

SYRIAN YOUTH PREPARES FOR THE BUSINESS WORLD

Based on the strategy defined by SHABAB, Syria was declared a lead country in the UN's Youth Employment Network (YEN) in June 2006. SHABAB (Strategy Highlighting and Building Abilities for Business) is a Syrian project whose objective is to motivate and develop the key skills of Syrian youth in order for them to succeed in a modern competitive job market. One of SHABAB's essential tasks is to create a sense of comfort, security and acceptance amongst Syrian society of a developing modern economic style and of seeking careers as an employee or entrepreneur in the private sector.



SHABAB chaired by Her Excellency Mrs Assad is exploring external partnerships to achieve the aims of empowering Syrian youth to find employment in business.

The Business Awareness Program is one of the first steps taken by SHABAB and it consists of a two-day program which aims to give 16-19 year olds an understanding of business and its crucial role in the economy. Through a tailored program of 6 interactive seminars, students gain a practical understanding of key areas, such as marketing & sales, human resources, small business, IT, finance, management and design & development. The objective of the program is that at the end of it, young people emerge with a greater knowledge and understanding of how a business works, and about the range of jobs available in business.

The first Business Awareness pilot program in Syria was held in the city of Aleppo from February 5th to March 20th. Over 380 students from 9 secondary schools, both academic and vocational, received the opportunity to learn more about business and the various components of running a company.

The program is delivered by volunteers from the business world who bring their knowledge and experience into the classrooms. Lara Al Sayed from the Aleppo Chamber of Industry thinks that " young people are now fortunate to have such a program which empowers them and gives them tools to use in their future

careers. What they are gaining now is what we were able to gain after the age of 23 and these skills are assets that will push them forward in their future accomplishments."

Besides raising awareness of business amongst young people, the program is an effective example of how the business world can contribute to the local community. In a society dominated by scepticism and suspicion towards the private sector, SHABAB is trying to create a new image of private companies and businessmen. The project is also giving business volunteers the channel through which they can help young people- many businesspeople have the desire to do more for their local communities but they do not know how. Similarly, for larger corporations interested in expanding their policy of corporate social responsibility, SHABAB is giving them a practical avenue through Business Awareness.

For many students, this was the first time that they had been exposed to business and entrepreneurship. Their reactions have been a mixture of curiosity, enthusiasm and a desire to learn more. Here are some comments from some of the students and headmasters from the schools who participated in the program:

Rim Shaban from Huda