

# **US Ambassador's Speech to the TAG Knowledge Forum September 24, 2013**

Mustafa Nasereddin, executive director of TAG Jordan...

Fouad Kraishan, President of Duke University Alumni, Jordan...

Your Excellency Dr. Talal Abu Ghazaleh, President of TAG

Knowledge Forum,

Other distinguished guests,

Colleagues, fellow Duke Graduates, and friends...

It is a great honor for me to address the Talal Abu Ghazaleh Forum. The topic I chose for tonight is the United States' partnership with Jordan in the areas of education and human development.

When I think about Dr. Talal Abu Ghazaleh, I think about his tremendous contribution to education in Jordan.

I think about the profound impact in Jordan of the Business School that bears his name.

I think about this important forum, which always generates new ideas and discussion in Jordan. And I think about the tremendous

contribution Dr. Ghazaleh has made in the area of intellectual property.

So I thought it would be appropriate to address themes that I know are close to his Excellency's heart.

The United States is very proud of our partnership with Jordan.

As you all know it is a partnership that has many facets.

Our security partnership has saved lives in Jordan and the United States.

We estimate that our trade partnership – and the Free Trade Agreement between our countries – has created more than 50,000 jobs in Jordan.

But when I think about our partnership, I think the most important aspect is our collaboration in human development.

I think the area where we are having the most impact in improving peoples' lives.

Late last spring, I visited a hospital in South Shouneh. We had just built, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Public Works, a new emergency ward at the hospital there.

Two years earlier, we had opened a neo-natal ward. After I toured the new emergency clinic, the director of the neo-natal ward showed me a chart.

The chart showed that since the inauguration of that neo-natal ward, infant mortality had decreased more than 70 percent.

By my arithmetic that neo-natal ward had saved the lives of more than 30 infants in two years. Thirty sons and daughters of loving parents.

We have renovated and equipped obstetric and neo-natal departments in 20 hospitals all over Jordan, as well as renovating and equipping emergency rooms in 5 hospitals.

When we build these facilities we provide the construction and state of the art medical equipment.

But we also invest in the training of the medical personnel at the hospital.

Everyone in this room knows that we can provide the best construction and equipment. But without the training to operate the machines and care for those babies, we would not have made such a huge difference.

With the investment in human resources, the good doctors and nurses in South Shouneh would not have been able to reduce infant mortality by 70 percent. We would not have saved more than thirty babies.

So it is this investment in human resources, in human development, that for me is the most important part of the partnership.

We are proud to invest in the people of Jordan. And we are investing in education, training, health, and work force development.

It's all about people. John F. Kennedy said: "The human mind is our fundamental resource."

Many U.S. Agencies in our Embassy are working with the Jordanian government to improve education and training opportunities for Jordanians.

In education, USAID:

- Is working nationwide to build 27 new schools, another one already underway, and 25 more planned over the next 5 years
- AID is also expanding 99 existing schools, with another 120 planned over the next 5 years
- Is renovating 150 schools over the next 4 years
- Has built or renovated 400 Kindergarten classrooms, with another 300 in the works

What does this mean?

- Some 250,000 students and teachers will have better facilities
- And an additional 80,000 members of these communities will also be able to use those spaces

USAID has also:

- Trained more than 8,000 teachers in leadership and professional development

- Enhanced the leadership, life and job skills of 59,000 youth who received training that helps them prepare for the world of work.
- Provided more than 20,000 students with renovated playgrounds and new sports equipment

These are impressive figures.

But it is even more impressive when you go to the schools that USAID and the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Works have renovated.

I visited the 10<sup>th</sup> Area Girls' School in Aqaba.

It is a terrific facility, with a science lab, a computer lab, a gymnasium, an outdoor playground and a community garden.

Part of the program design requires the school administrators to reach out to parents and community members to be part of the school community.

At the end of the tour I met with some of the seniors at the High School.

These young women were proud of their school and they were proud of what they were accomplishing. They had a wonderful learning environment, with well trained teachers, and they were on fire about their futures.

At the time, I had only been in Jordan a few weeks. I told the young women then that it was my best day in Jordan, so far. And, you know what... it still is.

Let me give you yet another example. I think we can agree that speaking English is a valuable skill in today's world.

There are numerous outstanding English language programs in Jordanian schools and universities – maybe the best in the Middle East -- but not everybody has access to them.

We decided we wanted to give young people from all over Jordan a chance to learn English. So we started a “micro scholarship” program called “Access.” This is an after school program that provides two years of intensive English language training and it includes an immersion summer camp.

I couldn't take you to Shouneh with me tonight. And I could not take you to Aqaba to meet the young women at the 10<sup>th</sup> Area Girls' school.

But I wanted to share with you the comments from one of the “graduates” of the Access scholarship program.

Her name is Batool. Batool spent two years learning English through an Access micro scholarship.

Martin Luther King said that the true goal of education is intelligence plus character. I think Batool is an amazing example of this.

Another terrific people-to-people investment my country is making in Jordan is through the Peace Corps. We have 55 Peace Corps Volunteers in Jordan, mostly young men and women who are living and working in local communities.

In 2012 alone, the Peace Corps taught more than 4,000 students to build strong English language skills; I think we can all agree there is no substitute for learning foreign language from a native speaker. These Peace Corps volunteers are in the classrooms, in underserved communities teaching English to Jordanian children.

Peace Corps volunteers also work with Jordanian teachers of English, to help them with their English language skills. And last year volunteers engaged more than 3,500 Jordanian in youth activities.

Female Peace Corps volunteers organize GLOW camps in countries all over the world. GLOW stands for Girls Leading Our World. Our volunteers staged a GLOW camp in Karak last summer. One of the girls who participated was asked how the program had changed her. She said: "Now I believe in women and I won't ever stop believing."

In Jordan, GLOW was such a hit, the boys got jealous. So the Peace Corps created a boys camp called: BRO (Boys Respecting Each Other).

BRO held its first session this summer at Yarmouk University. In addition to Respect, Leadership and Professional Development, BRO campers also worked on conflict resolution and respecting women.

Of course, the private sector also plays an important role in human development.

And we are proud to partner with the private sector to create exciting new opportunities for young Jordanians.

Hillary Clinton said: “Information networks are a great leveler, and we should use them to help lift people.”

Information technology is an important tool for human development. It can help make people more engaged and better informed citizens. And it can provide excellent business opportunities. Particularly for young people.

In partnership with the King Abdullah Development Fund, we are very proud to be funding the start-up bootcamps for the aspiring entrepreneurs at Oasis 500.

And USAID’s workforce development programs are training workers all over Jordan, preparing them for jobs.

These are vital programs and we are preparing to double down and expand this program with the local economic development project.

The goals of these twin projects are:

- address key gaps between the skills of the Jordanian workers and the needs of the private sector
- help small enterprises grow and prosper

- spur economic growth and increased investment outside Amman

We think investing in human development, in education, in English language, and job training is the best investment we can make in Jordan.

We think our investment is going to pay off, by contributing to an economy that creates good jobs for good citizens.

That's good for Jordan. And that's good for the United States.

And it's the right thing to do.

I just threw a lot of statistics at you, but we should never forget that behind each one of these numbers is a real person.

The mother of a newborn baby, who will live because it got proper care. A father who wants to start a business and support his family. A talented, ambitious kid, who wants a chance to succeed. On his merits.

Like Batool. Who happens to be with us tonight, along with her parents. Batool, please stand up and take a bow. Because it's not about us, it's about you. You are the future of Jordan. And you deserve our support.

Thank you