

JORDAN

Tackling Youth Unemployment

Building Capacity to Integrate “At Risk” Youth into Mainstream Society

Despite efforts to promote growth and significant investments in education by Arab countries, a large segment of Arab youth continues to remain outside of the mainstream of economic and social life.



This approach complements, rather than replaces, traditional sector-based investments in, for example, education.

The Project

In 2002 a JSDF grant was provided to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and implemented by the NGO Questscope. The project aimed to help working children and youth earn income during the day while attending evening classes to develop marketable skills. Certified public school teachers help the youth earn a proficiency certificate (10th grade level) and subsequently, vocational certification.

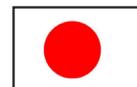
Vocational graduates also received business management training, enhancing future employability and livelihood options. Other learning elements included: coaching in life, social and coping skills, to help the youth integrate into society and to foster increased self-confidence and improve relations with family, friends and authority figures.

Unprecedented changes in the demography of Jordan (60% of the population under 18 years of age) and rapid urbanization (80% urban up from 20%) over the past 30 years have resulted in a dramatic increase in child poverty and vulnerability.

In 2006, the Middle East and North Africa (MNA) already exhibited the highest youth unemployment rate in the World (around 25%) as well as the largest gender gap in unemployment. Recent estimates suggest that as a result of the economic crisis, youth unemployment in the Middle East may have increased by a further 4% in the intervening years. Many unemployed youth wait for

two to three years for their first position and young women often face the greatest difficulties securing a job.

Relevant research and experience shows that traditional single-sector policies and interventions offer only partial solutions to these challenges. Unless a multi-sectoral youth-focused approach is established and interventions are developed that deliver a sizable critical impact at the community level, the needed results will not materialize.



The project had three components:

Enhancing Capacity of Referral Institutions: This component aimed to improve the capacity of community based referral organizations to deliver services to “at risk” children and youth, and allow them to access a supportive system of assistance providers oriented to their specific needs. These referral NGOs required training and guidance as they established effective networks that served the target group. The NGOs were also provided assistance on how to understand the importance of inter-organizational linkages and how to establish such linkages for the benefit of the child.

Establishing a Mentoring Mechanism: This component was to establish a mentoring program for the most “at risk” children/youth, to be carried out by the communities in close coordination with Juvenile Unit staff of MSD.

Enhancing Volunteerism: This component aimed to enhance the effectiveness of the mentoring component by establishing a coordination mechanism where community leaders/members, together with local MSD Juvenile Unit staff (for continuity purposes), would recruit, train and assist volunteers as mentors. This would stimulate and support volunteerism and community participation as a major component of ensuring coverage for all “at risk” children.

Results

This grant made it possible for state and social institutions to become more responsive to “at risk” children/youth and their families and communities.

The policy of the Government of Jordan, which underpinned the project, was to integrate institutional roles for the well-being of children and youth. This mandated Government Organizations, NGOs and the private sector to collaborate to promote a normal family atmosphere for each child, especially for those children at-risk and those who were wards of the State and/or delinquents. The policy further sought to support the family (decrease vulnerability) as a first line of defense against child labor, delinquency, child abuse and substance addiction. Jordan recognized education as a guaranteed right (formal or non-formal) for each child and aimed to increase the percentage of those completing primary education and reduce the dropout rate. The provision of non-formal education programs was a policy goal providing dropouts with learning and vocational skills. An additional

Project Data

- Implementing Agency: *QUESTSCOPE*
- Grant (TF050947) Amount: *\$0.994 million*
- Implementation Period: *10/16/2002 to 04/01/2005*

goal was reinforcement of the quality of non-formal education programs and introducing the concept of self-learning to enable students to continue educational and vocational training. Development of innovative education and evaluation techniques was also a priority.

The project developed two innovative approaches to respond rapidly to these needs: (i) a mentoring approach that provided a robust means of advocacy for children and created a supportive and effective social linkage for children outside of the government structure, a key feature for rehabilitation into mainstream society by age 18, and (ii) a “bottom up” approach that changed the institutional-social environment of “at risk” children.

A critical element in the success of the project was the active cooperation of the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) with other stakeholders, such as referral agencies and communities. Another unique feature was the involvement of former “street kids” in planning and delivery of services and activities.

Mentoring - the mentoring program was established and effectively helped build one-on-one relationships between the “at risk” child and the mentor, who was able to get to know the child/youth and steer him/her

towards appropriate educational choices. Although it was initially anticipated that 2,000 at-risk children would benefit, the directors of the six participating Centers of the MSD Juvenile Division all adopted the mentoring approach and were able to benefit over 12,000 children. In addition, the mentoring approach was incorporated into the working strategy of the MSD, and three key committees (referral, volunteer and implementation) were included in the official structure of the Juvenile Division. Going forward, this will contribute greatly to the institutional sustainability of mentoring as an effective approach to the problems faced by at-risk children.

Aimed at providing appropriate educational options, a “Street Education” program based on the Paulo Freire Education Model (PEM)¹ was developed. This assists school dropouts to study towards their 10th grade equivalency certification. Since the

Who is “at risk”?

(definition agreed with the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development (MSD))

- Children/youth between 10-18 years of age

Characterized by one or more of the following factors:

- from broken families
- youth, or a close family member, in trouble with the law;
- irregular schooling or withdrawn from school;
- compelled to earn income at an early age, working in the streets or in physical labor;
- early unprotected sexuality/sexual abuse;
- involved with substance abuse.

introduction of the new methodology and certification, an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 school dropouts (between the ages of 10-18) have benefitted and diversified their training and employment opportunities.

In 2007, Jordan's Ministry of Education (MoE) authorized this Non-Formal Education (NFE) Program as the official program for alternative 10th grade certification. This is a unique Government-NGO partnership and the first certification program for children who cannot compete in the formal system. There is interest in making further policy changes as a result of the successful integration of school drop-outs. New changes may, for example, allow youth to continue in secondary education after completing 10th grade equivalency. So far, 98 percent of those who have taken the 10th grade proficiency test have passed and the cost for each child is around US\$350 per year. This program undoubtedly emerged as one of the most successful outputs of the project.

Monitoring & Evaluation - Throughout the implementation period a participatory methodology was used to monitor and evaluate changes in at risk children/youth - in their lives, in their interactions with communities and institutions, the effectiveness of inputs and, the suitability of transformation processes. In 2004, an external evaluation was undertaken, aimed at assessing the impact of the government's capacity to change the environment for disadvantaged children. Oxford University also carried out a research study in 2009. Both studies showed that Jordan had made significant progress in reintegrating "at risk" children into mainstream society, and reducing alienation and violent behavior. It was also noted in the Oxford study that benefits were broad-based and, for example, young "mentors" may have gained even more than the "at risk" children. It was noted that, "JSDF was a turning point for MSD and Questscope."

Sustainability and Scale-Up - The JSDF Program was a pilot and only around 10% of eligible children and youth were assisted during the project period. The capacity building process (including the

1. PEM is based on the concept of restoring children through the learning process, moving through stages of: dialogue, knowledge building, awareness creation and development of critical thought. PEM assists children to go beyond literacy, as they begin to describe how they will make changes in their lives to reach their emerging personal aspirations. They become aware of their rights and their responsibilities to enjoy those rights, which leads them towards reintegration into mainstream society.

Maher grew up wondering if anyone really loved him.

His father died when he was small, leaving Maher's mother penniless and totally dependent on his grandfather. The grandfather's anger drove him to wish that he could die. So, at age 13, he took to the streets in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Amman.



Maher dropped out of school at age 15 to work. Long hours, low wages and dangerous jobs marked his days. His nights were spent rollerblading in deserted streets with a gang, drinking alcohol and getting high on glue fumes. Picked up by the police several times, he was well on his way to a criminal record.

When the Questscope volunteers first met Maher, he had not eaten a meal at home in over a week. He was sleeping under bridges, in tunnels and on benches in parks. Some of his street buddies had told him about a place where he could make some new friends and be safe.

Without knowing it, Maher had stumbled upon one of the Questscope non-formal education classes for dropouts. The teacher welcomed him. The other guys welcomed him. Nobody cursed him, or pushed him around. He fit in like he had always been there.

That is when the real Maher turned up: hungry to learn, hungry to love and be loved, hungry to belong. He is studying in our education program to complete high school, and he has made plans to shoot for the previously impossible goal of becoming a software specialist. He recently told one of our volunteers at an educational event, "You are my real family."

<http://www.questscope.net>

mentoring program and mainstreaming of NFE) has just begun to operate in a comprehensive approach and much remains to be done.

Jordan was the first country in the MNA Region to launch a bottom-up mainstreaming process for child protection that focused on building institutional capacity and establishing working collaborations between Government and Non-Government Organizations. The Government expressed its appreciation and strong commitment to continue the approach developed under the project and build strong community connections and participation. Many of the initial results and approaches were subsequently embodied in two cross-cutting policy documents - The National Plan of Action (NPA) for Childhood 2004-2013 and the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) 2004-2006.

A \$4m World Bank Loan "Social Protection Enhancement Project" followed the JSDF project and borrowed many of the JSDF grant practices, matched by \$6m of Government support. Other donors, including the European Union (EU), UNICEF, and UNDP were also mobilized to support the

approach. The EU earmarked \$1 million for the non-formal education program.

Morocco, Yemen and Lebanon are also in the process of replicating this program.

Evaluation and Lessons Learned:

A number of important lessons emerged from this project:

- Growing pressures caused by demographic change, urban poverty and the exclusion of disadvantaged children's issues requires non-traditional responses.
- A demand-driven (i.e. solely by government) model is not an adequate prototype for action or service delivery at the scale required.
- Innovative mechanisms should incorporate NGO's as an integral part of the solution and the learning cycles of governments and donors.
- Mechanisms for best practice models for NGO-Government cooperation should be developed and funded.
- NGOs' roles should include proposing policies that are rights-based in relationships, referrals and institutions.

A Comprehensive Approach is Required for Success

- This grant made it possible for state and social institutions to become more responsive to "at risk" children/youth and their families and communities. This was accomplished through a combination of three pro-social approaches:

1. **Locality Development** focused on increasing insight and capacity at the neighborhood/institutional level for improvements desired by children/youth and families.
2. **Collaborative Linkages** (partnership and referral organizations) were fostered by using experts, specialist institutions and agencies that were responsive to the situation of "at risk" children/youth and supportive of improving the role of children/youth.
3. **Social Action** was involved in generating appropriate responses by authorities that were the creators of urban environment through policy and implementation practices. This included: support for building the assets of "at risk" children/youth and their families; providing a range of economic, institutional and social opportunities to which this group previously had no access; ensuring that they were restored to an effective educational experience (staying in school, returning to school, and non-formal education).

Agencies and staff responsible for disadvantaged children are often marginalized within the government service - they typically receive minimal training, minimal resources, and can suffer from low morale. Their Invisibility to policy-makers can intensify the impact of these disadvantages. These are often exacerbated by low levels of compensation or opportunities for training outside their job descriptions and time commitments. The issues of compensation and incentives for public servants who invest time and effort in testing or mainstreaming new approaches cannot be ignored.

The importance of selecting appropriate CSOs -

Among the reasons for the success of Questscope in this project were, (a) The NGO shared the same goal with the project stake-holders, (b) It had the same commitment (especially to the Bank Task Team Leader) to overcome all possible difficulties; (c) There was an open and frank channel of communication with Questscope, and; (d) Questscope had multiple contact points with the Bank related to the delivery of services to disadvantaged children.

Using a CSO to achieving grant objectives -

This contributed to a strong community-based model for rehabilitation and integration while involving government and other non governmental institutions in the design and implementation process. The JSDF project involved multiple stakeholders was very successful in bringing institutions that did not usually work together to the table.

How to Improve the effectiveness of JSDF in dealing with CSOs -

- Establish an appropriate time scale to accomplish grant purposes. Institutional change such as the modified role of referral organizations and volunteers and the integration of this into Ministry practice is not practicable in 2 years.
- The NGO's role should be clearly defined as either proposing solutions, or enacting solutions mandated by others.
- All parties should act within guidelines for roles and responsibilities.
- NGO's should be facilitated to focus on highest standard/quality of implementation, especially when reorienting government and national agencies to a new paradigm of collaboration.
- NGOs tend to have an advantage in carrying out pilot projects and experimenting with new ideas.
- Contracting relationships with NGOs are different from grant relationships and may fail to recognize some of the strengths of NGOs.

The Japan Social Development Fund -- The JSDF is a partnership between the Government of Japan and the World Bank that supports innovative social programs in developing countries. JSDF grants are executed by NGOs/CSOs and local governments and implemented at the community level. JSDF projects meet four basic requirements: (i) they target and respond to the needs of poor, vulnerable, and disadvantaged groups, and aim to achieve rapid results, (ii) they are innovative and pilot alternative approaches or partnerships, (iv) they use participatory designs and stakeholder consultation to design inputs and as an integral part of monitoring and evaluation, (iii) they empower local communities, local governments, NGOs/CSOs through capacity building and rapid feedback of lessons learned, and (v) they focus on scale-up potential, replication and the sustainability of interventions.