



PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TO CONFLICT-AFFECTED CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES IN GAZA

*A programme supported by the United Kingdom's Department for
International Development (DFID)*



Mid-Term Evaluation, December 2009



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Executive Summary

The Psychosocial Support to Conflict-Affected Children, Youth and Families in Gaza Programme is a GBP 861,851 programme funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). The programme aims to provide youth and families in the Gaza Strip with psychosocial support to alleviate the stress caused by conflict, encourage dialogue and civic participation, and promote health and well-being. More specifically, Mercy Corps' activities focus on the provision of emergency psychosocial outreach to communities in Gaza North, Gaza and Khan Younis by providing safe spaces and psychosocial activities for children and adults to begin recovery and for community members to access information and assistance about available social services. Mercy Corps works with community based organizations (CBOs) to provide this context-appropriate psychosocial support for conflict-affected children and their families in the Gaza Strip.

The initial project timeframe was six months, from February 2009 to July 2009. With additional DFID funding, Mercy Corps was able to extend the project by eight months, resulting in a new project end date of 31 March 2010.

This mid-term evaluation report focuses on the first phase of Mercy Corps' programme (from 2 February until 31 August) in which eighteen family centres were established and over 4,000 children received psychosocial support. The report is the result of a programme-specific evaluation strategy developed by the Institute of International Health and Development, Queen Margaret University (QMU) in the United Kingdom, and Mercy Corps Gaza.

The purpose of this evaluation is to evaluate the extent to which Mercy Corps Gaza's psychosocial programme with children has achieved its goals. The evaluation strategy included the following components:

1. Session monitoring tool: this was designed by the Comfort for Kids (C4K) team specifically to monitor the delivery and effectiveness of programme sessions based on the C4K manual.
2. Interviews with parents: these interviews took place at the beginning and end of the programme, and focused on parents' observations of their child's behaviour. The interview schedule was designed by UNICEF in Gaza.
3. A structured diary completed by the children at the end of each session.
4. A timeline completed by children towards the end of the programme, to indicate the main events in their lives during the course of the programme, and their feelings about the programme itself.
5. An 'exit activity' in which children reflected on their experience of the programme and what they found particularly enjoyable, helpful and difficult.

EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME AGAINST OBJECTIVES AND (OUTPUT) INDICATORS SPECIFIED IN THE PROPOSAL

Table 1 below shows the achievements of the first phase activities against objectives and output indicators as in the revised logframe (submitted to DFID with the revised project proposal until 31 March 2010).

Table 1. Logframe indicators and achievements.

Narrative Summary	Verifiable Indicators	First Phase Achievements
Overall Objective: Youth and families participate in psychosocial activities which alleviate the stress caused by conflict, encourage dialogue and civic participation, and promote health and well-being.		
Purpose: To provide emergency psychosocial support to communities in Gaza North, Gaza and Khan	18 family centres providing structured psychosocial activities for 4-16 yr old children	18 family centres have provided structured psychosocial activities for 4-16 yr old children

Younis governorates by providing safe spaces and psychosocial activities for children and adults to begin recovery and for community members to access information and assistance about available social services.	6,600 children attending family centres	4,453 children attended psychosocial sessions at family centres
	6,600 adults attending family centres	771 adults attended psychosocial workshops and 5,049 adults participated in community gatherings
	100 children attend accelerated learning activities	<i>Next project phase only</i>
	50% of interviewed families report improved behaviour of children attending sessions	69.5% of interviewed families reported improved behaviour of children attending sessions.
	# of people who can accurately report necessary precautions and responses related to UXOs	9,065 families have received information about precautions and responses related to UXOs ¹
Result 1: 18 family centres established with information kiosks	# of family centres fully equipped and staffed	18 family centres are fully equipped and staffed
	# of family centres that provided information about social services	18 of families centres provided information about social services
	# of consultations/information sessions at kiosk ²	1,508 consultations/information sessions were conducted
Result 2: 13,200 children and parents participated in psychosocial activities	# of children who participated in psychosocial group sessions	4,453 children participated in psychosocial group sessions
	# of group sessions for children	5,359 group sessions were conducted
	# of children who participated in individual counselling sessions	902 children participated in individual counselling sessions
	# of individual counselling sessions for children	1,303 individual counselling sessions were conducted for children
	# of parents who participated in psychosocial workshops	771 adults participated in psychosocial workshops
Result 3: 450 community gatherings hosted in centres or local homes	# of community gatherings hosted	244 community gatherings or diwans organized
Result 4: 10,000 families have access to information regarding social services through youth teams	# of families who received information regarding social services through youth teams	9,065 families received information regarding social services through home visits by youth teams
Result 5: 36 Family Days	# of Family Days organized	16 Family Days organized

¹ No specific monitoring tool was used to measure whether people can accurately report necessary preconditions and responses related to UXOs.

² Indicators in grey cells have been added to the logframe to provide more detailed information about the results.

organized by family centres and with youth teams	# of children, siblings or peers, and parents who participated in Family Days	8,350 children, siblings, peers and parents participated in Family Days
Result 6: 100 children participate in accelerated learning activities	# of children who participated in accelerated learning activities	<i>Next project phase only</i>

EVALUATION OF PSYCHOSOCIAL PROGRAMME APPROACH

Four of the components of the evaluation of the psychosocial programme were designed to assess the response of the children (and the facilitators, to some extent) to the approach and materials used.

Session monitoring form

Each programme group was visited once by a monitor, who observed part of a session and spoke to a number of children, then completed a session monitoring form. Analysis of these forms showed that in general, children were reported to enjoy using the C4K workbook. However, it was perceived to be too advanced for some, particularly younger children and those who had difficulty reading and writing.

Diary completed by children

At the end of each session, children were asked to indicate on a diary form one good thing that happened that day, one bad thing that happened that day, and how they were feeling at the end of the session. Fifty diary forms were analysed. The 'good things' recorded by the children related primarily to the sessions themselves, particularly games, drawing and songs. Very few of the children recorded any negative events. Feelings at the end of the session were overwhelmingly positive, the only negative feelings were sadness because the session had come to an end. The diary activity helped facilitators to identify any issues affecting particular children, but they found completing it each session too burdensome.

Timeline

Towards the end of the programme, children were invited to create a timeline from the beginning of the programme up to that point. This gave them the opportunity to show the events that affected them during the course of the programme, both positive and negative, and to indicate their hopes for the future. A sample of 182 timelines was analysed for this evaluation, using content analysis.

Children included both programme events and events which occurred outside the programme on their timelines. Programme events were referred to positively in the vast majority of cases, with children saying they enjoyed programme activities (particularly Open Days) and relationships, and appreciated the gifts (e.g. comfort kits) they were given.

Outside the programme, school was frequently mentioned in timelines, particularly exams and exam results. Events related to the family were also important to children, with positive events including weddings and visits to/ from relatives, and the most commonly reported negative event being the death of a relative. Many children included 'trips' in their timelines as particularly positive events, and the summer vacation and spending time with friends.

Where hopes for the future were included in the timeline, the three most commonly mentioned were to succeed at school, to continue in the next part of the psychosocial programme, and for the war to end. Some children referred to their future career hopes.

Exit activity

This activity focused on children remembering what they have done during the programme, what they enjoyed, what helped them and what they found difficult. The exercise was conducted with all 155 groups, and 2,452 children participated. The children found games and art much more enjoyable than the C4K work or individual counselling, and found the C4K activity more difficult than the others. Whole group activities were perceived as by far the most helpful and enjoyable, and the least difficult, whilst individual activities were felt to be particularly difficult.

Parents' interview

The second aspect of the evaluation of the psychosocial programme focused on changes in the children's behaviour and feelings at the end of the programme, compared to the beginning, as an indication of how they may have been affected by their participation. A structured interview was administered to the parents of 371 children who participated in the programme before the sessions, and again at the end of the first phase of the programme.

Sixty-nine per cent of parents reported that their children demonstrated fewer behavioural problems, and more positive behaviours, at the end of the programme than they did at the beginning. It is not possible to state categorically that this change is due to the effect of the programme, since we were not able to compare the improvements made in the behaviour of children attending the programme with changes in the behaviour of children who did not attend the programme.

Considerable variety was found amongst the CBOs in the reported levels of improvement in children's behaviour over the course of the programme. Children attending sessions at five CBOs were reported to have made little or no improvements in their behaviour. In contrast, parents whose children attended sessions at seven different CBOs reported great improvements in behaviour. In addition, younger children and boys were found to show greater improvements in their behaviour over the course of the programme.

A. Purpose, Approach and Limitations

PURPOSE

The purpose of this mid-term evaluation is for Mercy Corps and QMU to present data relating to the achievements of the PSS programme, focusing particularly on the children's psychosocial sessions. The evaluation is described in the original proposal to the UK Department for International Development as being an integral part of the monitoring and evaluation framework over the life of the programme. Information collected will be vital for the following parties: *1) Mercy Corps' West Bank and Gaza office; 2) Mercy Corps' headquarters offices in Edinburgh, UK and Portland, US; 3) Queen Margaret University; and 4) involved communities in the Gaza Strip.*

In addition to the Psychosocial team in Gaza and the country team of Mercy Corps West Bank and Gaza, the headquarters offices in Europe and the United States are also directly interested in how the impacts of activities implemented measure against the programme indicators, as well as direct impact and progress achieved at the end of the programme. Mercy Corps will use information collected through the mid-term (and final) evaluation in the design of future programmes, thereby ensuring more effective and efficient implementation of future psychosocial programmes in Gaza. Mercy Corps Technical Support Unit in the United States is interested in lessons learned so that it can improve projects implemented across the 35 countries where Mercy Corps currently works. Project beneficiaries and stakeholders (i.e. communities and CBOs) will be encouraged to use acquired information as a tool for enhanced involvement and decision-making in follow on activities as to achieve increased sustainability.

Context

Since the conflict between Israel and Palestinians in Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009, Mercy Corps staff in Gaza have witnessed the growth of fear, anxiety, desperation and depression among children and youth. Parents, schools and other caregivers are often unable to cope with these issues and lack the tools to recognise and treat them. Moreover, there is a dearth of safe spaces in Gaza where children and their families can engage in extracurricular activities. This problem dramatically increased since a large number of homes and public spaces were damaged by the recent conflict.

Even prior to the latest violence, Palestinians in Gaza were affected by a humanitarian crisis resulting from two years of border restrictions imposed by Israel, high unemployment, political isolation from Palestinians on the West Bank, and international sanctions. This crisis has brought about shortages of food, medical supplies and water, and has had a psychological impact on the community of Gaza. A Psychosocial Needs Assessment conducted by Mercy Corps and the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (GCMHP) in early 2008, showed that the psychosocial needs of children were already high, and the conflict in December 2008/January 2009 has led to a further increase in psychosocial problems.

Psychosocial programme

In response to the above issues, Mercy Corps has implemented a comprehensive psychosocial programme since February 2009, which aims to address the need for emergency psychosocial interventions among children, youth, caregivers and community members. This programme has been implemented across the Gaza Strip in partnership with sixteen local CBOs. Their experience and credibility helped Mercy Corps identify stakeholders and provide relevant (local) context for psychosocial operations in coordination with existing community committees. The partners signed comprehensive agreements with Mercy Corps that regulated the specific nature of the relationship.

The programme was initially designed to be of a 'drop in' nature whereby children would be welcome to attend any number of sessions. It was anticipated that internally displaced families would lack a stable living arrangement so children would not be able to attend on a regular basis. However, the vast majority of children did attend on a regular basis, and Mercy Corps decided to change the approach from 'drop in' to regular attendance. Regular attendance can allow children to benefit more from the programme and develop closer ties to their fellow-participants.

During the first seven months of this programme (1 February to 31 August 2009), Mercy Corps has provided emergency psychosocial outreach to communities in Gaza North, Gaza and Khan Younis governorates by providing safe spaces and psychosocial activities for children and adults and community members have been able to access information and assistance about available social

services. Eighteen family centres were established, each providing psychosocial activities for approximately 160 children (aged 4-16) per week and kiosks which provide information on available social services and Unexploded Ordnances (UXO) warnings. Youth Teams from each centre have undertaken home visits to share this same information, ensuring that over 9,000 families across the Gaza Strip receive information about the services available to them. Family centres have facilitated 337 community gatherings to discuss their experiences during the war and their coping mechanisms and strategies for moving forward.

Each family centre provided psychosocial sessions to children and parents for a period of fourteen weeks (3.5 months). Children attended structured psychosocial programme sessions twice a week. The sessions were based on Mercy Corps' field-tested Comfort for Kids (C4K) methodology, as well as psychosocial sessions designed by the Mercy Corps psychosocial team specifically for the local context. In these sessions, children engaged in supervised group and individual activities that focused on self-expression and encourage the development of trust, playfulness and tolerance. Children who attended psychosocial sessions also received 'Comfort Kits', which included toys for younger children and drawing pads, writing paper and utensils. Separate meetings were held for parents and other community members in order to provide training on recognising special psychosocial needs of children and how to help children who are struggling to cope.

APPROACH

The mid-term evaluation was coordinated and managed by Rebecca Horn and Alison Strang from the Institute of International Health and Development, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, United Kingdom. Mercy Corps' Psychosocial team consisted of four staff (Jasem Humeid – Programme Manager, Mohamed Azaizeh – Project Officer, Khalid Al Najjar – Project Coordinator, and Salwa Al Nabaheen – Project Coordinator) who worked closely together with the QMU team during the programme period. Mercy Corps' Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Noha Basheer, also contributed to this mid-term evaluation report. Rebecca Horn visited Gaza once at the beginning of this programme, from 27 March to 4 April 2009, primarily to discuss the evaluation needs with programme staff and develop an evaluation strategy collaboratively.

Much of the work related to this evaluation was conducted after the visit. The Mercy Corps Gaza team were responsible for assisting with the design of tools, collecting the data as agreed in the evaluation strategy, and entering the data into databases designed by their Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. The analysis of the data and reporting of the findings was conducted by the QMU team with significant contributions from the Mercy Corps Gaza team. Constant communication between the QMU and Mercy Corps teams throughout the period of the programme ensured that both parties were fully involved in all aspects of the evaluation.

The aim of the evaluation strategy was to assess the effect of the programme on the children who participate. The evaluation strategy included the following components:

1. Session monitoring tool: this was designed by the Comfort for Kids (C4K) team specifically to monitor the delivery and effectiveness of programme sessions based on the C4K manual.
2. Interviews with parents: these interviews took place at the beginning and end of the programme, and focused on parents' observations of their child's behaviour. The interview schedule was designed by UNICEF in Gaza.
3. A structured diary completed by the children at the end of each session.
4. A timeline completed by children towards the end of the programme, to indicate the main events in their lives during the course of the programme, and their feelings about the programme itself.
5. An 'exit activity' in which children reflect on their experience of the programme and what they found particularly enjoyable, helpful and difficult.

LIMITATIONS

There are no dedicated monitoring staff working on this programme, and since programme staff were fully engaged in delivering the sessions, it was necessary to develop an evaluation strategy primarily based on activities that could be incorporated into the programme without excessively increasing the workload of programme staff. In addition, assessment visits had been made to potential participants'

families prior to the evaluation strategy being designed, so it was necessary to use the information already collected, rather than design an assessment tool specifically for evaluation purposes.

There was no opportunity for a comparison group to be included in this evaluation; the information collected relates only to children who participated in the programme. This makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the impact of the programme.

STRUCTURE OF REPORT

The following section of the report (Section B) details the outcomes in relation to each of the objectives and indicators outlined in the initial project proposal (Results 1-5). Section C focuses on the evaluation of the psychosocial programme in more detail, and reports the results of assessments of the programme approach and content, and an assessment of the effects of the programme on the children's wellbeing.

The final narrative section of the report, Section D, draws some conclusions and makes recommendations for development of the programme, and improvement of the evaluation strategy.

B. Evaluation of the Programme against Objectives and Indicators Specified in the Proposal

RESULT 1: FAMILY CENTRES AND INFORMATION KIOSKS

The project initially aimed to work with only nine family centres and CBOs. However, Mercy Corps increased the number of centres from nine to eighteen after a re-assessment of the situation with sixteen local CBOs participating in the project. Most of the centres are located in the northern parts of the Gaza Strip (the Governorates of Gaza and Gaza North) while three have been established in the Governorate of Khan Younis. See Appendix 1 for a map with the exact locations of the CBOs as well as their full names.

During the first phase of the programme, eighteen family centres were established and equipped with materials to set up an information kiosk. In addition, three facilitators per centre were trained to conduct the psychosocial sessions for children and workshops for parents and caregivers. Until 31 August 2009, 1,508 consultations were made to children and their families, providing them with information about social services offered in their communities such as distribution locations, programme announcements and available health services. In addition to social service information, the kiosks distributed information on UXOs and any other public service announcements that affect the communities' health and safety. Finally, the kiosks distributed information on indicators of psychological problems requiring clinical professional interventions. This helped parents and caregivers to recognise serious psychological problems and provide information on where to seek assistance.

RESULT 2: PSYCHOSOCIAL ACTIVITIES

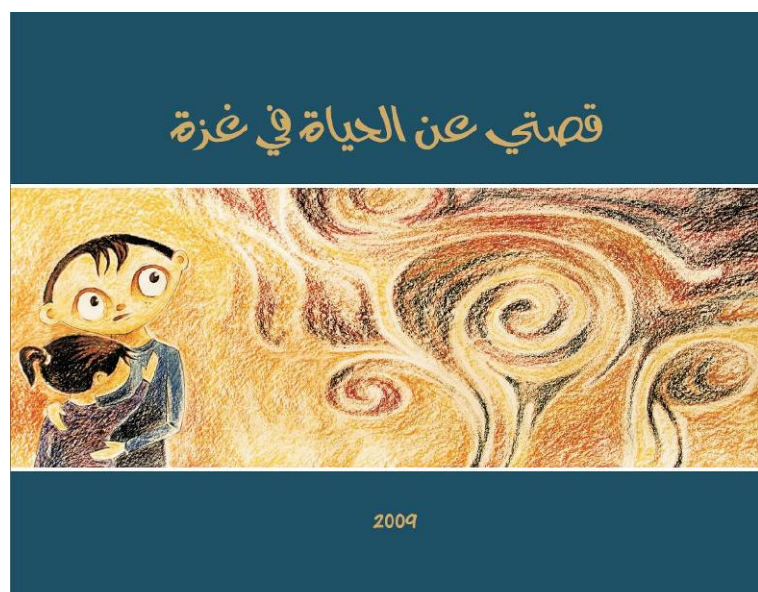
The programme was initially designed to be of a 'drop in' nature whereby children would be welcome to attend any number of sessions. It was anticipated that internally displaced families would lack a stable living arrangement so children would not be able to attend on a regular basis. However, the vast majority of children did attend on a regular basis, and Mercy Corps decided to change the approach from 'drop in' to regular attendance. Regular attendance can allow children to benefit more from the programme and develop closer ties to their fellow-participants.

Within the first phase of the programme, each family centre provided psychosocial sessions to children for a period of fourteen weeks (3.5 months). Children attended structured psychosocial programme sessions twice a week. As the number of centres increased to eighteen, Mercy Corps was able to reduce the number of children served per centre significantly. This way the groups of children participating in the guided psychosocial sessions could be reduced to just fifteen as opposed to the 25 initially envisioned. Consequently each family centre serves approximately 160 children instead of the proposed 300. In total, Mercy Corps reached 4,453 children aged 4-16 through 5,359 guided psychosocial sessions. In addition to the structured sessions, 1,303 individual counselling sessions were conducted for 902 children. Furthermore, 771 parents and caregivers benefited from psychosocial sessions.

Comfort for Kids workbook

The facilitators carried out activities using the Comfort-for-Kids manual. This manual was developed by a consultant who spent time in the Gaza Strip to train Mercy Corps staff and adapt the material to the current local context – both in terms of geography and the specific post-war situation after the war that started on 27 December 2008.

Comfort for Kids (C4K) has been launched in six post-disaster settings to-date: (1) Attacks on



World Trade Centres, USA, September 11, 2001; (2) Hurricane Katrina, USA, August 2005; (3) Hurricane Stan, Guatemala, October 2005 (4) Earthquake Response, Peru, November 2007 (5) Earthquake Response, Wenchuan China, May 2008 (6) The Gaza War, Gaza, Spring 2009.

The primary goal of each C4K response has been to increase knowledge and understanding of professionals, paraprofessionals and parents of at-risk children to recognise and respond therapeutically to signs of trauma in children. The underlying programme logic is that by training parents and providers in how to distinguish between normal reactions to traumatic events and “bad behaviour”, they will be able to support affected children more effectively and promote resilience; the more resilient children are, the fewer will need to be referred to mental health services.

Secondary topics have included promoting respect for each other, disaster preparedness, caring for others who have experienced a disaster and taking care of ourselves, and understanding natural disasters. Information is conveyed through highly interactive training sessions and supplemented by publications tailored for each response including booklets and pamphlets for adults and children’s workbooks. Each response has benefited from lessons learned from previous programmes.



During the first phase of the programme, 3,335 publications have been disseminated (3,255 to children³, 52 to facilitators and eight to Mercy Corps psychosocial staff), and approximately 89 people (52 facilitators of the DFID-funded programme, 29 facilitators of the ECHO-funded psychosocial programme and eight Mercy Corps psychosocial staff) have received C4K training. See Table 2 below for a summary of the children who received the C4K workbook per CBO and gender.

Table 2. Child recipients of C4K workbook per CBO.

CBO		Children aged 7-16 who received the C4K workbook		
		Girls	Boys	Total
1	El-Najada Palestinians Association	90	61	151
2	Al-Najda Social Association	100	86	186
3	Northern Association for Social Development	115	90	205
4	Palestinian Association for Relief and Development	76	77	153
5	Cultural Association for Heritage Protection ⁴	169	178	347
6	Family Development Association	105	92	197
7	Society of Remedial Education ⁵	192	214	406
8	Aknaf Bet El-Maqdes Association	94	74	168

³ Note that only the children older than 6 years of age receive the C4K workbook. The workbook is considered too complex for younger children.

⁴ Together with the CBO Cultural Association for Heritage Protection, Mercy Corps established two family centres.

⁵ Together with the CBO Society of Remedial Education, Mercy Corps established two family centres.

9	Beit El Mostaqbel Association	95	92	187
10	Bayadar Association for Environmental Development	87	88	175
11	National Agency for Family Care	96	88	184
12	Baitona for Community Development	87	85	172
13	Tomoooh Association for Skills Development	103	94	197
14	University College of Applied Sciences	85	90	175
15	Sharek Youth Forum	75	95	170
16	Al-Ekhlass Association for Development and Construction	92	90	182
	TOTALS	1661	1594	3255

RESULT 3: DIWANS

The family centres have been hosting community gatherings, or diwans, on a regular basis. These gatherings are an opportunity for community members, parents and caregivers to learn more about the services provided, the nature of the guided psychosocial sessions and to share their experiences. During these gatherings, parents and caregivers were also able to increase their awareness regarding the support children with psychosocial problems need. They learn to recognise signs of psychological problems, as well as ways to deal with these issues, or where to find external support. Diwans are also held within the home environment which gives families the opportunity to address and share issues of concern that they would be hesitant to discuss in public. Thus far, 5,049 adults, mainly parents of project children, have benefited from 224 centre-based diwans.

RESULT 4: ACCESS TO SERVICES

Eighteen youth teams (one per family centre) of two young people have so far visited 9,065 family homes to disseminate social service information and inform the community of family centre activities. During the outreach activities the families were also provided with educational material from UNICEF containing information about the dangers posed by unexploded ordinance and other items of a military nature prevalent in the Gaza Strip that might pose a threat to people's lives and health. Other material distributed included the C4K parent pamphlet. The work of the youth teams was instrumental in the success of the outreach activities. These youth teams have been trained by Mercy Corps staff members to ensure the highest possible service quality.

RESULT 5: FAMILY DAYS

During the first phase of the project, sixteen Open Days or Family Days were organized, reaching 8,350 children, adults and community members. CBOs individually, or in small groups, organised one-day activities providing children, peers, siblings, parents and other community members with an opportunity to spend time together in a safe environment, while at the same time learning from each other. Most often during an Open Day, CBOs prepare a series of activities that are conducted by beneficiary children, parents and/or facilitators. Children show the work that they have made during the psychosocial sessions, they perform drama/plays, sing and dance in front of a large audience. Participation in arts can increase self-confidence, empathy for others, collaboration skills and has many other beneficial effects. Participation of children in such events encourages healthy expression, cultivates friendships and builds social networks. They also provide opportunities for children to express themselves and learn to handle their stressful environment.

C. Evaluation of Psychosocial Programme

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAMME APPROACH AND CONTENT

Four of the components of the evaluation of the psychosocial programme were designed to assess the response of the children (and the facilitators, to some extent) to the approach and materials used. This was important since Mercy Corps Gaza were making use of the C4K workbook for the first time. The methods used were:

- Session monitoring form
- Diary completed by children
- Timeline
- Exit activity

The findings of each of these evaluation methods are discussed below.

Session monitoring form

The session monitoring form (see Appendix 2) was designed by the Comfort for Kids team⁶ specifically to monitor the effectiveness of the C4K sessions. It consists of eight questions which are answered 'yes' or 'no' by the monitor, and there is a space for comments relating to each question. It was designed to be administered monthly by an external monitor who visits a CBO and observes a session being delivered.

Each of the eighteen family centres involved in delivering C4K sessions received one monitoring visit between 9 and 12 August 2009 (i.e. towards the end of the first phase of the programme). The monitor spent 35-45 minutes in each session they visited (average [mean] length of time spent in sessions was 42 minutes), and spoke to between three and fourteen children in each session (average [mean] number of children spoken to was 7.3).

It should be noted that a single monitoring visit of less than one hour to one group per family centre is not sufficient for conclusions to be drawn about the quality of the delivery. It is recommended that in future programmes monitoring visits are conducted more regularly, at different stages of the programme, and that the monitor observes an entire session. It may be helpful for monitoring visits to be more structured, with monitors given guidance as to the number of children to be spoken to and the questions they should ask, and the types of observations to be made.

The frequency with which monitors responded 'yes' and 'no' to each question is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Monitors' observations of C4K sessions

	YES (Frequency)	NO (Frequency)
1. Children were upset while working in the workbook	1	17
2. Children were unable to concentrate after doing the workbook	1	17
3. Workbook is too advanced for the children	6	12
4. Insufficient workbook time	6	12
5. Children appeared to like to workbook	18	0
6. Children are concentrating well when using the workbook	15	3
7. Children are sharing their experiences	16	2
8. CBO facilitators are comfortable using the workbook with children	16	2

⁶ Comfort for Kids (C4K) materials are developed by Mercy Corps headquarters staff together with the Children's Psychology Health Centre (CPHC) in the United States. C4K has been launched in six post-disaster settings to-date, including the Gaza Strip.

Table 3 shows that completing the C4K activities did not appear to distress children and children liked using the workbook. In six of the eighteen groups, the workbook was perceived to be too advanced for the children, but in general children were said to concentrate on their work and to share their experiences. Most CBO facilitators were said to be comfortable with the workbook.

However, the 'yes/ no' response format does not allow mixed reactions to the workbook to be captured. These came through more clearly in the comments which accompanied the rating; it may be more helpful in the future to use a response format which allows a wider range of options (e.g. including 'some', or using a 1-5 rating scale).

The comments made by monitors suggest that some children became upset and frustrated because they struggled with the workbook. In some cases this was because they had difficulties reading and writing, but they enjoyed the drawing and colouring activities. In one group, some children said they did not like using the workbook because it made them remember the war. A small number of children in each group (2-5) were reported to have difficulties concentrating after using the workbook. Generally, children were said to remember and share events that happened to them, especially if it was something many of them experienced, but there were some children who were more reluctant to share.

Some groups felt that the workbook was pitched at an appropriate level for the children, whilst others said it was too advanced, especially for younger children and slower learners. In most cases, children were able to concentrate sufficiently to complete the workbook activities, but in some groups concentration was found to decrease as the session goes on, and in most groups there were a small number of children who found it difficult to concentrate, especially with the writing exercises.

Whilst facilitators were generally comfortable with using the workbook, they reported having difficulty with the younger groups (aged 7-9) and those who learn more slowly. It is recommended that these groups are provided with additional support, and more time is allocated to workbook activities during sessions. It is also recommended that facilitators are given guidance to help them identify children who are struggling with workbook activities, and how they can provide extra support in such cases.

Diary

When the programme was developed, it was envisaged as a 'drop-in' programme, with different children potentially attending each session. Therefore, a 'diary' was included to provide an ongoing assessment of children's feelings and thoughts about the programme, and to build up a picture of each child's experiences over time, even if they did not attend all the sessions.

At the end of each session, children were asked to indicate one good thing that happened that day, one bad thing that happened, and how they were feeling at the end of the session (see Appendix 3 for an example of a completed diary form).

Once the programme began, it was found that children tended to attend regularly, and whilst there were some benefits to the children completing the diaries, the facilitators found the task burdensome. A diary form was completed by each child at the end of every two-hour session, and often required the facilitators to support them in this task. A significant proportion of each session, and facilitators' time, therefore, was spent completing these diaries. Given that the information recorded by the children was minimal, this was not felt to be a good use of the facilitators' time.

Fifty of the diary forms were translated and analysed for the purpose of this mid-term evaluation. The sample included diaries from all CBOs. The characteristics of the children who completed the diaries in the sample are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Characteristics of 50 children whose diaries were analysed

Age group	Male	Female	Total
7-9 years	8	12	20
10-12 years	9	11	20
13-16 years	5	5	10
Total	22	28	50

The 'good things' recorded by the children related primarily to the sessions themselves, rather than events outside the session, and the 'good things' most commonly mentioned were games, drawing and songs. Very few of the children recorded any negative events that had happened during the day. Feelings at the end of the session were overwhelmingly positive, the only negative feelings were sadness because the session had come to an end.

Although the children recorded minimal information in their diaries, completing the diary gave them the opportunity to express negative feelings, and it is notable that they rarely did. In addition, collective activities, particularly games and art, are especially appreciated by children, which supports the findings of the exit activity (reported below).

The diary activity helped facilitators to identify any issues affecting particular children, but they found completing it each session too burdensome. It appears to be helpful for facilitators to have a regular point of contact with children, but for future programmes there is no need for the children's feelings to continue to be documented in this way. Children will continue to have an opportunity to express their feelings about the programme through the exit activity and the timelines.

Timeline

Towards the end of the first phase of the programme, children were invited to create a timeline from the beginning of the programme up to that point.

The timeline moves upwards to reflect times when they felt good, and down to reflect times they felt bad. On the line, they draw pictures to show good and hard events they experienced during the course of the programme (not necessarily related to the programme), and write something next to each picture to explain what it means. They are asked to draw at the end of the line something to indicate how they think their life will be in a year's time (with some written explanation). The final illustration should be of one good thing the child can celebrate in her/ his life now (see Appendix 4 for an example of a completed timeline). It should be noted that the timelines were not drawn exactly according to the above instructions; many children omitted the 'future' part of the timeline, and others recorded their hopes for the distant future rather than one year ahead. Very few children included something they can celebrate now in their timeline.

One time line was randomly selected from each group of children who regularly attended the psychosocial sessions in each Family Centre. Each of the 18 Family Centres ran approximately ten groups, so the sample consists of 182 timelines; 91 of these were from boys and 91 from girls. Sixty-six of the timelines (36.2%) were from children aged 7-9; 76 (41.8%) from children aged 10-12; and 40 (22%) from children aged 13-16.

The timelines were analysed using a simple content analysis framework. The positive and negative events referred to by the children were divided into 'within programme' and 'outside programme' events. There was a further category recording the children's hopes for the future. The findings are summarised in Table 5 below. The number of positive and negative references to each type of event are recorded (some children referred to a type of event more than once in their timeline).

Table 5. Summary of timeline analysis

	N. Positive references	N. Negative reference
WITHIN PROGRAMME		
Activities	144	4
Relationships	25	2
Other	45	63
OUTSIDE PROGRAMME		
School	83	36
Family events	83	51
National events	27	12
Trips	79	10

Summer vacation	21	2
Other	57	40

Within the programme

Table 5 shows that the vast majority of children who referred to programme activities in their timelines did so in a positive way. Children specifically mentioned enjoying the Open Days (28) and playing (17), with smaller numbers saying they enjoyed drawing (8), using the C4K workbook (6) and the theatre show (4). Only four children related programme activities to sadness on their timelines, and in three of these cases they were sad because they had missed the activities for some reason. One child said that the open day had been 'bad', which upset him.

The relationships children had formed in the psychosocial programme were referred to positively on 25 occasions in the timelines. Friends they had made in the sessions were mentioned fourteen times, and good relationships with facilitators were mentioned eight times. Only two children referred to relationships in a negative way; one said the children in the CBO did not play with them, and the other was sad because her friend did not attend the programme.

Other programme-related events referred to positively by the children include receiving gifts (bags and children's kits) (23). The main other programme-related event children said made them feel bad was the programme ending (56), with a small number of children saying they felt sad because they were unable to attend sessions at a particular time (4) or because the CBO was closing (3).

Outside the programme

One hundred and nineteen children included a school-related event on their timelines. Most of these were positive references, with children saying they were happy because they had succeeded in school/ exams (26), or because the time for the exams had come (16), because they received a certificate (5) and because the new school year was about to start (5). School-related events that children said made them feel bad include the time for exams approaching (22), receiving disappointing grades or exam results (5), and the new school year starting (5).

Events related to the family also featured frequently on timelines. The most commonly mentioned positive event was a family wedding (32), but others include parties (8), visits from/ to relatives (9), relatives' special events (e.g. graduation, travel) (7), receiving gifts from family members (3) and the arrival of a new baby (3). Some children also referred to negative family events on their timelines, specifically the death of a relative (20). Other negative family events include a relative being sick (4), disagreements with siblings (4), a parent being angry with the child (2) and the family house being destroyed (3).

National events were referred to by a smaller number of children on their timelines, with Ramadan being the most commonly-mentioned positive event (24). National events which children said made them feel bad mainly related to the Israeli occupation (8) or the after-effects of the 2008 war (6).

Many children included 'trips' in their timelines, often to the sea (41), but relatively few children specified whether these trips were with their family or with the CBO, so this category is likely to be a mixture of the two. However, it is clear that trips to the sea or other places are significant events for these children. Ten children said that they were sad because they had missed a trip for some reason. The summer vacation was mentioned by 23 children, with 21 saying they were happy because it had begun, and two saying they were sad because it had ended.

The other main non-programme positive events included by children on their timelines were spending time with friends (32) and receiving clothes or gifts (14). The main other negative events mentioned were remembering the war (10), becoming sick (7) and having disagreements with friends (4).

Hopes for the future

Sixty-four of the timelines sampled did not include hopes for the future. However, we cannot draw conclusions from this because it tended to be all the timelines from certain CBOs which omitted this part, so it is likely that the children were not instructed to include it.

Where hopes for the future were included in the timeline, the three most commonly mentioned were to succeed at school (24), to continue in the next part of the psychosocial programme (24) and for

the war to end (22). Some children referred to their hopes for a future career as a teacher (10), doctor (6), facilitator (4) or fisherman (1). Others hoped more generally for a good or successful future (15).

Exit activity

This activity focused on children remembering what they have done during the programme, what they have enjoyed, what has helped them and what has been difficult. It is a game in which they run to objects representing activities they have participated in during the programme. Objects representing all the types of activities are placed around the room and the children are invited to run to the object representing the activity they enjoyed most. The facilitators then count how many children ran to each activity, and record the numbers. They also ask the children why they selected the activity they did, and what they liked about it, and the facilitators write down the reasons given by the children. The children are then invited to run to the object symbolising the activity they found most helpful, and again the numbers are recorded and children asked to explain their choices. Finally, they run to the object symbolising the activity they found most difficult, and the numbers are recorded and children asked to explain their choices. They are asked to indicate their feelings about the different types of approaches used in the programme, and the different time periods of the programme, in the same way. Before the exercise begins, facilitators explain to children that there is no 'right answer', and give the children time to think about how they want to respond before telling the children to run to an object.

This exercise was conducted with all 155 groups, and 2,452 children participated. Each group consisted of between seven and 40 children, with a median group size of fifteen. The results of the exercise are summarised in Table 6 below. The numbers in each cell indicate the mean (average) number of children who selected each type of activity/ approach/ time, and the figure in parentheses indicates the standard deviation (a measure of variability).

Table 6. Summary of results of exit activity

	Most enjoyed Mean (SD)	Most helpful Mean (SD)	Most difficult Mean (SD)
ACTIVITY			
Art (drawing and colouring beyond the C4K workbook, craft activities, etc)	4.94 (2.62)	4.10 (2.35)	3.59 (2.36)
Games	6.79 (3.33)	5.07 (3.67)	2.34 (2.21)
C4K Gaza workbook	2.68 (1.84)	4.59 (2.80)	7.30 (4.41)
Individual counselling	1.34 (1.29)	3.59 (2.68)	2.54 (1.99)
APPROACH			
Individual activities (each child works alone)	3.62 (2.55)	3.59 (2.68)	7.51 (5.21)
Whole group activities (all children in the group work together)	8.17 (4.71)	7.72 (5.04)	3.38 (2.33)
Sub-group activities (children are divided into smaller groups, which work together)	4.04 (2.31)	4.48 (2.41)	4.73 (2.80)
TIME			
Beginning of programme	4.81 (2.75)	4.51 (2.65)	5.32 (2.85)
Middle	6.77 (4.40)	6.63 (4.25)	3.85 (2.37)
End of programme	4.25 (2.56)	4.65 (2.66)	6.12 (3.81)

The findings shown in the table above can also be shown graphically, which illustrates clearly the children's perceptions of each activity, approach and time period.

Figure 1. Children's perceptions of the four types of activity

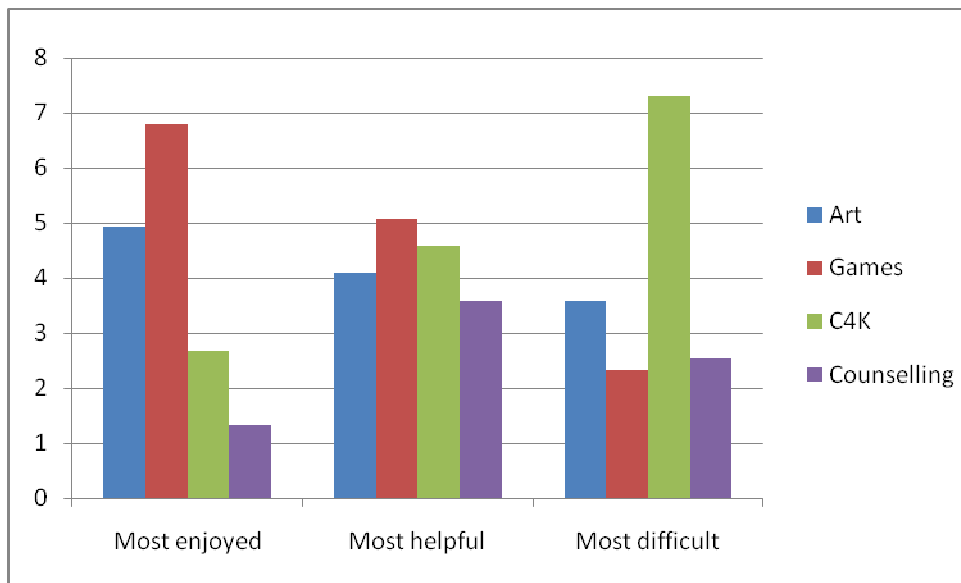
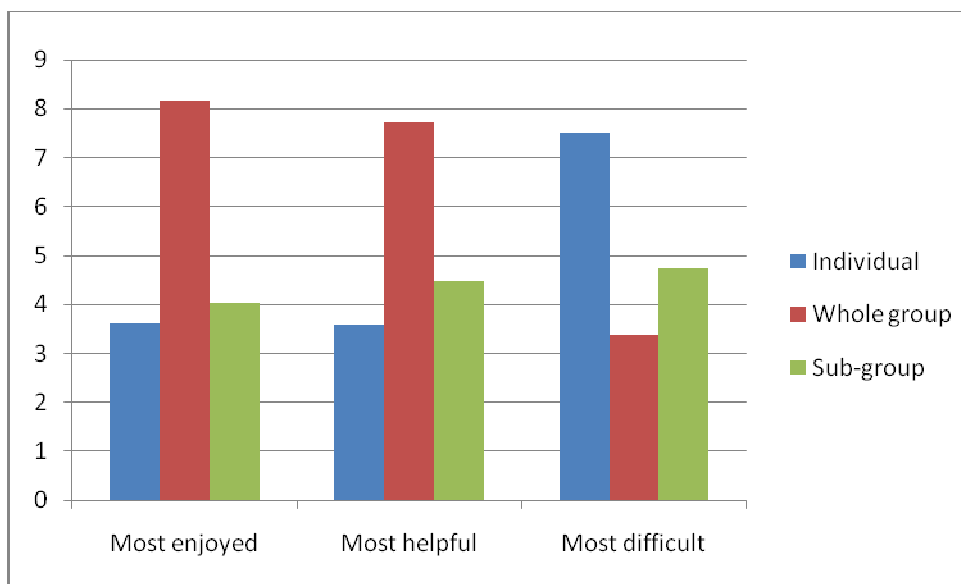


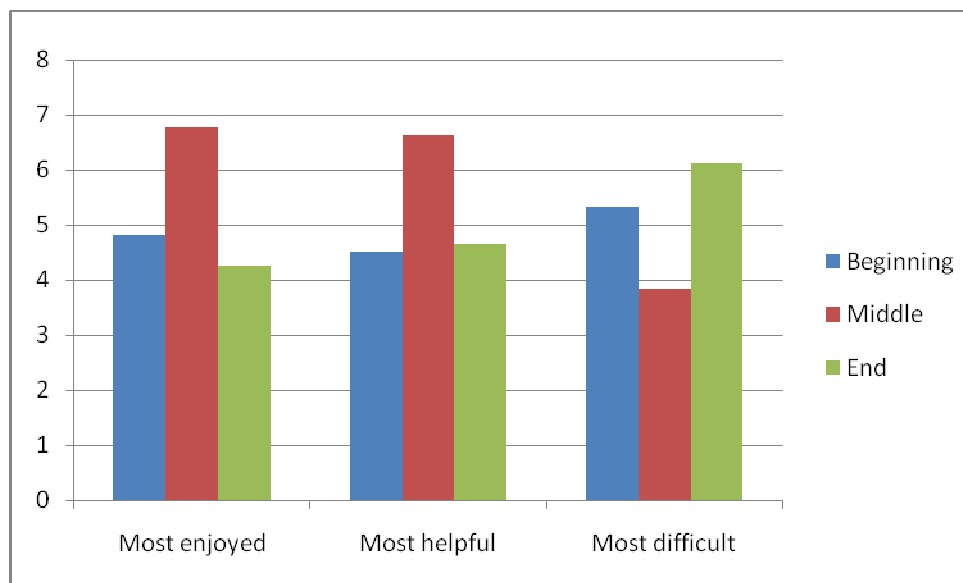
Figure 1 shows that the children found games and art much more enjoyable than the C4K work or individual counselling. There is little difference in how helpful they found these activities (which may indicate that they did not understand what was meant by 'helpful'), but they indicated clearly that they found the C4K activity more difficult than the others.

Figure 2. Children's perceptions of the three approaches



Whole group activities were perceived as by far the most helpful and enjoyable, and the least difficult, whilst individual activities were felt to be particularly difficult. It may be that the most common individual activity was the C4K work, which was said to be more difficult than other activities.

Figure 3. Children's perceptions of the three time periods



There is relatively little difference in children's perceptions of the three time periods (mean frequencies range between 3.85 and 6.77), but the middle period was rated the most enjoyable and helpful. This aspect of the exit activity did not provide useful information, and should not be included in the future.

The exit activity highlights the children's enjoyment of the activities undertaken by the whole group, particularly games, but they also enjoyed art activities, which may be undertaken individually, in small groups or as one large group. They did not enjoy individual counselling, or find it particularly helpful, and it would be useful to explore the reasons for this. They also reported finding the C4K work much more difficult than the other activities, and this would be worth exploring further. Of course, an activity which is difficult may be valuable, but it depends on the reasons for the difficulty. If it is perceived as difficult because the children are addressing challenging issues through the C4K workbook, this could be extremely beneficial, but if it is perceived as difficult because the children do not understand the exercises, or have problems reading and writing, this would not be beneficial. Informal discussion with the facilitators indicates that they themselves found it difficult to use the C4K manual since it was their first time; the workbook arouses all types of feelings and memories in the children, including distressing/ bad ones; and that many children needed adult help to work on it, so it was not as easy as drawing or playing games. Further exploration of these findings is essential.

ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS ON CHILDREN'S WELLBEING

The second aspect of the evaluation of the psychosocial programme focused on changes in the children's behaviour and feelings at the end of the programme, compared to the beginning, as an indication of how they may have been affected by their participation.

Parents interview

A structured interview, designed by UNICEF, was administered to the parents of 371 children who participated in the programme before the sessions began (between 24 March and 30 April) and again at the end of the first phase of the programme (between 18 and 29 August 2009).

A quota sampling strategy was used, which involved interviewing a sample of 24 parents of children from each of the eighteen family centres (parents of 12 boys and 12 girls). The boys and girls were sampled randomly from within each CBO. This sampling strategy should have led to 408 parents being interviewed, but because some of the selected parents were unavailable, the final sample consisted of 371 parents.

The intended and actual numbers sampled from each CBO are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Description of sample by CBO

CBO		Intended sample				Actual sample		
		Girls	Boys	Total		Girls	Boys	Total
1	El-Najada Palestinians Association	12	12	24		11	13	24
2	Al-Najda Social Association	12	12	24		13	11	24
3	Northern Association for Social Development	12	12	24		11	12	23
4	Palestinian Association for Relief and Development	12	12	24		12	11	23
5	Cultural Association for Heritage Protection ⁷	24	24	48		24	24	48
6	Family Development Association	12	12	24		11	12	23
7	Society of Remedial Education ⁸	24	24	48		24	24	48
8	Aknaf Bet El-Maqdes Association	12	12	24		12	12	24
9	Beit El Mostaqbel Association	12	12	24		12	12	24
10	Bayadar Association for Environmental Development	12	12	24		12	11	23
11	National Agency for Family Care	12	12	24		11	11	22
12	Baitona for Community Development	12	12	24		9	9	18
13	Tomoooh Association for Skills Development	12	12	24		11	12	23
14	University College of Applied Sciences	12	12	24		12	12	24
15	Sharek Youth Forum ⁹	12	12	24		0	0	0
16	Al-Ekhllass Association for Development and Construction ¹⁰	12	12	24		0	0	0
	TOTAL	204	204	408		185	186	371

The interview (see Appendix 5) consists of 25 statements. Parents describe the behaviour of their child by responding that 'yes', the statement describes their child; 'no', it does not describe their child; or it describes how their child behaves 'sometimes'.

Description of participants

The interviews were conducted with parents of 186 girls who participated in the programme, and 185 boys. Of these children, 73 (19.7%) had four siblings or fewer; 196 (52.8%) had between five and seven siblings, and 100 (27.0%) had eight siblings or more. The children's birth order ranged from first to thirteenth, with the mean birth order being fourth (standard deviation = 2.68). The mean age of the children was 10.81 (standard deviation = 2.45).

⁷ Together with the CBO Cultural Association for Heritage Protection, Mercy Corps established two family centres.

⁸ Together with the CBO Society of Remedial Education, Mercy Corps established two family centres.

⁹ Towards the end of the first phase of the project, Sharek Youth Forum was closed by local authorities. To ensure that the children and parents involved in the project were able to participate in guided psychosocial sessions, Mercy Corps and the CBO came to an arrangement whereby the sessions were temporarily conducted in homes of community members. The interruption however meant that pre-programme data was lost, and post-programme data could not be collected.

¹⁰ Towards the end of the first phase of the project, Al-Ekhllass Association for Development and Construction was closed by local authorities. To ensure that the children and parents involved in the project were able to participate in guided psychosocial sessions, Mercy Corps and the CBO came to an arrangement whereby the sessions were temporarily conducted in homes of community members. The interruption however meant that pre-programme was lost and post-programme data could not be collected.

The parents interviewed lived in the locations described in Table 8.

Table 8. Locations of parents interviewed

Governorate	Number (Per cent)	Location	Number (Per cent)
Gaza	122 (32.9%)	Gaza City	84 (22.6%)
		Jabaliya	38 (10.2%)
Gaza North	202 (54.4%)	Beit Lahiya	155 (41.8%)
		Beit Hanoun	47 (12.7%)
Khan Younis	47 (12.7%)	Khan Younis	47 (12.7%)

The proportion of the sample from each Governorate and location is representative of the distribution of the programme participants as a whole. Most of the children lived in the city (250, 67.4%), with smaller proportions living in villages (69, 18.6%) and camps (52, 14.0%). Parents were asked to describe the accommodation situation of the child. The majority lived in a house owned by their family (291, 78.4%), with relatively few living in rented flats (30, 8.1%), camp houses (30, 8.1%), shared rooms (10, 2.7%), a room in a shared house (5, 1.3%) or a tent (3, 0.8%).

In the majority of cases (286 pre-programme, 285 post-programme) the interview was conducted with the mother of the child, but a significant minority of interviews were conducted with fathers (73 pre-programme, 74 post-programme). A small number of interviews (10 pre-programme and 12 post-programme) were conducted with other members of the family, including aunts, uncles, brothers, grandfathers, sisters and stepmothers. In most cases (357, 96.2%) the same person was interviewed both pre- and post-programme, but in fourteen cases (3.8%) the post-programme interview was conducted with a different family member to the pre-programme interview.

Description of responses

The responses given by parents to each of the questions, in both pre- and post-programme interviews, are summarised in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Parents' responses to interview questions pre- and post-programme

	PRE-PROGRAMME			POST-PROGRAMME		
	YES	SOME-TIMES	NO	YES	SOME-TIMES	NO
1. The child considers the feelings of others	197	125	49	277	79	15
2. The child cannot sit in one place for a long time	200	101	70	114	133	123
3. Suffers from headache, stomach-ache, nausea	78	108	183	24	85	262
4. The child participates in games and school activities	227	102	35	297	61	13
5. The child experiences some loss of control (e.g. attacks of crying and anger outbursts)	151	132	87	69	133	169
6. Tend to play alone and loneliness	71	123	177	29	96	246
7. Obedient and does what others tell him	147	165	57	232	109	30
8. Anxious and looks depressed	109	155	105	50	132	189
9. Helps others when they are in need and if they are upset	207	113	50	267	80	24
10. Irritated and nervous continuously	127	142	99	59	116	196

11. He/ she has at least one good friend	204	71	94	251	63	57
12. Has some fights with peers	115	135	120	59	147	165
13. Sad and tearful	93	160	118	33	106	232
14. Popular, loved by the others	237	103	30	283	64	24
15. Unable to concentrate	101	185	85	58	132	181
16. Nervous with others in new situations, and easily loses confidence	127	145	98	54	89	228
17. Kind and gentle in dealing with younger children	241	90	40	277	71	23
18. Lying and cheating are some of his habits	40	106	223	15	59	297
19. Bullied by others	50	101	216	29	78	264
20. Volunteers to help others	217	101	51	270	75	26
21. Thinks a lot before taking any action	116	150	104	123	175	73
22. Steals from home, school and other places	23	22	324	9	23	339
23. More easily involved with older people than younger	123	127	117	137	146	88
24. Has a lot of fears and is easily frightened	173	121	75	60	139	172
25. Follows up with his homework and has good attention	162	131	77	229	110	32

The table above shows that the greatest changes reported by parents over the course of the programme were reductions in their child's fear (item 24) and restlessness (item 2), and increased obedience (item 7), self control (item 5) and consideration of others (item 1). The numbers (and percentages) of children whose behaviour was said to improve, deteriorate, or not to change at all over the course of the programme are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Summary of changes in children's behaviour on each item

	Deteriorate N (%)	No change N (%)	Improve N (%)	Missing data
1. The child considers the feelings of others	37 (10.0)	201 (54.2)	133 (35.8)	0
2. The child cannot sit in one place for a long time	62 (16.7)	137 (36.9)	171 (46.1)	1
3. Suffers from headache, stomach-ache, nausea	41 (11.1)	184 (49.6)	144 (38.8)	2
4. The child participates in games and school activities	31 (8.4)	230 (62.0)	103 (27.8)	7
5. The child experiences some loss of control (e.g. attacks of crying and anger outbursts)	43 (11.6)	159 (42.9)	168 (45.3)	1
6. Tend to play alone and loneliness	52 (14.0)	187 (50.4)	132 (35.6)	0
7. Obedient and does what others tell him	50 (13.5)	179 (48.2)	140 (37.7)	2
8. Anxious and looks depressed	53 (14.3)	151 (40.7)	165 (44.5)	2
9. Helps others when they are in need	46 (12.4)	214 (57.7)	110 (29.6)	1

and if they are upset				
10. Irritated and nervous continuously	46 (12.4)	151 (40.7)	171 (46.1)	3
11. He/ she has at least one good friend	59 (15.9)	191 (51.5)	119 (32.1)	2
12. Has some fights with peers	67 (18.1)	150 (40.4)	153 (41.2)	1
13. Sad and tearful	39 (10.5)	158 (42.6)	174 (46.9)	0
14. Popular, loved by the others	44 (11.9)	235 (63.3)	91 (24.5)	1
15. Unable to concentrate	60 (16.2)	138 (37.2)	173 (46.6)	0
16. Nervous with others in new situations, and easily loses confidence	42 (11.3)	141 (38.0)	187 (50.4)	1
17. Kind and gentle in dealing with younger children	52 (14.0)	226 (60.9)	93 (25.1)	0
18. Lying and cheating are some of his habits	29 (7.8)	234 (63.1)	106 (28.6)	2
19. Bullied by others	50 (13.5)	215 (58.0)	102 (27.5)	4
20. Volunteers to help others	56 (15.1)	205 (55.3)	108 (29.1)	2
21. Thinks a lot before taking any action	80 (21.6)	176 (47.4)	114 (30.7)	1
22. Steals from home, school and other places	23 (6.2)	305 (82.2)	41 (11.1)	2
23. More easily involved with older people than younger	112 (30.2)	174 (46.9)	81 (21.8)	4
24. Has a lot of fears and is easily frightened	40 (10.8)	135 (36.4)	194 (52.3)	2
25. Follows up with his homework and has good attention	44 (11.9)	188 (50.7)	138 (37.2)	1
TOTAL	59 (15.9)	24 (6.5)	258 (69.5)	30

Table 10 shows that some aspects of children's behaviour changed more than others over the course of the programme. Very little change was observed on item 22, 'Steals from home, school and other places', because the vast majority of parents said their children did not do this, either before or after the programme.

We would expect some the behaviour of some children to deteriorate over the course of the programme, because a proportion will experience distressing events outside the CBO which will affect their behaviour. However, a large proportion of children were said to 'deteriorate' on two items. On item 23, 'More easily involved with older people than younger', 30% of children were said to 'deteriorate' over time. However, this item is problematic, since it is not clear whether this behaviour is problematic or not. Item 21, 'Thinks a lot before taking action', is similarly ambiguous, since this can be seen as a positive or a negative behaviour. It is notable that a large proportion of children were also said to 'deteriorate' on this item, perhaps because it was interpreted in different ways by different parents. It is recommended that these two items are excluded from the interview schedule in the future. It may be more concerning that 18% of children were said to have more fights with peers at the end of the programme than at the beginning (item 12); it is not clear why this might be.

The areas in which greatest improvements in behaviour were noted are in reducing fear (item 24) and increasing confidence (item 16). It may be that these aspects of behaviour are particularly targeted by the programme, although it would require similar data to be collected from a comparison group to be sure of this.

A total 'behaviour' score was created for each child¹¹, based on the observations of their parents before and after the programme. A high total score indicates that the child is said by his/ her parent to demonstrate a high level of resilience, and a low total score indicates that they are said to demonstrate a large number of behavioural difficulties.

Comparison of total behaviour scores found that, on average, post-programme scores were significantly higher than pre-programme scores¹². This indicates that parents reported that their children demonstrated fewer behavioural problems, and more positive behaviours, at the end of the programme than they did at the beginning. Of the parents interviewed, 69.5% reported that their children's behaviour had improved over the course of the programme.

It is not possible to state categorically that this change is due to the effect of the programme, since we are not able to compare the improvements made in the behaviour of children attending the programme with changes in the behaviour of children who did not attend the programme. There are other possible explanations for improvements in behaviour. In particular, the programme began fairly soon after the Israeli incursion into Gaza in December 2008/ January 2009; we would expect children to show a high level of behavioural problems following such an experience, and for these to reduce gradually over time. It is difficult to separate out the natural reduction in problem behaviours over time from the effects of the programme.

Effect of background factors

The mean total scores pre- and post-programme, and the mean 'difference' scores for each CBO were calculated, and are shown in Table 11. A positive difference score indicates that parents report that the child's resilience increased over the course of the programme; a negative difference score indicates that the parents reported that their child showed more problematic behaviours at the end of the programme than at the beginning. 'Difference scores' ranged from -22 to +32, with a mean score of 7.09 (standard deviation = 8.96).

Table 11. Parents' interview: Descriptive statistics by CBO

	TOTAL PRE SCORE			TOTAL POST SCORE			DIFFERENCE SCORE		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
El-Najada Palestinians Association	20	33.30	7.33	24	36.29	6.52	20	1.90	8.93
Al-Najda Social Association	24	28.50	7.38	23	44.22	3.20	23	15.83	6.11
Northern Association For Social Development	23	29.78	8.93	23	37.09	6.02	23	7.30	6.81
Palestinian Association For Relief And Development	23	31.30	6.45	23	30.30	6.31	23	-1.00	3.86
Cultural Association For Heritage Protection	46	28.91	5.80	48	32.17	6.38	46	3.33	7.66
Family Development Association	23	22.74	8.36	23	35.17	6.24	23	12.43	7.60
Society Of Remedial Education	46	30.91	7.57	48	38.31	8.02	46	7.11	8.43
Aknaf Bet El-Maqdes Association	21	26.48	9.58	24	26.67	7.83	21	.48	11.89

¹¹ The scores of the 15 negatively-worded items were reversed (items 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24).

¹² Total scores can range from 0-50. Total scores were significantly higher at the end of the programme (median = 39) than at the beginning (median = 30), T=5852, p<.001, r=-.62.

Beit El Mostaqbel Association	22	30.05	8.72	24	44.63	4.00	22	14.23	9.37
Bayadar Association For Environmental Development	18	28.78	7.73	23	37.13	5.88	18	8.61	8.75
National Agency For Family Care	19	33.95	6.11	22	41.73	3.49	19	8.16	8.08
Baitona For Community Development	18	35.89	7.78	18	44.00	5.17	18	8.11	7.15
Tomoooh Association For Skills Development	16	29.75	5.77	23	40.22	4.63	16	10.38	3.30
University College Of Applied Sciences	23	32.65	7.05	24	39.50	4.43	23	6.87	6.44
TOTAL	342	30.07	7.90	370	37.24	7.73	341	7.09	8.96

Table 11 shows that there are considerable differences between CBOs in the extent to which children's behaviour was reported to improve over the course of the programme (the higher the 'difference' score, the greater the positive improvement reported). There are a group of CBOs which saw little or no improvement in children's behaviour over the course of the programme: Palestinian Association For Relief And Development; Aknaf Bet El-Maqdes Association; El-Najada Palestinians Association; Cultural Association For Heritage Protection; and University College Of Applied Sciences. The mean 'difference' scores for these organisations are significantly lower than the scores of a group of CBOs whose child participants reportedly showed great improvements in behaviour: Al-Najda Social Association; Beit El Mostaqbel Association; Family Development Association; Tomoooh Association for Skills Development; Bayadar Association For Environmental Development; National Agency For Family Care; Baitona For Community Development.

Table 12 shows the mean total scores pre- and post-programme, and the mean 'difference' scores for boys and girls, for the three age groups and the three Governorates.

Table 12. Parents' interview: Descriptive statistics by gender and age

	TOTAL PRE SCORE			TOTAL POST SCORE			DIFFERENCE SCORE		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
GENDER									
Boys	171	28.07	7.60	184	36.57	7.90	170	8.28	9.48
Girls	171	32.06	7.72	186	37.90	7.53	171	5.89	8.27
AGE GROUP									
7-9	111	28.66	8.24	120	37.31	7.64	110	8.42	8.85
10-12	120	30.42	8.33	127	37.34	7.79	120	6.73	9.24
13-16	111	31.10	6.90	123	37.07	7.83	111	6.15	8.69
GOVERNORATE									
Gaza	110	32.26	7.18	122	38.98	6.42	110	6.57	7.07
Gaza North	192	28.93	8.01	201	35.31	8.22	191	6.41	9.58
Khan Younis	40	29.48	8.21	47	40.96	6.23	40	11.70	9.41

Children attending CBOs based in Khan Younis were reported to have made significantly greater improvements in their behaviour in the course of the programme than were children in Gaza and Gaza

North¹³. Further analysis (see Appendix 6) revealed that younger children and boys were found to show greater improvements in their behaviour over the course of the programme. A greater increase in scores is also related to the same parent being interviewed before and after the programme. A child's birth order or living place (city, camp or village), or whether the mother or father was interviewed does not have any influence on improvement over time. Age, gender and whether the same parent was interviewed on both occasions account for just 7% of the variance in children's total 'improvement' scores so, as would be expected, other unidentified factors (possibly including the impact of the programme) have a much stronger influence on changes in children's behaviour over this time period.

¹³ $F(2, 338) = 6.21, p=.002$

D. Conclusions and Recommendations

CONCLUSIONS

The first phase of this programme has provided support to a large number of conflict-affected children, youth and families in Gaza. Eighteen family centres were established and a total of 4,453 children attended psychosocial sessions at these centres, 771 adults attended psychosocial workshops, and 5,049 adults participated in 244 community gatherings. In addition, 902 children participated in individual counselling sessions. Sixteen family days were organised for children, siblings, peers and parents. All the family centres provided information about social services, and more than 1,508 consultations/ information sessions were conducted in the course of this programme.

The C4K activities seemed to be appropriate and helpful for the majority of children, but a small proportion in each group found it too advanced and difficult to concentrate. This proportion was larger amongst the younger (age 7-9) groups. Those who had difficulty reading and writing had particular problems with the C4K activities.

More than 50% of the parents of children attending psychosocial sessions reported that their children demonstrated significantly fewer behavioural problems, and more positive behaviours, at the end of the programme than they did at the beginning. Due to the lack of a comparison group, we cannot be sure that this is due to the effect of the programme. However, other factors (age and sex of child; birth order; whether the same or a different parent was interviewed at the two time periods; whether the mother or the father was interviewed; whether the child lived in a city or in a camp or village) only account for 7% of the variance in children's total 'behaviour' scores so other unidentified factors (possibly including the impact of the programme) have a much stronger influence on changes in children's behaviour over this time period.

There is great variety amongst the CBOs in the reported levels of improvement in children's behaviour over the course of the programme. Children attending sessions at five CBOs were reported to have made little or no improvements in their behaviour. In contrast, parents whose children attended sessions at seven different CBOs reported great improvements in behaviour.

The children used their diaries mainly to record positive things that had happened in the session they had just participated in. The 'good things' most commonly mentioned were games, drawing and songs. Although the children recorded minimal information in their diaries, completing the diary gave them the opportunity to express negative feelings, and it is notable that they rarely did.

The timelines also showed that the children experienced the programme activities as overwhelmingly positive, particularly appreciating the Open Days. They also valued the relationships they formed in the programme, both with fellow-participants and with the facilitators. As expected, events which occurred outside the programme also had a considerable effect on the children, particularly events at school and in the family. National events, such as Ramadan, were seen as very significant by the children.

Children's responses to the exit activity demonstrate that they found games and art much more enjoyable than the C4K work or individual counselling, and found the C4K activity more difficult than the others. Whole group activities were perceived as by far the most helpful and enjoyable, and the least difficult, whilst individual activities were felt to be particularly difficult.

The evaluation strategy used for the first phase of this programme was rather minimal, since there were no programme staff available to undertake monitoring and evaluation activities. As a result, the evaluation was conducted primarily using data gathered in the course of the programme activities (diary, timeline, exit activity) and as part of the process of assessment of potential participants (parents' interview). The data gathered through these activities, although limited, suggests that the programme is having a positive effect on the children involved, and that the children enjoy participating in it. It is hoped that it will be possible to develop the evaluation strategy in order to explore how the children experience different aspects of the programme, and the extent to which any improvements in their behaviour can be attributed to their participation in the psychosocial sessions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Programme recommendations

- Younger children (7-9 years old) and slower learners struggled to use the C4K workbook. It is recommended that these groups are provided with additional support, and more time is allocated to workbook activities during sessions. It is also recommended that facilitators are given guidance to help them identify children who are struggling with workbook activities, and how they can provide extra support in such cases.
 - It may be worth considering extending the period for psychosocial sessions to allow more time to go through the C4K workbook for those children who need it.
 - Another option would be to increase the number of sessions for C4K material, and decrease the number of sessions in which other material is used.
- Children enjoy small-group and whole-group activities much more than individual activities. Whilst the individual activities are valuable, children may lose concentration if they are expected to work on their own for a long period of time. Where possible, it might be helpful to intersperse individual work with group activities.
- Those CBOs where little or no improvement in children's behaviour was reported over time should be offered increased support in future phases of the programme.

Evaluation recommendations

- The evaluation would be greatly enhanced by the collection of 'pre' and 'post' data (e.g. parents' interviews) from a comparison group of children. This would enable the evaluation team to identify the specific contribution of the psychosocial programme to any increase in children's wellbeing.
- The qualitative aspect of the evaluation needs to be developed further, in order to obtain more contextual information about the issues raised. The findings presented here highlight some areas of the programme which may need to be addressed, but a qualitative approach would help to clarify the meaning of these findings, and facilitate the development and improvement of the programme. It will be necessary to conduct a training workshop for programme staff to equip them to gather and analyse qualitative data.
- This evaluation highlighted that the C4K workbook was perceived to be too advanced for some children. It appears to be younger children who struggled, and those who have difficulties reading and writing, but it would be useful to conduct a more detailed assessment of the difficulties experienced with the workbook. A better understanding of the reasons for any difficulty would help the programme team to decide how to respond (e.g. by developing criteria to select children most likely to benefit from the workbook; to provide more support at particular stages of the workbook; or to revise the workbook).
- The session monitoring form should be reviewed, since the current form highlighted some issues which may be important, but did not allow monitors to gather sufficient information about these issues. It may be more helpful in the future to use a response format which allows a wider range of options (e.g. including 'some', or using a 1-5 rating scale), as well as a way of documenting more fully the reasons for each rating.
- In future programmes, monitoring visits should be conducted more regularly and at different stages of the programme. The monitor should observe an entire session instead of only parts of this. It may be helpful for monitoring visits to be more structured, with monitors given guidance as to the number of children to be spoken to and the questions they should ask, and the types of observations to be made.
- It appears to be helpful for facilitators to have a regular point of contact with children, but for future programmes there is no need for the children's feelings to be documented through the diaries. Children will continue to have an opportunity to express their feelings about the programme through the exit activity and the timelines.

- The facilitators should be trained and supported to help the children complete the timelines according to the instructions (particularly with regard to the children's expectations for their life in one year's time, and something they can celebrate in their lives).
- The instructions for the exit activity state that after the children have selected their 'most enjoyable' activity, etc., the facilitators should ask them to explain the reasons for their choice, and these explanations should be written down. This information was not obtained in the exit activities conducted during the first phase of the programme, which makes it difficult to understand the significance of the children's choices, and any implications for the programme. In future phases, additional efforts should be made to train and supervise the facilitators to run the exit activity in full, to ensure that as much useful information is collected as possible.
- During the exit activity, facilitators should explain to the children what is meant by the word 'helpful' in this context, and explain what the children should consider in order to decide which activities and approaches they found particularly 'helpful'.
- In future the 'time period' aspect of the exit activity should be excluded, since it did not provide useful information.
- Item 23, 'More easily involved with older people than younger', and item 21, 'Thinks a lot before taking any action', should be excluded from the parents' interview schedule in the future.
- If resources and capacity allow, it would be worth conducting some further discussions with groups of children to explore some of the findings of this evaluation, since some issues require further clarification.

Appendices

Appendix 1: CBO Location

Appendix 2: Session monitoring form

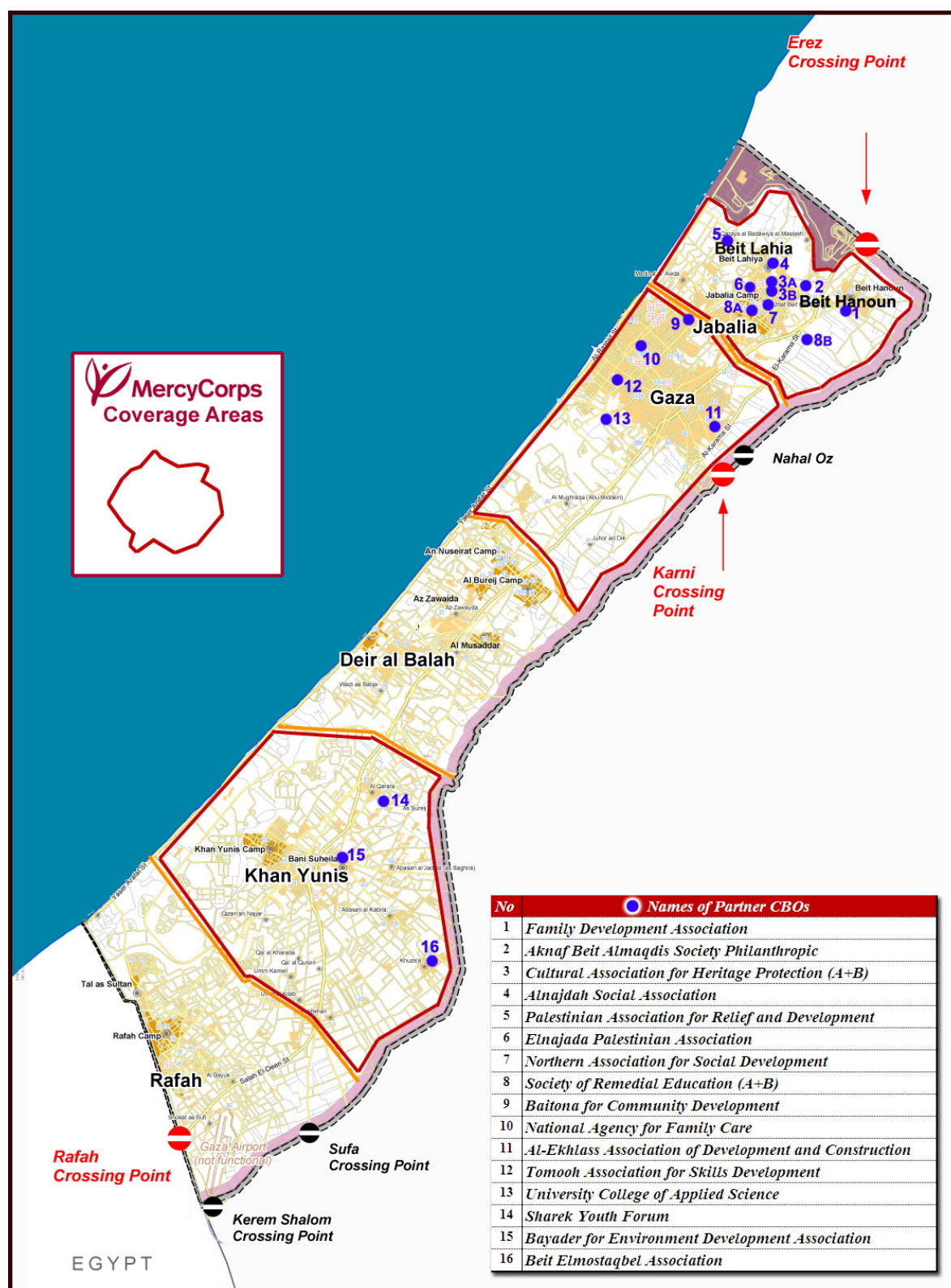
Appendix 3: Completed diary form

Appendix 4: Completed timeline

Appendix 5: Parents' interview

Appendix 6: Parents' interview – multiple regression

APPENDIX 1: CBO LOCATION



APPENDIX 2: SESSION MONITORING FORM

CBO Name and Site: _____

Monitor's Name: _____ Date: _____

A. Site Visit Data	
1. How much time did you spend at the site (in minutes)?	
2. How many children did you speak with?	
3. Did you take photos or videos?	Yes/No

B. Observations	
1. Children were upset while working in the workbook. Comments:	Yes/No
2. Children were unable to concentrate after doing the workbook. Comments:	Yes/No
3. Workbook is too advanced for the children. Comments:	Yes/No
4. Insufficient workbook time. (Guidelines suggest 45 minutes, 2-3 times weekly) Comments:	Yes/No
5. Children appeared to like the workbook. Comments:	Yes/No
6. Children are concentrating well when using the workbook. Comments:	Yes/No
7. Children are sharing their experiences. Comments:	Yes/No
8. CBO facilitators are comfortable using the workbook with children. Comments:	Yes/No
9. Other comments.	

* Use additional paper for comments if the blank space under each question is insufficient.

APPENDIX 3: COMPLETED DIARY FORM

Diary 9 a



Mercy Corps
مشروع الدعم النفسي والاجتماعي للمرأة والطفل
ممول من (DFID)

نموذج التقييم اليومي للأطفال

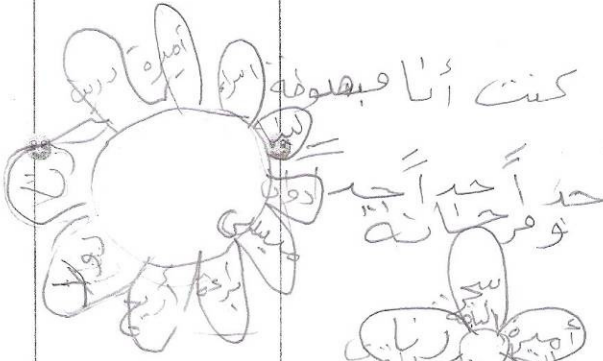
التاريخ / 6 / 10	العدد 2 م
اسم الطفل / مريم	العمر / 9
اسم المؤسسة / مركز البحوث والتنمية	اسم / رقم المجموعة / H
ملاحظات	ات الم
<p>- ذكية جدا. ملتزمة بالواجب.</p> <p>- تشارك في الأنشطة.</p> <p>- لديها صوت جميل.</p> <p>- she is clever. Attended the program.</p> <p>- she talent in song.</p>	<p>درب /</p> <p>out: she</p>

Diary 96

اكتب / ارسم شي حلو عن اليوم

شو حسيت بعد ما انتهى اللقاء
(اكتب / ارسم)

اكتب / ارسم شي مش حلو عن
اليوم



لعبة

البرشوت

ولعبة

البيضة

ولعبة

الكرة

او بدى

كاجن كل

يوم على

الجمعة

I'm so happy

I want to
come to the
CBo every Day

ولا

شي

كله

عيني

I inbrested
every
thing

I like play in football, &
Basketball play

APPENDIX 4: COMPLETED TIMELINE

Mercy Corps
DFID Psychosocial Support Programme
Time Line Evaluation Form

CBO Name: الجمعية الخيرية CBO Location: م. صيدا - الشرا Facilitator Name: محمد الشرا

Child's Name	اسم الطفل	Child's Age (yrs)	عمر الطفل (سنة)	Child's Sex	جنس الطفل	Date	التاريخ
<u>سميرة العلي</u>	<u>سميرة العلي</u>	<u>15 years</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>female</u>	<u>أنثى</u>	<u>2.9/2009</u>	<u>2.9/2009</u>

May (مايو) 2009 June (يونيو) 2009 July (يوليو) 2009 August (أغسطس) 2009

happy with the exams

happy to go home

Sad with exams results

Sad end the program

happy new clothes

hope good life

APPENDIX 5: PARENTS' INTERVIEW

Demographic Information Done by parents

Name: _____		Date: / /	
Age: _____		Date of birth: / /	
Order among siblings: _____			
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	
Address of living: _____			
Place of living	<input type="checkbox"/> refugee camp	<input type="checkbox"/> City	<input type="checkbox"/> Village
Kind of house	<input type="checkbox"/> rented flat	<input type="checkbox"/> refugee house	<input type="checkbox"/> Owned house
أخري حدد	<input type="checkbox"/> Tent	<input type="checkbox"/> room within extended family home	Others: Specify: _____
Number of brother and sisters: _____			
<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-7	<input type="checkbox"/> more than 8	

Facilitator's name: _____

Challenges and difficulties scale- done by parentsName: _____ Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female Age: _____

Address: _____

Dear father, mother:

Following are group of questions which classify the behaviours that some children show. There are three columns of scale that determine frequency of behaviour of your child. Please specify whether the child has shown the behaviours during the last 6 months.

YES	SOME TIMES	NO	BEHAVIORS
2	1	0	The child considers the feelings of others
2	1	0	The child couldn't sit in one place for long time (hyperactive)
2	1	0	Suffer from headache, stomachache, nausea
2	1	0	The child participates in the games and school activities.
2	1	0	The child experiences some of loss of control, attacks with crying and anger movements
2	1	0	Tends to play alone and loneliness
2	1	0	Obedient and does what other tell him.
2	1	0	Anxious and looks depressed
2	1	0	Helps others when they are in need help and if they are upset
2	1	0	Irritated and nervous continuously
2	1	0	He/she has at least one good friend
2	1	0	Has some fights with peers
2	1	0	Sad, and has tears in his/her eyes
2	1	0	Popular, loved by the others
2	1	0	Lacks attention,
2	1	0	Nervous in inclining to others in new situations, and easily loses confidence
2	1	0	Kind and gentle in dealing with other younger children
2	1	0	Lying and cheating are some of his habits
2	1	0	Bullied by others
2	1	0	Volunteers to help others
2	1	0	Thinks a lot before taking any action
2	1	0	Steals from home, school and other places
2	1	0	Easily involved with elder people than younger
2	1	0	Has a lot of fears and is easily frightened
2	1	0	Follows up with his homework and duties until the end, and has good attention

Do you have other comments:

APPENDIX 6: PARENTS' INTERVIEW – MULTIPLE REGRESSION

In order to identify some of the factors that may contribute to the change in scores, a 'difference' score was calculated for each child by subtracting the pre-programme score from the post-programme score. A positive difference score indicates that parents report that the child's resilience increased over the course of the programme; a negative difference score indicates that the parents reported that their child showed more problematic behaviours at the end of the programme than at the beginning. 'Difference scores' ranged from -22 to +32, with a mean score of 7.09 (standard deviation = 8.96).

A multiple linear regression was conducted with 'difference score' as the dependent variable. The variables hypothesised to contribute to the difference score are described below:

- Age of child
- Birth order
- Sex
- Whether the same or a different parent was interviewed at the two time periods
- Whether the mother or the father was interviewed (ten cases where other relatives were interviewed were excluded from this analysis)
- Whether the child lived in a city or in a camp or village (camp and village had to be combined for the purposes of this analysis)

The six variables were entered in a single step, using a 'forced entry' method. An initial assessment of multicollinearity found that none of the variables was closely related to another.

The model significantly predicted the difference between parents' ratings of their child's behaviour before and after the programme ($F(6, 325)=3.77$, $p=.001$, $R^2=.07$). If $p<.05$ is taken to indicate statistical significance, three of the predictor variables predicted the total difference score: age ($\beta = -.12$), sex ($\beta = -.14$) and whether the same parent was interviewed at the two time periods ($\beta = .16$). Younger children and boys were found to show greater improvements in their behaviour over the course of the programme, and a greater increase in scores is related to the same parent being interviewed before and after the programme. However, together, the variables account for just 7% of the variance in children's total problem scores so, as would be expected, other factors (including the impact of the programme) have a much stronger influence on changes in children's behaviour over this time period.