as well as their mothers. The teachers have been proud of the parent sessions they conducted and how positively the mothers responded. Many mothers noted that these sessions were not only about understanding their children better through HEART but also helpful in learning more about themselves; participating in HEART activities allowed them to process their own stress. In a follow-up to these parent sessions, mothers reported that they enjoy doing arts at home with their children and that the HEART approach has helped them to be more patient and understanding.

The teachers indicated that HEART sessions have been especially useful for children with both physical and mental disabilities, offering them a new and creative way to engage with their peers and in the overall learning environment. They noted not only higher attendance in school by these children but also a significant increase in their participation in the classroom.



Children engage in numerous HEART activities, including sculpture, dance, and art in the West Bank. Photos: Save the Children



## Jordan

In 2014, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE), HEART integration continued in three public primary schools in Amman: Khawla Bint-Alazwar, Al-Manakher, and Alkhansaa. In collaboration with the MoE, Save the Children identified key stakeholders in the schools and ministry to initiate HEART activities, and teachers from various faculties were chosen to receive training and roll out the HEART program in their schools. Liaison officers from the MoE and focal points from the Protection Department in the ministry have also been part of the capacity building process.

In 2013 and 2014, 40 teachers, principals, and MoE personnel working in these three schools were trained in HEART. A total of 1,025 students participated in HEART across these schools. The program is extremely popular with students, teachers, and administrators. Teachers and principals report that students who are involved in HEART show more positive academic outcomes, become more engaged and interactive in class, demonstrate a greater tendency to form tight social relationships with their classmates, and resort to less bullying and related behavioral challenges.

HEART activities have been integrated into classes ranging from kindergarten through grade 9. They have been successful in making various academic subject areas more fun and creative, such as learning language through drama and math through music. In addition, special sessions for psychosocial support through expressive arts have been organized on a regular basis, conducted by both teachers and school counselors, to provide students with a safe and supportive environment through which to process and share feelings and stressful experiences. Students and teachers have been so happy with HEART that, in March 2015, they organized a student-led celebration of the HEART work at the Alkansaa School in Amman. Children performed drama sketches and musical plays for teachers, parents, community leaders, Save the Children staff and officials from the Ministry of Education.



Children engage in numerous HEART art, music and dance activities in Jordan. *Photos: Save the Children*



## Next Steps

Save the Children is extremely grateful for the generous support of the Bokra Initiative. We are currently working with the Initiative to support a new fundraising campaign that will launch in June 2015 to support the expansion of HEART in the Middle East. We look forward to continuing this great work with you and to reaching thousands more children in need in the years to come.

## Stories from the Field

### **Baylasan Walks Back into School**

Five-year-old Baylasan was born in the West Bank with a physical disability that has limited her movement. She uses two crutches to walk.

Her teacher Abeer says that Baylasan was always withdrawing from activities at the kindergarten. Other children weren't playing with her and always saw her as someone "strange" and different. All this made Baylasan feel lonely and excluded.

Everything changed for Baylasan once she was introduced to HEART activities. The changes were sudden and surprising for her and the other children as well. Baylasan became excited about participating and children started to interact with her more and more.

Abeer explained: "Baylasan is more able to express herself and is clearer when it comes to her feelings. Now, she has new friendships." Abeer added that before HEART, Baylasan's participation was limited as many activities were physical. Now, HEART has helped introduce new activities that Baylasan can easily engage in such as drawing and musical activities.

Baylasan's mother who also participated in the parent sessions said: "Baylasan used to hate the kindergarten and always acted sick so that she wouldn't have to go. Now, she's very excited and finally she smiles when she goes. I myself as a mother benefited a lot. I feel more confident while trying to support Baylasan and my other children. I feel I have alternatives now and can come up with many exercises that enable my children to express themselves in a positive manner. Even the atmosphere at the house is more relaxing! Now I'm thinking about Baylasan's future and am planning on approaching the school's administration prior to her enrollment so that they are better able to accept Baylasan, support her and avoid repeating any negative experience she had at first in kindergarten."



Baylasan was born with a physical disability that made her withdraw from activities and her peers in class. Through HEART, she was able to overcome her inhibitions and actively participate in class. *Photo: Save the Children*

