



ILO Regional Office for the Arab States

The Provision of Childcare Services through Cooperatives to Support Economic Opportunities for Women

Terms of Reference

Background

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations. It is the only tripartite UN agency – bringing together government, employers’ and workers’ representatives to elaborate labour standards and policies and promote decent work around the world.

In 2019, the ILO partnered with UN Women to implement a four-year regional programme “Promoting Productive Employment and Decent Work for Women in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine” funded by SIDA. The programme aims at promoting decent employment opportunities for women in Egypt, Jordan and OPT through promoting equitable laws and policies, engaging public, private and community actors and reducing the uneven responsibility of unpaid care. The joint programme builds on the specific expertise of the involved agencies and their added value and brings together a range of partners to deliver the programme.

As part of this programme, the ILO would like to pilot the model of cooperatives as childcare providers to support economic opportunities for women both in the cooperative as well as enabling parents, especially women, to access childcare services and join the labour market.

Introduction

Lack of access to safe, affordable, and good quality childcare is one of the main barriers preventing women from entering or remaining in the labour market. If they decide to stay, they either have to rely on the support of other women in their family to care for their children, or they take up jobs that are not commensurate to their qualifications or ambition, but suits them because of the flexibility, or proximity to home they provide, even if they do not offer decent working conditions.

On average, Palestinian women do seven times more unpaid care work than Palestinian men. When women work for pay, it is mostly in care occupations, such as early childhood education, health care services, disability care or long-term care for the elderly which account for nearly half of all female jobs. Jobs in the care economy are however, often undervalued, providing poor working conditions and low levels of pay, even though care work, both paid and unpaid,

is crucial to the future of decent work, both providing job opportunities in the care economy women are likely to take up, and allowing parents, particularly mothers, enter the labour market. Demand for childcare may also exist independent of the need to support a family's work schedule, given the growing recognition of the benefits of early childhood education to foster social, emotional, intellectual and physical development

ILO's Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities recognises that government, employers and workers have a responsibility to enable workers with family responsibilities to exercise their right to free choice of employment, take into account their needs to exercise this choice, and this includes by providing or promoting public or private child-care services and facilities.

Countries have introduced a range of options for the delivery of childcare services including employer-led workplace-based provision and tax funded state provision. Childcare cooperatives are an alternative in the mix. Cooperatives have been found to be a viable solution in areas where mainstream provision of childcare does not exist, for instance in rural areas, or for informal workers, and are usually more flexible and responsive to the needs of members and their communities. The types of care provided through cooperatives are different according to local contexts and beneficiaries' care needs. Furthermore, there are quite a few cases of cooperatives in the care sector which are multipurpose in nature, reflecting the beneficiaries' various yet overlapping care needs. They provide multiple services (e.g. day care, child care, foster care and mental/developmental health care, etc.) to distinct populations including elders, children and adolescent youth, and persons living with disabilities or illnesses.

They are usually owned by staff or parents, sometimes supported partially by employers, government or other community actors in an area, and provide a great deal of authority to members to decide the hours they operate, to set staff salaries and fees, and to design the programmes on offer. The multi-stakeholder model is a unique innovation emerging from cooperatives' involvement in the care sector.

Cooperatives may have advantages both for workers and service users, especially when these are members of a cooperative. For workers, they can provide improved wages and benefits, facilitate formalisation of home-based care, or promote professionalization and training of care workers. For users and their families, the cooperative model can provide a viable alternative to get better care services by enabling them to engage in care plans or encouraging their active participation in caregiving.

An interesting example that illustrates these elements of a childcare cooperative is of Brazil where waste pickers organised to establish the Asmare Waste Pickers Cooperative (Associação dos Catadores de Papel, Papelão e Material Reaproveitável) in 1990. Research from 2018 shows that the cooperative has approximately 100 members 55 per cent of whom are women. The cooperative collects materials from schools, businesses and residences. It recycles 300 tons of materials every month including paper, cardboard and plastic, and sells these to private industries. Asmare Cooperative members identified their need for quality childcare services so that they could work a full day and not have to take their children with them to the recycling

plants. The demand for childcare services for waste pickers from Asmare was presented to the government and a budget was allocated to this initiative after several years of negotiation with the local government. The cooperative also received support from non-governmental organizations, to find a safe space to leave their children while they worked. The childcare cooperative is well-known for prioritising the needs of waste pickers and their children. For example, opening hours reflect the working hours of waste pickers from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. There are 27 professional and trained staff members who work across four shifts and provide services for approximately 80 children. Currently, 70 per cent of the spots in this day-care centre are designated for the waste pickers' children and 30 per cent is open to the general community. UMEI also has special needs assistants for children with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, hearing impairment and autism at the centre.

Objective

Building on the extensive experience of ILO with cooperatives in OPT, and given the demand for childcare amongst parents, especially women, in OPT, the ILO would like to establish a cooperative as a model of affordable, high-quality childcare provision, in line with the needs of a selected community, which could serve as a model for others to replicate.

Tasks of the consultant

Under the direct supervision of the ILO Gender team in Jerusalem and in close consultation with the Decent Work Team members in ROAS, the consulting firm is expected to carry out the following tasks:

Phase 1:

- Conduct an assessment of the current landscape of cooperatives and care, mapping out the legal, institutional and programmatic context, and good practices in OPT and other comparable contexts.
- Conduct stakeholder consultations to validate the assessment and identify possible sites, partners and models to establish a childcare cooperative
- Prepare a feasibility study, detailing elements such as establishment costs, business/funding model, partners, demand for services, types of services required, staffing, standards, registration, and capacity gaps, including cooperative management, finance and accounting, and childcare training, to be addressed.
- Conduct stakeholder consultations on the establishment of a childcare cooperative.

Phase 2:

- Identify the best childcare cooperative model that fits with the OPT context.
- Identify the right people from the start. The core group of potential member-owners must consist of people who have similar ideas, interests and needs.

- Train a cohort of women on the various skills and competencies needed to run the cooperative, including professional childcare provision, with training modules adapted or developed for each set of skills
- Explore the possibility of developing some or all of the modules as nationally recognised, certified courses
- Support the establishment of the cooperative and provide a period of support to address issues that may arise once it begins operation, to ensure the sustainability of the cooperative at short-term, medium-term and long-term.
- Document the process of establishing a childcare to produce a policy brief, one video, and other communication products such as press releases and social media posts.
- Provide presentations to the ILO and other stakeholders, as required

Deliverables

1. An inception report detailing the timelines, consultations, and proposed action plan
2. An assessment of the cooperatives landscape
3. Primary report including main findings of stakeholder consultations, recommendations, and the potential model of childcare, etc.
4. Feasibility study and a final report that includes the feedback and comment from the validation workshops with stakeholders.
5. Business Plan to include: the structure of the cooperative, the implementation, operation and administration.
6. Capacity needs assessment of the proposed cooperative
7. Training modules
8. Communication visibility products