

**ILO workshop**

# **Towards a demand-driven impact research agenda on youth employment in MENA**

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# Agenda

- Background
- Findings
- Takeaways

# Belief in evidence-based policymaking, but...



Strengthen  
evidence-based  
programming and  
policymaking



More effective  
policies and  
programs



Improved labor  
market  
outcomes

... reality is different.



# Despite growing body of evidence, uptake is limited

- Global evidence increasingly available (see earlier presentations, systematic review by Kluve et al 2016)
- But policymakers and implementers are not necessarily using good practices; repetition of same mistakes
- Why? Bad communication of findings? Low relevance of evaluations? Other reasons?
- Many evaluations are ad-hoc, not strategic. Based on “cooperative” implementer and availability of researcher
- Evaluation design often driven by global knowledge gaps and specific donor/researcher interests
- **But global/scientific gaps are not necessarily local priorities!**



**We need to get better at making evaluations more relevant to decision makers!**

# Methodology: Bottom-up identification of evaluation priorities

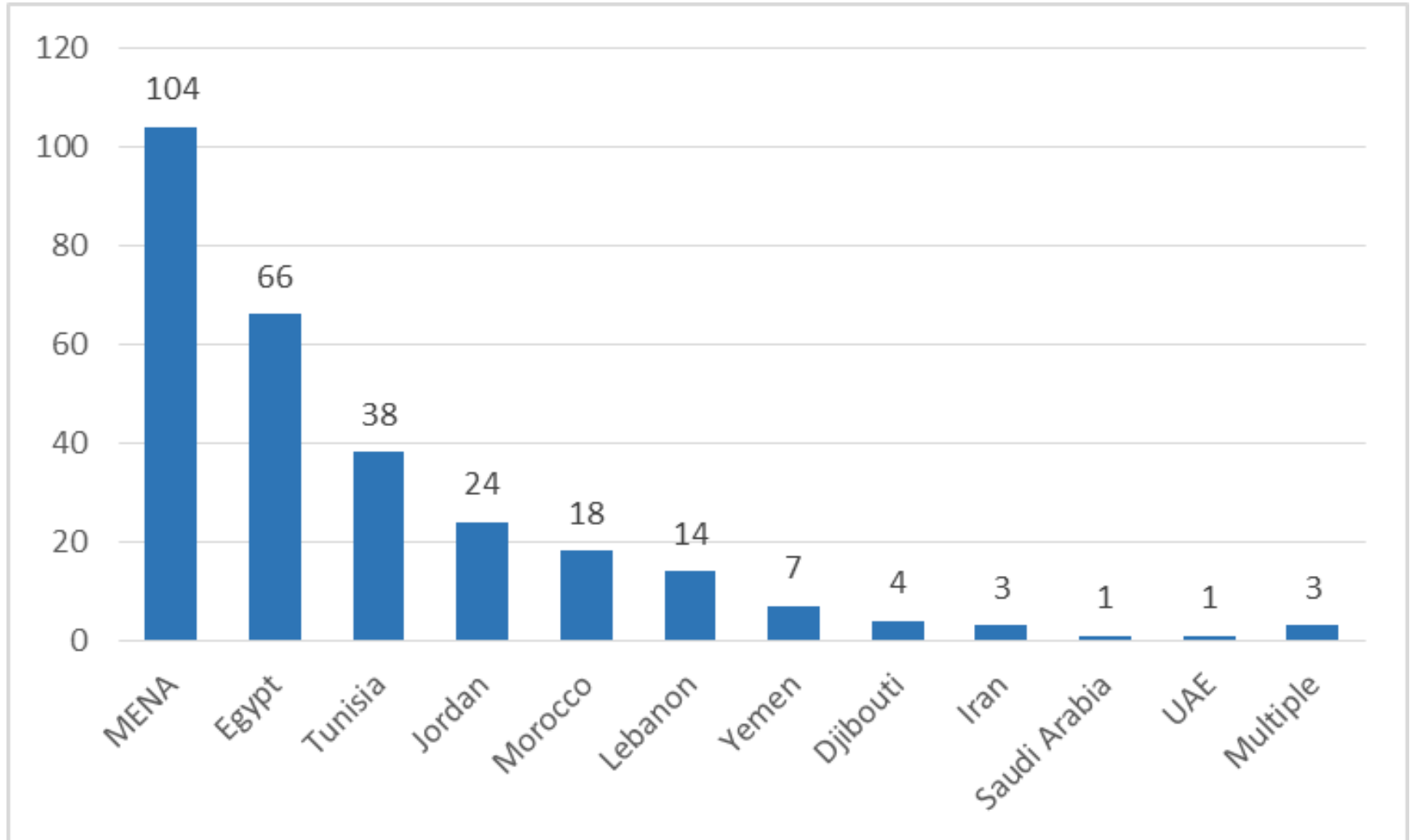
- **Objective:** Guide future evaluations towards most pressing questions
- **Bottom-up approach:** What are the programmatic knowledge gaps on the ground (not diagnostic issues)? (policymakers, implementers, donors, etc.)
- **Initiative of Taqueem Council** (working group): e.g. ILO, JPAL, RWI, WB
- **Sources:** Pragmatic, based on available networks
- **Qualitative data collection:** Interviews, workshops and events, evaluation studies, project documents, country reports, etc.
- **Analysis:** Content analysis, classification of responses by ALMP and sub-theme
- **Limitations!!**
  - Not comprehensive → Not representative
  - Subjective
  - Heterogeneity in data collection (relatively informal process)

**Very preliminary. Work in progress for discussion!**

# Agenda

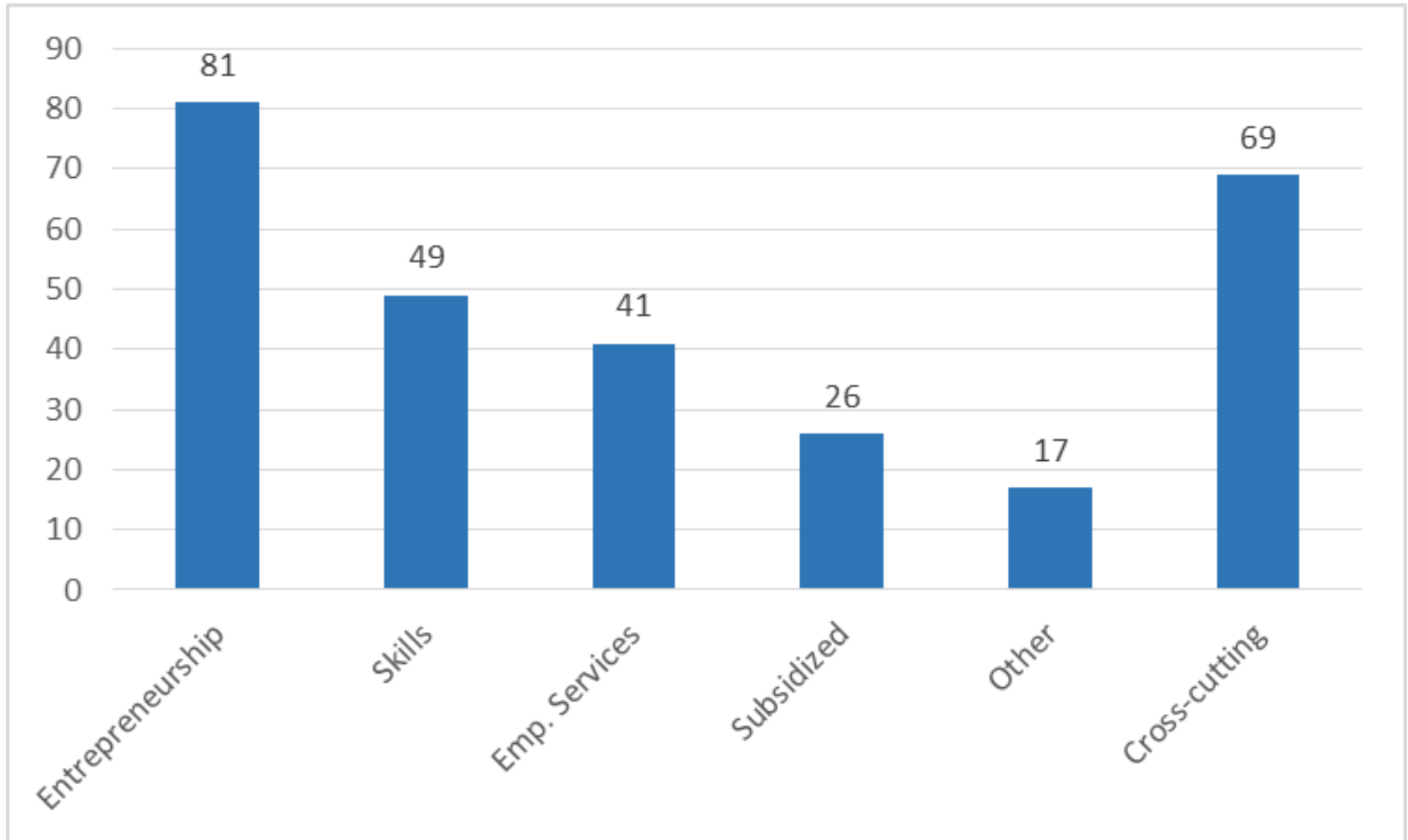
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## Distribution of questions by country (n=283)





# Distribution of questions by category of ALMPs (n=283)



# Entrepreneurship (n=81)

## Targeting (14)

- How to identify those with most potential?
- More vulnerable people vs. those with more growth potential?
- Right timing for entrepreneurship training/education

## Access to Finance (14)

- Right financing mix for new entrepreneurs
- Effect of different capital (credit, islamic finance, cash, in-kind grants, etc.) on take up, investment decisions, firm growth, etc.
- Specific modalities for youth and women

## Coaching (12)

- Coach/mentor profiles/characteristics
- Delivery mechanism
- Incentives for coaches

## NFS/BDS (7)

- Added impact
- What elements work best?
- Cost recovery and efficiency

# Skills development (n=49)

## OJT (15)

- Impact (compared to classroom-based)
- What modalities (internship, non-formal apprenticeship, etc.)
- Integration with education system

## Soft skills (13)

- Which skills are most important ?
- Best way and timing to develop/teach them?

## TVET (9)

- Appropriate training duration (short vs. longer)
- How to increase cost-effectiveness?
- How to raise its reputation?

## Demand-driven (7)

- Incentives for employers (to participate, to hire)
- Which approach (vacancy-based, sector-based, etc.)

# Employment Services (n=41)

## Matching (9)

- What's the best way, incl. when should matching take place?
- Impact of job fairs

## Targeting (8)

- Which groups to focus on? (where is impact biggest?)
- Skill/career testing and profiling of beneficiaries
- Targeting/sequencing of different services offered?

## Job search assist. (6)

- To what extent is it enough / binding constraint?
- Combination with other services (e.g. matching, information)
- Minimum duration

## Inst. arrangements (5)

- Governance and incentives for PES
- Public vs. private provision
- Result-based contracting

# Subsidized employment (n=26)

Public works/services	<b>Individual/HH impacts (4)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct effects on beneficiaries (consumption, neg. coping mechanisms, etc.)</li></ul>
	<b>Community impacts (4)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effects of infrastructure/services on communities</li></ul>
Wage subsidies	<b>Targeting (5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which youth, which employers (informal employers, avoid deadweight)?</li><li>• Give subsidy to individual or firm?</li></ul>
	<b>Combination (2)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In which combination are subsidies most successful (alone, with OJT, etc.)</li></ul>
Both	<b>Long-term effects (4)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How to provide stepping stone to permanent employment?</li><li>• Incentives or commitment devices for employers?</li></ul>

# Cross-cutting questions (n=69)

## Preferences & expect. (19)

- How to influence youth aspirations and expectations (about public sector, private sector, informal vs. formal employment, technical professions, entrepreneurship, etc.)

## Targeting (12)

- How to profile/segment youth by needs/constraints?
- What works best for who? (incl. university graduates)
- How target those who benefit the most from specific services?

## Gender (10)

- Gender-sensitive design (e.g. training hours, safe spaces, etc.), incl. Impact of engaging gatekeepers
- Influencing gender-views of employers
- What works to increase labor force participation of women?

## Inst. arrangements (8)

- Design and impact of result-based PPPs (e.g. contract terms)
- Effective coordination structures in multi-agency programs

# Cross-cutting questions (n=69), continued

## **Retention (7)**

- Strategies to reduce dropout during implementation, esp. women (what incentives, nudges, ecosystem needed?)
- Strategies to improve retention on the job

## **Labor force part. (7)**

- What works to increase labor force participation of women?
- What works to increase labor force participation of other groups, e.g. lower-education, discouraged youth, etc.

## **Displacement & migrat. (5)**

- Tailoring for displaced populations vs. host communities
- Right combination and sequencing of services (supply side, demand side, protection)

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# Conclusions (1): Top 10 issues of interest in MENA

preliminary

- Expectations and aspirations
- Targeting (across ALMPs)
- On-the-job training
- Soft skills
- Access to Finance
- Non-financial services / Coaching
- Gender / LF-participation
- Institutional arrangements and contracting
- Displacement and migration
- Job retention | Matching | TVET

## Conclusions (2): Towards demand-driven research agenda

- **Importance of cross-cutting questions**
- **Commonalities and differences compared with “global” knowledge gaps**, confirming value added of this exercise:
  - Prioritize among global knowledge gaps
  - Identify new (country/region-specific) questions
- **Put more research emphasis on Top 10 issues** (Can we agree on shared agenda?)
- **Implications for:**
  - Impact evaluations
  - Performance/process evaluations
  - Diagnostic studies (better understand underlying reasons)
  - Better communication of existing knowledge

# Questions & discussion

- Do these preliminary findings resonate with your own experience?
- Potential value added of this approach? Dig deeper in MENA? Other countries/regions?
- How do we translate these findings into guiding future research and evaluations?
- Any methodological recommendations? (not too heavy, but ensure credibility)



# Annex

# Potential next steps: Is it worth it moving on? What's the appetite within ILO and/or other partners?

- Phase 1: Preliminary data collection and analysis (ongoing)
- Phase 2: More in-depth data-collection & analysis for MENA
  - Consultation of a larger number of stakeholders → make more representative (incl. more countries, e.g. GCC)
  - Stakeholder prioritization of issues
    - Those already collected
    - Derived from global knowledge gaps
  - More robust coding of answers
  - Benchmark of questions with existing evidence base (which questions are already answered)
- Phase 3: Operationalize research and communication agenda
- Phase 4: Other countries/regions?

## Other interventions (n=17)

**Volunteering  
(3)**

**Non-formal  
educat. (3)**

**Working  
conditions (3)**

**Graduation (2)**