

# 3

## Job Search Clubs

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PROSPECTS countries have sizeable youth populations that are reaching working age and in search of jobs in constrained labour markets. These markets are characterized by high rates of informality and a lack of decent jobs that correspond to the skills, competencies and interests of young people. Intersecting factors, such as weak economies and education systems, mean learners do not have the skills required in the labour market. As a result, youth unemployment is high and there are vast numbers of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET). In the Middle East and North Africa region, the latest NEET rate was measured at 31.5 per cent;<sup>26</sup> across Africa as a whole it was 21.9 per cent.<sup>27</sup> PROSPECTS countries are also host to large displaced populations, the majority of whom are under the age of 30 and, in many instances, trying to access the labour market alongside members of the host community. Youth employment is a priority in national development plans and youth strategies in all eight PROSPECTS countries, including Egypt and Jordan (National Youth Strategies) and Kenya (National Development Youth Policy, National Career Guidance Framework and Young Peoples' Agenda of Kenya).

Job Search Club (JSC) is a methodology developed by the ILO to support young people who face difficulties in their job-search process. It acknowledges that all young people have sets of skills and agency in their own job search but may lack experience in translating experience into employment opportunities. The concept is based on a behavioural model of job search and placement pioneered by a Canadian behavioural psychologist and that was first adapted to ILO programmes in 2014 in Egypt.<sup>28</sup> An EMIPF (explain, model, imitate, practice and feedback) structure reinforces each skill and technique that is introduced in the clubs (JSCs). Various ILO offices around the world have refined and adapted the “learning by doing” model, helping institutionalize the model targeting unemployed young people, in collaboration with Ministries of Youth, Public Employment Services, TVET providers, NGOs and universities. In the context of PROSPECTS, country teams saw an opportunity to apply the methodology and address the issue of unemployment for both refugee and host community youth.

26 ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024: Middle East and North Africa*, 2024.

27 ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022: Africa*, 2022.

28 The methodology was introduced in collaboration with the Egyptian Ministry of Youth and Sports, NGOs and CAPSCU, the training centre at the Cairo University Faculty of Engineering, and supported by several ILO development cooperation projects: Decent Jobs for Egypt's Young People, funded by Global Affairs Canada; Creating a Conducive Environment for the Promotion of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, funded by the United States Department of State; Transition To Employment: Career Guidance for Youth and Job Creation, funded by the Egyptian-Italian Debt Swap programme; and Decent Jobs for Egypt's Young People in Menofeya and Qalyubeya, funded by DANIDA.

The core of the JSC is a two-to-three-week intensive activity for groups of 16 young people, assisted by two trained facilitators. This group phase is not designed as training but as a space where each club member is supported through activation measures, peer-to-peer support and other behavioural methodologies to acquire a range of hard and soft job-search skills. These include identifying job opportunities, completing a CV or writing a good application letter, practising good interview skills and dealing with potentially stressful work situations. Following the group phase, the clubs continue to act as a space for peer-to-peer support and coaching. Facilitators play a key role in maintaining momentum behind the clubs through regular points of contact and exchange, whether through in person meet-ups, WhatsApp exchanges, or other ways of connecting that are suited to the local context. The clubs continue to provide a support network of young people in similar situations, where successes can be shared alongside challenges, in a spirit of mutual learning.

Depending on the country context, JSCs have been implemented as an extension of employment services, as part of youth engagement initiatives and as post-training support to help young people transition into employment. General criteria for selecting participants included having difficulties in the labour market – for instance, experiencing several months of unemployment despite actively seeking full-time work; a commitment to dedicating five to six hours a day to the job-search process over a two-week period; and willingness to participate in structured, group activities. PROSPECTS' experiences with JSC are discussed in greater detail below, including where different contexts necessitated different approaches and where lessons can be learned for future programming in contexts of forced displacement.

### ► 3.1 Description and key approaches

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There are two main learning objectives of JSC: ensuring young people understand that the job-search process requires dedication and time, and helping them become independent in their job search. JSC was first adapted by PROSPECTS in Egypt in 2022 to help young refugees and host community members in their job-search processes. This was done in partnership with Egypt's Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS). The methodology was then adopted in Jordan, where it was aligned to objectives in the National Youth Strategy and helped build a partnership with the Ministry of Youth. In Kenya, it was introduced in the context of the National Career Guidance Framework and rolled out in the career service offices of TVET institutions and institutions of higher education. Similarly, in Iraq, it was implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sport and introduced in the career development centres of universities and TVET institutions. In Uganda, it was incorporated within rural employment services, which had been extended to refugee-hosting areas under PROSPECTS.

Country teams built up networks of JSC facilitators in the districts and localities where the clubs were rolled out. This included training staff of Ministries of Youth, other relevant national institutions and implementing partners as facilitators.<sup>29</sup> These were then responsible for convening the clubs, coaching and maintaining group cohesion after the club period. The heavy time commitment made it necessary to train and contract implementing partners who could dedicate all their working time to JSC implementation, alongside civil servants, who could play a supervisory and supporting role. The commitment of facilitators greatly influenced the clubs' success, in terms of cohesion of the group members and their ability to find jobs.

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<sup>29</sup> Implementing partners are selected through a competitive process to carry out specific tasks and deliverables according to an agreed timeline. Implementing partners refer to legally recognized non-profit organizations, including non-governmental organizations, foundations, research institutes, education institutions, intergovernmental organizations, or similar. For the ILO, implementing partners can also be a constituent of the ILO, or an affiliated member of a constituent's workers', employers', or government organizations.



Egypt had a strong network of MOYS facilitators who had been previously certified under other ILO projects, as well as a master trainer<sup>30</sup> located in the country. Other PROSPECTS teams used the Egypt-based master trainer to start building a facilitator network in their countries of operation. Training of trainers commenced with facilitator training for Ministry representatives and/or implementing partners, but as the clubs were piloted and scaled up, the team in Jordan also started to train JSC alumni as facilitators. These included refugee facilitators who were able to provide first-hand experience of the job-search process.

## 1. Helping young people transition into employment

In Jordan, Kenya and Egypt, JSCs were first piloted as standalone interventions, without being intentionally linked to other areas of employment support, such as skills training. While JSCs can be part of Active Labour Market Programmes,<sup>31</sup> the first PROSPECTS pilots focused on testing the methodology where there were high rates of youth unemployment. They were not designed in response to identified skills gaps or challenges in accessing specific sectors of work, as happened later in Kenya (see next subsection).

JSCs primarily served as a programme tool to support young people in their transition to employment in the labour market. The peer-to-peer format was particularly well suited to PROSPECTS, as it brought young people from refugee and host community backgrounds together to work through challenges and offer mutual support in the process. Working collectively to overcome common challenges also served to strengthen social cohesion between groups.

In Egypt and Jordan, the first JSC pilot phase was carried out in government youth centres. In subsequent phases, Jordan applied the methodology in two main universities attended by students from both the refugee and host communities. JSCs usually target new graduates who have tried to find jobs without success and are in a position to dedicate all their time to an intensive job-search process. In Kenya, JSCs were incorporated into Offices of Career Services in TVET centres and institutions of higher education. In Iraq, they were introduced in career guidance offices in universities and TVET centres in Dohuk and Nineveh. The methodology was eminently suitable to be applied in these academic and training contexts and among students who were about to enter a challenging labour market.

The methodology was also rolled out in youth and community centres in more rural areas. In Uganda, it was introduced as a component of rural employment services, taking advantage of newly constructed job centres and mobile employment services in the Isingiro district. In Jordan, the JSC pilot phase included two clubs within refugee camps. The rationale for empowering young people and helping them translate their knowledge into livelihoods was equally applicable in refugee camps and settlements in rural areas, but livelihoods pathways here were more constrained, owing to movement restrictions and closed camp economies. Links to self-employment, business development and volunteerism were relevant for these cohorts, although the methodology traditionally focuses on waged employment, creating a potential misalignment between it and the economic reality of camp-based participants. The clubs were able to provide young people with an increased sense of agency over their livelihoods and life prospects, but immediate outcomes in terms of jobs were uneven. A quarter of participants in Jordan found jobs after the clubs, while in Uganda, 57 per cent of JSC participants found employment immediately after the clubs.

30 Master trainers are selected by the ILO and able to train and accredit facilitators of Job Search Clubs. As JSC is a relatively new methodology, the network of master trainers is small and the criteria for Master Trainers are not as stringent, for instance number of training hours, as in more established training programmes, such as Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB).

31 Active labour market policies comprise employment intermediation services, labour market training, entrepreneurship and self-employment, employment subsidies and public employment programmes.

## 2. Bridge between skills training and employment

Later application of the methodology saw JSC incorporated into skills development, in an effort to help trainees transition into the labour market. In Egypt, JSC graduates had the opportunity to participate in skills training that aligned with their career interests. In consultation with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, and digital labour platforms, the project team in Egypt developed a skills training programme for refugee and Egyptian youth, focusing on skills in web-based, cloud-computing services. JSC graduates were targeted as participants for the digital skills training. This was particularly advantageous for young refugees, as it gave them skills to access a wider selection of jobs that were web-based and thus not covered by sector-specific restrictions that applied to non-national workers in Egypt.

In Kenya, PROSPECTS used JSC as a form of post-training support. A digital skills training programme was rolled out and JSCs were organized to address graduates who had reported difficulty transitioning into relevant digital jobs. The JSC methodology was tailored to the job-search process in digital sectors and included modules on looking for work on online employment platforms, and awareness of risks and opportunities associated with digital work. This tailored form of support provided by the JSC saw higher rates of employment among its participants (67 per cent), compared with programmes that used JSC as a starting point for youth engagement (25 per cent in Egypt and 26 per cent in Jordan).

In Jordan, the second application of JSC targeted green jobs. Green Jobs Search Clubs helped participants look for jobs in green sectors, which also showed potential for growth. Green sectors and occupations are aligned to the Ministry of Labour's National Employment Plan, the aim of which is for 10 per cent of all jobs in Jordan to be green jobs by 2030. The Green Jobs Search Clubs were applied in two universities attended by refugee and host community students. Hence, the methodology was introduced in a setting where students already had initial career interests and a foundation of relevant skills.

## 3. Integrated programming on youth engagement

Following on from the iterations of JSC in Egypt, Jordan and Kenya, other countries adapted the methodology to support broader programme objectives on youth engagement. In these instances, other PROSPECTS activities had already been put in place and partnerships established to support youth engagement. In Iraq, JSCs were piloted in partnership with the MOYS youth directorates, TVET providers and career development centres within universities.<sup>32</sup> PROSPECTS had already supported these entities to implement career guidance, work-based learning and enterprise development training for young people. Staff within these institutions were already trained as trainers and familiar with ILO methodologies, such as SIYB. In some cases, SIYB trainers became JSC facilitators, providing a natural link between PROSPECTS activities. While the application of the methodology in Iraq was at an early stage at the time of writing this report, JSCs have been introduced into a landscape with well-established programming and partnerships on youth engagement.

In Uganda, JSCs were introduced within programming already under way on rural employment services. They were piloted in Isingiro district and built on an existing implementation agreement with an international organization that had extended employment services to rural areas under separate donor-funded projects. The follow-up for JSC participants included referrals to other ILO-supported services, such as TVET, digital skills training, apprenticeships and employability skills, all of which were active in serving young people in the Isingiro district.

While embedding the JSC methodology into well-established programmes for young people can support additional employment-related skills training that will improve future job prospects, the outcomes of the clubs may not reflect employment, but instead their participation in other project activities, such as cash for work. For this reason, the number of young people in jobs immediately following the clubs should distinguish between the types of employment or volunteer work, for instance fixed-term and waged employment, short-term cash for work, apprenticeships etc.

<sup>32</sup> These included the University of Dohuk and University of Mosul.

### ► Engaging the interest of refugee and host community youth in Job Search Clubs in Jordan

In 2019, the Jordanian Ministry of Youth (MOY) launched its National Youth Strategy, which called for a focus on increasing the availability and reach of services to young people through MOY centres. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, youth unemployment, that is, among those aged 15 to 24, exceeded 46 per cent; as of 2023, it remained at just over 41 per cent. This drew national attention to the situation of young people and confirmed the need for more concerted support. The MOY National Youth Strategy highlighted links to Jordan's Vision 2025, a detailed socio-economic plan put forward by the King, entitled "Developing career guidance, employment services and changing business culture". With these policy elements in place and against a backdrop of high youth unemployment, the PROSPECTS Jordan team adapted the JSC model from the programme in Egypt and applied it in partnership with UNICEF, using the MOY youth centres as spaces in which to convene the clubs.

Adaptation of the tool began in consultation with the PROSPECTS team in Egypt, along with the JSC master trainer in that country. The MOY in Jordan approved adaptations and provided feedback in the process. The version adapted for Jordan took into consideration labour market governance, particularly policies governing refugees' access to specific trades and occupations. This included work-permit processes, sectors that were "closed" to foreigners and regulations to register a business. Because Egypt and Jordan shared the same language, similar cultural contexts and groups of refugees, the adaptations were relatively easy to make.

Taking the example of Egypt, the PROSPECTS Jordan team established a partnership with the MOY. It did so jointly with UNICEF, whose mandate lent itself to the activity. It established a UN-to-UN Agreement with UNICEF for the JSCs, with UNICEF transferring funds to the ILO to apply and implement the methodology. Under this collaboration, UNICEF used its partnership with the MOY to secure youth centres as spaces in which to convene the clubs. It also conducted outreach activities related to the JSC among youth groups and youth-led organizations. The ILO was responsible for adaptation, application and follow-up. Both organizations appointed country-based staff as focal points to ensure coordination and oversee day-to-day operations.

The JSC started with training for facilitators, led by the master trainer from Egypt and including staff from UNICEF, the ILO, MOY and the partner selected to implement the clubs, the Business Development Centre. The week-long training covered the role of facilitators and skills for successful facilitation, supporting job-search functions and providing job-seekers with information on job vacancies and skills requirements. Given that the clubs would bring together both refugees and members of the host community, attention was given to addressing social cohesion between these groups.

In the pilot phase, 20 clubs were set up across the three largest refugee-hosting governorates. These included clubs inside the Zaatari and Azraq refugee camps. Each started with ten days of training, providing skills to build the employability profile of participants, followed by coaching and peer-to-peer support.

The pilot served as proof of concept, which enabled the MOY to pilot it and scale it up. By engaging the MOY directly in the adaptation and facilitator training, the Ministry's ownership of the methodology was reinforced. The Ministry subsequently endorsed JSC as a method to deliver the aims of the National Youth Strategy. JSCs responded to real needs, namely very high youth unemployment among both host and refugee communities in the country.



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After the pilot, the JSC methodology was further adapted to focus on “green” jobs.<sup>a</sup> This was partly influenced by the Ministry of Labour’s National Employment Plan 2023, the aim of which is for 10 per cent of all jobs in the Kingdom to be green by 2030. An accompanying green jobs assessment also demonstrated the current and anticipated potential for green jobs in Jordan’s agriculture, energy, manufacturing, tourism, transport, waste management and water sectors. The format of the clubs remained similar to those convened in the pilot phase but introduced the concept of green jobs and how these contribute to environmental preservation and restoration. In two cases, green JSCs were convened in universities, which provided a pool of qualified refugee and Jordanian youth in the process of pursuing green professions. In addition, a jobs fair was organized with private sector employers in green sectors and enterprises.

The evolution of JSC in Jordan illustrates a model that is linked to national policies and processes, while also considering genuine labour market challenges faced by young people. The methodology was relevant and beneficial to both refugees and host community members, with both groups reporting similar levels of employment directly after their participation in the clubs. ■

a Green jobs refer to jobs that contribute to or restore the natural environment – see ILO, *Green Jobs, Green Economy, Just Transition and Related Concepts*, 2015.

## ► 3.2 Narrative and lessons learned

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### Operational lessons learned

The lessons learned from JSC implementation are presented below and relate to targeting, implementing partners, adapting the JSC methodology to specific contexts and insight from new iterations of JSCs.

#### Targeting young people in need of job-search support

As mentioned in the country examples, JSC targets a younger cohort of individuals (aged 16–25) who have difficulty navigating the job-search process. It is a fairly resource-intensive method, as it provides coaching in a small-group setting and follows the small cohort in the months after the training is completed (the recommended number of participants per club is 16 and the recommended duration of follow-up support is three months). The clubs are kept small in order to foster the development of a close rapport between participants and so that coaches can provide individual support. Given the time and resource intensity of the methodology, careful targeting is key to obtain desirable outcomes, that is, that the young people involved find employment.

Having young people with the same or similar skill sets makes it easier to foster peer-to-peer support. This helps in exchanging relevant experiences, tips and insight about potential employers and (sub)sectors. This was the case in Kenya, where JSCs were introduced as a form of post-training support. This resulted in better employment outcomes measured three months after the clubs concluded (67 per cent employed, compared with 25 per cent in Egypt and 26 per cent in Jordan). It also targeted a specific sector where young people had been trained (digital), meaning the guidance and support to find a job could be more tailored. If the objective is to have young people successfully navigate the job-search process and find jobs independently, then targeting the graduates of skill trainings can be effective in leading to employment.

While the JSC methodology is not designed for specific sectors, the examples from Kenya and Jordan show that a sector-based approach can deliver tailored support. For instance, in Kenya, JSC participants learned to target their CVs towards jobs in web design and development. At the time of writing, Kenya and Egypt had adapted the JSC methodology for digital sectors, while Jordan had adapted it for “green” jobs. A sector-based approach will also bring together young people with similar skill sets, thus enabling exchange of relevant tips and insight, as noted previously.

If a sector-based approach is used, it is important to verify that jobs in formal employment are also open to refugees. In some countries, certain occupations are closed to non-national workers. Aligning sectors to labour market governance also avoids raising young refugees’ expectations regarding careers that they are not legally able to pursue. While it is up to the JSC participants themselves to navigate the job-search process on their own using the skills they have gained through the clubs, having up-to-date information on laws and policies is important for a well-informed job-search process.

Age is another important point for consideration. The JSC manual sets the target age range as 16–25. However, refugees have likely had their education and livelihoods interrupted and delayed owing to displacement. In Egypt, for instance, JSCs targeted an older age range (18–34). It can also be the case that adults re-train for new professions and occupations but then lack experience in looking for jobs in those fields. Furthermore, in Egypt, a training course on coding attracted slightly older participants who were still interested in the JSC methodology. Because the methodology is designed for individuals who have encountered challenges looking for jobs, the methodology is nevertheless relevant for older adults.



Geographical targeting is another consideration, as illustrated by the different country experiences with JSC. PROSPECTS targets areas that host refugees, which can have different characteristics both within and between countries – for instance, rural versus urban, and in- and out-of-camp settings. JSC outcomes are generally better when the clubs are held in areas with more economic opportunities. In Jordan, for example, JSCs were convened outside and inside camps. Within camps, there are limited employment opportunities and while those that do exist are an important source of income and purpose, they generally consist of paid and unpaid volunteer work with INGOs.

Using the JSC methodology within AIMS (Approach to Inclusive Market Systems) or business development services interventions may be another way to apply job-search modules in more rural or camp settings, where self-employment and employment in MSMEs are more common. The methodology focuses on waged employment, but considering how young people can be directed to business development support is important. As young people explore their own interests and capacities, they may find they are more drawn to self-employment than waged employment, in which case having a pathway to SIYB or other types of business development training is good practice. This can also provide more opportunities for young people as employees of MSMEs.

## Choosing partners to implement JSCs

National partners, whether from government or public institutions, were trained in the JSC methodology. This involved a three-to-five-day training programme for staff nominated by their institution, led by a master trainer. This was followed by practical application of the theory, overseen by the master trainer and ILO staff. Across all countries where JSCs were implemented, they were aligned to existing national strategies and/or initiatives on youth. It was important, therefore, to have partners from national institutions who were either responsible for such strategies, or had a clear role in their implementation. In some cases, this was the Ministry of Youth, while in others, partners came from the youth employment side. This was the case in Kenya, where JSCs were referenced in the National Career Guidance Framework and implemented in partnership with the State Department of Labour and Skills Development.

Sensitivities regarding employment for non-national workers also varies from country to country and influenced what partnerships were pursued. National stakeholders, such as Ministry of Labour career counsellors, whose mandates were restricted to serving only national workers were not an effective partner for JSC. This was sometimes the case with Public Employment Services and Ministries of Labour. As illustrated by the experiences in Jordan and Egypt, partnering with Ministries of Youth allowed PROSPECTS to work with national and refugee youth. In Iraq, where the refugee population is relatively small compared with the number of IDPs and returnees, JSCs were organized in partnership with the MOYS, as well as Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs labour directorates in Nineveh and Dohuk.

Education and training institutions also proved to be useful partners, particularly given their close connection to large groups of young people with foundational skills sets. In Iraq, Kenya and Jordan, the career guidance offices of training institutions and universities were used for outreach and organization. In all instances, these institutions both accepted and accredited refugee students, which is an additional consideration for programming in forced displacement contexts.

In addition to partnering with national institutions as a measure to support ownership and sustainability, PROSPECTS teams needed support from an implementing partner to oversee the day-to-day operations of JSCs. Civil servants had competing priorities and time constraints, whereas implementing partners were brought onboard and were able to dedicate their full time to JSC implementation. In Jordan, the Business Development Centre was engaged as an implementing partner to support JSC rollout. It was responsible for outreach, organization and running the clubs, while the MOY oversaw the process and provided access to its centres in which to convene the clubs. One of the Business Development Centre's tasks was to create a plan to institutionalize JSC within the MOY, involving a capacity assessment and mapping of resources that would be required to take up the methodology. Implementing partners were used in all PROSPECTS countries, most of them international organizations and with backgrounds in career guidance and skills development.

## Logistical considerations for launching JSCs

Country contexts dictated where and how the clubs were set up. For instance, JSC requires internet access for the modules on online job portals. In Uganda, limited smartphone ownership and limited or intermittent mobile network coverage in rural areas meant the JSCs needed to be organized in a space where participants could access the internet, tablets and/or computers. In contrast, in Jordan, internet and wireless infrastructure was more readily available to individuals, owing to good 4G/5G coverage and high smartphone ownership among both refugees and host community members. Venues were therefore less dependent on Wi-Fi and computers, as participants could generally use their own devices.

Another logistical consideration was choosing training times based on distance and ease of transport. In Uganda, it became evident that longer training sessions (more hours per day) would be more convenient for trainees, as it would reduce their travel time to the training venues and the associated transport costs. On the other hand, in Jordan, trainees wanted shorter sessions so that they could fit the training around their other daily commitments. This was particularly the case for female participants, who cited competing family obligations. The target age range (16–25) can also mean that there are potential conflicts with school and/or training times.

## ► 3.3 Sustainability

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To make interventions more sustainable, they were anchored in national policy frameworks and institutions, so that governments would take ownership. In Jordan, JSC was endorsed by the Ministry of Youth as a methodology to realize the objectives of the National Youth Strategy. In Kenya, it was included in the National Career Guidance Framework.

In relation to building capacity, successful rollout at scale requires the development of networks of nationally based JSC facilitators. The small pool of master facilitators was one factor that limited scalability across PROSPECTS countries. As the methodology expands, more training of master trainers will need to be delivered. The format of this could be similar to certification of SIYB trainers and master trainers. A well-established network would be able to respond to requests for implementation, independent of the ILO.

## ► 3.4 Integration with other areas of work

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It has become clear over the course of PROSPECTS phase I that employment and livelihood outcomes can be strengthened if members of the target group are able to access a multiplicity of services. JSC was originally launched under PROSPECTS without being intentionally linked to other programme areas but, over time and with experience, it was (re)introduced in different country programmes as part of an integrated package of employment support.

As demonstrated in Uganda and Kenya, JSC has been combined with activities on career guidance and employment services. JSCs are now a means through which employment services can build young people's capacity and confidence to search for jobs. In Uganda, the methodology was introduced into job centres established in rural refugee-hosting areas with the support of the ILO. The centres already had trained staff and cohorts of young people visiting them. Therefore, it was a straightforward process to provide additional training on the JSC methodology to these staff members and to facilitate outreach to interested young people.



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Links to skills provision differed. In Kenya, JSCs were introduced to support skilled graduates who had trouble entering the labour market. In other words, they were not planned from the outset of the students' training but were introduced as a form of post-training support, in response to graduates' reports of difficulties finding work. This also highlights one important aspect of the methodology: regular follow-up after the clubs conclude. This helps measure employment outcomes and collect information on challenges encountered. This feedback mechanism allowed the programme to introduce the clubs as a response mechanism. In Egypt, JSC participants were directed to skills training to improve their chances of finding work in the digital sector. Referrals to other areas of programming like this can be useful if JSC participants recognize the gaps in their skills that make them less competitive in the job-search process.

PROSPECTS Iraq introduced JSC after it had already rolled out SIYB and work-based learning with the Ministry of Youth and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The fact that SIYB and work-based learning opportunities were set up by PROSPECTS meant that JSC participants could be referred into these trainings. The link with SIYB was particularly useful, because of the limited formal-sector job opportunities in the areas where PROSPECTS operates. In many cases, entrepreneurship serves as one of the few viable livelihood pathways for young refugees and host community members.

There were other areas of programming outside of employment and skills development that were connected with the JSC methodology. The JSC manual includes modules on labour rights and social protection. Links to Work Wise Youth: A guide to youth rights at work can also be taken advantage of for future adaptations of JSC modules in new countries and regions.

There is also potential for greater integration within the humanitarian, development and peace nexus and the work of other partners. The situation of young people is a key priority for governments and donors. The JSC methodology can be applied in other joint programmes and adapted by partners to establish collaboration. For example, the private sector mandate of the International Finance Corporation could be valuable in this context, in terms of forging links between JSC participants and larger private sector employers in PROSPECTS countries. UNHCR's refugee networks can also continue to be used for JSC outreach in refugee communities. UNICEF can continue to serve as a key partner, but there may also be potential for joint working and integration beyond referrals and the use of its youth networks. The PROSPECTS teams in Iraq and Lebanon had started to work on programming to engage young people, which complemented UNICEF's Generation of Innovation Leaders (GIL).

## ► 3.5 Challenges

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A key challenge for JSC and its continued application is the cost. JSC is a resource-intensive methodology, given that it requires two facilitators to guide a small cohort for two weeks – plus the associated costs of venue hire, transport and materials. It might be more viable in the long term, therefore, if work on JSC were undertaken jointly between academics, government officials and private sector actors. To date, piloting of JSCs has been financed by PROSPECTS, but in subsequent phases, national resources need to be allocated if the methodology is to be implemented sustainably. Documenting the job placements of graduates and their employment trajectories after participation can help make a case for investing national resources in JSCs.

A second challenge relates to the institutionalization of JSC. The clubs can help operationalize strategies and national priorities, particularly around youth engagement, but it may be difficult to institutionalize the methodology in government agencies and services that are understaffed and underfunded. Potential solutions to this include establishing networks of facilitators to support JSC in partnership with national counterparts and as part of a national strategy for youth employment. As already mentioned, a larger network of country-based master trainers will need to be established to accompany the process of institutionalization.

A third challenge relates to the context in which JSCs are initiated and managing the expectations of young people. Many of the economies in which the JSCs have been applied under the PROSPECTS programme are weak and do not offer sufficient formal sector jobs. Their labour market information systems are also weak, creating a challenge in providing market-relevant guidance to participants. In contexts where forcibly displaced people are confined to camps or are afforded limited employment options, consideration needs to be given to whether there are actually jobs and opportunities accessible to them. Without these opportunities, JSC inevitably results in limited outcomes and unmet expectations, particularly for refugee youth. The methodology can help young people navigate challenging labour markets and build confidence in their own capacities.

Another challenge is the time required to influence behaviour change. JSC is premised on encouraging young people to be active agents in their own career development. Such an approach may take time to have an effect, particularly if young people have grown up in systems that – intentionally or unintentionally – have taught them to be passive. While initial outcomes vary depending on how the JSCs were rolled out, outcomes might be better in the medium and long term if the proactive behavioural change is given time to mature. Having the methodology embedded in career guidance offices of universities and training institutions can also support longer-term behavioural change, as the services keep up with the students and trainees over the years.

With regard to the nexus partnership, thus far, the ILO has been the lead agency in implementing the JSC methodology. Other partners have provided access to networks (refugee and youth) and space (UNHCR community centres, UNICEF-supported youth centres).





- ▶ JSC is a unique methodology to empower disadvantaged job-seekers in becoming independent in their job search, drawing on activation, positive reinforcement and group support. This proactive approach is particularly relevant for young refugees, who may face additional restrictions on the sectors and types of jobs they can access.
- ▶ JSC brings forcibly displaced and host community participants together around a common challenge and reinforces social cohesion when approached through a conflict-sensitive lens.
- ▶ JSC is highly adaptable and open to sector-specific applications. This is evident from adaptations for the digital economy and the green economy, whereby young people were provided with tailored guidance on how to search and apply for jobs in the related sectors.
- ▶ JSC is best incorporated into employment support and/or employability services. It is important to have trained personnel who are able to inform and refer job-seekers to the most appropriate service for their situation and career objectives. In this respect, strong labour market information systems also support Job Search Club outcomes.
- ▶ JSC should constitute a particular service offer for specific and carefully selected target groups. Referrals from one service to another should be possible for participants who realize that they are “on the wrong track”. This might be the case for young people who, when exploring their interests and capacities in the JSCs, realize they are better suited to self-employment. In such cases, referrals to business development services can be good practice.
- ▶ The JSC methodology can be used as a tool to operationalize national strategies and development plans, particularly on youth employment. This can also help young people target their job search in sectors that the government has prioritized for job creation, such as green and digital jobs.
- ▶ When applying the JSC methodology for refugees, it is important to select a national partner whose services are inclusive of refugees. Other important considerations for refugee participants include having up-to-date and relevant information on the sectors and occupations non-national workers are permitted to work in by law, as well as on work-permit and business registration processes.

