The Youth Community of Practice (YCoP) global listserv links professionals and practitioners at USAID and its partner organizations to effective youth development ideas, information and best practices to help:

*Design more effective, sustainable youth programs, and
*Better integrate youth participation in USAID development projects

In this Links Youth and Education Series Part II: Business Education in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA): Part I of this Links series on Youth and Education focused on programs working to provide young people with educational opportunities where conflict, natural disasters, or poverty made access to education difficult or impossible. Part II of this Links Youth and Education Series takes a different approach by focusing on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region where many young people receive a basic education and education systems are undergoing important reforms, but where these educational opportunities do not necessarily lead to successful transitions to the workforce. Youth unemployment remains high, at nearly 25 percent. In many cases, the skills acquired by young people in educational institutions do not match those sought by the private sector. The region’s high unemployment rates therefore reflect a demographic of well-educated young job seekers with enormous potential, who are either waiting or searching for work. This Links explores programs, initiatives, and resources in the MENA region that are working to address the issue of both education and youth employability through business skills development.

Announcements:

“Taqeem” program undertakes impact evaluation of education program in the Middle East
http://www.shababinclusion.org/content/article/detail/1412
Earlier this year, Silatech, The Wolfensohn Center for Development at the Brookings Institution, the Dubai School of Government, and the Issam Fares Institute at the American University of Beirut announced Taqeem, a new program to undertake and promote impact evaluation in the areas of employment and entrepreneurship in the Middle East. While billions of dollars are invested each year in youth projects in the region, the impact of such programs on the region’s youth is unclear. Taqeem resolves to measure the impact of youth projects in order to influence and improve the next generation of youth policies in the region and to discover innovations that may improve the lives of youth across national boundaries.

Projects and Initiatives:

Textiles Merchandiser Training Program (MTP) and Banking Program
http://www.efefoundation.org/homepage.html
In Egypt, the Education for Employment Foundation (EFE) is working to combat rising youth unemployment by preparing Egyptian youth for careers in textiles and banking, two industries
enjoying continued growth in the country. In partnership with Gherzi consulting, a Swiss firm specializing in the textile industry, EFE-Egypt is currently delivering 250 hours of technical training in the fundamentals of textiles and the merchandiser position, supplementing this with 150 hours of professional skills training. As the banking sector expands rapidly in Egypt, demand for qualified employees is rising apace. With support from the Middle East Partnership Initiative (http://mepi.state.gov/), and a partnership with the Egyptian Banking Institute (EBI), EFE-Egypt is training unemployed youth to become junior bank staff professionals. Twenty-one participants have completed the five-day technical training program so far, and will soon move on to banking training with Banque Misr.

**Basic Business Skills Acquisition (BBSA) Scholarship Program**  
The Future Generation Foundation (FGF), chaired by Gamal Mubarak, is currently implementing the Basic Business Skills Acquisition (BBSA) Program in Egypt. BBSA is designed to empower recent university graduates with the skills they need to develop careers in the private sector. The three-month training program includes Business English, IT for Business, and work readiness skills, such as effective communication and leadership, team work, and critical thinking. The training also exposes participants to several different skills tracks such as principles of sales, marketing, accounting, and finance. As part of the program, students form teams and develop a business project that responds to market and/or specific community needs. Business skills are especially important in Egypt, where public sector careers, previously highly sought after, no longer represent a viable career path for most of Egypt’s youth.

**International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF): Building Links between Business and Education for Youth**  
[http://www.iblf.org/regions/Middle_East.jsp](http://www.iblf.org/regions/Middle_East.jsp)  
Founded in 1990, The International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) is an international non-profit organization that works with business, governments, and civil society to encourage and improve the positive contributions of more than 100 of the world’s leading private companies to support sustainable development. In particular, IBLF provides strategic advice to companies operating in transitional and emerging economies. Youth and education is a key area of focus for IBLF, which emphasizes the vital role that business can play in promoting youth employment and engagement. The organization has undertaken two major projects in the Middle East, including the Business and Youth in the Arab World project and its Youth Business International programs in Saudi Arabia, Syria and Israel. More information about both programs can be found on the IBLF website, along with practitioner resources such as *Business and Youth in the Arab World*.

**Resources for Practitioners:**

**Generation in Waiting: The Unfulfilled Promise of Young People in the Middle East**  
Youth in the Middle East continue to face severe economic hardship and social exclusion stemming from poor education, high unemployment, and pervasive poverty. The region’s youth also present a great opportunity for development in the region, and Generation in Waiting, published by Brookings Institution Press, is a resource for researchers, policymakers, civil society, and private sector leaders who want to better understand the challenges and opportunities facing Middle Eastern youth. It covers the following areas of concern to youth: access to decent education, opportunities for quality employment, availability of housing and
credit, and transitioning to marriage and family formation. The report also makes policy recommendations and sets an agenda for economic development,

*The Disconnect between Education, Employment and Job Growth in Jordan*

http://www.jcpprd.org/Files/ResearchDatabase/06-0314-3%20ch06.pdf

This 2009 publication explores the challenges encountered by Jordanian youth when trying to capitalize on the country’s recent economic growth, and in particular the growing divide between this economic growth, education, and young people’s transition to employment. Although Jordan’s educational reforms have led to higher school enrollment and a better quality of education, the country’s labor market has shifted toward low-skilled jobs that are poorly regarded by Jordanian youth. The challenge is whether Jordan can create stronger links between a diverse labor market, its strong education system, and the talents of its young people. To overcome this challenge, the document emphasizes the importance of policies that include youth’s input and ensure their inclusion in society.

**Looking for YOUR input:** We would like to hear from you! YCoP welcomes ideas, resources, and best practices on effective youth programs and youth participation. We would also like to encourage nominations of other youth practitioners or youth leaders to participate in the YCoP Links listserv. Hit “reply” to send information and feedback to YCoP Links.

To **unsubscribe** from the list, users should send an e-mail to listserv@info.usaid.gov with only “unsubscribe youthcop” in the body of the e-mail. *(No signatures please).*

**Mission of YCoP:** The Youth Community of Practice provides a forum for professionals and practitioners at USAID and its partner organizations to gather, consolidate, archive, disseminate and exchange information, knowledge, ideas and best practices, particularly related to the incorporation of youth participation in USAID development projects. The Youth Community of Practice is an informal body of volunteer members, reached through a global list serve and Washington-based chapter. Both the list serve and DC chapter forums include USAID staff, youth practitioners outside of the Agency, and youth themselves. It is jointly sponsored by the office of education in the bureau of Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade (EGAT) at USAID and the Education Quality Improvement Program3 (EQUIP3), and implemented by the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC).

**Disclaimer:** The information and opinions expressed in the materials provided through YCoP Links or posted by listserv participants is not official U.S. Government information and does not necessarily represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Government or EQUIP3. For a copy of the guidelines and/or charter, put the request in the subject line of the email and send to: youthcop@lists.info.usaid.gov. Participants should be aware that the list is public and not private communication. When participants voluntarily disclose personal information on a list serve, that information can be collected and used by others and may result in unsolicited messages from other people.