



Policy Brief

TVET and Skills Education for all: Enhancing Livelihood Opportunities for Jordanian and Refugee Youth

2024

Executive Summary

This policy brief sheds light on the challenges and opportunities of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector in Jordan by adopting a sectoral and refugee-specific approach. TVET and Skills Education in Jordan has been identified as a development priority by the Government of Jordan and the donor community, as not only a useful tool to achieve a skilled and competitive Jordanian workforce, but also an educational pathway to enhance protection and livelihood opportunities for refugee communities, including Yemenis, Somalis, and Sudanese. Nevertheless, the poor social image of TVET among Jordanians, inefficient public financial management strategies, or insufficient coordination between the involved stakeholders are some of the challenges the TVET sector in Jordan is currently suffering from.

TVET and Skills Education for all

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Jordan is home to 723,886 registered refugees.¹ While Syrians constitute the bulk of the refugee population, other nationalities have sought and found refuge in Jordan, such as Yemenis, Somalis, and Sudanese. Despite UNHCR's advocacy of the "One Refugee Approach," the needs of these particular refugee communities have been significantly overlooked by the international aid community and Jordanian authorities, exacerbating their vulnerabilities. As evidenced by the 2022 UNHCR Vulnerability Assessment Framework, Yemeni, Somali, and Sudanese refugees have limited access to livelihood opportunities, resulting in low employment rates, meager household incomes, and unbearable indebtedness levels.² The exclusion of these segments from the 2016 Jordan Compact, and the absence of durable solutions, have exacerbated these challenges.

As stressed in several national strategies, the Government of Jordan has identified TVET and Skills Education as a key economic and educational priority to address the current skills mismatch among youth in Jordan and increase the efficiency and productivity of its workforce, positively contributing to national economic and human development.³ Furthermore, TVET and Skills Education have been internationally, regionally, and nationally recognized as an effective and efficient educational pathway to foster refugees' livelihood opportunities.⁴ By providing transferable technical and soft skills to refugees, TVET programs can support them to find durable solutions either by strengthening their self-reliance and local integration in the host communities, preparing them for return to their countries of origin or speeding up their resettlement process. Hence, the strengthening and modernization of the TVET sector in Jordan can be beneficial for Jordanians and refugees alike, improving the welfare of all communities residing in the Kingdom.

TVET sector in Jordan: Challenges and gaps

Although the TVET sector in Jordan has adopted a set of institutional, legal, and financial reforms in recent years, there are several challenges and gaps to be tackled. Firstly, despite significant restructuring efforts in recent years, the **governance framework remains largely unimplemented**, leading to a high level of fragmentation and ambiguity in stakeholder roles and responsibilities. Additionally, there exists a pressing need for **enhanced coordination among donors**, who, despite recognizing TVET/Skills as a crucial development priority, lack a cohesive strategy for reforming and modernizing the sector. Moreover, the financial landscape poses its own set of obstacles, with **limited public budget allocations** and an **inefficient public financial management system** not based on outcomes or performance, providing no incentive to public TVET providers to improve their services. Furthermore, the **design of TVET curricula** often is supply rather than demand-driven, neglecting the importance of soft skills. The **engagement with the private sector is weak**, and **TVET facilities and equipment** are often **outdated or inadequate** for effective training. Moreover, **trainers and teachers lack practical experience and pedagogical skills**, failing to train the new generation of workers. In terms of **inclusion**, while there has been a progressive increase in women's participation in TVET, it remains a predominantly male-dominated stream, and opportunities for persons with disabilities are limited. Furthermore, TVET suffers from a **poor social image among Jordanians**, linked to the perception that vocational and technical professions are associated with a lack of social protection coverage. Lastly, **transition pathways** from vocational and technical streams to academic ones and vice versa are **restricted**.

Key Learnings

ARDD monitored the learning journey of 15 students, Jordanians and Yemeni, Somali, and Sudanese refugees, conducting a TVET/skill program. These were the key learnings extracted:

1) Refugee as TVET students: Learning is an individual process, unique to each student, a journey influenced by their circumstances and personal motivations. Refugees decide to enroll in a TVET/skills program for a variety of reasons, ranging from seeking to enhance their livelihood opportunities to being the sole alternative to traditional academic pathways. However, dropout rates among TVET refugee students can be explained due to external (i.e. resettlement, health issues, finding a full-time job) and internal (i.e. schedule incompatibility, personal and professional dissatisfaction with the program) factors. Moreover, it has been found that transportation can be a deterrent

element for their participation in TVET if the provider is located far from their communities. Additionally, as evidenced by their TVET experience, education programs for refugees should incorporate a protection dimension into their design and implementation to address the unique challenges and barriers they face.

2) TVET and skills programs: Flexibility is essential to ensuring a successful learning journey, considering that refugee students must balance their training with previous professional and/or personal obligations. Furthermore, in terms of duration, 3 months was deemed to be appropriate to transfer new skills and knowledge to students, although longer training opportunities are welcomed.

3) Environment: Creating a safe and enabling learning environment involves a combination of factors: teachers, facilities, equipment, or family and friends' support. As a result of conducting a TVET/skills program, refugee students' social reputation within their families and communities has increased, as well as it has become a positive coping mechanism to deal with the regional instability. In addition, education has been proven to be a catalyst for social cohesion among refugees of different nationalities and between refugees and host communities.

4) Durable solutions: Refugees point out resettlement as the preferred durable solution, viewing TVET as a means to enhance their chances of resettlement success and improve job prospects in their new countries. On the other hand, when it comes to self-reliance as a durable solution, is less attractive for refugees if inclusive labor market policies are not put in place.

Recommendations

A) Donors

1. Strengthening the TVET system in Jordan should remain a priority.
2. Reach and implement a common donor coordination strategy in the TVET.
3. Protection should be part integral of the design and implementation of any education program.
4. Engage Jordanian authorities in conversations regarding enhancing access to livelihood opportunities for all refugees.
5. When providing funding to private institutions, encourage the practice of transparency regarding TVET fees by private institutions.

B) Government of Jordan

1. Promote multi-stakeholder dialogue for recommendations regarding TVET supply.
2. Review the funding strategy of public TVET centers.
3. Promote private-public partnerships to enhance results.
4. Enhance the public's perceptions of TVET and Skills Education through public campaigns.
5. Swift implementation of the current TVET governance structure, including the activation of the work of the TVSDC and improving the coordination among all relevant stakeholders on TVET.
6. Re-visit the structure of the current education system for enhanced transition pathways.

7. Flexibility for refugees concerning **a)** documentation requirements, and **b)** age limits.

8. Consider a system of grants for non-Jordanians to access public TVET and skills opportunities.

C) Private Sector

1. Enhance on-the-job training opportunities for TVET and Skills students.
2. Support TVET institutions with up-to-date information regarding market needs.
3. Engage in national conversations regarding livelihood opportunities for non-Jordanians.

D) CSOs/NGOs

1. Enhance public perceptions of skills and TVET education with public audiences through communication campaigns.
2. Promote TVET among women and persons with disabilities.
3. Improve referral systems between CSOs and TVET providers.
4. Organize periodic information campaigns regarding TVET / skills opportunities for refugees and Jordanians.
5. Engage with TVET and skills providers in offering complementary soft skills programs for refugees and Jordanians of different backgrounds.
6. Consider the location of TVET/skills providers. They should ideally be situated near their communities. If it is not feasible, it is essential to provide adequate and timely transportation allowances or establish a private transportation system.
7. Provide TVET/skills opportunities lasting from three months to one year.

E) TVET & Skills Providers

1. Further investment in career guidance and counseling for the students.
2. Incorporate student-centered pedagogical resources into the curriculum to enhance the professional development of teachers.
3. Enhance transparency regarding fees by fixing standard rates and publicly disclosing them.
4. Include in the TVET/skills curriculum a paid work experience during or at the end of the program, whether within the TVET/skills provider itself or externally.
5. Foster a safe and enabling educational environment for refugees by zero tolerance towards discriminatory acts, integrating them with Jordanian students, and considering their particular education needs and barriers.
6. Further flexibility is needed. Firstly, providers should allow students to change their chosen professional field without additional fees if they have a reasonable justification. Secondly, flexibility in scheduling and attendance requirements is vital, with providers accommodating refugees' unique circumstances when establishing compulsory attendance policies and designing timetables.

Endnotes

1 UNHCR, Registered Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Jordan (as of 31 March 2024) (April 2024), <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/108075>

2 UNHCR, Vulnerability Assessment Framework: Population survey of refugees living in host communities - Jordan 2022 (20 June 2022), <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/93754>

3 See Economic Modernisation Vision, National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2016 – 2025, National Employment Strategy 2011-2020, National TVET Strategy 2023-2027.

4 See UNHCR Refugee Education 2030 Strategy, joint pledge “15by30”, Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan, Jordanian Response Plan 2020 - 2022

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