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# SKILLS MISMATCH AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT

## HOW TO BOOST EMPLOYABILITY OF YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN IN EGYPT

Success Stories & Lessons Learned  
From ILO Interventions

2014/ 2015



Decent Work Team for North Africa  
Skills and Employability Branch



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Skills mismatch and underemployment:

How to boost employability of young women and men in Egypt

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كيفية تعزيز القابلية للتوظيف بين الشباب والشباب في مصر

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## FOREWORD

Egypt has witnessed tremendous social and political changes since 2011, when the Arab Spring started to shake the political landscape in North Africa. Social unrest and instability led to sharp declines in economic growth rates that soon translated into low rates of job creation. This exacerbated poor labour market prospects for young people, in particular for women, who are at a stark disadvantage to access decent jobs, and for the growing number of highly educated graduates who do not find jobs that match their qualifications.

The ILO was called upon by the national government, workers, employers and civil society to support the economic and social transition as well as smooth labour market transformations. These types of interventions, which are grounded in internationally agreed labour standards, and also apply and adapt ILO tools to the Egyptian context, aim to enhance the relevance of skills provided, improve job matching, career guidance and counselling. These interventions also target those that are most disadvantaged, including working children.

The main purpose of this publication is to share ILO experiences and highlight success stories. Project interventions change people's lives. These are the stories we intend to tell in this publication, embedded in the specific approach chosen and Egyptian context in which they take place. Thereby, we would like to encourage national partners and development practitioners to continue working towards more and enhanced skills and jobs for a bright and more socially inclusive future for Egypt.

This publication is the product of collaborative efforts between five technical cooperation projects on youth employment and women empowerment in Egypt, all contributing to enhancing skills and employability among those disadvantaged in the labour market: The Decent Jobs for Egypt's Young People Project is supported by CANADA, The Way Forward After the Revolution – Decent Work for Women in Egypt and Tunisia by the Government of Finland, Creating a Conducive Environment for Effective Recognition and Implementation of Women's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in Egypt by the US State Department, Combating Worst forms of Child Labor by Reinforcing Policy Response and Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods and Educational Opportunities in Egypt by the US Department of Labor and Transition To Employment: Career Guidance for Youth and Job Creation by the Italian-Egyptian Dept for Development Swap Program. Thanks are due to all donors for their trust in ILO work, and to ILO colleagues and teams running project operations with great commitment and enthusiasm.

This publication has been drafted by Ms Lea Zanola, former Technical Officer at the ILO Skills and Employability Branch in Geneva. During her two-week stay in Egypt she visited the project sites in order to conduct interviews with different stakeholders and to take pictures illustrating the cases. Ms. Christine Hofmann, Skills Development Specialist in the Decent Work Team for North Africa, provides technical support to the projects and coordinated work for this publication. Ms Nadia Rifaat translated the document into Arabic, and Ms Asma Rezk, Communication Officer in the Cairo Office, prepared the layout and helped publish it.

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## BACKGROUND ON SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY IN EGYPT

### EGYPT'S LABOUR MARKET SITUATION IN TRANSITION

Economic recovery after a period of recession, similar to the one experienced by Egypt after the political changes caused by the “January 2011 Revolution”, usually sees labour markets improve at a much slower pace. Egypt is likely to be no exception, unless major reforms are implemented that will address industrial, employment, and education and training issues through concerted efforts and dialogue between the government and social partners.

Poverty has been increasing over the past years. Egypt's national statistical office, the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), reports a significant increase in absolute poverty following the 2008 crisis from 20.6 per cent in 2008/2009 to 25.2 per cent in 2010/2011, and 26.3 in 2012/2013.<sup>1</sup>

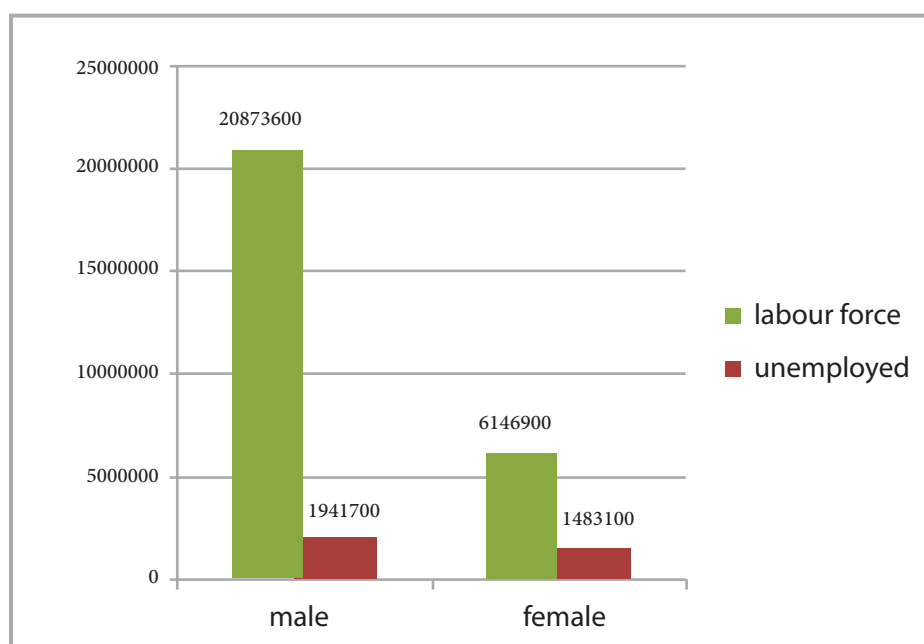
The low growth rates of Egypt's economy have not been able to deliver the numbers of quality jobs required to absorb the large cohorts of youth entering the labour market. This has led to high rates of unemployment and underemployment including large shares of long-term unemployed, who tend to have major difficulties to (re) enter the labour market, as well as inactivity. The unemployment rate, which was 12.7 per cent in 2012, rose to over 13 per cent in 2013 (CAPMAS<sup>2</sup>); furthermore around three-quarters of the unemployed are young people aged 15 to 29. Young women – if they opt to work - are least five times more often unemployed (unemployment rate of 38.1 per cent compared to 6.8 per cent, Barsoum et al. 2014<sup>3</sup>) than men. This is partly because they queue for public sector jobs, not finding the adequate quality and security in jobs offered by the private sector (Krafft and Assaad, 2014<sup>4</sup>).

1 CAPMAS (Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics). 2014. Egypt Statistical Yearbook, 2014. Section Public Indicators: <http://www.capmas.gov.eg/pdf/Electronic%20Static%20Book2014//PDF/indicator/Untitled.pdf>

2 CAPMAS (Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics). 2014. Egypt Statistical Yearbook, 2014. Section Labour Force: <http://www.capmas.gov.eg/pdf/Electronic%20Static%20Book2014//PDF/labor/Untitled.pdf>

3 Barsoum, G.; Ramadan, M.; Mostafa, M. 2014. Labour market transitions of young women and men in Egypt. Work4Youth Publication Series No. 16. Youth Employment Programme, Employment Policy Department, International Labour Office, June.

4 Krafft, C.; Assaad, R. 2014. Why the Unemployment Rate is a Misleading Indicator of Labour Market Health in Egypt, Policy Perspective No.14, ERF, Cairo.

**FIGURE 1. ESTIMATED LABOUR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYED, BY SEX (2012)**

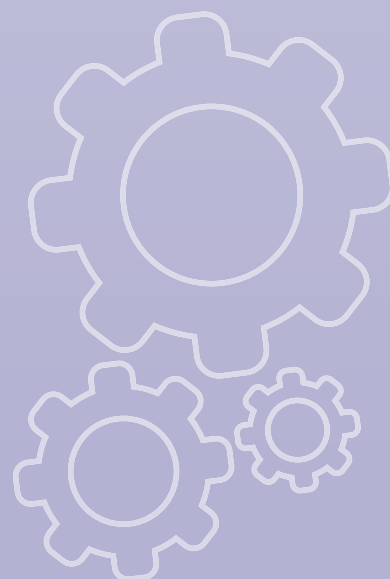
Source: CAPMAS

Other issues that also affect Egypt's labour market include: low-quality employment, high levels of informal employment, and depressed wages. Young workers in Egypt are almost exclusively found in informal employment<sup>5</sup> (91.1 per cent) with very little differences between women and men, and rural and urban areas, respectively (Barsoum et al. 2014). Only one third of all paid employees in Egypt have legal contracts, of which only 30 per cent have social insurance and 21 per cent have medical insurance (SABER, 2014<sup>6</sup>).

Poor working conditions, the temporary nature of the jobs, and low salaries were reasons stated by as many as one half (50.1 per cent) of working youth surveyed in the 2012 SWTS (Barsoum et al. 2014) on why they would like to change their job; others wanted to change because their current job did not match their level of qualification. In fact, according to Barsoum et al. (2014) almost one half of working youth (47.7 per cent) are in occupations that do not match their education. This phenomenon has a strong impact on the worker's productivity and satisfaction, and indicates a severe mismatch between the skills of the labour force and those needed by the economy. This mismatch can be illustrated by comparing the occupational distribution of the surveyed working youth (indication of the labour demand) and the

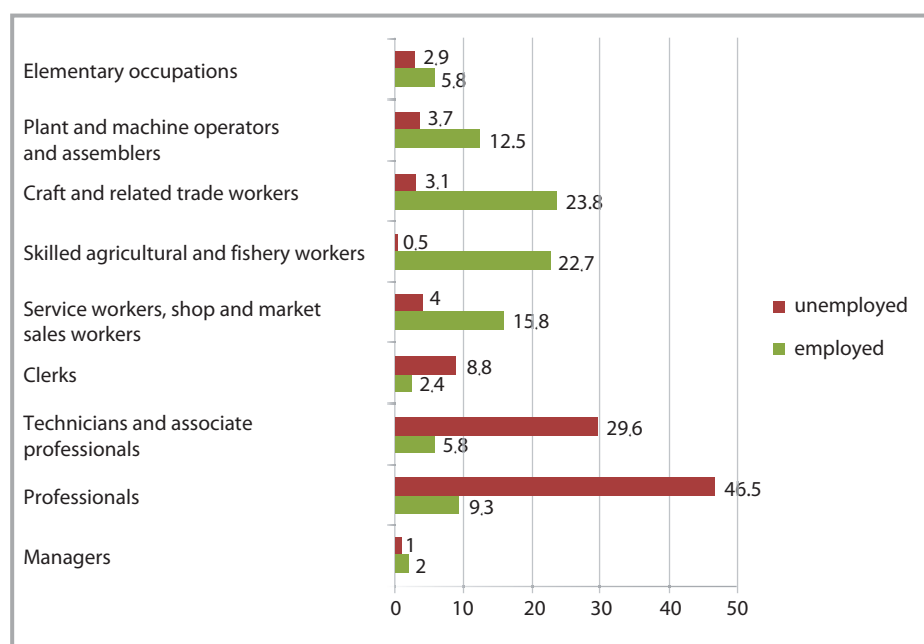
5 Informal employment as used in Barsoum et al. (2014) is made up of two subdivisions: workers in the informal (unregistered) sector and paid employees holding informal jobs in the formal sector. The latter earn a salary but do not receive other benefits, such as social security contributions or paid annual or sick leave that would normally be associated with a job in the formal sector

6 SABER (Systems Approach for Better Education Results). 2014. SABER Country Report, Arab Republic of Egypt, Workforce Development. The World Bank.



distribution of occupations sought by unemployed youth (indication of the labour supply). Figure 2 shows that unemployed youth looked mainly for higher skilled occupations, especially professionals and technicians, while the top occupations held by employed youth were mid-level ones (craft and related trades work, and skilled agricultural and fishery work).

**FIGURE 2. UNEMPLOYED YOUTH BY OCCUPATION SOUGHT, AND EMPLOYED YOUTH BY OCCUPATION, IN %**



Source: Barsoum et al. 2014 (data from the SWTS 2012)

The mismatch is driven by a disconnected education and training system that does not deliver labour market relevant skills. In addition to a lack of adequate labour market intermediation, career guidance and counselling, which could serve to provide young people with relevant information and address deep-rooted social and cultural misconceptions about certain occupations. Therefore, the Youth Employment National Action Plan (NAP) of 2010–15, which outlines Egypt’s strategy towards more and better jobs for youth, and the National Strategy for Training for Employment, seek to improve the existing labour market policies and programmes by developing public employment offices and strengthening labour market information units at the Ministry of Manpower and Migration (ILO, 2010<sup>7</sup>).

7 ILO. 2010. Egypt: Youth Employment National Action Plan. International Labour Organization, Sub-regional Office for North Africa, Cairo.

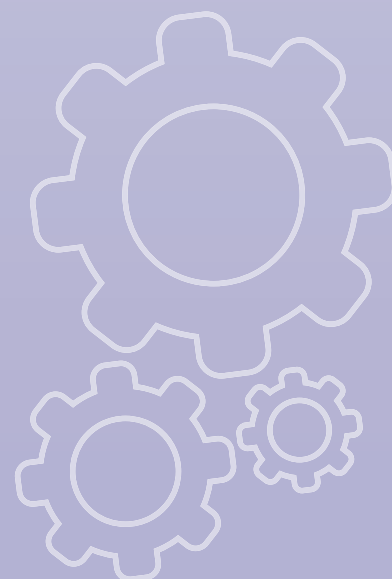
## SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN EGYPT

The System Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) workforce development report finds that Egypt's policymakers are well aware of the disconnect between the existing capacities of the education system and the labour market requirements as well as the resulting negative impact on the employment situation. During the last twenty years, Egypt experienced a very strong growth in university education. Today, nearly one out of every three Egyptians in this respective age group attends university, which continues to lead to an excess supply of university graduates over labour market demand. Since technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is perceived to be a lower form of education and suffers from underdevelopment and low investment, the labour market experiences a shortage of technical and mid-level professional skills (SABER, 2014).

Improving and strengthening the TVET system is therefore a second priority area of the NAP (ILO, 2010). Even though the government has recently taken a number of positive steps towards enhancing the TVET system, it still suffers from structural deficiencies, such as: (i) a lack of social dialogue between government, employers and workers on TVET; (ii) fragmented roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders; (iii) an absent unified vision or strategy; (iv) limited influence of employers and industry in shaping, developing, standardizing and implementing policies and curricula; (v) absence of worker representatives in governance structures; (vi) weak quality assurances and financial management; and (vii) devoid culture of monitoring and evaluation.

TVET in Egypt is available at the following education levels: preparatory, secondary, and post-secondary. The TVET system is highly fragmented with over 30 active institutions and bodies that operate in isolation, among these there are as many as 19 Ministries. As a result, flexibility and permeability of the system is limited. Additionally, the system fails to deliver high-quality education and further cements the poor public perception of TVET. Primary school students with low grades are forced to enrol in vocational preparatory schools; and the technical secondary track (compared to the general secondary track) enrolls those who performed poorly in the prep school exams. The Ministry of Education is by far the largest TVET provider in the system, administering approximately 1,300 technical secondary schools (TSSs) and enrolling 72 per cent of all TVET students (SABER, 2014).

With regards to apprenticeship schemes the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Manpower and Migration are involved in providing this type of work-place based training, with a focus on industry: (Amin, 2013)<sup>8</sup>. Informal apprenticeship, where young workers learn alongside an experienced master craftsman that traditionally leads to a full time occupation in the crafts sector, still plays an important role in preparing youth with lower



8 Amin, G. 2013. Legal Review of Apprenticeship in Egypt, prepared for the ILO, forthcoming.

educational backgrounds for the labour market (ILO, 2012)<sup>9</sup>. The SWTS data shows that low educational attainment is widespread in rural areas (42.2 per cent of rural youth finished their education at the primary level or below) but remains an issue in urban areas too (29.4 per cent) (Barsoum et al. 2014). Upgrading the informal apprenticeship system is a valuable policy option to tackle skills mismatch and youth unemployment in Egypt, and could also help facilitate the integration of dropouts who do not have access to the formal system anymore.

There is a limited number of non-state training providers, including private training centres, training units in companies, foundations that generally conduct relevant and well-structured programmes. These programmes have been well received by both students and employers (among those are some apprenticeship schemes). Yet most of these programmes remain pilots (SABER, 2014).

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9 ILO. 2012. Informal Apprenticeship in the Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs): Alternative Approach. International Labour Organization, Decent Work Team for North Africa, Cairo.

## ILO GLOBAL SKILLS POLICY

The ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008) and the Global Jobs Pact (2009) highlight skills development as central to improving productivity, employability and social inclusion. The Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195) provides guidance on the content of effective skills policies and systems. The Conclusions on skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development that were adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 97th Session in 2008 established a strategy for skills development.

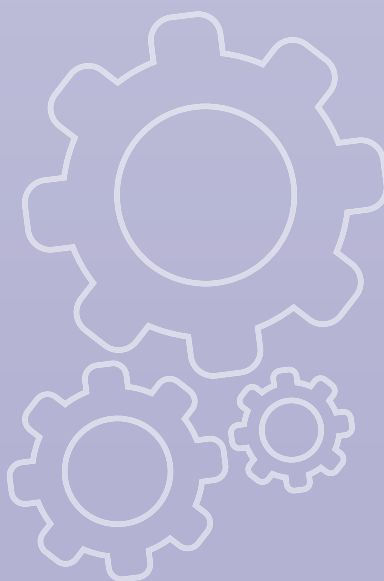
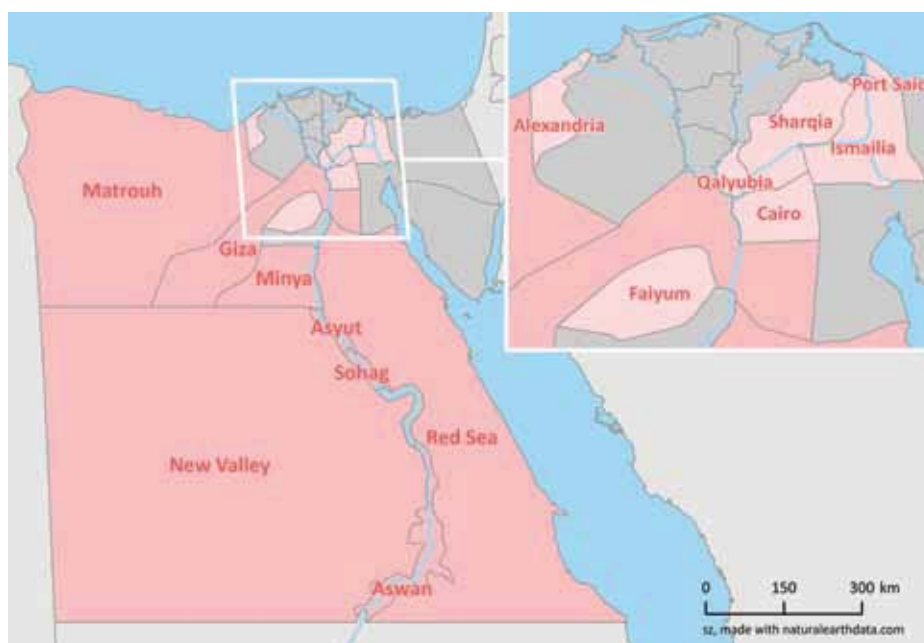
The ILO is oriented towards the promotion of decent and productive employment through a skills development policy whose actions include:

1. Assisting the country in the process of structural transformation and supporting the development and the adoption of effective skills development policies and action plans to promote active labour market programmes and decent work, especially for young people;
2. Enhancing technical and vocational training programmes aiming at developing the competencies and skills needed to strengthen individual capacities and knowledge linked with employment needs;
3. Strengthening the linkages between education, skills development, labour market entry, and lifelong learning through three main objectives: i) matching supply to current demand for skills; ii) helping workers and enterprises adjust to change; and iii) anticipating and delivering the new and different skills that will be needed in the future.

## SCOPE OF THE ILO SKILLS INTERVENTIONS IN EGYPT

The current ILO skills portfolio implemented through five projects can be found in the Governorates marked below.

*Source: own illustration*



## CASE 1: Training For Employment – Empowering Vulnerable Women Through Soft Skills And Technical On-The-Job Training

### PROJECT TITLE:

Creating a Conducive Environment for Effective Recognition and Implementation of Women's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in Egypt.

The project, which is financed by the US State Department, aims to economically and socially empower women by promoting their fundamental rights, stimulating employment growth and improving their employability. The results are achieved through the development of a policy framework, capacity building of national institutions, and empowerment of local key players (including private sector companies) using the Local Economic Development approach.

### DESCRIBED INTERVENTION:

Training for employment of vulnerable women

### SECTORS:

(1) Textile and ready-made garments, (2) Food processing

### LOCATION:

Currently, Greater Cairo and Sharqia Governorate

### IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES:

1. The Forum for Training and Education (FORTE) of the German Arab Chamber of Industry and Commerce is the partner for the textile and ready-made garments sector. FORTE is a registered NGO focussing on fighting unemployment among the Egyptian youth, and is specialized in dual vocational training.
2. The Tenth of Ramadan Investors Association (TRIA) is partnering with the ILO in the food processing sector. It is an independent non-governmental, non-profit organization, created to help member businesses to become more successful long-term investors in the 10th of Ramadan industrial zone.

## THE CHALLENGE

While unemployment rates are generally high in Egypt, women are three to four times more likely to be unemployed than men. This is particularly true in the low social classes where women's economic activity is either controlled by their brothers or, when married, by their husband. Women looking for decent jobs therefore face the double challenge of overcoming gender barriers in the workplace and at home.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE– DESCRIPTION OF THE ILO INTERVENTION

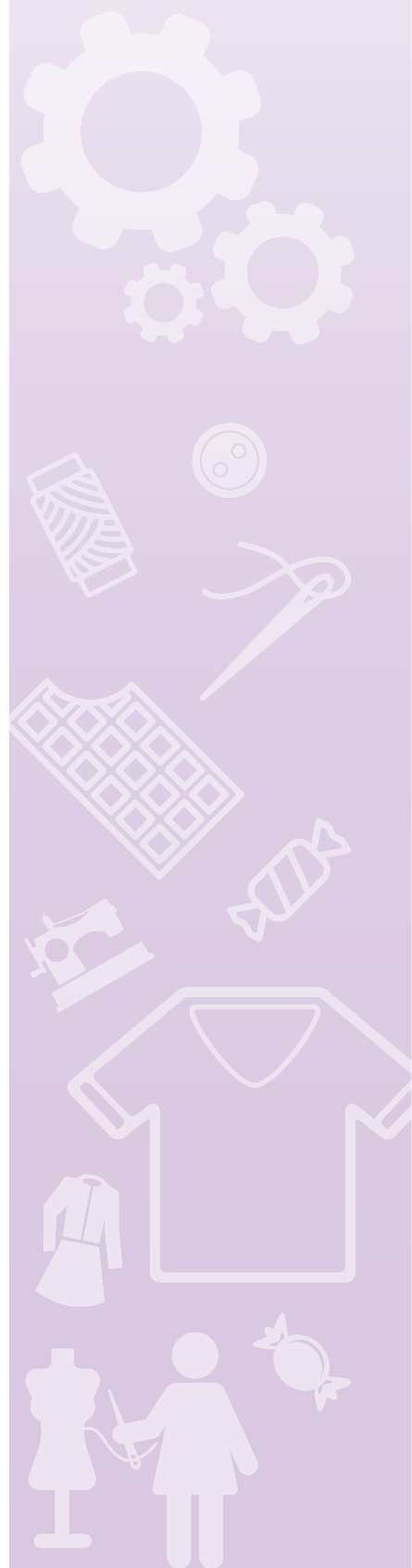
In order to provide poor women with decent employment opportunities and to facilitate a sufficient income that will allow them to sustain a family and to be financially independent; the project introduced training for employment schemes. These active labour market measures target women who are particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable, such as divorced women or widows from poor areas, who in many cases are heads of households and in desperate need of a regular income.

Most of these women have very low education levels and have never been formally employed before. Therefore, the project offers a one-week off-the-job training on essential soft or core skills. For instance, women that take part in this training learn the proper attitude towards work, how to behave in a team, how to communicate on different hierarchy levels, and how to claim their rights at work. The latter is especially important, as labour law regulations are not always enforced and abuses of workers' rights are still common in Egypt.

*"It is the first time that we are providing training on workers' rights and that employers are supporting it." Mr Magdi, project coordinator of TRIA, implementing agency of the training for employment scheme in food processing.*

The off-the-job training is followed by an on-the-job training phase that lasts between one- to three-months in either a textile or a food processing company. The women learn job-specific skills and are introduced to the different machines, educated on safety issues, and informed of the whole production cycle. The textile and food processing sectors have been selected because of their employment potential in general and for women in particular. While the ILO and the respective implementing agencies provide the off-the-job training, the human resources departments of the companies deliver the on-the-job training. Implementation of the training for this employment scheme started in November 2013 in the textile sector and in January 2014 in the food sector.

To ensure the availability of sufficient positions in the project, the implementing agencies get in contact with all companies in their region and sector. Most of the companies agree to take part in the project as they usually have a high labour turnover



and are always in need of workers. To ensure decent and sustained employment, the implementing agencies sign an agreement with the companies in which they commit to issue a renewable contract (covers the training phase and twelve months employment), pay 300 EGP (around 40 USD) as salary during the training period and a minimum monthly wage of 800 EGP (around 110 USD) upon completion of training. Companies also commit to providing social and health insurance, and free transportation to the women. In addition, the company and human resources managers attend training sessions on fundamental principles and rights of women at work, International Labour Standards on occupational safety and health, and modules on competitiveness and productivity at work. The training modules include simulations on working conditions and social relations in the company, among other things.

Regular monitoring visits to the factories are conducted during the project implementation period. The supervisors respond to a questionnaire concerning the women's performance, attitude, and training progress. Interviews with the women provide important information on the working conditions in the work place, their satisfaction and empowerment.

FORTE collaborates with fifteen textile companies and to date has achieved sustainable employment for 525 women. TRIA managed to facilitate employment contracts for 190 women in eight factories, and another 400 women are in the process of being hired. These figures mean that the targets will most probably be met even if the implementers had to replace many women who dropped out of the programme.

## EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED

There is a general agreement among the different stakeholders concerning the high impact and importance of the one-week pre-employment training related to core skills. The women for instance feel more independent and acquire self-confidence and self-esteem through this particular training.

*"After my divorce 11 years ago I was completely depending on my brother. He was against my employment in the textile factory, but thanks to the communication training, I could convince him that this is good for me and my two children." Fatma, 40 years old, beneficiary of the ILO training for employment for vulnerable women.*

The companies report that women who complete the training generally perform better, have an improved attitude, and know how to work in a group compared to women and co-workers who did not partake in the training. As a result, there is lower turnover among these women.

*“The women hired through the project have learned to cope with difficulties, are more committed and follow instructions better; they really apply the soft skills learned, especially the communication skills.” Ms Rabab, human resources manager of the participating company Tie.*

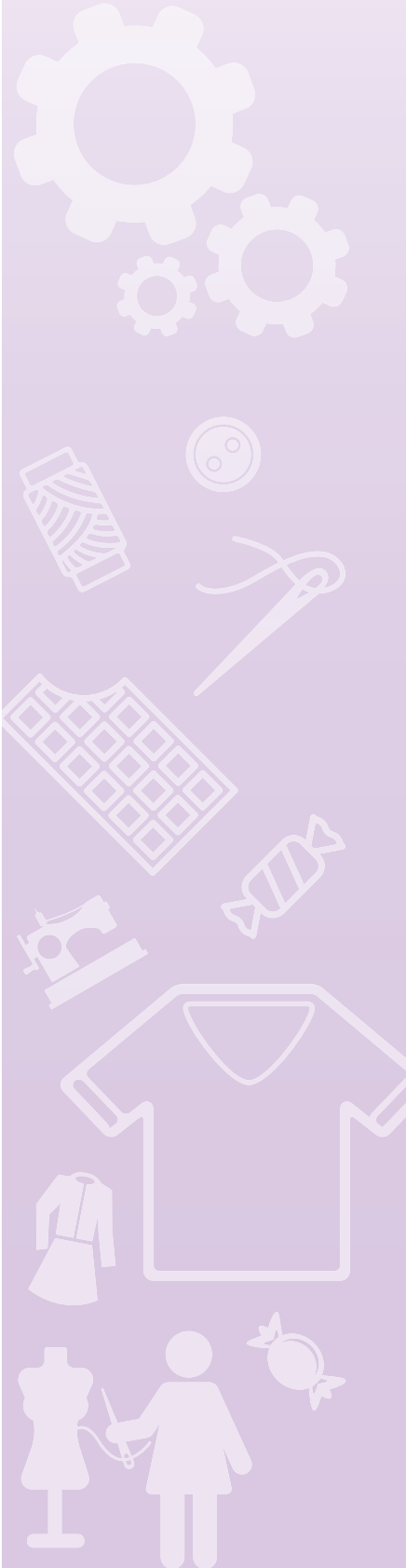
The main challenges the implementing agencies face is in finding women who belong to the project’s target group and for women to not dropout during or right after the training phase.

*“Convincing the factories is the simplest part, they are always in need of labour, the most difficult thing is to reach and retain the women.” Ms Saad, project coordinator of FORTE, implementing agency of the training for employment scheme in textile.*

The dropout rates in the textile companies are considerably high (to date, 275 out of 800 trained women have dropped out), even though the project applies various retention strategies. These strategies include the provision of lunch, free transport, child care facilities (in some cases), insurance by the company, and a certificate and an award of 300 EGP (40 USD) for women who have completed both the on- and off-the-job training.

The alarmingly high dropout rates in the textile factories made the implementing agency FORTE alter their approach. Initially, the beneficiaries were selected based on datasets from NGOs and government registries, in particular the Egyptian Food Bank. However, many of those women were not depending on themselves to earn money. Some women were eligible to conditional cash transfer or charity money and thus preferred staying at home rather than working in a factory, while others dropped out as soon as they got married. Dropping out of employment after marriage seems to be a common trend in Egypt, so frequent that some companies have started to hire men instead of women – even though women deliver work of the same or better quality. Other women left during the training phase because the pay was too little. These women often returned to the informal sector where they can earn more money as a street vendor or domestic worker. For such women they are so poor that their only preoccupation is their income level, and not their working conditions, opportunities for skills upgrading, or career prospects in the future.

FORTE now identifies beneficiaries by talking directly to women in the street and not through intermediaries as previously done. Accordingly, the dropout rates of the newly recruited women are significantly lower, as they are now well informed of what is expected from them during their employment and FORTE has achieved in identifying the women in most need of employment.. In addition, the employers conduct further interviews with interested women and also arrange visits for potential employees to the production site before starting the programme. This helps the woman assess whether the type of work corresponds with her expectations and ideas. FORTE states that several factories are now considering introducing the



training sessions on soft skills and the duties and rights at work to all their workers since it has helped to reduce dropouts.

*“The project should focus more on raising awareness among women that working in a factory is nothing bad but leads to financial independence.”  
Randa, 36 years old, beneficiary of the ILO training for employment for vulnerable women.*

## FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, NO EXPERIENCE WITH FORMAL EMPLOYMENT, AND POOR EDUCATION ARE SOME OF THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMEN BENEFITTING FROM THE ILO TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT SCHEME

Most women hired through the ILO training for employment scheme are formally employed for the first time, have a low educational background and as head of households bear the financial responsibility for the family. Case and point the woman in the picture above wearing the turquoise veil had to take care of seven children during her search for a better-paid job, which is a difficult undertaking for any person much less for an illiterate woman. Luckily, her neighbours told her about this opportunity. She is very happy about the job and the training she receives and the fact that one of her daughters was able to join her in working with Horreia Food Industries Co. The two belong to the 50 women the company hired through the project. Horreia Food Industries Co produces candies, biscuits, and juices for the African market and employs 650 persons in 10th of Ramadan City in Lower Egypt. Due to the great impact of the training, the management decided to offer it to all new employees from now on at the company's own costs.

*Picture 1.1: Beneficiaries employed by Horreia Food Industries Co. and company representatives*



*Picture 1.2: Production process*



## THE OWNER OF DELTA SWEETS SHOWED GREAT COMMITMENT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING AND FILLED ALL VACANCIES THROUGH THE PROJECT

Delta Sweets employs around 2000 people in four factories located in 10th of Ramadan City. The company produces all kinds of sweets and exports to the United States, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, and other countries. Mr. El Shanawany, the owner of Delta Sweets, who also acts as the head of the food unit at Tenth of Ramadan Investors' Association (TRIA) learned about the ILO training for employment scheme when TRIA was chosen as the implementing agency in the food sector. From the very beginning, he was committed to participating in the project and was eager to provide employment opportunities to vulnerable women. Thus, Delta Sweets is the company with the largest number of placements with 50 women already hired by the company through the training programme and on track to hire up to 150 women. Not only did Mr El Shanawany fill all the company's vacancies through the project; he is considering continuing with the training scheme beyond the project and on the company's own costs. This is attributed to the fact that the employees who have gone through the training scheme develop a positive attitude towards their work, are more productive and stay longer in the firm.

*Pictures 1.3: Production Process*

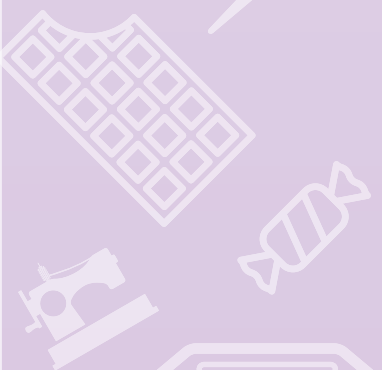


## THE SPORTSWEAR COMPANY TIE REPORTS SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER LABOUR TURNOVER DUE TO THE PRE-EMPLOYMENT SOFT-SKILLS TRAINING

The company Tie has existed since 1988 and produces sportswear for international brands. The company exports to many European countries. About 1000 women and men are currently employed in two factories located in the Nasr City Free Zone area in the Governorate of Cairo. Until now, Tie recruited 23 women through the ILO training for employment scheme. While the company already had an internal training centre to show inexperienced workers on how to use the different machines, the pre-employment soft-skills training is completely new and further develops the company and its staff. Ms. Rabab, the human resources manager for Tie states that she is pleased with the attitude and performance of the women who are recruited through ILO's employment scheme and of those who participate to the soft skills training.. She reveals that the project's biggest impact on the company is the significantly lower turnover among these women.

*"I didn't have a life before, but now I feel strong!" says Randa, 36 years old, newly employed by the sportswear company Tie.*

As an unmarried woman, Randa was financially depended on her brother, who did not want her to leave the house to work. Day after day, she sat at home and her life consisted of watching TV, eating and sleeping. One day, a friend told her about the possibility of joining the ILO training for employment programme and to start working in a textile factory. The prospect of becoming financially independent was very tempting, for Randa so she contacted the implementing agency FORTE. Randa, who can hardly read and write, says that the training she received and the first paycheck she earned completely changed her life. The trainer developed her leadership and communication skills, which enabled her to be more open. As a result of the training, Randa now enjoys talking and engaging with other people, and gives regular feedback to Ms. Rabab, the human resources manager of Tie, on how to improve the programme. More importantly, Randa is now preparing to take on a supervisory role in the company. Randa now feels strong and empowered. She even takes computer courses on her own, and no longer worries that her brother is not talking to her.



## **CASE 2: Upgrading Informal Apprenticeships – Enabling Working Children To Acquire Basic Education And Transferable Skills To Enhance Their Social And Economic Mobility**

### **PROJECT TITLE:**

Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labour by Reinforcing Policy Response and Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods and Educational Opportunities in Egypt (CWCLP).

The US-funded multi-agency project is led by the World Food Programme (WFP), and implemented in partnership with the ILO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It targets rural areas in Egypt, which are most affected by food insecurity, vulnerability, poverty, malnutrition, and child labour. The project aims to promote sustainable livelihoods of target households, strengthen child labour related policies and legislation and the capacities of partner institutions, raise awareness for the topic, and improve and expand education for working children.

### **DESCRIBED INTERVENTION:**

Upgrading informal apprenticeship

### **SECTORS:**

Agriculture

### **LOCATION:**

Sharqia Governorate in Lower Egypt (described here), plus Faiyum, Asyut, Minya, and Sohag in Upper Egypt

### **IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES:**

The apprenticeship schemes are implemented by civil society organizations based in the targeted Governorates: Community Development Association for Women and Child Improvement (Sharqia and Sohag), Caritas Egypt (Faiyum), Terre des Hommes (Asyut), Coptic and Evangelical Organization for Social Services (Minya).

## THE CHALLENGE

Child labour in Egypt, which is fuelled by a lack of educational opportunities remains a widespread phenomenon in the country. Difficult to measure, reported figures vary widely depending on the age range and type of survey. Between two-thirds and three quarters of Egyptian child labour occurs in agriculture, which is historically an under-regulated sector of the economy. Children often work in indecent jobs and sometimes under hazardous conditions affecting their safety, health or moral development. Poverty and lack of education are root causes of child labour, that are exacerbated by an unregulated informal economy, inadequate social protection measures, and poor quality educational systems. Many children, particularly girls, drop out of school early in order to supplement relatively meagre household incomes.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE – DESCRIPTION OF THE ILO INTERVENTION

Many families in rural areas in Egypt are particularly vulnerable as they are affected by food insecurity, poverty and malnutrition, and depend on the additional income provided by children. Accordingly, any approach to tackle child labour needs to be comprehensive, aimed at strengthening the livelihoods of the families on the one side, and enhancing the children's social and economic mobility on the other side. To reach the latter goal, the project works on building the capacity of the Ministries, social partners, and other key actors to upgrade informal apprenticeships, one of the country's oldest means of acquiring vocational skills by working alongside an experienced professional in a company or small workshop. Upgrading informal apprenticeships in Egypt means formalizing children's work relationship, improving the working conditions, introducing structured learning, and issuing a certificate to ensure the transferability of skills acquired and the chances for attaining a higher salary. The project only targets agricultural occupations, which are unique in the sense that most of the work is seasonal and done within family businesses.

In the apprenticeship contract signed by the company, the parents, and the Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MoMM), a duration of one year is fixed, even if formal apprenticeships in Egypt normally take three years. The rather short duration was chosen to adapt to the specifics of the occupations and the conditions of the families, which would not agree to a longer contract as the children would then lose their flexibility to move to a better-paid job.

***"The children's and families' main concern is freedom and flexibility: they want to be free to move to another employer if someone else pays better." Representative of the Egyptian German Agricultural Company, apprenticeship host company within the CWCLP.***



In addition, the participating families receive food aid by the WFP in order to ensure the parents' support. Once a month they receive 20kg of flour and 10kg of rice. The incentives that the ILO provides and financially covers for the business owners consist of issuing work insurance and a medical examination for the apprentice, as well as improved occupational safety and health measures to raise productivity.

Most of the working children are virtually illiterate, as they either never attended school or dropped out of the formal education system and had no chance to return. The Egyptian law does not allow dropouts above the age of 12 to go back to formal education as well as younger children who have been out of school for two consecutive years. The one-year apprenticeship at a company therefore gives them the opportunity to catch up on basic education and acquire transferable technical skills. While the minimum working age in Egypt is 15 years, an apprenticeship contract can already be issued to 12 year-old children<sup>10</sup> (as set in the labour law) and up to the age of 17 years. In addition to the workplace-specific on-the-job training, they attend a series of one-day off-the-job training sessions delivered by trained teachers of the MoMM. These sessions include aspects of occupational safety and health, the behavioural benefits of learning in the workplace, labour rights, conflict resolution and other soft skills and competences that are not necessarily linked to a specific profession. At the same time, the programme helps illiterate apprentices and interested mentors to attend literacy classes. The achievements of the apprentices are tracked in a score card and all participating children receive a nationally recognized certificate from the MoMM indicating that they completed the programme. Apprentices above 16 years of age can also obtain an occupational license for the job they have been practicing.

Plans and curricula for both on- and off-the-job training as well as the learning material have been developed in close cooperation with the MoMM. In addition, the project provides training to mentors in the companies (including a certificate) and to the labour inspectors from the MoMM to sensitize them in hazardous child labour and the importance of occupational safety and health in the workplace.

The project targets 3000 working children in total. In Sharqia Governorate, around 580 apprenticeship contracts have been signed to date, 300 of them with seven partner companies in Husseineya district, where the percentage of child labour is particularly high.

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<sup>10</sup> In order to comply with ILO Convention No. 182 (Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999), the project only targets children from the age of 14.

## EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The experience of the implementing NGO “Community Development Association for Women and Child Improvement” showed that a major challenge was to get the employers on board. As apprenticeships for child workers was a new concept in Sharqia Governorate, it took almost one year to convince the business owners to sign such contracts. Six companies for instance refused, as they did not trust the NGO or had bad experiences with the MoMM in the Directorate. The main focus of the NGO’s work was therefore to build trust and to establish relationships with the businesses in the region. For that purpose, they worked through a well-known and established person in the district to convince the employers. They also did field visits together with the MoMM to challenge both sides’ mentality. Apparently, the strategy worked out and new businesses now ask the NGO about the programme.

*“My impression from the visit here in Sharqia was very positive and I am glad to see that the NGO seems to have established a very good relationship with the participating businesses.” Onsi Georgious, ILO National Project Officer of the CWCLP.*

The experiences of the project showed that food aid was a strong factor for the families, since it is paid by the project, sustainability beyond project funding might be a problem. However, the apprenticeship component goes together with a livelihood component, where the mothers gain support in running their businesses. This component aims at achieving financial security for the families, which would mean that in the long-run the food aid and the children’s income would not be needed anymore. In addition, the apprenticeship component includes the provision of training for trainers in and outside the companies, as well as equipment to improve occupational safety and health in the workplace. Moreover, the above-mentioned links, which the NGO developed with the private sector, will also be very helpful in future, particularly because the NGO and the Ministry showed interest in continuing with the activities beyond the project’s end.

One of the challenges, which have not been addressed, is the seasonal nature of the work and the question of how to fill the time in between. It might be necessary to further improve the programme, for example, by adjusting the provision of the off-the-job training accordingly.



## CONVINCED OF THE CONCEPT OF APPRENTICESHIPS, THE EGYPTIAN GERMAN AGRICULTURAL COMPANY REFURBISHED ITS PREMISES TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING TO THEIR APPRENTICES

The Egyptian German Agricultural Company is located in Husseineya district, which belongs to the rural Governorate of Sharqia in Lower Egypt. Established in 2002, the company started producing ornamental plants and culinary herbs in 2004. They deliver to local markets, export to the Arab States and – thanks to the company's German partner – to the European Union. There are many families in the district who rely on the additional income gained by their children, which is why the company has many minors working. The children who are going to school, work on Fridays when schools are closed but the company is open. All children working in the company are encouraged to study alongside their work, since ensuring the children's education is seen as being part of the company's social responsibility.

*Pictures 2.1 and 2.2: Plantations at the Egyptian German Agricultural Company*



When the company was approached by the local Community Development Association for Women and Child Improvement and informed about the possibility to introduce apprenticeships for child workers, they were open to discuss and among the first firms who signed apprenticeship contracts. While at the beginning, the company's management was rather sceptical because they didn't know the NGO, they were quickly convinced of the benefits of apprenticeships, especially for those children who can not go back to the formal education system. The company helped the NGO in reaching out to children and their families in order to convince them to participate in the programme. Currently, the company has 22 apprentices, out of 40 children of the same age group (14 to 18 years old). Every child works and receives training in the field that fits best with his or her qualifications and abilities. Two engineers are responsible

for the on-the-job training of the apprentices, which is a substantial part of the one-year apprenticeship. As the programme is considered beneficial to all parties involved, the Egyptian German Agricultural Company is now starting to refurbish its premises in order to be able to provide the off-the-job training on the spot as well.

***“We really like our job and convinced our parents to sign an apprenticeship contract with our current employer.” Sohaila and Hend, 14 years old, apprentices at the Egyptian German Agricultural Company.***

Picture 2.3: Sohaila (left) and Hend (right)



Sohaila and Hend, are fourteen-year-old girls from Husseineya district in Lower Egypt, who have always financially supported their families by working. Some time ago they started working with the Egyptian German Agricultural Company, more or less on a full time basis. The two girls liked their employment as they were able to work together and “see the flowers bloom”. They also liked the idea of joining the apprenticeship programme together in the same company. Their parents, however, were reluctant at the beginning to let them join the programme. The girls managed to eventually convince them, highlighting all the advantages including the food aid the families would get in return. On the 28th of January 2014, their contracts were signed, and they are very much looking forward to receiving training and learning more about what is behind the job they are doing.



## THE OWNER OF SNOROK LAND NOT ONLY SIGNED THE FIRST APPRENTICESHIP CONTRACT IN THE GOVERNORATE, BUT TOOK THE INITIATIVE IN THE DISTRICT AND CONVINCED OTHERS TO FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE

Snorok Land is a company located in the village of Bahr El Bakar in Sharqia Governorate. Specialized in packaging and exporting agricultural products like onions and bananas, the company employs between 100 and 150 workers on a seasonal basis, depending on the workload. Many of the workers are children from the village of Bahr El Bakar. The owner of Snorok Land, Mr Sarwat, is a renowned person in Husseineya district and knows most families personally, as well as many employers. During his former employment as labour inspector for the Ministry of Manpower and Migration, he heard of the multi-agency child labour project and the possibility to offer apprenticeships to children working in his company. He immediately showed interest, not only because he felt that ensuring children's education is his social responsibility, but also because he had already cooperated successfully with the ILO, when WISE, an ILO methodology to improve working conditions and productivity in small enterprises, was applied in his company. He then used his good relationships to convince the children and their parents to participate in the apprenticeship programme. As a result, Snorok Land was the first company that signed apprenticeship contracts in the framework of the intervention in Sharqia Governorate. Mr Sarwat started with 25 apprentices, and now he has 55 apprentices

*Pictures 2.4 : Apprentices at Snorok Land*



*Picture 2.5: Apprentices at Snorok Land*



between the age of 14 and 17 years. More children of the same age are working in his company, but only during their vacation when they are not in school. He was so convinced of the apprenticeship concept that he advocated the initiative to the entire district, and other companies have followed his example and started signing apprenticeship contracts.

***“The apprenticeship programme is good because I can help my family and at the same time learn more about the occupation.” Youssef, 15 years old, apprentice in the company Snorok Land.***

Youssef and his brother started working at Snorok Land because the company is close to where they live and offers remuneration that is comparable to other places. With his 15 years of age and previous working experience, Youssef knows the job very well. The owner considers him as kind of “supervisor” who oversees other children. Youssef’s parents know the company owner and trust him. His reputation as well as the food aid and work insurance their son would get when participating in the apprenticeship programme, were factors that convinced them to sign the contract. Youssef is very happy to gain the chance to help his family and, at the same time, to learn more about the occupation, and receive a formal occupational licence at the end of his apprenticeship that recognizes the skills he has gained over the years.

Picture 2.6: Youssef together with Mr Sarwat (left) and a member of the local implementing NGO (right)



Picture 2.7: Youssef (right) with his brother showing the banana-packaging machine



### **CASE 3: Skills Sharing And Upgrading Within Social And Economic Solidarity Groups – The Impact Of Cooperatives On The Income And Social Empowerment Of Bedouin Women In Upper Egypt**

#### **PROJECT TITLE:**

The Way Forward After the Revolution – Decent Work for Women in Egypt and Tunisia

The Finnish-funded project is aiming to strengthen Tunisian and Egyptian women's position to participate in the labour market and improve labour market institutions to better assist women after the revolution in both countries. It supports the ILO's constituents (governments, workers and employers) to address the challenges women face, for example, related to employability, gender equality, and social dialogue.

#### **DESCRIBED INTERVENTION:**

Socio-economic justice for Bedouin women through cooperatives

#### **SECTORS:**

Handicrafts (and agriculture, not described here)

#### **LOCATION:**

Governorate of Aswan (and Red Sea, not described here)

#### **IMPLEMENTING AGENCY:**

The Centre of Egyptian Family Development (CEFD) is a non-profit NGO founded in 2000 as an alliance of 22 local associations. It has seven offices in Egypt with more than 90 employees and focuses on job creation, legal assistance and economic participation of women and youth.

## THE CHALLENGE

Egypt's Eastern Desert communities are isolated from the rest of the country, and poverty is widespread due to very limited and scarce income possibilities. Bedouin women, who are mostly illiterate, have been particularly cut off from Egyptian society and have been marginalized and neglected for many years. They have not been included in the national census and lack official legal registration (e.g. birth certificates or personal identity cards). More than 90 per cent of Bedouin women have no legal papers and therefore are excluded from basic services such as health, medical insurance, schooling, and social and legal welfare. In addition, tribal customs and traditions hamper women's social and economic participation. Even if they produce good products, they are often not able to adapt to changing needs and sell their products at a fair price as they lack access to markets, relevant knowledge, and bargaining power.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE – DESCRIPTION OF THE ILO INTERVENTION

Recognizing that the lack of organization is a major reason for Bedouin women's limited access to income-generating activities, the project developed a practical model to empower the women to start working collectively in social and economic solidarity groups. Three cooperatives have been established in the agricultural and handicraft fields, and have been supported with equipment, legal advice, and the development of value chains, especially with regards to the quality of their products and successful marketing strategies. Combining gender empowerment and value chain development approaches, the project ensures both vertical integration of the activities carried out by the women into local value chains, and horizontal integration to strengthen the decision-making power of women in the chain. The project combines various ILO tools, such as Gender Links to Value Chain Analysis, GET Ahead, and My.Coop.<sup>11</sup>

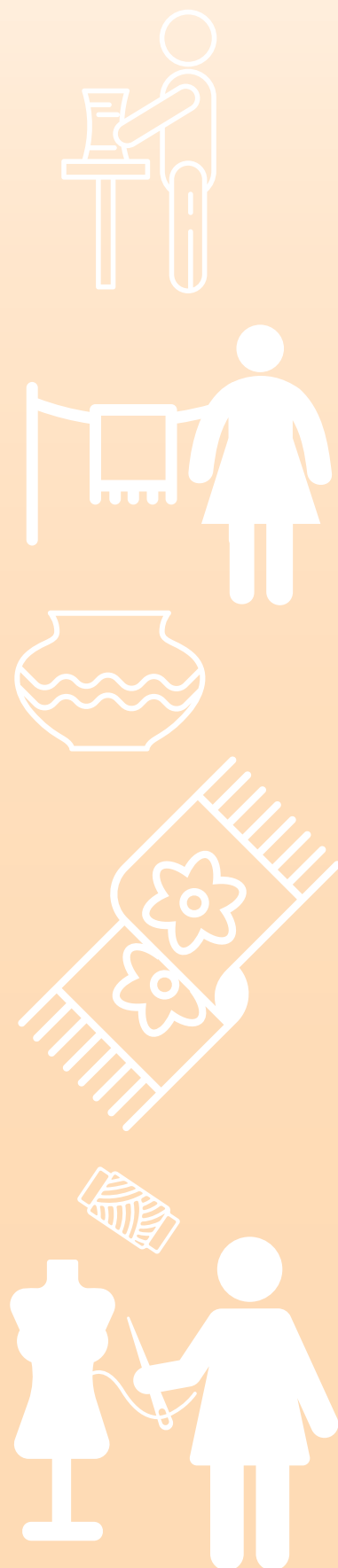
The cooperative described here, was the first cooperative for women and handicrafts in Upper Egypt and has gathered more than 200 members after seven months of operation.

The cooperative is organized around 11 women leaders, who were selected through a pre-study. The project screened all women working in handicrafts in the region and selected women who had both good technical skills and charismatic leadership

<sup>11</sup> The first tool "Making the strongest links: A practical guide to mainstreaming gender analysis in value chain development" is an ILO guide that provides methods for incorporating gender concerns into the different stages of value chain analysis and strengthening the links essential for gender equality and promoting sustainable pro-poor growth and development strategies.

The "GET Ahead for Women in Enterprise Training Package and Resource Kit" aims to assist ILO partner organizations in promoting enterprise development among women in poverty who want to start or are already engaged in small-scale business.

The "Managing Your Agricultural Cooperative, My.COOP" training package covers managerial challenges that many agricultural cooperatives face and explains the role of cooperatives in achieving a more equitable distribution of income, democracy, and economic and social development.



personalities. The leaders then nominated their members, which in most cases already belonged to their professional network. The 11 solidarity groups around the women leaders currently have between 20 and 100 members, which will soon require the establishment of sub-groups. Most of the participating women are divorced or widowed and are either financially responsible for their children or are single and take care of their parents and other family members. The women joined the cooperative in order to have a regular income and to manage their own business. With the training they receive (e.g. in marketing and diversification of products), they will also be able to work in a team instead of alone at home.

*"I was motivated to join the handicrafts cooperative because of the training and the regular income; and I wanted to produce a greater variety of products."*  
*Sayed Saad, 26 years old from Kum Umbu, Aswan Governorate, member of the handicrafts cooperative.*

Not only are the cooperatives beneficial for the women to organize their business (e.g. collectively purchase raw material and bargain for better prices), but also to share experiences and upgrade their knowledge. The system of internal skills sharing and upgrading is informally organized around the women leaders. In this system, the leaders have a coordinating role, provide technical knowledge, and coach their members.

The implementing association CEFD is in close contact with the leaders and holds regular meetings. They discuss how to adapt to changing needs, improve the quality of products, and other relevant issues. Earlier, for instance, the women were only producing for tourists, a market that has sharply declined after the revolution in 2011. Therefore, the association CEFD advised the women to alternatively target the local market and assisted them in adapting their products to suit local needs, and learn traditional designs.

Learning is organized differently in the 11 groups. While one leader gathers her members at her home to work collectively, another leader visits her members in order to show them new techniques, check the quality of the products they produce, and provide them with advice. The production process is optimized since the leaders distribute the tasks among the women according to their skills.

The selling of handicraft products takes place both individually and in joint exhibitions. The women have also organized an exhibition in Abu Simbel as their own initiative, which included deciding which products they would display, purchasing the raw material, producing in groups, and packaging and labelling the products. The exhibition was a big success. The mayor of Aswan was present as well as the ambassadors of many Arab countries. As the latter showed interest in making the products in their countries, it is now planned for the cooperative to expand selling to those countries. While the first exhibition was paid for by the project, the upcoming ones will be financed by the cooperative itself. In addition to the exhibitions, the women will be supported to open their own stores.

## EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The strategy to form small solidarity groups within the cooperative is working very well and the implementing agency believes that the approach could be easily replicated, including in bigger cities and outside the handicrafts sector. By building the capacities of the leaders, the association CEFD has made the results sustainable and the cooperative has been able to provide each woman with decent work and an increased income.

The financial impact of the cooperative – and in particular of the exhibitions – is enormous. While a woman used to earn 300 EGP (around 40 USD) per month when she was producing and selling independently, she can now gain up to 1000 EGP (about 140 USD) in two days at the exhibition. This is because the women obtain the full price of the final product and have better access to markets.

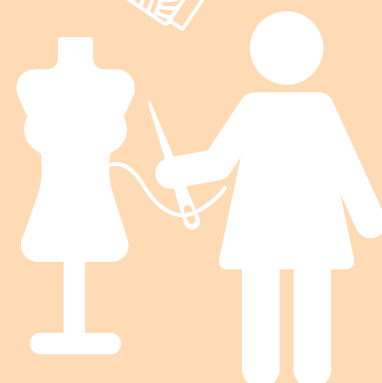
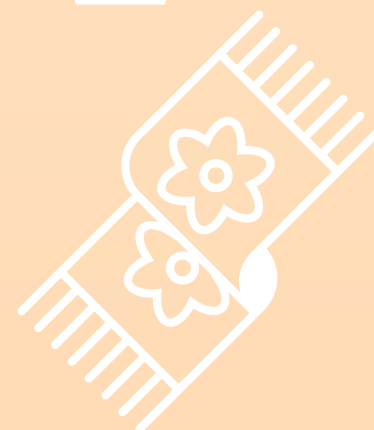
The most important lesson learned is the strong impact on women's social empowerment. Not only do they enjoy having company while producing and thus have a social life within their communities, but they also gain self-esteem and become active members of society. The women have also expanded the sale of their products beyond their towns.

*"At the beginning, the women were terrified about leaving the village for the exhibitions but now they feel free and have opened up to the world; they started moving and now even want to go and sell their products in the cities."*  
Ms Sohair El Masri, founder of CEFD, implementing agency of the project supporting Bedouin women in Upper Egypt.

*"The most important thing is that now our products are shown to the world!"*  
Bedouin women from Kum Umbu, Aswan Governorate, members of the handicrafts cooperative.

*"Being a member of the cooperative gave me new perspectives and opened my mind."* Sayeda Saad, 26 years old from Kum Umbu, Aswan Governorate, member of the handicrafts cooperative.

*"I met new people and saw other towns, even the Red Sea – I feel recognized and famous now."* Afef Gad Hassan, 39 years old from Draw, Aswan Governorate, member of the handicrafts cooperative.



## HANDICRAFTS SOLIDARITY GROUP OF KUM UMBU, ASWAN GOVERNORATE

### **Sekina Saad, in her 40s, leader of the solidarity group in Kum Umbu, Aswan Governorate**

As a divorced woman, Sekina Saad has had to make her own living and is also taking care of her elderly mother. For the past 10 years, Sekina has been working in the handicrafts field. In order to purchase raw material, which she then distributed to other women for production, she received micro-credits from the Centre of Egyptian Family Development (CEFD). The Bedouin woman with only primary education was known with CEFD as an “A” grade client because she was never late in paying back credits. When CEFD was chosen as the implementing partner for the ILO’s “Socio-Economic Justice for Bedouin Women” project component, they contacted Sekina for the feasibility study. Since Sekina was already experienced in instructing producers on how to improve the quality of their products, she was selected as a leader for the town of Kum Umbu. She then contacted the women that she was already working with and told them about the cooperative. Sekina now has 50 to 60 members across different villages in Aswan and visits them every three to four days. She shows them new products, distributes the different tasks among the members according to their skills, controls the production process and finally collects the products. She is very happy with what she has learned so far and says that her expectations towards the cooperative were met. Her main motivation for joining the cooperative was to increase the diversity of her products. While she used to only produce traditional belts and black scarfs, she now uses different colours and is also producing completely new products such as jewellery made from beads. In addition to the new designs and products, she notes that she has also learned how to conduct market research and is now able to recognize value added to products in different stages of the value chain.

### **Haneya Mohammed, 30 years old, member of the solidarity group in Kum Umbu, Aswan Governorate**

Haneya completed her commercial secondary education, and is currently still single and takes care of her sisters, brothers, and mother. Since 2004, she has been working in handicrafts from home and only on demand. Traders would buy her raw material and would later collect her finished products from her home. She would produce only what they asked for, without having any say in the product or its design. She was never aware of the final price that her products sold for, and she only received a small fee for the work she did. Like most of the other women, she was introduced to the idea of the cooperative by Sekina, the leader of the solidarity group in Kum Umbu (see above). Sekina explained that they would be working together and not alone in order to sell their products themselves and be the joint owners of their business. The fact that they would work in a group was the main reason why Haneya joined the cooperative. She says that the training on how to organize the work in a group

and how to manage the cooperative was very useful and she has observed many benefits. Firstly, her income considerably increased since she is not producing for others anymore but receives the full amount for the final product with all its value-added. Secondly, she now has a social life because she works in the production unit together with other women. Thirdly, she feels she is not marginalized anymore, but instead is now an active member of society. Finally, Haneya says she feels free to create and sell her products - she even travelled to Cairo herself to sell there.

## THE HANDICRAFTS SOLIDARITY GROUP OF DRAW, ASWAN GOVERNORATE

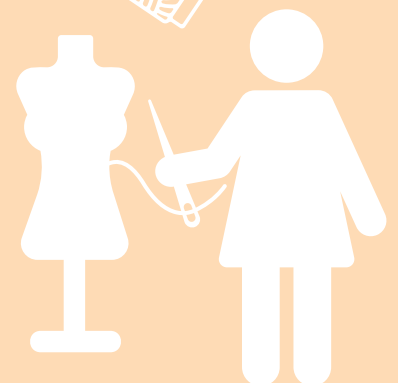
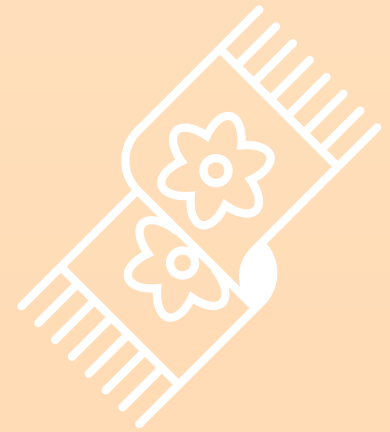
**Shadya Taha, 34 years old, leader of the solidarity group in Draw, Aswan Governorate**

Shadya is a married mother of two and has been working in handicrafts for many years. With a certificate in commercial secondary education and two years of education in a computer institute, Shadya is considered as one of the better-educated Bedouin women. Shadya was purchasing raw materials, producing at home and visiting stores in Aswan in order to sell her products. But sometimes nobody bought from her. Now, after she was asked by the Centre of Egyptian Family Development (CEFD)

*Picture 3.1: Amal Moussa (member, 30 years old), Sayeda Saad (member, 26 years old), Sekina Saad Mohammed Ali (leader, in her 40ties), Haneya Mohammed (member, 30 years old)*



*Picture 3.2: Presentation of products*



to become the leader of the handicrafts solidarity group in Draw town, she clearly feels the difference. As a result of the improved quality of products, demand has increased. In addition, she has learned how to bargain and sell products and is now well-known among storeowners. Her income is also more stable and much higher. Finally, she appreciates working in a group, and daily gathers the 30 members of her group in her home to distribute the tasks and produce together.

**Sabrin Taha, 24 years old, member of the solidarity group in Draw, Aswan Governorate**

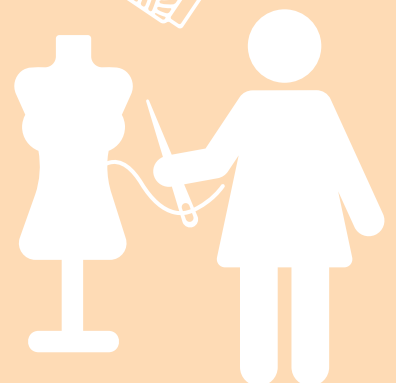
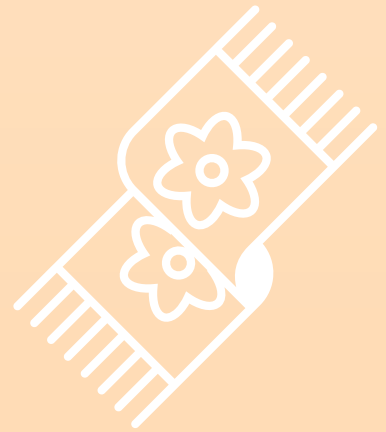
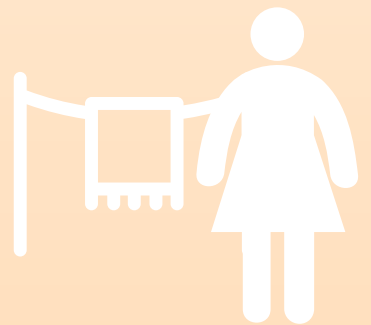
Sabrin is the younger sister of Shadya, the leader of the handicrafts solidarity group in Draw town (see above) and has been working with her sister since the age of 12. Sabrin learned of the cooperative through her sister, and was eager to join and learn. Sabrin has always displayed talent in drawing and art, and she is now responsible for the design of the products in her solidarity group. With the help of the CEFD, she has learned how to professionally draw and adapt designs to meet market demand. Motivated and full of initiative, during the value chain training together with the agricultural cooperative she had the idea to plant strawberries on the small piece land besides her house, which has never been cultivated before. Although she ate all the strawberries she grew, she still wants to grow more and also join the agricultural cooperative in future.

*Picture 3.3: Sabrin Taha (member, 24 years old), Afef Gad Hassan (member, 39 years old), Shadya Taha Hassan Gad (leader, 34 years old)*



*Picture 3.4: Presentation of products*





## **CASE 4: Employment Fairs – Matching Skills By Providing a Platform For Employers And Job Seekers To Meet in Person**

### **PROJECT TITLE:**

Decent Jobs for Egypt's Young People – Tackling the Challenge Together

The Canadian-funded ILO project follows a multi-dimensional and integrated approach to stimulate youth employment in Egypt by tackling the challenges of labour supply, demand, and matching at the same time. The project focuses on strengthening the capacity of the Ministries and national and regional partners to draft and implement youth employment action plans. The project also aims to develop the capacity of training institutions to support apprenticeships and deliver entrepreneurial skills. In addition to promoting enterprise development and self-employment, the project also works to strengthen the capacity of public employment services, youth organizations, and enterprises to efficiently match skill supply and demand.

### **DESCRIBED INTERVENTION:**

Employment fairs

### **SECTORS:**

Various, but mainly industry, agriculture, and tourism

### **LOCATION:**

Governorates of Port Said, Minya, and Red Sea

### **IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES:**

This project is directly implemented by the ILO in close cooperation with the national partners concerned. The employment fairs are jointly organized by the project's focal points in the three Governorates along with the Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MoMM) and the Public Employment Services (PES).

## THE CHALLENGE

While there is a shortage of decent work opportunities in Egypt, access to available jobs is also limited. Often, finding a job in Egypt is restricted to personal connections, and vacancy announcements do not reach jobseekers. Matching labour supply and demand is a great challenge, and local partners are usually not in the position to or lack the capacity to implement innovative and effective solutions. In addition, interventions have often been fragmented and are not sustainably anchored in local structures, and thus are limited in scale.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE— DESCRIPTION OF THE ILO INTERVENTION

In order to provide a platform for job-seekers and employers to meet and exchange, the ILO introduced the concept of employment fairs to the MoMM and the PES. While employment fairs are not new in Egypt, the organization and target group of the new concept differ. So far, most employment fairs have been organized by private agencies and universities for multinational companies who pay for the service. However, the employment fairs supported by the ILO are free, open to everyone, and target mainly poorer segments of society and blue-collar occupations. The ILO's Italian-funded project on career guidance for youth employment (see case 5) pioneered these types of employment fairs.

The project's first fair has been implemented in the Governorate of Port Said, Lower Egypt, on 29th March 2014, with the second one held shortly after in Minya, Upper Egypt, on 10th May 2014. A third fair was also held in the Red Sea Governorate on 7th June 2014.

The organization of the employment fairs has been a joint undertaking of the ILO project's focal points in the three Governorates, the local PES, the MoMM, and other members of the local career guidance taskforce. The taskforce is composed of public institutions, social partners, individual employers, and civil society organizations that are committed to improving transitions to the labour market locally. This public-private collaboration is a major achievement in ensuring sustainability.

The companies in the region are able to participate in the employment fair without paying fees, however, they are required to sign an agreement that ensures that the jobs that they offer are decent. The agreement obliges the participating company to issue a job contract to the employee within the first week of work, and to regulate their employment in accordance to the labour law. While in Port Said, which is an industrial zone, enough employers from the region were available, in Minya employers from Cairo and the South Sinai Governorates have been invited to ensure a sufficient number of vacancies were available. The participating companies have all been identified through a roster from the MoMM's labour inspection and were then individually contacted. The 60 companies present at the Minya employment



fair offered over 10,000 vacancies (mainly blue collar jobs, but also other positions such as accountants) and more than 2000 training opportunities (in the form of internships offered by companies, and vocational training offered by the Tourism Enterprise Training Partnership in preparation for employment).

Job seekers were made aware of the employment fair through advertisements in local TV, newspapers, social media, banners in the streets, flyers, announcements after Friday prayers, and calling cars which went to the remote areas. A total of 7000 job seekers registered their attendance in Minya, compared to 2'440 in Port Said where 4500 vacancies were available.

After each fair, the project follows up with the employers to receive feedback and to gain updates on the total number of job seekers who found a job through the fair. In Minya, 403 young people were formally hired through the employment fair. In Port Said, 648 young men and women were employed and as of January 2015, an additional 250 were in the final recruitment procedures through the Port Said employment fair. Finally, in the Red Sea, 950 young men and women were employed as a result of the fair.

## **IMPRESSIONS FROM THE EMPLOYMENT FAIR, ORGANIZED BY THE ILO'S "DECENT JOBS FOR EGYPT'S YOUNG PEOPLE" PROJECT IN MINYA CITY**

There is a great deal of bustle at eight in the morning, one hour before the employment fair in Minya city stadium opens its doors. Traditionally dressed middle aged men, young women with babies, groups of friends, and entire families are all waiting in the sun, squeezing against the fence, and filling in the required registration forms. The young volunteers, who have been recruited by the local authorities, are well-prepared and excited to start the day.

Inside the big hall, the employers' cabins are arranged against the wall. Representatives from 60 companies from the Governorates of Minya, Cairo and South Sinai are hoping to fill their vacancies today – a goal which seems not too unrealistic given the crowd waiting outside.

Very quickly, the hall becomes a busy market place. Job-seekers are queuing in front of certain booths, especially those of local companies. The space in the middle of the hall turns into a meeting point. People are sitting on the carpet-covered floor in order to fill in job applications, discuss job prospects, or simply to take a rest. Employers are constantly providing information, answering questions, and collecting job applications. Without the 30-minute lunch break foreseen by the organizers during which the hall was closed, there would not have been enough time for the company representatives to even have a coffee. The number of registered visitors exceeds 7,000 in the afternoon, but the final numbers are likely to be higher since not every job seeker filled in a form. People are still coming at seven in the evening and leave disappointed because the fair had just ended.

## EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The participating employers highly appreciated the employment fair in Minya. With a large number of job seekers and “extraordinary organization”, they considered the fair to be very successful. It has been proposed that the fair will be repeated in other locations across the Governorate, and that the fair will be extended to two days instead of one. The organizers also suggested inviting more and larger companies, since they had the impression that there were not enough vacancies for all the job seekers that attended. The companies suggested establishing a common database in order to access the profiles of job seekers later, in case they are in need of labour. The employers also proposed to introduce an information corner in the fair, where job seekers could get information about the types of jobs available, the working conditions, and the specific requirements. This kind of preparation is considered necessary as many companies have a major problem with the retention of their employees, particularly hotels which suffer from high turnover as job seekers’ expectations are often mismatched with work in tourism.

While the employment fair was perceived as an overall success, both job seekers and company representatives noticed a major challenge - there are too many university graduates looking for higher-level jobs, while the jobs available are generally for middle-level qualifications. Companies felt that the diversity of jobs offered could be increased, since, for example, a lot of English commerce graduates were asking positions but were not able to find suitable jobs in accordance to their qualifications. Despite this, the demand for university graduates in the labour market is far lower in most companies than it is for skilled workers.

*Pictures 4.1: Waiting in front of the doors*



Picture 4.2: Waiting in front of the doors



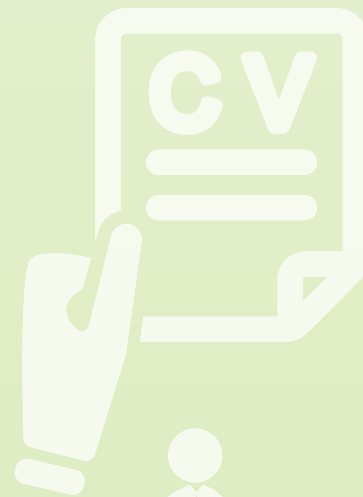
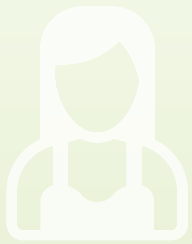
Picture 4.3: The Hall



Picture 4.4: Job seekers in front of employers' cabins



Pictures 4.5 - 4.7: Queuing in front of the cabins and filling in application forms



Pictures 4.8: Obtaining information from employers



Picture 4.9: Queuing in front of the cabins



Picture 4.10: Filling in application forms on the floor



## JOB-SEEKERS' VOICES

**Maual Taha, female, 30 years old**

*"I am from Minya city and only completed primary education. For five years I have been unemployed, even though I was always actively searching for a job. I realized now that I have to look outside Minya, and I am ready to go anywhere since I am unmarried and do not have a family. The local authorities informed me about the employment fair here in Minya. I am looking for a job in the tourism sector, like as a housekeeper or something similar, but I have no idea if I will be successful today."*

**Mina Isaak, male, 23 years old**

*"I am a trained car mechanic from Minya. Even though I was never unemployed and am currently working as a car mechanic, I am looking for a better-paid job in the same field. I learned about the Minya employment fair when I saw the banners in the streets. Since I am single, I am willing to work anywhere in Egypt."*

**Reda William, male, 38 years old**

*"I completed my technical industrial vocational education and have my own shop for windows and doors here in Minya. I don't have a stable income, that's why I started looking for a job when my first child was born ten years ago. Now, as the situation has become worse after the revolution and I sometimes don't have work for over a week, I started searching for a new job again. I saw the banners in the streets of Minya city and heard the announcements in the mosque, and that's why I am attending the employment fair today. I was actually looking for a public sector job but realized that there are only private companies here. I really don't know if I will find what I am looking for. I would like to work as driver or as a security guard and I would like to stay in Minya because of my family. But if I get a job elsewhere, I would rather take them with me than leave my wife and three children alone."*

**Mohammed Gamel, male, 25 years old**

*"I am originally from Minya but I live in Cairo because that's where I was able to find work. I have a Bachelor's degree in simultaneous translation - Arabic, English, and French, but what I do is not related to my educational qualifications at all. I work in sales for a pharmacy. I somehow came across the facebook page for the employment fair and decided to come to Minya. I am looking for a job which is linked to my field, such as in customer service or something similar where I can at least utilize my language skills. If I don't find anything in Egypt, I will start looking for a scholarship to go abroad."*



## THE PERSPECTIVE OF PARTICIPATING COMPANIES

*“The main advantage of the employment fair is the direct contact you have with job-seekers. I am able to pre-selection suitable candidates and then start with the interviews right after.” Mr Wahid Ramadan Mohammed, owner of Yasmin for Pasta Production.*

Picture 4.11: Piles of applications



The pasta manufacturer “Yasmin” is located in Minya’s industrial zone. Mr Wahid Ramadan Mohammed, who is the owner of the factory, employed 65 people before he had to close the factory for a six-month renovation period. Since many of the former employees left because they could not afford to be unemployed for the duration of the renovation, he is now hiring new employees, and wants even more employees than he had before. He is looking for all kinds of profiles, including food engineers, drivers, sales people, packaging staff, and others. Thus, he saw the employment fair in Minya as an excellent opportunity to fill the company’s 75 to 80 vacancies. He was literally overwhelmed with job-seekers and received approximately 700 applications. The reason for this high number, he says, is probably because the factory is located in Minya and because the jobs are also suitable for women. But for him, the number of applications is not the main advantage of the fair; it is the direct contact with the job-seekers. This allows him to pre-select people he felt were qualified for the position– for example, he received applications from ten engineers with exactly the same profile he wanted – and was able to start the interviewing process right after the fair. He was also pleased to screen the applications he received from women, and interviewed as many as possible at the fair in order to save them from travelling to the industrial zone for an interview.

*"The most important skill needed is the attitude towards people." Ms Iman Soliman, training coordinator at Renaissance Sharm El Sheikh Golden View Beach Resort.*

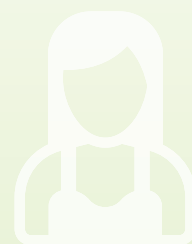
Picture 4.12: Interested jobseekers listening to information from companies



The Renaissance Golden View is located in Sharm El Sheikh in the Red Sea Governorate and employs 320 people. The hotel currently has 35 vacancies, mostly for food and beverage managers, housekeepers, and kitchen staff. In addition, they offer 20 internships for one to three months to students during the summer break. Ms Iman Soliman, the hotel's Training Coordinator says that the internships are a good opportunity for students, because it prepares them to start working for the company after they graduate. The company was invited by the ILO project to participate in the employment fair in Minya, and even though Ms. Iman did not know people in Minya, she previously participated in an employment fair in Alexandria and found it to be a very effective method of recruitment. Indeed, she received many applications on the day of the Minya employment fair and was satisfied with the calibre of candidates that completed application forms. In order to assist her colleagues later during the interviewing process, she noted her impressions of each candidate she spoke to and received an application from. She particularly took note of the applicant's work attitude, social skills, and language skills..

*"We usually recruit through private agencies, professional networks including hotel schools, and through the hotel's homepage. But the employment fairs are far more effective." Mr Sayed El Wassef, Director of Human Resources at the Marriott Sharm El Sheikh Red Sea Resort.*

The Marriott Sharm El Sheikh Red Sea Resort had 400 employees and 80 vacancies, mainly for waiters and front office staff. In addition, they offer both short-term and long-term training opportunities, offered mostly during the summer. The director of the resort, Mr Sayed El Wassef, says that the main difficulties in finding suitable workers are the poor work attitudes that applicants have, and the remote location



Picture 4.13: Marriott representatives at the employment fair



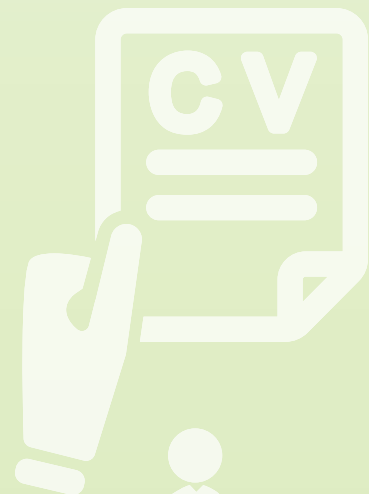
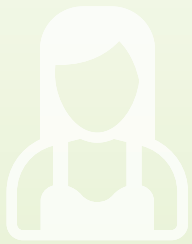
of the hotel (especially for females who prefer to work close to home). The hotel usually recruits staff through private agencies, professional networks including hotel schools, or through the hotel's homepage. The employment fair in Minya, which the ILO project had invited Mr Sayed to join, had been his third fair to attend. He considers the employment fairs as very beneficial and an effective way to recruit workers because he is able to get in direct contact with the job-seekers and can screen the applications on the spot. Due to the sheer number of applications received and the good calibre of applicants he received on the day, he expects to quickly fill all 80 vacancies through the fair.

*"I am very confident we will be able fill all our vacancies, through the employment fair, even the specialized positions, because there are many qualified people here in Minya." Mr Nasser Nabil from Pharmaceutica.*

The multinational company Pharmaceutica produces agricultural chemicals and pharmaceuticals in Egypt and exports them to other countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The company's headquarters is in Cairo, and currently employs 3000 people, and is planning to expand. For example, the company recently hired 65 agricultural engineers to work in their fertilizer factory in Alexandria, and they are now opening pharmacies in Minya, where they are looking to hire sales specialists, pharmacists and veterinarians. Mr Nasser Nabil, a representative for Pharmaceutica, who attended the employment fair in Minya, considers the fair as an excellent opportunity to fill their 20 vacancies available in the governorate. Normally, they would announce the vacancies on the company's website or in the newspaper, but in his opinion an employment fair is more effective for recruitment. At the end of the day, Mr Nasser received piles of applications because the company pays well and the jobs are located in Minya, which is a rare combination. He is confident they will be able to quickly fill all their vacancies since he met many qualified people in the Minya employment fair.

*“Although we normally don’t face difficulties in finding labour, thanks to this fair we will probably fill all 90 vacancies we have at once.” Mr Ahmad Ibrahim, human resources specialist at Ascom Geology & Mining*

ASCOM Geology & Mining, has traditionally specialized in providing services to the cement industry in the Middle East, North and East Africa, and the Gulf. However, the company gradually expanded its operations, and in 2008 started manufacturing of Calcium Carbonate, used for medicines and toothpaste –in Minya’s Industrial Zone. The factory currently has 290 employees and 90 vacancies, mainly for workers in storage, packaging, and cleaning, as well as some vacancies for technicians and engineers. Mr Ahmad Ibrahim, Human Resources Specialist of Ascom, was approached directly by the ILO to participate in the fair. Although he admitted that the company does not usually face difficulties in finding employees since they offer good salaries and positions in Minya, he considers the employment fair to be very useful since he will be able to fill all 90 vacancies at once through the fair.



## **CASE 5: Career guidance – counselling youth to open up new perspectives and to smoothen the transition from school to work**

### **PROJECT TITLE:**

Transition to Employment – Career Guidance for Youth and Job Creation

The project's second phase – known as the Tawgih project – is financed through the Italian Egyptian Dept for Development Swap Programme, and builds on the achievements made in the previous three-year Career Guidance for Youth Employment project. The project aims to facilitate the transition to decent employment, and works on the key areas of labour market intermediation and career guidance. The project assists in upgrading the public employment service (PES) centres affiliated to the Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MoMM), and provides capacity building to job counsellors, teachers and other related stakeholders in various institutions.

### **DESCRIBED INTERVENTION:**

Career guidance

### **SECTORS:**

Not restricted

### **LOCATION:**

Ten Egyptian Governorates in this second phase (Alexandria, Matrouh, Qalyubia, Port Said, Ismailia, Cairo, Giza, Asyut, New Valley, and Sohag) in addition to five governorates from the project's first phase.

Implementing agency: For the implementation of this project, the ILO makes use of linkages established within the framework of the previous career guidance project, such as the staff of the PES, the central department of the MoMM, and employers', workers' and youth associations.

## THE CHALLENGE

Despite the economic progress achieved in the recent decades, unemployment remains high in Egypt. One of the main problems is that the job aspirations and expectations of young people do not match the jobs available in Egypt's labour market. As a result, there is a mismatch between the skills employers expect from new recruits, and those skills provided by universities and vocational training centres. In addition, the labour market intermediation system is not able to efficiently bring together the two sides, which is why neither employers nor job seekers usually make use of the few employment services available. The low capacity of the PES and the related institutional and administrative infrastructures also precludes the design and implementation of active labour market policies and programmes that are required for facilitating market-oriented economic reform and tackling unemployment in general and youth un- and underemployment in particular.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE – DESCRIPTION OF THE ILO INTERVENTION

In light of the above-mentioned issues, the ILO started with a first project on Career Guidance for Youth Employment in 2009, which continued in a second phase and is now called the Tawgih project, Arabic for “guidance”. It is built upon a package of integrated initiatives to mobilize the public employment offices, educational institutions, training providers, youth associations, employers’ and workers’ organizations and the media, in order to provide labour market information and career guidance to young people.

The project provided support to five public employment offices in its first phase and 10 in its second phase, to assist the PES to act as effective mediators between young job seekers and enterprises, thus delivering more effective job matching services. Pilot youth employment units are established in each of the participating offices, and its staff are trained to deliver a range of quality services that specifically target young people.

In order to create a system for replication by the stakeholders and to ensure the sustainability of delivering these services after the project's completion, the project established a task force group for each of the 15 participating PES offices. The groups consist of at least ten people from each Governorate, representing the relevant stakeholders, including young people, youth centres, training centres, trade unions, employers, teachers of technical schools, and media representatives. The task force members receive training on how to act as career counsellors in their respective work places, and the group meets on a regular basis to discuss the implementation of the project's career guidance work plan.

While a number of initiatives have helped to develop Egypt's PES system over recent decades, career guidance was a new concept in Egypt. Accordingly, there



were no references or manuals on the subject. The project therefore compiled an ILO toolkit for Egypt to be used as a training manual to career counsellors in the above-mentioned institutions. Moreover, other resource material was developed, as well as a basic training programme for the PES counsellors and task force groups. Specialized training sessions and study visits for the PES staff were undertaken, and youth events on career issues have been organized for an average of 100-120 young people in each Governorate.

## EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The commitment of the pilot offices' management is a crucial element for the project's success. The Burg el Arab office, for instance, is performing very well not only because there are a lot of vacancies in the area, but because the Director and his staff are highly motivated and sustain strong linkages with all stakeholders. As a result, the office is now better known and more often utilized by youth and enterprises in the area.

The main success factor of the project is the notion of having a multi-organizational task force for each pilot PES office in order to increase outreach and ensure sustainability of the services delivered.

*"The major success element of the project has been the establishment of the task force groups and the inclusion of the counselling services in the activities of the respective organizations. Thanks to the task force groups we are able to reach a lot more job seekers than through the employment offices only. Many job seekers can't come during office hours or are more comfortable using the services provided by an organization they already know." Nagwa Ismail, ILO Project Manager, Tawgih project.*

Trainings for the task force groups began to materialize in the sense that trained members have started to replace externally recruited trainers, for example, in the youth activities. This reflects the capacity building that has taken place over the project's lifetime.

Another achievement is the many synergies created between different ILO projects that can be used to improve the system at a larger scale. The Decent Jobs For Egypt's Young People project (DJEP, see case 4) benefited from the experiences on career guidance, and the ILO's training for employment scheme (see case 1) is planning to use the services of the Burg el Arab employment office to recruit the participating women.



Picture 5.1: Said and Mr Mohammed at the Burg al Arab employment office



*“My task is to guide the job seekers towards the jobs available. I like this because it means opening up new perspectives by breaking routines and shifting the focus of their career.” Mr Mohammed Abdel Malek, Counsellor at the Burg al Arab employment office.*

Mr Mohammed is one of two counsellors working in the Burg al Arab employment office. He has been working in the office for six years and has witnessed how the office has improved as a result of the project’s interventions. In this period, many manufacturing companies started producing in the expanding industrial zone near Alexandria in Lower Egypt, but the vacancies available were, and still are to a great extent, for low-skilled factory workers. Consequently, most job seekers come to see

Mr Mohammed and his colleagues because they are not able to find the positions that they are looking for in the area. Many of them are over-qualified for the jobs available, since they have an educational background that does not directly fit the job profile. Bringing these job seekers and the available jobs together is not an easy task, which is why the office joined the ILO project on career guidance. The office premises have been refurbished and equipped with the necessary infrastructure, and the manager and his staff received targeted training. Mr Mohammed was trained on how to receive job seekers, how to provide information on the training that prospective employees required and where to get it. He also now provides guidance to job seekers on available positions and if necessary, on how to slightly shift the focus of their career or to undertake relevant courses and trainings to attain a job. As a result of the project’s varied interventions, many more job seekers are now using the services of the Burg al Arab employment office.

*“Thanks to the advice of my counsellor, I took a training in administration and was able to move from working in the production unit at a textile company, to becoming a human resource manager!.” Said, 37 years old, beneficiary of the improved services at Burg al Arab employment office.*

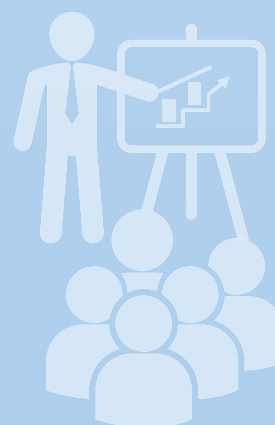
Despite having graduated from the local university's faculty of commerce, Said was not able to find a job related to his field of education. Married and father of three children, he was not able to afford being unemployed. After having searched for one year, he accepted a job as production worker in a textile company, which he found through a job fair organized by the Burg al Arab employment office. Nevertheless, he still continued searching for a job that would better fit his aspirations until at last, he saw a vacancy advertised for a human resource manager. Since he was aware that the Burg al Arab employment office provided good services, he went there in order to seek help with his job application for the position. Mr Mohammed, one of the office's counsellors (see above), showed Said how to prepare his CV and provided tips for his job interview. Said also took the counsellor's advice and enrolled in a training in administration, which helped him get the job.

Picture 5.2: Israa (left) and Fatma (right)



**Fatma, 27 years old, and Israa, 28 years old: members of the Alexandria career guidance task force and volunteer job search counsellors from the Youth Centre in Burg el Arab**

Fatma and Israa both completed their bachelor degree in Arts and live in the governorate of Alexandria. They were working for the Ministry of Youth and the Alexandria Library respectively when they were informed about the possibility of joining the Alexandria task force of the ILO's career guidance project. As both young ladies liked the idea to work as youth counsellors, they completed the training sessions together along with other volunteers from other organizations and are now involved in various project activities. For instance, they organize youth activity days in the technical schools, where they teach students and graduates about



leadership, teamwork, work ethics, CV writing, and other job search related topics. All trainings are provided in an animated way, using sports activities and games. As they excelled in their work, the project management decided to engage them in other ILO interventions, such as the newly introduced Job Clubs of the Decent Jobs for Egypt's Young People project (DJEP, see case 4). Fatma and Israa are now Job Club facilitators and are responsible for preparing and implementing the two-week intensive programme for particularly disadvantaged job seekers.

