

Field Report for the Journal of International Development

Educating Refugees: The Impact of a Pro-Social Educational Programme for Syrian Refugees in Jordan

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Introduction

The Syrian conflict is well into its seventh year, with the violence, deaths, destruction and deprivation only increasing as the years grind on. The resulting refugee crisis continues to grow too, with over five million people having fled the country and around 7 million more displaced internally, meaning that in total over half the population have left their homes as a result of the conflict. A total of 2.4 million children have been displaced, with many millions more characterised as “in need.” There is a huge range of problems resulting from such large numbers of victims of war and over such a long timeframe, especially for the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan who have absorbed the majority of those fleeing.

Due to the magnitude and severity of the deprivation caused by the crisis, the programming designed to help these vulnerable, transient populations must be multi-faceted and comprehensive. Many children have missed years of school, and a growing number have never been at all; on top of this they are suffering mass trauma from experiencing violence, loss, displacement and poverty – and all the attendant complications.

Here we look at a specific programme being implemented in Jordan with funding from UNICEF. The programme takes place in both the Syrian refugee camps and also centres in the host communities and is based on a curriculum designed around the popular cartoon *1001 Nights* to facilitate both educational and socio-behavioural development through entertainment.

Save the Children was commissioned to collect data on the effects of the curriculum, which this field report is largely based on, along with analysis of other quantitative, qualitative and anecdotal information. Follow-up field visits were made by the authors to add qualitative observations. There are myriad problems in measuring such intangible concepts such as empathy, kindness, tolerance and so on, but the study still manages to show a clear positive effect of the programme, echoed in interviews with teachers and implementers.

The following analysis shows the attitudinal changes of children who have taken the education programme designed around the animation *1001 Nights*, created by Big Bad Boo Studios, a Canadian animation studio and educational entertainment company. Across all the children surveyed, negative attitudes dropped dramatically, but the change was especially marked among the most ‘at-risk’ children – indicating that the programme is particularly impactful on reaching those children most in need. Qualitative reports from teachers, implementers and parents not only support these findings but go further to point out improvements in relations between communities, behavioural improvements at home and in the playground, and also some stories of the adults themselves changing how they interact with children as a result of experiencing the programme. “Some of the teachers and facilitators have seen that the material have also changed themselves,” said a UNICEF implementer.

There is a major caveat to all the analysis below: despite careful data collection and analysis no-one can be entirely sure that the observed changes in attitude and behaviour are down to one single programme. The children who went through the *1001 Nights* curriculum also went through many others, and over the course of the implementation many of their lives changed with the changing backdrop of the conflict, and shifting circumstances as refugees; for example news from Syria, political or personal, might affect behaviour, or a changing economic situation for better or for worse such as a job gained or lost, or simply a child's adaptation to a different environment with natural resilience or its opposite, or an increase or decrease in stability. We believe, however, that *1001 Nights* has indeed had an impact for two broad reasons: one, the evaluation was designed to test specific lessons learned from specific episodes, and two, the qualitative reports from parents, teachers and implementers; these are the people observing and interacting with the children daily and therefore have a deep familiarity with what affects their behaviour, and they all spoke with overwhelming positivity about *1001 Nights*.

Background to Jordan

Jordan has made significant progress towards the realization of children's rights to survival, development and protection. This was achieved despite the challenge of several waves of refugees and regional instability. However, there are signs of growing disparities between children in the country across various dimensions, as seen for example in increased rates of extreme poverty and a low level of economic participation of women.¹

Incidence of poverty tends to be higher in rural areas, though two-thirds of the poor live in urban areas.² People living in hard-to-reach areas, including the 5.9 per cent of Syrians currently living in what are commonly referred to as 'Informal Tented Settlements'³ face significant barriers to accessing basic social services.

Jordan is ranked 134th out of 144 countries in terms of gender equality.⁴ Women's academic achievements do not translate into labour market success. The female participation rate in the labour market is only 13.2 per cent, compared to 58.7 per cent of men.⁵ Women who are employed are paid almost seven times less than the male counterpart.⁶

¹ The Government of Jordan and UNDP, *Second National Millennium Development Goals Report Jordan 2010*

² UNDP, *Jordan Poverty Reduction Strategy*, 2013

³ UNHCR, *Living in the shadows*, 2014

⁴ The World Economic Forum: Economies, Jordan < <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/rankings/> >, accessed 21 June 2017

⁵ The Government of Jordan Department of Statistics, *Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2016*

⁶ The World Economic Forum: Economies, Jordan < <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/rankings/>

Children and adolescents with disabilities face high levels of stigmatization, a lack of specialized services, and structural and social barriers. In Jordan, 6.1 per cent of children aged 5 to 17 have some form of functional difficulties, and for 1.3 per cent children these are severe.⁷

Jordan's population of 9.5 million is young, with 63 per cent below the age of 30 and 40.2 per cent children.⁸ There is a vast demographic window of opportunity to better engage Jordan's youth economically, socially, and civically. However, a third of youth aged 15-24 are unemployed (31.5% male and 56.9% Female)⁹.

Jordan hosts nearly three million non-Jordanians, including 1.33 million Syrians,¹⁰ of whom 656,000 are registered as refugees.¹¹ The protracted nature of the crisis in Syria has placed significant stress on the socio-economic environment of the country, strained the capacity of government and partners to provide quality services for all children, and also challenged communities and care-givers to meet the needs of vulnerable children. This requires a shift in emphasis towards promoting the resilience of communities and also the capacity of government services to meet the needs of all vulnerable children in the Kingdom.

The Government of Jordan's commitment to providing learning opportunities for all children in the Kingdom, irrespective of their status or nationality, has resulted in the expansion in the number of double-shifted schools and the development of a "catch-up programme" for children that have been out of school for long periods. Yet more than 40,200 Syrian refugee children remain out of school in 2016, requiring additional strategies to overcome the remaining barriers.¹²

The combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Jordan on the Convention on the Rights of the Child were submitted in 2013, and the Committee considered the reports in 2014. Key issues included the considerable delay in adopting the Children's Rights Bill and the draft law on juvenile justice; cuts in the national budget that threaten progress achieved in children's development; and violence against children, including corporal punishment and honour killings. The sixth periodic report is due in 2019.

There is an ongoing need for a robust response to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect at family, school and community level, including addressing social norms and improving institutional capacity. Violence against children in homes, schools, and institutions remains prevalent. Eighty-nine per cent of children were subjected

⁷ The Government of Jordan Department of Statistics, *Jordan Population and Housing Census 2015*, 2016.

⁸ The Government of Jordan Department of Statistics, *Jordan Population and Housing Census 2015: Main results*, 2016.

⁹ The Government of Jordan Department of Statistics, *Employment and Unemployment Survey 2016*

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ UNHCR. <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>. Accessed February 2017.

¹² No Lost Generation, *Preparing for the Future of Children and Youth in Syria and the Region through Education: London One Year On*, 2017

to a violent form of discipline of whom 20 per cent were subjected to severe physical punishment.¹³ Eleven per cent of children in public schools self-reported having been subjected to physical violence by teachers during the 2015-2016 school year.¹⁴

Child labour and child marriage are increasingly relied upon as negative coping mechanisms in response to the socio-economic pressure facing the most vulnerable households. An estimated 76,000 boys and girls in Jordan are engaged in economic activities, of whom about 92 per cent are child labourers.¹⁵ It is estimated that 3.7 per cent of 13 to 17 year old girls are married in Jordan, including 2 per cent of Jordanian girls and 13 per cent of Syrian girls in this age group.¹⁶ Analysis of registered marriages in Jordan indicates that marriages of Syrian girls rose sharply from 18 per cent of total registered Syrian marriages in 2012 to 35 per cent in 2015.¹⁷

Background to 1001 Nights

Whenever I say on the morning line [waiting to go into the classroom] that it's 1001 Nights today they get extremely happy and excited. Teacher, Baqaa Camp, Jordan

Drawing from the traditional framing and folktales of the original *1001 Nights*, this animated version of the stories has been developed with contemporary settings and language for children. The television series now airs in over 60 countries and 20 languages on premier television networks including Disney, Cartoon Network, PBS, Discovery Kids and Al Jazeera Children's Channel and others. The popularity can be measured by ratings and by the mass audience reach the program achieves. In over half of the countries in which it airs, the cartoon is one of the three most viewed programs for children between the ages of 4 and 14. In many countries, for example the Gulf States, its viewership comprises over 24% of youths in its target demographic when it airs, and in the aggregate, its estimated global audience exceeds 120 million people per year.

But beyond the sheer enjoyment of the product as seen in the viewing figures and reach, *1001 Nights* has other benefits: each episode has been crafted with a lesson in pro-social behaviour, aiming to develop values such as honesty, empathy, individual rights, the rule of law, kindness and helping others, making responsible choices, critical thinking, the value of literacy and education and respecting the ideas, beliefs and opinions of others. When Ministries of Education began using the cartoon in schools, a curriculum was developed with activity books with hands-on activities; lesson plans with suggestions for questions and other in-class activities; and comic

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Data based on results from the Ma'an Campaign online survey

¹⁵ ILO, *National Child Labour Survey 2016 of Jordan*

¹⁶ *Jordan Population and Housing Census 2015*

¹⁷ UNICEF, *A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan 2014*

books for the children to take home. While the curriculum suggests activities, teachers are trained to develop their own activities in any way that they see fit for their classroom and the specific needs of their classes. For example, we observed teachers acting out relevant pieces of the episode, with the script in their handbooks, before playing the cartoon: for younger children especially, seeing their teachers doing something a little silly, certainly funny, was as gripping as the cartoon itself. Other activities include puzzles, drawing, colouring and answering questions. In a life where resources are extremely limited, even owning such books can be exciting. One of the most common questions from the children was: "When will there be new books?"

Overview of the data

Quantitative and qualitative data on the impact of the *1001 Nights* programme in Jordan was collected by Save the Children during 2016, using an instrument that was administered before the implementation of the *1001 Nights* curriculum (pretest) and after the completion (posttest). 199 children ranging from 5 to 15 years took part in the pretest and 117 in the posttest. The original design of the study was to have longitudinal data, that is, to test the same children both pre and post taking the programme, but the transient nature of refugee life and the administrative challenge in keeping track of children moving from centre to centre meant that only 71 children completed both the pretest and posttest. To avoid excluding the majority of the sample (which would reduce the reliability and generalisability of the findings), all available data was analysed using cross-sectional methods; when analysis of the subset of 71 children who were in both pre and post-tests led to substantially identical results, we decided we could use the full data sets with confidence.

The twenty questions of the test focused on issues related to honesty, empathy, the rule of law, kindness and helping others, respecting the ideas, beliefs and opinions of others, and the value of literacy and education. In addition, there were focus groups and interviews with parents and facilitators (such as the teachers and volunteers), with the data produced combined for analysis.

In addition, a researcher observed the programme being taught in a number of different contexts: the Azraq refugee camp (home to over 80,000 Syrians, in northern Jordan) and two Makani centres in host communities in Amman, one with a high turnover of exclusively Syrian refugees (Suwailah), the other with a more stable, and mixed population, of Iraqi, Palestinian and Syrian refugees (in the Baqaa refugee camp, set up in 1968 to cope with the influx of Palestinians from the 1967 Arab-Israeli war). These observations elicited certain gaps in the test, as the data did not show certain aspects of the effects of the programme, most obviously community cohesion and empathy skills. Consultations with teachers and facilitators who have implemented the same programme with similar communities

in Lebanon showed the same gaps in the results presented below, leading to redevelopment of the measures for the next round of data collection.

Development of Research Measures

The development of measures to assess the educational impact of *1001 Nights* was informed by several considerations. First, as is common in such studies of educational materials, the data collection tool is intended to be valid, reliable, and closely aligned with the goals of the programme; that is, the research instruments must be accurate and measure the types of outcomes that the programme is intended to promote (e.g., Copple & Bredecamp, 2009; Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). Thus, consultation with the creators of both the *1001 Nights* television series and its classroom lesson plans was woven into the process of creating research measures, to ensure close alignment between assessments and project goals.

Second, whenever possible, measures were adapted from assessment tools that have been well-established in past research, whether that research concerned educational media per se or broader developmental or educational issues. For example, much of our measurement of empathy was adapted from Bryant's (1982) empathy scale, which has been validated and used extensively for decades in developmental research.

Third, in addition to aligning the measures with the programme's educational goals, the measures were also designed to be consistent with the nature of the *1001 Nights* project. In particular, the educational approach of *1001 Nights* is grounded in storytelling, so storytelling was also incorporated as an element of the measures when appropriate. Techniques such as role-playing, evaluating realistic fictional scenarios, and retelling stories were used to assess children's comprehension, attitudes, and dispositions.

Finally, although the measures were grounded in approaches and instruments that have been widely used in past research, we also recognized that marked differences exist between the children participating in *1001 Nights* research and the populations with whom such measures have been used in the past. Research instruments that have proven to be age-appropriate and culturally appropriate for western children may be less so for refugee children who have endured the hardships of war, deprivation, and life in refugee camps. For this reason, as the implementation of *1001 Nights* (and its accompanying research) has rolled out in new locations with new populations of children, research instruments needed to be continually revisited and the measures and tools revised – essentially using each new data set as a sort of “rolling pilot test” – to best suit the needs of the children and to focus on the particular educational outcomes that are considered most critical.

Data Collection

Certain simplifications were carried out in the field in response to challenges to the data collectors, posing problems for analysis. The biggest problem to emerge as a result of simplification is that children were not asked the questions as an open-ended task, but rather given a series of possible responses, limiting the value of what they said: they would be more able to guess the “right” response, or at least try to, rather than respond with their own sense of what they should think or do. Second, they were not asked for justifications of their answers, which is where much of the assessment can be made: people can do something “wrong” (e.g. stealing) for the “right” reasons (e.g. to save someone’s life).

Another obvious lacunae is the lack of a control group, which may be possible to address in another implementation, as roll-outs are not done simultaneously across a population. Therefore the first set of children to go through the program can be compared to a group who do not receive the curriculum before the post-test is applied. However, ensuring the groups are comparable may require further analysis and the need to undertake regressions to control for other factors that influence the results.

Data Analysis

Numerical analysis was done through coding the four possible responses per question into two “negative” options (that is, the immoral choices and disregard for others) and two “positive” options. Here the data is presented as a drop in negative answers as a means of showing attitudinal shifts from negative to positive responses. The data is divided into subgroups as following: those in refugee camps and in community centres in host communities; girls and boys; and three different age groups. A statistical analysis suggests that there were no systematic differences across age groups, gender, or location when it comes to the impact of the program. In other words, the program works equally well across all of these subgroups.

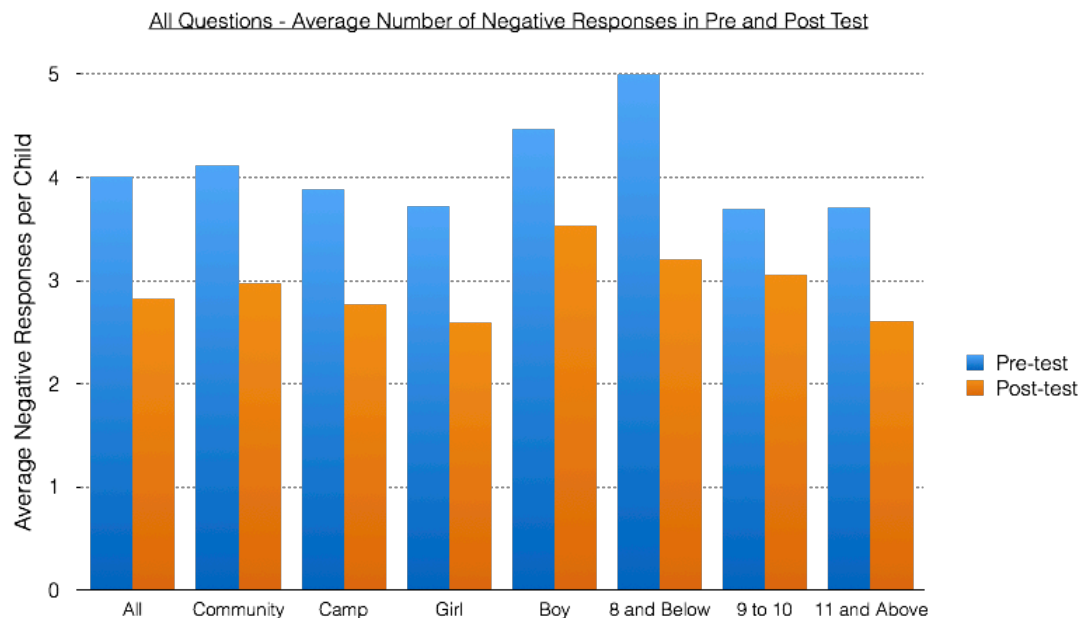
The questions were then grouped together in just two categories: those to do with practical actions, and those to do with empathy and emotions. A major difference then emerged: the program scored extremely highly on all the action-related questions, whereas the emotional measures showed little change. This is where the qualitative work became essential, as the feedback from facilitators and implementers was sharply at odds with this picture. The following report provides evidence from the field to flesh out the figures and also suggest areas where the tool could be developed.

Finally, the data is broken down to show the shift within only the most at-risk children; that is, those who scored lowest on the pre-test questions. *1001 Nights* has had a remarkable effect on these children, even more remarkable than the averages across all the children tested.

Impact Assessment

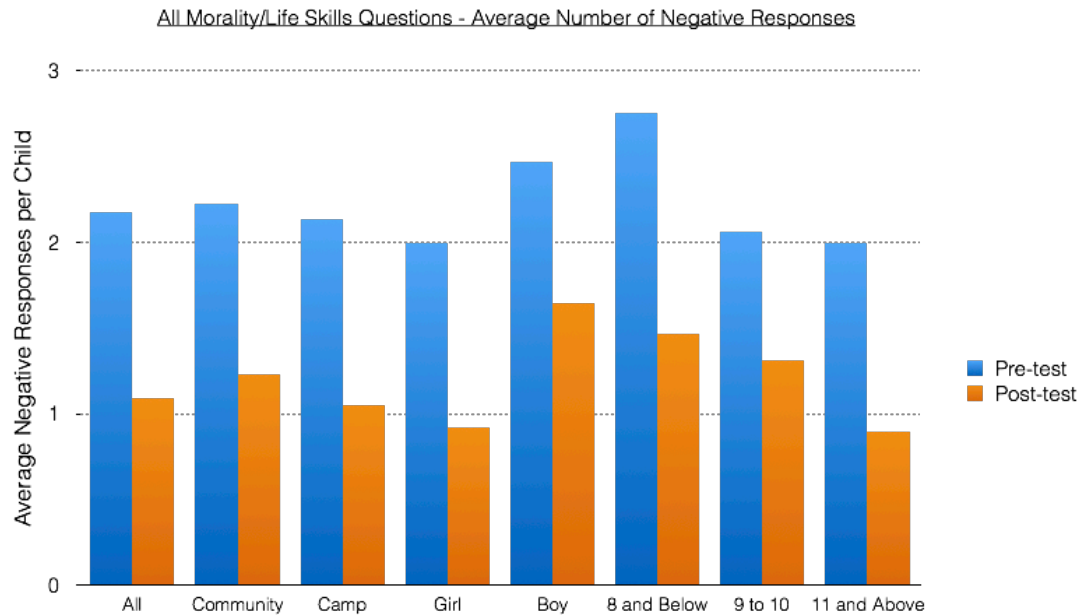
Overview

The aggregate results are impressive across all subgroups:

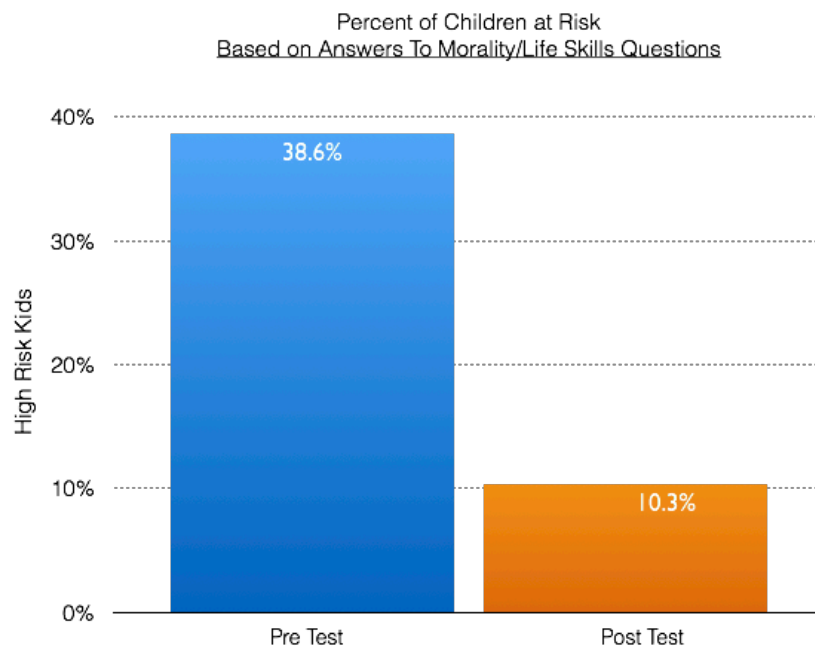


This graph shows the average number of negative responses to all 20 questions in the pre-test and post-test: before the *1001 Nights* programme, children on average responded to 4 questions with a negative answer, and after the programme this dropped to 2.8 out of 20 (amounting to a 30% reduction in negative responses).

Just alone, this shift to pro-social attitudes is welcomed and in line with the objectives of the programme, but a closer look at the data shows even more encouraging signs. There was a set of questions to do with empathy that did not show much of a shift, an issue explored below: we conclude the questions did not adequately capture the children's attitudes either pre or post test, based in part on teachers' and implementers' testimonials. Once you extract these answers, leaving just questions to do with morality and practical behaviour, the results are even more marked. On average, children provided the negative answer on 2.3 of the questions prior to the program, versus 1.1 after the program (amounting to a 52% reduction in negative responses).

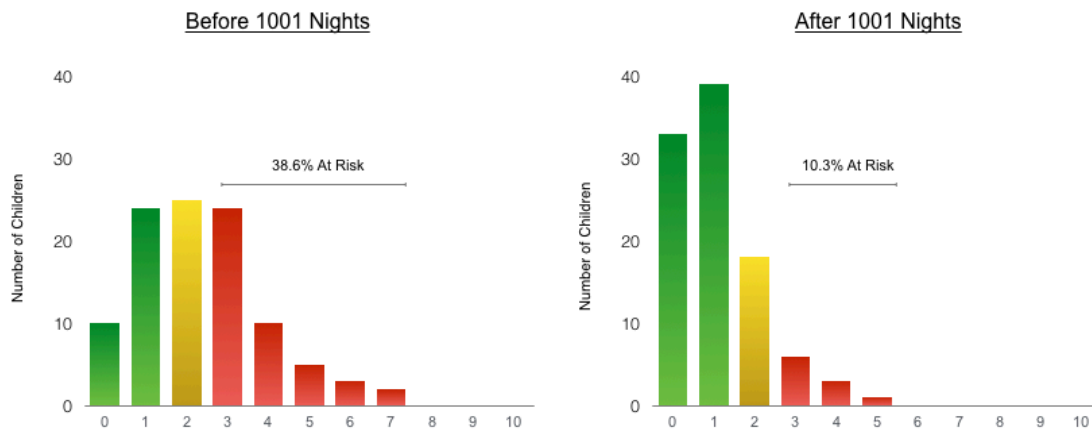


But the most significant result comes when the most vulnerable of children are analysed. Those children who answered with negative responses for three or more questions out of 10 were classified as “at risk”, amounting to 38.6% of the sample before the programme. After taking the program, those answering three or more questions negatively were reduced to 10.3%, translating into a reduction of negative attitudes (or those deemed “at risk”) by 73%.



We can categorise all the children according to how “at risk”: 0 or 1 negative response out of 10 is no risk (green in the graph below); 2 negative responses is

medium (yellow); and 3 and over is high (red). As this graph shows, the distribution of the children shifts significantly:



Empathy

There were five questions to do with empathy:

- Does it make you sad to see a kid who can't find anyone to play with?
- Do you like to watch people open presents even when you don't get a present?
- If you see a kid who is crying, do you feel sad?
- Do you get upset when you see someone being hurt?
- Do you believe that kids who have no friends probably don't want any?

As mentioned above, there was very little shift between pre- and post-tests for these questions. There could be many reasons for this. The first possible explanation is that the measures did not capture emotional feelings either pre- or post-test, despite being based on a well-known and long-established scale, perhaps due to the transfer of the measures from an American context to a Syrian refugee camp. The children in this study are more used to seeing people crying and being hurt than most other children in the world, so they could have been desensitized from the scenarios used to measure empathy. Second, there could have been ceiling effects on the pre-test scores meaning that there was no room for improvement. Third, perhaps empathy is simply harder to change than the more practical aspects of behaviour. Fourth is the possibility that the programme didn't have an impact on shifting empathy and therefore needs to be re-developed or supplemented with additional interventions.

Trying to determine which factor is most relevant is where the qualitative aspect of the study was very useful. During various follow-up interviews and focus group discussions, an increase in empathy was spoken about unprompted, with teachers and implementers describing how attitudes to other children changed: the treatment of disabled children for example, or children from different refugee

populations (Iraqi, Palestinian and Syrian), became more patient with and understanding of each other. Parents reported to teachers how this aspect had improved with their children at home as well. The children themselves also talked of the programme in these terms: “these are books that teach you not to lie and to be an honest and a good person,” (Jordan).

During a facilitator training session in Jordan, one teacher who had already been teaching the programme told an emotional story about a disabled child in the class. No one was mean to him, she explained, because that would have been stopped, but nobody played with him and during break times he just sat on his own. But after a *1001 Nights* lesson about respecting people regardless of their physical appearances, “that child was never alone again; he is included in every activity.”

Extraordinarily a similar story was told by another teacher in Jordan:

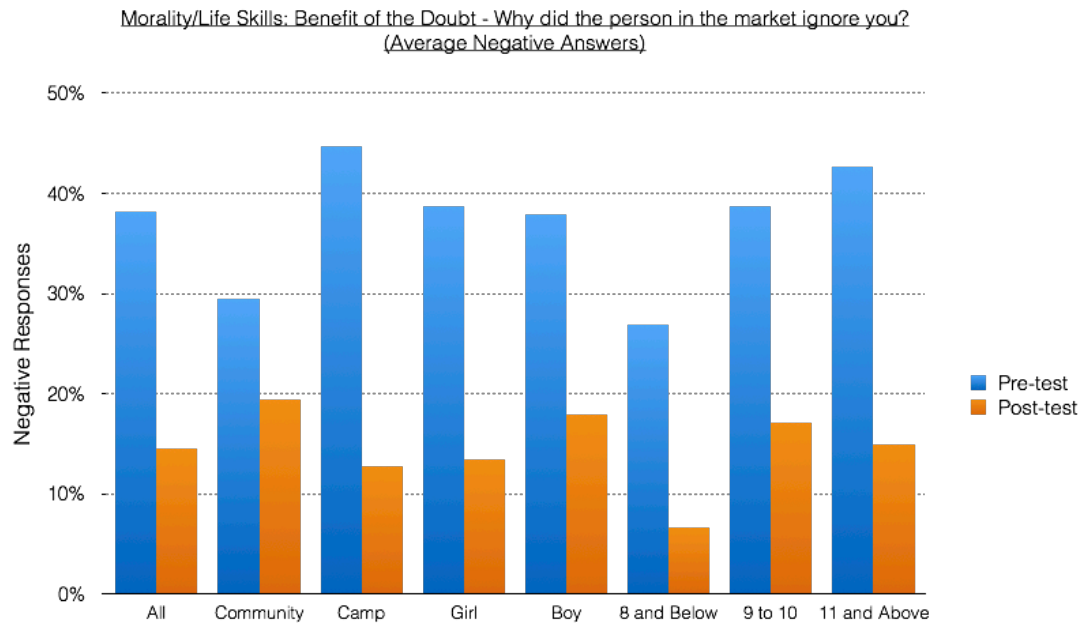
In the Makani in Zarqa’a they use this story to teach children how to deal with a disabled person, how to respect them. It changed the way that children deal with people of disability; after this story compassion to each other developed.

It seems very clear from teachers’, implementers’, funders’, and parents’ experiences that *1001 Nights* is having an impact on children’s behaviour, so the inability to see this in the data must lie in the measurements. Looking at the individual questions will help determine how best to do this.

Individual measurements

Benefit of the Doubt

“One day you are walking in a market and you see someone your age nearby. When you say “hello” to him/her, he/she looks at you and says nothing. Then, when you tell him/her your name, he/she turns away and says nothing. Why did the person in the market ignore you?” This question tests a number of attitudes: how quickly people make assumptions, how forgiving they are, whether they delay judgement, and it is a measure of willingness to be empathetic, to think of situations and events from the other’s point of view. The change in how the children answered this question before and after going through the curriculum is extremely marked:



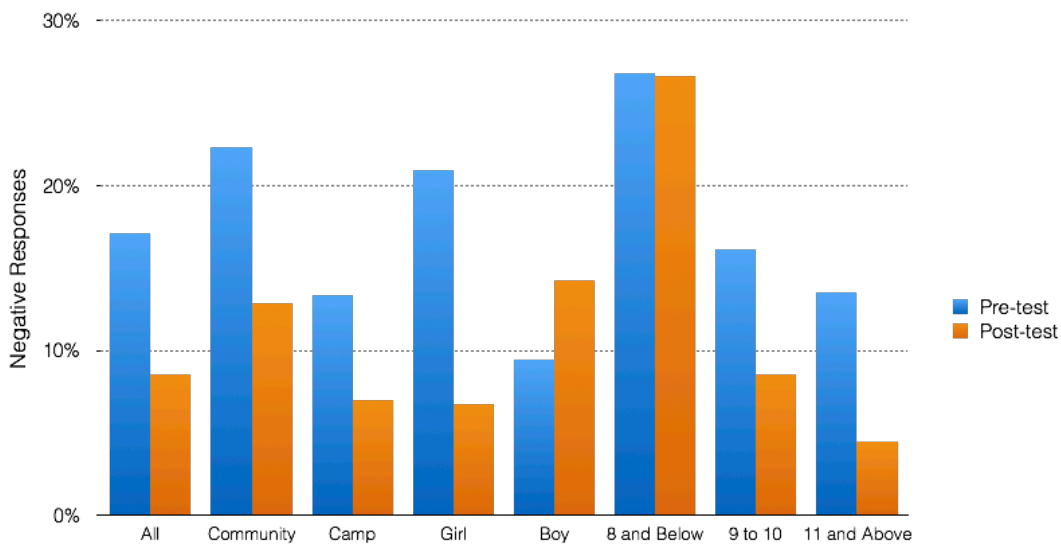
Prior to the *1001 Nights* programme, 38% of the children provided a negative answer. This was reduced to 15% after the program (amounting to a 62% reduction in those providing negative responses). Children moved from a hostile attitude to the out-group (assigning a bad motive to the other child) to a more open attitude to a stranger, bringing fewer assumptions to a social situation; a valuable lesson for the rest of their lives, and of immense use in the harmony within and between wider groups such as in the home, school or neighbourhood.

Inclusivity

As the examples of empathy to the disabled children show, there was more inclusive behaviour in the Makani centres, both in the classroom activities and in the playground. There was a question which tested this, and which showed clear results, but in fact the effect was even bigger than the data suggests.

The question was: One day a new kid your age comes to school and sits beside you in the classroom. He or she comes from a different country and speaks a different language at home than you and your friends. What do you do?

Morality/Life Skills: Tolerance for People of Different Backgrounds - A new kid comes to school. What do you do?
(Average Negative Answers)



Below the age of 8, there is very little change, and there is a gender discrepancy, but overall the answers show a drop in hostility to the newcomer, the member of an out-group, not like you. Quantitatively, 17% of children provided a negative/hostile response in the pretest and only 9% in the posttest (a reduction of 49%). Perhaps more important than the quantitative drop is that implementers reported “increased cohesion” between children of different nationalities, in communities where Iraqis, Palestinians, Jordanians and Syrians live together.

You can see that the integration has been strengthened in this activity - although we couldn't measure this systemically it shouldn't be something that is just seen as a coincidence. Implementer, UNICEF Jordan.

This observation was then probed with teachers in Makani centres, who were unanimous in saying that inter-group hostility had dropped in mixed classes and the playground was a less hostile environment which they directly attributed to *1001 Nights* because they heard children framing discussions using episodes. In a situation where violence in schools is given as a reason for children dropping out, this effect can be vitally important for certain children to continue to attend school.

This shift has been felt among the adults as well as the children, with facilitators and implementers reporting personal journeys:

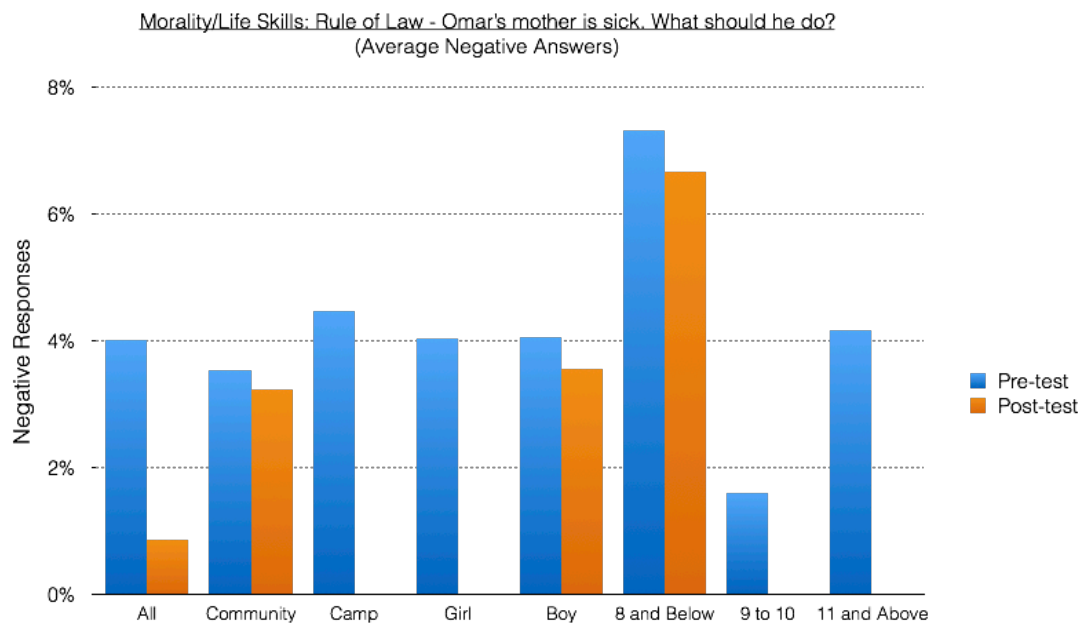
...some of the teachers and facilitators have seen that the material have also changed themselves. Implementer, UNICEF

Parents have reported using episodes from *1001 Nights* to improve behaviour at home, including to mediate during conflict in the home: they are giving tools to the

entire refugee society, not just the children. Developing a measure to capture this is challenging but necessary.

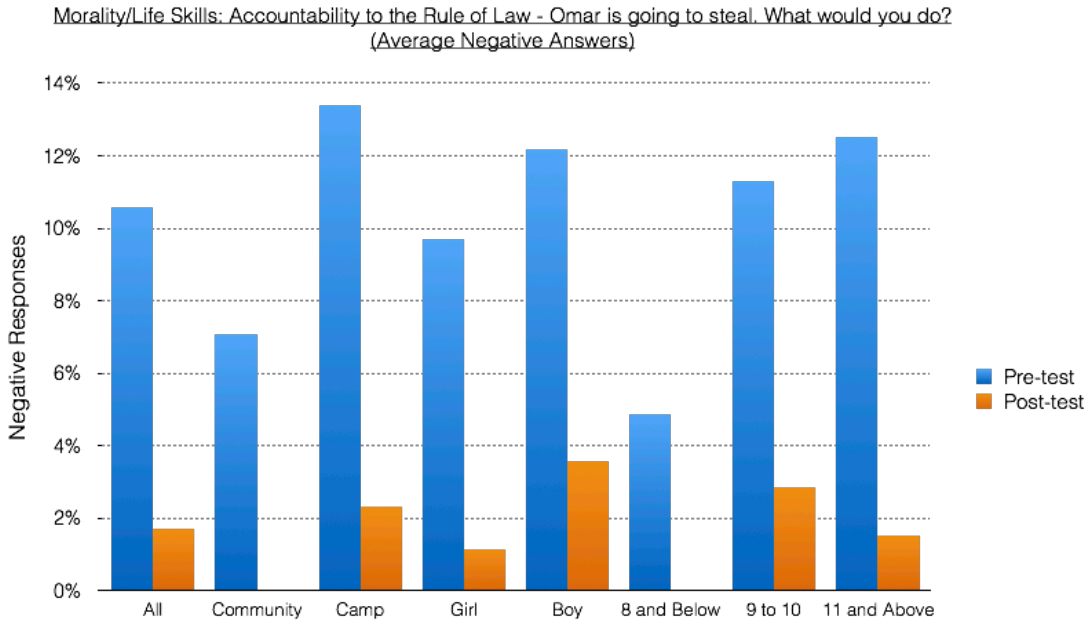
Rule of Law

“Omar’s mother is sick and he needs medicine for her, but Omar’s family cannot afford it. Omar asks the owner if he can pay a lesser amount for the medicine, but the owner refuses to sell it for a lower cost. He laughs at Omar and tells him ‘It’s not my problem’. What should Omar do?” This question is challenging, and it is not the answer which is important in measuring attitudes but the reasoning given: one possible answer is that Omar should steal the medicine, but for one child this might be in order to save his mother’s life, and another might say the storekeeper deserves it because he was mean. These are very different moral positions yet the answer is the same. This means that the data, though showing a drop in negative answers, is not as informative as it could be with further probing of the answers. However, there was a valuable follow-up question based on the same scenario:



Accountability to the Rule of Law

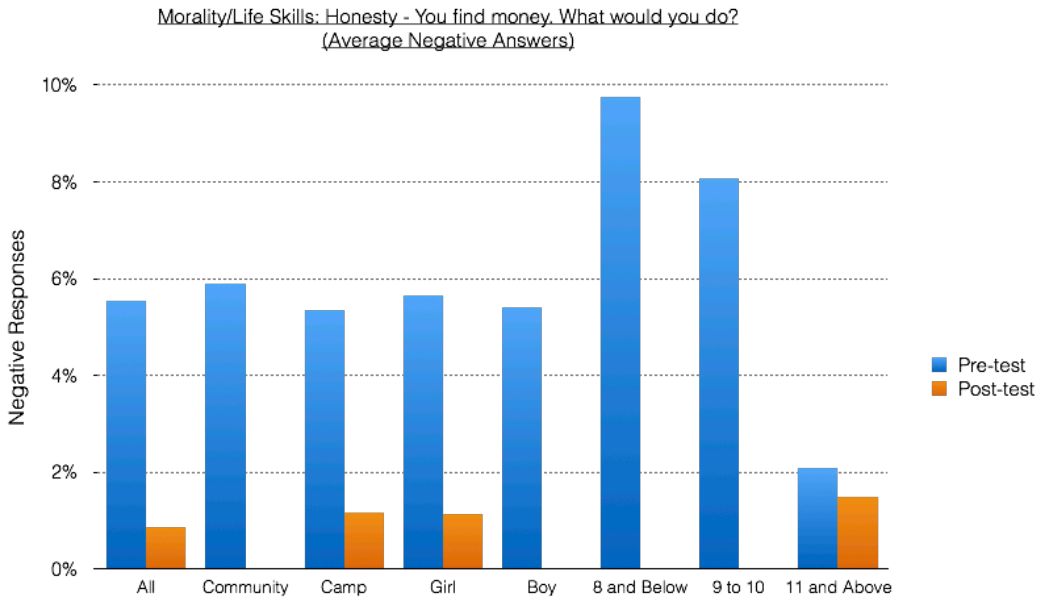
“Omar is your friend and he tells you that plans on stealing the medicine. What do you do?” The choices are to help him steal, to tell him stealing is wrong and try and stop him, to tell your parents or store owner, or to say nothing and let Omar steal the medicine. Again, follow-up questions would have been interesting as the reasoning is important, but these questions are more direct and so more reliable. The data again shows a clear improvement in attitudes to the rule of law and in accountability for breaking the rule of law:



The reduction in negative responses was very significant. Prior to the *1001 Nights* program, 11% of children provided a negative response, and after this was reduced to 1% (a reduction of 88%).

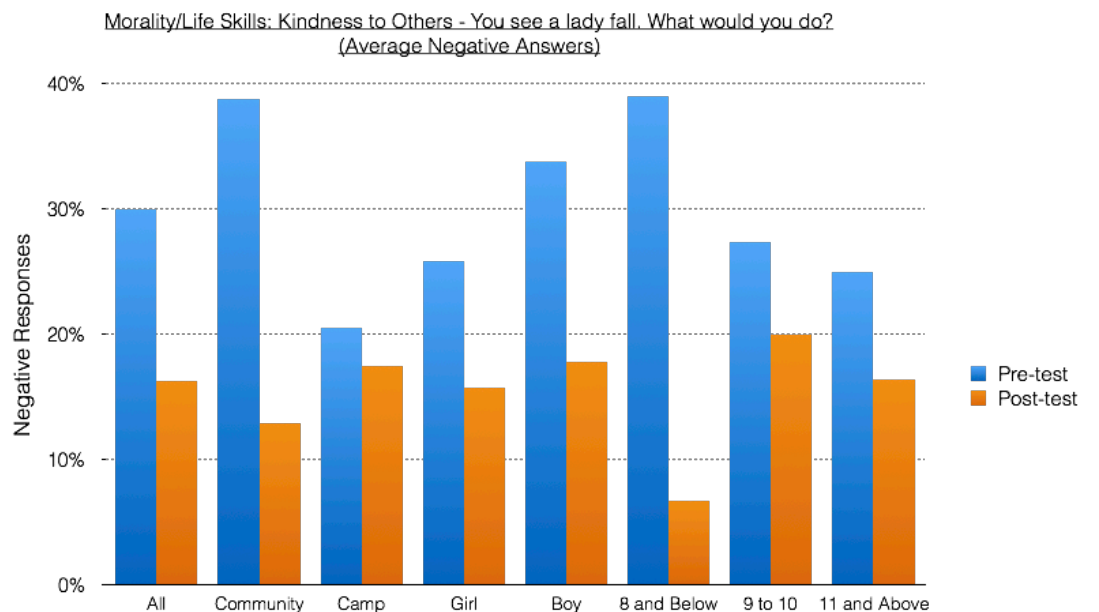
Honesty

“You walk into an empty classroom one morning and find an envelope full of money. What would you do?” This test for honesty was one of the largest attitudinal changes found, with some of the subgroups dropping to zero negative answers after going through the curriculum:



There were numerous reports of increased honesty in a variety of contexts: including less lying but also discussions about why lying and covering up is wrong, and linked to discussions about how gossiping and speaking behind people's back is wrong, as it hurts other people and can have lots of knock-on effects for the whole class.

Kindness to Others



This question tests for empathy but then goes further: it tests whether children have been taught to *act* on their empathy. The observations to do with inclusivity are important here, too, as are reports of increased sharing of food and belongings. Quantitatively, negative responses dropped from 30% of the respondents to 16% (amounting to a reduction of approximately 46%).

Gender Equality

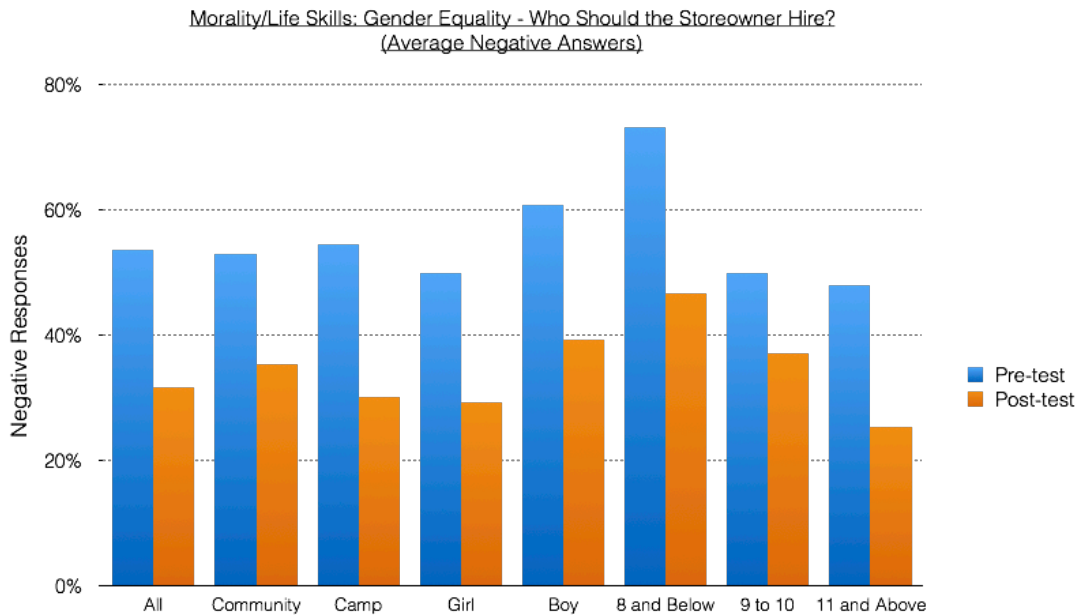
The question designed to test attitudes to gender was as follows:

Mohammad and Aisha are both trying to get a job at a store, but the storeowner can only hire one of them.

What should the store owner do?

- 1. Hire Mohammed because boys are better workers;*
- 2. Hire Aisha because girls are better workers, or*
- 3. Hire whichever one is going to be best for the job.*

Prior to the *1001 Nights* program, 54% of students provided a negative answer, that is, to hire either Aisha or Mohammed, rather than the one that was the best fit for the job. After the programme, this number was reduced to 32% (amounting to a 41% reduction in notions of gender inequality).



This attitude to gender equality was striking in two of the three field visits.

In Azraq camp, the team observed a class of 25 boys, mostly aged between 8-10 (two teenagers, one younger). After watching the episode, they were asked, “Who’s your favourite character?” and “who would you like to be?”, the answer came loudly and clearly: *Shahrazad* (the story-spinning princess), from the majority of this class of boys. When asked “why?”, the reasons varied from: “she tells all the stories”; “she’s wise”; “she’s kind”; “she knows the answers.” Just two of the boys said it was because “She’s beautiful.” The creator of *1001 Nights* who accompanied the team on this visit, Aly Jetha, noted that in the animation and children’s entertainment industry, this was extraordinary because of the way broadcasters categorize program as “boy versus girl” programs. “If you travel the world over and ask a group of 8-10 year old boys who their favourite cartoon character is, the answer will always be Spiderman, Batman or Superman...boys at that age, generally don’t pick women as their preferred role models”, he said.

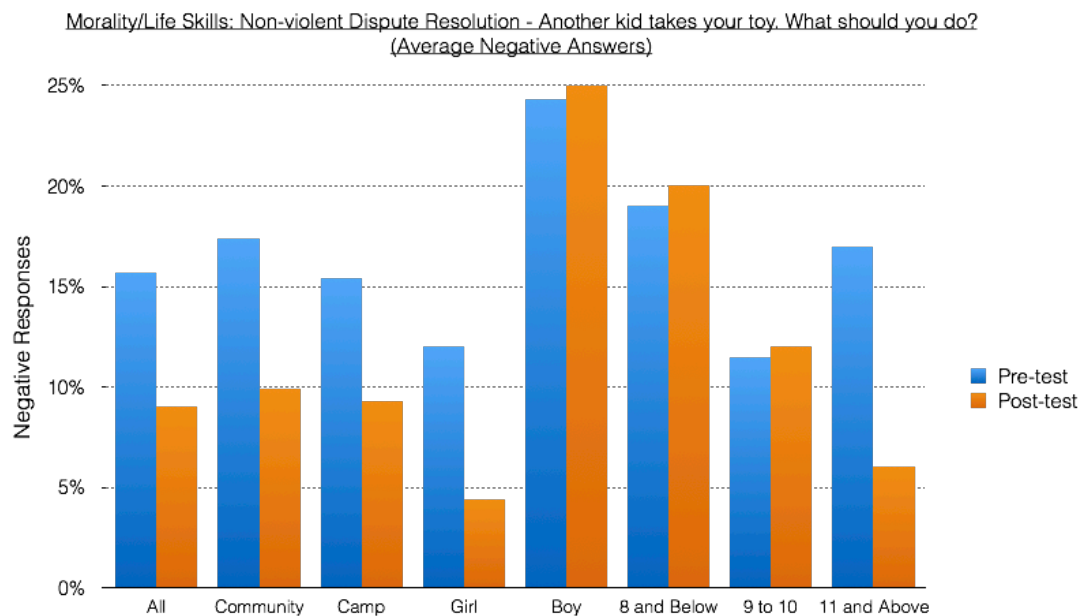
A class of third grade Syrian students was observed during one gender-relevant episode (“Princess Rou”, telling the story of the strongest woman in the world); initially, stereotypical answers were given to the characteristics of males and females (girls are shy; men are doctors and so on). By the end of the half hour class, focussed on the episode of Princess Rou, debates were happening about gendered toys (“Of course girls can play with cars, as long as she wants to,”), leadership roles (“Sometimes women are better and sometimes men, it depends on the person”), in a mixed classroom. (One attitude which did not shift amongst any of the children was that boys do not play with dolls; it was seen as a great joke.)

Syria has remained a very patriarchal society, with women enjoying significantly fewer rights than elsewhere in the Middle East, and markers of social inequality

high (such as honour killings, employment patterns, few social spaces for women and so on). Changing these attitudes will have a long-term positive effect on these children's chances in a world outside their home country.

Non-Violent Dispute Resolution

The children were asked what they would do in a situation in which another child comes and takes away their toy, with choices between grabbing the toy back, getting your friends to help you grab the toy, asking for it back, and asking whether you can share and play together. The shifts were informative, because it was mostly the older age group who learnt this lesson the best:

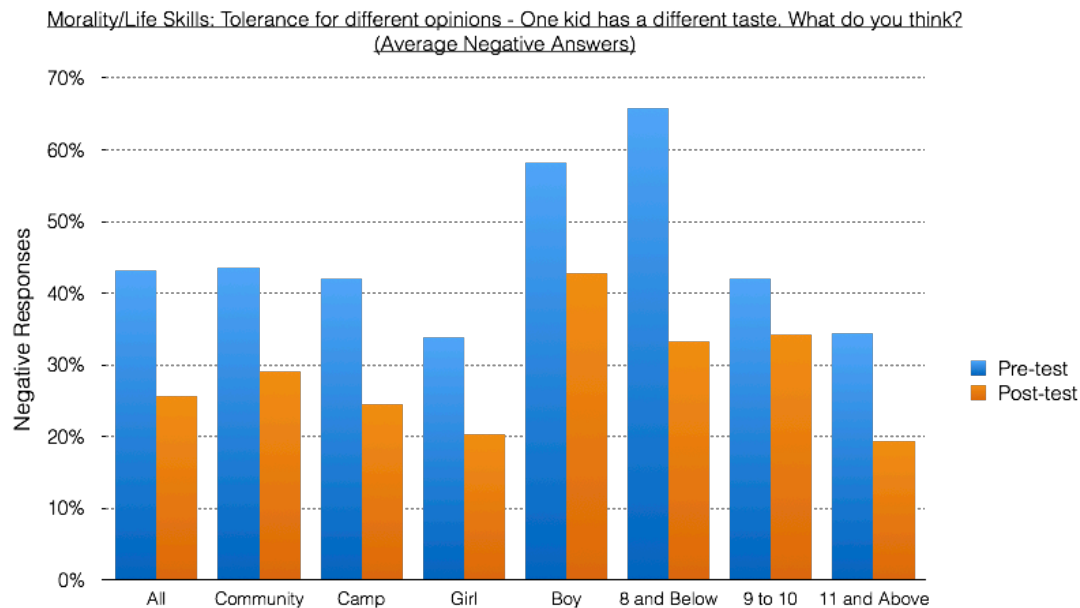


Prior to the *1001 Nights* programme, 16% of the children provided an answer that was considered aggressive or violent. This was reduced to 9% after the programme (amounting to a reduction of 42%).

Teachers in Jordan were hesitant about talking about violence in the Makani centres; they couldn't talk about a shift without acknowledging that it was present in the first place, so this was difficult to really probe under the constraints of the fieldwork. In future, more standardised focus groups should be held with anonymised responses, in order to understand the situation the children are facing and what effect *1001 Nights* is having. It is also essential to work more with parents to find out how behaviour is changing in all areas of the children's lives, not just at the Makani centres.

Tolerance for other points of view

This question seems innocent but probes something very important for the development of other pro-social behaviour: the tolerance for someone else's difference in taste. "A teacher offers to bring chocolate or vanilla ice cream to class. Everyone prefers chocolate, except one kid who asks for vanilla. What do you think? 1. Chocolate is better. 2. Vanilla is better. 3. Neither is better or worse, each person has different tastes."

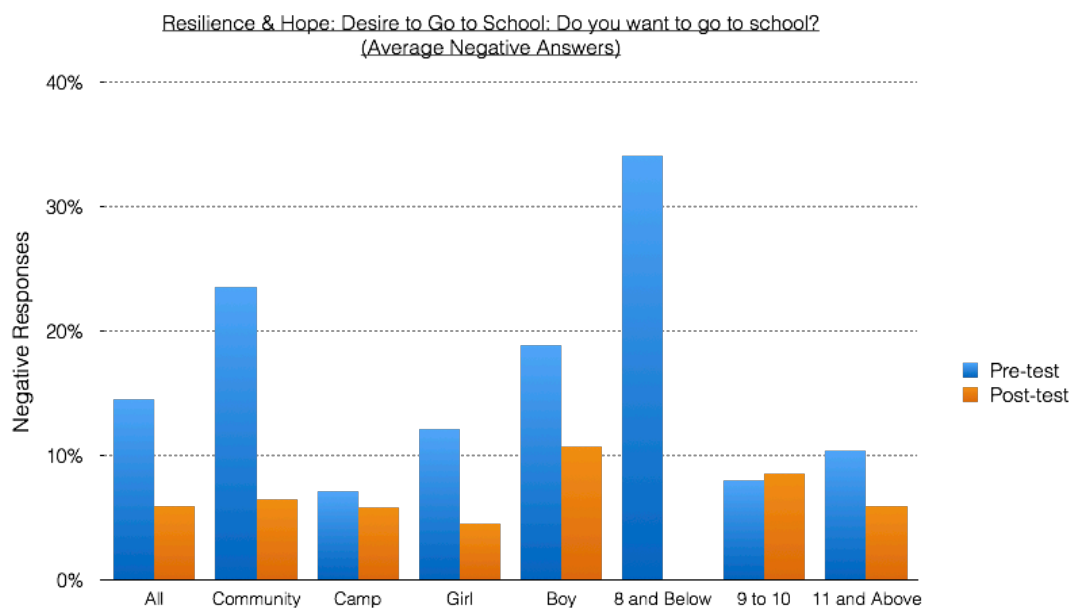
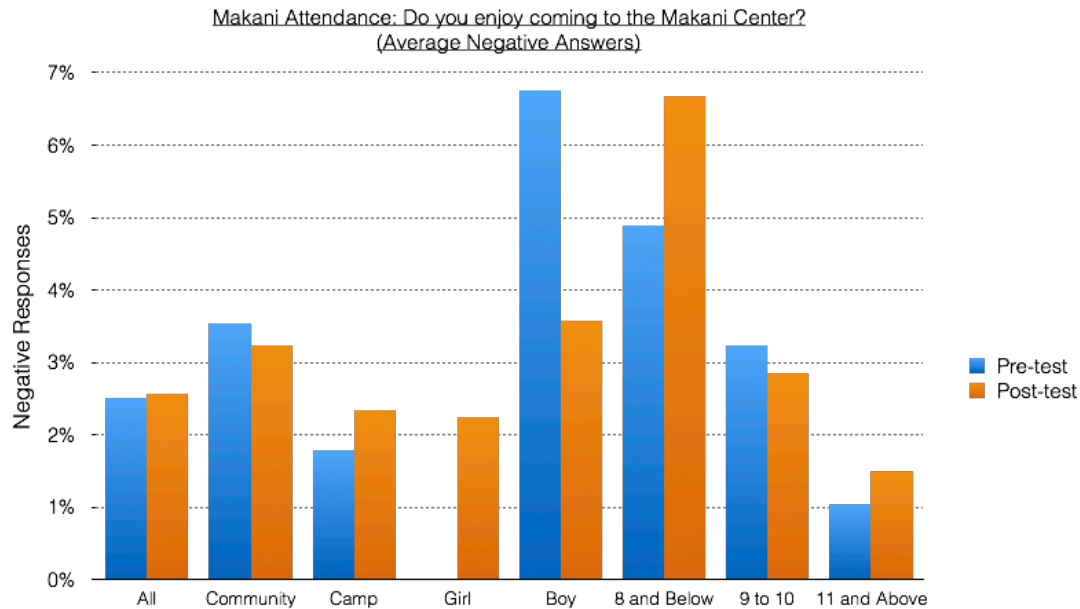


This is much more important than just ice-cream, as tolerance for other people's taste reduces bullying, encourages independent thought, empathy and critical thinking; it also has implications for learning how to deal with more serious disagreements in points of view to do with personal values. While the quantitative data is impressive, showing a reduction in negative responses from 43% to 26% (a 39% reduction), the field research provided more tangible manifestations of this change:

I had a kid in the 7th grade who was a trouble maker - everyone followed this one boy, like a gang leader; no-one would do anything against him. I showed them a story about being yourself and not copying anyone else. So they started to question their actions; why were they copying that kid's actions. And after one single lesson the whole class changed.

Enjoyment and education

There were two questions designed to elicit attitudes to education, and therefore attitudes to their future: an indirect measure of hope. The two were: "Do you enjoy coming to the Makani Center?" and "Do you want to go to school?"



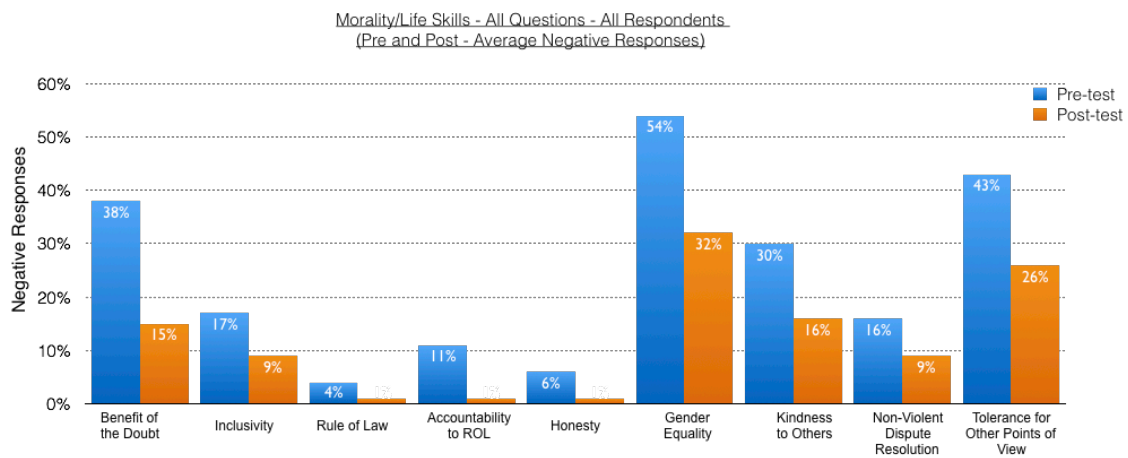
There are certain anomalies between the sub-groups: 8 and below seemed to enjoy going to the Makani centre far *less* after going through the programme yet wanted to go to school far *more*: this is probably a feature of the small sample size and simply requires more data collection across the demographics to explain.

Interpreting the significance of this data is complicated, however. The questions could be measuring increased compliance with rules, or perhaps enjoyment of improvements in the general provision, including *1001 Nights* but not restricted to it. Another possibility is that many of the children had not been to a Makani centre before, either because of age or because they were newly arrived in Jordan, and these results are showing the difference between an uncertainty of what the

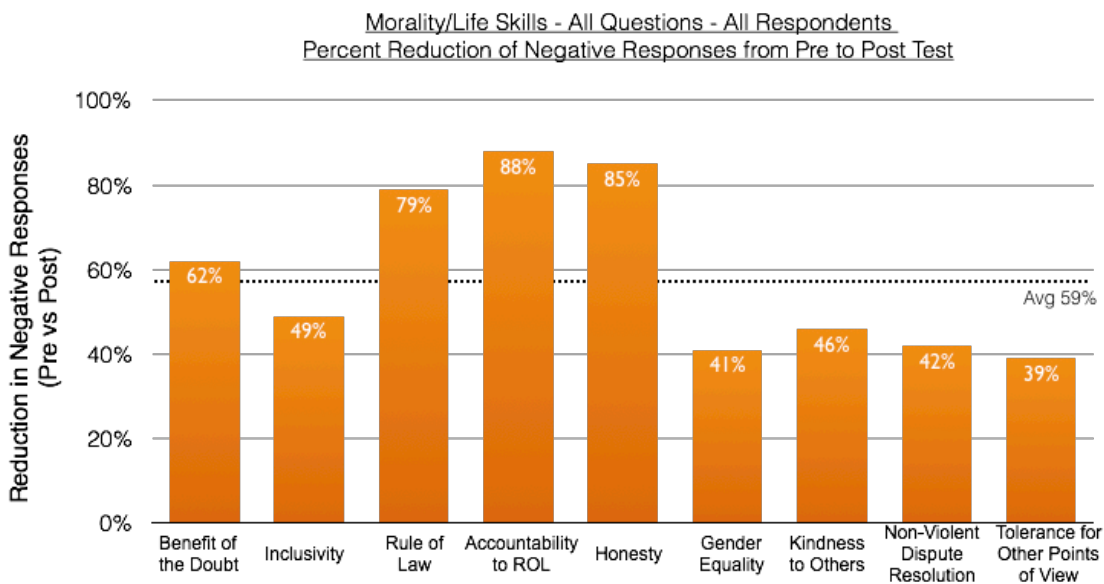
experience would be like (having a “fear of the unknown”) and the feeling, six months later, of a routine and being settled. In order to overcome this, the evaluation should be done with children who are not newly arrived to the place of provision; otherwise it could be the performance of the centre as a whole rather than the specific programme, which is being measured.

Conclusion

The overall results of this curriculum couldn't be clearer: kindness, empathy, tolerance, inclusivity, honesty have all increased in both word and deed, as this summary graph of all measures shows:



Across every category, the corresponding reduction in negative values was significant.



But even more benefits emerged during fieldwork, including increased community cohesion, and also a noticed drop in materialism among the children, and a lack of competitiveness. “There was a very competitive boy, he was good, but he always wanted to be the best, and it really held him back,” one teacher in Lebanon said. “It held him back socially, and also he couldn’t work with other people at all, couldn’t get any benefit from team work.” *1001 Nights* helped him change this negative approach, until he was helping weaker students, and then at the end-of-year sports day came the ultimate evidence of change: he was on the winning side of the tug of war and swapped sides to help those who were losing!

An unexpected and surprising story of a major effect of *1001 Nights* came from the Makani centre in Baqaa Camp, concerning a class of Syrians who had just had a lesson based on an episode in which Prince Shihab prevented his people from leading him to war. Some students saw him as a coward, but other students saw him as courageous in saving his people.

They related the story to real life and what happened in Syria, how Bashar Al-Assad has caused his people to die for nothing, in contrast to the prince in the story who saved his people.

The next step is to test children going through the programme longitudinally, to determine how long these changes last, whether the progress continues with or without further lessons, and other questions to do with long-term impact. But in the short term:

They are completely different children now, easier to teach and more positive for the future. Teacher, Makani Centre, Baqaa refugee centre.