

## YWJ PARTICIPATES IN PRIVATE MEETING WITH HIS MAJESTY KING ABDULLAH II ON REFORM PROCESS



In March, Rana Al Turk, Youth:Work Jordan (YWJ) Country Director, joined 17 youth and civil society representatives at a private meeting with His Majesty King Abdullah II to promote dialogue around positive ways of engaging the nation's youth and better serving their needs.

"We are meeting today to listen to your suggestions," said the King in addressing the youth. "I am aware of the concerns and challenges that are facing you, especially unemployment."

*"We left the meeting knowing that our mission to empower youth, especially those at the margins of society, is more critical than ever before."*

—Rana Al Turk | YWJ Country Director

The event was one of a series of meetings the King is convening with young Jordanians to discuss next steps in achieving long-term reforms. His Majesty stressed the importance of empowering youth to express their opinions freely and of closing the gap between young people's needs and the plans of the government, political parties, and civil society institutions. "We left the meeting knowing that our mission to empower youth, especially those at the margins of society, is more critical than ever before," said Ms. Al Turk. "The reform process demands that youth are supported and prepared to pursue more active civic roles."

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### YOUTH:WORK Jordan

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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.

[www.youthworkjordan.org](http://www.youthworkjordan.org)  
[www.youthworkjordan.org/ar](http://www.youthworkjordan.org/ar)

With its focus on improving livelihood and development opportunities for the nation's marginalized youth, YWJ was well positioned to inform and shape the dialogue. Ms. Al Turk outlined key challenges facing vulnerable youth and emphasized the importance of coordinating efforts across sectors to create "an enabling environment" for today's youth. Greater attention, she said, needs to be placed on creating youth-friendly services at the local level and promoting a more holistic approach to youth development among civil society organizations.

In line with the King's vision for long-term reforms, YWJ is pursuing a multi-sector approach in advocating for improved youth employability models, practices, and policies. Through its new policy focus, YWJ will identify key policy issues that impact youth and hinder their engagement in the labor market and civil society; promote a national dialogue on social, economic, and educational policies related to youth; and develop a policy agenda that outlines core objectives to be pursued by YWJ and its partners to improve youth employability.

As for efforts to actively engage youth voices at the national level, the King will host a youth conference, entitled "Dialogue for Jordan," at the Dead Sea on May 28–29, where young people will have the opportunity to put forth reform recommendations. Youth:Work Jordan staff are playing a lead role in planning for the conference and will serve as session moderators, with YWJ beneficiaries also actively participating.

## Youth Profiles

### Finding Courage For Life: Zakarea's Story



#### East Amman, Jordan

Young men growing up in the Al-Nuzha neighborhood have few role models. The youngest in a family of nine children, Zakarea, 19, felt lost after failing to pass the Tawjihi exam at the end of secondary school. "I was depressed. I didn't care about anything. I didn't have any goals," says the tall, lanky youth with piercing brown eyes.

Now, after completing a three-week life skills training course offered through Youth:Work Jordan, Zakarea is poised to start a job stocking goods at a local Safeway grocery store.

*"All Jordanian boys should have the chance I've had. They would be different; the country would be different."*

In addition to learning how to set goals and establish priorities, the training focused on building participants' self-confidence and skills in communicating effectively, handling difficult situations, and serving as a positive force in their family and community. As part of the workplace readiness training he received, Zakarea also learned entrepreneurial skills. While satisfied with his current job for now, his long-term goal is to start his own business. "Maybe even a coffee shop," he says.

*"I feel more confident, more capable. I have hope now."*

—Sajeda, 22, jewelry-making trainee, Zarqa

*"Before the training, I was careless. I had ambition, but I didn't know how to realize it."*

—Malek, 23, YWJ graduate, now an IT trainer, Zarqa

*"The life skills training taught me how to deal with other people, to solve problems, and pursue my goals."*

—Wejdan, 24, YWJ graduate, now a CBO coordinator, Jordan Valley



Sajeda



Malek



Wejdan

# Community Updates

## EAST AMMAN | Jordan Career Education Foundation (JCEF)

Since April 2010, more than 600 youth in East Amman have completed training courses in English, life skills, HVAC, and IT, with 189 placed in jobs or currently participating in on-the-job training. Youth volunteerism activities are well underway with 140 youth participating in cleanup campaigns in local schools and youth centers benefitting 3,000 students and community members. Youth are also 'giving back' some of what they have learned through the program. Young women participating in *Hikayat Simsim*, an educational initiative, trained mothers on how to communicate effectively with their children. "The training reinforced the need to involve parents and focus on the relationship between parents and their children," said Dana Yanis, YWJ Youth Engagement Officer. To nurture the creativity and job skills of participating youth, a collaborative agreement was also signed with the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) to create film clubs.

## JORDAN VALLEY | Jordan River Foundation (JRF)

Twenty youth graduates of the culinary arts training passed their certification exams and are now participating in an entrepreneurship training to refine their skills prior to applying for grants or loans to start their own businesses. Four of the youth are employed with CBOs as caterers, with one having started her own micro-enterprise. To strengthen the capacity of local CBOs, JRF held a training workshop in Mallaha focused on the importance of leadership in Jordanian society and the role of local committees. The workshop (which was also held in Zarqa) included a dynamic exchange of experience and promoted a spirit of cooperation among CBOs. Forty-four youth from Mallaha and Waqqas, along with their families, participated in an "Orphan Day" campaign that included a speech by the Mayor and a short play performed by YWJ participants. And more than 100 youth from the Jordan Valley's three CBOs cleaned up Al Mallaha Park, painting its sidewalks and planting trees to make it more youth friendly.

## ZARQA | Jordan River Foundation (JRF)

Under the Patronage of HE Minister of Labor Mahmoud Kafaween, seven coiffure trainees from Khawla Bint Al Azwar celebrated their graduation from the Habawal Academy and are participating in on-the-job-training. Youth engagement activities are on the rise in Zarqa. In celebration of His Majesty King Abdullah II's birthday, 88 youth from various CBOs, together with the Agricultural Directorate, planted seedlings donated by the Directorate. Youth from three CBOs in Zarqa spent a day reading stories, distributing gifts, and playing soccer with young orphans, while youth from the Shua'a and Abna' Al-Watan Associations formed a choir and held a folklore evening in honor of Mother's Day. In the Royal Village of Al Zarqa, 20 young artists completed a fine art mural depicting a picturesque village and mountainscape.

## RUSSEIFEH | Jordan Hashemite Fund for Development (JOHUD)

Young women engaged in the Working Women's Association (WWA) are actively contributing to their community (e.g., teaching out-of-school girls about handicraft production and reaching out to nearby street youth). Graduates of WWA's IT training are also transferring their knowledge by training mothers in basic computer skills. Youth from the Women Hetteen Camp Association orchestrated a number of volunteer activities, including preparing breakfast for underprivileged community members and orphans, distributing gifts as part of a Mother's Day event, and passing out homemade desserts in honor of the Prophet Muhammed's birthday. Fifty youth from the Eskin Talal Association also contributed their time and talent to those served through the Al Amal Center for Disabilities.

## MA'AN | Jordan Hashemite Fund for Development (JOHUD)

Over 40 youth and community members from the Bahri Orphans Association set an example for others to follow when they dedicated a day to cleaning Al Shameyyeh street. The volunteer campaign included the painting of sidewalks and planting of trees — benefiting over 3,000 community members. Youth from the Ma'an Women's Association also conducted cleanup activities at a local vocational training center and hosted a Mother's Day event.



# News & Events

## NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR YOUTH ENTERPRISE FINANCING

IYF and the Development and Employment Fund (DEF) signed an agreement on March 20 to launch the "Youth Neighborhood Loan Project" to be implemented through YWJ. DEF, a government-lending and capacity-building institution, is establishing a nearly US\$1 million loan fund to finance youth-run income-generating projects in YWJ target communities. The joint effort will encourage entrepreneurship and sustainable economic growth in Irbid, East Amman, Zarqa, Russeifeh, Jordan Valley, and Ma'an.

## VISIT BY U.S. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

On March 2, ten YWJ youth participants shared their accomplishments, challenges, and aspirations with Michael Posner, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, along with representatives of the U.S. embassy and USAID in Jordan. The roundtable discussion took place at the Khawla Bent Alazwar Charitable Society, a YWJ implementing partner in Zarqa. The youth, all of whom had dropped out of the formal education system, expressed their gratitude for the life skills training they received, saying that it allowed them to appreciate their strengths and set goals for their future. Asked by Mr. Posner what they felt are the greatest challenges facing young people in the region, the youth responded clearly — poverty, low wages, unemployment, and lack of youth services. The youth overwhelmingly noted the program's positive impact and the need for more young people to benefit.

## MINISTRY OF LABOR TO COLLABORATE WITH YWJ

In March, an agreement was signed between IYF and the Ministry of Labor (MoL) designed to enhance employment opportunities and vocational training for youth. Through the agreement, select Ministry of Labor Employment Directorates will be trained to provide youth-friendly services and coach youth through the job search process. The project and the newly-trained Ministry associates will facilitate access to information on employers and employment opportunities, conduct joint job fairs and employment campaigns, as well as direct youth to Ministry of Labor vocational training activities.

## YWJ TRAININGS UNDERWAY IN IRBID

Also in March, YWJ began program activities in Irbid, where 400 youth, ages 15 to 24, will benefit from trainings focused on increasing their employability and engaging them in efforts to improve their communities. Activities in Irbid are being carried out by the Jordan Career Education Foundation in collaboration with two local CBOs: Al Affaq Charity for Needy Students and the Family and Childhood Protection Society. Technical trainings to be offered include HVAC repair, hospitality, sewing, household maintenance, construction, tourism, and retail sales. Youth will also benefit from life skills training and volunteer activities focused on creating youth-friendly spaces in their neighborhoods.



(top) Michael Posner Meets with YWJ Youth

(bottom) Rana Al Turk, YWJ Country Director and Omar Al Omari, DEF President

## YWJ Website Now Available in Arabic!

To learn more, visit:  
[youthworkjordan.org/ar](http://youthworkjordan.org/ar)

