



Youth work and youth unemployment in Jordan



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Executive Summary



The Middle East and North Africa region are currently facing fast-changing and demanding challenges in social, political and economic areas. Jordan has also been impacted by many recent changes affecting several countries in the region simply as a consequence of being located in a sensitive geopolitical area.

The role of youth in triggering and fuelling such processes cannot be ignored. Today Jordanian youth represents the largest population group in the country's history, with nearly 2 million people (30.5%) out of the total population aged between 15-29. This should definitely be perceived as an unmissable opportunity, specially considering the increasing percentage of highly educated young people within that group. However, such a large number of young people entering the labour market has also added to the pressure on society as a whole and more particularly on Jordanian youth itself. Jordan today has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the region, with 29.9% of young people of working age unemployed, almost triple the estimated overall 2012 unemployment rate of 12.2%.

Jordan's political and institutional discourse has focused on youth employment issues and made it a priority. Tackling the issue will necessitate a more comprehensive and integrated approach and will require coordinated efforts and the inclusion of all the stakeholders concerned. Specific programmes and instruments can complement each other in a coordinated way to become more efficient in achieving particular goals.

Youth workers in general, along with youth organisations and other organisations working with young people, are examples of key stakeholders whose participation is both relevant and irreplaceable. They are referred to in several policy documents as fundamental stakeholders in the implementation of the Jordanian National Youth Strategy, which also considers youth employment to be a top priority

and has set out specific and concrete objectives to tackle the issue. These stakeholders are seen as fundamental in preparing young people for the job market; increasing the number and variety of youth employment opportunities; increasing the productivity of young people and motivating them to be self reliant; and contributing to the elimination of different forms of discrimination impacting young people in the Jordanian labour market.

This recognition of the role youth work and youth workers can play in promoting and increasing the employability of young people is growing with an increasing number of employers and public institutions realising that young people cannot become fully equipped for society and labour market demands with only what the formal education system offers them. Furthermore, there is a growing need to facilitate complementary skills that empower young people to live in increasingly demanding and complex societies.

Youth workers should act as a bridge between the different authorities involved, the young people themselves and their communities. However, youth workers can only assume this function efficiently when relationships of trust exist between the various stakeholders and when there is a real integration of youth workers at every stage in the implementation of such strategies and programmes. This integration necessarily means cooperation and participation at every stage, from the initial discussions, design of the actual programmes and instruments, the practical steps of field implementation, to monitoring and evaluation.

This publication aims to contribute to the general reflection on youth work in Jordan with a specific focus on assessing the ongoing situation, the challenges, strategies and good practices of youth work in terms of the current complex issue of youth unemployment in the country. It will provide a statistical overview of the general situation in the country with regard to youth unemployment and a specific focus on the current youth work situation in Jordan.

1. Introduction

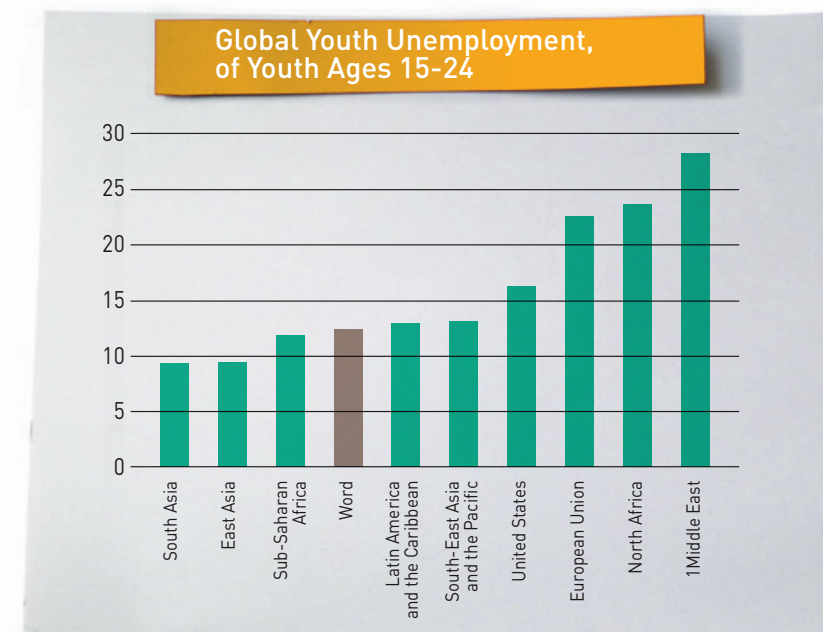
Context of the seminar within the framework of the region

The Middle East and North Africa region, often referred to as the 'Arab world', is home today to the largest proportion of youth in the region's history, with over 100 million young people aged between 15 and 29 representing 30 percent of its total population¹. However, many of these young people are unable to find decent, sustainable employment, and are consequently prevented from realising their full potential as productive members of a viable society. Indeed, according to several authors, the failure of most countries in the region to effectively integrate the large groups of young people inside their borders - economically, socially and politically - has been a major factor in the rise and spread of the so-called "Arab Spring."

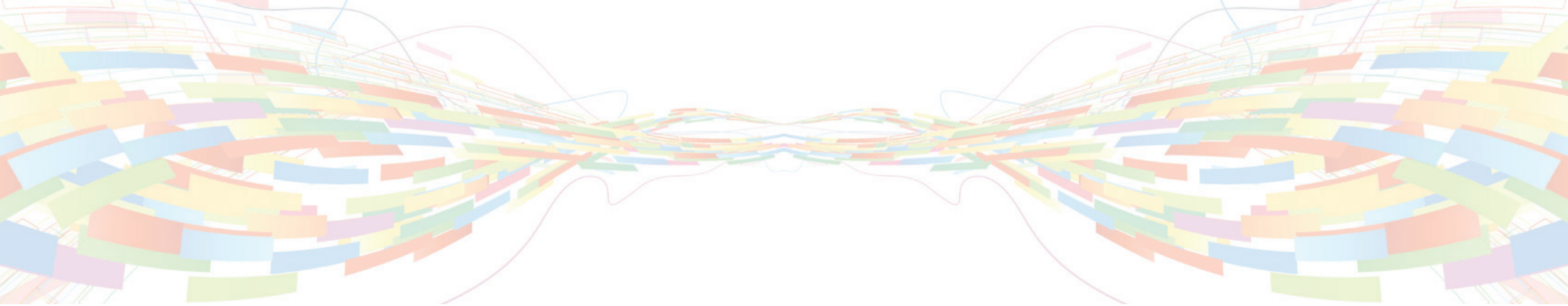
It is therefore not a coincidence that the issue of youth employment has been at the top of the agenda of both the main institutions dealing with youth issues and of political leaders in recent years. Unemployment indicators among young people (particularly on both sides of the Mediterranean) have been steadily rising since 2008 and have now reached alarming levels. The effects of this situation are not restricted to changes in the economic and social realities in some of the countries concerned but have also led to major political changes and reforms in several countries south of the Mediterranean and to social unrest and continuous protests in others north of the Mediterranean basin.

Jordan is no exception, exhibiting some of the social factors that led to the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. It is thought that Jordan has remained relatively stable because Jordanians fear the consequences of violent revolutions and would prefer gradual and peaceful reform. Furthermore, the Jordanian leadership has been responsive to change and has rapidly implemented reforms.

The share of youth (defined as young people aged between 15 to 24) in total unemployment is at least double the total rate in this region. In addition, the youth unemployment rate of around 25% in the MENA exceeds that of any other region in the world. Youth unemployment now stands at 29.9% in Jordan (2011) and is only exceeded by that of the Palestine at 38.8% (2010)².



In a country where 30.5% (nearly 2 million people) of the population is aged between 15-29³, such unemployment rates have had a huge influence on the discontentment manifested in demonstrations across Jordan.



In order to better analyse the current youth unemployment situation in Jordan and to find ways to invert the current trend, the Jordan EuroMed Youth Unit (hosted in the Ministry of Political Development) in cooperation with SALTO Youth EuroMed and the “We Are All Jordan Youth Commission” association organised a seminar entitled “Youth work and youth unemployment -youth economic engagement as a seed for a sustainable spring” in May 2013 in Amman. This publication is the result of this seminar that provided an opportunity for about 20 participants from 10 European countries to meet around 20 youth workers and representatives from different institutions dealing with youth in Jordan. The seminar was a follow-up event to the 2012 Marly le Roi seminar recommendations that highlighted the importance of addressing the issue of youth employment in the Euro Mediterranean region. It was designed to allow for a deeper reflection on the role of young people in supporting the overall economic and political stability of the EuroMed region. During four working days, participants had the opportunity to share good practices and to network for the development of initiatives that could contribute to change in the current situation in their communities, countries and thus in the region.

Aims & objectives of the study

This publication aims to contribute to the general reflection on youth work in Jordan with a specific focus on assessing the ongoing situation and the challenges, strategies and good practices of youth work in terms of the current complex issue of youth unemployment in the country. It provides a statistical overview of the general situation in the

country with regard to youth unemployment while specifically focussing on the current situation in Jordan.

This publication gives readers a general view of youth work in Jordan and its educational and pedagogical background. It also provides a compilation of relevant available data on the unemployment situation currently facing young people in Jordan and some of the main challenges youth workers encounter in the implementation of their projects. This document also includes some examples of youth projects and best practices in both youth unemployment and the integration of young people into the labour market.

It is part of a collection dedicated to Youth Work in Meda countries that aims to provide an in-depth reflection on current issues and challenges facing youth work in the Euro Mediterranean region.

Methodology

The information was collected using several research instruments, including bibliographical research, interviews and focus group discussions. It would have been difficult, however, to have reached any conclusions without the informal discussions the author had the pleasure and opportunity to participate in during the seminar, particularly on the perceptions of young people themselves on the situation they are living in today in their country.

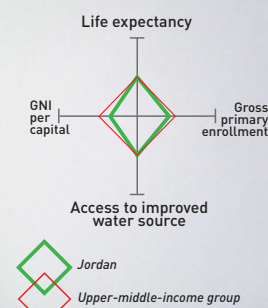
The quantitative analyses is mainly based on available data from the Jordanian Department of Statistics, International Labour Organisation, the World Bank, the United Nations, etc. Qualitative analysis was conducted using the results of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions involving different target participants including Jordanian youth workers and young women’s groups among others.

Jordan at a glance

POVERTY and SOCIAL

	Jordan	M. East & North Africa	Upper-middle-income
2011			
Population, mid-year (millions)	6,2	337	2,490
GNI per capita (Atlas method, US\$)	4,380	3,866	6,563
GNI (Atlas method, US\$ billions)	27,1	1,279	16,341
Average annual growth, 2005-11			
Population (%)	2.2	1.7	0,7
Labor force (%)	2.5	2.0	1,1
Most recent estimate (latest year available, 2005-11)			
Poverty (% of population below national poverty line)	13	..	..
Urban population (% of total population)	83	59	61
Life expectancy at birth (years)	73	72	73
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	18	26	16
Child malnutrition (% of children under 5)	2	6	3
Access to an improved water source (% of population)	97	89	93
Literacy (% of population age 15+)	93	76	94
Gross primary enrollment (% of school-age population)	92	105	111
Male	92	108	111
Female	92	101	111

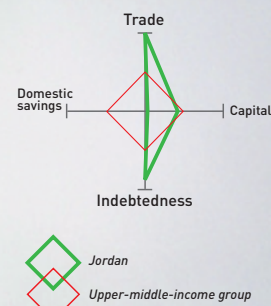
Development diamond*



KEY ECONOMIC RATIOS and LONG-TERM TRENDS

	1991	2001	2010	2011	
GDP (US\$ billions)	4.2	9.0	26.4	28.8	
Gross capital formation/GDP	25.9	21.0	24.0	25.5	
Exports of goods and services/GDP	59.5	42.1	47.8	45.6	
Gross domestic savings/GDP	2.6	-4.0	2.8	-2.8	
Gross national savings/GDP	15.0	20.8	16.9	13.5	
Current account balance/GDP	-10.1	-0.3	-7.1	-10.0	
Interest payments/GDP	9.6	5.6	1.0	1.2	
Total debt/GDP	231.3	132.4	63.3	61.1	
Total debt service/exports	28.5	19.5	5.7	6.7	
Present value of debt/GDP	..	..	..	56.2
Present value of debt/exports	..	..	..	116.2
(average annual growth)					
GDP	4.6	6.6	2.3	2.6	3.7
GDP per capita	1.3	4.2	0.1	0.4	1.9
Exports of goods and services	2.6	4.5	24.2	-5.0	6.6

Economic ratios*



STRUCTURE of the ECONOMY

(% of GDP)

	1991	2001	2010	2011
Agriculture	8.5	2.3	3.4	3.3
Industry	26.2	25.8	30.7	31.1
Manufacturing	13.7	15.7	19.2	19.4
Services	65.3	72.0	65.9	65.6
Household final consumption expenditure	71.4	81.1	76.7	82.9
General gov't final consumption expenditure	26.0	22.9	20.5	19.9
Imports of goods and services	82.8	67.1	69.0	73.9

Growth of capital and GDP (%)



Growth of exports and imports (%)



(average annual growth)

	1991-01	2001-11	2010	2011
Agriculture	-4.3	8.4	6.9	3.9
Industry	4.9	6.9	1.2	3.3
Manufacturing	5.9	7.8	2.0	4.0
Services	4.9	5.6	4.2	3.3
Household final consumption expenditure	5.8	6.3	-3.2	5.0
General gov't final consumption expenditure	4.8	5.2	-10.9	-6.3
Gross capital formation	-0.3	8.7	-13.3	2.6
Imports of goods and services	2.6	4.9	-3.4	-3.5

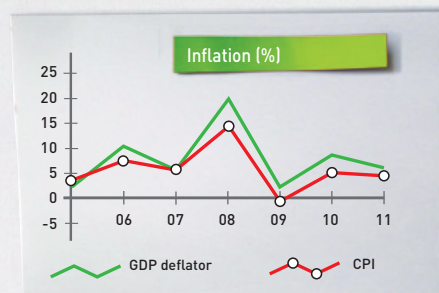
Note: 2011 data are preliminary estimates.

This table was produced from the Development Economics LDB database.

* The diamonds show four key indicators in the country (in bold) compared with its income-group average. If data are missing, the diamond will be incomplete.

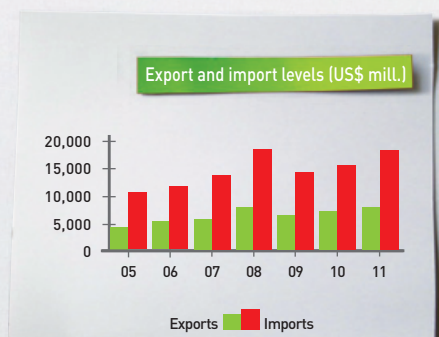
PRICES and GOVERNMENT FINANCE

	1991	2001	2010	2011
Domestic prices				
<i>(% change)</i>				
Consumer prices	8.2	1.8	5.0	5.2
Implicit GDP deflator	5.1	0.8	8.4	5.0
Government finance				
<i>(% of GDP, includes current grants)</i>				
Current revenue	44.8	31.6	24.6	27.1
Current budget balance	13.1	2.6	-0.7	-1.4
Overall surplus/deficit	6.3	-2.4	-5.6	-6.2



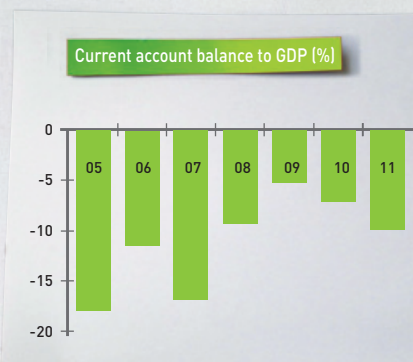
TRADE

	1991	2001	2010	2011
<i>(US\$ millions)</i>				
Total exports (fob)	1,132	2,297	7,046	8,101
Fuel	126	252	889	1,047
Agriculture	181	128	374	632
Manufactures	403	1,047	3,177	3,349
Total imports (cif)	2,512	4,877	15,603	18,347
Food	613	796	2,502	2,029
Fuel and energy	355	684	3,339	4,983
Capital goods	369	1,010	2,776	2,797
Export price index (2000=100)	95	101	208	234
Import price index (2000=100)	92	102	242	305
Terms of trade (2000=100)	104	99	86	77



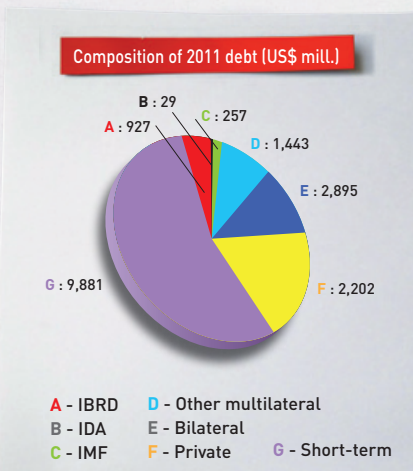
BALANCE of PAYMENTS

	1991	2001	2010	2011
<i>(US\$ millions)</i>				
Exports of goods and services	2,484	3,786	12,660	13,135
Imports of goods and services	3,429	6,034	18,287	20,725
Resource balance	-945	-2,248	-5,627	-7,590
Net income	-362	162	-91	-180
Net current transfers	884	2,061	3,832	4,878
Current account balance	-423	-25	-1,887	-2,892
Financing items (net)	403	-7	2,925	1,734
Changes in net reserves	20	32	-1,038	1,158
Memo:				
Reserves including gold (US\$ millions)	930	3,177	13,426	11,893
Conversion rate (DEC, local/US\$)	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7



EXTERNAL DEBT and RESOURCE FLOWS

	1991	2001	2010	2011
<i>(US\$ millions)</i>				
Total debt outstanding and disbursed	9,700	11,886	16,737	17,634
IBRD	511	886	1,008	927
IDA	76	55	32	29
Total debt service	740	865	780	933
IBRD	97	105	115	120
IDA	2	3	3	3
Composition of net resource flows				
Official grants	403	343	762	..
Official creditors	414	334	165	-219
Private creditors	-97	22	876	213
Foreign direct investment (net inflows)	-12	274	1,651	1,469
Portfolio equity (net inflows)	0	-57	-20	109
World Bank program				
Commitments	25	120	0	0
Disbursements	40	161	33	25
Principal repayments	56	57	104	110
Net flows	-16	104	-71	-85
Interest payments	43	51	14	12
Net transfers	-59	53	-85	-98



Note: This table was produced from the Development Economics LDB database.

2. Overview of Youth in Jordan

Definition of youth

In Jordan, youth is defined as those Jordanian males and females between 12 and 30 years of age. According to the National Youth Strategy⁴, these are the years that most people move from childhood to adulthood, from dependence to independence. This definition is similar to that used in many other Middle Eastern countries as the Arabic word for 'youth' – shabab – can even include people over 30. The Jordan National Human Development Report (2000)⁵ summarised this age period in these words – 'Jordanian youth stand at a critical crossroads in their personal lives, as they navigate the challenging passage from childhood to adulthood. Most of them are making the shift from being recipients of society's care and services, to becoming contributors to society's growth and development. In a fast changing world, they are the generation of Jordanians that must make the fastest changes to exploit new opportunities, meet fresh challenges, and vanquish old constraints.'

In contrast to this frequently found definition of youth from that part of the world, the UN definition as 'people between the ages of 15 and 24' is more and more widely accepted and used for statistical purposes and policy making. This difference in definition is quite significant and can lead to confusion and inaccuracy when dealing with youth related issues. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that most current Jordanian statistical

data is now based on the UN definition and not the former.

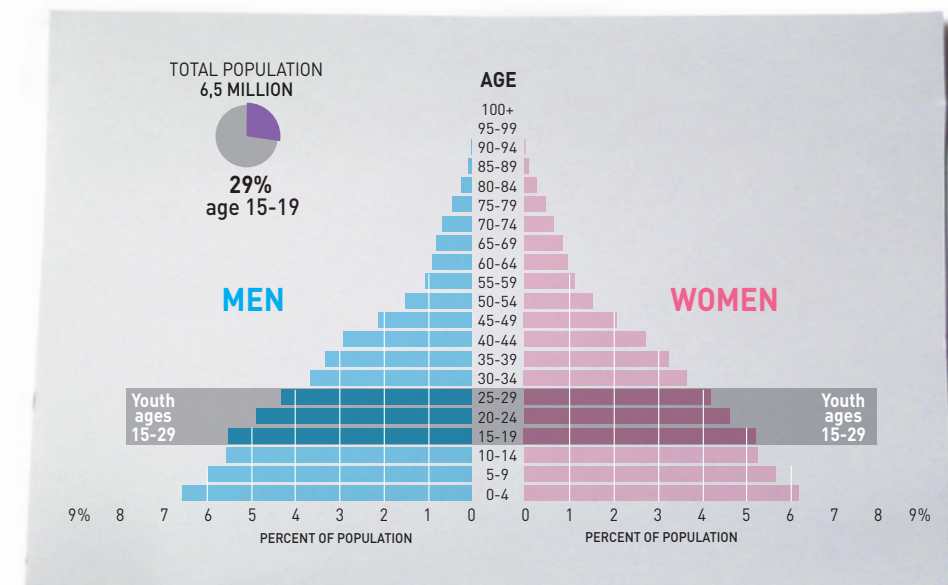
Young Jordanians are by no means a homogeneous group. Some young women and men are still at school, while others have completed their education or dropped out of school; some are rurally based, while others are living an urban lifestyle; some are employed or self employed, while others are unemployed; and while many young people live with their parents, others are themselves parents. Young people in Jordan represent a diversity of circumstances.⁴

General statistics

Jordan is a small country located in a complex region in the Middle East and is consequently highly sensitive to and affected by external factors. Scarcity of natural resources, desert terrain with barely 3% of arable land and scant fresh water resources limit the development possibilities and economic independence of the country. Half of Jordan's exports and a quarter of its imports come from trade with its neighbours, which explains its sensitivity to the geopolitical situation in the region and

vulnerability to external shocks. Located as it is between Israel and Iraq, Jordan has been affected by the crisis in both these countries. Turmoil in Palestine/Israel also affects Jordanian tourism, which is a key industry for the country, representing a significant share in GDP.⁶

With a total population of approximately 6.3 million people, Jordanian society is very young, which is also true of many neighbouring countries. There are an estimated 1.37 million young Jordanians aged between 15 and 24, representing 21.5% of the entire population³.





In terms of distribution, the National Youth Strategy 2005-2009⁴ reported that 50% of young Jordanians reside in the two cities of Amman and Zarqa, 25% in the Middle region, 11% in the Northern region and 4 % in the Southern region. The Jordanian population is predominantly urban (82.6%). The largest city, Amman, is home to over 2 million inhabitants, representing over a third of the whole population. Poverty poses a significant problem as 7% of the population lives below the USD \$2 a day poverty line, while 14% live below the national poverty line.⁷

The population increased fivefold between 1960 and 2005 – more than in any other Arab country except for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. Even though the fertility rate has fallen from almost 8 births per woman in the 1970s to 3.5 nowadays, it is still above the average for Middle Eastern and North African states and for developing countries.⁷

Jordan's official language is Arabic, although English is widely spoken and also taught in school, as is French to a lesser degree.

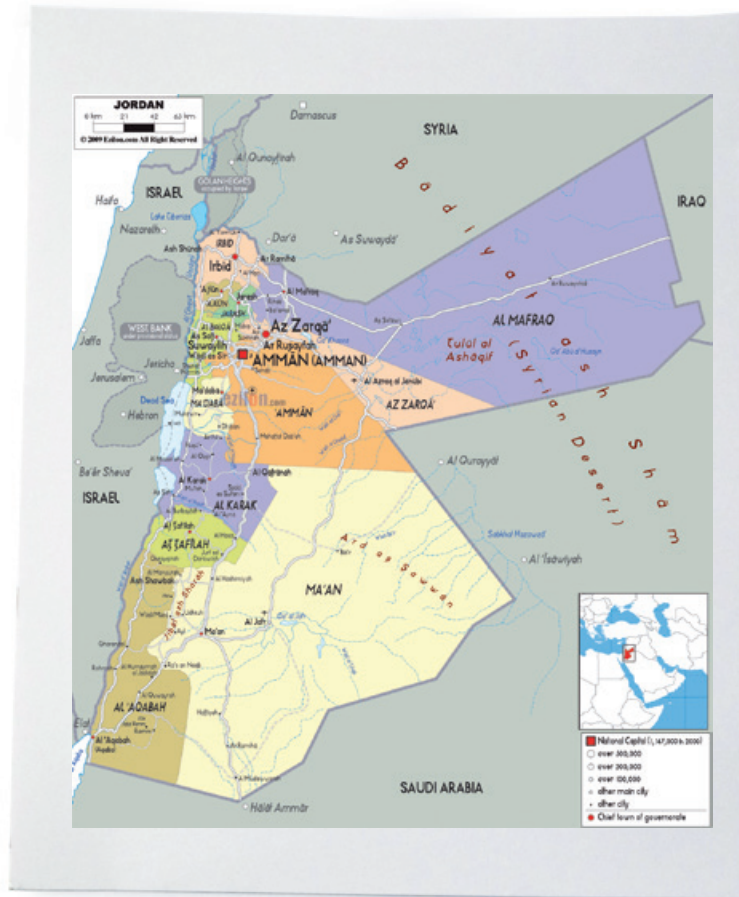
Migration in Jordan

Like most other Middle Eastern countries, Jordan is a recently created state, having been established in 1921 within borders drawn by the European colonial powers. Since that time, various forms of migration movements from, to and through Jordan have played a key role in shaping the country's demography, economy and politics. Soon after its establishment, it became the first host to Palestinian refugees. Ever since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Palestinians have arrived in several waves, forming a very large and integral part of the kingdom's population.⁸

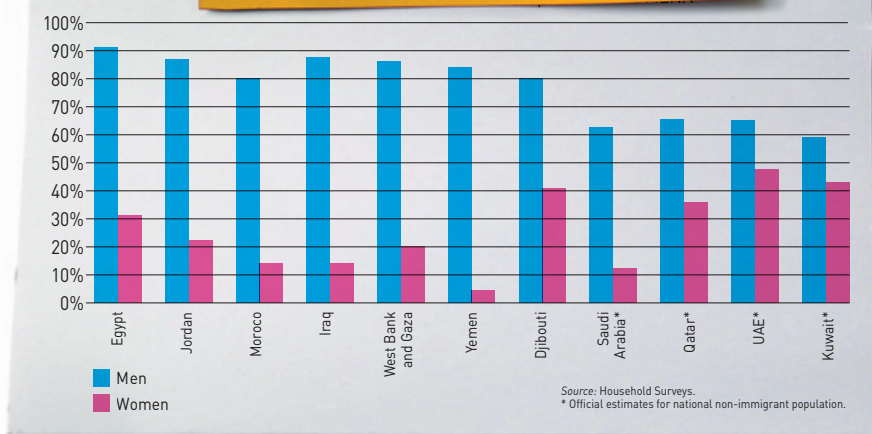
Located as it is at the crossroads of two major areas of instability and prolonged conflict, Jordan has become a destination for several waves of forced migrants from Lebanon, Iraq and, more recently, Syria. It has also opened its borders to a number of ethnic minorities, including Chechens, Circassians, Assyrians, Armenians, Kurds, Druze, Dom (Gypsies) and others.

Nowadays, it is Syrian war refugees who are a major source of concern. According to the latest numbers from the UN Refugee Agency⁹, there are currently nearly 550,000 registered Syrian refugees in Jordan, about 110,000 of whom live in the Zaatari refugee camp. Jordan has absorbed the remainder directly into its communities, mostly in northern Jordan. Roughly 50% of these refugees are under 18 years of age. Refugees receive help from the international community but also from the Jordanian Government, which provides food vouchers, access to education for the younger children, health care, security, infrastructure and water. Some reports have stated that ethnic Jordanians blame the refugee influx for

the current increase in the cost of living. The government is trying to reduce tensions and has promised to continue helping refugees in spite of the enormous costs generated at a time of heavy external debt. Despite these assurances, Jordanian society is divided over the question of whether their country should continue to accept refugees as it has always done in the past.



Female and Male Labor Force Participation across MEMA



Since the 1973 oil crisis, large numbers of Jordanian citizens – mainly young and highly skilled – have emigrated overseas, more often than not towards oil-producing states, which still represent the most frequent destination for Jordanians. This trend continues to this day. Although current data on Jordanians abroad is scarce and fragmentary, making it difficult to have accurate numbers, according to the national Ministry of Labour, the total number of Jordanian migrants in 2009 stood at 339,755, or 22% of the total current Jordanian labour force, and is to be found mostly in oil producing countries, the United States or other MENA and EU countries.⁸

In addition to bringing down unemployment and helping to defuse political tensions, emigration has allowed the Jordanian state to tap the remittances of its expatriates in order to secure a continuous source of financial revenue. Jordan has been described as the world's only oil-economy with no oil, i.e., a state highly dependent on foreign aid

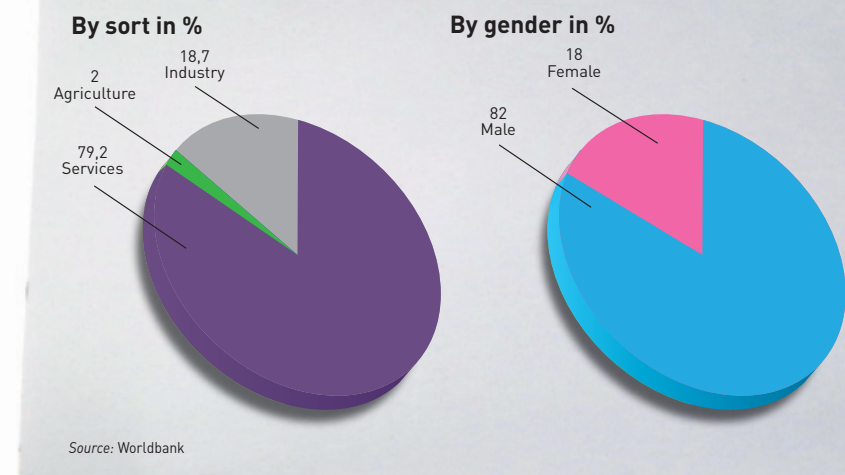
from oil-producing states and on remittances from its nationals working in these countries. A recent World Bank report estimated that Jordan ranked 10th in the world among top-remittance receivers proportionally to GDP. In 2007, remittances represented 20.3% of Jordan's GDP. Part of these remittances have also been invested in agricultural technology in the Jordan Valley, increasing job availability in that sector.¹⁰

In the same period, Jordan began recruiting unskilled and semi-skilled workers destined to fill shortages in the agrarian, construction and service sectors. Considered as a sort of replacement migration, foreign workers are now fundamental to the Jordanian labour market.

Since 1994, the number of foreign workers holding work permits has gone from a little over 42,000 to a record 352,000 in 2009. After decades of an 'open door' policy, Jordan introduced a more protectionist policy in 2007, reserving certain jobs for nationals. As a consequence, the number of foreign nationals holding work permits has dropped (except in

2009) since the changes in the labour law had made many foreign nationals with valid work permits illegal¹¹ and the numbers continued to drop until 2011. According to the Department of Statistics³, foreign workers accounted for 11% of the Jordanian labour force in 2012 and 15% of these were non-Arabs.

Labour Force in Jordan



Level of Education

Three main characteristics distinguish Jordan from other middle income countries in the area of schooling: the high level of pre-school attendance among 5-year-olds, almost the same attendance rates for male and female children in compulsory schooling and the fact that females have higher attendance rates beyond compulsory education levels than

males¹². Despite this, although the number of female students is close to or exceeds the number of males at almost every educational level, Jordan has one of the lowest rates of female participation in the job market in the world.

The adult literacy rate stood at 93 % and youth literacy (15-24 years) at 99 % in the period of

2007-2011¹³. Nowadays, school attendance ratios are nearly universal in primary school for both girls and boys.

The number of young people in Jordan is set to increase every year over the next decade as the largest age groups are also the youngest, with children under 15 currently representing more than 37% of the entire population. A large percentage of this bulge will reach working age over the next 10 years, increasing the pressure on university and college places and also on jobs and training facilities. The number of new university students and therefore potential job market entrants is expected to rise exponentially in coming years. One in every three young Jordanians (approx. 250,000) were enrolled in higher education in 2011/2012.³

According to national youth studies, youth priorities in life are dominated by educational aspirations, with 55% of young people indicating that their main concern was to complete their education at every level. We can say that Jordanian youth is generally optimistic and four out of five of them are firmly convinced that their future will be better than their present, although young females have less positive expectations than young males.⁴

As noted above, education is no guarantee against unemployment in Jordan. On the contrary, statistics show that unemployment tends to increase with additional schooling, exceeding 15% for those with tertiary education in Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia.¹

3. Overview of youth work in Jordan

Educational and pedagogical background of youth work in Jordan

Concerning youth work in Jordan, both the terminology and the field itself are quite new, even though some organisations have been active in this field and doing excellent work for many years.

Despite this, the youth worker interviews and focus group discussions revealed difficulties in defining youth work, even among individuals with working experience in this field.

Youth work training is provided in different forms and by different actors. The interviews revealed that coordination between the various actors providing training for youth workers needs improvement. Nowadays, Government institutions provide training that is mainly directed towards both the youth centre network and the youth leaders managing these centres around the country. In addition to this, royal non-governmental and international organisations have their own training programmes for their staff and regularly provide sessions ranging from training for trainers, training of facilitators, peer to peer training, among others, to beneficiaries of their community based projects. National and local NGOs, on the other hand, clearly lack access to qualified training for both their youth leaders and staff members.

As far as higher education in the field of youth work is concerned, there are still no specialised offers in universities providing complementary training.

Legal framework for youth work and youth policy development in Jordan

Youth policies and programmes are mainly regulated at government level by the Higher Council for Youth and the Jordan Sports and Youth Fund. The main documents providing a framework for the sector are the "National Youth Strategy"⁴ and the "Investment Strategy for the Jordan Sports and Youth Fund".

The Higher Council for Youth (Al-Majlis al-A'lal Shabab - HCY) was established in 2001. It is the body designated by the government to develop strategic and long-term planning on youth issues. It is also responsible for the coordination of youth-related projects and activities within its cross-sectorial and therefore cross-ministerial scope. In addition to formulating and developing youth policy, the HCY also licenses youth clubs and organisations and sets up youth centres.¹⁴

The HCY is the main institution responsible for youth policy in Jordan, whose obligations also include drawing up and implementing its policy in coordination with other relevant ministries and institutions. HCY enjoys the status of a Ministry and its President reports directly to the Prime Minister. It also collaborates with other non-governmental actors to ensure a broader approach.¹⁴

The key document regulating youth issues in Jordan is the National Youth Strategy prepared jointly by the HCY (Assistance of Higher Council for Youth), UNDP (United Nations Development Program) and UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund). This is a document that was recently reviewed and launched anew at the end of 2010 for the period 2011-2015. It

was endorsed by the Cabinet and released in response to the directives of King Abdallah II. It provides a framework for developing a youth policy that fits the needs of young people and promotes their development. The vision of the NYS (National Youth Strategy) is to "raise and develop Jordanian young men and women who are aware of themselves and their abilities, loyal to their country and proactively take part in its progress and development, able to deal with the variables and developments of this age in a confident, aware and steadfast manner, within a secure and supporting environment"⁴.

The youth employment issue has also been formally prioritised in the Jordan's National Employment Strategy 2011-2020¹⁷.

Main challenges for youth workers

Youth workers, youth led NGOs and NGOs working in the youth field in Jordan face considerable challenges.

One of the aspects highlighted by the focus group discussions was the lack of specific, nationally recognised training for small NGOs. While international, Royal and national NGOs very often have their own capacity building programmes for their staff, the majority of the smaller organisations do not have the means or access to such training programmes. The need to develop a capacity building programme for youth workers within the framework of the formal educational system was also mentioned.

On the organisational level, several obstacles were pointed out, in particular the access to funding opportunities to sustain an organisation in a medium and long-term perspective. Participants commented that, very often, in order to access information about funding and to be closer to donor institutions, an organisation needed to be based in Amman, with the result that those that do not have this possibility or those whose area of action is not in the Amman region can find it difficult to participate in information sessions and activities promoted by donor institutions, further reducing their ability to access proper funding and grants.

A number of organisations said that their dependence on external funding prevents them from focussing on their priority projects and meant that they had to constantly adapt to donor priorities.

The lack of specialisation in specific fields of expertise was also highlighted. In fact, many

organisations continue to be quite broad in terms of their scope of action, without acquiring competences and extensive know-how in specific areas (e.g. environment, healthy lifestyles, employment, etc.). This approach allows NGOs to apply for different calls for project proposals, even when they are not specialised in the field of the project.

The lack of transparency in access to funding was also one of the issues raised during the discussion, with many participants saying that funds are often earmarked for specific organisations that have privileged contacts and access to information inside the various institutions dealing with public and private funding.

The issue of transparency of funding procedures has also created a lack of trust among target communities, as many people perceive some NGOs as having been created or existing only to access funding rather than to fulfil community needs.

Another issue raised during the discussion was the poor level of cooperation among NGOs, often resulting in a duplication of efforts and replication of projects that could have greater impact if implemented within a framework of cooperation among organisations. Stiff competition among NGOs for the available resources is blocking the development of synergies and joint projects among smaller organisations, which would benefit most from cooperation initiatives.

4. Youth employment in Jordan

Main facts on youth unemployment in Jordan

Like most Middle Eastern countries, Jordan has a high youth unemployment rate. Indeed, according to the ILO (International Labour Organization) Youth Unemployment 2013 Report², Jordan has one of the highest rates in the region, with 29.9% of young people unemployed; almost triple the overall 2012 unemployment rate estimated at 12.2%.³

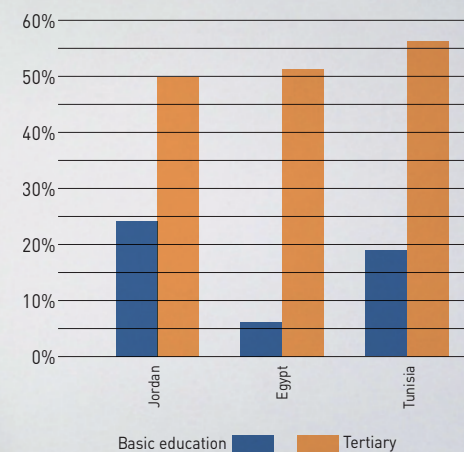
There are also sharp gender differences in unemployment rates. Unemployment among young women is nearly three times that of their male counterparts. Young female labour force participation is particularly low in Jordan, where only 9.5 per cent of young

women have jobs, compared with 23% for the total female participation rate. In terms of their education, seventy-six per cent of young women job seekers have an intermediate diploma or higher-level qualification. Although young women reach high levels of education, they still encounter difficulties getting hired in occupations that correspond to their qualifications.²

The National Employment Strategy¹⁷ highlighted an interesting point, namely: "(...) the public sector is the employer of first choice for many Jordanian youth. A closer examination of public and private sector jobs reveals that the choices made by youth are not so much driven by a "culture of shame" but by important differences which make opting for a public sector job, or even waiting in line for one for several years, quite rational. In terms of entry level wages, benefits, working hours, and working conditions, the public sector offers a much more attractive package to many young job seekers." This could explain some of the issues pointed out during this seminar and mentioned below, whereby the perception of a proper job often coincides with the general characteristics of public sector jobs and influences young people's expectations and choices.

The rapidly expanding Jordanian labour pool represents a substantial challenge for the local economy, which needs to create sufficient jobs to absorb the ever-increasing number of new entrants (young people for the most part) into the labour market every year. Inspired by the Arab Spring, young people have been at the helm of street protests since January 2011, demanding jobs, constitutional reforms and greater freedoms. The Jordanian Government

Youth unemployment by education (2008)



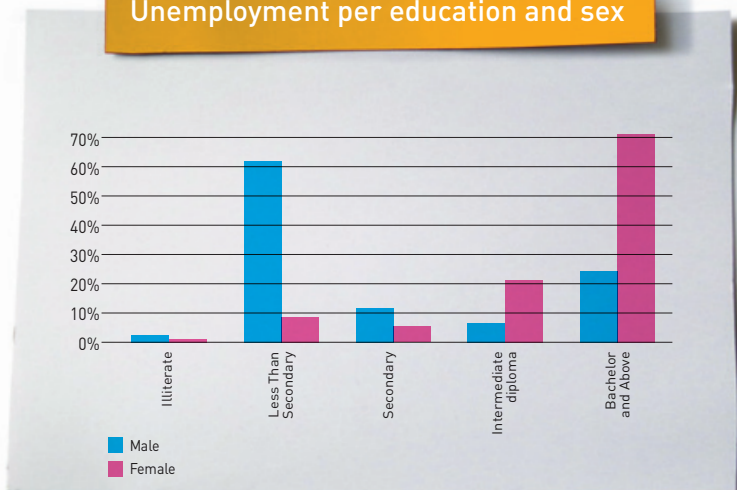
responded swiftly to this challenge, with youth employment figuring prominently in all recent national policy documents. Jordan's Executive Development Plan 2011-2013, the National Employment Strategy¹⁷, which was formally endorsed in May 2011 and the Jordan National Agenda 2006-2015, all address the structural employment problem in Jordan, calling for policies and programs to amplify job creation with a focus on youth employment and enhanced social protection coverage for all. They all also call for the gradual reduction in the number of migrant workers and their replacement by Jordanian labour.¹⁵

Demands for freedom of association, employment and decent jobs have featured prominently in the recent wave of unrest sweeping the country, with more than 550 labour-related protests and strikes taking

place in Jordan since January 2011. The Government has in turn placed employment and jobs for Jordanians at the heart of its response, formally endorsing a National Employment Strategy in May 2011.¹⁵

Many programmes and projects are being launched or prepared to address youth participation and youth employment. These include, *inter alia*, programmes on technical and soft skills, micro-finance and entrepreneurship, job matching and job placement. While all these programmes address clearly perceived needs, they mostly relate to the supply side, focusing primarily on youth employability. Many also function independently, with little national coordination and coherence between the different projects, so that the desired impact at national level remains limited.¹⁵

Unemployment per education and sex



Main challenges for young people today in Jordan

According to the 2000 Human Development Report on Youth⁵, most young Jordanians live in stable families and safe communities, have unprecedented access to basic health, education, shelter, and other services, and enjoy much more wide-ranging life choices than any previous generation. Yet whenever young people are given their say, they tend to stress negative perspectives or trends, reflecting the issues of greatest concern to them. Today, when asked about youth's most pressing challenges, the majority of youth workers interviewed clearly identify unemployment as the biggest challenge for young Jordanians.

As noted before, Jordan is the country in the region where young people have the highest levels of education while at the same time being one of the countries with the highest youth unemployment rates². Many are of the opinion that the high unemployment levels are the result of a mismatch between current educational offers and labour market demands. Others believe that the reason is the reluctance of young people with higher education qualifications to accept jobs that they feel do not correspond to those qualifications.

It was not a coincidence that the young women interviewed also felt that the main challenge facing them was access to a proper job. This is supported by the low rate of young female participation in the workforce. Many interviewees believed that this was due to cultural reasons and specifically referred to the many stereotypes still influencing modern day society's view of women's competences to access certain job areas.

In general, both young women and men felt that the current cost of living in Jordan is also a burden since living costs are too high. This cost, coupled with the difficulty of finding a job (which could lead to instability in the longer term), is dragging many young people into poverty situations. Many also said that even when they do find a job, salaries are too low to ensure financial and social autonomy. The centralisation of work opportunities and good education facilities in Amman or other major cities such as Irbid or Aqba is another problem highlighted by young people. This centralisation in turn leads to higher living costs for those wishing to access education, training and jobs.

The lack of involvement of young people in vocational training was identified by Mr. Mohammad Alawneh, the head of the employment unit at the vocational training institute, as one of the main causes behind the high youth unemployment rates in Jordan. In his opinion, the reasons for this are family pressures and a lack of social recognition of what such qualifications offer, with many young people preferring to proceed with university studies rather than developing their competences and professional skills through vocational training.¹⁶

These findings from interviews and focus group discussions support and further reinforce observations made by international and regional organisations, as well as universities and other stakeholders. It is clear that any youth policy designed to tackle these issues needs to integrate these observations in order to improve the chances of efficiently reducing youth unemployment issues and youth civil society participation.

5. Youth work and youth unemployment

The role of youth work in youth employability in Jordan

As mentioned before, Jordan's political and institutional discourse have focused on youth employment issues and made it a priority. However, coordinated efforts and the inclusion of all the stakeholders is necessary to put this into practice using a more comprehensive and integrated approach. Specific programmes and instruments can then complement each other in a coordinated way, rendering them more efficient in achieving particular goals.

Youth workers in general, youth organisations and organisations working with young people are examples of key stakeholders whose participation is both relevant and irreplaceable. They are referred to in several policy documents as fundamental stakeholders in the implementation of the Jordanian National Youth Strategy, which also ranks the issue of employment of young people as a top priority with concrete, specific objectives in this area. These stakeholders are considered as vital in preparing young people for the job market; increasing the number and variety of youth employment opportunities; increasing the productivity of young people and motivating them to be self-reliant; and contributing to eliminate different forms of discrimination affecting young people in the Jordanian workforce.

This recognition of the role youth work and youth workers can play in promoting and increasing the employability of young people is growing because nowadays, a growing

number of employers and public institutions understand that young people cannot be fully prepared for society and labour market demands by what is on offer in the formal education system. There is a growing need to facilitate complementary skills that empower young people and prepare them to live in increasingly demanding and complex societies.

The discussions during the focus groups and interviews conducted during the seminar revealed that this recognition of the role of youth workers and of non-formal education in better-equipping young people for the labour market has only recently started to appear in the political discourse. While we were able to observe NGOs that had been working for many years in the field of soft-skills development with concrete programmes for the development of young people's competences (thereby promoting their employability and entrepreneurship abilities), we could sense that the awareness of the youth workers themselves that they were key actors in such processes still needs to be developed. Any recognition of the fact that youth workers can definitely help young people to become more employable and also improve their entrepreneurial skills obviously requires a clear investment by public and private institutions in the training of youth workers so that they can better support and coach young people in this field.

Special attention should be given to creating spaces where the providers of traditional formal education - the different levels of public and private schools and universities - can cooperate with youth organisations and NGOs working with young people so that they can develop complementary approaches and specific education programmes together that support the development of young people's

competences and boosts their employability and entrepreneurship potential.

Youth workers could act as a bridge between the different authorities involved, the young people themselves and their communities. However, youth workers can only assume this function efficiently when relationships of trust exist between the various stakeholders and when there is a real integration of youth

workers at every stage in the implementation of such strategies and programmes. This integration necessarily requires cooperation and participation in all stages: during the initial discussions, the design of the programmes and instruments, the practical steps of field implementation, monitoring and evaluation.



Amman, 14th of May 2013, Special evening of the seminar "Youth Work & youth employability in Jordan"

Examples of projects and programmes focusing on youth employment in Jordan

There are currently several initiatives and projects aimed at increasing young people's involvement and participation in Jordanian economic life. While some of these initiatives

are programmes led by government institutions, the examples presented below are mostly projects undertaken by the civil society. Some of them target students while others focus more on women or specific groups of young people with fewer opportunities, supporting their integration into the labour market and, consequently, into Jordanian society.

El Hasan Youth Award (HYA)

This initiative provides Jordanian youth between 14 - 25 years of age with an opportunity to enrol in self-challenging, educational and non-academic programmes in services, skills, expeditions and physical recreation to ensure a balanced development of their personality.

The Skills Program is one of the main activities designed to support the development of entrepreneurial competences in young people, focussing on helping them discover their abilities and interests and develop them. By participating in a system of progressive learning, training, self-assessment and coaching, the participants progress through different levels (Bronze, Silver and Gold) as they master the skills they have chosen to develop. Once they have received the Gold Award, they can opt to learn a new skill and go back to beginner level in that new skill. The range of skills that can be developed is extensive: from arts to communications, life skills such as consumer affairs, democracy and politics, home management, character and appearance, to vocational skills such as carpentry, plumbing, embellishment, etc. *The participant is required to practise the skill for a period of time enabling him to deepen his/her knowledge and proficiency of it.* More than 200 options are listed in the Skills Guide Book available in the programme.

For more information: <http://hyaward.org.jo/main/en>

Leaders of Tomorrow

Leaders of Tomorrow is one of the few youth-led organisations in Jordan whose work focuses on building young people's employability capacity both in Jordan and regionally in the Middle East and North Africa.

One of the activities of the organisation is the management of the web platform FOR9A.COM ("opportunity" in Arabic). By building partnerships with many organisations, centres, embassies and universities in the region, FOR9A is able to provide access for young people to the most recent scholarships, fellowships, lectures, conferences, trainings, volunteer positions, contests, competitions and cultural exchanges. FOR9A provides youth with free and open access to opportunities that build their capacities and opens doors to professional careers, opportunities to increase their mobility and change their life positively as a result. These opportunities are presented both in Arabic and English to ensure wider access. Currently, the website has over 4,000 visitors per day and more than 800,000 page-views per month.

Through the service FOR9A Vitamin, the organisation interacts with Arab youth on a daily basis, providing practical tips and personal career guidance and offering a wealth of valuable information to build Arab youth's employability skills and expose them to capacity-building and educational opportunities.

For more information: <http://for9a.com/en/>

Tamweelcom

Tamweelcom is a non-profit and pioneering microfinance company in Jordan that is committed to fighting poverty and unemployment. It is wholly-owned by the Noor Al-Hussein Foundation (King Hussein Foundation). More than 300,000 clients, 94% of whom are women, have received funding since Tamweelcom began operating in 1999.

Recently, to further focus on youth employment, they signed an agreement with the Youth Business International (YBI) to design and develop programmes that help young entrepreneurs aged between 18 and 35 to launch their business projects. Together with the YBI, they also promote a nationwide business plan competition, followed by a series of training courses, designed to enable participants improve their entrepreneurial and business management capacities.

For more information: <http://www.tamweelcom.org/>

Questscope

Questscope began its work in Jordan 25 years ago. Today it is an international NGO that runs a second chance programme estimated to have already reached 100,000 people who left school early. After dropping out, children are often unable to rejoin the formal system and miss their chance to access a college education or vocational opportunities. The Non-Formal Education (NFE) programme developed by the organisation, in collaboration with Jordan's Ministry of Education, is uniquely designed to meet the specific needs of not only each student, but also of each community in order to help them grow together. The programme has enabled thousands of young men and women who left school early to continue their studies. In addition, Questscope has developed one of the largest civic engagement programmes in Jordan, training 4,000 student volunteers from Jordanian universities to mentor 6,000 young people at risk of juvenile delinquency. Questscope's success in this area led to a joint initiative with the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development and the World Bank, expanding the Questscope mentoring model to every juvenile centre in the country.

The INJAZ Al

Operating in 12 countries across the Middle East and North Africa region, INJAZ al-Arab has its headquarters in Amman and is a confederation of national offices collaborating with corporate volunteers and Ministries of Education to provide experiential education and training to Arab youth in work readiness, financial literacy and entrepreneurship. It also facilitates a mentorship programme for Arab business leaders in order to inspire a culture of entrepreneurship and business innovation among Arab youth.

INJAZ al-Arab programmes provide students with practical business-related skills as part of the regular educational curriculum. It also encourages business leaders to invest their resources in the future of the region's youth and become the reflection of what they want to see in the world by mentoring and inspiring young people to reach their true potential.

For more information: <http://www.injazalarab.org>

Jordan River Foundation (JRF)

The Jordan River Foundation is a Jordanian non-profit NGO established in 1995 and chaired by Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah.

Since its creation, the Foundation has initiated numerous socio-economic projects for women, aimed at providing employment opportunities that in turn enhance their livelihoods. These projects also work towards enhancing women's knowledge and skills in the production of traditional handicrafts and entrepreneurial skills. Such initiatives have already benefited thousands of individuals, directly or indirectly, and today they continue to generate income for vulnerable communities and families across Jordan.

For more information: <http://www.jordanriver.jo/>

International Youth Foundation (IYF)

The organisation runs the programme Youth for the Future (Y4F), formerly known as Youth Work Jordan. This programme is run in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development and the Government of Jordan. Its goal is to encourage youth at risk to take on productive and rewarding roles in society. Through two core programme models, IYF supports youth by ensuring successful transitions to active life, building sustainable community youth hubs and encouraging the development of support partnerships at community level.

Y4F offers comprehensive support, including skills training, mentoring, career guidance, internships and assistance in job placement. The majority of young people helped by Y4F are school dropouts and many have lost hope in their ability to achieve a positive future. In recent years more than 400 youth workers were trained in a range of technical and programme areas that support the effective organisation and delivery of youth services.

6. Conclusions

Young people in Jordan, like in other countries in the region, are facing very demanding challenges. However, in the recent history of the region, there has never been such an opportunity to have young people as key actors in the development of policies to promote an enabling environment in which youth can be a source of economic prosperity and social change.

Jordan's growing population of highly educated young people can use the demographic situation and conditions to improve the living standards and wellbeing of all Jordanian citizens. The renewed political focus on youth in the country is not only an opportunity to invest in young people but also to build strategies with them that will contribute to long term sustainable economic growth.

However, in order to have young people play a central role in the country's development, youth-led and youth-oriented organisations need to be supported and the role played by both the professionals and volunteers working in these organisations - the youth workers - in society recognised.

Youth workers already play a major role and shoulder a great responsibility as a result of their work with young people. Their role is to assist the development of young people's entrepreneurial competences, set up a safe and stimulating environment to nurse their ideas and projects, complement their formal education and prepare them for the realities of the labour market. Through such actions, youth work can definitely be part of the answer to the biggest

challenge facing young people in Jordan today, namely the high level of unemployment.

However, for youth work to be mainstreamed in Jordan, the impacts and importance of this field of action needs greater social and political recognition, especially since we are dealing with a country in which youth currently constitutes the largest population group. There is an obvious need to better equip youth workers by providing them with more qualified training in a way that is accessible to youth workers throughout Jordan and not merely to those living and working in major cities.

As King Abdullah II has said

Tareq Naser: Representative for the private sector and Board member at Young Entrepreneurs Association
Young Entrepreneurs Association :
<http://www.fnst-amman.org/en/index.php/jordn/partners/26.html>

Mohammad Amin Alawneh: Head of Employment Unit at the Vocational Training Centre :
<http://www.thenewvtc.com/about-the-jordan-vtc/>

several times, the greatest present and future asset of Jordan is the country's young people. Therefore, their involvement and participation in the development of the country is crucial in finding solutions to the social and economic challenges of modern Jordan. This can be achieved by means of a clear investment in the youth work field and the development of programmes to improve the competences of professionals in this field. This is will consequently improve the quality of the projects run by and for youth and the overall impact that young people can have on Jordanian society.

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Youth work and Youth unemployment in Jordan



This publication has been edited and financed by the Regional capacity building support unit (RCBS) for Euromed Youth Programme IV dealing with the countries participating in the ENPI South (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia).

The overall objective of RCBS is to support the Euro Mediterranean youth units (EMYUs) in their efforts to ensure an efficient implementation of the Euromed Youth programme and an optimum achievement of results:

- guidance and training activities for EMYUs and project leaders and organisations,
- coordination and synergies between actors and stakeholders (youth in action programme, Euromed platform, etc.),
- visibility and communication.

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Youth work and Youth unemployment in Jordan

Youth work is changing and opening new interesting perspectives for the future. The field of youth work within Meda countries is living strong changes and the role of young people is more and more relevant in the society.

It is the fourth issue of a collection in several languages called «**Youth Work in...**» composed of publications dedicated to youth work in the European Neighbourhood South countries.

This collection aims to support the cooperation within EuroMed area providing a depth reflection about the nowadays issues and challenges in youth work in the Euro Mediterranean context.

Youth work and Youth unemployment in Jordan is the result of a seminar, organized with the coordination of RCBS (Regional Capacity Building and Support Unit for the EuroMed Youth Programme IV) held in Jordan from the 13th to the 18th June 2013 that gave the chance to contribute, during five days, to the overall reflection about youth work in Jordan with a specific focus on unemployment. The specific aim of this study is to supply some new keys for reading the ongoing situation of youth work in Jordan, the challenges, strategies and good practices.

This publication provides:

- an overview about Youth Work in Jordan;
- an educational and pedagogical background of youth work in Jordan;
- some challenges of youth workers for developing projects facing the unemployment of youth in urban and rural area;
- some examples of youth projects and best practices for facing unemployment of youth in the country and supporting their insertion in the labour market.

Download it for free at: www.euromedyouth.net and <http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/>



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