



## Shaping the Future, Right from the Start!

Tahaddi launched its first holistic Early Childhood Development (ECD) Program in January 2018. Given the importance of the first five years of life, when the human brain grows at its fastest rate and builds the foundation for the years ahead, the ECD program is an investment into the life-long cognitive, physical, and social development of children.

Over the next year, a total of 50 families will participate in this multi-dimensional project, which integrates educational, health, and psychosocial support. Families benefit from an early childhood education program, mother and children's groups, and preventative health initiatives. The program is made possible through funding from the French Embassy in Lebanon.

Much of this ECD program is run out of our newest center, the Early Childhood Education Center. The center is located on the ground floor of a renovated apartment building near our health center and contains a small, courtyard surrounded by growing plants. It is a calm, safe space that doubles as a playground and a meeting area.

For many of the families involved, the ECD program is an extension of ongoing Tahaddi support. Mona Hamid, a single Lebanese mother of three children, sells tissues on the streets but still cannot earn enough money to cover her family's bills each month. Tahaddi has been supporting her since early 2017 through monthly

rent assistance (thanks to generous donors in Malta), food vouchers, and essential household items such as warm blankets and mattresses.

Through the ECD program, Tahaddi has been able to further broaden its support. Mona's youngest son (pictured climbing the stairs to his home in the photo above and with his sister in their home below) is now enrolled in the new pre-school classes opened in



the Early Childhood Education Center, where he is learning everything from the alphabet (in both Arabic and English) to caring for his teeth.

Mona herself is taking positive parenting workshops and brings her children to the weekly mothers' groups where they are able to leave the stress of daily survival behind for a couple of hours.

**Tahaddi is on Instagram!** In addition to our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#),

Tahaddi is now posting daily photos & videos of our work at [instagram.com/tahaddilebanon](https://www.instagram.com/tahaddilebanon).



## Early Childhood Education

Twenty-four children between the ages of 3 and 4 are currently registered in Tahaddi's preschool KG1 class, launched in 2018 at Tahaddi's Early Childhood Education Center (ECE). This has extended Tahaddi's kindergarten program from two to three years of pre-school classes (KG1, KG2, and KG3). The overall objective of Tahaddi's early childhood education classes is to equip children with the pre-requisites to successfully integrate into public school alongside their peers from other neighborhoods.

A coordinator, an educator, and two classroom assistants hired from the community (including a young graduate of Tahaddi's non-formal education program!) provide a safe and stimulating environment for their students at the ECE. Children learn to socialize, improve their motor skills and communication abilities, and explore the world around them in a bilingual curriculum.

Each morning, they enjoy circle time and the new books the educators bring to life during story hour. Parents are also an important part of the daily life of the ECE. They attend regular workshops on nurturing their children during this critical stage of childhood and many participate in mother and children's groups.

Tahaddi is proud to be part of the global effort to expand access to inclusive and quality early childhood education. One of the targets of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal on education is to provide access to quality early childhood development, care and preprimary education by 2030 for all children.





“If a society values its children it must cherish their parents.”

John Bowlby  
(developmental psychologist)

## Weekly Mother and Young Children’s Group

The Mother and Young Children’s Group provides a positive and welcoming space for young mothers (aged 15-30) and their children to meet each week. These weekly gatherings take place within the playground of the ECE. The groups foster strong bonds between young children and their mothers, offer emotional support for mothers through psycho-social activities, and enhance parenting knowledge and skills. Health and nutrition are also improved through community cooking classes and health promotion workshops.

The 25 families invited by Tahaddi to join these gatherings were selected because their children were assessed to be at risk, often as a consequence of the extreme economic pressures faced by the family.

In an effort to reduce this financial burden and enhance nutritional intake, families receive monthly food vouchers in the amount of \$85. Children in the program are also prioritized for Tahaddi’s well child health checks, which regularly measure each child’s progress ensuring they have the care needed for a healthy start to life.

These weekly meetings are a place of mutual learning, where women share their talents and skills. One woman gave a demonstration for the group on how she resourcefully makes yogurt and soft cheese. Using her monthly food voucher, this mother buys a portion of dried milk. Each day, she makes a small quantity of milk and yogurt for her family. This technique is affordable, ensuring that her family has regular access to dairy products, which are consumed immediately and don’t require refrigeration.

In addition, this program is providing some families with financial support to purchase essential kitchen utensils including refrigerators and gas stoves, which families often lack. Not owning these needed appliances prevents many families from being able to prepare fresh and nutritious food for their children. Tahaddi’s ECD program will ensure that more community members have the knowledge, skills and means to improve their young children’s nutritional intake, which is a vital building block for their longer term development.



“When I am here, I feel like I am in a different world. These meetings encourage me to plan for the future and for bigger things.”

“I no longer feel sad and depressed. I feel I am learning new ways to care for my kids.”

“I am now careful in choosing healthy snacks for my two-year old.”

- Comments from participants in  
the Mother and Young  
Children’s Groups



A snapshot of the everyday activities of the Early Childhood Development program. Clockwise from the top: the KG1 pre-school class learns about hygiene while brushing their teeth; the KG1 class goes on a field trip to Tahaddi Health Center; mothers and children during the weekly playgroups; morning circle time at the Early Childhood Education Center.

