



Wilton Park
Youth Dialogues

Provisional programme

Youth employment in the Levant: opportunities and challenges

Tuesday 16 – Thursday 18 October 2018 | WP1611

With 60% of the population under thirty, the long-term stability, prosperity and peace of the Middle East has never depended so much on the region's young people. However, too many young people are being denied the opportunity to contribute to their communities, with the region having the highest youth unemployment rate in the world. The latest Arab Youth Survey puts it at around 30% - more than double the global average. In the Levant, unemployment rates for young people can be even higher, with Jordan, for example, at 36% and female youth unemployment there rising to 41.8%. Young people themselves identify youth unemployment as the top joint issue facing the region, along with the rise of Daesh.

Education and training which adequately prepares young people for growth industries is a significant challenge. There is frequently a disconnect between education and skills and the jobs that are available now or in preparation for the changing world of work through mechanisation and automation. Moreover, in many Arab countries, more education does not lead to better prospects. In Egypt, 34% of university graduates were unemployed in 2014, compared with 2% of those with less than a primary education. There is a sense that the social contract which saw governments promise jobs and security in the region has been broken, with little indication of what might replace it.

This has fostered a deep sense of disappointment among youth, frustrated upward social mobility and exacerbated feelings of marginalisation. The issue is further exacerbated by the fact that young people are often excluded from decision making processes that affect their lives at community and national levels. Indeed, many young Middle Eastern youth are trapped in 'waithood', as the lack of employment forces young people to delay key rites of passage, such as marriage, compounding their dependency on their parents.

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Alongside the challenge of youth unemployment lie the critical security concerns of instability and radicalisation in the region. Against this backdrop, tackling youth unemployment is seen to be crucial, not only to promoting the human rights of young people, but to building peace and prosperity across the Arab world.

This Wilton Park event will focus on youth employment in the Levant and seeks to hear from young people about credible solutions that might combat the crisis. It will also explore how governments need to respond to regard the youthful population of the region as their greatest asset - as an opportunity and not a threat.

In partnership with Mercy Corps, The Asfari Foundation and in association with the WANA Institute, Jordan, the Institute of Development Studies and the UK Department for International Development.

This event is part of the 'Wilton Park Youth Dialogues: powering the future' series which focuses on young people, with a view to generating a positive and action-oriented debate, looking at youth ambitions and opportunities in relation to employment, education, security and peace.

(Speakers invited and themes proposed * denotes to be confirmed)

Tuesday 16 October

1200

Participants arrive and buffet lunch available

1330-1445

Welcome and opening remarks

Alison Hilliard

Programme Director, Wilton Park

HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan (video message)

President, Royal Scientific Society (RSS); UNESCO Special Envoy for Science for Peace, Amman

Omar Rifai

Director-General, WANA Institute, Amman

Hunter Keith

Country Director, Jordan, Mercy Corps, Amman

Alistair Burt (video message)

Minister of State for the Department of International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London

1445-1515

Tea/coffee

1515-1645

1. Imagining the future: the dynamic nature of employment

How is the work landscape changing for young people? Where will the new jobs be and what will they look like? How will technology and emerging innovation impact the job market in the future? How do mind-sets need to change to embrace the future of work and prepare young people for the next wave of mechanisation and automation? What does decent work for young people look like now and in the future? What should young people expect from their governments and from their education to equip them for the realities of work in the 21st century?

Omar Tahboub

General Manager, Bayt.com, Amman

Zeina Saab

Founder and Director, Nawaya Network, Beirut

Marwan Juma

Chairman of the Board, Kinz For Information Technology Company, Amman

1645-1730

Photograph followed by tea/coffee

1730-1900

2. How are young people currently being prepared for this new world of work? Challenges and opportunities

This session will explore the scale of youth unemployment in the Levant, looking at barriers to youth participation in decent work, as well as emerging opportunities. What is driving the high youth unemployment rate in the region and what regional differences are there? Is this about employment or about bringing about a culture of change and challenging the status quo?

And, how are young people currently being prepared for the changing world of work? What is working and what is not?

Marwan Muasher

Former Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Jordan; Vice President for Studies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Board Member, Asfari Foundation, Amman

Hanan Khader

Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Hello World Kids, Amman

Mona B El Zoghbi

Expert on Youth and Community Engagement for Sustainability, Beirut

1930

Reception followed by dinner

Edward Oakden

British Ambassador to Jordan, British Embassy, Amman

Wednesday 17 October

0700-0800

Walk (optional)

0700-0845

Breakfast

0830-0845

Facilitator briefing (for session 5 facilitators only)

0900-1030

3. Hearing the success stories of young people: sharing innovative solutions and best practice

There have been many successful stories of young people becoming entrepreneurs in the Middle East. Some of these have come from the refugee communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, with start-ups developing technologies to ease the hardship of young displaced Syrians.

This session shares innovative solutions and best practice lessons from these and other success stories. What has worked and why? And, how can this be scaled up to impact the job market?

Ziad Barouni

International Consultant; Storytelling Coach; Founder at SnackableNews and Start Innovating, Amman

Valentina Primo

Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Startups Without Borders, Cairo

Saddam Sayyaleh

Director, I Learn, Jerash

1030-1100

Tea/coffee

1100-1230

4. Barriers to success: what needs to change?

What needs to change to replicate success stories? What are the unique challenges that stand in the way of preparing for a new world of work? How much of an obstacle is the current system of government and the traditional Arab social contract?

What role does the state have to play, as an employer but also as a regulator and an enabler of the private sector? What is the responsibility of the state to build market competition and attract investment? Does the work culture need to change and how much of an obstacle are national employment quotas and a dependence on employment in the public sector? What is the role of government in fostering an environment where entrepreneurship and innovation is facilitated and encouraged? How can promoting entrepreneurship and competitiveness sit with the challenges of providing security and social inclusion? And, what is the changing role of the private sector and entrepreneurship? What role do donors have here in influencing change and attracting investment and growth? How could this event feed into the ongoing UK - Jordan partnership on creating quality jobs and fostering entrepreneurship for Jordan's current and future generation?

Samir Murad

Minister of Labour, Ministry of Labour, Amman

Jan Wimaladharma

Private Sector Advisor, Department for International Development (DFID), Amman

Nader Kabbani

Director of Research, Brookings Doha Center, Doha

1230-1400

Lunch

1400-1515

5. Breakout sessions: breaking the impasse

Sessions 5 and 6 are two 75 minute breakout sessions on different themes, allowing participants to attend two different topics. These sessions will allow reflection on the discussions to date, as well as further assess ideas put forward for change, including addressing inclusive economic development, reconstruction and the role of donors.

Engaging and enabling the private sector**Facilitator: Tareq Abu Qaoud**

Programme Manager, Better Work Jordan, International Labour Organization (ILO)
Amman

Women's economic empowerment**Facilitator: Frida Khan**

Senior Specialist, Gender Equality and Non-discrimination, Regional Office for the Arab States, International Labour Organization (ILO), Beirut

How to build bridges between education and work**Facilitator: Abed Shamlawi**

Director of Strategic Development, Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA), Amman

Promoting entrepreneurship through education and skills training

Facilitator: Ziad Barouni

International Consultant; Storytelling Coach; Founder at SnackableNews and Start Innovating, Amman

Using new media and technology to create jobs / using technology to drive impact and scale

Facilitator: Mohammad Obaidat

Director, Queen Rania Center for Entrepreneurship (QRCE), Amman

1515-1530

Tea/coffee

1530-1645

6. Breakout sessions: breaking the impasse (second round)

1645-1715

Tea/coffee

1715-1830

7. Feedback from breakout groups and discussion

1900

Reception followed by dinner

Thursday 18 October

0700-0800

Walk (optional)

0700-0845

Breakfast and checkout

0830-0845

Facilitator briefing (for session 9 facilitators only)

0900-1030

8. Creating jobs for young people on the move: refugees, migrants and temporary workers

Many young people in the region are refugees, migrants or temporary workers. How can their employment needs be catered for? Are there examples of success to learn from? And how can the tide of those young people who leave the region in what's been called 'the brain drain', be encouraged to stay or even be attracted back to their home countries?

Shahera Youssef

Director of Work, FHI 360, Washington, DC

Saleem Najjar

Chief Executive Officer, Sharqi Shop, Amman

Lydia Bassaly

Head of Recruitment and Translation Services, NaTakallam, Cairo

1030-1100

Tea/coffee

1100-1200

9. Breakout groups on next steps: what needs to change?

Group One

Facilitator: Roula El-Rifai

Senior Program Specialist, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa

Group Two

Facilitator: Marc Sommers

International Consultant, Washington, DC

Group Three

Facilitator: Barik Mhadeen

Researcher, Human Security, WANA Institute, Amman

Group Four

Facilitator: Rebecca Davies

Skills for Youth Employment Advisor, Department for International Development (DFID), London

1215-1230

10. Evaluation survey

Completion of online survey

1230-1330

11. Feedback, conclusions, commitment and next steps

1330

Lunch

1430

Participants depart

This is a preview programme and as such may be subject to change.

This is an invitation only conference.

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