

YOUTH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN LIGHT OF THE SYRIAN REFUGEE INFLUX

The Jordan Office of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) organized in collaboration with Mossawah Center for Civil Society Development a roundtable discussion in Irbid, Ramtha and Zarqa on "Youth Economic Empowerment in Light of the Syrian Refugee Influx". The two-day event, held in March 2015, brought together representatives from the local community, civil society, activists, journalists and a number of Syrians living in the targeted areas of the private sector.

Following the welcoming remarks of KAS Project Manager **Ms Nidaa Al-Shraideh**, and Director of Mossawah Center for Civil Society Development, **Mr Suliman Al Khawaldeh**, Member of the Jordanian Parliament and former Minister of Municipal Affairs **H.E. Dr. Hazim Qashou'** highlighted the role of municipalities and their expected roles in supporting youth economic opportunities. He talked about the investment in municipal work and called for municipalities to make a shift from service-oriented into development-oriented work. This is an imperative change if municipalities want to contribute to the alleviation of Jordanians' suffering from inflation and rising prices. Qashou' stressed the importance of the municipalities being open for cooperation with governmental agencies and local and international non-governmental organizations to get necessary funds for the implementation of projects that create job opportunities for the youth.

In the second session, former Minister of Information and Director of Imdad Center, **HE Nabil Al Sharif** talked about the role of the media in promoting and marketing youth economic opportunities. He highlighted the role of the new media encouraging it to work with all sectors to enhance the economic empowerment of the youth. The media should address the difficulties of young people getting into the labor market, but it should also be a strong advocate of vocational training as a promising area of employment for the youth.

In the third session, member of the Jordanian parliament, **H.E. Dr. Reem Abu Dalbuh** talked about the role of educational institutions in linking educational outcomes with the market requirements and needs. She said that 80% of Jordan's students are enrolled in academic programs and only 20% are involved in vocational training and technical vocations, which is the very opposite of the supply-demand trends of the labor market. She emphasized the importance of offering students vocational training beside their academic studies to be qualified enough for the labor market after they finish their studies.

Dr. Khalid Al Wazani, chairman of Issnaad Consulting, referred in the fourth session to the role of the private sector in strengthening youth competitiveness in the economic sector. He started his intervention with an overview of the Jordanian economy and its challenges. The private sector has an important role in Jordan's Economy, he said, as it is a key player in food production through agriculture, industry and export. Education and health are

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN

01st April 2015

Muna Sukhni

Dr. Otmar Oehring

www.kas.de/amman

also two crucial areas where the private sector is heavily investing.

Al Wazani also mentioned that around 60% of Jordan's Employees are working in the private sector.

In conclusion, Al Wazani recommends that the role of the Supreme Council for Human Resources Development should be activated to achieve an optimal orientation of the human resources' strategic planning and competitiveness that must contain a pivotal role for the private sector in the empowerment and the integration of youth in the national economy. He added that real participatory between the two sectors would be the best way to determine a competitive national economy and the proper utilization of human resources.

Dr. Shaker Al Khasawneh, a lawyer and expert in media publication issues, pointed out in his session to the opportunities and challenges that arise when promoting youth economics empowerment in the light of the Syrian influxes.

Al Khasawneh threw light on the impacts of the Syrian refugee influxes on Jordan maintaining that the labor market has been the most affected. There are Syrian workers that are more qualified than Jordanians, especially in handicrafts. This reality demands the introduction of new qualifications that do not exist in the country. Jordanians, especially the unemployed should be trained and get qualified according in a manner that answers to the demands of the labor market.

In the 6th session, **Mr. Suliman Al Khawaldeh** talked about the role of civil society organizations in promoting and strengthening youth economic empowerment. The Jordanian youth is facing big challenges in entering the labor market. Al Khawaldeh defined the components and the work of local communities. He pointed to three sectors that are the three key sectors for the development process, which are

the government, the private sector and the institutions of the civil society.

The role of the civil society organizations, he said, is to be a partner of these sectors and to assist and control them for achieving the best integration of the development process.

Conclusion:

At the end of the meeting, the participants came up with the following recommendations:

- Introduce educational reforms, promote vocational training and develop new specializations that match the requirements of the labor market
- Activate the role of municipalities, strengthen their developmental role and work to create projects that will provide job opportunities for the youth
- Build partnerships between the private sector and different institutions to launch youth employment projects.
- The media should work on awareness programs that advocate the culture of vocations.