MARKET ASSESSMENT REPORT AL-QURNA DISTRICT
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLIC</td>
<td>Canadian Leaders in International Consulting Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus group discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>HH</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KII</td>
<td>Key informant interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMA</td>
<td>Labour market assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoLSA</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSME</td>
<td>Micro, small &amp; medium enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-government organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC</td>
<td>Norwegian Refugee Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVET</td>
<td>Technical vocational and education training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VT</td>
<td>Vocational training</td>
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<tr>
<td>VTC</td>
<td>Vocational training centre</td>
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Executive summary

Canadian Leaders in International Consulting (CLIC) was contracted by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to conduct a labour market assessment for Basra and Al-Qurna cities in the Governorate of Basra. The Emergency Livelihood Project, supported by UNDP with generous funding from the Government of Japan, aims to train female and male youth in skills for employment and to assist them in finding employment during and/or after training. The aim of the labour market assessment was to map out supply and demand in the local labour market and to assess the scope of MSME scale-up and start-up opportunities.

The assessment had two specific objectives:

1. To assess markets (both supply and demand) in selected sectors with the potential for growth and promising income earning opportunities, including the business climate and potential for start-up and scale-up of MSMEs.

2. To assess the supply and demand sides of the labour market in both the private and public sector, including the identification of skills gaps and training needs among vulnerable youth and women from poor households, rural-to-urban-migrant families, IDPs and minority communities.

CLIC, referred to as the Consultant in this report, applied a mixed methods approach for the assessment, utilizing quantitative surveys with youth job seekers and business owners/managers, and qualitative KII s and FGDs targeting female and male youth job seekers, key government representatives, and employers. Field observations and secondary literature supported the primary data collection, and the general findings from the assessment were validated with the Emergency Livelihoods Cluster on November 28th, 2019 in Erbil, KRG.

Fifteen representatives from employers participated in the business survey and 35 youth participated in the job seekers survey. In addition, youth were engaged in two FGDs (one each with female and male youth) to provide contextual information for the survey results. Employers were also engaged through an FGD and key informants from government and business institutions were engaged through interviews, providing contextual information for the employer survey results. All data collection was conducted with a gender lens; separate focus groups were conducted with female and male youth of 15-34 years of age and female enumerators and researchers were employed to collect information from female respondents.

Data collection for the assessment was conducted during a very challenging period in the history of Iraq, in the South and in Basra governorate there were violent demonstrations which led to the shutdown of government agencies and the establishment of checkpoints throughout the area which limited the mobility of the Consultant’s team and as such, the assignment took longer than expected.

Main Findings

Similar to most markets in Iraq, the sector experiencing the most growth (other than oil) is construction – infrastructure, commercial, and housing – as the country seeks to rebuild after decades of conflict and
destruction. Construction companies were reported as being the largest employers, however these employers have experienced constraints due to inconsistent payment and honouring of contracts on the part of the government. Small commercial and housing subsectors had not experienced these difficulties and their growth continued, increasing demand for skills such as electrical wiring, décor, and finishing. Yet, youth do not see this sector as an attractive career path in Al-Qurna; youth indicated that the harsh conditions and nature of the sector did not provide security of employment. Micro and small enterprises in urban areas employed the greatest number of people including retail stores, hospitality services, food production, mobile telephone and computer repair shops, hair salons, repair of small electrical equipment, and small-scale manufacturing (welding, carpentry, blacksmithing).

Youth seeking employment in Al-Qurna reported a variety of obstacles to their achievement of regular, paid work. Both youth and employers noted that a lack of experience and necessary skills were the main obstacles to employment. This was coupled with a lack of training institutes in the area to deliver technical and vocational trainings, with only one mentioned by respondents, Al Najah Centre, all other trainings were reportedly provided to employees by their employers directly. Compounding this situation, employers have employed low-skilled foreign workers who they claim work harder than Iraqi staff, which has depressed average salaries across the district and made available employment even less enticing for youth.

Women continue to face barriers related to customs, traditions, and discrimination as they seek employment. As a result, female youth were limited in the types of sectors and professions available to them including beauty, food processing, sewing, education (teaching private lessons), and E-marketing (a new and growing sector in Al-Qurna).

Youth respondents reported relying on their parents, partners, or family members as their main income source as the majority reported they did not hold permanent employment and were instead working part-time. The majority of youth respondents reported they had not received any vocational training or skills training, but that most were interested in participating in such training. A reported challenge was lack of access to information about training and employment opportunities, as youth did not know where to look for this information. Youth also reported that corruption, lack of employment opportunities, and employers’ preference for foreign workers were barriers to their finding full-time employment.

Employers also reported facing a variety of challenges including a lack of sought-after technical skills and experience among job applicants, and applicants’ expectations of higher salaries than employers could afford. All employers engaged through the assessment reported that commitment and discipline, realistic expectations about work, and overall physical ability to do the job were the most important requirements they considered when hiring an employee. Employers reported positive attitudes towards youth employees, describing them as reliable, hard-working, skilled, knowledgeable, and professional. Employers showed an interest in hiring interns or on-the-job trainees and all employers reported an interest in hiring employees that had undergone vocational training. However, employers were mixed in their commitment to recruit female employees due to the physical requirements in certain sectors (i.e. construction or manufacturing) and social norms regarding the role of women in the family and community. Employers reported that the sectors currently hiring the most employees in Al-Qurna were the food sector, commerce/trading, agriculture, and manufacturing.
Recommendations

The main recommendation of the assessment is for NRC to focus its livelihood support on the provision of training for job seekers to meet the needs of micro and small enterprises as they represent the largest growth in Iraq, and in Al-Qurna in particular. MSMEs should be the focus as large enterprises are facing serious challenges due to difficulty of doing business in Iraq as stated in the World Bank’s economic report for fall 2019. In addition, connections should be made between livelihoods actors in the area including VTCs, employers, government agencies, business institutions, and NGOs in order to promote a coordinated response to the need for employment among youth and the need among employers for skills employees.

1. Provide skills training for male youth in carpentry, repair of electrical appliances, and computer and telephone repair. Provide skills training for female youth in E-marketing and beauty training, building from and complementing similar training available (but limited in trainee numbers) at the Al Najah VTC.

2. Integrate soft and employability skills training into exiting VTC syllabus including life skills, communication, self-confidence skills, and critical thinking skills to increase employability and job retention.

3. Integrate literacy and numeracy training as a component of all training programmes.

4. Support the Al Najah VTC to expand existing technical and vocational trainings through the provision of training materials and specialized trainers, focusing on vocations listed in the first recommendation above.

5. Support existing micro, small, and medium scale businesses in the construction sector (specifically electrical wiring and installation, and décor finishes) via cash grants to scale up their businesses.

6. Provide training and support to employers and business stakeholders on gender-sensitive workplaces and labour codes, along with community sensitization sessions that promote the rights of women and the importance of women as income earners and decision makers in the household.

7. Work with VTCs and existing training providers to identify adapted training schedules that will allow flexibility for individuals with household or income earning responsibilities. Schedules can be adapted to half day or evening classes, to allow individuals to work during the day and attend classes in the evenings.

8. Work with VTCs to provide supports for vulnerable or marginalized individuals in the community to allow them to participate in the training programmes. For example, providing childcare to allow mothers to attend classes or providing transportation supports for individuals participating in vocational training only available in Basra city.

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9. Promote private sector engagement and partnerships with social security institutions and insurance companies for the provision of social security and health insurance for workers in the private sector, increasing interest in employment in the private sector.

10. Develop apprenticeships/internships/on-the-job training programmes for youth and adults in order to gain the necessary skills and experience required in the job market. This will require financial and business training support for businesses that participate and accept trainees, ensuring a safe workplace for training participants.

11. Work with MSMEs, training centres, government, and other stakeholders to advertise jobs and trainings available through job campaigns, employment fairs, and social media. Work with stakeholders to utilize existing professional platforms for identification of candidates and to improve articulation of available jobs to the general public.

12. Support youth interested in opening their own businesses via partnerships with existing financial institutions such as the cooperative housing institution and MoSLA for provision of loans (cash-in-hand or through hawala offices) with low rates.

Conclusion

The recommendations presented here are specific to Al-Qurna, they were drawn to identify the sectors and sub-sectors that represent opportunity for employment of youth in large numbers. The findings indicate that growth areas are within construction, information communication and technology (ICT), and retail business sectors. The study also identified some specific opportunities for female youth in Al-Qurna, recognizing restrictions imposed on women and providing employment opportunities that comply with these restrictions. The assessment also identified micro and small size companies in the retail, hospitality, ICT, and mobile sectors as providing the greatest opportunity for employment for youth. However, MSMEs face a variety of challenges to their growth, limiting their ability to hire additional employees.
1 Introduction

1.1 Context

The city of Al-Qurna is located within Basra district and is flanked by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and Shat Al Arab on the Arab Gulf. It is located 74 kilometers north of Basra city and has a population of approximately 500,000, according to estimates from the local council.

Al-Qurna is an agricultural area that has provided abundantly in the past and has continued to provide irrespective of the economic conditions that may have affected the agricultural sector negatively in other regions of the country. Al-Qurna is known for its vast oil deposits, which the government has claimed may be the largest in the world. Al-Qurna is dominated by the private sector, with a large service industry available to meet the needs of oil companies in the area.

Similar to other southern cities, Al-Qurna is a tribal society with deep-rooted beliefs in traditional gender roles. The tribal-based society represents the largest population in Al-Qurna, which has implications on economic activity in the city and access to resources as women generally do not work outside of the home and are not seen as income earners for the household.

In addition to its oil deposits, according to cultural websites, Al-Qurna is where the Garden of Eden was believed to have existed. It is also believed that the Tree of Life remains in Al-Qurna. A factor which has driven tourism to the area in the past, however recent conflict and instability have reduced this sector in the city. In addition, Al-Qurna marshlands have a great potential to be a tourism destination as these unusual bodies of water have incredible historical significance to Iraq and humanity and were designated an UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2018. According to UNESCO,

“...The Ahwar is made up of seven components: three archaeological sites and four wetland marsh areas in southern Iraq. The archaeological cities of Uruk and Ur and the Tell Eridu archaeological site form part of the remains of the Sumerian cities and settlements that developed in southern Mesopotamia between the 4th and the 3rd millennium BCE in the marshy delta of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The Ahwar of Southern Iraq – also known as the Iraqi Marshlands – are unique, as one of the world’s largest inland delta systems, in an extremely hot and arid environment.”

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Similar to Basra city and other parts of Iraq, Al-Qurna suffers from high unemployment. The economy in Al-Qurna was once multisector, with a significant agricultural sector that produced high yields and employed a large number of the citizens. However instability and conflict have damaged the economy and infrastructure in Al-Qurna, as with the rest of the governorate. The assessment found that agriculture, livestock, fishing, education, blacksmithing, and carpentry were the strongest sectors in Al-Qurna, with a high potential of generating income and employment opportunities for male youth, while E-marketing and home-based jobs represented income generating opportunities for female youth as they were viewed as acceptable to conservative members of families and community members.

During the period in which the assessment was conducted, Iraq was rocked by wide-spread demonstrations. The people of Al-Qurna, particularly its youth, participated vigorously in these demonstrations. According to news reports and the Consultant’s field staff, the protesters blocked roads and barred government officials from their offices. All over Southern Iraq, unemployment was perceived to be the main driver for the demonstrations:

“In Basra, a city of more than 4 million, the unemployment rate shot up sharply to at least 30 percent, according to deputy Gov. Dhirgham al-Ajwadi. Between 30,000 and 35,000 students graduate from the city’s private and government universities and institutions, and most of them end up without jobs, he said, blaming federal officials for not focusing on what the labor market needs.”

The demonstrations disrupted business and commerce in the area, as oil companies evacuated their foreign staff for fear of becoming a target and many businesses closed during this period. However, Iraqi business owners also indicated that the cash crunch experienced during the ISIS fighting years and the ongoing slow payment process forced many businesses to shut down, in particular larger employers. Micro and small business seem to be able to survive in this economic environment as they rely more on family and friends to support them and in many cases they can adapt their staff numbers as needed.

1.2 Assessment Aim and Objectives

Main Objective

The main objective was to conduct a labour market assessment to determine supply and demand in the local labour market and assess the scope of MSME scale-up and start-up in Al-Qurna.

Specific objectives

1. To assess markets (both supply and demand) in selected sectors with the potential for growth and promising income earning opportunities, including the business climate and potential for start-up and scale-up of MSMEs.

4 “Soaring unemployment fuels protests in southern Iraq”, Sinan Salaheddin, Associated Press. https://apnews.com/c335ab38b6924cb8b71bf9579ff8380c
2. To assess the supply and demand sides of the labour market in both the private and public sector, including the identification of skills gaps and training needs among vulnerable youth and women from poor households, rural-to-urban-migrant families, IDPs and minority communities.
2 Labour Market Assessment Methodology

2.1.1 Overall Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this assessment, CLIC utilized a mixed method approach, including both qualitative and quantitative data collection to provide a complete overview of the labour market in both the private and public sector, including the identification of skills gaps and training needs among vulnerable youth and women from poor households, rural-to-urban-migrant families, IDPs, and minority communities. The data collected was also analyzed to provide recommendations of selected sectors with the potential for growth and promising income earning opportunities, including the business climate and potential for start-up and scale-up of MSMEs.

Through the quantitative youth survey, 35 youth that were unemployed or seeking employment at the time of data collection were interviewed. In addition, surveys were conducted with 15 employers at local businesses. Qualitative data was collected through three focus group discussions (one each with female and male youth, and one with female and male employers) and through ten key informant interviews with stakeholders in Al-Qurna including:

- Directorate of Agriculture
- Member of the Municipal Council
- Director of Justice for Al-Qurna District
- Head of the Agricultural Training Unit
- And other relevant stakeholders.

In addition, one case study was reviewed of a successful MSME owner to understand how businesses have been established in the area and the challenges they have faced.

The desk review conducted in the inception phase, coupled with the qualitative and quantitative data triangulated the data on which the Consultant was able to present the findings and recommendations. The information was validated on November 28th, 2019 with the Livelihood Cluster Meeting coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The table below provides an overview of which data collection tools was used for this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Targeted Respondents</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Survey</td>
<td>Unemployed youth survey</td>
<td>Vulnerable youth whose livelihoods are under pressure and with limited income generating opportunities (male)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vulnerable youth whose livelihoods are under pressure and with limited income generating opportunities (female)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employers survey</td>
<td>Business employers of small, medium, and large companies</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1.2 Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative survey was administered to 15 business owners in order to explore multiple aspects of employment in Al-Qurna. This survey covered the overall business sector; assessed bottlenecks/challenges facing the business sector; identified opportunities and interests for mentorships, apprenticeships, and job placements; businesses’ perceptions of job seekers; constraints to starting or expanding business; and soft and technical skills and characteristics most desired by employers versus the existing skills and characteristics of current employees. Furthermore, 35 male and female youth were interviewed to assess their perceived skills gaps and to understand their preferred technical and vocational courses and sectors of employment.

2.1.3 Qualitative Data Collection

To triangulate the quantitative data, CLIC conducted two different types of qualitative data collection: ten key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders in Al-Qurna and three focus groups discussions (one each with female and male youth, and with employers). The youth FGDs were conducted by identifying female and male members of each of the studied communities in Al-Qurna between the ages of 15 and 25 and aimed to include youth from different socioeconomic groups and levels of education. These sources provided information to triangulate and contextualize the findings from the quantitative data collected via surveys with employers and youth.

2.1.4 Method of Interviewing

Quantitative Survey

The Consultant used a standard face-to-face data collection method, with responses recorded through mobile data collection (KOBO platform). The goal of 50% female respondents for the business survey was not achieved as Al-Qurna had a very traditional society with proscribed roles for gender and the majority of businesses in the city were managed by men.

During data collection for the business survey, the enumerators started from a common landmark in each of the districts, such as the mosque, the square or the main street. The interviewers adopted a simple walking and systematic sampling method; they selected one out of 15 businesses for the survey until the total sample size was reached. In addition, for the business survey the owners of the businesses or director or permanent worker were prioritized for the interview in order to provide sufficient information regarding hiring practices and other aspects of the survey.
If the randomly selected business owner did not want to participate in the survey, the next business immediately to the right was selected. However, in case the alternative business to the right also did not want to participate, the next business immediately to the left of the original business was selected.

Thirty-five unemployed female and male youth were interviewed as part of primary data collection for this assessment. Local CBOs were asked to provide lists of youth they had worked with on employment and training programmes. From these lists a simple random selection was used, and youth were contacted until the sample size had been reached for the youth survey. Prior to each interview, an informed consent statement was read and agreed to by the respondent.

The CLIC field team conducted quantitative data collection between October 26th and November 19th, 2019. The team consisted of two enumerators under the supervision of the CLIC Team Leader.

**Qualitative Data collection**

**FGDs**

The CLIC field team conducted three focus group discussions between November 2nd and 19th, 2019 with a total of 27 participants. The participants in the youth FGDs were between the ages of 15 and 35 years and were separated by gender, facilitators were selected to match accordingly. The following table outlines the breakdown for the FGDs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Employers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(female and male)</td>
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**KII**

The CLIC field team conducted five key informant interviews with 10 participants between November 3rd to 16th, 2019. The key informants represented the agricultural sector, the justice sector, the provincial council, and representatives of other economic sectors such as construction and food producers. The key informants were selected using a purposive or two stage purposive-snowball sampling approach. The most important consideration in the selection of the key informant was their intimate knowledge on the subject matter.

**2.1.5 Surveys – Constraints & Limitations**

1. The movement of team members and respondents was limited throughout the period of data collection as main streets were blocked due to demonstrations and tribal conflict. In addition, internet cuts by the government of Iraq made it challenging to communicate with government parties and stakeholders.
2. Some government parties refused to give documents or statistical information related to the percentage of unemployment or any relevant information, limiting the information available for triangulation and analysis for this assessment report.
3 Main findings

3.1 Key findings – Business Survey

3.1.1 Demographics

Overall, very few respondents in the quantitative business survey were women; of the 15 employers interviewed, 13% were female and 87% were male. Of the respondents in the business survey, 80% were owners of the business and 20% were managers of the business. The managers surveyed were equal parts female and male and all were between 18 – 35 years old. 60% of employers reported that they had the same number of employees compared to last year, 33% reported having more employees, and 7% said that they had fewer employees compared to last year. The majority of employers (60%) reported that they had not grown their businesses since 2018, with the main reason being that the economy was not performing well, but they did report that they had still plans to grow in the future.

In addition to the business survey, one focus group discussion was held with 9 employers composed of a mix of female and male individuals in Al-Qurna on November 19th, 2019. The aim of this discussion was to provide additional contextual information to understand hiring practices and job opportunities.

As part of the business survey, employer respondents were asked how many years their business had been operating, 53% reported their business had been running for more than 10 years, 40% for 6 to 10 years, and 7% for a year or less.
3.1.2 Business profile in Al-Qurna

The majority of employers surveyed (80%) reported that the main sector in Al-Qurna was the private sector, while 20% reported the government sector was the main economic driver. 27% of employers surveyed reported the main type of business in Al-Qurna was commerce or retail businesses, 20% reported agriculture, 20% manufacturing/possessing, 7% construction, 7% education, 7% mechanical and electrical engineering, and 7% forestry wood.

FGD participants reported that small businesses such as bakeries, food shops and restaurants, agriculture, oil, food processing, poultry and fish markets, and repair of electrical devices and mobile phones were the main employers in the area. They also reported that the tourism sector and private education in Al-Qurna had started to expand. It was evident from the discussion that micro and small business in the food sector represented the highest potential for growth, this could mean opening another location or hiring one or more staff to help with the business.

3.1.3 Challenges Faced by Business

The assessment also aimed to understand the challenges employers face in running their businesses. 22% reported that the main challenge was lack of government support, followed by 18% reporting high cost of rent/taxes and lack of capital liquidity. 11% of respondents indicated other challenges such as water scarcity, tribal conflicts and animal diseases; 7% reported costs of raw material; 4% reported government regulations; 4% political uncertainties; 4% high cost of paying human resources; 4% corruption; 2% reported security concerns; 2% lack of electricity services; and 2% weather conditions.
53% of employers surveyed said that they had hired new staff within the last 6 months, while 47% said that they had not. Employers who had not hired any new staff reported a variety of reasons for this situation including insufficient profit to hire extra staff (33%), no vacancies (33%), there are no skilled laborers in the market (17%), available laborers were not willing to work due to low labor market rates (8%), and that they couldn’t find qualified staff (8%).

3.1.4 Business Growth

To understand businesses’ growth, employers were asked if they were willing to hire new staff in the next six months and if they were planning to expand their business, 80% of the employers interviewed reported that they were willing to hire in the next six months and 20% said they were not willing to hire new staff. Of those willing to hire new staff, 75% of employers were willing to hire youth up to 30 years old, while 25% said that they were not willing to hire youth. All employer respondents reported a desire to expand their businesses, more than half (54%) of them mentioning that they were thinking to add more products/services, 25% were thinking to hire more employees, and 21% were thinking to open another location. While employers had these desires to expand their businesses, they also reported facing several challenges in expanding. The main challenge reported was lack of capital liquidity (57%), 19% reported high cost of rent/taxes, and 10% reported lack of government support.

3.1.5 Finding New Employees

As part of the business survey, employers were asked about the arrangements they make with their employees, 93% of employers reported that they did not sign an official contract with their employees, they mentioned instead having verbal contract or an agreement on job rules. 47% of employers interviewed said that they usually sign a daily contract with their employees, 33% have verbal agreements, 13% that they sign monthly contracts, and 1% reported using seasonal contracts.

Employers were also asked how they recruit new employees, 31% reported that they find new employees through friends, 29% through relatives, 14% through social media, 6% through an advertisement on a local TV or radio, 6% through social gatherings, 3% through the friends or a relatives of current employees, 3% using a job advertisement in a local newspaper, and 3% through job advertisement on a window/board in the community.
3.1.6 Preference when Hiring New Employees

When asked about their preference when hiring new employees, the majority employers (87%) in the business survey in Al-Qurna reported that they preferred to hire female over male employees. This contradicts the information provided in the FGDs by employers in Al-Qurna who reported preferring hiring male employees due to the physical nature of the work to be done. The difference in these responses was likely due to the different sectors represented in the FGDs and the business surveys, and the skills and abilities that employers in each required of their employees. The majority of employers (47%) in the business survey reported that they had no age preference for employees, 33% preferred to hire employees between 26 and 35 years old, and 20% preferred to hire staff that were 25 years old and younger.

33% of employers surveyed reported that they would hire new employees with no experience, 33% reported that they preferred to hire employees with 1 to 4 years of experience, 27% reported that they preferred to hire someone with several years of experience, and 7% said that they had no preference. 60% of employers
reported that they preferred to hire someone who knows how to write and read, 20% had no preference, and 7% preferred to hire someone who had completed primary, secondary, and college.

The majority of employers surveyed (67%) reported that they had no preference related to marital status of employees, 20% preferred to hire married employees, and 13% preferred to hire unmarried employees. In the business survey, employers also reported that they had no preference related to status of displacement.

All employer participants in the FGD reported that they preferred not to hire female employees. Their concerns related to culture, social norms, and that they fear tribal conflicts when hiring female employees. Employers preferred to recruit someone with some level of experience, from the same geographic area as the business, with some level of education (able to read and write), but did not have a preference regarding marital or displacement status.

### 3.1.7 Challenges to Finding New Employees

The business survey also aimed to understand the challenges that employers faced when hiring new employees. 28% of employers reported that the main challenge was lack of technical skills or experience, 22% that there were skilled workers but that the demand for these skilled workers was high, 22% that workers demanded high salary/remuneration, 13% that workers were mostly unaware of vacancies, 6% that workers lacked communication skills, 6% that workers lacked adaptability, and 3% that it was difficult to advertise available positions.
3.1.8 Perceptions about Youth

Employers in the business survey were asked about their overall perceptions about youth. 93% of employers perceived youth as reliable employees, 80% perceived youth as hard working, 67% perceived youth as professional employees, and 80% perceived youth to have skills and experience. These findings confirm employers’ stated interest in hiring youth.
3.1.9 Youth Skills

Based on their experience, general perceptions, and personal opinions, employer respondents in the business survey were asked to rate the importance of youth’s skills when recruiting an employee (1= not important, 2=somehow important, and 3= very important). The findings from these questions are displayed in the tables below.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication skills</th>
<th>Interpersonal skills</th>
<th>Basic literacy skills</th>
<th>Past Training</th>
<th>Technical skills</th>
<th>Computer Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall ability</th>
<th>Problem solving/ decision making skills</th>
<th>Commitment and discipline</th>
<th>Appropriate level/ type of education</th>
<th>Ability to apply knowledge learned to work</th>
<th>Realistic expectations about world of work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

FGD employer participants also mentioned that they would prefer to recruit someone with technical skills related to their business sector, for example in machinery and electrical repair, animal nutrition, design, dyeing, decoration, computer skills, English language, and teaching skills. They also mentioned that they preferred to recruit someone committed, that had good communication skills, had self-confidence, and had the physical ability to do the job.

3.1.10 Training Opportunities

As part of the business survey, employers were asked if they were willing to take on interns or on-the-job trainees, 93% of employers reported that they were willing to take on interns or on-the-job-trainees, and 7% reported that they would not. Those who were not willing to hire interns or on-the-job trainees reported that main reasons for this preference were that they had no space in their workplace (33%), that they had no vacancies to accept more employees (33%), and the cost of training them was too high (33%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WILLINGNESS TO TAKE ON INTERNS/ ON-THE-JOB TRAINEES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes 93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REASONS WHY EMPLOYERS ARE NOT WILLING TO TAKE ON INTERNS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT COSTS TOO MUCH TO TRAIN NEW PEOPLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I HAVE NO VACANCIES TO ACCEPT MORE EMPLOYEES (APPRENTICES)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I HAVE NO SPACE IN MY WORKSHOP/BUSINESS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
53% of employers in the business survey reported that they had hired interns before. 71% reported that they did not pay the interns, 14% reported that they pay interns between 10,000 and 20,000IQD weekly, and 14% reported that they pay more than 30,000IQD. All employers reported that they are interested in hiring someone who had just undergone vocational training.

3.2 Key Findings – Job Seekers (Youth) Survey

3.2.1 Demographics

36 youth were interviewed using the job seekers survey. 42% of the respondents were female and 58% were male. 39% of the interviewed job seekers were between the ages of 20 to 29, 14% between 15 and 19, and 8% between 30 and 34.

LEVEL OF EDUCATION

- Diploma: 8%
- Master: 11%
- High School: 11%
- Intermediate School: 22%
- None: 11%
- Primary School: 22%
- Bachelor (BA/BSC): 25%
- Technical Institute: 25%

GENDER

- Male: 42%
- Female: 58%

AGE GROUPS

- 25 - 29: 39%
- 20 - 24: 39%
- 15 - 19: 14%
- 30 - 34: 8%

25% of the youth respondents in the job seekers survey had a technical institute certificate, 22% had a bachelor’s degree, 22% had a primary school certificate, 11% had an intermediate school certificate, and 8% had a high school certificate. 72% of the respondents in the job seekers survey were heads of households. 61% of youth surveyed were unmarried, 36% married, and 3% were engaged to be married.

Living standards of job seekers were examined during the survey, revealing that 58% live in regular shelters, 19% live in tents, 19% in unfinished buildings, and 3% live in an agricultural land (empty space).
As part of the job seekers survey, youth were asked about their main source of income, 50% of youth reported that they relied on a part-time jobs, 44% relied on their parents/relatives, 3% had a full time job, and 3% use their own savings.

### 3.2.2 Youth Employment Status

The assessment also aimed to understand the current employment status of youth in Al-Qurna and their average monthly income. Findings revealed that 44% of youth interviewed in Al-Qurna did not have permanent employment and only participated in part-time temporary employment.

38% of youth respondents reported earning 0-99,999IQD, 19% of youth earned 300,000-399,999IQD, and 19% reported earning 200,000-299,999IQD. 60% percent of surveyed youth reported that their current income amount was less than the usual amount they would normally earn.

33% of youth interviewed had no debt, while 25% had 400,000-500,000IQD of debt, 11% had more than 500,000IQD of debt, 8% had 100,000-399,999IQD of debt, and 6% had less than 100,000IQD of debt.
3.2.3 Sources of Information about Work

The survey also asked youth where they found information about work opportunities. 53% of youth reported learning about work opportunities through social media, 42% through word of mouth, and 6% through referrals.

![Graph showing sources of information about job opportunities.]

3.2.4 Youth Attitudes and Commitment towards Work

Youth respondents in the job seekers survey were asked a series of questions related to their attitudes and commitment to work. Respondents were asked to rank the statements where 1 meant strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neither agree to disagree, 4 meant agree, 5 meant strongly agree.

Youth reported positive attitudes and motivation towards work. The majority of youth interviewed reported that they had high motivation towards work and that they were recognized for good work, meeting deadlines, and arriving to work on time. This indicates that youth are committed to employment and that they meet employers’ requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am not quite ready to handle a part-time job</th>
<th>Most jobs are dull and boring</th>
<th>It is OK to be unemployed even when there is a job available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I know I can succeed at work</th>
<th>Working hard at a job will pay off in the end</th>
<th>I am/ was rewarded/ recognized for good work</th>
<th>I can balance work with my personal life</th>
<th>I am/ was recognized for meeting deadlines</th>
<th>I am/ was recognized for arriving to work on time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Labor market assessment Al-Qurna district 26
3.2.5 Market and Employment Opportunities

67% of youth interviewed reported that the main employment sector in Al-Qurna was the government, specifically oil, electricity, health, and education sectors. 25% reported that the private sector was the main employer and 8% reported that they did not know the main employer. 89% of youth in Al-Qurna also reported that they preferred a job in the government sector while 11% reported that they preferred the private sector. Youth reported that they did not want to work in the private sector due to lack of application of labor laws and that social security and health insurance were not provided or activated in the private sector, but that security of position and social supports were available through government positions.

25% of youth interviewed reported that they were seeking employment in oil and gas production, 19% preferred to work in transportation, 17% had no preference, 14% preferred to work in education, 8% preferred to work in services, 6% preferred to work in forestry wood, 6% in health, and 3% in agriculture. The majority of youth interviewed (67%) preferred to work 8 hours per day and 92% preferred to work morning shifts over evening shifts.

Youth respondents in the job seekers survey were asked if their families pressured or encouraged them to work in specific jobs or sectors, 64% of youth reported that their families did pressure them to work in certain jobs. Male youth said that their families encouraged them to work in oil, construction, carpentry, and transportation sectors. Female youth reported that their families encouraged them to work in education or to
do work with flexible hours or home-based businesses such as beauty, teaching, and selling products through social media.

3.2.6 Challenges and Barriers to Employment

The assessment also sought to identify challenges and barriers to youth employment in Al-Qurna. The main challenge to youth employment identified by youth was corruption (31%) as many youth did not have connections to political parties or tribal affiliations, both of which made it easier to get employment. Other challenges cited by youth were lack of employment opportunities (30%), employers’ preference to hire foreign rather than national workers in the private sector (28%), lack of experience and skills among youth (6%), customs and traditions (3%), and lack of national production (2%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHALLENGES YOUTH FACE IN MAKING MONEY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LACK OF NATIONAL PRODUCTION AND INCREASE OF FOREIGN PRODUCTS IN THE MARKET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LACK OF EXPERIENCE + SKILLS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFERENCE OF FOREIGN WORKERS TO WORK BY THE PRIVATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LACK OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADMINISTRATIVE CORRUPTION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

58% of youth interviewed in Al-Qurna reported that there were some jobs that they would not do. Male youth reported that they preferred not to work in construction or cleaning services, while female youth reported that they preferred not to work as a maid or as a sales agent. However, 42% of youth reported that they would take any employment opportunity available they were offered. Male youth preferred not to work in construction or jobs that require physical ability because these jobs require them to carry heavy materials and they are not able to do this. While female youth preferred not to work in the private sector in general because they faced sexual harassment and discrimination by society in this sector.

Youth respondents in the job seekers survey were asked whether they felt disadvantaged in accessing work due to their age, gender, and/or ethnicity. 44% of youth reported that they did feel disadvantaged and 56% did not feel disadvantaged. Those youth who reported feeling disadvantaged in accessing work due to age, gender or ethnicity reported that they felt this way due to the
prevalence of corruption and “Wasta” (favouratism) in Al-Qurna. Male youth added that employers preferred to hire female employees over male employees. Female youth reported that traditions and customs, discrimination, and sexual abuse were disadvantages they had faced.

3.2.7 Training Opportunities

86% of youth interviewed in Al-Qurna reported that they had never participated in vocational training and 14% of youth reported that they had received some form of training. Of those youth that reported having received vocational training, 80% had completed the full length of the training programme and 20% had not completed the full length of the training programme due to financial constraints and the timing of the training programme. 88% of youth interviewed reported that they were interested in receiving vocational training and 13% reported that they were not interested in taking part in vocational training.

As part of the FGDs, youth were asked the main type of trainings they sought. The majority of male youth expressed interest in carpentry, mechanic, repair of electrical appliances, computer, automotive service technician, hair dressing, and E-marketing training. Female youth in the FGDs expressed interest in computer numerical control (CNC), tailoring, dressmaking, beauty, education (teaching), and the pastry and food industry training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carpentry</td>
<td>Computer Numerical Control (CNC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mechanic and repair of electrical appliances</td>
<td>Tailoring, dressmaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>Beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Automotive service</td>
<td>Education (Teaching)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hair dressing</td>
<td>Pastry and food industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E Marketing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other preferences</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blacksmithing</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dyeing</td>
<td>Social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decoration</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2.8 Youth Skills

Youth respondents in the job seekers survey were asked about their perceived personal and technical skills. 25% of youth interviewed had basic literacy skills, 24% had interpersonal and communication skills, 18% had problem solving/decision making skills, and 9% had leadership skills.

27% of youth interviewed reported that they had marketing skills, 19% had computer skills, 11% had skills in photography, 9% had English language skills, 7% had skills in catering, and the rest had other skills such as financial management, automobile maintenance and repair, welding, and tailoring.

Youth respondents in the job seekers survey were asked to rate the perceived skill levels of youth for a series of both hard and soft skills, where 1 meant very poor skills, 2 meant poor skills, 3 meant acceptable, 4 meant good skills, 5 meant very good skills. The table below outlines the findings from these questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic literacy skills</th>
<th>Communication skills</th>
<th>Interpersonal skills</th>
<th>Technical skills</th>
<th>English language knowledge</th>
<th>Computer Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Youth respondents in the job seekers survey were asked to rate the perceived skill levels of youth for a series of both hard and soft skills, where 1 meant very poor skills, 2 meant poor skills, 3 meant acceptable, 4 meant good skills, 5 meant very good skills. The table below outlines the findings from these questions.
3.2.9 Establishing a Business

Youth respondents in the job seekers survey were asked if local businesses and financial institutions in the district supported youth entrepreneurship. The majority of youth (97%) interviewed said that financial institutions did not provide support to youth and 3% felt that these institutions did provide support.

In the job seekers survey youth were also asked if they had enough information on how to get money to start a business or run a business. 53% of youth interviewed reported that they get money through bank/company loans, 39% reported that they borrowed money from relatives/friends, 3% used their own savings, and 3% did not know how to get a loan to start a business.

3.3 Key Findings – Key Informant Interviews

3.3.1 Main and Active Sectors

The KIIIs sought to understand the sectors with potential for growth, income generation, and employment opportunities for vulnerable youth and adults in Al-Qurna. Key informants reported that the key growth areas in Al-Qurna were the oil and agriculture sectors. Retail trade and tourism were also reported as sectors that had a high potential of expanding and generating income and employment opportunities for youth in Al-Qurna.

Private businesses such as blacksmithing, carpentry, mobile phone repair, telecommunications, hairdressing, food markets, and agriculture (including dairy production, animal husbandry, and fish farming) were the most profitable employment sectors for youth in Al-Qurna.

Key informants also reported that the government focused its attention on investing in the oil sector, without focusing on other important sectors such as tourism, industry, and agriculture. Key informants felt that government attention and support for these sectors would greatly help to generate income and job opportunities in the district.
3.3.2 Government Actions to Promote Employment Opportunities

Key informants were asked whether efforts were made by the government to promote livelihoods opportunities for youth and adults in Al-Qurna, the responses varied among the respondents according to the sectors. A member of the municipal council revealed that there were initiatives to develop the industry school and the technical institute to provide trainings for female and male youth. The municipal council members also noted that there were initiatives to develop government banks to provide loans to small business owners and an initiative from the Ministry of Oil to build a university and open new faculties in Al-Qurna, such as faculties of education, management, and economy. The Director of Education in Al-Qurna also revealed that there were initiatives to hire workers as part of the contracts of oil companies.

The Director of the Women’s Association in Al-Qurna reported that there were plans to house and employ 400 agricultural engineers in the modern agricultural village, but that the project was halted due to lack of financial capacity. Other key informants were unaware of employment and training initiatives specifically in Al-Qurna.

3.3.3 Income Generation Activities for Female Youth

Key informants were asked whether efforts were made to generate income for young women in Al-Qurna district. Key informants reported that there were no real plans or efforts in place to promote livelihood or career opportunities for women, however there had been attempts to promote hiring female employees. Some key informants reported that efforts had been made by INGOs and the Al Najah Centre, to provide vocational trainings and help women to develop skills towards independence through income generation. Many of the key informants reported that women were restricted in their employment opportunities in Al-Qurna and were only able to work from home in many cases. If they worked from home, women would work in sewing, beauty, handcrafts, pasty and food, and E-marking sectors.

3.3.4 Unemployment rate

The Director of Women’s Association in Al-Qurna reported that unemployment rates ranged between 20-30% and that there are no exact rates of unemployment because there are no statistical studies or information available for the district. She stressed that the data, even if available, would not have been shared publicly. The Consultant experienced this lack of data sharing as part of the desk review for this assessment. A member of the municipal council reported that the unemployment rate was approximately 50% and that the gap between educational achievement and market needs, the lack of skilled workers, and corruption had a significant impact on unemployment rates in Al-Qurna. He also mentioned that the highest unemployment rates were in Nusayr, Salam and Mazra’a areas. Key informants also reported that people considered themselves unemployed unless they worked in a governmental job, even they worked at a good company with a good salary, as government work was more stable and well-regarded.

3.3.5 Barriers to Employment

Key informants were asked about the main challenges faced by youth and adults in Al-Qurna seeking employment. The main challenges identified included lack of job opportunities compared to the number of the unemployed individuals, nepotism by political parties, factories being shut down and the lack of plans to develop the various labour sectors and rely entirely on foreign products, lack of training opportunities to
develop the capabilities and skills of unemployed youth, youth and children dropping out of school, lack of financial and technical support for young people to open their own businesses and financial support being limited to loans that have very high interest rates, and for female youth customs, traditions, and discrimination that determined their employment opportunities.

### 3.3.6 Training Opportunities

Key informants were asked the kind of trainings they felt were needed for youth and adults to improve their employability. A member of the municipal council and other key informants recommended trainings in sewing, beauty, computers, English language, and photography for female youth, and trainings in hairdressing, computers, automotive, carpentry, mobile repair, blacksmithing, and food processing for male youth.

### 3.3.7 Training Opportunities and Services Available

The Director of the Women's Association in Al-Qurna reported that there had been a plan to open a training centre for unemployed youth in electricity, general mechanic and electronic repair, welding, and blacksmithing in cooperation between UNDP and the Japanese Embassy. She also mentioned that the Al Najah Centre trains young people under the age of 35 in life and management skills in cooperation with NRC. The Director of Agriculture in Al-Qurna reported that in the agricultural institution there was a training available to become a beekeeper which was open for any person who wanted to learn beekeeping. Once trainees completed the beekeeping training, they received a certificate and received a license and a loan to start their own businesses in beekeeping. There were also private sector providers of vocational trainings in language, computer, hairdressing, and sewing, but the cost of these courses exceeded 250,000 IQD, limiting people’s access to the services and trainings. Free vocational training courses were only available in Basra city and youth found it difficult to attend these courses because they could not afford the transportation cost.

### 3.4 Key Findings – Focus Group Discussions

The youth FGDs were designed to gather contextual information from youth about the challenges and bottlenecks they faced in their pursuit of employment, as well as their perceived skills and training preferences. The participants of the FGDs reported that they did not see real economic improvement and only a few said that there was a development in the private sector. The important sectors identified in the youth FGDs that could generate income were oil, health, education, agriculture, and electricity in the government sector. In the private sector, youth identified private schools and micro and small enterprises in urban areas as being key employers of youth. Key sectors reported by youth for MSMEs were retail business, hospitality services, food production, mobile telephone repair, and agricultural projects (fish lakes, poultry, and animal husbandry).

The participants of the youth FGDs reported that the main challenges faced by youth in Al-Qurna included lack of job opportunities, corruption, lack of planning to cover the gap between unemployment and the number of graduates, lack of financial support (from government and others), lack of training courses, increased reliance on foreign labor, absence of local national production, and cultural norms and traditions that reduced women's employment opportunities.
“We live in a tribal society that does not allow us to work or choose the work we wish.”

Female youth, Al-Qurna

As part of the youth FGDs, participants were asked about the employment opportunities specifically for male and female youth and what kind of work was appropriate for male and female youth to earn a living. Male FGD participants reported that they were more interested in oil companies, dyeing and decoration, blacksmithing, carpentry, hairdressing, mobile repair, and agriculture. While female youth stated they were interested in working in education (teaching), pastry making, E-marketing, and beauty. All participants stated that they were least interested to work as a sales agents, as servers, or in construction work requiring the to carry heavy materials.

Furthermore, youth FGD participants were asked what skills were needed by male and female youth in order to increase employability in the above stated sectors. All youth FGD participants mentioned technical skills related to the specific sector or industry such as construction, hair dressing, marketing, reading and writing, blacksmithing, carpentry, mobile repair, computer, and English language skills. Participants also mentioned skills in decoration, dyeing and driving.

The youth FGDs also sought to understand the most important goals held by youth and what they sought to achieve in their lives. Participants reported that they sought to find a stable job (referring to employment with the government), to complete their studies, and to have their own business. Youth reported that the lack of job opportunities had a negative impact on young people and led to drug use, fraud, suicides, family problems, and administrative and financial corruption.

4 Conclusion

In Al-Qurna, the oil, agriculture, and tourism sectors were the most promising areas expected to grow and employ more individuals. Furthermore, micro, small, and medium scale businesses including food processing/production, mechanical and electrical supplies, and construction were the most profitable jobs that had high potential of generating income and employment opportunities for youth.

A lack of support and professional training and development of youth in Al-Qurna by government and humanitarian and development actors contributed to the current skills gap and the high unemployment rate among youth in the area. Furthermore, corruption and nepotism in recruitment for government positions, insecurity, and lack of government support for the private sector affected the employment opportunities available for youth in Al-Qurna. The industrial and education sectors were no longer considered viable employment areas due to the lack of government support to these sectors. Businesses surveyed reported lack of access to credit, high cost of rent, and lack of government support were challenges they faced as they worked to scale up their businesses.

Male youth expressed interest in carpentry, mechanic and repair of electrical appliances, computer, automotive service technician, hairdressing and E-marketing training and employment. While female youth
expressed interest in training and employment in Computer Numerical Control (CNC), tailoring, dressmaking, beauty, education (teaching), and the pastry and food industry.

For women working from home, social media marketing and sales were increasing in Al-Qurna providing an opportunity for women to earn an income while working from home and complying with social norms. Working in social media marketing and sales would require learning new skill sets such as graphic design and photography, some English language skills, and entrepreneurial skills.

There was one large VTC in Al-Qurna, the Al Najah Centre, which was affiliated to the Ministry of Labor (MOLSA) and offered trainings including mobile repair, food processing, secondary ceilings, plumbing, mechanics, electricity, and others. However, youth were not receiving information about opportunities to learn new skills at this centres nor were they aware of where to find information about available job opportunities in their area.

Youth interviewed in Al-Qurna reported a lack of interest in employment in the private sector as they considered it a temporary and unstable employment option. The preference among youth to work in government positions was rooted in the application of labor laws and provision of social security and health insurance through government positions, supports that were not provided or activated in the private sector.

The assessment also aimed to understand potential business grants/cash payment mechanisms (hawala, banks, mobile money, etc.) in the targeted areas, cash in hand and hawala (money transfer offices) were mentioned as the most preferred option by youth.

5 Recommendations

1. Provide skills training for male youth in carpentry, repair of electrical appliances, and computer and telephone repair. Provide skills training for female youth in E-marketing and beauty training, building from and complementing similar training available (but limited in trainee numbers) at the Al Najah VTC.

2. Integrate soft and employability skills training into exiting VTC syllabus including life skills, communication, self-confidence skills, critical thinking skills to increase employability and job retention.

3. Integrate literacy and numeracy training as a component of all training programmes.

4. Support the Al Najah VTC to expand existing technical and vocational trainings through the provision of training materials and specialized trainers, focusing on vocations listed in the first recommendation listed above.

5. Support existing micro, small, and medium scale businesses in the construction sector (specifically electrical wiring and installation, and décor finishes) via cash grants to scale up their businesses.

6. Provide training and support to employers and business stakeholders on gender-sensitive workplaces and labour codes, along with community sensitization sessions that promote the rights of women and the importance of women as income earners and decision makers in the household.
7. Work with VTCs and existing training providers to identify adapted training schedules that will allow flexibility for individuals with household or income earning responsibilities. Schedules can be adapted to half day or evening classes, to allow individuals to work during the day and attend classes in the evenings.

8. Work with VTCs to provide supports for vulnerable or marginalized individuals in the community to allow them to participate in the training programmes. For example, providing childcare to allow mothers to attend classes or providing transportation supports for individuals participating in vocational training only available in Basra city.

9. Promote private sector engagement and partnerships with social security institutions and insurance companies for the provision of social security and health insurance for workers in the private sector, increasing interest in employment in the private sector.

10. Develop apprenticeships/internships/on-the-job training programs for youth and adults in order to gain the necessary skills and experience required in the job market. This will require financial and business training support for businesses that participate and accept trainees, ensuring a safe workplace for training participants.

11. Work with MSMEs, training centres, government, and other stakeholders to advertise jobs and trainings available through job campaigns, employment fairs and social media. Work with stakeholders to utilize existing professional platforms for identification of candidates and to improve articulation of available jobs to the general public.

12. Support youth interested in opening their own businesses via partnerships with existing financial institutions such as the cooperative housing institution and MoSLA for provision of loans (cash-in-hand or through hawala) with low rates.
6 ANNEXES

Annex 1  UNEMPLOYED YOUTH SURVEY –LMA
Annex 2  EMPLOYERS SURVEY –LMA
Annex 3  FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION FOR YOUTH –LMA
Annex 4  FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION FOR EMPLOYERS –LMA
Annex 5  KEY INFORMANTS INTERVIEWS (KII)s DISCUSSION GUIDE –LMA
Annex 6  CASE STUDY 1