



Learning and Working

TVET – An Educational Route Leading to Prosperity



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Palestinian youth in East Jerusalem, who represent around 22 percent of the population, are significantly affected by multifaceted socio-economic and political situations. According to a 2022 report by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, while unemployment rates in East Jerusalem are considered low (6.8 percent) in comparison to the West Bank, poverty rates remain high, with 72 percent of all Palestinians living below the poverty line, including 81 percent of Palestinian children. This is due to various reasons, including the Israeli policies and practices that have resulted in a higher cost of living, a fragmented and low-quality education system, and a high school dropout rate of 29 percent for grades 9 to 12 (22 percent girls, 34 percent boys).

With limited available economic opportunities in local markets and a dismal living environment, labor force participation among Palestinians in East Jerusalem is low, particularly among women, where only 5 percent of women have full-time jobs and 21 percent have part-time jobs, which brings the issue of unemployment to the forefront. Approximately 38 percent of East Jerusalem residents over 18 have not completed 12 years of schooling. Moreover, employment prospects are further restricted and dependent on Israeli policies and the Israeli job market. This is particularly the case for Palestinian men, given that 60 percent of employed Palestinian men are considered either unskilled or skilled laborers in manufacturing and construction. Female employment, on the contrary, is largely concentrated in education and services.



Training of academic teachers on TVET at Ramallah Girls TVET School. Photo courtesy of UNDP/PAPP.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) that is geared towards school students in East Jerusalem has been met with renewed interest by Palestinians, private and other providers alike, as a means to address high dropout rates, unemployment, and low labor force participation. Until recently, most of the Palestinian TVET programs and employment services in East Jerusalem have been provided by NGOs and CBOs (e.g., Dar al-Aytam, Dar al-Yateem Al-Arabi, and Lutheran World Federation). Lately, as part of the Palestinian Ministry of Education's (MoE) national TVET reform, the MoE started to pilot the integration of TVET streams through establishing TVET units in four schools, namely, Abu Baker Girls' School (Sur Baher), Al-Nahda Girls' School (Old City), Dar al-Aytam Boys' School (Old City), and Tala' al-Quds Secondary School for Boys (Beit Hanina). However, several challenges still impede the expansion of TVET education. TVET enrolment remains low, while the majority of students enrolled in TVET streams are boys.

Although the number of TVET offerings are slowly growing for Palestinians in East Jerusalem, studies have shown that the current TVET offerings in East Jerusalem are still characterized by a limited variety of subjects.

In response, UNDP support to TVET in East Jerusalem has embarked on an initiative to advance the national plans to improve TVET education for school students, solidify the partnership with private sector, and put in place new skilling schemes to promote youth exposure to opportunities in the local market and workplace environment, in addition to the initiation of evidence-based labor market intelligence for informing policy makers and stakeholders constantly on supply and demand.

The first TVET school operated by the Jerusalem Directorate of Education (JDoE), in Al-Thouri neighborhood, has been recently remodeled to offer five technological TVET streams, namely, renewable energy, electricity utilization, survey and buildings, interior design and

decoration, and smart building technologies. This innovation began at the start of the current scholastic year, and enrollment of students is under way. School operations are supported through awareness and promotion campaigns carried out in partnership with Palestinian Vision Organization. Future plans include adding new TVET streams to existing TVET units, specifically at Dar al-Aytam, within the ongoing rebranding strategy adopted by UNDP to transform the site into a socio-economic and education hub in the core of the Old City, as well as the reinforcement of TVET education at Tala' al-Quds School in Beit Hanina. As a new way to complement TVET education, skilling programs have been initiated, students at TVET schools will be offered soft-skills development that is relevant not only for future employment but also to start their own businesses or become self-employed. The skills package includes communication skills, basic financial management, languages, basic IT skills, CV-writing and job-interviewing skills, and others as needed.

Linkages with other initiatives have been implemented by UNDP, notably the establishment of the Career Advancement Center at the YMCA to create new and alternative opportunities for Palestinian youth and provide employability skills to enable them to access local markets through enhancing accessibility, relevance of skilling, and employability, as well as offering opportunities for beneficiaries to access career guidance support and counseling to ensure that students, youth, and women are aware of their available options to enter and advance in the market.

Over the past year, UNDP has contributed immensely to the TVET system in the State of Palestine. Funding provided by several donors, including KfW/Government of Germany, UAE, Japan, IsDB, and others, has enabled UNDP to construct and improve the learning environment of more than 13 training centers as well as that of several youth empowerment and skilling programs. The ongoing UNDP/Norway project support to TVET in East Jerusalem represents a new learning curve for the project stakeholders to test new models in very complicated geopolitical settings, with a strategic aim that is in close coordination with the national counterparts to scale up and expand the operation of this model at different locations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

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