

Impact Brief Series, Issue 2

Education for Employment Foundation

Morocco

The Taqueem (“evaluation” in Arabic) Initiative is a technical cooperation programme of the International Labour Organization and regional partners including Silatech, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation. Taqueem applies an iterative cycle of capacity development, impact research and policy influence to improve evidence on “what works” in youth employment and to support youth employment stakeholders make evidence-based decisions to improve resource allocation and programme design.

The Taqueem Impact Brief Series documents how organizations measure outcomes of their youth employment programmes, the tools that are applied and the findings and recommendations that emerge to assist them in improving impacts and programme design. The organizations profiled in the Impact Brief Series form a Community of Practice, a collaborative approach to building capacity on monitoring, evaluation (M&E) and impact evaluation and foster learning and cooperation among youth serving organizations.

KEY MESSAGES

- Conducting a follow-up survey amongst programme beneficiaries is strongly recommended to track longer-term outcomes.
- When following up with a large number of beneficiaries, sampling might be advisable, as opposed to tracking all beneficiaries. Sampling can be done by random selection to minimize potential bias in results.
- While web-based surveying can reduce time and resource requirements, it also poses numerous challenges, such as low response rates and potential response bias.

Revamping an M&E system to meet the needs of a growing NGO in becoming more results-driven



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Background

Education for Employment (EFE) is a network of local non-profits in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, and Yemen, which are supported by organizations in the United States and Europe. The EFE network addresses the youth employment challenge in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, seeking to create job opportunities for unemployed youth by providing professional and technical training that leads directly to career-building jobs.

EFE Maroc was founded in 2007 and currently runs four distinct training programmes, one of which is called Finding a Job Is a Job (FJIJ). FJIJ is a three-day employability training targeting unemployed youth, often youth who are transitioning from school to work. FJIJ teaches job-search skills, how to improve CVs and cover letters, and how to perform in a job interview. Every course brings together one trainer and 20–25 participants. EFE Maroc's goal is to train 12,500 youth in FJIJ over a four-year period, which started in 2011. EFE Maroc partners with youth centres and universities in the delivery of the project, and training is delivered in six regions across Morocco. FJIJ training takes place under the umbrella of the Al-Morad Initiative, a wider project financed by the MasterCard Foundation.

Taqeem support

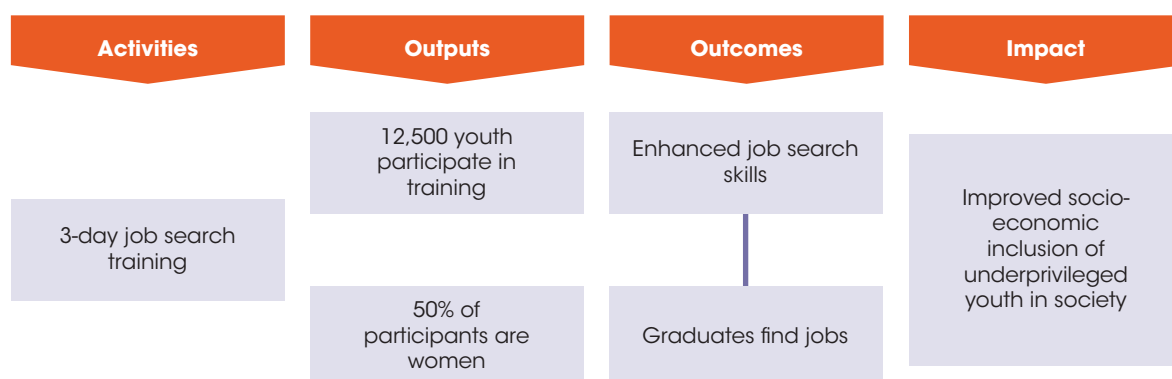
The M&E function at EFE falls under the Performance Management department, which is a centralized function overseen by EFE's headquarters in the United States. Each EFE affiliate has an M&E manager responsible for all projects within the country. At the time of joining the Taqeeem Initiative, EFE Maroc relied on complete M&E systems for all but their newest training programme, FJIJ. EFE Maroc therefore joined Taqeeem, seeking to develop a comprehensive and innovative monitoring and evaluation plan that would provide a harmonized approach to collecting and analyzing outcome data for FJIJ.

M&E system

Results chain

The FJIJ programme is based on the assumption that the education, knowledge, and skills provided by the public education system in Morocco are often insufficient for enabling graduates to find quality employment. It also assumes that jobs are available for young people that have the right skills. With this in mind, EFE seeks to meet two outcomes: (1) young people gain skills and knowledge on how to conduct an effective job search; and (2) the job search is successful, leading to decent employment (figure 1). The long-term impact of the project is to contribute to socio-economic inclusion of underprivileged youth in Moroccan society.

FIGURE 1. Overview of the results chain for EFE Maroc's FJIJ project



Data collection instruments

EFE Maroc rolled out a series of revised data collection tools between 2012 and 2013 to better capture the outcomes of the programme. The M&E plan for EFE's FJIJ project includes five instruments which measure a series of indicators, as described in table 1 (see also figure 2).

TABLE 1. Description of data collection tools and main indicators of the M&E system for FJIJ

Instrument	Main indicators measured by the instrument	Description
Application form and interview (baseline)	- Number of FJIJ applicants - Level of job-search knowledge and skills - Attitude towards employment - Motivation to get a job	An online application form asks around 15 questions on socio-demographics, work status, education, and motivation, based on which EFE determines eligible applicants and contacts them for a short interview. Data are exported to Excel and filtered
Attendance sheet	- Number of youth participants enrolled - Number of youth who graduate from programme - Number of trainings delivered	Attendance sheet administered every session by the trainers. Important since graduation certificate is given only to those attending at least 60% of the sessions. After every training, trainers send a scan of the attendance sheet to the training team, who manually updates participant data in the database
End-of-training questionnaire	- Percentage of graduates satisfied with training - Self-assessed changes in knowledge and skills	Online questionnaire sent to graduates upon completion of the training to measure participants' satisfaction with the training, evaluate initial skills and knowledge gained, and understand participants' short-term plans for looking for work. There are 20 questions, taking 10–12 minutes to complete
Two- and four-month follow-up surveys	- Percentage of graduates applying skills/knowledge - Percentage of graduates having found a job - Number of recent job applications - Number of recently granted interviews	Online follow-up surveys sent to graduates two and four months after the end of training, with the objective of following graduates' job-search activities and outcomes. There are 20 questions, taking 10–12 minutes to complete, which address the use of different job-search techniques, time invested, applications sent, interviews granted, assessment of FJIJ contribution, etc.
Focus groups	Assessment of FJIJ contribution for several indicators	Group discussions moderated by EFE Maroc's M&E manager, bringing together 8–10 FJIJ graduates, involving 4–6 key questions used to complement quantitative findings from online surveys. Moderator is accompanied by a note-taker who records all conversations. Held 2–3 times per year, each lasting around 60–120 minutes

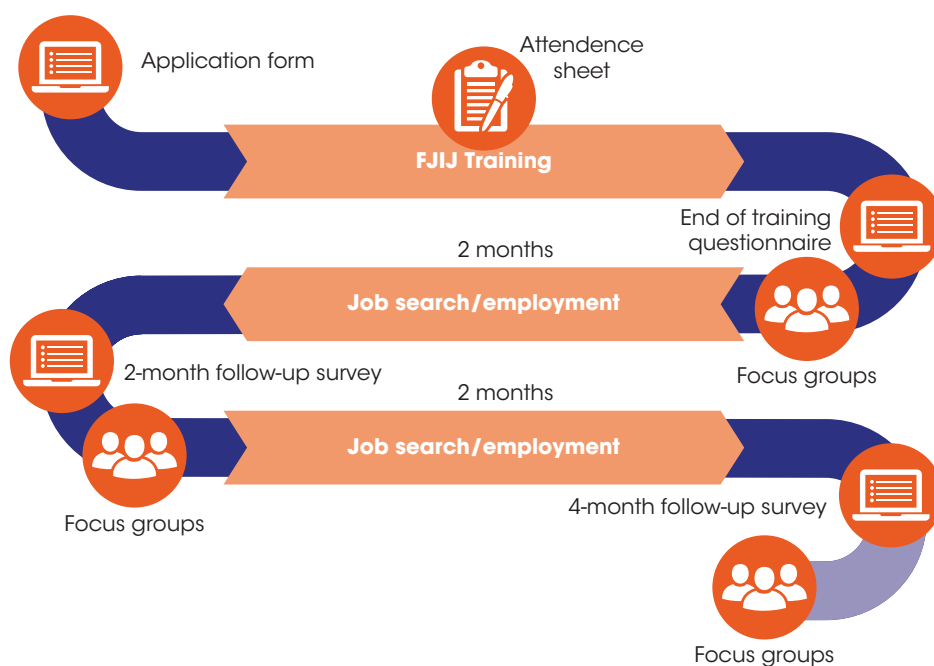
Data from the online surveys can be automatically exported to the spreadsheet, while data from the attendance sheets are transcribed from paper. The M&E manager is responsible for controlling the quality of the data; this includes the arduous task of matching records from the various surveys to the same individual.

In the future, EFE Maroc is seeking to employ more powerful database software in order to better deal with the growing number of data entries and to gain flexibility in the analysis performed.

Data management

EFE Maroc's M&E database is a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet in which all administrative and survey data are input, cleaned, and analyzed. While not an ideal tool, EFE Maroc decided to use Excel for this operation as it provided a simple, low-cost solution and one that staff already had the skills to operate.

FIGURE 2. Overview of data collection workflow of the M&E system for FJIJ



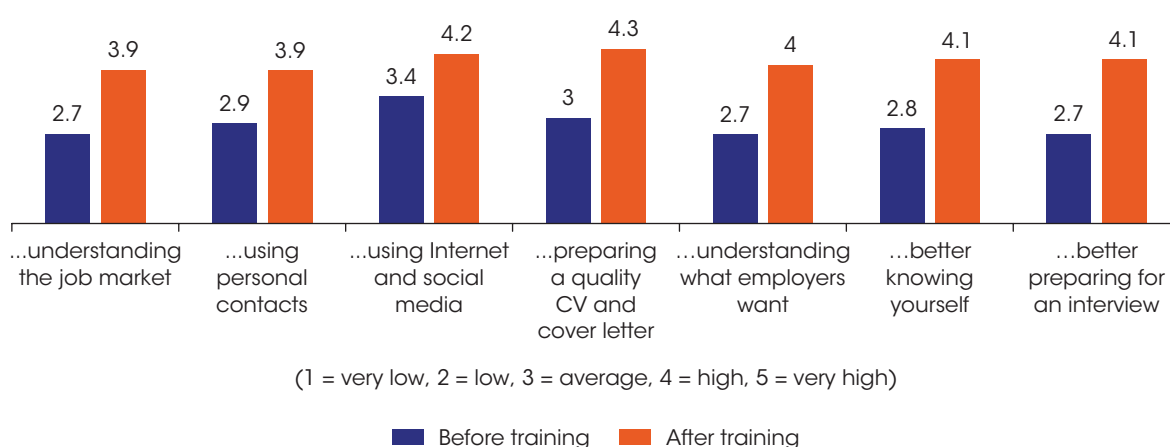
M&E results

The data collected provided tentative evidence that EFE is achieving its objectives for FJIJ. However, these results should be interpreted with caution because of low response rates (uncertainty as to whether the results are representative of all graduates) and the lack of a comparison group (causality between the project and the observed outcomes can only be assumed).

- **Self-assessed knowledge and skills:** EFE asked graduates to assess their level of confidence before and after the FJIJ training regarding different aspects of job-search techniques and skills. Results highlighted in figure 3 show that in the seven topics covered during the training, the graduates' level of confidence upon the completion of the training was higher after the training than before the training.
- **Job-search behavior:** EFE Maroc was also interested in knowing whether participants' job-search techniques changed after training. Findings suggest that participants employed all techniques more frequently after training, though using personal contacts for job search (networking) showed only slight improvement, indicating that EFE Maroc might want to reinforce this portion of the training.

- **Securing a job:** The early findings indicate that about half of the job-seeking graduates found a job within four months. Interestingly, graduates who found a job did not necessarily seem to attribute this success to training. Subsequent focus group discussions could help better understand these results.

FIGURE 3. Before and after comparison of confidence in job-search-related activities, 2012 FJII graduates (N = 285)



Lessons learned

Survey random sample of your beneficiaries and ensure high response rates

EFE regularly sends online surveys to hundreds of young beneficiaries per month. All youth who participate in EFE trainings are sent both an end-of-training survey and two follow-up surveys. Response rates to the surveys have often been low; in a recent EFE survey, only 24 per cent of surveyed youth provided a response. In the future, EFE will not need to send their surveys to all training participants and instead can send the survey to a smaller sample of respondents, while implementing new strategies to get high response rates from those surveyed.

- Calculating the size of a representative sample can be done by using sample-size calculators available online.¹ The larger the size of the population of interest (i.e., training participants), the lower the percentage of individuals needed for the sample.
- The youth surveyed (i.e., the sample) should be drawn randomly from all trainees. This will ensure that the respondents share, on average, the same characteristics as those not surveyed.
- As a rule-of-thumb, the non-response rate should be no more than 20 per cent. Strategies for increasing response rates include offering an incentive, sending several reminders, personalizing communication, and choosing alternative survey tools (e.g., phone calls instead of web-based surveys). To prevent “survey fatigue” among beneficiaries, EFE decided to suspend its two-month follow-up survey.

¹ See for example <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>.



Choose appropriate database management and analysis software

EFE Maroc relied on Microsoft Excel to compile and analyze data about FJIJ. While Excel provides a simple solution, dealing with growing amounts of data case raise challenges. It also requires data collected via an external online

survey platform to be imported independently. Practitioners like EFE should seek a data management and analysis software that allows them to better process the large amounts and different types of data that are being collected. In countries with strong internet connectivity, a cloud-based system might be useful, meaning the data would be available online and could easily be shared with staff and stakeholders.²

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Ensure the sustainability of the M&E system

EFE Maroc faced high staff turnover in the M&E function. This meant significant delays in implementing the new M&E system. Practitioners anticipating a similar challenge should ensure that the M&E responsibilities are shared among all units in the organization.

² Examples of cloud-based data management systems include “Salesforce” and “goProve”.

Next steps

Piloting focus groups

Organizing focus groups amongst FJIJ graduates has been difficult. Focus groups tend to be labour- and time-intensive for staff, as graduates are often unavailable due to other commitments like employment. Graduates are also sometimes skeptical as to why they are being contacted, even though careful precautions are taken regarding the wording of the invitation message (email and telephone). As a result of these challenges, EFE's first pilot focus group had to be cancelled because no participants showed up, and a second one was conducted with only four of eight confirmed participants in attendance. In the future, EFE plans to overcome this issue by offering a larger incentive to youth.

Revisiting M&E system to capture other targeted outcomes

A second major objective (intended outcome) of the FJIJ programme is to build the capacity of partner institutions to better serve youth, using examples from successful EFE programmes. EFE is currently developing the results chain and indicators tied to this outcome, which will be followed by the design of a data collection plan.

Further enhancing M&E capacity

The Swiss Academy for Development (SAD), a consultancy firm specialized in monitoring and evaluation, has provided external expertise to EFE in this reform process. Upon validation and full roll-out of the system in Morocco, EFE is looking forward to replicating the model among EFE affiliates in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen.

Assessing the feasibility of an impact evaluation

Finally, when a functioning and strong M&E system is in place, and if judged relevant according to future plans of FJIJ, an impact evaluation could be performed on the training programme. A study to assess the feasibility of conducting an impact evaluation of FJIJ was conducted by SAD. It recommended postponing the evaluation until targeting and admission procedures were revised. SAD also considered it risky from a cost-benefit perspective to evaluate an intervention of such a short (three-day) training activity.



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