

JORDAN – LENS



Jordan's economy is among the smallest in the Middle East. Urban and rural areas house 22 poverty pockets – a concentrated

area of severe poverty with a variety of health, education and infrastructure problems.



Creating business solutions to poverty

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QUICKFACTS

- 90% of businesses are MSEs, only 4% women owned
- Only 10% of all bank lending is to MSEs
- 75% of people do not have a bank account
- 14% unemployment, 29% youth unemployment
- 60% are not economically active
- 96% literacy
- Population 7.9M

Background

Jordan is at the center of a political and economic crisis that began with the Arab Spring but has continued as key neighbors and trading partners—Egypt and Syria—experience on-going instability and outright conflict. Regional turmoil and stalled economic growth have driven Jordanian gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates down from eight percent in 2008 to less than three percent since 2010.

While poverty rates in Jordan fell in the early 2000s, they have remained

at around 13 percent since that time. Fiscal pressures to reduce subsidies and better target safety nets, as well as massive influxes of refugees from Iraq and Syria, are straining an already overburdened system, and are likely to lead to increasing rates of poverty nationwide.

Micro and small-sized enterprises (MSEs) employ over 50 percent of the Jordanian workforce, but they face unique constraints to growth, including an unsupportive policy

environment, firm-level inefficiencies, challenges accessing finance and an inadequately trained workforce.



USAID LENS

The USAID Local Enterprise Support Project (LENS) is a five-year project that supports small business growth and better economic planning to strengthen Jordanian communities against economic adversity.

The project brings together local governments, business owners, and key community groups to collaborate together on initiatives that will boost

economic development, create jobs in their communities, and are inclusive of women and youth. Many initiatives will support the growth of micro and small enterprises (MSEs).

MSEs are often at the heart of individual, family and community livelihoods within vulnerable populations, and local towns that have a high number of locally owned

businesses have more engaged citizens who are invested in developing a stronger and prosperous community.

USAID LENS currently works in the governorates of Irbid, Zarqa and Amman, in areas outside the Greater Amman Municipality. It plans to expand its operations into at least one other governorate in 2015.

Outcome | 5-Year Project Budget

- Promoting better policies to encourage business and investment
- Supporting local economic development (LED) and planning
- Encouraging business growth in key sectors
- Helping business owners and local government access finance to fund their initiatives
- Building stronger local networks to encourage economic development

