▶ MicroMentor:
The social platform

This document is part of a series of case studies by the Enterprises Department of the ILO. Each case study presents one or several approaches that contribute to enterprise formalization across the world. The case studies provide a snapshot on a particular initiative and may not be exhaustive.

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AT A GLANCE
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Name:	MicroMentor
Short description:	MicroMentor is a free mentorship-matching website, where one can find a business mentor or become a mentor for another entrepreneur. The online platform connects volunteer mentors with entrepreneurs, small businesses, and non-profit organisations worldwide.
Technology:	Social platform
Regions:	Global
Link to enterprise formalization:	Indirect (through enhanced access to productive factors /business development support which is important for enterprises to develop, grow and seize the benefits of operating in the formal economy)

This case study shows how technological innovations may contribute to the formalization of economic units and their workers. Coined e-formality, the ILO has developed a theoretical framework for different public policies and technological applications that support transitions to formality.
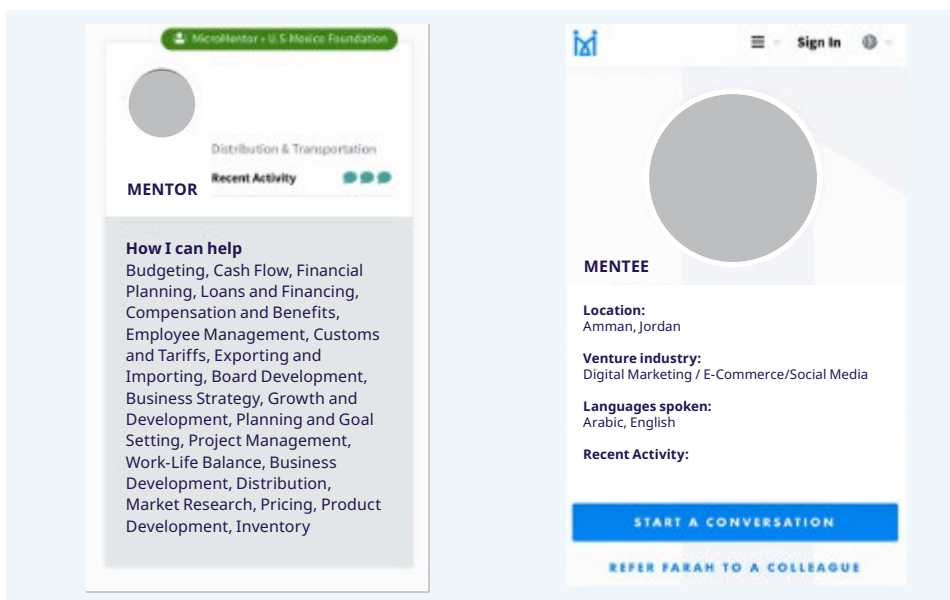
1. What is the initiative and what does it try to achieve?

MicroMentor is a social enterprise that works with development partners (e.g. the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development), corporations and governments, to deliver country-specific, regional and global mentoring and employee engagement programmes that promote economic development and skills-based volunteering.[1] Established in 2008 and funded by Mercy Corps, the mentoring programme is based on a social platform that enables the world's largest community of purpose-driven entrepreneurs and business mentors to create connections, solve problems, and build businesses together.

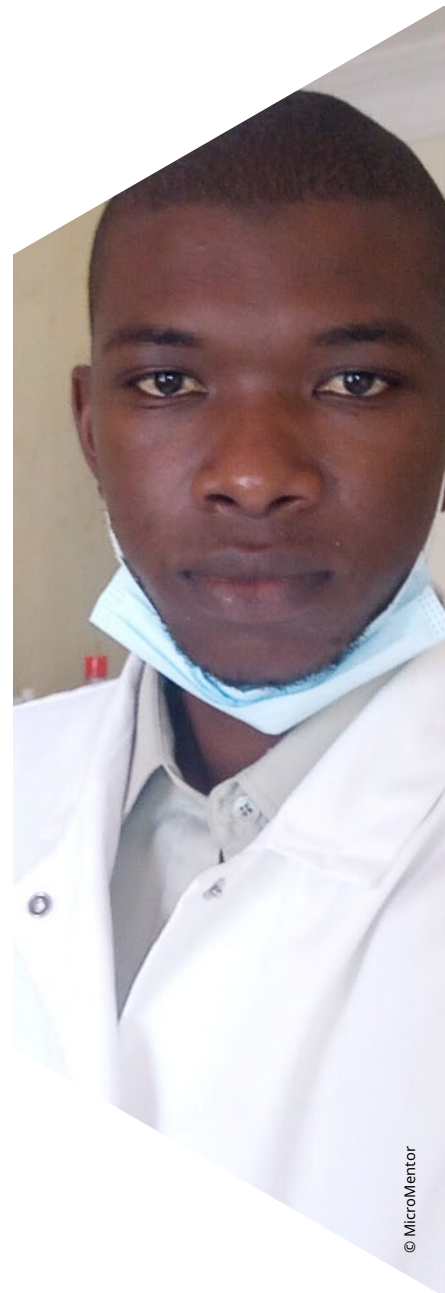MicroMentor is an international platform, and entrepreneurs and mentors can make connections within the same country or internationally. MicroMentor is based in the Mercy Corps headquarters in Portland, Oregon, USA. However, the platform is available to entrepreneurs and mentors throughout the world. It has 75,000 users. The system of the mentorship model is based on AI technology typically used by social networks. For this, the platform uses an algorithm to search through results based on the relevance to the mentee profile. The person interested in receiving mentorship can contact the potential mentor by writing a message (see Figure 2). Entrepreneurs have the opportunity to complete a self-assessment of their business to determine what areas they need mentoring help with.

▶ **Figure 1: Mentor and mentee profiles on MicroMentor**

MENTOR

How I can help
Budgeting, Cash Flow, Financial Planning, Loans and Financing, Compensation and Benefits, Employee Management, Customs and Tariffs, Exporting and Importing, Board Development, Business Strategy, Growth and Development, Planning and Goal Setting, Project Management, Work-Life Balance, Business Development, Distribution, Market Research, Pricing, Product Development, Inventory

MENTEE

Location:
Amman, Jordan

Venture industry:
Digital Marketing / E-Commerce/Social Media

Languages spoken:
Arabic, English

Recent Activity:

START A CONVERSATION

REFER FARAH TO A COLLEAGUE

Source: MicroMentor

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1   According to the MicroMentor solutions page: "MicroMentor's evidence-based, online employee engagement solution can help you launch an effective business mentoring initiative that is tailored to support your organization's goals, and make a lasting impact. Our online platform connects employee volunteers with entrepreneurs, small businesses, and non-profits from across the globe in meaningful mentoring engagements." Source: https://solutions.micromentor.org/

▶ **Figure 2: Using the platform**

1 Create a Profile
Entrepreneurs and mentors create profiles where they share their background and needs

2 Search
MicroMentor's matching algorithm enables users to browse through a sorted selection of entrepreneurs and mentors to find the one that best fits their needs

3 Start a Conversation
Entrepreneurs and mentors exchange messages through a personal messaging interface

4 Start Mentoring
Conversations lead to finding the right match and the pairs carry on their mentoring relationships in a way that works for them

Source: MicroMentor

MicroMentor's white label solutions allow third parties and governments to offer its services as if it were their own.

As the platform focuses on mentoring to improve business decisions, it seeks to increase the level of skills development. Evidence shows that entrepreneurs reported significant improvement in business skills, business planning, market research, marketing and sales skills. Thus, when small businesses become more efficient due to mentoring, they can move from the 'survivalist' stage towards a more mature stage in which the economic unit is capable of sustaining itself over time. This is an important prerequisite for the formalization of enterprises. In addition to mentoring and enterprise development, incentives, the legal and regulatory environment and other measures will determine to a large extent the degree to which enterprises will be willing and able to formalize.

MicroMentor also delivers tailored mentoring programs to corporations, INGOs, and government agencies across the globe, and trains employees in the art of business mentoring. It drives employee engagement with its virtual volunteering

▶ **What is white label branding?**

White label technologies are ready-made, licensed software products developed by one company and that can be rebranded by another company.
White labeling allows products and services to be rebranded and advertised under another brand. The aim is to capitalize on customer loyalty and trust in existing brands, thus saving time and resources needed to develop and establish a new brand.
White label solutions can help a company utilize its business's unique branding to offer a product or service without needing to invest in additional infrastructure or the creation of technologies. The result: SMEs can focus on building their brands and selling their services while simplifying the conversion path for customers.

Sources: Forbes (2014); Mosaic Digital (2019)

packages, while enabling organizations to make a global economic impact through mentoring. The platform delivers a scalable and low-effort alternative to in-person mentoring for organizations that support entrepreneurs.

2. What is the institutional framework?

MicroMentor is available at no cost to entrepreneurs and is powered by volunteer mentors. MicroMentor is a social innovation of Mercy Corps, a global humanitarian organization that receives its funding from sponsors and donors. MicroMentor values in-person mentorship models but prioritizes its own digital model, whereby marginalized entrepreneurs and volunteer mentors create an online profile describing their respective business needs and skills, then self-select a mentor from anywhere across the globe.
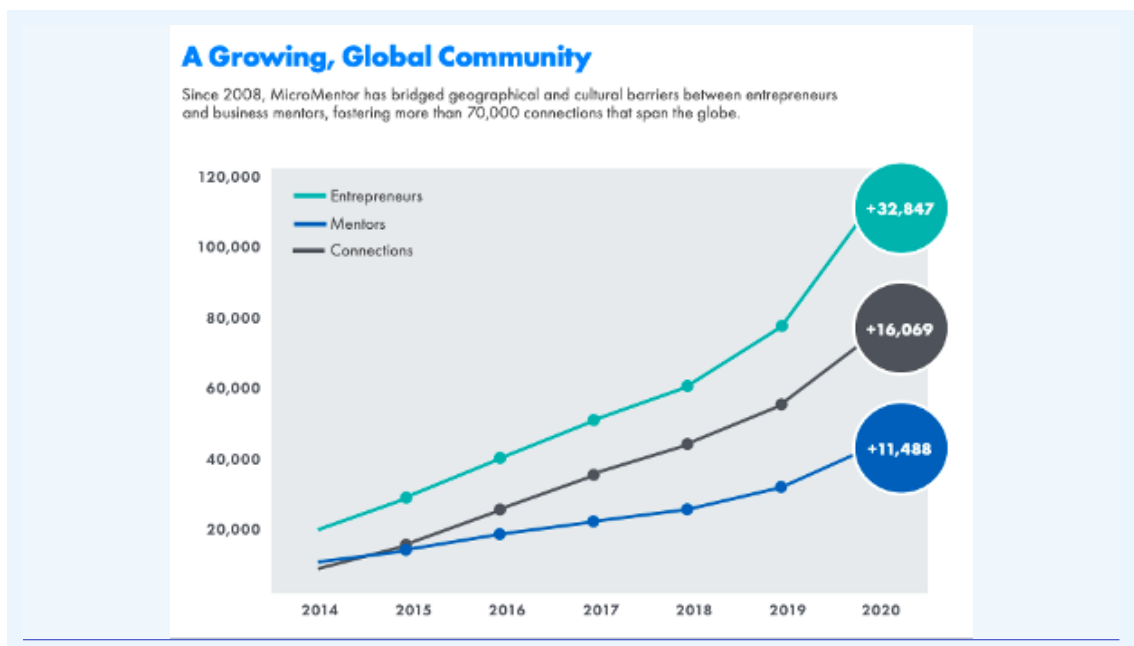
3. What has been achieved?

Mentoring is a proven solution to increased technical skills, access to resources, business survival and job creation (OECD & EU, 2016). According to MicroMentor's 2020 annual report:

a) 21 per cent of mentored entrepreneurs experienced an increase in revenue;

b) One more job was added to the economy, on average, per mentored entrepreneur;

c) 16 per cent more jobs were retained by mentored entrepreneurs.

Evidence collected by MicroMentor suggests that entrepreneurs who receive mentoring experience have better business outcomes, skills development, and increased access to business development resources.

With an active global community of over 47,000 members, in 2019 MicroMentor focused its growth in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Indonesia.

▶ **Figure 3: MicroMentor growth**

A Growing, Global Community

Since 2008, MicroMentor has bridged geographical and cultural barriers between entrepreneurs and business mentors, fostering more than 70,000 connections that span the globe.

Source: MicroMentor Annual Report 2020

Results are as follows:

▶ **Latin America:** 810 more jobs added to the economy by mentored entrepreneurs than non-mentored entrepreneurs.

▶ **Africa:** 1,176 new jobs added to the economy by mentored entrepreneurs. Almost five (4.7) more jobs on average added to the economy per mentored entrepreneur.

▶ **Indonesia:** 1,158 new jobs created.

According to a MercyCorps presentation in partnership with the World Bank in 2018, MicroMentor's performance in terms of employment generation can be expressed as an average increase of 1.5-2 permanent jobs, 1.2 part-time jobs and temporary jobs after the receipt of mentoring assistance.

4. References

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PPT – CBIN Micromentor Overview – *https://olc.worldbank.org/system/files/CBIN%20MicroMentor%20Overview-.pptx*

🔖 More case studies on enterprise formalization can be found here

Please contact us in case you have any comments or questions with respect to this case study.

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