

Impact Brief Series, Issue 4

International Youth Foundation

Egypt

The Taqeem (“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

- When designing a technology solution for M&E, it is important to consider end-to-end workflow to ensure that data are collected, managed, and analyzed consistently. Every manual intervention in the workflow increases the risk for data loss, errors, and delays.
- Maintaining contact with beneficiaries post-programme is not easy. Youth-friendly approaches, practical communication methods, and incentives for participation should be considered carefully from the onset.
- Training and management of staff performing M&E data collection and analyses need to be designed properly. Third-party M&E responsibilities need to be carefully monitored to ensure data quality.

Improving data quality through optimization of data flow and data collection instruments



Background

The International Youth Foundation (IYF) and Nahdet El Mahrousa (NM), an Egyptian NGO, in partnership with the MasterCard Foundation, are implementing Egypt@Work, a four-year, US\$5 million initiative that addresses the need for increased youth employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in Egypt. The programme aims to give 10,000 disadvantaged youth increased employment prospects in both wage and self-employment. The programme is delivered to young beneficiaries through a range of local implementation partners (LIPs). These partners are trained to deliver the individual projects and to grow their capacity for wider delivery.

Taqeem support

Prior to receiving assistance from Taqeeem, Egypt@Work already had a comprehensive M&E plan with a well-defined results framework, performance measurement plan, 11 different data collection tools, and a risk-mitigation plan. Taqeeem advised IYF mainly on streamlining data collection processes as well as:

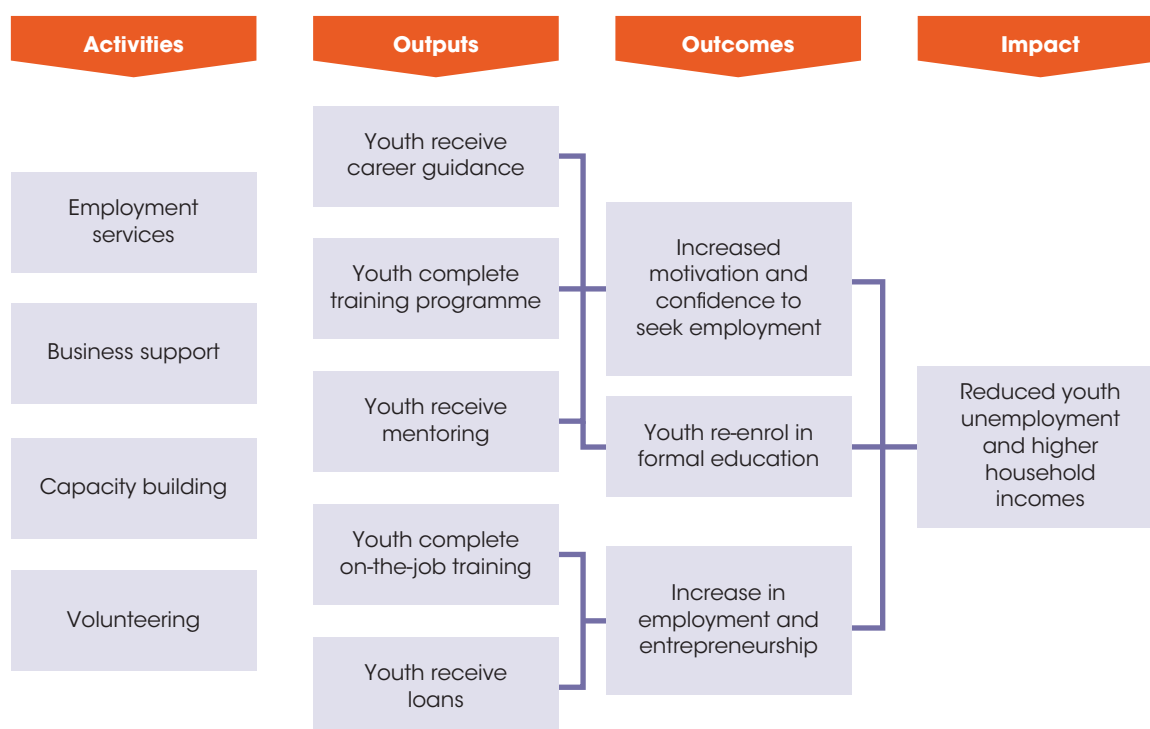
- **Data management:** IYF's challenge was determining how to manage the large amounts of data that were being collected.
- **Capacity development:** Improving the M&E skills and knowledge of IYF staff and partners who were responsible for primary data collection.
- **Survey design:** Improving delivery channels for surveys to increase response rates and accuracy.

M&E system

Results chain

The long-term objective of the Egypt@Work programme was to provide young people with market-relevant technical and life-skills training and pre- and post-training support services to increase their employment and entrepreneurship prospects (figure 1).

FIGURE 1. Overview of the results chain for Egypt@Work project



Data collection instruments overview

The main data collection tools of the M&E system are described in table 1, and figure 2 illustrates the data collection workflow.

TABLE 1. Description of the data collection tools and main indicators

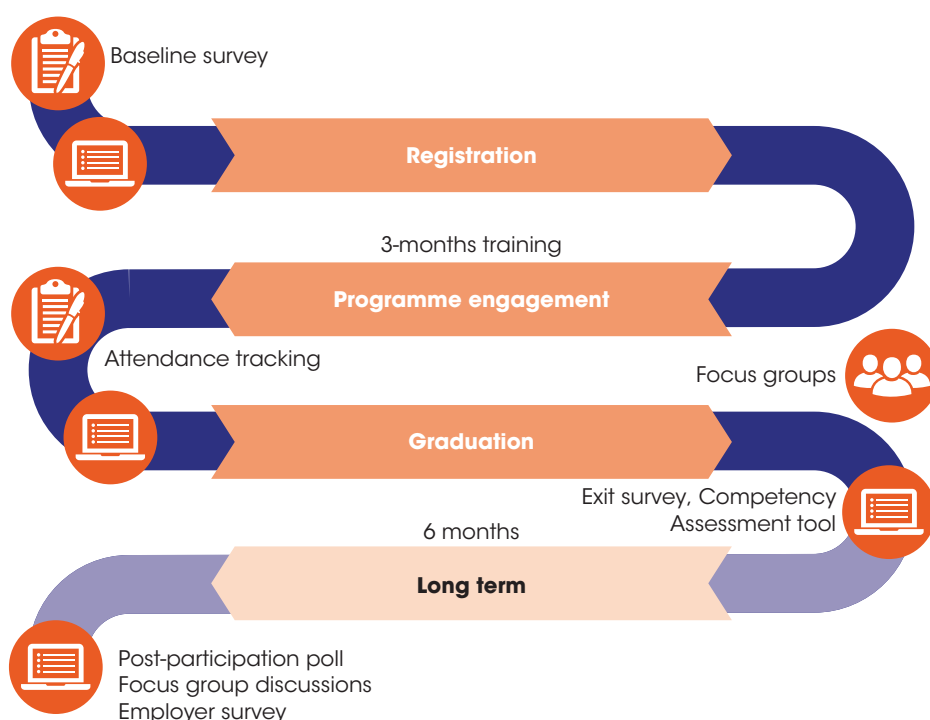
Instrument	Main indicators measured by the instrument	Description
Baseline survey	- Percentage employed in quality jobs or self-employed - Percentage who have started loan repayment - Percentage in education or training - Percentage reporting self-confidence	10-minute, paper-based survey conducted at registration before training begins
Exit survey	- Number who complete programme - Number who receive job or internship placements - Number who receive small business support - Average satisfaction rates - Number of job offers	10-minute, paper-based survey conducted immediately after graduation
Post-participation discussions and polling¹	- Percentage who retain jobs and enterprises - Percentage of loan repayment - Percentage to re-enrol in education	(1) Focus-group discussions with 10–15 youth (2) A polling method in a group setting Conducted 6 months after graduation
Employer questionnaire (6 months later)	Employer satisfaction with programme graduates and participant' skills	5-minute, web-based survey conducted 6 months after graduation
Post-programme focus groups (12 months later)¹	Percentage of new enterprises still operating after 12 months	Survey of youth who had started business at time of exit survey conducted 12 months after graduation

¹ Post-participation and post-programme surveys utilize sampling meaning that only selected beneficiaries will be surveyed. It is expected that approximately 1,800 out of the total of 10,000 youth will be surveyed

Data workflow

Before Taqueem's assistance, IYF depended on local programme officers to collect data on beneficiaries on paper and to send this information to the local office, where it was entered manually into a database. Results were then sent to IYF's global headquarters, where Excel-based results were migrated into a larger database. Each of these steps provided a source of delay, and data quality was threatened by potential data entry errors.

FIGURE 2. Overview of the data collection and intervention workflow



In order to support the data capture and management of the information from all of the programme's nine local partners across Egypt, it was decided to implement a cloud-based platform using the Salesforce.com online database.

Data from across IYF's nine implementing partners is now consolidated into one online database that can be accessed from any internet connection. The database was designed to hold data from 20,000 baseline and exit surveys (for 10,000 programme beneficiaries) as well as other data for the 10,000 youth, including attendance logs and competency results, post-participation surveys and post-programme surveys. The system was designed to sort data by individual, partner, sex, and location of training.

M&E results

The results in figure 3, exported from the Salesforce.com cloud, show how IYF uses the results of its M&E system to monitor outcome indicators and track programme beneficiaries. In this example, actual figures are compared against target figures to show progression towards committed results. Data from IYF's three main outcome indicators are reported: training graduates, employed youth (wage employment) and business start-up. Data were obtained through post-participation polling 6 months after training graduation and are presented by separating the data from the four governorates where IYF operates.

FIGURE 3. Results achieved between January 2012 and September 2013 in four governorates. Targets are based on projected achievements after two years of implementation



Lessons learned

Developing and deploying the cloud-based database

While the adaptation of the cloud-based database helped to streamline the data collection and analysis processes, IYF continued to struggle with data quality issues due to a lack of ICT skills in their implementing partner offices. Primary data are still collected using paper forms and data get lost in the transfer from paper to online database. Moreover, the adaptation of the technology itself imposed costs on IYF in terms of staff training and high annual subscription fees.

Despite challenges with the data collection, the online cloud-based database is a powerful tool that offers unique advantages to Egypt@Work. Unlike the experience with many other databases, IYF has not experienced any glitches with the system that would require data to be re-entered or checked for accuracy. Likewise, Salesforce.com can hold an extensive amount of data (over 20,000 surveys with 30-50 questions per survey). The database is also a real asset to the Egypt@Work programme as it is relational, meaning that IYF can link youth to the implementing partners that provided them services, or link the baseline and exit surveys to the same individual to quickly see changes in individuals over time.

Database adaptation and maintenance can be a burden

The M&E database using Salesforce.com requires complicated coding to adjust survey forms as well as setting up “dashboard displays” (visual graphs showing progress towards goals for each indicator). IYF ended up investing extra funds to hire an IT expert to make the required adjustments.

“ *Egypt@Work addresses the need for increased youth employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in Egypt. The programme aims to give 10,000 disadvantaged youth increased employment prospects in both wage and self-employment* ”

Challenge of tracking beneficiaries post-training

Six months after youth graduate from the programme, IYF calls the youth to determine their job or business status. It was discovered that many of the phone numbers no longer worked, and many of the youth did not appreciate receiving calls from IYF’s central managing partner, with whom they were not familiar. Thus, IYF has started setting up focus group discussions through the local implementing partners to administer the follow-up surveys with a smaller sample of graduates. Arranging focus-group discussions has also proved difficult. Many youth did not show up for scheduled meetings due to the fact that they were working or in school.

Pay attention to survey design to increase the reliability of responses

It is important to ensure that the questions posed in any survey allow the respondent to give the most appropriate answer. This is a common problem with online surveys, or sheets offering Likert scales for all questions. The temptation to simply tick all questions in the “agree” column is great and shortens the time spent completing the survey. However, the data collected will be of little value and will not reflect the true story. To avoid a fully positive or fully negative response, questions can be phrased to require a negative response in a few cases to indicate a good outcome.

Next steps

Egypt@Work will continue administering the baseline (registration) survey and exit surveys to all youth through M&E managers based in implementing partners. The surveys will continue to be administered in an interview style to meet the needs of illiterate youth in the programme. Data from these forms will be entered into the Salesforce.com database as youth graduate from the programme. This data entry and analysis will be completed by local staff in Egypt who can quickly follow-up with local partners as needed.

As Egypt@Work continues piloting M&E tools and systems, the programme will analyze the information collected from the programme, partners, youth, and employers about what works in skills training in Egypt. Emphasis will be placed on sharing this knowledge with local partners to help them monitor, improve, and ultimately sustain their work beyond the Egypt@Work programme.



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