



YWJ PREPARES YOUTH FOR TOURISM SECTOR

Over the last decade, Jordan, along with ten other Mediterranean countries, benefited from the highest growth rate in foreign tourism globally, accompanied by an additional increase in domestic tourism. While tourism waned in 2011 as a result of the global economic downturn and events associated with the Arab Spring, the sector remains strong with 20,000 tourism jobs expected to be created over the next two years.

To leverage this opportunity, YWJ has joined with the Jordan Federation for Tourism Association (JFTA) and the Jordan Hospitality and Tourism Education Company (JHTEC) to launch a public/private sector initiative designed to provide unemployed youth, ages 18 to 30, with the life skills, technical training, and career guidance services they need to be successful. Over the long term, the initiative seeks to employ 2,000 young Jordanians.

Already, more than 120 young men and women have been trained for tourism-related jobs through YWJ's partnership with JHTEC. Over the course of three months, trainees develop the basic skills needed to assume roles in kitchen operations, housekeeping, and customer service. Prior to their JHTEC training, the youth also receive basic English and life skills instruction through YWJ.

The tourism and hospitality industries account for 12-14% of Jordan's GDP.

To ensure participants have the support they need to succeed, JFTA connects youth to on-the-job training and employment opportunities through its hotel network. More than half of the youth who have graduated from the hospitality training to date have been placed in jobs at major hotel chains and holiday resorts.

Nasser, a 20-year-old participant from Southern Shouneh excelled in the training, securing a job with JHTEC's sister company, the Century Park Hotel. "I remember my first day working at a hotel," says Nasser. "I was intimidated by everything, but with the support I received through YWJ, I learned to

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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.

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overcome challenges at work.” According to Nasser, his new job represents an opportunity to contribute to the growth of an expanding segment of the economy. He not only earns an income but experiences other parts of the world through the tourists he meets.

While growth in tourism-related employment opportunities is encouraging, youth are frequently reluctant to pursue jobs in the sector for reasons related to religion (e.g., they are unable to serve alcoholic drinks); gender restrictions, with females often unable to work from home; and the stigma associated with the ‘culture of shame,’ with tourism jobs considered by youth and their parents as too menial. To counter this negative perception, YWJ actively engages the parents of participating youth to garner their support and is working with its partners to raise awareness of career opportunities in the tourism and hospitality trades.

Over the long-term, YWJ seeks to expand demand-drive employability models such as this to help meet the vocational training needs of employers, particularly in the industrial sector, that have a large number of vacancies.

INTERVIEW: SENATOR MICHAEL NAZZAL

Below His Excellency Senator Michael Nazzal, President of the Jordan Hospitality and Tourism Board and Vice President of the Jordan Hotels Association, shares his views on tourism trends and opportunities.



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What factors are contributing to growth in the number of visitors to Jordan?

The Kingdom has long been a transit country and host to many nationalities. In addition to people traveling to Jordan from within the Gulf region, we have visitors from Europe, the U.S., and Asia coming for pilgrimage and to trace historic sites and events. Did you know that John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the Jordan River and was beheaded in Jordan? Moses' brother also died here. Jordan has a lot to share with four Greco Roman cities, natural bromine gas in the Dead Sea, and a number of eco parks for relaxation. In total, there are about 18,000 tourist sites in the nation. Many people prefer to come here rather than go other countries that offer more manufactured destinations.

What is the outlook for tourism in 2012?

With Syria and Lebanon closed to tourists, Jordan is expecting a flood of tourists, mainly from the Gulf region. The tourism and hospitality industries account for 12-14% of Jordan's GDP. By 2015, this number is expected to increase to 15-16%.

From your experience of working with YWJ, why is it critical to create opportunities for marginalized youth?

These youth represent significant untapped potential for the nation. If we do not succeed at employing them, they are more likely to be on the streets with little hope for their futures.

The tourism field is a perfect place for youth. It is diversified and offers a suitable venue for achieving their goals in a rapidly changing environment with new information every day and diversity through the customers they meet. For those that persist, they will get to travel and see the world in addition to earning an income.

What should be done to promote the tourism field, now dominated by foreign labor, among young Jordanians looking for work?

Parents should be involved in this process. We need to ask ourselves why parents do not allow youth to work at hotels. Parents need to accompany youth on field visits to hotels. They need to see what their children will be doing, so that they can understand there is no shame in these jobs. The parents of these youth live in poverty pockets, meaning that most of them have probably never been to a hotel, nor do they know about the potential within this field. Once the parents get involved, they are more apt to allow their children to work.

Hospitality runs in Jordanian blood. We just have to find a way to nurture what we do naturally. Our role is to give youth the right information so they can decide for themselves.



STEP-BY-STEP AN ENTREPRENEUR REALIZES HIS DREAM: MOHAMMED'S STORY

"I was daydreaming one day and saw the name 'Al Nabuti Air Conditioning' sparkle in front of my eyes and I knew I had to start a business," recalls 20-year-old Mohammed. Two years later, his dream is now a reality. Located in the quiet village of Al Ma'mounieh on the outskirts of Madaba, Mohammed's business is housed in a modest space with bright white walls and a pale blue façade.

"A million mile journey must begin with a single step," affirms the fledgling entrepreneur. "I can hardly describe the feeling I had when I assembled an air conditioner for my first client two months ago."

A critical step in his journey to becoming self-employed was Mohammed's decision to enroll in the Youth:Work Jordan (YWJ) program. Through YWJ, Mohammed developed life and workplace skills, and completed a one-month technical training in how to install and repair heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. The training, offered through the LG-Al Asalah Academy, concluded with an entrepreneurship workshop.

Following, Mohammed applied for and received a 2,000JDs loan from the "Youth from the Neighborhood Loans" project implemented by YWJ and the Development and Employment Fund. With the loan, he purchased the equipment he needed and rented a space to work out of for a year.

His two-month-old business already has loyal customers who refer him to potential clients. "I spend an hour every day after work cleaning my equipment, and that's what makes my customers come

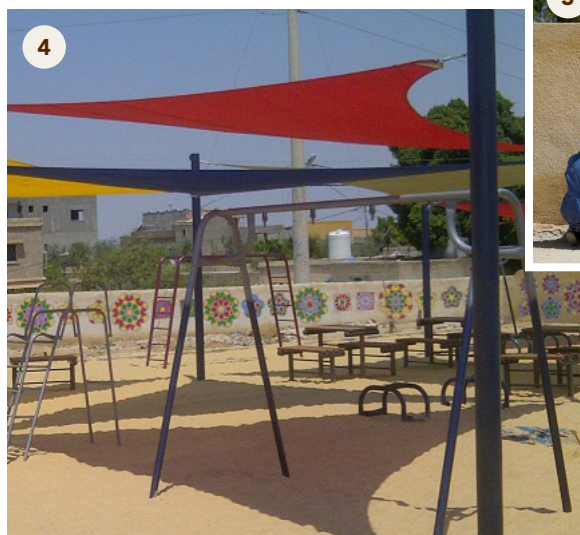
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YWJ YOUTH Serving Their Community

Promoting the active civic engagement of youth is a key pillar of YWJ's efforts, with more than 4,600 youth having contributed to the development of their communities since the program's inception. Below, youth and community members participated in the restoration of the Um Kalthoum park and playground in Southern Shouneh. Efforts began with the painting of a colorful mural on the surrounding walls. As part of YWJ's commitment to creating youth-friendly services, a plan was then developed for the construction and maintenance of new recreational facilities through a partnership between YWJ, Rawdah CBO, the Shouneh governate, and the Ministry of Education.



1. YWJ participants encourage dozens of school children to volunteer their time in renovating the Um Kalthoum playground.
2. "The most important lesson I learned during the mural project was to not wait for others to give my town a facelift but to take initiative for myself," said YWJ participant Yousef Al Aydi.
3. Colorful mosaics representing Jordanian culture now decorate the park's walls.
- 4, 5. The more youth-friendly park now features a seating area and recreational facilities, including a football field.



News & Events

USAID Mission Director Visits Mafrq

USAID Mission Director Beth Paige met with youth and toured YWJ activities in the city of Mafrq (right, top). Her visit began with a meeting with 15 youth engaged in activities led by YWJ's local implementing partner, the Queen Zein Al Sharaf Association. The youth discussed their challenges and concerns, and how the program is helping them to realize their potential.

"It is very important for us to hear about the Youth:Work Jordan program and its impact in increasing youth's job readiness in Mafrq," said Ms. Paige. "We are glad to support youth, to develop their skills, and give them a chance for a better future."

The tour included a visit to a formerly abandoned park that was rehabilitated by YWJ volunteers, the launch of a youth IT center, and the opening of a gym. These services all contribute to the program's long-term goal of creating an enabling environment for youth.

YWJ Youth Honored at Graduation Ceremonies

More than 3,600 youth have graduated from YWJ programs since 2009, including more than 100 young Jordanians from Sahab, Mafrq, and Southern Shouneh who were recognized for completing a three-month hospitality training delivered by the Jordan Hospitality and Tourism Education Company (JHTEC) (right, second top). To date, more than 60 graduates have secured hospitality-related jobs at various hotels around Jordan.

In May, Her Royal Highness Princess Sana' Asem awarded graduation certificates to 180 youth from Mafrq, Irbid, Sahab, and Southern Shouneh who had completed life skills, social entrepreneurship, IT, and secretarial training programs offered through YWJ. The program has provided these out-of-school youth with the opportunity to enhance their employability skills and create a new path for success.

YWJ Partners with Vocational Training Corporation

On May 28, YWJ, the USAID Jordan Tourism Development Project Siyaha, and the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (right, second bottom) to enhance the career empowerment approaches at three vocational training centers in order to create youth-friendly spaces that provide young Jordanians with an enabling environment and a strong pedagogical system.

Youth Share Their Views Through "Let's Talk"

Let's Talk, a YWJ initiative launched in late 2011, provides youth with a safe space to openly discuss their opinions on topics of importance to them in the presence of an expert facilitator. Since March, 19 sessions have taken place in YWJ communities on topics ranging from drug abuse prevention and awareness to personal status law to promoting civic engagement and entrepreneurship.

And in May, more than 200 YWJ youth from Sahab, Southern Shouneh, East Amman, Russeifeh, Mafrq and Zarqa attended the first national "Let's Talk" session facilitated by prominent morning radio show presenter Mohammad Al Wakeel (right, bottom). Over two hours, the youth shared their concerns with Mr. Mohammad, who listened to their challenges and provided guidance.



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back," says Mohammed. "They always tell me I'm clean, tidy, and friendly — all things I learned from the YWJ life skills training." After just one month of operation, Mohammed was able to cover his monthly loan payment in addition to generating a small profit that he uses to support his family and older brother who is studying abroad to become a doctor.

The YWJ entrepreneurship training he took equipped Mohammed with marketing knowledge that he applies through posting adverts for his business on websites and in local newspapers. Mohammed is one of more than 915 youth to have completed entrepreneurship training through YWJ and one of 60 to establish a business.