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.

**TECHNICAL EDUCATION.** The final two years of secondary education include TVET secondary schools. TVET education is provided in technical and vocational schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBG), run by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and certain Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs). There are more than 15 secondary industrial schools providing TVET in agricultural, commercial, hotel, home economics, and industrial spheres. The Ministry of Labor and Ministry of Social Development operate Vocational Training Centers — including those targeting marginalized groups such as, early school leavers, people with disabilities, people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and released prisoners. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) additionally offers vocational training programs to prepare skilled and semi-skilled workers in a variety of vocational fields, but these programs are available only to children of refugees. NGOs also offer a wide variety of TVET programs covering many areas such as sewing, weaving and secretarial services for women. WBG also has several private sector training centers that deliver TVET capacity-building and training programs.²
CAREER COUNSELING. Transitioning from education to work is a challenge for youth in WBG and it is difficult to find direct evidence of career guidance activities, though the need for services is clear from reviewed literature and key informant interviews (KIs). There is limited provision of online career guidance and job support, for example through the regional Ta3mal website; however, where it is available, it is generic in nature, and the reach of online services could not be determined based on reports. Career guidance in the vocational education sector is considered a key factor in TVET reform. Services are available to students from some TVET institutions and to adults outside of the education system in one-stop shops as part of the transformation of employment offices being supported by regional chambers of commerce. However, these services do not specifically target secondary education. Funds to support employment office reforms came from national-level budgets, rather than short-term project funding, making their investment potentially more sustainable in the long-term. Additionally, for populations they serve, UNRWA has a system to follow up and track the employment status of UNRWA Vocational Training Centers (VTCs) and UNRWA Education Science Faculty’s graduates.

KEY STATISTICS. As of 2020, the total net enrolment rate (the ratio of children of official school age who are enrolled in school to the population of the corresponding official age of school) was 99 percent for secondary school-aged girls, while the rate for boys was 95 percent. Comparatively, only 69 percent of boys were enrolled in upper secondary school. The following graphs highlight a significant drop between lower and upper secondary school, particularly for male students.

The out-of-school rate was the highest for upper secondary school-aged boys, at 26 percent, and those living in rural areas at 24 percent.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS. Only a small percentage of total students are enrolled in vocational programs, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (UIS), but that percentage is steadily increasing. As of 2020, about 3.8 percent of male students are enrolled in vocational programs, while 2.9 percent of females are enrolled. Data from the evaluation of the European Union (EU) supported the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)-implemented TVET project in WBG have shown that supported TVET institutions in Gaza are reporting employment rates in the range of 60 percent to 80 percent among graduates six months after graduation.
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**
- Teachers and parents are aware of the need to boost the TVET industry.
- Growing support for digital transformation for better education delivery.
- STEM education is booming in Palestine, which may supply more skilled workers.
- There is strong desire towards improvement and reform in education.
- Newly established TVET Commission (2021) mandated by the President; will work on a TVET law and strategy; as well as on unifying the accreditation system among other priorities.

**Weaknesses**
- Continued conflict, especially in Gaza, interrupts schooling. A study done by GIZ showed that the conflict reduced the probability of passing the final exam, test scores, and university admission rates.
- Two parallel education systems exist (UNRWA and the Government). However, a new TVET Commission should unify these systems (see Strengths).
- There is lack of public trust in the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its education system.
- Enrollment in secondary level TVET is low, and relatedly, there are few apprenticeships or other work-based learning opportunities. TVET is viewed as a less desirable education option than general education.

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

**Opportunities**
- WBG is a new emerging market in information technology (IT) outsourcing.
- Increasing IT literacy could be leveraged to provide career guidance using digital technology.
- There is exposure to advanced education systems in the surrounding countries, especially Israel.
- Strong culture of education.

**Threats**
- There are limited resources to invest in education.
- Lack of political horizon reduces youth interest in education.
- Education outcomes and labor market are mismatched: educated youth are more frustrated due to high unemployment. For example, there are gaps between new rising industries (irrigation, car technicians for modern cars) and what education institutions are offering.
- The Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs) sector is weak in absorbing educated youth.
- There is a strong culture of pressuring youth to pursue engineering and medicine degrees and less of STEM and TVET education.
Interventions targeting the secondary school age group in WBG focus on:

**JOB MARKET MATCH.** Programs focus on secondary age youth but expand to reach up to college graduates, with the aim to prepare them for the job market and/or to help future entrepreneurs launch a business. They highlight collaboration with educators, employers, and families to prepare youth for the job market. They offer work readiness, on-the-job training, and entrepreneurship upskilling, and also emphasize preparing, connecting, and matching students to the job market to generate livelihood opportunities for unemployed youth.

**DEVELOPMENT & LEARNING.** Programs emphasize reaching out-of-school youth to enhance learning outcomes, including a focus on providing social and emotional learning and helping youth to build a positive identity. Additionally, programs have been designed to create positive experiences for in and out-of-school youth, facilitate learning outcomes through extracurricular activities such as sports and career counseling, and enhance the quality of the curriculum by making it more relevant to the labor market.

**PREPARE & UPSKILL.** Programs offer safe spaces for out-of-school youth to develop life skills, offer careers counseling, and promote digital skills. Others support a network of youth centers to equip youth with life and employment skills and link them with the job market.

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

### KEY GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION AND FOUNDATIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

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<tr>
<th><strong>USAID Partnerships with Youth (PWY), Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education</strong></th>
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<td>- Operates Youth Development Resource Centers (YDRCs), which provide youth with different trainings, careers counseling, and promotes information technology (IT) skills.</td>
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<td>- New iteration of the program, Positive Youth Engagement (PYE), targets marginalized and vulnerable youth ages 10–19 by providing them with a menu of activities, resources, and opportunities to improve their psychosocial and mental wellbeing and to effectively contribute to social and economic development and engage with their communities. The new model of YDRCs operate as safe hubs for youth learning, leadership, and innovation.</td>
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<th><strong>USAID School Improvement Program (SIP), AMIDEAST</strong></th>
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<td>- Supports vulnerable schools in the West Bank and East Jerusalem by enhancing classrooms and school facilities in at least 50 schools, developing the schools’ teaching and learning and implementing extracurricular activities such as sports and career counseling.</td>
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<th><strong>USAID Youth Entrepreneurship Development (YED) Program, IYF</strong></th>
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<td>- Targets youth aged 14–29 to prepare them for the job market and helps entrepreneurs start their businesses.</td>
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Education For Employment: Palestine Job Placement & Entrepreneurship, Pathways to jobs

- Prepares youth and matches them with the job market across the MENA region, aiming to create livelihoods opportunities for unemployed youth in the MENA region.
- Network in nine countries across the region to match youth job seekers, from all genders, with the job market, after equipping them with needed life and employment skills.
- Works with educators, employers, and families to improve their attitudes and to better prepare youth for the job market.\(^\text{17}\)

CITATIONS

3. Ta3mal. Home.
8. Net enrollment rate: the number of children of the age of a particular level of education that are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.
11. UIS. (2020).
15. USAID. (2014). WBG Education Development Program