



**Youth – Employability – Opportunity
January 18-19, 2009
Amman, Jordan
Summary Report**

Overview

From January 18-19, 2009, the International Youth Foundation and the MENA Child Protection Initiative of the Arab Urban Development Institute convened a meeting of experts from across the Middle East and North Africa to identify long-term solutions to the region's youth employment crisis. Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah, the two-day forum was an initiative of the World Bank's Global Partnership to Promote Youth Employment and Employability. The Jordan River Foundation and the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development were local co-hosts of the event, with Aramex as the official corporate sponsor. More than 140 participants, including representatives from international and Jordanian governmental agencies, corporations, and civil society organizations gathered to analyze "what works" in skills development and job placement programs for disadvantaged youth and to share best practices and lessons learned in building effective strategies to promote scale and sustainability of youth employability programs. Meeting participants came from Jordan, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, U.A.E., Yemen, Canada, Italy, Switzerland, and the United States. The meeting was held at the Grand Hyatt in Amman, Jordan.

In light of the significant interest in continuing to build upon the learning from the event, this document provides a brief summary of each day's events followed by a more in-depth discussion of panel and breakout sessions during the course of the two-day meeting. We have also included a link to all presentations made by panelists at <http://www.iyfnet.org/document.cfm/1019>.

The first day of the meeting took a regional perspective, looking at challenges and program and policy responses across the MENA region, particularly in urban areas. There were several recurring themes throughout the day's discussions including the need to build effective public-private partnerships for greater impact, the significant skills gaps among entry-level young workers cited by employers, the need to align the formal education system as well as out-of-school programs more closely to the skills

demanding by the labor market, and the role that local governments, municipalities, and mayors can play in promoting youth employability. Participants were presented with a number of different case studies and best practice approaches to youth employability from the region, including a life skills for employability program for out-of-school youth in Morocco, a career center model developed in Egyptian public universities, and the use of mobile phone technology in job placement programs in Palestine.

The second day of the meeting focused on Jordan and its particular challenges and opportunities in youth employment and employability. There was much dialogue around the “culture of shame” that permeates the Jordanian youth culture, the need to change the attitudes of decision makers – particularly around the role of parents and family, the impact of the global financial crisis on youth employability, options and strategies for improving youth employment in Jordan, the role of the Jordanian private sector in on-the-job training and attracting youth to entry-level jobs so they may gain work experience, and the need for more demand-driven training and curricula to improve school-to-work transitions. On both days, youth voices and participation were a central part of the dialogue to inform key decision-makers and to help construct paths forward.

As a concrete step to build on the discussions, the final sessions of the meeting solicited ideas about critical steps stakeholders could take both individually and collectively to promote youth employment and employability in Jordan in the areas of program design and delivery, research, and partnerships. Participants discussed possible collective actions and next steps that could be taken to maintain the momentum in the area of youth employability and to build a road map for the way forward. Four critical questions framed these discussions to lay the foundation for the creation of partnerships between public, private and nonprofit organizations which could contribute to enhancing youth employment and employability in Jordan:

- 1) What elements are critical for successful projects?
- 2) What are achievable and meaningful goals?
- 3) What can we do to start planning for expansion, replication and scale of effective programs?
- 4) What can your organization / sector offer?

More detailed outcomes from these and other important sessions throughout the two day event can be found in the following section of this report.

In addition to the two-day meeting, a separate working session on program monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was held on January 20. Organized by the Youth Employment Network, the workshop convened a smaller group of about 30 regional and international experts and practitioners to discuss experience and approaches to monitoring and evaluation of youth employability programming. For outcomes on the M&E workshop, please contact Mr. Drew Gardiner at the Youth Employment Network (gardiner@ilo.org).

January 18 (First Day of the Meeting)

For the first day of the meeting, the theme of the sessions was “*Youth Employment and Employability in the Middle East and North Africa: Regional Perspectives on Challenges and Current Responses.*” The following section of this report provides an overview of key issues and discussion points from each of these sessions. Several PowerPoint presentations were also shared throughout the day and can be found at <http://www.iyfnet.org/document.cfm/1019>. Please refer to the Agenda of the meeting for the full list of sessions and speakers.

Presentation and Discussion: Regional Trends and Challenges in Youth Employment and Employability

This session focused on laying the foundations for the two day meeting by providing a regional overview of youth unemployment and employability data and trends. It also summarized the recommendations from the Arab Urban Development Institute Child Protection Initiative’s Brainstorming Meeting held in Amman in October 2008. *Please refer to PowerPoint presentations made during the session for further information.* Major regional trends and challenges discussed include:

- Population trends: Many countries in the MENA region are witnessing high rates of urban growth due to the continuous flow of rural-urban migration and labor migration to oil producing countries. By 2020, 70% of the population is expected to live in urban areas; fertility rates are growing but a reduction is expected in the future; the Maghreb region is already experiencing declining fertility rates.
- There are impressive gains in educational attainment and gender parity but these have not translated yet into substantially higher wages or higher economic growth.
- The MENA youth bulge has peaked and has begun to pass, except in the Gulf.
- Youth unemployment rates are the highest in the world (average of 48%), but falling.
- The public sector still has some of the highest wages, sending mixed signals for youth.
- A high-wage public sector and lower-wage, highly-regulated private sector creates favorable conditions for “waithood”.
- 2009 will likely experience a labor reduction due to the global financial crisis and decline in oil prices; economic fortunes of the region are linked to oil, even in non-oil producing countries through migration and remittances.
- Pressure on wages: There is evidence of weak earnings and growing informal sectors in many countries. This is contributing to the rising age of marriage and to “waithood” and low morale among youth.
- Employable worker characteristics: Productivity and wages depend on a person’s knowledge, skills and abilities/experience.
- There are significant deficits in skills and experience:
 - Employers cite lack of credentials
 - There is a skills mismatch between the education system and what the labor market demands
 - Lack of on-the-job/practical experience is also a problem; in most MENA countries a majority of unemployed have no significant work experience.
- School to work transition is particularly difficult for females.
- Youth unemployment appears not to be spreading to adults.

- Young people should take charge of their lives by thinking seriously about careers before leaving school, interning, volunteering, and gaining work experience and reading relevant books outside the classroom curricula.

Panel Discussion: What Skills do Employers Need Among New Entrants to the Job Market?

The key themes underpinning this session were private sector perspectives on what kinds of skills are needed among new entrants to the job market. Sharing the experiences of Aramex, the Al Banawi Industrial Group, and the BMCE Bank Foundation, the panel speakers stressed the following points:

- Aramex often hires young people with no experience and invests 2-3% of its revenue in a “corporate university” training program designed to develop soft and technical skills of entry-level workers. Skills such as teamwork, creativity, communications, and customer service are very important for Aramex’s business model.
- There is a need for more junior colleges and polytechnic schools to develop focused, technical and practical skills demanded by industry.
- Nursing is a particular opportunity for unemployed females in the MENA region and it is also culturally accepted.
- Al Banawi Industrial group has three CSR programs focused on youth employability: a 10-day “mini MBA”, leadership, and mentorship programs.
- There is a need to create more public-private partnerships to improve skills for new entrants into the labor markets
- Job reservation by MENA youth for cultural reasons. Many young people are selective about the jobs they want and can afford to take an “I don’t want it, because I don’t have to” approach because they are living at home and being supported by their parents. A ‘culture of shame’ permeates the younger generation and their families. Many entry-level jobs available are viewed as “beneath them”.
- There are not enough part-time work opportunities at the high-school level.
- What interventions should the social sector concentrate on?
 - Basic education
 - More national dialogue on reforming and updating curricula in government public schools to make it more relevant
 - Universities and high schools need to offer more job assistance and career placement services to improve school-to-work transitions
 - There needs to be more local input and less expatriate involvement
 - There needs to be a separation of politics from education
 - Singapore’s National Institute of Education offers a best-practice model because industry CEOs are on board.

Breakout Sessions: What works in Skills Development and Job Placement for Disadvantaged Youth

The afternoon breakout sessions on the first day of the meeting focused on concrete examples and case studies of programs and strategies that are working or show potential for enhancing youth employability and increasing youth employment. Sessions focused on approaches to building soft skills, or life skills for employability,

what works in on-the-job training and job placement, and how to scale programs for broader impact.

Breakout Session: Approaches to Building Soft Skills, or Life Skills for Employability

Panel speakers in this session presented three case studies from Morocco, Egypt, and Jordan. A youth panelist who participated in the Princess Basma Youth Resource Centre Life Skills program in Jordan also spoke about the impact the program had on her life and outlook for the future.

- “Emploi Habilité” project in Morocco is the first and only project in Morocco offering comprehensive life skills and basic IT to out-of-school unemployed and disadvantaged youth, ages 16 – 26, with very limited education.
 - The program is a partnership of the regional academies of education and training under the National Ministry of Education, the Secretary of State in charge of professional training, IYF and a set of implementing NGOs.
 - Program combines life skills with vocational or technical training in diverse fields such as electrical repair, plumbing, tourism and hospitality, and automobile repair.
 - Program combines 20% theoretical instruction with 80% practical, technical training.
 - Project was piloted on 48 youth and scaled to 1,400 youth in its second year. The program is now being institutionalized at regional and national levels.
 - The success of the program lies in its content, methodology and emphasis on rigorous training of trainers and master trainers.
 - The curriculum combines lessons in personal attributes such as self-confidence, understanding one’s emotions, and improving one’s self-image with lessons on employability skills such as working in teams, solving problems, time management and how to work under pressure.
 - Remarkable change of attitude, vision for the future and self-confidence; ripple effect amongst family, siblings, neighbors; Life skills training motivated youth to enroll and stay in vocational programs.
 - Private sector employer satisfaction rates very high – they report getting youth “they can work with” – i.e., more qualified technically but most importantly with much better personal competencies.
 - Program builds on existing institutional infrastructure: facilities, teachers/trainers, local administration capacities that have extensive reach and capacity for scale.
 - Developed a team dedicated to coach new trainers, ensure quality and follow up with youth – the quality and resources put into the team has been a key factor for the program’s success.
 - Strong private sector involvement: Businesses recognize value of life skills training; constant outreach and personalized contact by project manager with businesses; strategic and business-savvy project leadership.

- The KEY Career Development Center at Faculty of Engineering at Ain Shams University in Cairo is the first-ever, on-campus career center at Ain Shams University catering to career development and job placement services for students in Egyptian public universities.
 - Program is managed by the Egyptian Junior Business Association that is able to leverage its strong ties to the private sector to secure job placement and internship opportunities and to ensure that the training delivered is demand-driven.
 - An important component is providing on- and off-campus, quality content training focused on developing the undergraduates' hard and soft skills.
 - The Center seeks to link graduates to real employment opportunities by developing a professional recruitment service.
 - Ongoing activities to encourage undergraduates' ethical, social and intellectual development, as well as their commitment to social values, are essential ingredients.
 - Securing mentored, objective-based internships in reputable companies is another service the Center seeks to extend, with the objectives of providing undergraduates with the needed technical insight and hands-on experience, exposing them to the future working environments and job requirements they are seeking, as well as offering the companies the opportunity to become acquainted with potential future employees.
 - The CDC serves as an "information point", disseminating information on all training, workshop, seminar, internship and other career- and self- development opportunities available, through and outside the Center. Regularly distributed materials and a well-maintained website are vital communication tools to provide undergraduates with career development and job opportunity information.
 - Sustainability is a vital component incorporated in the planning and implementation of the Center's objectives and operations. Developing ongoing revenue-generating activities is crucial to the longevity of the Center's operation.
 - An essential component in feasibly maintaining the Center's major activity of training, and extending it to a larger pool of beneficiaries in the future, is transforming the training from outsourced to "in-house," self-conducted. The Key CDC is aiming to develop and maintain its own pool of volunteer trainers, and training programs, through investments in "train the trainers" and training curriculum.
 - The KEY CDC is continuously working to develop a successful formula for "early enhancement" of undergraduates to be feasibly duplicated in other universities throughout the country thereafter.
 - Strong marketing and public relations campaigns and efforts to raise awareness amongst students on the importance of soft skills besides the academic curriculum.
- The Princess Basma Youth Resource Centre (PBYRC) Life Skills program.

- PBYRC is part of the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development established in 2002 in response to the needs of young Jordanians.
- Centre works with young people ages 10-24, taking a rights-based approach, including gender equity, participatory environment and sustainability as core principles.
- PYBRC works through JOHUD's community centers and offers a variety of programs around giving young people access to appropriate information and skills to allow them to make effective life choices and achieve full potential.
- Basic life skills training program delivered to over 1,500 young people. Program also works with adults, mainly teachers and youth workers, on youth-friendly approaches and ways to support youth-led initiatives.
- Life situations based curricula and peer approach: Topics include communication skills, dealing with diversity, problem solving, stress management, healthy lifestyles, self-awareness.
- Life skills are not a secret recipe nor a "machine" for creating employable youth; assumption that all young people are employable, and life skills a means of discovering how and where.
- Self-awareness is a key requirement for life skills; program helps youth strategize towards creating themselves instead of choosing what is available. It is important to not stereotype images of youth; a strong life skills program recognizes that young people have individual and unique attributes.
- Life skills outside the training hall, the importance of creating an enabling environment for life skills by working with parents, youth workers and employers.
- In Jordan there is a "vision" problem - young people do not know what type of jobs to pursue and explore. As a result, young people keep changing jobs and there is no commitment to follow through with one trade or job.
- The problem of lack of life skills in the Middle East is also a problem of the failure to question our parents, teachers and other societal authorities – this is not allowed socially, culturally and politically.
- The importance of values-based education versus / in addition to skills-based education.
- There is an emerging need for a scientific research on benefits of "life skills for employability".

Breakout Session: What Works in On-the-Job Training and Job Placement

Panelists with experience in the private sector and with youth employability and on-the-job training or apprenticeship programs spoke about their experiences in helping young people to develop skills and work experience and find jobs. A youth panelist also spoke about her experience in an internship program which led to a permanent job.

- On the issue of enhancing training relevance, speakers highlighted the following factors:

- Employing part-time trainers from business and industry
- Having trainers go back to business every few years
- Adopting and regularly updating flexible, modular curricula and cooperative modalities of training
- Providing re-training and further training opportunities
- Providing adequate career guidance and counseling service, linked with proper labor market information system
- Engaging employers at all levels of the training process
- Focusing on job placement as an outcome at all levels of the training program and organization
- Engaging Employers
 - Finding out employers' needs through informal consultation, meetings, focus groups, surveys
 - Defining qualifications profile
 - In provision of training through internships, apprenticeships, etc.
 - Evaluating training outputs
 - Accreditation
- Success is enhanced when:
 - On employers' side: qualified Master trainers, adequate physical resources, reasonable size of establishment, existence of qualification profile and training program, awareness of training value & support/buy-in by CEOs, have a say in evaluation and accreditation of training outputs
 - On training providers' side: Flexible timing allowing for block or sandwich TWI, adequate coordination with industrial establishments, having agreements defining roles and responsibilities with industry, having strong monitoring and follow up system for TWI
- Career guidance at labor offices including profiling, aptitude testing, accreditation of experiential learning, personal action planning, entrepreneurship, referral to training, course and work tasters, job-clubs, networking with employers
- Career guidance at TVET including aptitude testing, entrepreneurship, links between TVET and higher education, placement & mentoring, academic planning, courses in career development
- Career guidance at universities including linking theory to practice, employability skills, job search training, job-finding clubs, CV, job interviews, peer-to-peer, career fairs, internships
- Job placement should be seen in a series of steps along a continuum that includes obtaining career information (valid, reliable and up-to-date labor market information); career education (in or/and across the curriculum; extra-curricular activities; school-to-work curriculum); career counselling that supports self-understanding, career assessment, individual or group career guidance, employment counselling (immediate employment goals, interview skills, personal action planning); job placement (registration of vacancies, networks with employers).
- Case study: Saudi Jewelry Association, in which employers came together to create a formalized apprenticeship program to ensure the industry could supply its need for qualified staff

- Case study: Souktel – Using mobile phone technology to help youth find jobs
 - Why use SMS?
 - Available on all mobile phones
 - Leading communications tool among youth in developing countries
 - Send/receive information instantly
 - Reach youth anytime, anywhere – even in areas with no Internet
 - Cheaper, more accessible than Internet and landline phone
 - Two Services: JobMatch and AidLink
 - JobMatch: Linking job-seekers with employers
 - AidLink: Connecting aid agencies with the people they serve; Enhancing logistical planning and data collection.
 - Value-Add: Save Time, Save Money, Reach More People

Breakout Session: Scaling Programs for Broader Impact

The session presented case studies of strategies for scaling programs through alliances and public-private-civil society partnerships.

- The Egyptian Education and Employment Alliance program is a public-private-civil society partnership for job creation.
 - Program is serving university students through the establishment of the first-ever career development centers at Ain Shams and Cairo Universities; the model will be replicated and expanded to another 15 faculties and universities next year.
 - National Youth Council oversees more than 4,000 national youth centers nationwide; most are not working properly so EEEA selected 6 centers to pilot the delivery of a “One Stop Shop” model which delivers services in job placement, health, sports, cultural activities and youth civic participation.
 - Some lessons from the Egyptian experience on scaling these programs include:
 - It is important to involve the public sector if programs really want to scale and institutionalize at a national level; without change at the public level, it is difficult to achieve full scalability; one challenge in this regard is dealing with the government as a huge bureaucracy.
 - Incentives are important to push the public sector to dedicate resources in the right direction; programs need to think about how to structure these incentives.
 - “Reform” is in fashion – be as knowledgeable as possible about what the government is doing.
 - Cash and in-kind leverage from private sector partners is a good way to leverage people with intellectual property and is a way to use private sector leaders to push change.
 - To scale up, show results and find partners; also don’t recreate – piggy-back on what is already going on and take good government programs and build on them or keep them.

- Corporations in Arab world are less concerned with/sophisticated about CSR than multinationals.
 - Whenever one thinks about scalability of programs, one needs to think about capacity especially in the monitoring and evaluation arena.
 - Key elements for scalability:
 - Numbers are not the only important factor but quality of activities is also key
 - Need clear, basic model for expansion
 - Need effective communication
 - Volunteerism is important in scaling programs
 - There is good and bad in all organizations – focus on the good.
- Moroccan experience in scaling public-private partnerships
 - Moroccan Education and Employment Alliance (MEEA) program identified and highlighted the need for public-private-civil society sector partnerships, creating a culture that did not exist in Morocco before as each sector was working on their own in a vacuum.
 - MEEA had to start by creating this awareness and creating awareness of the concept of partnerships.
 - Private, NGO and public sector partners are the framework for alliance partnerships; should be a “win-win” value proposition for all members of the Alliance and need incentives for partners to continue to work for good of the alliance; MEEA created a strong incentive for partners to continue to work together (they realized the manifold benefits of working together; though they could easily go their own way, they choose to continue working together for mutual benefit)
 - Once the partnerships have been formed, you need government buy-in
 - From the beginning, MEEA built partnerships and alliance assuming a national need:
 - Capitalized on existing training framework: A technical training program recognized by the state (CFA).
 - Secured government buy-in: Ministry of Education is major actor and strong ally for the project.
 - Developed a team dedicated to coaching new trainers, ensuring quality, and follow-up.
 - Key factors for success:
 - Through the complex adaptation and implementation of successful combination of technical training and life skills, MEEA has answered a key national need.
 - Through concrete results, MEEA catalyzed enthusiasm for life skills program, got private/public sector buy-in, and is presently attracting the interest of major stakeholders and potential donors.
 - At this stage LS is a major unifying factor that is bringing all partners together and a key to future Alliance success.

- Public/private/civil society partnerships are the only way to achieve larger scale...otherwise the program is too small and benefits too few youth.
- Key Factors for Success: Private Sector Engagement –
 - Key partnerships with private sector, associations and government stakeholders
 - Results from pilot phase sell program to local businesses and secure internships for trainees
 - Constant outreach and personalized contact by project manager with businesses and students
 - Have to make such partnerships economically sustainable for private sector partner
 - MEEA has 300 private sector partnerships for job placement avenues for youth.
- Challenges for scaling up:
 - Keeping the private/public/civil society actors actively engaged
 - Ensuring the quality of training programs, including the quality of life skills trainers
 - Ensuring sources of funding to build capacity of institutions to integrate new training and sustain it
 - Follow-up on youth after their graduation
- Lessons for scaling up:
 - Scaling up youth programs can be a challenge in the MENA region because can't be done without public sector (Ministry of Education for example) approval and engagement
 - A compelling training package that responds to real training needs with concrete results can motivate public and private sector engagement
 - Public sector must be willing to invest and take risks
 - Need to build a team to manage larger programs in order to foster sustainability and avoid reliance on one or a few individuals
 - Using the Alliance framework helped both outreach and placement.

Panel Session: The Role of Mayors and Municipalities in Youth Employability

The session included presentations and discussions among mayors from Lebanon, Syria, and Sudan as well as perspectives on local economic development issues from the experience of the U.S. Agency for International Development. The discussion focused on the array of initiatives and activities that local governments, mayors and municipalities can undertake to promote youth employment and employability in the region. Mayors also discussed their experience in working on these issues in their own countries. *Please refer to PowerPoint presentations given during this session for further information.*

January 19 (Second Day of the Meeting)

The theme of the second day of the meeting was “*Challenges and Creative Strategies for Increasing Youth Employment and Employability in Jordan.*” The following section of this report provides an overview of key issues and discussion points from each of these sessions. Several PowerPoint presentations were shared throughout the day and can be found at <http://www.iyfnet.org/document.cfm/1019>.

Plenary Discussion – The Impact of the Global Financial Crisis on Youth Employability in Jordan

This session presented perspectives of His Excellency Bassem Al Salem, Minister of Labor, and key stakeholders in Jordan and from the international community on the expected impact of the global financial crisis on youth employability in the country. Major discussion highlights included:

- It is likely that young Jordanian workers in the Gulf region will be impacted by the global financial crisis and will return to Jordan. The Ministry of Labor is creating a group within the MOL to address returning Jordanians.
- There is a need to increase the number of public-private partnerships focusing on youth employability to increase and widen impact of programs.
- To help improve the employment situation for young Jordanians, the government is considering the following options:
 - Increasing public work projects to help employ youth.
 - Increasing the number of incentives (i.e. tax breaks) for companies that employ more youth.
 - Lowering wages rather than laying people off – this will help to stabilize the unemployment rate.
 - Extending training programs to delay entry into the job market and to take advantage of the added time to increase skills development.
- There is a need to change the mindset of how youth define success.
 - The real estate boom is an example of speculation that does not create long-term marketable skills
 - How do you define success – someone who drives a fancy car or someone who employs 200 young people?
- More venture capital and credit is needed for entrepreneurial ventures and there is a need to provide incubator or other support services for the younger population of workers to build their own start-ups.
- Companies need to do more training for entry-level workers post-university.
- More counseling services are needed at the university level. Many students are studying certain disciplines because they are popular or “trendy” even if the supply of jobs in these industries is low.
- There is a need for more “green” jobs such as in the area of solar energy. There is a need to work with the Ministry of Environment to push regulation in this area as it is no longer a luxury but a necessity.
- The government needs help from the private sector to reverse the “culture of shame” by making jobs more decent and attractive for Jordanian youth – such as offering minimum wage and having proper contracts. The government could offer possible incentives or rewards to private companies that hire young Jordanians. NGOs also play an important role but it is not the role of the Ministry of Labor to resolve all these issues.

- There should be a plan or proactive measures to use the “brain drain” of Jordanians returning from the Gulf as a result of being laid off. It is important that all ministries are involved including the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education.
- In Jordan, only 5% of high school graduates go on to technical training while 95% of graduates go on to university. This is a problem. The Government is working on developing a Higher Council of human resources to address this issue with the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education.

Plenary Discussion: Cross-Cutting Themes of Youth Development and How They Impact Youth Employability and Life Opportunities

This session brought together a panel of experts including the Minister of Social Development, H. E. Hala Lattouf, Imad Fakhoury, CEO of the Aqaba Development Corporation, and Jay Knott, Mission Director of USAID Jordan to discuss cross-cutting themes of youth volunteerism, social values, and private sector needs to better understand how they impact youth employability and opportunities for young people. It was moderated by William Reese, CEO of the International Youth Foundation.

- There is a very small culture of volunteerism amongst Jordanian youth. Currently only 10% of youth volunteer; this is not a reflection of the lack of need for youth volunteerism but the lack of framework in which to do this.
- There needs to be more discussion around identity and social inclusion of youth, our social values and where we are heading as a society.
- We need to examine what are the reasons why Jordanian youth are going overseas to work – is this just to seek employment or is this to get more freedom and get away from parents.
- We need to unleash the creativity of youth.
- The Aqaba Development Corporation is looking at significant new investments and economic zones to create new jobs for young people.
- There is a regional gap with respect to recruitment of youth in Southern Jordan versus the center of the country. There is also a regional gap in terms of how we are intervening in youth employment initiatives.
- What does the private sector look at in youth? Knowledge, skills, abilities and values.
- Young people in the Southern part of Jordan and in Aqaba in particular have several concerns – they do not want to accept unsatisfying jobs so many choose to remain jobless, they feel like their education does not prepare them adequately for the job market, and there is lots of fear that the economic crisis will result in a decline in formal sector jobs.
- Jordan’s social value system is at a crossroads – it is torn between a traditional, patriarchal community system which promotes authority and an infusion of individualism and modern perspectives that technology and advancement has brought.
- Many of Jordan’s positive social norms and strong family values come from its tribal roots but it also needs to be able to be adaptable to modernization.
- There is a need to involve and improve private sector perspectives on vocational training and design.
- There is a need to address and improve the mismatch in job skills between new graduates and what the job market demands.

- There is a need to move aggressively in the quality of education.
- There is a need to integrate lifelong learning.
- There is a need to introduce internship programs at the university level.
- There is a need to deal with the culture of shame.
- There is a need to improve career counseling.
- There is a need to create a part-time education system for young people that need to work while furthering their education.
- It is equally as important to educate parents about the needs of young people.
- There is a need to take a holistic approach and orient and train adults and other segments of society besides youth to change their attitudes towards youth.

Breakout Sessions: Enhancing Quality and Relevance of Skills Training for Youth in Jordan

While the breakout sessions on the first day of the meeting focused on regional case studies and best practices in youth employability programming, the afternoon breakout sessions on the second day featured Jordanian examples of models and strategies that are working or show potential for enhancing youth employability.

Breakout Session: Learning about What Works through Effective Program Monitoring and Evaluation

This session explored approaches to monitoring and evaluation of youth employability programs. Discussion focused on what kind of data is needed to assess program quality and relevance and what kinds of indicators programs use. Discussion also centered on what results programs are seeking to achieve and how programs define success. IYF's *entra 21* youth employability program in Latin America was used as a case study for one approach to program monitoring and evaluation. Some of the issues raised by the speakers are outlined below.

- What are you trying to achieve?
 - What's the goal of your program?
 - What's the objective of the evaluation?
 - Monitoring project performance and service delivery?
 - Understanding whether a person who participates is more likely to be employed after participation than before?
 - Understanding whether that person is more likely to be employed after participating in the program than he would have been had he not participated?
 - Understanding the impact of his increased probability of employment on his ability to support a family?
- Monitoring: a continuous process of collecting and analyzing information to see how well a project, program or policy is performing against expected results, to support implementation.
- Evaluation: an assessment of the consequences of an intervention, to determine its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, to support the decision-making process.
- Basic ingredients for evaluation:
 - A clear goal (e.g. reduce youth unemployment)

- A diagnosis of the problem (e.g. people have the “wrong” skills)
- A solid theory of change (if we do *this*, then *that* will happen)
- Use whatever tools necessary to solve the fundamental evaluation question - How can we know that changes in the outcome are due to our intervention?
- It is important to have good counterfactual information

Please refer to the presentation made by Mattias Lundberg of the World Bank for further information.

Breakout Session: Improving School-to-Work Transitions

This session explored the key constraints and gaps limiting successful school-to-work transitions among youth in Jordan and in other countries including some examples from Latin America. The discussion focused on strategies that may be used to improve transitions from the formal education system at the high school level into the world of work.

Breakout Session: Strategies for Employer Engagement

This session explored strategies for successful employer engagement in youth employability programs. There was much discussion around how to find up-to-date, accurate information about the local job market, as well as on the obstacles and successes that program’s experienced in working with businesses and potential employers to secure internships and job placement for their youth cohorts.

- Jordan River Foundation Youth Career Initiative is a six-months education and employability program for young people that uses resources of the hotel industry to provide participants with life skills and vocational skills.
- It targets young people between 18-21 who have recently completed high school (or equivalent) and have limited opportunities to improve their employability.
- It is an opportunity for youth to improve long-term social and economic skills including life and business skills.
- It is a program initiated by the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF).
- Jordan is the first Arab Country to implement the program that is implemented in 11 countries around the globe.
- How are employers engaged?
 - Hotels provide training venues
 - Human resources:
 - Trainees are supervised and trained by Professional Department Managers
 - Hotels provide part of the theoretical training covering topics such as Personal Presentation, Customer Care, Team Work, Business Finances and Telephone Techniques
 - Provide English and IT courses
 - Financial resources:
 - Provide monthly allowance for trainees
 - Provide uniform and a daily meal for participants
- Challenges and observations from the program:

- The amount and different levels of commitment the program required from hotels including financial, staff time...etc.
 - The program was a new concept to hotels in Jordan which required a big effort on JRF's team to communicate its objectives to hoteliers
 - It is important to get the youth involved and feel ownership in the internship or job placement process.
 - Initially it was challenging to find youth willing to participate in their hotel hospitality apprentice training program with the Marriott, Sheraton and Four Seasons hotels, but when program participants were reassured that they could look for other jobs while serving as apprentices in the hotels, youth were more willing to enroll. Upon enrolling, however, all participants stayed with the program until completion. Results indicate that there was a significant improvement in employability skills after 6 months of practical, on-the-job training.
 - One challenge with these kinds of projects is that the private sector feels they are time consuming.
 - Employer / supervisor orientation is important to help employers stay engaged as mentors. Follow up with the employers is critical to maintain momentum and to ensure that youth are being supported professionally.
 - JRF's model for employer engagement: when planning the hotel apprentice program for disadvantaged youth they worked closely with hotel management to ensure the program was demand-driven. They set up committees with the HR departments and at the director level to find out hotel's needs and criteria. To ensure adequate follow up support for the youth, they met once a month with the HR supervisor, and weekly or biweekly with the youth. From the beginning each youth was assigned a mentor. Follow up was frequently done through SMS – this is an easy, convenient and less time-consuming way to follow up with so many trainees.
- Maharat Internship Programs described its experience in “Creating Employment Opportunities for Youth”.
 - Since 1999, when the Jordan-U.S. Business Partnership established one of the first internship programs in the country, recent Jordanian university graduates have benefited from this world-class opportunity to prepare them for the workplace and give them a head start in the job market.
 - Through the Maharat Internship Program, Tatweer expands on this tradition, providing interns with a menu of structured training, mentoring and work experiences to help develop their skills and future careers. Employers benefit from a pool of more polished job candidates.
 1. BDC/Maharat Model: Trainees partake in practical study groups and the youth themselves are tasked with looking at industry needs assessments as part of their training and/or may be asked to do a marketing project for a potential employer. Under the Maharat program, SMEs offer on-the-job training and internships for their youth trainees. As an incentive to SMEs to participate in

the program, BDC provides 5% of the trainees' stipend. To ensure employer engagement, BDC has businesses sign contracts to ensure they are committed to the trainees' development. BDC has diagnostic visits to SMEs to assess how interns can help, and in doing this they help employers assess their overall internal staffing needs and structure.

2. The Ministry of Labor plays a role to pressure companies to improve their HR practices and general conditions for their employees.
3. Employer engagement in a job training and placement program: This should not be viewed as "CSR" for companies but must be a "win-win" for businesses.
4. There needs to be better awareness of labor market information that is available and there is a need for better sharing of this information with the NGO community.
5. Where can data and information on the labor market be found? Newspapers, government ministries, information gathering in the community itself, especially from local businesses and employers, and information from mayors and municipalities.

Brainstorming Sessions: Identifying Priorities for Concerted Action to Address Youth Employability Issues in Jordan

The concluding sessions of the second day of the meeting provided an opportunity to identify priorities of stakeholders for concerted action to enhance youth employability and increase youth employment in Jordan in the areas of program design and delivery, research and partnerships. Participants broke out into three groups to discuss possible collective actions and next steps in these three areas. Four critical questions framed the discussions:

- 1) What elements are critical for successful projects?
- 2) What are achievable and meaningful goals?
- 3) What can we do to start planning for expansion, replication and scale of programs that are working?
- 4) What can your organization / sector offer?

Program Design and Delivery

1. What are elements are critical for successful program design and delivery?
 - Early involvement of youth
 - i. Involve parents as well
 - Needs assessment to analyze the market should include an assessment on the workforce, an analysis of the cultural context and geographical outreach and representation.
 - i. The target groups should be identified (youth segment, gender, etc.)
 - Training staff on skills requirements
 - Funding
 - Good curricula
 - Employer Engagement
 - i. Involve the local economy

- ii. Local Economic Development: vision needed
- Have an influential champion
 - Involve local public, private and civil society partners and clearly define structure of cooperation
 - Ensure that there is sufficient capacity-building for all program partners involved
 - Government employability policy needs strong incentives for SMEs and wage regulations
 - Effective communication is key to successful program implementation.
- 2. How does one measure concrete visible results in two years? (What are achievable and meaningful goals?)
 - Number of curricula/training manuals
 - Number of employed youth (track retention levels, quality of jobs and level of wages)
 - Level of engagement with private sector
 - Other sources of funding engaged
 - Set of best practices on how to close skills gap (lessons learned) developed
 - Have a plan for scale up
 - Changes in attitudes?
 - Structural reforms of local business development and recommendations for policy changes
 - Number of local institutions having adopted best practice processes
 - i. Local contributions
 - ii. Adapted model
- 3. What can we do to start planning for expansion, replication and scale?
 - More partnerships (and more commitment from current partners)
 - Include monitoring and evaluation
 - i. Advisory committee including youth
 - Story telling
 - Mid-term assessment
 - Advocacy strategy
 - More funds and resources
 - Flexibility
 - Customize to local conditions
 - Build capacity for local partners
 - Have buy-in from local and national partners
- 4. What can you offer? A number of contributions were offered including:
 - Regional outreach
 - Reporting to inter-governmental bodies
 - Working experience with drop-outs/delinquents
 - Volunteers from university
 - Contact to local community-based organizations
 - Training, curriculum development, English classes
 - Testing of skills
 - Providing benchmarks
 - Youth care concept, midterm assessment, M&E tools

- Offer internships

Research on Youth Employment / Employability Issues

1. What are elements are critical for successful projects?
 - Need for information on labor markets to match supply and demand
 - What exists in Jordan already?
 - i. Research on child protection, child labor surveys
 - ii. Labor market database
 - What research is needed?
 - i. Drop-out situation in the region (cause?)
 - ii. Urban-rural disparities
 - a. Gender gap (magnitude? reasons?)
 - iii. Need for disaggregation of data
 - a. Household surveys – can be used for information on youth, should use same questions
 - Who can conduct the research and collect the data? What exists already?
 - i. Municipalities
 - ii. UNICEF (child labor)
 - iii. Development information – MDGs – youth unemployment
 - iv. Household employment surveys every 5 years in Jordan (DHS) – need to harmonize these
 - v. Ministry of Planning -- statistics
 - vi. ILO school-to-work survey
 - Measure satisfaction in work
 - i. Indicators –
 - a. Aspirations of youth
 - b. Stereotyping/mindsets (as obstacle to youth employment)
 - ii. Culture beyond government influence
 - iii. Awareness/advocacy to change attitudes
 - What are the causes of unemployment? What are the structural causes? (Where is the source of the headache?)
 - i. Use impact evaluation of interventions because causes can be outside labor market
 - ii. Don't limit focus to labor market
 - iii. Questions to consider:
 - a. Reservation wages – culture of shame – choosing unemployment?
 - This is a middle-income issue
 - Different concerns about lower income groups
 - Study – provide information to youth to see effects
 - b. Minimum wage – how much is it applied? How much informal work is there?
 - Need more conferences and learning workshops to expand successful youth employment / employability models
 - Need more focus on most vulnerable youth (at-risk youth, young people in rural areas)

Partnerships to Promote Youth Employability

1. What elements are critical for successful projects?
 - Comprehensive mapping of youth initiatives including the need to conduct a wider mapping beyond employment needs and include mapping of youth involvement in such areas as the arts, anti-violence, etc. Need to map different actors and identify different partners and define roles (who is doing what).
 - Have a champion(s) from each sector to pull all parts together at the institutional level and to ensure commitment from the private sector.
 - Consider a more objective, neutral entity (board of trustees, NGO).
 - People need to earn their role in the program – there should be minimum standards and benchmarks put in place to determine and ensure successful project delivery.
 - Take comprehensive, holistic approach (local, central) and take into consideration what the Ministries are already doing.
 - Ensure local ownership and put the national agenda as the first determinant: local government, community based organizations, associations, schools, clubs, etc.
 - Partnerships at the level of the schools and the family (develop the role of the education institutions and the role of the family) and educate parents for better orientation of children.
 - Educate the private sector.
 - IYF role as neutral player.
 - Check what other donors and players are doing and identify synergies among initiatives/programs by other actors/donors/organizations.
 - Negotiate at the onset the vision, roles and stop along the way to check if all partners and parties are committed and happy with their roles. Need to have an agreement/consensus on what the vision of success is and what each organization's role is. (How do you monitor commitment?)
2. What are achievable and meaningful goals of a partnership framework?
 - Cost effectiveness
 - Strategic goals and awareness
 - Systemize the process so it can be scalable and duplicated
 - Produce youth capable of finding and keeping a job, and find employers that will offer job opportunities to these youth as a corporate responsibility.
 - Develop a joint and comprehensive strategy to raise the awareness and build the capacity of the family, the entrepreneurs, etc....
 - Change the employment "culture" (from the private sector, family and youth sides)
 - General national policy/strategy that guides the initiatives and funding (e.g. early professional orientation of youth, employment readiness, production of guides)
 - Better coordination to put available resources together strategically to achieve goals
3. What can we do to start planning for expansion, replication and scale?

- Systemize the process/design: starting within a system, ensure that the outputs are real, ensure a higher body to take action in case problems are identified.
 - 3 main stages: sound planning, involving all actors, monitoring and evaluation.
 - Simplicity of the model – build model that is simple and focused with organizations focusing on strength.
 - Dedicate the proper human resources and training on building partnerships (capacity-building on how to implement the program effectively and work with partners to build partnerships)
 - Transfer of ownership
 - Involve beneficiaries on the ground going beyond the elite circles
 - Show impact (evidence-based). Demonstrate that there are new and more efficient ways to work with youth.
 - Distinguish between replication and scaling up – In terms of partnership, once you build a partnership that has proven to be successful, we should build scale capacity from the beginning.
 - Identify proper performance indicators (beyond the numbers), and design a sound M&E plan.
4. What can you contribute?
- Outreach/recruitment models, training in soft skills (how to get a job), assessing private sector demand, good knowledge of private sector, M&E capacity and tools.
 - From the public side, open dialogue, build infrastructure, ready to support programs.
 - Link initiatives planned in Jordan to other ongoing initiatives.

Youth Voices Sessions

Young people also had the opportunity to share their perspectives about cross-cutting needs for youth employment in Jordan through two Youth Voices sessions organized by the Jordan River Foundation and the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development on the first and second days of the meeting. On the first day, young people from JRF's youth employment programs expressed their concerns through a "talk show" presentation stimulating a lively debate around issues such as the minimum wage, with several of the young participants explaining in their words why the current monthly minimum wage is not enough. Another topic of concern for the youth panelists was that school subjects are unconnected to the needs of the marketplace and the schools are not equipped to offer practical advice about what subjects and educational tracks would be helpful in finding future employment. They stressed the need for more career exploration to explore academic and vocational fields and potential career paths, as well as the need to incorporate more creative and flexible ways to allow students to be able to move between educational tracks at later stages.

On the second day, JOHUD presented a film highlighting issues in youth employment, and seven youth led a theatrical role play that brought to the forefront potentially sensitive but critical issues of concern for young Jordanians today. These issues included the recruitment challenges ordinary and disadvantaged youth face as a result

of societal tribalism, class monopoly and the role of “wasta” or “connections in the Jordanian culture. In their role plays, the young actors encouraged employers to not only hire Jordanians from prestigious local or foreign universities but to expand their recruitment to other young people. They also expressed a desire to see more clan cooperation amongst young people. The youth also acted out their frustration at the role of the elite in preferential employment and how children of elite families get jobs first. Youth also acted out the particular challenges that young women face in seeking employment outside the teaching field and the need for particular career guidance oriented towards young women. Many young women fear non-traditional, female-oriented jobs such as working in a factory as a result of stereotypical social norms that they are “unsafe for a woman”. Young women also receive much less guidance and support in basic career exploration and preparation such as how to write a CV than young men, according to the youth participants.

Meeting Wrap-up

The two-day meeting concluded with thanks from the International Youth Foundation for the active participation of so many regional, international, and Jordanian stakeholders as well as a commitment by World Bank partners to seek further input from Jordanians about new youth employability programs in the country.