

Northern Region Job Fair: 300 job seekers hired immediately

Challenges:

Jordan's high unemployment rate remains a serious constraint to its economic reform efforts, especially in areas outside the capital city of Amman. One part of the solution to bringing the rate down is matching employers with open positions with those citizens who are seeking work throughout the country. The Ministry of Labor is endeavoring to support these efforts through its regional employment directorates spread throughout the country but the directorates need help in designing effective job matching activities.

Initiatives:

The USAID funded Economic Development Program (SABEQ) began working with the Ministry of Labor to develop the regional directorates' capacity. In 2008 they partnered together to conduct a job fair in the southern region of the country which was very successful in finding jobs for over 500 job seekers.

The Program gathered key ingredients for the success of the fair into a manual for the Ministry to enable them to conduct job fairs on their own after the Program support ends. The manual emphasized the importance not only in preparing job seekers through training activities such as resume writing and interviewing techniques but also in preparing potential employers in developing attractive displays and "selling" themselves to potential hires.

The manual was completed in Arabic in 2008 and formed the basis for subsequent fairs with the Ministry becoming increasingly confident in its ability to conduct fairs on its own with less and less support from the Program team.

These efforts came to fruition with the very large job fair conducted in the Fall of 2009 in the Northern Region of the country.

The two-day fair was inaugurated by the Minister of Labor, and the USAID Mission Director, as well as key representatives from partners including over 68 potential employers stationed in exhibition booths that welcomed jobseekers.

In addition to workshops on CV writing, interview skills and how to start your own business, there were a number of humorous interactive theatre shows that sought to address the so-called "culture of shame" that inhibits willingness to work.

Results:

A total of 68 companies and 4 community based training organizations sought to attract over 10,000 job seekers.

5,000 CVs were collected by the exhibiting companies and 300 immediate job matches were made during the job fair. The interactive theatre attracted over 800 attendees.

The job fair also attracted private company sponsorships for the first time. Sponsors were Extensya and Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC) as gold sponsors, King Hussein Bin Talal Development area as silver sponsors, and Irbid mall as media sponsors.

The Program and the Ministry will follow up over the next months to verify the additional placements that stem from the fair; if the southern fair's success is any indicator, we can expect additional job matches from this northern event.