



## FIRST PERSON

# Entrepreneur Links Boost Business

**Contacts with other entrepreneurs help Muna's pickle-making "hobby" become a business**



Photo: Mahmoud Shawkat

***Entrepreneur Muna Hamdan says, "The business-to-business service is fast and makes everything easier. I've used it too many times to count. I look for suppliers, and I use the connections I make as opportunities to market my products."***

Muna Hamdan needs an endless supply of jars and plastic bags for her home-based business producing jams and pickles. She spent valuable time searching for suppliers until she heard about the Business-to-Business (B2B) service at the Jordan Micro Credit Company, a USAID-supported institution that seeks to help entrepreneurs through small loans and support services.

The B2B database, the first such resource in Jordan, is designed to help small and medium-sized businesses like Muna's access information about local suppliers and buyers. In addition to finding potential business partners, clients can use the database to compare prices or find new business ideas by looking for gaps in the marketplace.

USAID helped the Jordan Micro Credit Company create the B2B service as part of a larger effort to establish a sustainable microfinance industry in Jordan and help low-income Jordanians become a part of the country's economic growth. Within ten months of its December 2003 launch — and without marketing — the database had 27,000 entries representing more than half a million products. Muna is one of more than 300 entrepreneurs who have used the service to create more than 170 business links.

"The business-to-business service is fast and makes everything easier," says Muna. "I've used it too many times to count. I look for suppliers, and I use the connections I make as opportunities to market my products."

In addition to generating opportunities for Jordanian entrepreneurs, the B2B has also spurred a significant cultural shift, helping women do business directly with men — an occurrence that is rare in Jordan due to Islamic social conventions. More than 40 percent of the links created through the B2B are between men and women.