

**Education and Child Protection
Needs Assessment
in West Mosul**

Conducted by
War Child UK and Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid

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➤ Introduction

As part of a planned partnership between War Child UK and Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid to provide educational support to neighbourhoods in West Mosul, a needs assessment was carried out in January 2018. This was to determine key educational and child protection needs in five areas of Mosul that had undergone three years of occupation by ISIS and the effects of the Iraqi Army's liberation of the city in the Mosul Offensive.

➤ Key Findings

Young people who have grown up in Mosul over the past few years have been exposed, and are continuing to be exposed, to a large number of child protection risks while also facing a lack of learning opportunities. The current security situation and the lack of decent local education has meant many caregivers have doubts about sending their children to school. Local environment risks and the risks from unexploded ordinance, along with continuing violence and the presence of armed gangs, mean that the route to school is seen as unsafe particularly if young people have to travel long distances. The dire economic situation has also meant many caregivers send their children out to work, which can involve joining an armed group. Young people are recognised as being stressed because of their isolation from their peers, the lack of security and the economic impact of the conflict causing insecurity about their food and shelter, which has manifested itself with signs of emotional distress and greater aggressiveness.

Education is seen as a top priority for young people who see it as the means to achieve success and rebuild their country. Their caregivers are also very keen for new learning centres to open in their communities. There are however, many doubts about the quality of both the school buildings and current teachers and the lack of school supplies. Focus groups with school age children have noted their desire to a broader range of activities in school, whilst key informants highlighted the need for recreational activities and psychosocial support in addition to education, as the means to bring about recovery for young people negatively affected by the current environment.

➤ Methodology

Data collection took place between the 21st and 23rd of January 2018 in five neighbourhoods in West Mosul following consultation with other agencies in order to identify service gaps. These neighbourhoods listed below, were chosen based on their current lack of service provision along with damaged school infrastructure. The table lists estimated numbers of young people in each district based on interviews with the Mukhtar (local community leader).

Neighbourhood	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-11	Ages 12 – 17	Total
Jawsaq	300	400	500	1200
Nabi Shayt	70	70	60	200
Danadan	60	80	80	240
Al Ghizlani	100	200	150	450
Zanjili	300	500	400	1200

The data collection took the form of four key informant interviews in each neighbourhood: two using a child protection questionnaire and two using an educational needs assessment. The key informants included Mukhtars, doctors, nurses and head teachers.

In addition, in each neighbourhood focus groups were held with both caregivers and with school aged children to assess their perceptions of education and the current security environment. These included children both inside and outside of education. The child protection needs section below will reference the ten former key informant interviews and the education section the latter ten.

➤ **Assessment Findings: Child Protection**

1. Separated children

Five of the ten key informants were aware of separated children in their districts: two each from Zanjili and Ghizlani and one from Nabi Shayt. All these respondents claimed that at least some of these children were separated from their parents though conflict, but joining armed gangs and displacement were also noted as contributory factors. The key informants all stated that separated children had been taken in by relatives.

2. Existing Risks

Environmental risks were the most common risks mentioned by key informants across the neighbourhoods with eight of the ten child protection surveys highlighting this issue. This has meant that, alongside the dangers from landmines and unexploded ordinances, the journey to school is particularly hazardous and the most common location noted as dangerous for children.

Existing risks for young people

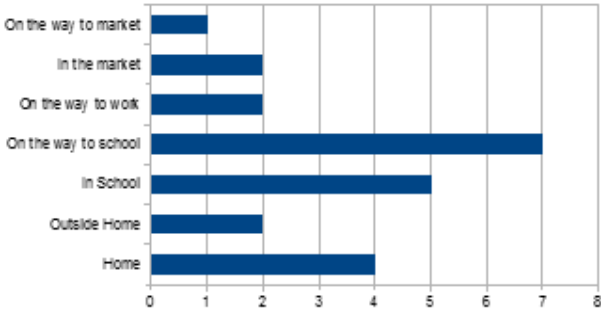


In focus groups parents echoed these concerns and explained that in districts where schools were not currently functioning, their children have to walk greater distances to attend classes, exacerbating these dangers.

Schools too were seen as potentially dangerous environments with damaged and inadequate buildings and classrooms seen as deterring young people from going to school.

Other key risks mentioned included sexual violence and criminal acts.

Locations where young people experience danger

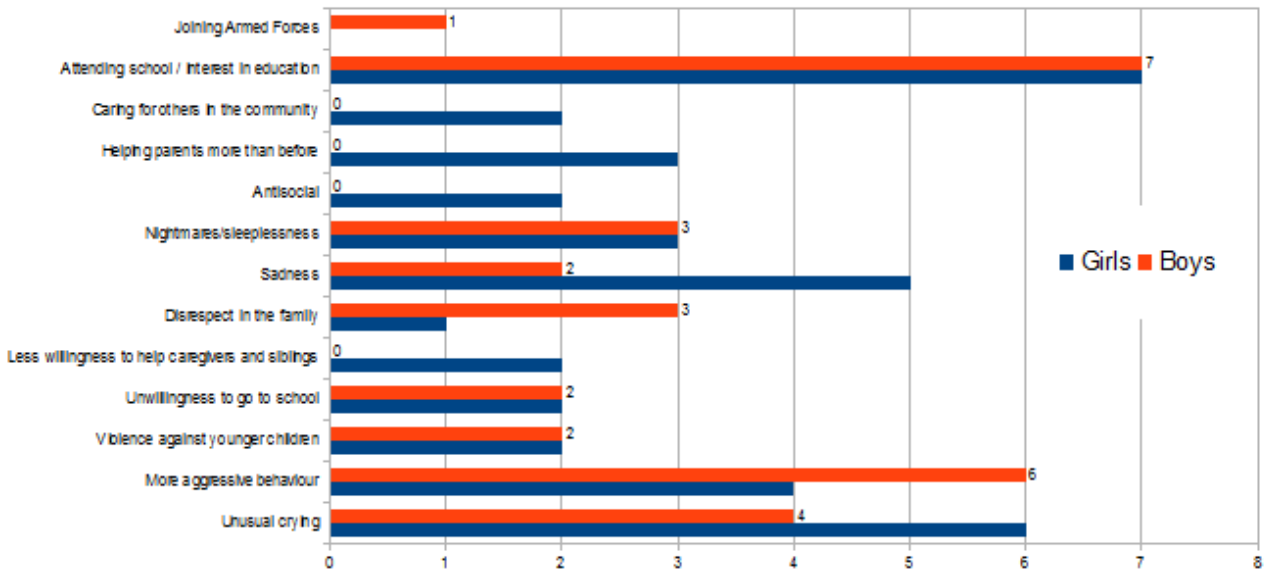


3. Changes in attitude post the liberation

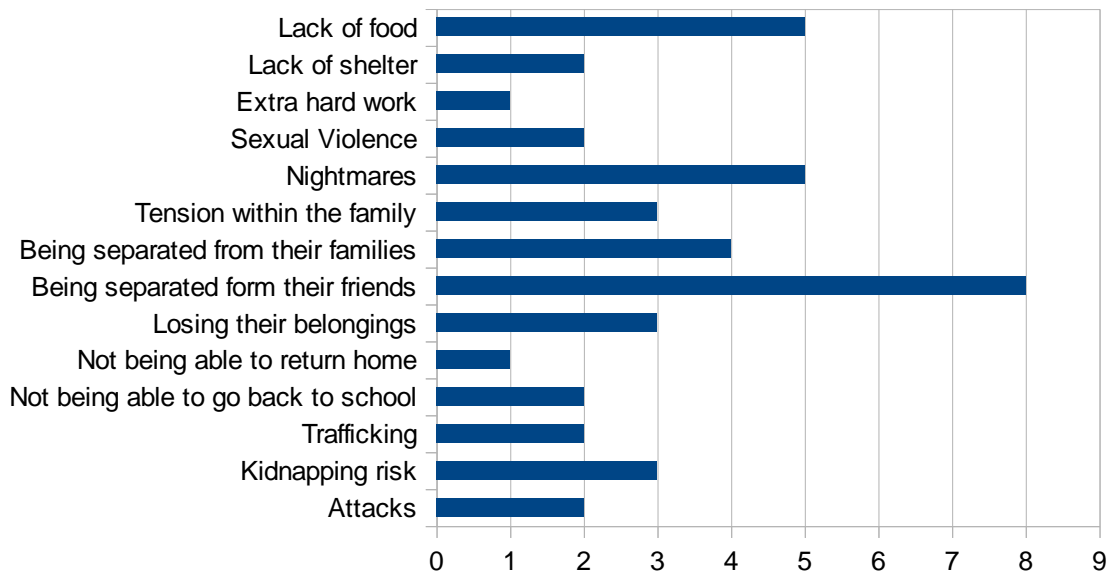
All ten key informants recognised a change in young people's attitudes following the Mosul Offensive. The most common change noted was an interest in schooling following three years of ISIS occupation where there was no formal schooling. An unwillingness amongst other children to go to school was also noted.

Girls tended to be more likely to be classed as experiencing sadness or being antisocial by the key informants and unusual crying was noted frequently. They also showed a greater tendency to help out more in the home and with other people in the community. Boys were seen to be more violent and disrespectful since the departure of ISIS. Being separated from friends was seen as the most common reason mentioned by key informants for young people feeling stressed, along with separation from their families. A number of other risks including trafficking, kidnapping, losing their belongings and sexual assault were brought up. Other factors such as nightmares were mentioned by half the informants. The lack of food and shelter were also noted.

Changes in attitude between girls and boys



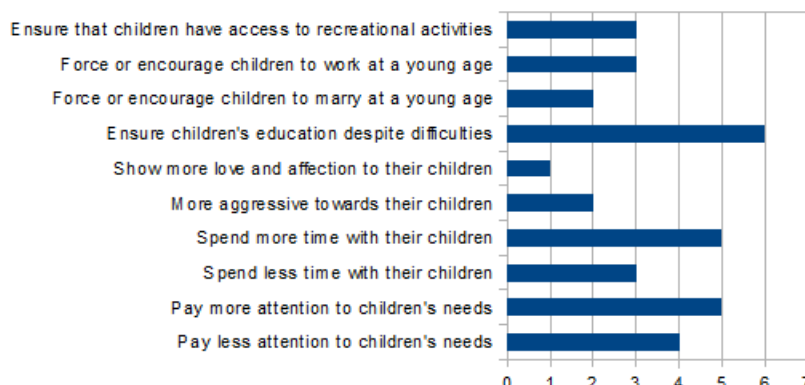
4. Causes of stress in young people



5. Changes in caregiver attitudes since the Mosul Offensive

Caregivers' attitudes towards their children in the months since the Mosul Offensive were also noticeably different. Key informants saw this manifesting in both positive and negative ways. Some key informants noted that the caregivers showed more attention and spent more time with their children whilst others saw the opposite. Some caregivers were seen to encourage education participation but others were keen to encourage other coping strategies for the children under their care such as early marriage and work.

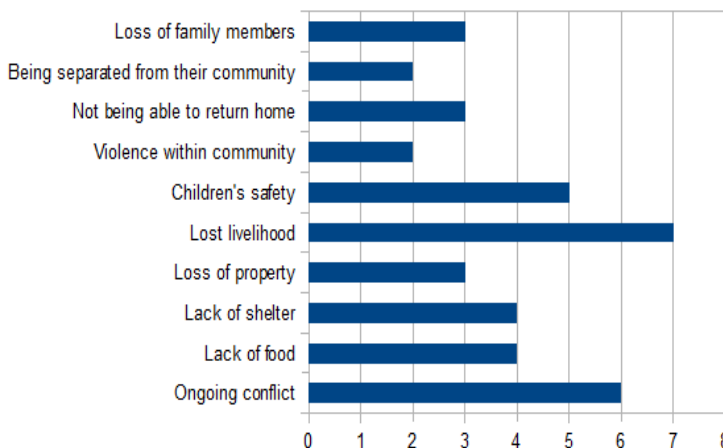
Caregiver's Attitudes



6. Major causes of stress for caregivers

The major causes of stress to caregivers provides an explanation for these results. The economic consequences of the occupation and subsequent military action have meant that there were few existing livelihoods for caregivers to earn money. The loss of livelihoods and the lack of food and shelter that come as a result can mean that young people are required to seek income generating activities at the expense of their education; a key reason given in the focus groups by young people as to why they were out of school. Caregivers were also deeply concerned about ongoing conflict, levels of violence in their community and the risk to children's welfare.

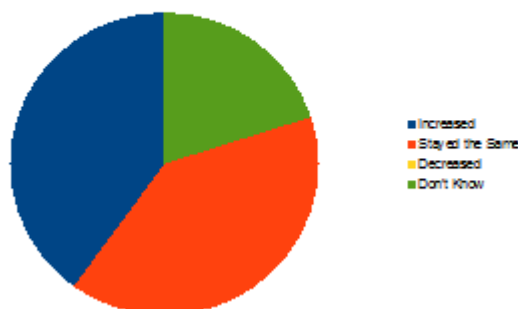
Causes of Stress – Caregivers



7. Armed groups

Eight out of the ten child protection interviewees were aware of young people in their communities who had joined local armed groups. Of those eight, four had seen an increase in the number of young people joining since ISIS had left, while the other four had seen no difference. The economic incentive for joining an armed force in a district with few other income generating opportunities was seen as major reason for this increase.

Key informant Perceptions about the numbers of young males joining armed groups



➤ **Assessment Findings: Education**

1. Young people's priorities

Through focus group exercises, young people frequently recognised the value of education. When asked to choose the most important priorities in their lives given a range of options, four of the five focus groups chose education as one of their top two choices (other options were: Home Education, Family, Leaving Iraq, Clothes, and Money). They justified their decision by describing education as important for success, for finding future employment and rebuilding their country. They also raised the difficulties they had had in accessing schooling over the past few years. The young people who had stayed in Mosul had been out of school for three years during the ISIS occupation and those who had left to IDP camps often had a very limited education, with some respondents claiming to just have classes in mathematics during this time.

Other key priorities for children revolved around their families and homes whilst three of the groups mentioned travelling outside Iraq. This latter priority was mentioned as only possible if they received an education first.

2. Preferred Curriculum content

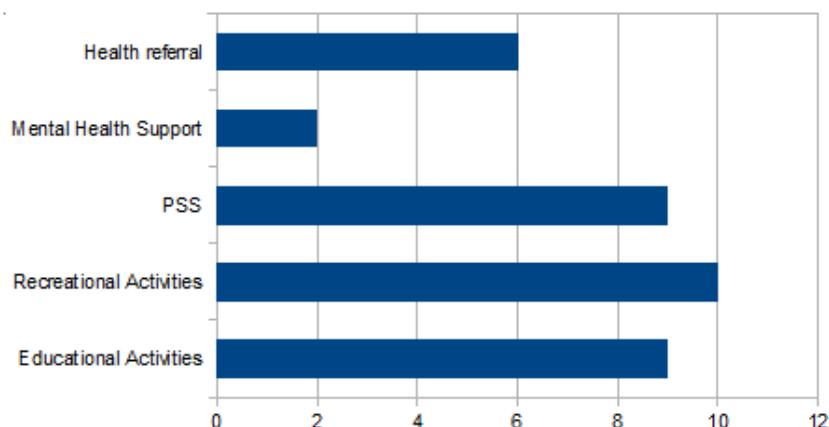
In terms of curriculum, the focus groups all selected art (painting), sport and entertainment as subjects or aspects of their ideal school's curriculum. These lessons are not currently provided given the low level of resources in schools. English and the Quran were suggested by more than one group as something they would also like to learn.

Caregivers too were keen to discuss the value they found in learning. The focus groups all identified education as important for the recovery of their neighbourhoods. There was a large sense of unhappiness with the current condition of the schools, the lack of teachers and the lack of supplies. The distance that children had to travel to attend school was also a concern, particularly in Jawsq where none of the schools are currently operating. Nine out of the key informants listed educational activities as a vital area for children's recovery. They also highlighted recreational activities and psychosocial support programmes (PSS) as programmes they would like to see implemented in their area. Health referral systems were requested by six of the key informants as the amount of medical centres is seen as insufficient.

3. Preferred intervention type:

Ten Key informant were asked about what the preferred type of intervention in their communities should be and they ranked them as follows:

Types of intervention requested by key informants (out of 10)



4. Availability of Educational Services

Whilst there were some school buildings hosting classes, focus groups continually raised the issue of the lack of teachers and supplies. Due to structural damage, more than one school are currently sharing functional buildings with other schools, either on a split shift basis or with expanded class sizes. Teachers too were in short supply.

Half the key informants did not know if there were Ministry of Education teachers still in their districts. They were more aware of local people who would like to volunteer for teaching with seven of the ten interviewees drawing attention to community members who would like to become involved. Community led schools were very popular; all ten interviewees thought that this would be a good for their district.

➤ Recommendations

- Support for local communities in establishing age appropriate learning spaces within their districts.
- Development of more flexible learning centres for young people who are currently working to support their families.
- Development of transitional learning spaces to help children who have missed years of schooling to catch up.
- Refurbishment of buildings which could act as schools and create a safe learning environment.
- Increase teacher training and training of community members who wish to support classes.
- Training in psychosocial support for teachers and school employees to act a focal point for community wellbeing and to provide a welcoming learning environment for students.
- Ensure greater supply of resource scarce schools with learning materials.