



@UNICEF JORDAN

## CONTEXT

### Youth Economic Engagement

Jordan's young, educated population presents an enormous opportunity to accelerate growth and positive change. Roughly 63 per cent of people in the Kingdom are under the age of 30<sup>1</sup> - and with 99 per cent literacy rate among youth, their unique capacity can be further harnessed to support the ambitious development agenda in the country. However, with one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world (and female youth unemployment being almost triple that of males), this potential remains largely unrealized<sup>2</sup>. Thirty-nine per cent of Jordanian youth aged 15-29 are not in education, employment or training (NEET)<sup>3</sup>, constraining pathways for youth to transition to a productive member of society. The mismatch between the current focus of the education system (and resulting skills of youth) and the needs of the labor market is at the root of this disconnect<sup>4</sup>. Results from a round table carried out between UNICEF and the Jordanian private sector in 2017 showed that the key skills required by employers are communications, problem-solving and other transferrable skills.

## MULTIPLE PATHWAYS AND ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH TO ENABLE TRANSITION TO LIVELIHOODS/ ADULTHOOD

### Enhancing Economic Engagement

Jordan has continuously explored ways to build the technical capacity of young people to support their transition to employment. The private sector in Jordan has a significant role to play in this, as they often see young graduates ill-prepared for work by lacking the necessary transferable and technical skills. Harnessing the dynamic interplay between the private sector and opportunities for skills development is key to unlocking the potential of youth. Win-win solutions entail the private sector directly contributing to equipping young people with such skills, often through a process that entails concurrently learning and working. Different private sector engagement models can be localized based on the geographical needs in Jordan, for example, apprenticeship opportunities can be extended for youth living in rural setting that otherwise would not have access to an educational institution.

Supporting the expansion of the Gig and remote work economy will

provide an outlet for personal and financial growth beyond traditional employment. This would provide opportunities for youth in rural areas, women facing cultural and transportation barriers, and people with limited mobility.

Promoting entrepreneurship is also one of the key pathways for youth economic engagement. Holistic and integrated business development and entrepreneurship support packages, coupled with mentoring and hands-on support, are key to growing and scaling enterprises.

As part of this, facilitating access to credit and finance will foster a generation of change-makers and potential job creators. Young people and the most vulnerable are less included in the formal financial system, hence the importance of increasing their access to credit. As a response to this, in 2018, the Central Bank of Jordan adopted the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) 2018 – 2020. This strategy promotes gender equality in terms of reducing the gender gap in finance which will help unleash the economic potential of women entrepreneurs and women-led enterprises.

The Government of Jordan has also established a network of Employment Offices across the country to match job seekers to employment. Enhancing the services offered through these centers, to include support to young entrepreneurs that would enable the expansion of this critical pathway for youth.

1. Government of Jordan Department of Statistics, Jordan Population and Housing Census 2015: Main results, 2016.

2. UNICEF Jordan, The Situation of Children in Jordan: Fact sheet, October 2018.

3. Amer, M (2018) School to Work Transition in Jordan 2010-16, ERF: Working Paper

4. Centre for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan with International Labour Organization, Ministry of Labour and Government of Jordan Department of Statistics, National Child Labour Survey 2016 of Jordan, 2016.

## IMPROVING DECENT WORK AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES:

The Government of Jordan placed employment and Decent Work at the heart of its National Employment Strategy and has launched the National Framework for Employment and Empowerment aimed at creating 30,000 decent employment opportunities for youth by 2020.

Key actions needed to achieve this agenda include the adoption and implementation of policies that a) promote better work conditions, b) increase the minimum wage (which currently stands at 220JD per month), to be on par with maintaining minimum standards of living, c) non-discrimination and d) equal rights at work. This would also entail extending a minimum level of social security and insurance for all occupations.

Women in Jordan have a critical role in advancing Jordan's economic development. If 25 per cent of women enter the labor force in the next 7 seven years, then Jordan will achieve a 5 per cent year on year GDP growth. Already, more females than males are graduating from University, but this does not translate to more females accessing the labour market. The Government of Jordan has been working to reduce the school to work transition gap and to increase female labour participation and promote retention. The Jordanian Parliament in 2019 passed amendments to the Labour Law

to remove key obstacles that prevent women's economic participation. These amendments endorsed paternity leave and the provision of workplace daycares. In 2017 the flexible working arrangement regulation was issued to allow women and men to adopt flexible working arrangements. However, more needs to be done to support women with access to localized employment, greater access to daycare facilities for the working parents and support with transportations, which is a critical impediment, sighted by many women as the key obstacle to accessing employment.

## UNICEF'S RESPONSE

UNICEF Jordan has been focusing on supporting the employability and economic engagement of youth in Jordan by implementing the national **Pathways to Youth Engagement 2018-2022 strategy**. This entails five approaches to achieving employability, which are underpinned by mentoring and coaching, with the expectation to improve three key outcomes for young people: **transferable skills building, engagement and employment**.

- **SKILLS BUILDING:** Through a nationwide programme at scale, UNICEF equips young people with key foundational, transferable and employability skills, while fostering social

cohesion within communities, to pave the way for more opportunities and an economically active future.

- **ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES:** Providing opportunities to practice and reinforce skills is central to the strategy. Creating engagement opportunities includes providing on-the-job skills training and also the establishment of a platform where youth that are interested in volunteer and engagement opportunities can meet providers of these opportunities and develop partnerships.
- **EMPLOYMENT:** UNICEF also facilitates the final-step for youth to access employment and self-employment (building on the skills and engagement opportunities strengthened as part of the strategy). Support is provided to youth to access technical and vocational training, ensuring a solid link with decent and sustainable employment opportunities.

Based on the lessons learned of supporting women-led social businesses with entrepreneurship development and access to finance and business mentoring in 2018 with positive results, UNICEF aims to increase economic engagement and income generating opportunities for youth through social entrepreneurship, and to foster equitable and sustainable local economic development and community



UNICEF Jordan aims to ensure that every young person is in education, learning, training or employment by 2030.

**GENERATION UNLIMITED:**

### For more information, please contact:

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