



Technology Industry Leader in the Middle East Challenge

As a country without an abundance of natural resources, Jordan must rely on its people's skills to drive the economy. When Jordan's King Abdullah II took the throne in 1999, he challenged the private sector to devise a plan for building the country's young information and communications technology (ICT) sector by utilizing Jordan's highly skilled and educated workforce.



Photo: Studio Harron

Estarta is one of the Jordanian IT companies that has capitalized on the opportunities the REACH Initiative has offered and now exports to the U.S. markets.

“The ICT industry in Jordan takes great pride in our national ICT initiative. USAID provided Jordan’s ICT stakeholders the tools we needed to develop this strategy, including expertise, financial resources, as well as moral support along the way.”

- Ra'ed A. Bilbessi, CEO, Information Technology Association Jordan (int@j)

Results

The REACH Initiative has helped transform Jordan into an ICT leader in the Middle East. Jordan's ICT sector has seen tremendous growth since the REACH Initiative was launched, in spite of persistent regional insecurity and a global decline in technology spending and investment. Since 2000, the number of ICT-related jobs in Jordan has grown from 1,250 to 9,000, the ICT sector has attracted more than \$79 million in cumulative foreign direct investment, and export values total more than \$47 million. The 2002 Jordan ICT Forum, the culmination of USAID's support to the ICT industry, attracted nearly 1,000 participants from more than thirty-five countries including top U.S. and European executives, who praised Jordan's dynamic approach and strong public-private cooperation.

Initiative

USAID has been a driving force behind the REACH Initiative - a government-business partnership and national strategy to develop Jordan into a leader in exporting ICT products and services. Launched in 1999, USAID funded the initiative's founding document, which outlined a five-year plan for cooperation among industry, government, and other partners to achieve these ambitious goals.

To coordinate the private sector's contribution to the initiative, USAID helped create int@j, now the country's most dynamic and active business association. The AMIR Program assisted int@j in organizing workshops and producing new strategy documents for each phase of the initiative. The AMIR Program also fielded local legal experts to help draft and promote new or revised legislation related to ICT, resulting in the adoption or amendment of twenty-five laws and 273 articles.

