



■ Her Majesty meets with youth from East Amman at their YWJ community booth.

YOUTH:WORK JORDAN LAUNCHED UNDER HER MAJESTY QUEEN RANIA AL ABDULLAH'S PATRONAGE

Young People Take the Lead

Youth:Work Jordan (YWJ) was officially launched Feb 23 at the Royal Cultural Center in Amman under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah. Her Majesty joined more than 300 government, business, NGO and youth leaders to celebrate the milestone event. The ceremony itself was a dynamic reflection of what YWJ seeks to accomplish over the next five years: young people taking the lead. Throughout the event, youth participants from YWJ's targeted neighborhoods ran the show. With Queen Rania, USAID Mission Director Jay Knott; President and CEO of the International Youth Foundation (IYF) William Reese, and leaders of the four coordinating NGOs of the program looking on, the youth leaders welcomed the dignitaries, presented a lively and at times humorous skit about their lives and hopes for the future, sang rap songs, and explained the YWJ program's goals and strategies. Their energy and pride filled the room.

YWJ is a collaborative, community-based initiative to promote marketable job skills, improve social services, and expand civic engagement opportunities among some of the most underserved youth in Jordan. With funding from USAID, the International Youth Foundation and Jordan's Ministry of Social Development are working together with leading Jordanian NGOs and local youth to address the needs and aspirations of Jordan's young people in 12 neighborhoods countrywide.

The program offers a comprehensive, holistic approach. "We want to provide marginalized youth with opportunities through training and education ... and work with the private sector to match ready youth with suitable jobs," says USAID Mission Director Jay Knott. Youth engagement is a parallel YWJ focus, explains Her Excellency Hala Lattouf, the Minister of Social Development. "We aim to invest in the positive attitudes and hidden capabilities of the youth, and work hand in hand with

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YOUTH:WORK Jordan

Youth:Work Jordan (YWJ) is a community-based five-year initiative that seeks to improve the life and job prospects of highly vulnerable youth. Through a unique alliance, the **International Youth Foundation** is partnering with **USAID**, the **Jordanian Ministry of Social Development**, and well respected national and local organizations across Jordan to improve and expand community-based social services, with an overarching focus on promoting the employability and civic engagement of Jordan's youth.

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YWJ Small Scale Initiatives Excite Youth, Win Community Support

The Youth:Work Jordan program (YWJ) is based on the philosophy that youth engagement is key to the success of any youth program. Who can articulate young people's challenges and needs better than youth themselves? To reflect this philosophy, YWJ and its partner CNGOs have initiated local youth forums in each of the 12 target neighborhoods to serve as the main platform for involving youth in the design and implementation of YWJ activities.

Beginning in late December 2009, YWJ and its partner CNGOs started to reach out to youth in each neighborhood by posting ads in public places regularly frequented by youth, inviting them to join the cause. Some 400 young people, both male and female, answered the call.

After being introduced to the YWJ program and the role of the youth forums, youth were assigned to identify gaps, needs, and opportunities in their communities. Young people used Polaroid cameras to document the challenges in each of their neighborhoods. Based on the results, youth started to draft and propose projects to address these issues.

To equip them with the necessary skills to move forward with their plans, YWJ and its CNGO partners invited the youth participants to a three-day team-building retreat. Participants shared with each other their concerns and aspirations and worked in groups to further refine and develop their proposals, using the skills and tools they had gained in the meeting to assist them in the planning, implementation, and evaluation process.

As youth laid the groundwork to carry out these small scale community initiatives, known as "quick wins," they developed stronger relationships with members of the community, including their parents, neighbors, friends, and stakeholders from the private and public sectors. Having earned the support of the com-

munity, they were able to leverage donated materials and equipment to complete their projects. Participating youth also gained greater confidence in their own abilities to make a difference. As one YWJ volunteer explained: "We felt so happy that people in the community were interested in our challenges; it made us feel more responsible for helping ourselves and our community."

The following are updates of YWJ "Quick Wins" in each targeted community.

EAST AMMAN

CNGO: Jordan Career Education Foundation (JCEF)

Five YWJ "quick win" projects have been carried out in Jabal Nuzha and Khreibet Souq by 40 volunteers. Examples of projects include:

- Organizing a three-day bazaar at the Greater Amman Municipality to showcase 40 women's handicrafts. His Excellency the Mayor of Amman, Eng. Omar Ma'ani, visited the event to show his support and encouragement.
- Renovating a tunnel under a busy highway to make it brighter, more youth friendly, and safer for local residents to use. The tunnel had previously been used by some youth to engage in dangerous behavior. Given the safety issues, families and school children were often forced to walk across the highway instead.
- Rehabilitating local parks and sports fields

In each project, youth led negotiations with the local municipality and received support in terms of donated space and materials for their projects. One youth called the community service-experience, "challenging, creative, and enlightening."



■ Youth volunteers and community members in Ma'an take a break from their street cleaning project (left).

Irbid volunteers (above) use donated materials to refurbish their local sports club.



■ These young women in Jordan Valley helped renovate the local elementary school.

IRBID

CNGO: Al Farouq Orphan Welfare Society

Sixteen volunteers in Irbid initiated two community projects.

- In Al Shamali, youth have begun work on a local sports club by painting and decorating the main hall and cleaning up the playground. The club administration helped the youth volunteers by donating equipment and materials needed to work on the building and gaining the Governor of Irbid's support for their activities.
- In Al Turkman, youth renovated the local park by adding fresh soil, erecting side walls for protection, and painting the walls and pavement. Community members also got involved by suggesting new ideas for how to make the park more youth-friendly.

JORDAN VALLEY

CNGO: Jordan River Foundation (JRF)

Three YWJ projects have been carried out in Jordan Valley, with 22 youth volunteering to improve their neighborhoods.

- In Mallaha, young people worked with adults to renovate the community's only elementary school, painting the interior and exterior of the building while also installing flooring in the classrooms. "We went to school here and one day our children will go to school here," said one young female volunteer. "We wanted to improve conditions and make it beautiful." Other youth in the neighborhood rehabilitated the park, planting shrubs, installing benches and waste baskets, and creating a playground for neighborhood children.
- In Waqqas, young people built and painted a wall around the local cemetery, which was located across from an elementary school and had become a gathering place for local youth to engage in risky behaviors. Said one volunteer: "We learned that if there is a problem in the community we want to find a solution." In both neighborhoods, youth gained support from parents and local officials who encouraged them to continue their volunteer activities.

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community-based civil society organizations to engage them in voluntarism initiatives in order to enhance community values and the sense of belonging."

Immediately after the launch ceremony, Her Majesty and other select dignitaries visited young people who had set up booths outside the main hall to showcase their YWJ volunteer activities. Many of the booths had posted "before and after" photos showing what they had accomplished in their neighborhoods. Youth eagerly explained to visitors that they had initially taken photographs to document the areas of need in their communities — broken walls, garbage strewn parks, dangerous alley ways — and then met with partner organizations to prioritize their volunteer projects. Small grants, often complemented by donations from the community, supported about 17 such projects in the target neighborhoods. Most of these youth had never participated in volunteer activities, and they smiled when they described how hard they worked and their sense of personal satisfaction.

While small, these initial "quick win" projects help illustrate the many challenges facing Jordan's at risk youth, as well as their enthusiasm to be part of the solution. For example, one targeted area, Irbid's Shamali community, is home to 125,000 residents who live in extremely crowded and impoverished neighborhoods that offer limited social services and very few jobs. Due to lack of space and resources, young people have no place to play sports, promote cultural events, or meet together. Suicides among frustrated and alienated youth are on the rise. Supported by YWJ, young people are now renovating a youth center — the only one in the area — by painting the walls, cleaning up trash, and fixing up an outside area for use as a basketball court. "We have so little to do here, so this project gives us a chance to help the community and have a place to play and put on cultural activities," says one youth volunteer. "We're proud of what we've done."

Now with YWJ officially launched, the IYF Jordan staff is busy getting the program up and running. Two year grants have been signed with each of the four coordinating NGOs (CNGOs) for a total of \$6 million. These CNGOs include the Jordan River Foundation, Jordan Career Education Foundation, Al Farouq Orphan Welfare Society, and Jordan Hashemite Fund for Development. They, in turn, will sub-grant to community-based organizations in each of the target neighborhoods to implement the projects. "The excitement is building every day, as grants are finalized, community programs are launched, and we begin to tap into the enormous potential of our targeted youth," says Rana Al Turk, Country Director for YWJ. "We have high expectations for making a real difference in these communities over the next five years."

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MA'AN

CNGO: Jordan Hashemite Fund for Development (JOHUD)

Three projects have been conducted in the Abu Bakr and Al-Shamiyah districts of Ma'an, with 41 youth participating.

- All the projects involved improving the community by cleaning streets, painting walls, and planting trees. Community members and outside observers said how impressed they were that the youth were taking the initiative to improve their communities. Some offered to help by spontaneously bringing the volunteers meals as well as water, coffee, and tea while they worked.

RUSSEIFEH

CNGO: Jordan Hashemite Fund for Development (JOHUD)

Over 30 youth participated in two YWJ projects in Russeifeh.

- In Awajan, youth have taken an empty piece of land that was donated by the Municipality and begun to repurpose it for a public park. The youth mobilized 40 other community members to help clean the land and then worked with local vendors to obtain materials such as soil, fertilizer, and a fence. They will soon plant trees and install benches and a playground for the park. Youth said how surprised they were at the community's support, adding that while they had worked hard they were proud of their accomplishments.
- In Al-Musheirfeh, youth painted the walls of three neighborhood schools. From the beginning, they led the process themselves, collecting offers from suppliers and purchasing the necessary materials and equipment. They will soon showcase their creativity by painting murals on the walls.

ZARQA

CNGO: Jordan River Foundation (JRF)

A total of 34 volunteers in Zarqa participated in two community projects.

- In Massoum, youth renovated the local cemetery, clearing the chambers of debris and painting Quranic verses and prayers on the chambers and the cemetery walls. Youth also painted the sidewalks of some of the adjacent streets. Many of the young people, especially the females, were participating in volunteer activities for the first time.
- In Hussein, youth have begun to renovate and clean three local schools and paint the outside gates.

News & Events

February 2010: IYF Signs Grant Agreements with Youth:Work Jordan's

Coordination NGOs. In the presence of Her Excellency Hala Lattouf, the Minister of Social Development, and USAID Mission Director Jay Knott, IYF signed grant agreements with its Jordanian NGO partners (CNGOs): the Jordan River Foundation, Jordan Hashemite Fund for Human Development, Jordan Career Education Foundation, and Al Farouq Society. These organizations will oversee all program activities in the YWJ target areas.

March 2010: YWJ Concludes Training of Community-Based Organizations. YWJ's four CNGOs concluded a week-long orientation training for 63 community-based organizations (CBOs) interested in participating in the YWJ program. Participants received in-depth information about the program and learned how to improve their proposal-writing skills and how to attract and incorporate youth into their programs.

April 2010: YWJ will solicit proposals from service providers for programs that address specific needs that have been identified across YWJ's target communities in the areas of non-formal education, IT training, life skills and Business English.

Youth Voices

"We worked very hard [on this tunnel], but we learned that you can take something ugly and make it beautiful."

– Khreibet Al Souq youth

"We want to be part of dealing with the challenges of our neighborhood."

– Waqqas youth

"We were surprised. We discovered we had hidden skills that we can use. This project made us believe more in ourselves."

– Waqqas youth

"Give us a chance and we'll never let you down."

– Ma'an youth

"You can't believe how ugly the floor was and how beautiful it is now." (School renovation project)

– Mallaha youth

"Each one of us hopes for a better community, but you have to work really hard. This project increased our leadership and confidence and our belief in our own capabilities."

– Mallaha youth

"We realized we could convince other people to join us. We learned to identify what we needed. The planning part was new to us. But it was the most fun."

– Russeifeh youth