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**Middle East Educations, Research,
Training, and Support (MEERS)**

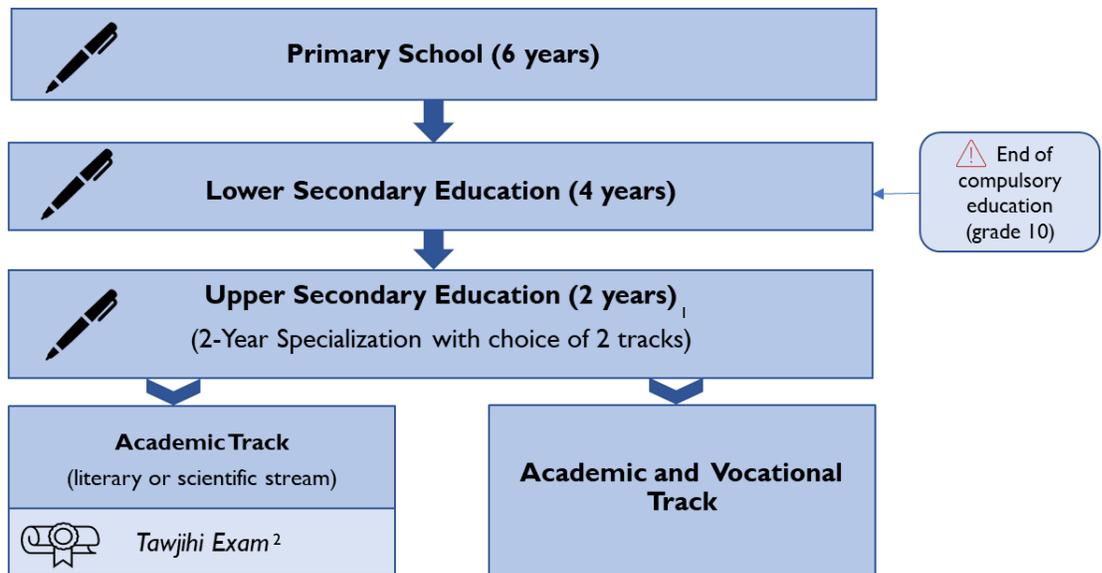


JORDAN

This brief is part of a larger study investigating interventions that support lower and upper secondary school aged youths' transition through school to higher education (HE), to technical and vocational training (TVET), and/or to prepare youth (including out of school youth of secondary school age) to pursue career and livelihood pathways in 11 selected countries across the MENA region. This research does not examine the quality of education, but rather, the knowledge and skills needed to make successful transitions. Therefore, this study focuses on support that wraps around general and technical education curricula.

PROGRESSION AND DECISION-MAKING POINTS

GENERAL EDUCATION



TECHNICAL EDUCATION. Students can choose to enroll in applied vocational training provided by the Vocational Training Corporation, as an alternative to secondary education. Applied vocational training focuses on preparing students for the job market through apprenticeship programs.³ Vocational education offers six types of schools: commercial, industrial, agricultural, nursing, hotel services, and home economics. Each of these fields focuses on different subjects in Grades 11 and 12. Students can continue into community colleges under Al-Balqa' Applied University for a two-year course of study leading to receive a Technical Diploma.⁴

CAREER COUNSELING. The education system in Jordan has an established tradition of counseling services in secondary education, in TVET as well as general education, delivered by trained counselors. Several universities offer an undergraduate counselor training program, and some of the modules focus on careers guidance related issues. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for the counselor network in schools and in Vocational Training Institutes. The responsibilities of the Jordanian counselors working in both secondary schools and technical vocational institutes is, however, quite broad. Dealing with students' behavioral and personal issues takes priority over careers

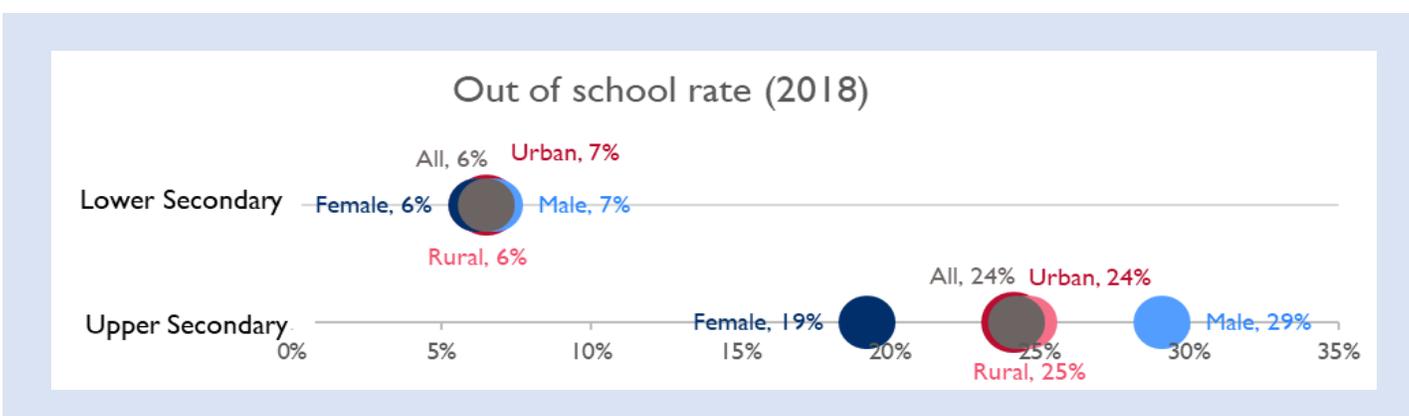
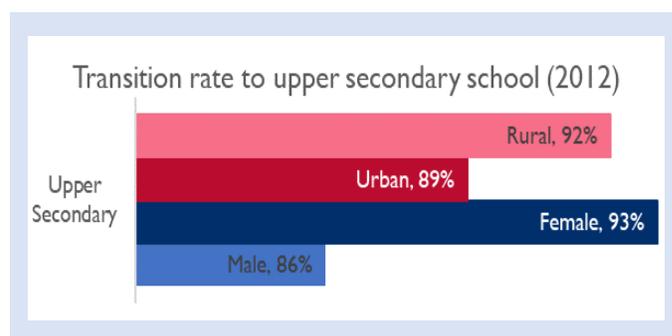
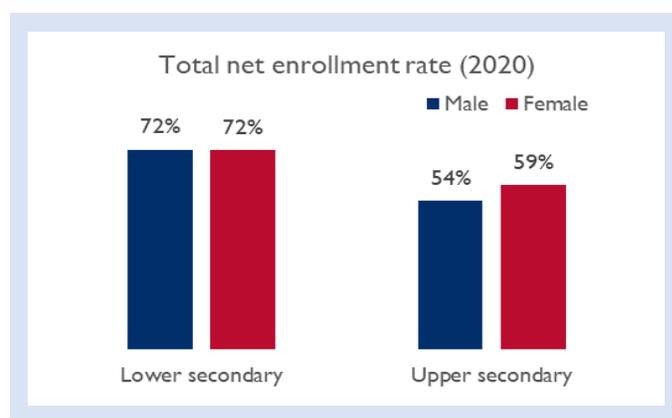
guidance issues. Starting in 2011, when the Jordanian government initiated the E-TVET reform following the Al Manar initiative, two strategic development plans — the Jordan National E-TVET Strategy 2014–2020 and the Jordan 2025 Blueprint — have incorporated the development of careers guidance provision. Several projects in cooperation with international donors e.g., *Building a Quality Career Guidance System in Jordan – A Step at a Time* (Canada), *Jordan Workforce Development* (USAID), the *Jordan Competitiveness Program* (USAID) have been targeting the improvement and modernization of career counseling services. The development of tools and resources necessary for the delivery of careers guidance at all levels of the education system is an integral part of all these projects, one of them being a web portal that aims to provide users with accurate information about educational and occupational pathways to enable them to make informed decisions concerning school to work transition.⁵

Career counseling services are also needed by the large number of displaced Syrians who, since the start of the civil war in 2011, have taken refuge to Jordan. The Syrian refugees in Jordan do not have the same educational attainment levels as Jordanians — only 15 percent of the refugees aged 15 and over have completed secondary education compared to 42 percent Jordanians of the same age group.⁶ The refugee population has difficulty accessing the employment market. The Jordanian government, with assistance from international donors, is exploring avenues of support, such as agricultural cooperatives, offering a package of services for jobseekers, including job matching and careers guidance.

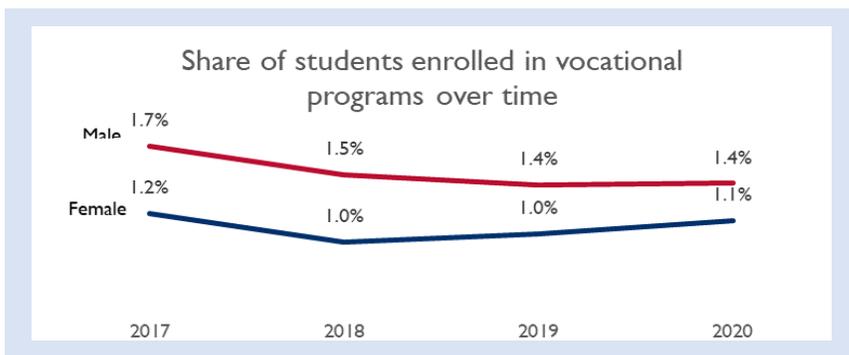
Another initiative based on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), is trialed by the Jordan Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) in the construc-

tion sector and is designed to support transition to employment of both refugees and Jordanian workers who have not completed formal education. These initiatives are not specifically aimed at secondary education-aged youth.⁷

KEY STATISTICS. In Jordan, the net enrollment rate for upper secondary school is almost 20 percent lower for males than enrollment for lower secondary school, and 13 percent lower for females. Only 86 percent of males make the transition from lower to upper secondary school, compared with 93 percent of females. Similarly, upper secondary school-aged males are the group with the highest out-of-school rate at 29 percent, compared to 19 percent of females of the same age.¹⁰



TVET STATISTICS. The Government developed a National Employment Strategy for the 2011–2012 period, which included mid-term provisions to scale up school-to-work transition programs and reform TVET.¹¹ However, the share of all students enrolled in vocational programs has remained low over the last four years, hovering at around 1 percent for males and females.¹²



Numerous **systems-wide factors impact youth transitions and the interventions designed to support youth through this period.** Notable strengths and weaknesses related to the general and technical education systems include:



Strengths and Weaknesses of General and Technical Education Systems

Strengths

-  Education is high on the Royal Court agenda; the King initiated the Jordan Education Initiative: a multi-stakeholder partnership model to support education reform.
-  The Government of Jordan is open to partnerships and involvement with projects launched by NGOs or international donors. For example, World Bank and other donors are investing heavily in education reform.¹³
-  Women are pursuing advance degrees at large number, diversifying male-dominated fields. According to the UNESCO more than 60 percent of students in the natural sciences, medicine, dentistry and pharmacy are female; for engineering females comprise 28 percent, and 45 percent of computer science students.¹⁴ Despite this, educational gains have not translated to an equivalent increase in female participation in the labor force.¹⁶

Weaknesses

-  There is a huge mismatch between education outcomes and labor market needs. For example, many private sector Small and Middle Enterprises (SMEs) are operating in the informal sector with little or no mechanism to feed inputs into the education outcomes.
-  Jordan's education system emphasizes memorization, and less critical thinking. Jordan is ranked 109 out of 162 countries in the 2019 Human Development Index.
-  The school system is under pressure to meet the Syrian refugees' needs, e.g., many schools work double shifts due to insufficient capacity at schools. Teachers are limited with those teaching morning shifts recruited and paid at the central level and those in afternoon shifts working without formal contracts.¹⁵
-  Jordan has a strong culture of shame towards the TVET sector: many youth are pressured by their parents or community members to pursue general education despite their own interests.

Macro-environment factors impact the lived experiences and decision making of secondary school-aged youth, including the political and economic context, conflict/crisis, demographics, environmental constraints, etc. A selection of key factors include:



Opportunities and Threats of the Macro-Environment

Opportunities



Regional economic initiatives, like the Abraham accord, benefit Jordan given its location and human capital strengths.



Green economy and green jobs are a necessity due to the severe water shortage and limited energy resources, which presents an opportunity for the education system, in particular TVET, to scale training and job creation in “green” sectors.



Jordan has a very young population with 63 percent under the age of 30. ¹⁶



There is strong political leadership eager to reform in education, embed TVET, and deeply embed career counseling into the education system.

Threats



Very few women participate in the workforce. An estimated 86 percent of women are absent from Jordan’s work force. ¹⁷



The population is growing due to high birth rate as well as immigration: government cannot meet the needs in education and employment for large young population.



Limited natural resources, paired with fast population growth, presents imminent threats to youth livelihoods today and in the future.



Many youth are entering the workforce with irrelevant skills, particularly lacking social and emotional skills, combined with a very weak private sector unable to supplement training.



Jordan ranks 131 out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index, which assesses progress towards gender parity. ¹⁸

Interventions targeting the secondary school age group in Jordan focus on:

VOCATIONAL, FORMAL & INFORMAL EDUCATION. Programs support the MOE’s reform to shift into a knowledge economy. Training opportunities include social leadership, entrepreneurship, paths to employment through starting new businesses, and enhancing work readiness. Programs facilitate the provision of formal and informal education and vocational training to marginalized children who are at risk of child labor. Other programs integrate participatory learning, empowerment, and academic growth into the education system for in-school and out-of-school youth. Activities include training and counseling, recreational activities, and engagement with families and community-at-large.

MARKET, JOBS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. Programs provide professional development, credentials, and a database for “school-to-career” matching. Capacity building for school counselors and students to identify job opportunities in the local labor market and enhance skills are designed to help bridge the gap between the school-acquired knowledge and in-demand job market skills. Efforts are underway to raise awareness of personal and professional competencies to facilitate entry to the job market either as qualified employees or potential business owners.

SOCIAL PROTECTION, TRAINING & SOFT SKILLS. Programs offer packages of integrated social protection services including soft skills, structured child protection services, and support learning services for marginalized children and youth. Programing targets refugee and host communities, and mobile centers that reach informal communities. Work ethics, professional mindset trainings, entrepreneurship training, English, and IT courses are offered to at-risk youth and other youth, to prepare them for the actively hiring market sectors, such as food processing and hospitality. Programs use technology to enhance career development by offering six months of training followed by three to five months of on-the-job training.

The following tables provide a non-exhaustive **list of general education and TVET-focused interventions targeting secondary school-aged youth in Jordan.**

KEY GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION AND FOUNDATIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

USAID Education Reform Support Program (ERSP)

Component 2: Save the Children: School to Career and Life Skills through Sports Programming

- Supported the MOE's reform efforts by implementing the second phase of ongoing Knowledge Economy.
- ERSP project was organized into four component areas: early childhood education; youth, technology and careers; professional development and credentialing; and data use for decision making.
- One main youth component of the project was scaling up the school-to-career program to 330 schools to give students the skills they need to participate productively in the workforce.
- Capacity building for counselors, who help students identify job opportunities in the local labor market that align with their skills and interests.¹⁹

INJAZ - multiple phases with USAID support since 1999

- Aimed to enhance the skills of youth and increase their participation in the economy to help bridge the existing gap between the knowledge acquired through education and the skills required by the job market. For example, by raising awareness of personal and professional competencies, and supporting youth to enter the job market as qualified employees and business owners.
- Multiple programs in Jordan such as, We are Social Leaders (WASL); My Entrepreneurial Project (MEP); My path to Employment (PME); Company Start-Up Program (CSP); and The Work Readiness Program.²⁰

UNICEF Makani "my space" platform

- Offers a package of integrated social protection services, including life skills, structured child protection services, and learning support services for marginalized children and youth.
- Operated more than 200 Makani centers across Jordan, including in refugee camps, host communities and mobile centers that reach informally tented settlements.²¹

USAID Youth with Potential Jordan

- Dated program (mid-2010s) that aimed to develop practical training and on-the-job skill development, endeavoring to long-term employment for youth.
- Focused on soft skills, work ethics, and a professional mindset among 2,000 at-risk Jordanian youth to prepare them for the market in the field of food production and hospitality. Technical training implemented through the Vocational Training Corporation.²²

MENA Youth Employment Strategy (MENA-YES), U.S. Department of Labor

- Program built linkages with private sector to determine needed skills, then provided demand-driven training, which covered financing, market development, business management, and entrepreneurship, to prepare youth for specific labor opportunities.
- Provided both technical training and work-based apprenticeship and internship placements and connected youth with credit opportunities.
- Not exclusively focused on secondary age youth, targets youth aged 15–25, but emphasized women and disadvantaged youth.
- Operated by Global Communities in Jordan, Lebanon, and Yemen.²³

USAID Non-Formal Education (NFE) Program

- MOE-certified two-year program that integrated participatory learning, youth empowerment, and academic growth, and targeted out-of-school and at-risk youth. The program formally ended in 2018.
- Activities included training and counseling, recreational activities, and engagement with families and the community-at-large.
- The NFE certificate, which is officially recognized by the MOE, provided entry to vocational training and facilitated a pathway to formal education.²⁴

KEY SECONDARY-LEVEL TVET AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

ILO Decent Jobs: Upgrading Informal Apprenticeships in Jordan

- The Upgrading Informal Apprenticeships in Jordan pilot was conducted by the ILO in collaboration with the International Youth Foundation (IYF).
- Program operated two main phases: six months of basic training, which included technical and workplace core skills (life skills, business English, and IT), followed by three to five months of on-the-job training.²⁵

ILO Know About Business (KAB) Program - Jordan

- Pilot test of KAB entrepreneurial skill development curriculum with young Jordanian women and men enrolled in vocational high schools and community colleges.
- Creates awareness around enterprise and self-employment as a career option for trainees.²⁶

USAID Workforce Development and Enterprise Support Project

- Focused on creating a demand-driven workforce development system leading to increased private sector employment for women, youth and those living at or below the poverty line.
- Integrates career guidance, new certifications for TVET professions, and pilot "Innovation hubs" at TVET centers. Operational until 2018.²⁷

USAID Jordan Youth for the Future (Youth: Work Jordan)

- Focused on soft skills, employability, and entrepreneurship skills. Also provided youth-friendly services, supported youth civic engagement, and impacted youth employability models, practices, and policies. The program operated between 2009–2014.²⁸

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