



SUCCESS STORY

Improving Safety and Health Standards Key to Attracting Jordanians to Vocational and Technical Sector



Photo: USAID/Jordan WFD

Participants from the private sector and the Vocational Technical Corporation (VTC) in the OSH workshop to support the development of occupational profiles, competencies, curriculum and accreditation for the position of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) supervisor. (Date: 26 March 2015).

JWFD supports an enabling work environment by upgrading operational safety and health standards in the work place, with the ultimate objective of creating a competitive, demand-driven workforce development system for all Jordanians, especially youth and women.

“Protecting the safety and health of our employees is humanitarian work,” said Arwa Al Manasra, one of the participants at the USAID-funded Jordan Workforce Development (JWFD) Project’s workshop on Operational Safety and Health (OSH) Standards. Arwa, a Process Safety Engineer at Jordan’s Bromine Company, is a strong advocate for investing in capable and well-trained operational safety and health supervisors in the private sector, especially in the industrial sectors.

Arwa’s philosophy is at the core of one of JWFD’s primary tenants; supporting an enabling work environment by upgrading operational safety and health standards in the work place, with the ultimate objective of creating a competitive, demand-driven workforce development system for all, especially youth and women. “Unsafe and dangerous work environments are often cited by Jordanians, particularly youth and women, as barriers to working in the vocational and technical sector,” notes Mohammed Ajarmeh, the project’s OSH Specialist. In fact, according to the Social Security Corporation (SSC), more than 15,000 work-related accidents took place in Jordan in 2013, 27% of which were in the industrial and service sectors.

Mohammed’s professional experience in the health sector has strengthened his conviction in the importance of enhancing operational safety and health standards in the workplace. “As a professional nurse, I not only witnessed the grave injuries of work-related accidents, I also treated them and cared for these patients. I recognized then that I want to work to prevent these accidents from happening in the first place, so I moved on to the OSH field, armed myself with the certification required and here I am today working with JWFD to raise awareness on the importance of OSH in the vocational sector,” noted Mohammed.



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In addition to training OSH supervisors in the private sector, JWFD is focused on reforming the vocational and technical training curriculum at Jordan's Vocational Training Institutes (VTIs) by incorporating OSH modules that are in line with international best practice but also tailored to meet Jordan's needs. Additionally, the project will train Jordanian youth and women in the six target governorates (East Amman, Zarqa, Irbid, Tafleh, Ma'an and Aqaba) to become certified OSH supervisors. "There is a need for more than 2,500 OSH supervisors across Jordan in order to prevent work-related accidents and to attract Jordanians to the vocational sector," stressed William Thompson, JWFD's Chief of Party. He added that this will prove hugely beneficial to the private sector in Jordan and will contribute to a notable and much-needed "decline in the number of accidents per year and decrease in injury-related costs incurred by the SSC," which, since 2013, has amounted to 190 million Jordanian Dinars.

JWFD will also work closely with the Government of Jordan (GoJ) to strengthen the capacity of OSH inspectors. There are currently 30 inspectors at the Ministry of Labor (MoL) specialized in operational and health inspections (40% of which are women). "We plan to increase the number of OSH focused inspectors," noted Maysoon Al Reemawi, Head of Occupational Safety & Health Department at the Ministry of Labor. "The more qualified our inspectors, the more likely we will be able to decrease the number of work-related accidents," she adds. A chemical engineer by education, Maysoon's private sector experience in the pharmaceutical field, gives her an edge in her current job. "My work in quality assurance in the pharmaceutical field deepened my understanding of health and safety issues in the workplace. However, there are many Jordanian employers who still do not recognize the importance of enhanced OSH standards. This is why the Jordan Workforce Development's workshop with the private sector is so critical. We look forward to working with the project to continue to change mindsets in Jordan's private sector about the importance of investing in strong OSH standards," she adds.

JWFD held two workshops focused on strengthening the capacity of OSH supervisors in March 2015. Both workshops were attended by 30 OSH supervisors and specialists, primarily representing Jordan's private sector.