



International
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THE TAQEEM FUND FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT EVALUATION (PHASES I & II) A partnership to promote results-based monitoring and evaluation for youth employment in the MENA Region

Youth unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is the highest in the world. The 2010 global youth unemployment rate was 13.0 per cent. This figure was 26.1 per cent in the Middle East and 24.2 per cent in North Africa.

More recent social and political events in the region have contributed to a decline in economic activity and increased unemployment. In 2013, youth unemployment in the Middle East had risen to 27.9 per cent; in North Africa the figure reached 30.2 per cent (see ILO: Global employment trends for youth 2015).

There is an urgent need to address this challenge with evidence-based solutions. Indeed, many development

partners, including governments, international institutions and civil society, are desperate to respond to their constituents' demands to create more and better jobs for youth. Unfortunately, there are few examples revealing the actual policies or programmes that provide positive results. The Youth Employment Inventory (YEI) estimates that only 15 per cent of youth employment programmes from developing countries have assessed the net change in beneficiaries' outcomes that might be attributed to their intervention. Furthermore, those evaluations that have been made often lack visibility and a dissemination platform.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Partners:

Silatech; the Jacobs Foundation; the Swedish International Development Coordination Agency (Sida); the International Fund for Agricultural Development

Beneficiary countries:

22 countries in the MENA region

Timeframe:

First phase:
2010 – 13
Second phase:
2013 – 18

Budget:

USD 1.3 million

THE RESPONSE

Taqeem (meaning “evaluation” in Arabic) has been implemented in two phases. The first phase worked with 15 youth employment organizations and initiatives reaching approximately 15,000 young people per year, as part of a competitively selected Community of Practice (CoP) to improve the capacity of these organizations to measure and monitor the impact of their programmes. This was primarily achieved through “Evaluation Clinics”, which taught CoP members the key steps for impact evaluation and equipped them with technology-enhanced, low-cost, high-impact monitoring and evaluation tools and small grants. The development of a web-based knowledge sharing platform and dissemination campaigns supported the reporting of successes and challenges to stakeholders and raised project profiles. Finally, organizations with positive results developed and conducted randomized control trial studies to demonstrate the impact of their programmes.

In its second phase, the overarching vision of this partnership is to create and apply evidence-based policies for the promotion of youth employment in the MENA region.

More specifically, the main goals of the second phase of the partnership are to:

- Incorporate the technical assistance model of these “Evaluation Clinics” into local evaluation institutions conducting research in the field of youth employment and entrepreneurship, thereby forming monitoring and evaluation ‘hubs’ for youth-serving organizations;
- Produce evidence on what does and does not work through impact evaluations allowing policy-makers and investors to improve decision-making processes. The evidence will also demonstrate how interventions work. This includes an annual request for proposals to provide technical and financial support to qualified research teams for implementing experimental impact evaluations;
- Ensure that evidence is translated into policy through the dissemination of messages to governments, institutions and investors.



“Monitoring and Evaluation is often times seen as a luxury in projects that is something that you shouldn’t devote a lot of resources to. But what has come across in Taqueem is that it is not a luxury, it is critical to successful program implementation.”

CoP Participant



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RESULTS

The first phase of the project produced the following results:

- The development of impact evaluation and monitoring and evaluation systems for the CoP of 15 youth-led organizations;
- A narrowing knowledge gap on youth employment. For example, the Fund contributed to the first-ever completed impact evaluation on youth apprenticeship schemes, and the first experimental study on the economic empowerment of adolescent girls;
- The amassing of a portfolio of nine rigorous impact evaluations and 12 monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems in the MENA and sub-Saharan Africa regions. A key tool to influence policy has been the sharing of a series of short policy briefs, which provide decision-makers with a summary of the main findings and policy implications of the studies.
- The establishment of a strong and recognized brand in the “Evaluation Clinics” (13 have been delivered since 2008), and the certification of over 500 youth practitioners through the rigorous training methodology. This has created a critical mass of evaluation expertise in the targeted regions;
- The increased use of information and communication technology. The majority of organizations are now using web-based surveying tools; others are using smartphones and tablets to survey beneficiaries. All are moving away from paper-based surveys, especially for analysis where either Excel or cloud-based M&E databases are used;
- The establishment of an initiative that reassures and encourages investors with evidence which has led to the national scale-up of several evaluated programmes, including the Technical and Vocational Skills Training pilot programmes for orphans, vulnerable and affected youth in Malawi;
- The dissemination of knowledge on innovative and appropriate techniques for improving results measurement in youth employment initiatives. The online Taqueem Portal provides evaluation resources to CoP members and funders, such as policy briefs, data collection protocols, surveys, terms of reference for lead researcher and data collection firms, and completed evaluation reports;
- A social media campaign showcasing the evaluation methods and results of the community of practice (including the CoP knowledge-sharing group and videos on YouTube. See: Taqueem Community of Practice (YouTube).

BENEFITS OF PARTNERING

Policy-makers in the MENA region receive evidence-based recommendations on youth employment.

A critical mass of impact evaluation expertise is created amongst youth employment practitioners, coupled with an increased evidence base for “what works” in youth employment.

Through results measurement, donors are reassured that their investment is creating value for young people and that the implementing organizations are accountable, transparent and efficient in the way they allocate resources.