

Executive Brief

**Low-Fee Kindergartens (“KG2s”) in Jordan:
Current Landscape and Role in KG2
Universalization**



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Low-Fee Kindergartens (“KG2s”) in Jordan: Current Landscape and Role in KG2 Universalization: Executive Brief

This executive brief highlights key findings from the 2023 study titled "Low-Fee Kindergartens (“KG2s”) in Jordan: Current Landscape and Role in KG2 Universalization”. The study was conducted during 2023 and aimed to understand the status of low-fee private sector kindergarten (KG2) provision in Jordan and explore ways the Ministry of Education (MoE) could collaborate with private KGs to achieve universal access to KG2. Focusing on low-fee private KG2s, the research assessed their potential to reach vulnerable populations. The study utilized a mixed methods approach including a quantitative survey of 648 low-fee KG2s in six governorates, key informant interviews with KG2 principals and MoE policy-makers, and consideration of challenges and opportunities for collaboration.

The State of Low-Fee and CBO-based KG2s

A third of private KG2s and 40% of CBO-based KG2s were found to be low-fee KG2s, defined by the MoE for this study to refer to those charging JOD 50 or less per month. Out of a pool of 1,773 identified private KG2s and 158 CBO-based KG2, a total of 593 private and 68 CBO-based KG2s were confirmed to offer KG2s services for JOD 50 monthly or less, for a total of 661. Around two thirds of those are located in Amman and Irbid.

Almost all of KG2 providers are licensed though there is a significant difference across KG2 types. Nearly all (96%) KG2 administrators surveyed said that their institution was licensed. However, results show that 83% of CBO-based KG2s were licensed, compared to 98% of private KG2s. This may be attributable to the fact that if CBOs had the appropriate license, then they are automatically able to operate. However, **in-depth interviews with KG2 administrators described the licensing process as challenging and time consuming at times.** Providers need to deal with different government bodies including the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Transportation (MoT), municipalities, Civil Defense Department, as well as providing enrollment data to MoE on EMIS. This could contribute to lower the rate of licensed providers and misreport data.

Low-fee KG2 providers serve around a quarter of the total enrollment in the academic year 2022/2023. The 648 low-fee KG2s surveyed served 32,656 students with a median enrollment of 40 students per KG2. Notably, the size of low-fee KG2s varied by governorate ($p < .05$), with larger enrollment levels in Zarqa, Irbid, and Balqa.

Quality

The low-fee private KG2 sector is not over-crowded and in line with the MoE’s expectations in terms of class size and supervision. According to the MoE standards, the student:teacher ratio for KG2 should be a maximum of 25:1. At least 86% of low-fee KG2 schools meet this standard.

Staffing seems to be strong in low-fee KG2s which implies relatively high structural quality. According to the gathered data, finding qualified teachers is not a challenge. The majority (65%) of teachers in low-fee KG2s had a Bachelor's degree or higher. **Despite the strong staffing, there is a lack of professional development training for teachers in low-fee KG2s.** Currently, there is no officially required course of professional development for private KG2 teachers. CBO-based KG2s were more likely to report attending



other (non-MoE) in-service courses/workshops (77%) compared to their peers from private KG2s (51%). However, the need is present and both providers expressed their desire to receive training by MoE.

Low-fee KG2s over-rely on directive teaching style versus child-led exploratory teaching. Ninety-six percent of KG2 administrators reported their teachers read aloud and discuss on a daily basis. In addition, most (85%) administrators reported utilizing one entire curricula model compared to using several elements of multiple models. Private KG2s can use the MoE curriculum or choose an alternative curriculum with MoE approval.

Attendance monitoring is almost universal across the surveyed sample which is another strong structural quality indicator of low-fee KG2s. Nearly all (99%) of administrators said they tracked children's attendance daily. Most KG2s only tracked attendance on paper; only 16% used specialized attendance software and only 8% used spreadsheets. This is a great starting point for MoE to consider working with low-fee KG2s to encourage them to track attendance using EMIS.

Inclusivity

Low-fee KG2s enrollment patterns show equitable access to almost all types of students, yet CBO-based KG2s tend to include more student categories than private ones. Low-fee private KG2s report enrollment patterns which are equitable with respect to gender (about 48% female, 52% male). **CBO-based KG2s tend to be inclusive not only with respect to gender, but also with respect to nationality, refugee status, and students with disabilities.** The percentage of students with disabilities reported by CBO-based KG2s was about ten times higher, on average, than the percentage reported at low-fee private KG2s, and this difference was statistically significant. Low-fee private KG2 administrators reported that they did not serve many students with disabilities because their teachers do not have the skills to support them and would appreciate it if they could be trained on this.

Low-fee KG2s served refugee students in concentrated specific locations but with varying rates. While 53% of CBO-based KG2s and 73% of low-fee private KG2s reported they did not serve any refugees, most of the refugee students served reside in urban areas of Amman, Mafraq, Irbid, and Zarqa. In addition to that, low-fee KG2s also served non-Jordanian students other than Syrian refugees.

Financial sustainability

Fees charged by low-fee KG2s tend to vary between KG2 types and locations. On average low-fee KG2 administrators reported charging monthly fees of 38 JOD. The average fee charged by CBO-based KG2s was 30 JOD per month, notably lower than at low-fee private KG2s (39 JOD per month). Moreover, KG2s in Mafraq, Zarqa, and Irbid tended to have the lowest fees.

Higher fees charged by KG2s tend to avert the enrollment of vulnerable groups of students. There was a significant negative correlation between reported monthly fees and the percentage of Syrians enrolled. The higher the fees, the lower the number of Syrians and refugees enrolled. This correlation seemed to be stronger when other nationalities are involved as well. This is a result of inadequate financial capabilities of vulnerable families as well as administrators' resistance to changing fees as they directly affect the feasibility of operating KG2s.



Capacity for expansion

Both KG2 types reported having both the physical space and the enrollment capacity to expand given that their operations remain feasible. Approximately 65% of private and 61% of CBO-based low-fee KG2s said they were not at full enrollment capacity, and they could collectively enroll an additional 27,500 students. Willingness to expand enrollment in these facilities will substantially help achieve the strategic goal of universalizing access to KG2s, but more geographically granular data is needed on students to better address the enrollment needs. In addition to enrollment capacities, space availability is also present in both types of KG2s.

Perspectives on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

MoE officials and low-fee KG2 providers are operating from quite disparate viewpoints of what PPPs might look like, and each may have misperceptions of the other. Both sides seem to locate common areas of cooperation, yet they need to expand mutual awareness. MoE's main concern is about the quality of education provided within low-fee KG2s. KG2s see the MoE as a capable entity that could relax the licensing process, provide training, and provide financial aid to support enrollment. Furthermore, MoE perceives private KG2s as highly profitable entities that could pay for licensing fees and training. These points of view need to be addressed through further collaborations between the two entities.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations have been formulated and discussed through a workshop involving relevant stakeholders, conducted on the 21st of November 2023. These suggestions have been prioritized by the stakeholders during the discussions.

Licensing and regulations

- Create a one-stop shop for registration, follow up, and supervision on licensing linked to the different MoE field directorates in all governorates¹.
- Create a manual for low-fee KG2s on licensing and regulations; rationale and steps to take.
- Follow up on data entry and accuracy of data in EMIS by the school management and the MoE.
- Explore ways to encourage unregistered “unofficial” KG2 providers to become registered and licensed.
- Provide capacity-building and loans to support low-fee KG2s to help them meet accreditation standards, in collaboration with donors and partners.
- Design and implement a public awareness campaign to make families aware of how KG2 accreditation serves as a signal of quality.

¹ The Ministry of Social Development has a website that helps with licensing procedures.



Quality

- The MoE could lead the enhancement of professional development pathways for low-fee KG2 teachers by providing training to improve their skills, knowledge, and pedagogical effectiveness. Meanwhile, the private sector and donors could be responsible for covering the associated training costs.
- Conduct a review (potentially by the National Center For Curriculum Development) of the curricular models in use by private KG2s to ensure they are well-aligned with national curricular standards.
- To better assess the quality of low-fee KG2 services, include private and CBO-based KG2 teachers in future teacher surveys or studies of teaching and learning quality in Jordan.

Inclusivity:

- Improve existing data on number and location of disadvantaged and vulnerable KG2-age children to better identify areas where these students are (most) under-served and collect comprehensive data, if unavailable. Develop a context-specific plan for expanding enrollment of these students in each of these target areas.
- Provide capacity building / training to low-fee providers on how to support students with disabilities or additional learning needs.²
- Develop and pilot financing mechanisms that aim to promote inclusivity in low-fee KG2s.³ E.g. targeted vouchers, grants to providers linked to inclusion of specific groups.
- Pilot other approaches that address non-financial barriers to KG2 inclusion (e.g. awareness sessions on inclusivity to parents).

Financial Sustainability

- Pilot a subsidized loan and grants program to support KG2 establishment and/or expansion, as recommended in the KG2 Universalization Strategic Plan. This could potentially be supported by local banks through exemptions from bank interest.
- Launch private-sector sponsorship programs as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) schemes to provide financial assistance to low-fee KG2s for tax purposes.
- MoE could provide training on financial sustainability to low-fee KG2 providers.⁴
- Explore PPP options; this could increase revenue stream to low-fee and non-profit KG sector; e.g. expanding access to available KG seats via vouchers to individuals or grants to providers.

² There is existing training (e.g Humanity and Inclusion (HI)).

³ HI offers financial support for school fees and transportation.

⁴ There is already financial sustainability training offered by other entities like GIZ and Plan International.



Expanding KG2 capacity in Jordan:

- Understand and address non-financial barriers to lack of participation in KG2. E.g. information campaigns to educate parents about the value of KG education and / or information about the availability of KGs in their communities.⁵
- Understand the overlap between available seats in existing KG2s and unmet demand.
 - a. Link data on the location of KG2-age children to data on public sector enrollment (from EMIS) and private sector enrollment (from this study or from future EMIS data collection).⁶
 - b. EMIS - Add a question about KG2 enrollment to the registration form for Grade 1.

Potential for Private-Public Partnerships:

- Design, and conduct a cost analysis for possible PPP models, e.g.: vouchers for individuals; grant subsidies for private providers/vouchers for institutions (upfront / results-based / blended);⁷ build-operate-transfer (BOT) approaches; management-based contracts (publicly financed, privately run). Pilot and evaluate model(s).
- Identify ways for the MoE to engage with low-fee KG2s around policy issues more frequently; for example, expand existing working groups to include representation from both public and private sector (the National ECD group to include a representation of the private sector).

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⁵ The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) have plans to launch an awareness program.

⁶ There are existing heat maps for KGs.

⁷The World Bank is working on a project involving vouchers and subsidies in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE). The pilot is expected to roll out in 2024.

