



Interactive Theater...A Creative Tool that Changes Mindsets

Challenges:

Jordan's unemployment rate has remained high despite considerable investments in the education of its workforce. It is generally acknowledged that there is a high "reservation price" due to cultural and social traditions among the unemployed that keeps them from accepting open positions. This large unemployment rate is likely to grow because of the very young median age and this will be a drag on Jordan's efforts to continue to develop its economy.

Initiatives:

USAID has worked in a number of ways to address the unemployment rate, including dealing with cultural issues that have traditionally kept men and women from joining the work-force. One tool that has proven very effective in changing mindsets and working through the so-called culture of shame has been the use of interactive theater in USAID's Economic Development Program (SABEQ).

The theater is a 45 minute long dynamic exchange between the professional actors, the facilitator and the audience, and is based on a script commissioned by the Program to address sensitive issues around employment. During the performance, real success stories are introduced and discussed with the audience, and support organizations within Jordan are identified.

This outreach tool is a creative way to interact with youth, particularly in conservative communities, and helps address critical topics of unemployment, the culture of shame, as well as potential career options.

Results:

To date over 27 performances have been held at public outreach events at job fairs, youth festivals, nursing career campaign, and others with an aim of connecting people, building trust, sharing knowledge, teaming to achieve common goals, and equally important changing mindsets reaching over 5,000 individuals.

Most recently, the program trained students attending the "2009 Northern Job Fair" on how to design and produce their own shows to address themes of particular interest to them. The students then preformed their new play that focused on presenting the different performances of people in interviews highlighting a variety of personalities, and the selection rationale of employers.