



## CAPOEIRA IN PEACE OASIS — JORDAN

The refugee camp Zaatari Camp is close to Jordan's northern border. It was established 2012 and has become emblematic of the displacement of Syrians across the Middle East. The camp has evolved from a small collection of tents into an urban settlement of some 80,000. Since 2012 over 460,000 refugees have passed through the camp. The prolonged crisis in Syria and the continued state of limbo for those living in Zaatari Camp present risks to the psychosocial wellbeing of children. Many have lived through horrible experiences both in Syria and Jordan, impacting their behavior, engagement in school and family life, and overall psychosocial wellbeing.

Lutheran World Federation (LWF) together with the NGO Capoeira Al Shabibi decided to act on the needs, using right based approaches manifested in Capoeira: **participant-led programming** to encourage children and youth to openly share their opinions in class, **train leadership**, and **collaboration between participants**. The approach also emphasizes safe space. In the context of a Capoeira session, both participants and facilitators are treated as equals and trusted friends.

Capoeira is an art form that combines music and rhythm, teamwork, body awareness, and creativity. Participants learn to play musical instruments, clap and sing with expression and confidence, support their peers and work together to perform technical martial art movements, heighten awareness of their bodies and the space around them, and think independently by creating unique movement sequences.

Participants have a chance to play and engage in movement along with discussion and learning of psychological issues they are facing, in this way exploring issues in their lives and learning how to better cope with obstacles. With the use of Capoeira youth could be **equipped with appropriate coping strategies**, facilitating psychosocial skills enabling youth to manage their feelings in a healthy way and **engage more productively within their family and within the wider community**.

Between November 2017 and April 2018, 172 Capoeira sessions were led by Capoeira Al Shababi trainers, and 48 Training of Trainers (TOT) sessions were conducted for Syrian volunteer facilitators. The TOT was an excellent tool for promoting sustainability in this activity. The Syrian volunteers benefit from **developing leadership skills**; children benefit from having **role models from their community**; and achieved **increased sustainability**.

A number of 106 children and youth (50% male, 50% female) participated in the sessions, and care was given to **creating a safe space for both genders**. Female trainers and volunteers instruct all-female classes. A female-only space also provides the opportunity for girls to feel fully comfortable participating in a movement-based activity. Capoeira **promotes inclusion**, since it is adaptable to all experience levels and promotes empowerment and respect for others, why the focus was also given to including **persons with disabilities**.

Two performances gave participants the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in movement and music to their local community.

Five volunteers were trained to become Capoeira instructors themselves. The volunteers were taught to play and maintain Capoeira musical instruments, learned the theory behind psychosocial support and how to adapt it to Capoeira sessions, and achieved an intermediate level of Capoeira skill. They learned to design games for focus, trust, communication, and creativity, manage disruptive behaviour, conduct case referrals, and follow up with participants' families. Although the project finished in April 2018, Capoeira sessions for boys and girls are still being held daily in Peace Oasis (as of June 2018), by the sustainability created by the **promotion of self-empowerment** and the development of leadership skills amongst the facilitators.

The following quote comes from a female Syrian facilitator.

*“The first session I gave, it’s very hard to describe what I felt. I felt very good that I was responsible for something. At first, I was nervous, but in the last ten minutes I asked the girls how it was, and they said it was amazing, and they loved it so much. I increased my self-confidence. Honestly, I didn’t believe in myself as much before, I didn’t have the courage. I used to be so shy, shy to create conversations and talk, but now I say anything I want. When I look in the mirror, I say to myself that I have to rely on myself and not on others because now I have more responsibility. I am happier now.”*

## Lessons learned

A key lesson learned is that there is a need and appreciation for a diversity of psychosocial interventions, in addition to traditional psychosocial class sessions. Capoeira provides psychosocial support in a variety of ways, including community building, leadership development, and expression through music and movement- all in one package. It is for this reason that the activity was so well-received by the community.

## ACT Regional Psychosocial Community of Practice in Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA)

You have just read a good practice of Community Based Psychosocial support, from the ACT regional community of practice in Middle East and Northern Africa.

The Regional Psychosocial Community of Practice (PS CoP) is a group of people joined together by common issues of working in the field of community based psychosocial support, as part of the ACT Alliance humanitarian response to emergency and disaster situations that took place in a given place in the region. Through the regional Community of Practice, the aim is to strengthen the capacities and practices of community based psychosocial support of ACT members, by sharing good practices appropriate to local cultures, share expertise and experiences.

### How to join and get in touch

For ACT Members in Middle East and North Africa who are interested to join the PS CoP or want to know about the PS CoP in the region, can communicate with Nader Abu Amsha, the chair for the MENA region PS CoP. **For more information contact:**

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