

Impact Brief Series, Issue 5

Lothan Youth Achievement Center

Kuwait

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

- Introducing new technology in an organization that has not yet “digitized” needs to be complemented by a thorough change management plan.
- The introduction of monitoring and evaluation into an organization must involve all staff to ensure that the body of knowledge created is understood by everyone.
- Data collection activities should be included into the delivery processes of every project so that it becomes part of the way of working.
- Ensure Board members, trustees, and senior managers understand the value of monitoring and evaluation.

An NGO in Kuwait designs a simple and scalable M&E system through participative learning and harnessing the powers of technology



Background

Lothan Youth Achievement Center (LOYAC) is a leadership organization that runs programmes for young Kuwaitis aged 6–28 years. One of LOYAC's strengths is its relationships with over 100 private sector companies that support them financially and provide LOYAC's graduates with internships.

The flagship programme of LOYAC is the Summer Programme that runs for six weeks every summer. This programme serves 500 youth per year and is accredited by two national universities. The three main components of the programme are:

1. **Paid internships** – to provide professional skills to youth through on-the-job training in the tourism, customer service, restaurant, and retail industries (30 hours per week for six weeks).
2. **Community service** – to develop young people's sense of humanity through community volunteering (16 hours total over the six weeks).
3. **Recreational and cultural learning** – students work in teams to create a group project to learn about their culture, explore their creativity, and display their talents.

Taqeem support

LOYAC joined Taqeem to understand how M&E could assist them in proving the impact of their programmes to donors and supporters and enhance efficiency in the way they delivered their programmes. Prior to engaging with Taqeem, there was no M&E system in place at LOYAC. Very few data were being collected at the output level (e.g. time spent in training and volunteering) and data at the outcome level (e.g. graduation and job placement) were not collected systematically. The understanding of the importance and benefits of solid M&E was low.

Taqeem assisted LOYAC to build its system from the ground up. Much of this work was on capacity development, training LOYAC staff on key M&E concepts. Three LOYAC staff attended trainings, experts made multiple site visits, and consultations with senior management took place.

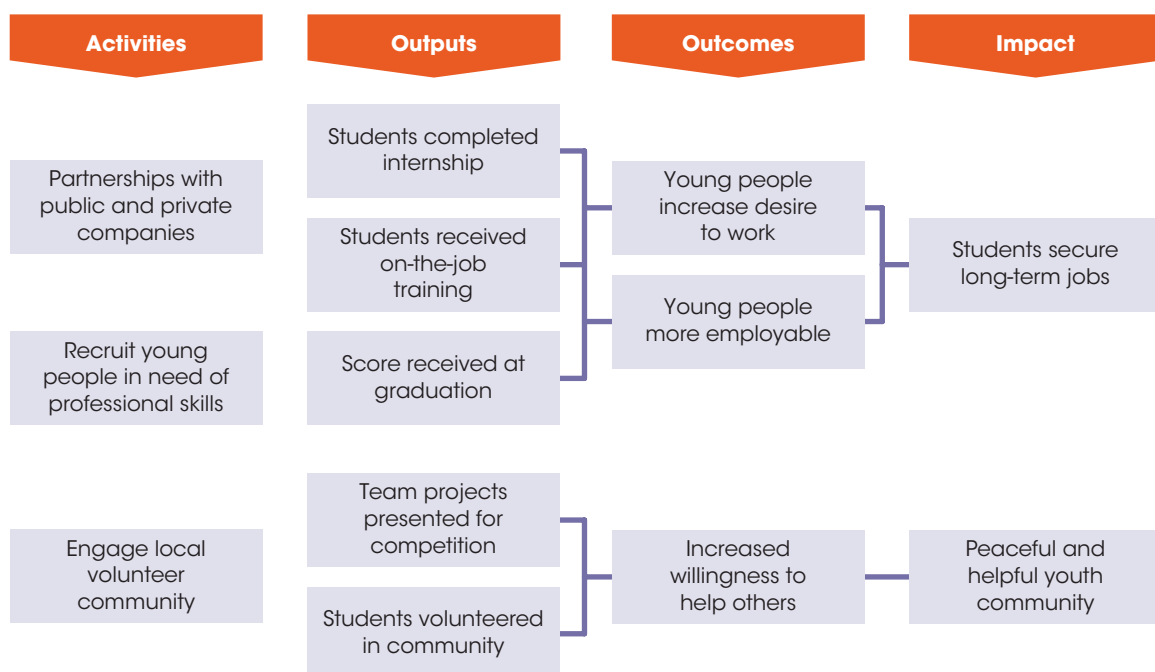
A second area of support was data management. LOYAC was using a basic Management Information System (MIS) to manage student application forms (name, contact details and basic demographics), and to record who was assigned to which company for the internship. A newly designed cloud-based M&E system was introduced called goProve. Survey data are now collected at several points during the programme from all programme participants (see table 1).

M&E system

Results chain

The results chain for the Summer Programme summarizes LOYAC's theory of change for addressing a lack of employable skills among Kuwaiti youth as well as a lack of understanding of importance of being involved in the local community (see figure 1). In the long run, LOYAC wants the internships to lead to careers in the companies where they are placed and for youth to run successful community projects.

FIGURE 1. Visualization of the results chain from activities to impact at LOYAC



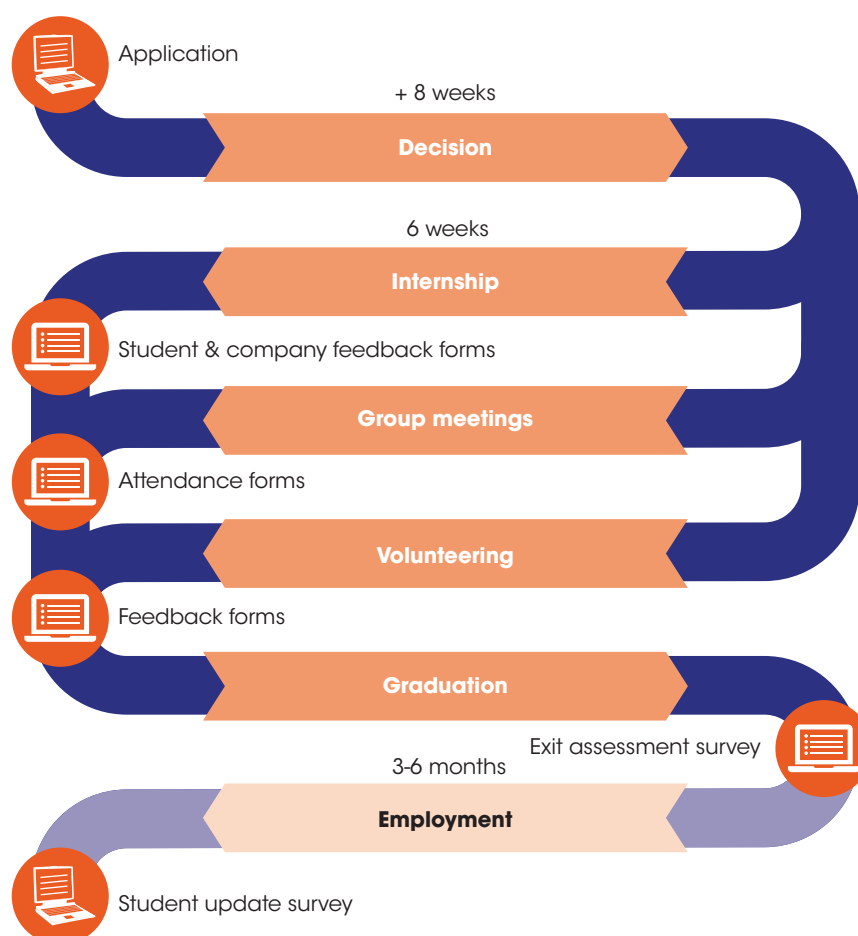
Data collection instruments

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

Data management

Taqeem supported LOYAC in upgrading their M&E database to a simple, more intuitive system called goProve, a cloud-based application designed to collect, manage, and analyze M&E data.¹ The application enables data to be fed by a series of survey forms. For instance, goProve provides the ability to employ offline data collection tools using tablet devices. Similarly, the students could also send in feedback via email directly to the goProve database. Through the new system, data can be collected by LOYAC supervisors at the office, at company premises, and at other locations throughout Kuwait. Moreover, data from the existing MIS could be uploaded into the new database. In terms of analysis, goProve allowed for live analysis of the data, so dashboards were configured to provide LOYAC's management with information on data collection progress and results analysis. Analysis, charts, and reports were used to present to the Board at regular intervals.

FIGURE 2. Overview of the data collection workflow



¹ For more information on goProve, see <http://www.goprove.org>.

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

Instrument	Main indicators measured by the instrument	Description
Application form	Demographic information: gender, education, work, and volunteer experience	Registration forms are completed online through LOYAC's website and data are stored in the cloud-based database
Application form Exit assessment survey Update survey	- Percentage of students to increase professional competency scores - Number with intention to seek work in private sector - Number who intend to continue volunteering - Percentage increase in social awareness scores	Self-reported or supervised questionnaires to assess student's professional competency, motivation to work and social awareness using a five-point Likert scale. The short questionnaire is completed three times by all students: at the application, immediately after graduation and three to six months after graduation. The survey data from each student are automatically reconciled and linked to the student record by goProve, allowing individual and disaggregated analyses on the changes in response over time
Company evaluation form	- Professional competency score - Social awareness score - Attendance score - Attitude score - Appearance score - Teamwork score	Completed by the host companies at the end of placement to provide feedback on student's performance using a five-point Likert scale. Completed online through the goProve website
Feedback form	- Student's satisfaction with supervisor, job placement and LOYAC support - Employer's satisfaction with student and LOYAC support	A series of eight questions scored on a five-point Likert scale provides a way for host companies and students to give quantitative feedback on their satisfaction with the programme. Feedback can be given and submitted at any time through the M&E database

M&E results

M&E data were obtained from the 2013 cohort of summer students where 477 students were accepted into the programme.

Baseline characteristics

Overall, the programme attracted male and female participants equally. Fifty per cent of participants were either in or graduated from high school, while 40 per cent were pursuing higher education (see figure 3).

Exit assessment survey

Of the 477 students, 77 per cent completed the exit survey providing insight into the success of the programme in increasing employment competencies and social awareness. Figure 4 shows data from three of the main survey questions.

FIGURE 3. Baseline demographic information

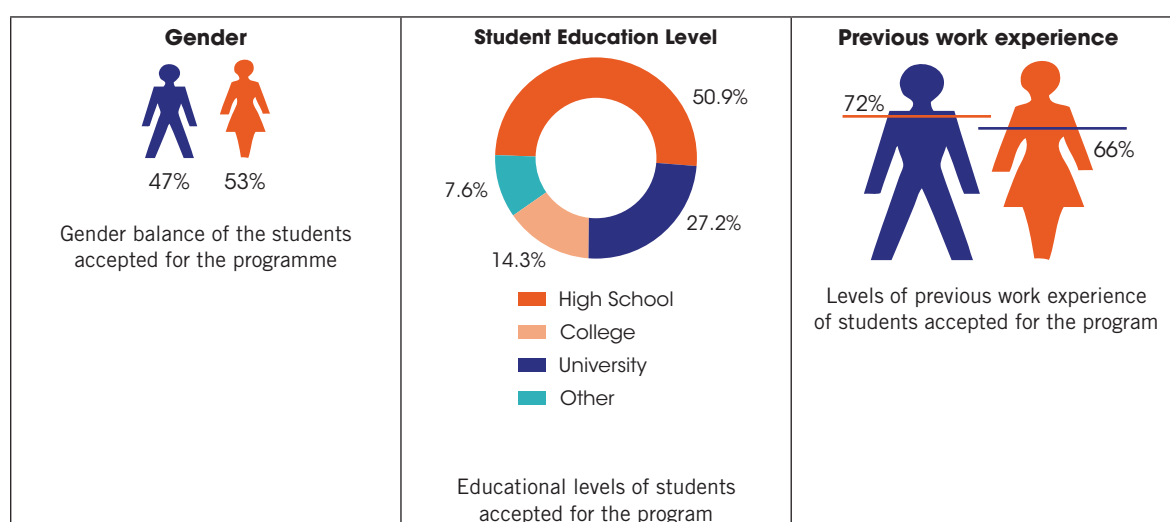
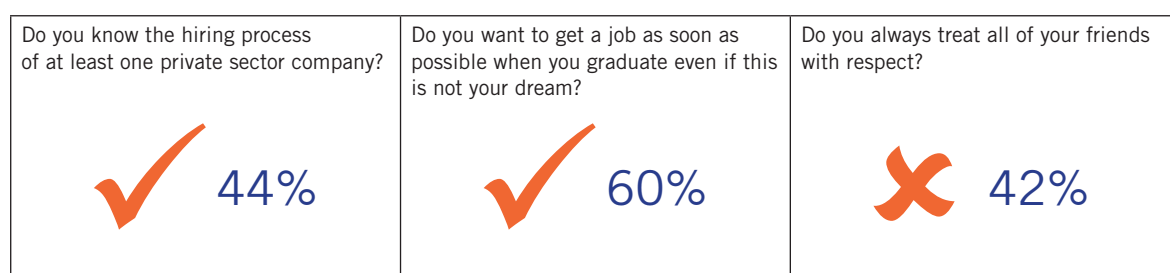


FIGURE 4. Exit survey data based on 367 student responses





Lessons learned

Ensure buy-in by senior management

For a change process towards stronger M&E to be successful, the Board and senior management team need to understand the benefits of collecting data and demonstrating the programme's effectiveness and providing an enabling environment for implementing stronger M&E across the organization. More and better data about programme effectiveness, in turn, can act as a powerful tool when engaging with prospective delivery partners and funders.

Embed M&E knowledge in more than one person

The training and support was focused on the appointed M&E Officer within LOYAC. Soon after the start of Tameem's support, the M&E Officer left LOYAC and the knowledge and expertise went with him. The lesson learned here was to ensure that more than one person receives training and support. As people get trained in new techniques, they become attractive to other organizations that will tempt them away, leaving a knowledge gap. In response, all LOYAC staff and volunteers have now been provided with new job descriptions.

Keep it simple

Initially, the M&E system proposed capturing video feedback from a selection of the students at the start of their engagement (interview) and then at the end to gather a series of change stories told by the students themselves. The aim was to create a series of short before- and after-stories that could be used to promote the programme. Due to the severe resource issues, some initial videos were planned, but were not taken any further. The lesson here is to make the first implementation of any M&E system as simple and lightweight as possible. This will encourage data collection, make analysis easier, and produce simple reports with little impact on delivery processes. Over time, the detail of the data and complexity of analysis can be increased.

Make it relevant

It is important to collect data from the students during the programme or very shortly afterwards so that the response rate is high. Attempting to request data a long time after the end of a programme will be much more difficult. A strategy that may help to collect follow-up survey data is to educate the students on why the data are being collected and the benefits to the programme. This "giving back" will appeal to many of the students, but should not be seen as a guarantee.

NEXT STEPS

Adopt M&E for other programmes

“ *LOYAC's Summer Programme provides professional skills to youth, develops their sense of humanity, and helps them learn about their culture, explore their creativity, and display their talents*

The M&E system designed for the Summer Programme has been adapted slightly to meet the aims of other LOYAC programmes, such as the internship programme. The main difference from the Summer Programme is that there is no volunteering element; however, the desired outcomes remain essentially the same. By keeping the same set of questions for the majority of the programmes, LOYAC should be able to monitor the change in those students that attend multiple programmes.

For new iterations of the Summer Programme, the M&E system will be simplified so that only the essential data and surveys are collected to monitor some of the important outcomes. Over time, additional indicators and surveys will be added as resources and stakeholder demand changes.

MIS versus M&E

LOYAC has a comprehensive MIS database as well as two permanent staff members who design, build, and maintain this system. The LOYAC strategy is to define and build new functions into this system to allow their partners (companies) to enter data remotely. The data required for M&E reporting and analysis are exported from the MIS and imported into the M&E database, providing a quick and simple way to share the data without disrupting the proven MIS processes.

Using the results

Prior to participating in the Taqeem initiative, LOYAC had no results information available and did not systematically use the information collected from the MIS. Moving forward, it is intended to use the data collected more strategically to assess performance and improve programme delivery, and leverage the information in communication and outreach to donors and the public (e.g. reports, website).



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