

Education and Support for Small Businesses Can Unlock Arab Youth Potential

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[Arabic](#)

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- Arab youth possesses the power and potential to change its fate, as well as an entrepreneurial spirit.
- Tackling crippling unemployment will require a change in mindset: many youths still believe the public sector is the best route to employment.
- Educational reform is key: from teaching young people problem-solving and entrepreneurship to mentoring, training and apprenticeships.
- Governments must support small businesses and cut red tape, while the private sector must offer apprenticeships and invest in organizations that train young people.
- More information about the Meeting here: <http://www.weforum.org/MiddleEast2011>

Dead Sea, Jordan, 23 October 2011 – Fulfilling the employment potential of Arab youth will need educational reforms, support for small businesses and private sector engagement, said H.M. Queen Rania Al Abdullah of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at the World Economic Forum Special Meeting on Economic Growth and Job Creation in the Arab World at the Dead Sea in Jordan today.

“Partnering with academia, NGOs and the private sector could reposition the Arab world as a hub of creativity and innovation. We have within our people all the potential and power to change our fate,” she told participants in a plenary session on Addressing the Employment Challenge.

About one-quarter of young Arabs are unemployed, and the statistic is even higher among women, she said. That costs the region about US\$ 15 billion, cripples communities, hinders development and frustrates an entire generation.

Although many young Arabs possess a dynamic entrepreneurial spirit, the belief persists that traditional public sector jobs are the best route to stable, well-paid employment.

“We have to re-engineer the expectations of our children, instil in them the belief that there are no limits to their aspirations,” she said. Education must be reformed so that young people learn the skills required by the job market: problem-solving, teamwork, communication and entrepreneurship.

Governments have a role in clearing red tape, while networks of investors must get involved with innovative funding for schools and start-ups and by offering internships and apprenticeships. “When we create one entrepreneur, they create three or four new jobs, sparking a chain reaction that seemingly does the impossible: create something out of nothing,” said H.M. Queen Rania. “We can all do more to encourage young people to take risks, to teach our children to see and foresee the next big opportunity, to nurture the next generation, to break assumptions and confound expectations,” she added.

The Queen praised organizations supporting young entrepreneurs, such as INJAZ Al Arab, Jordan’s

INJAZ Al Arab's Senior Vice-President Soraya Salti said industry-specific courses must be introduced and the private sector must come to the table with suggestions of skills that are needed and investment for organizations that train youth. Salti is a Co-Chair of the Special Meeting. "This generation of Arab youth are so inspired and so capable. They've done the impossible politically; we need to empower them to do the impossible economically," she said.

Governments can play a role in enabling and removing red tape, but they should not invest, said Habib Haddad, Chief Executive Officer, Wamda, United Arab Emirates, a Co-Chair of the Special Meeting and a Young Global Leader. Private equity and micro-venture capital is the key to supporting start-ups.

Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Brussels, warned against competition between the public and private sectors. Partnership between the two on mega-infrastructure projects could create many jobs. She also called on companies to take on apprentices. "We must act now, not tomorrow," she said. "We need immediacy and scale."

The World Economic Forum's Special Meeting on Economic Growth and Job Creation in the Arab World is taking place on 21-23 October 2011 at the Dead Sea, Jordan.

The Meeting Co-Chairs are: **Mohammed H. Al Mady**, Vice-Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), Saudi Arabia; **Yasmin Galal**, Global Shaper, Cairo Hub, Egypt; **Habib Haddad**, Chief Executive Officer, Wamda, United Arab Emirates, a Young Global Leader; **Muhtar A. Kent**, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, The Coca-Cola Company, USA; **Maurice Lévy**, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Publicis Groupe, France, a Member of the Foundation Board of the World Economic Forum; and **Soraya Salti**, Senior Vice-President, Middle East and North Africa, INJAZ Al Arab – JA Worldwide, Jordan, a Social Entrepreneur

Jordanian Radio and Television (JRTV) is the Host Broadcaster of this Meeting.

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