



NEWS BULLETIN 283
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New Talent Catalog Will Connect Syrian Refugees with Global Employers

Amman, Jordan and Beirut, Lebanon: A major new international initiative was launched today in Jordan and Lebanon to assess the skills of refugees in the Middle East and place them in jobs outside the region.



Nazar Poladian helped design the Talent Catalog. He was a refugee in Lebanon before resettling in Canada.

The initiative is an [online Talent Catalog](#) that will highlight the skills and talents of refugees now languishing in Jordan and Lebanon where the vast majority of refugees are not allowed to work.

The Talent Catalog was designed in part by a Syrian refugee, Nazar Poladian (left) who was resettled to Canada last year. It is also based on input from the private sector, from Syrian, Iraqi, and Palestinian refugees, and from dozens of international and local NGOs and UN agencies.

The Talent Catalog is the first major product to emerge from [Talent Beyond Boundaries](#) (TBB), a new nonprofit based in Washington that helps private-sector employers around the world to connect with skilled refugees in the Middle East.

TBB was founded in 2014 by Mary Louise Cohen, a Board Member of The Advocacy Project (AP) and her husband, Bruce Cohen. AP is providing administrative support.

"Until now there has been no effective effort to find private sector employment opportunities globally for skilled refugees" says Ms. Cohen. "Talent Beyond Boundaries is changing that. Using labor migration could provide opportunities at livelihoods and self-sufficiency for thousands of refugee families."

TBB hopes to collect 10,000 refugee profiles within six months. The profiles are not available to the public so as to ensure the protection of the refugees, but TBB will share information about education, language, and work experience with prospective employers from the private sector.



Tarek worked as an electrical engineer in Syria before seeking refuge in Jordan. Unable to work, he wants to put his skills to use.

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), almost five million Syrian refugees are living in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon. While the three governments have been generous in providing asylum, they impose severe restrictions on the ability of refugees to work.

At the same time, there are labor shortages and skill gaps around the world that refugees could help to meet. [A recent survey of 41,700 hiring managers](#) found that 38% were having trouble filling positions.

In developing the Talent Catalog, TBB has found that many refugees are desperate for the chance to work. Tarek, an electrical engineer from Syria, told TBB that he has struggled to support himself in Jordan:

"I currently work informally as a film director's assistant. I am very interested in going abroad to work in my field. I don't want to take money from humanitarian organizations. I want to work. I want to continue to develop myself and my skills. Life deserves to be lived."

Inleel, an Iraqi refugee living in Jordan who worked as an environmental and water engineer in Syria said: "If I found an opportunity to work in my field abroad, of course I would go, no question. There should be some kind of legal system or pathway to help refugees to work in another country."



TBB is working in the Middle East with a Dutch NGO partner, [SPARK](#). Together, TBB and SPARK have built a network of outreach volunteers among the refugee community in Jordan and Lebanon who will spread the word about the Talent Catalog and help refugees to create a profile. The site is in Arabic and English.



Mary Louise Cohen founded Talent Beyond Boundaries with her husband Bruce

"Refugees are individuals with diverse talents they are eager to contribute, given the opportunity. They are engineers, doctors, nurses, architects, accountants... They have the very skills that companies around the world are looking for. The Talent Catalog has great potential to demonstrate this to the private sector and to others," says Sayre Nyce, Executive Director of TBB.

TBB has a cooperation agreement with UNHCR and will share lessons learned with others working on the refugee crisis, including the Solutions Alliance, the Global Forum on Migration and Development, and the Concordia Summit. The United States State Department (Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration) has also expressed support for the pilot program.

- * [Click here](#) to learn more about Talent Beyond Boundaries
- * [Click here](#) to meet talented refugees
- * Get involved - email TBB at info@talentbeyoundboundaries.org

Thanks to Humanity United for supporting our fellowship program and to the Peace and Collaborative Development Network for re-posting our bulletins.



The Advocacy Project (AP) supports advocates who work for human rights and social justice at the community level. AP is based in Washington, DC. Phone +1 202 758 3328. For more information [visit our website](#) or email us.

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