news | YOUTH:WORK Jordan

Newsletter of the **YOUTH:WORK Jordan** Program

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BRIDGING YOUTH NEEDS AND EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS IN JORDAN

Youth:Work Jordan (YWJ) approaches the issue of youth employability from both the supply and demand side – working with employers to assess the skills requirements of their employees, while also learning from youth about their needs and those factors that contribute to youth-friendly workplaces. While challenges exist on both sides of this equation, YWJ creates spaces through which employers and youth can learn from each other and work toward mutually-beneficial solutions.

A recent YWJ workshop brought together more than 70 private sector representatives, leaders of community-based organizations (CBOs), and youth to explore the expectations of both youth job seekers and companies looking for qualified workers. Entitled "The Role of the Private Sector in Youth Employability: Challenges and Opportunities," the all-day event was held under the patronage of Labor Minister Maher Al Waked and is part of a series of events being sponsored by YWJ to engage key stakeholders in a dialogue around youth employment issues and solutions.

"I was employed at a factory where I used to work overtime and not get paid for it," said 19-year-old Farah from East Amman in a video shown at the event. "We were allowed to take five minute lunch breaks." Farah's experience is not uncommon. Interviews and surveys conducted by YWJ of those youth it has placed in jobs reveal challenges to workplace retention, including low salaries and lack of adequate transportation.

Those private sector leaders present acknowledged the concerns expressed by youth, while endorsing YWJ's efforts to 'bridge the skills gap' experienced by marginalized youth and foster more youth-friendly work environments. "If it weren't for programs like YWJ, youth wouldn't have the confidence to stand up and speak at a workshop such as this," said Mays Arab, Business Development Manager at the Luminus Group, a YWJ partner. "[Through the program], they learn important life skills. It's astonishing how much effort these youth are putting into changing their lives."

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Youth:Work Jordan (YWJ) is a five-year initiative of the United States Agency for International Development, the International Youth Foundation, and the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development. Working in partnership with the public, private, and civil society sectors, YWJ seeks to create an enabling environment for disadvantaged youth through improving youth employability practices and policies, strengthening the capacity of youth-serving organizations to deliver effective services, and engaging youth in developing their communities.

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Program Highlights

To date, Youth:Work Jordan has:

- Reached **4,500 youth** through life skills and/or vocational training programs, with over **1,300** placed in jobs
- Engaged over **4,000** youth in volunteer activities
- Created **70** youth-friendly services
- Forged more than **70** local alliances with the public sector, private sector, and youth-serving organizations
- Leveraged over **$6 million** in support of its mission
- Secured commitments from a range of Jordanian partners, including the creation of **2,000** jobs in the hospitality and tourism sector and establishment of a network of career counseling centers.

Another factor influencing the placement of young people in entry level jobs is negative family and community attitudes stemming from the 'culture of shame,' whereby certain trades and low-level positions are deemed outhunworthy of youth, particularly for young women who are less educated.

During the workshop, IYF Field Manager Najwan Shiber explained how the culture of shame is interpreted differently depending on whether one is male or female. "For females, it mainly results from parental pressure preventing girls from working, since it is customary for girls to pursue in-house work. In addition, females are considered to face a greater chance of sexual harassment at factories and farms," she said. "For males, the majority feel that the income they receive at entry level jobs and the working conditions, simply make such jobs not worth the trouble."

Those youth present at the workshop put forth a number of recommendations for addressing their needs, including the establishment of more youth-friendly work environments, adequately-equipped restroom facilities, provision of health benefits, and more accessible and affordable transportation options to/from their places of work.

To address these and other needs, the private sector participants suggested that IYF develop specialized training programs and workshops for company employees who work directly with marginalized youth. Along those lines, YWJ is providing employees and supervisors at Maliban, a leading textile manufacturer employing YWJ-trained youth, with life skills trainings and has negotiated with the company to play music during work hours and to create a more youth-friendly cafeteria. Other recommendations included the need for the Ministry of Labor to review and amend private sector human resource regulations and guidelines, and to establish mechanisms that promote youth job placement and enhance career development opportunities for employees.

The particular needs of young women were also emphasized, including the need for them to have access to safe, localized transportation options, part-time employment opportunities, day care for their children, and 'at home' work options for those who are unable to leave their homes for long periods of time.

At the close of the workshop, Labor Minister Maher Al Waked affirmed the Ministry's role in promoting the employment of a local workforce. "The Ministry of Labor will support companies that employ Jordanians, through providing 45 JDs for each national employee that joins the company for at least one year on minimum wage," he said.

YWJ will organize follow up workshops to evaluate progress toward reaching those recommendations put forth at the event, which will also inform YWJ's policy focus on improving working conditions for youth.

Building a Cadre of Trained Youth Workers: Shireen's Story



"Ironically, I studied planning for three years, but had no idea how to plan my own life," recalls 22-year-old Shireen, who graduated top of her class at Balqa University in northwest Jordan. With a major in regional planning and architecture, Shireen spent nearly a year trying to secure a position with the local municipality in her hometown of Southern Shouneh. Among her ideas was the creation of a central market to promote economic growth; yet her modest roots and lack of any real 'connections' left Shireen without a job and in a state of near depression.

That's when she learned about Youth:Work Jordan through the *Al Ta'awon Association*, one of YWJ's local implementing partners. Moved by YWJ's mission, Shireen started volunteering with the program, and was encouraged to attend YWJ's *Passport to Success* (PTS) life skills training. Following the training, she was nominated to become a certified PTS trainer and participated in a five-day Training of Trainers workshop, practicing alongside a professional.

"Youth need someone patient to listen to them," says Shireen, who now serves as both a PTS trainer and career guidance counselor through YWJ. "I wanted to help motivate them and assist them in transforming their lives for the better. YWJ allowed me to do this."

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Community Updates



Youth in Sahab play soccer as part of YWJ's focus on youth-friendly services.

RUSSEIFEH

In Russeifeh, youth created a second park for the Russeifeh Sons Association. CBO staff also received Save the Children's 'Siraj' training on community leadership for youth workers. Youth continued with basic life skills, Open for Business, and IT trainings.



CBO staff in Southern Shouneh visit a handicraft center for ideas.

ZARQA

Four trainings were given to strengthen the capacity of CBO youth workers in Zarqa: "Together We Can Build our Country," "Violence Among Peers," "The Individual and the Interactive Circles Surrounding Him/Her," and "Youth Recruitment Tools and How to Activate Youth Participation in CBOs." A range of courses was provided to youth, including: English, IT, entrepreneurship, and technical trainings. A number of events were also held for youth: an entrepreneurship day to showcase and promote youth businesses, a job fair, and an open voluntary day. Six youth groups received grants for social projects, including mural painting in collaboration with special needs youth, a food production unit, a puppet theatre, and the installation of water filters in low-income homes.



Soap products made by youth in Southern Shouneh.

AMMAN

Two youth-friendly services were established in Amman – a gym by Sanabel Al Kheir Charity Association and a library by the National Society for the Rehabilitation of Poor Families. Additionally, a film club income-generating enterprise was launched. Five youth groups were awarded grants to undertake civic engagement activities, including a football team to help youth spend their time more productively; a band that remixes oriental music for a modern feel; a face-painting group that will conduct open days across Al-Nuzha; a women's handicraft and social center for the underprivileged; and a learning center where English, Arabic, and Math classes will be conducted in addition to classes for those with learning disabilities.

IRBID

In Irbid, youth participated in entrepreneurship trainings with Intel Entrepreneurship and Beyond Excellence. Youth from the community-based organization AFAK took part in the rehabilitation, cleaning, and painting of the walls and playground of the UNRWA School in Al Shamali neighborhood.

JORDAN VALLEY

A job fair was held to link youth who have completed YWJ technical trainings with employers. An open day was also held to support the entrepreneurial ideas of youth. The youth demonstrated their business concepts and served the local community for a day. That Al Netakein CBO launched a gymnasium hall in Mallaha where they held a graduation ceremony and rehabilitated Al Roweha Park. In Waqqas, a multipurpose room and library were also established.

Two youth groups received grants for their projects in Waqqas. One opened a library; the other created shaded areas for passers by. Two other projects were awarded grants in Mallaha – the first named streets in their neighborhoods and the second will build a public garden at Al Twal School.

In Southern Shouneh, CBOs have started income-generating projects to support the employment of youth and the sustainability of their organizations. At Al Ta'awon Association, a production kitchen will be established. Al Jawasreh Association has initiated an organic soap production factory and Al Rawda Association is preparing an ice factory.

MAFRAQ

Four computer educational facilities have been established by Talal Abu Ghazalah Group (TAG) – one in Mafraq (with one in Sahab, and two in Southern Shouneh). All are operating at full capacity, with a total of 205 youth benefitting from these services. These IT Centers will be a certified IT Branch and part of the TAG network of IT centers. They will also serve as a source of revenue generation for the CBOs over the long term with youth required to pay a minimal entrance fee.

Youth in Mafraq (as well as Sahab and Southern Shouneh) are participating in hospitality trainings at the Jordan Hospitality School that include housekeeping, kitchen and restaurant service, and specialized English Courses. These youth will then be channeled into jobs in the hospitality sector.

M'AAN

A number of activities took place this quarter in M'aan, especially in the area of youth-friendly services. Two parks were established: Ahl Al Himmeh Park featuring a soccer field and a women- and children-only park sponsored by the M'aan Women's Association.

Two workshops were held, one on precious stone-making and another on tailoring. Four different trainings were implemented for the benefit of youth in Basic Life Skills, Open for Business, and Photoshop Basics.

News & Events







Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah Meets YWJ Youth in Zarqa

Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah visited the Khawla Bint Al Azwar Society, a YWJ implementing partner in Zarqa, and met with its board and beneficiaries. Discussion focused on the Society's success in creating employment opportunities for the local community and its women in particular.

Her Majesty also met with youth beneficiaries of "Take My Hand," an initiative implemented by the Jordan River Foundation in coordination with IYF and the Ministry of Social Development to help young Jordanians enter the workforce. Participating youth briefed Her Majesty on their projects and the benefits they have gained through the program.

New Partnerships Formed

IYF has entered into a number of new partnerships with companies and training institutions with the goal of leveraging valuable resources and expertise in support of YWJ's mission. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh & Co. International Limited has agreed to establish TAG Knowledge Societies to support IT and training opportunities for youth living in disadvantaged communities in Jordan and Lebanon. In addition, a partnership with the Abu Ghazaleh Cambridge IT Skills Center will enhance youth employability in Jordan.

Through an expanded partnership with the British Council, 750 underprivileged youth from Sahab, Mafraq, and Southern Shouneh will benefit from business English courses designed to maximize their employability. The British Council will also identify the best locations for establishing English Clubs in select communities, where youth can practice their English-speaking skills in a casual, supportive atmosphere.

With tourism considered one of the most critical sectors of the Jordanian economy, IYF formed a partnership with the Jordan Hospitality School and the Jordanian Hotels Association to provide YWJ beneficiaries with high-quality vocational and technical trainings geared to the hospitality sector.

IYF also signed an agreement with Al Quds Community College to provide youth with specialized vocational and technical trainings that match market demand. Al Quds will also rehabilitate three vocational centers in Sahab, Southern Shouneh, and Mafraq.

25 Youth Graduate from "I Serve"

Twenty-five aspiring young social entrepreneurs from Sahab, Mafraq, and Southern Shouneh graduated from YWJ's "I Serve" program, through which they received leadership and project management training over the course of five days. The youth received their certificates from Her Royal Highness Princess Sana' Asem. The 25 youth selected had previously participated in the "I Can" phase of the program, during which they completed IYF's *Passport to Success* life skills training and implemented various volunteerism and civic engagement activities.

Among those social entrepreneurship proposals pitched by the youth were a volunteerism and literacy center targeting youth in Sahab and an arts and handicraft training initiative for women in Mafraq. All projects were assessed on their ability to meet local community needs with seven now being considered for grants of up to 3,500 JD.

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Recognizing that youth, especially young women in Shouneh, face many challenges, including parental pressures, Shireen feels change is possible. "It feels great to see our efforts translate into real success," she adds, recalling the time she created a Facebook page for *Al Ta'awon* that resulted in a crystal manufacturing company in Amman wanting to hire nine females trained through YWJ.

Shireen is one of 667 youth workers to have participated in YWJ professional trainings, with the goal of fostering a more enabling environment over the long-term to support youth in their journey to a productive adulthood.