

# Experiments to Improve School-to-Work Transitions among Young Graduates in Jordan

Tara Vishwanath  
MNSED

# Project Design

- Three main components:
  - financial incentives
  - Training for graduates aimed at improving employment prospects for youth in the private sector
  - Training for “gender- friendly” work environment for firms
- **First two components are implemented this year and designed to facilitate rigorous evaluation**

# Components

- Component 1: Jobs voucher
  - Pays 150JD per month for up to 6 months for every job placement with eligible firms
  - Aimed at improving information on both sides through the job experience
  - Subsidizes on-the-job-learning to facilitate school-to-work transition
- Component 2: Employability skills training for graduates
  - Lack of employability skills considered to be one of the key barriers to school-to-work transition in Jordan.
  - Interview skills, professional work-place habits, business communication, leadership and team work skills.
  - Training will emphasize interactive methods as opposed to lecturing
- Component 3: “Gender Friendly Environment” training for firms: Encourage firms to recruit women proposing simple ways of making work environment safe and appropriate to women

# Target population

- The intervention is aimed at community college graduates.
  - These are girls are from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds since better off students go to Universities
  - The unemployment rates for this group are particularly high 30-40%
  - Labor force participation is extremely low ( discouragement)
  - There is some indication that elements of discrimination, cultural factors and skills mismatch are at play
  - 900 graduates are expected to benefit from the job voucher, training or both in 2010. (70% female)
    - 300 get job vouchers only; 300 get training only; and 300 get both vouchers and training; 450 is the control group
  - We aim to add 900 will be added in 2011 conditional on funding

# Challenges in Design

- Challenges in Design
  - Lack of clarity on most important factors and mechanisms responsible for youth unemployment
  - Access to data and rigorous studies difficult (common problem across the MENA region). Many studies are qualitative and evidence is anecdotal.
  - Employment stifling labor regulations
  - Compatibility of design with cultural norms

# Challenges in Implementation

- Challenges in Implementation
  - Tight deadlines. Time sensitive target population. Interventions must be executed around August-September due to the academic cycle.
  - Implementation initiated in May:
    - Initiated an awareness campaign among the potential beneficiaries
    - Completed a baseline survey
    - Planning to implement the training in September
    - Aiming to initiate job voucher component with a monitoring system by September
  - Governance of the community colleges was a “big” challenge: turnover of senior administration, uncertainties of exam schedules and dates, etc.

# Lessons Learned in Early design and Implementation

- **Do not assume anything:** collect and process as much information as possible to identify the best possible intervention for impact
- **Manage expectations:** - Maintain credibility and reputation
- **Build consensus from the start:** A multi- ministerial steering committee ( education, labor, chamber of commerce and industry) vetted all ideas from design to implementation plans. Ultimately crucial for sustainability
- **Engage various stakeholders:** Task force created for the pilot was very useful for trouble shooting, vetting design issues etc.
- **Tremendous internal support essential for swift execution:** Continued financial support remains a challenge for MENA .

**Big Thanks to the Jordan Team:** Abdalwahab  
Khatib, David McKenzie, Nithin Umapathi,  
Michele Zini

