



HOW A MEDICAL-VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM HELPED SUSTAIN A LIVING FOR A FAMILY: THE STORY OF MERVAT ABU RAMELEH

Mervat Abu Rameleh, 37 years old and a mother of five, works extremely hard in her hometown of Amman, Jordan. She has an intensive, full-time job as a health care support worker. Every day, she is at a family's house to care for a female patient who suffered from a stroke. Mervat helps the patient with personal hygiene, physiotherapy exercises, administers daily medication, and anything else that is required of her. Six out of seven days, she is there for a 12-hour work day. On the seventh day, she works a half-day so she can run her household errands. Before and after work, she cooks, cleans, and helps her younger children with their homework.

Mervat's motivation behind all this hard work is her children. They want to go to university after they graduate high school. Her eldest is graduating this year and will start her university education in the coming fall.

ENROLLING IN THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING CORPORATION (VTC) HEALTHCARE SUPPORT WORKER (HSW) PROGRAM

Before Mervat started working as a healthcare support worker, she was searching for a well-paying job to support her family. Previously, she had worked from home as a web designer. Wanting to earn a higher salary, she sought a career that was in higher demand and would therefore pay more.

As luck would have it, she found out about the Healthcare Support Worker (HSW) training program--the first of its kind in Jordan--offered by the VTC. The program offers a six-month theoretical component, where trainees learn how to support seniors with medical support both at their homes and at medical institutions. Then, trainees undergo a 200-hour field internship to gain important practical experience. They then receive a professional licence accredited by the Ministry of Labor and are linked with potential employers for future employment.

Her brother and sister-in-law, both doctors, highly encouraged Mervat to enroll in this program, as they saw the opportunity for her to earn a good, consistent salary working as a healthcare support worker, which would

consequently help her fulfill her financial commitments and obligations.

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OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO FIND EMPLOYMENT AND EARN A GOOD SALARY

There are a number of barriers that prevent women and female youth from working in the healthcare support field in Jordan. Despite that this career path guarantees a good income, families are concerned that it is not a safe work environment and the overall demanding nature of the work. The WE LEAD project will be working on such barriers with stakeholders to make this sector more accessible for VTC graduates. Mervat and her family were not discouraged by this.

Mervat knew that with this career path she could provide a good living for her family, which remains her ultimate goal. After she graduated from the eight-month HSW training program, it connected her with a home-care company where she got her first work experience caring for two Alzheimer's patients.

Eager to explore more opportunities and market her skills, Mervat placed an advertisement on Open Sooq, a forum for people to buy and sell goods and services, for her services as a home care worker. From this, she secured her current position. Despite the long hours, Mervat is very happy with her job - she earns a very good wage. "I am financially empowering myself and my children," she says.

CONTINUOUSLY LEARNING AS A HEALTHCARE SUPPORT WORKER

Working as a healthcare support worker is very rewarding for Mervat since it opens various employment opportunities in the medical field.

Not only does Mervat feel rewarded by the fact that she is directly supporting her patients, but she is also improving herself and her self-confidence through constant on-the-job

learning. "It is exciting for me, I am learning many new things in the field by dealing with different medical cases."

With her experience in the field, she hopes that one day she can work at the VTC as a trainer for the HSW program and pay it forward. "I want to change the stereotype about the HSW program. It is much more than changing diapers. I have learned so much in the field, and I would love to inspire others with my experience," she says.

She encourages other Jordanian women and female youth to apply to the VTC HSW training program. "It is a good opportunity....and it is a good program to earn a good income."

WE LEAD Project

Empower Women, Build a Community

The Women's Economic Linkages and Employment Development (WE LEAD) Project (2017-2021), funded by Global Affairs Canada, is run in consortium with World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and the Canadian International Consulting Company (Clic). This project is in partnership with the Government of Jordan, Jordanian organizations, and private sector institutions, seeks to increase the number of Jordanian women and female youth in the workforce through two training programs: Medical Office Assistance (MOA) and Healthcare Support Worker (HSW). Additionally, the project addresses both the gender-specific barriers and social norms that prevent women from entering the workforce.

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