



International
Labour
Office

Impact Report Series, Issue 2

Boosting Youth Employability in Morocco - I

Qualitative assessment of MEDA
Maroc's 100 Hours to Success programme
September 2015

TAQEEM INITIATIVE





International
Labour
Office

Boosting Youth Employability in Morocco - I

Qualitative assessment of MEDA Maroc's 100 Hours
to Success programme
September 2015

Copyright © International Labour Organization 2015
First published 2015

Publications of the International Labour Office enjoy copyright under Protocol 2 of the Universal Copyright Convention. Nevertheless, short excerpts from them may be reproduced without authorization, on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation, application should be made to ILO Publications (Rights and Licensing), International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, or by email: rights@ilo.org. The International Labour Office welcomes such applications.

Libraries, institutions and other users registered with a reproduction rights organization may make copies in accordance with the licences issued to them for this purpose. Visit www.ifrro.org to find the reproduction rights organization in your country.

Boosting youth employability in Morocco – I: Qualitative assessment of MEDA Maroc's 100 hours to success programme / International Labour Office, Employment Policy Department – Geneva: ILO, 2015

ISBN 978-92-2-130446-3 (print)

ISBN 978-92-2-130447-0 (web pdf)

International Labour Office Employment Policy Dept.

youth employment / entrepreneurship / programme evaluation / impact evaluation / baseline survey / methodology / role of ILO / Morocco

13.01.3

ILO Cataloguing in Publication Data

The designations employed in ILO publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the International Labour Office concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the International Labour Office of the opinions expressed in them.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the International Labour Office, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

ILO publications and digital products can be obtained through major booksellers and digital distribution platforms, or ordered directly from ilo@turpin-distribution.com. For more information, visit our website: www.ilo.org/publns or contact ilopubs@ilo.org.

This publication was produced by the Document and Publications Production,
Printing and Distribution Branch (PRODOC) of the ILO.

*Graphic and typographic design, layout and composition,
printing, electronic publishing and distribution.*

PRODOC endeavours to use paper sourced from forests managed
in an environmentally sustainable and socially responsible manner.

Code: CAD-REPRO

Contents

Preface	1
Section 1: Background	3
1.1 Objectives of study	3
Section 2: Research questions	5
Section 3: Methodology	7
3.1 Sample	8
3.2 Analysis of the data	8
Section 4: Problems encountered and limitations of the study	9
4.1 Weakness of the participant database	9
4.2 Language barriers	9
Section 5: Findings	11
5.1 Recruitment and reasons for enrolment	11
5.1.1 <i>Desired skills</i>	12
5.2 Skills acquired during the training programme	14
5.2.1 <i>Impact of financial education modules on beneficiaries</i>	19
5.2.2 <i>Impact of the entrepreneurship modules on beneficiaries</i>	21
5.3 The impact of the training on labour market outcomes	22
5.3.1 <i>Outcomes for currently employed beneficiaries</i>	22
5.3.2 <i>Job satisfaction</i>	24
5.3.3 <i>Barriers to succeeding in the labour market</i>	24
5.3.4 <i>Helpful skills for the job market</i>	27
5.3.5 <i>Job aspirations</i>	28
5.4 Effects of the 100 Hours to Success programme on education pathways	28
5.5 Benefits of social ties formed during the training	31
5.5.1 <i>Other successes of the programme</i>	32
5.6 Elements missing from the programme	33
5.7 Challenges in implementing the training	34
5.7.1 <i>Profile of the beneficiaries</i>	35
5.7.2 <i>Logistical issues</i>	35
5.7.3 <i>Lack of community involvement</i>	36
5.7.4 <i>Continued support</i>	37
5.7.5 <i>Problems specific to beneficiaries</i>	37
5.7.6 <i>Gender issues</i>	38
5.8 Individuals who dropped out of the programme	39
5.8.1 <i>Profile of the group, recruitment and reasons for joining</i>	39
5.8.2 <i>Reasons for dropping out</i>	40

5.8.3 <i>Gender differences among dropouts</i>	41
5.8.4 <i>Perceived benefits of completing the programme</i>	42
Section 6: Conclusion and recommendations	43
6.1 Conclusion	43
6.2 Recommendations	45
6.2.1 <i>Recruitment</i>	45
6.2.2 <i>Make-up of groups</i>	45
6.2.3 <i>Content</i>	46
6.2.4 <i>Involvement following the training</i>	46
6.2.5 <i>Measuring impact</i>	47
6.2.6 <i>Dealing with dropouts</i>	47
References	49

Preface

In June 2012, the International Labour Conference of the ILO resolved to take urgent action to tackle the unprecedented youth employment crisis through a multipronged approach geared towards pro-employment growth and decent job creation. The resolution “The youth employment crisis: A call for action” contains a set of conclusions that constitute a blueprint for shaping national strategies for youth employment.¹ It calls for increased coherence of policies and action on youth employment across the multilateral system. In parallel, the United Nations Secretary-General highlighted youth as one of the five generational imperatives to be addressed through the mobilization of all the human, financial and political resources available to the United Nations. As part of this agenda, the UN has developed a System-wide Action Plan on Youth, with youth employment as one of the main priorities, to strengthen youth programmes across the UN system.

The ILO has responded to this call by investing more into understanding “what works” in youth employment, including through a focus on the generation of evidence in the “Area of Critical Importance on Jobs and Skills for Youth” (ACI II) and through its technical cooperation portfolio. Since 2011, the ILO has aimed to increase the effectiveness of youth employment interventions in the Middle East and North Africa through the Taqeem (“evaluation” in Arabic) Initiative. The Taqeem 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 policy makers take evidence-based decisions for better resource allocation and programme design.

The “Impact research” series diffuses research reports from Taqueem supported impact evaluations. Reports include baseline, endline and qualitative studies and intended to describe research designs, methodologies, interventions under investigation and policy and programmatic findings and recommendations. Research in this series has been selected through ILO’s Fund for Evaluation in Employment, an annual call for proposals, which provides seed funding, and technical assistance to rigorous impact evaluations.

Taqueem supports the impact evaluation of the “100 Hour to Success” programme implemented by Mennonite Economic Development Associates in Morocco (MEDA Maroc). The research explores the impact of employability, finance and entrepreneurship training combined with job placement support to better understand young people’s transitions from school to the labour market. The research follows a mixed methods research design

¹ The full text of the 2012 resolution “The youth employment crisis: A call for action” can be found on the ILO website at: http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/101stSession/textsadopted/WCMS_185950/lang--en/index.htm.

combining a quantitative randomized controlled trial with qualitative focus groups and key informant interviews. This report *Boosting Youth Employability in Morocco: Qualitative assessment of MEDA Maroc's 100 Hours to Success programme*, authored by Kathleen Woodhouse-Ledermann and Niklaus Eggenberger at the Swiss Academy for Development (SAD), provides results of the qualitative study. Drew Gardiner, ILO Evaluation Specialist, Paul Dyer, Silatech Knowledge Program Manager and Elena Mizrokhi, MEDA M&E Officer provided technical guidance to SAD.

We thank the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation and Silatech for their generous financial support and are particularly grateful to MEDA for the courage, willingness and cooperation in making this study possible.

Youth Employment Programme – Taqeeem Initiative
International Labour Office (ILO)
4, route des Morillons
1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland
tel: +41 22 799 7824
taqeeem@ilo.org
www.ilo.org/taqeeem

Section 1: Background

Youth unemployment is a mounting global crisis. An estimated 73 million young people worldwide are currently jobless, and young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults (ILO, 2015). As is the case in many countries around the world, Moroccan youth have suffered from a lack of training and employment opportunities. In 2012 it was revealed that 49 per cent of Moroccan youth were neither in education nor in the workforce (World Bank, 2012). Unfortunately, few programmes targeting youth unemployment exist in the country. To address this gap, the Mennonite Economic Development Associates Morocco (MEDA Maroc) developed the ‘100 Hours to Success’ programme. Launched in 2009, this five-year initiative offered young people aged 15–25 100 hours of training in the core areas of entrepreneurship, finance and life skills. The training aimed to provide beneficiaries with work-relevant skills to aid them in finding a job or becoming self-employed. The skills taught matched those used by civil society actors and governments as part of active labour market programmes.

In 2012 MEDA Maroc sought to undertake an impact evaluation of the 100 Hours to Success programme with the cooperation of the Taqueem Initiative and the financial support of International Initiative for Impact Evaluation. This evaluation, led by the International Labour Organization (ILO), Silatech, and the Humboldt Institute, analysed the impact of the training modules on the beneficiaries. The resulting baseline report outlined the responses of 1,815 young people from the treatment and control groups to a survey on their employment-related skills. The follow-up survey of the impact study is ongoing and will be released in 2016.

In addition to the quantitative study, a qualitative assessment of the 100 Hours to Success programme’s was designed to provide contextual detail. This qualitative study will be used with the quantitative results to provide a strong, multi-faceted evaluation of the impacts of the MEDA Maroc programme on the labour market outcomes of Moroccan young people. The data includes the opinions and experiences of participants in the programme, while questions were also asked about the programme’s implementation process to enable improvements to be made prior to its replication in other contexts. The qualitative evaluation aims to gain a broader understanding of how the beneficiaries’ skills and their experience of transitioning to the labour market have changed as a result of the training. The study also incorporates questions on the successes and challenges experienced by MEDA Maroc staff and trainers during the implementation of the programme.

1.1 Objectives of study

Against this backdrop, the ILO and its partners commissioned the Swiss Academy for Development (SAD) to conduct a qualitative study using focus group discussions with programme beneficiaries, as well as interviews with MEDA Maroc staff and with young people who dropped out of the programme. The objective of this study was to analyse the

impact of the training on the beneficiaries' skills, aptitudes, saving patterns and employment/business outcomes. The incorporation of young people who dropped out of the programme aimed to provide an insight into potential barriers to participation. Data collection took place in December 2014 and January 2015 in Oujda and Taourirt, and analysis of the transcripts was conducted using a process of coding for themes. This report is divided into the following sections: an explanation of the research questions arising from the ILO Terms of Reference; the methodology used for data collection; problems encountered during the data collection process and the limitations of the study; findings from the research questions and additional themes that emerged from the data; and recommendations for future implementation of the training.

Section 2: Research questions

This qualitative study analyses the impact of the 100 Hours to Success programme on beneficiaries, using data from focus group discussions and interviews with key participants. The study aims to uncover how the programme impacted young people's skills, aptitudes, saving patterns and employment and business outcomes. Research questions include:

- How did the 100 Hours to Success programme affect the lives of beneficiaries in terms of their educational path and their ability to find employment?
- How did the changes in their skills and knowledge impact other domains in their lives?
- Did the training affect the beneficiaries' attitudes and motivations?
- To what extent did the young people gain self-confidence, willingness to take on risk or willingness to speak up? Did such outcomes affect the likelihood of them finding a job?
- Did the young people benefit from the social connections made through the programme?
- How did the young people who participated in the programme come to be viewed by others who were not programme beneficiaries?

These questions emerged from the training modules, which focused on the three core areas of entrepreneurship, life skills and financial education. In addition, SAD developed the following research questions for the focus groups and interviews, targeted at the three types of participant in the study.

Employed beneficiaries:

- What skills did participants want to develop when they first enrolled in the programme?
- What aspects of the training did beneficiaries feel helped them the most in acquiring and maintaining their job?
- What aspects of the training were not useful to them?
- How do participants see their professional future?

Unemployed beneficiaries:

- What is holding beneficiaries back from finding employment?
- How do they perceive the outcomes of the training in general?
- Do they feel that they acquired the necessary skills to find new employment?
- What was lacking, and what other barriers to getting a job exist apart from the programme's content?

MEDA Maroc staff and partners:

- What were the successes and challenges of implementing the programme?
- What role did gender play in the experience of beneficiaries?

- How were the objectives of the programme met by MEDA Maroc staff?
- What changes would help strengthen the programme?

Though the study outline focused on the impact of the training on participants, the ILO and SAD decided to also include the viewpoints of young people who dropped out of the programme. The baseline report of the quantitative study showed that a large number of young people chosen for the programme either dropped out while it was running or decided not to participate at all. It is important to know what types of barriers – whether logistical or socio-cultural – these young people are facing. The research questions guiding interviews with this group included:

- When and why did the young people drop out of the programme?
- What constraints were placed on them? Were there external influences that affected their choices regarding participation in the programme?
- How did the people around them feel about the programme?
- Would they participate in the programme if given another opportunity?

Section 3: Methodology

The qualitative impact evaluation of the 100 Hours to Success programme was conducted using focus group discussions with beneficiaries and interviews with trainers, one key partner² and young people who dropped out of the programme. The study was conducted in the cities of Oujda and Taourirt in the Oriental region of Morocco, and included young people from both urban and rural areas. Beneficiaries and young people who dropped out of the programme were contacted by MEDA Maroc staff using the programme's participant database. The trainers and key partner interviewed were also chosen by MEDA Maroc staff. Both the discussions and interviews were conducted in *darija* (a Moroccan dialect) by the local team, trained by SAD staff, and the transcripts were translated into French by the moderators for analysis.

Focus group discussions were chosen as the qualitative tool for data collection from beneficiaries because of their ability to account for the comfort level of participants and to maximize exposure to the varied opinions, experiences and insights of the young people. Due to time and budgetary restrictions, it would not have been possible to conduct upwards of ten interviews with beneficiaries, as this would have greatly reduced the possibility of gaining valuable insights into the impact of the training. Focus groups allow for personal stories to emerge in a participatory manner. While focus group discussions do not produce representative data, in this context they provide indispensable examples of various participant opinions and experiences. The views voiced by beneficiaries are either shared by others in the group or are unique to the individual, but they always contribute to an in-depth understanding of the programme's impact.

Beneficiaries were divided into focus groups using the categories of employed/unemployed, and were further separated by education level. Discussions were structured using the Terms of Reference questions listed in the previous section, and were tailored to the groups depending on their employment status. A mixture of male and female beneficiaries were invited, and the goal was to hold at least eight separate discussions with six to eight participants, each one lasting between 60 and 90 minutes.

The decision to conduct one-to-one interviews with MEDA Maroc staff (trainers), a key partner and young people who dropped out of the programme was based on the usefulness of such interviews in tackling sensitive topics and providing detailed information. The need to be cautious when approaching certain issues was particularly important in the context of the young people who dropped out of the programme, as there was no way of knowing what internal or external factors had contributed to their decisions. A set of questions was

² The key partner chosen by MEDA Maroc is the manager of a community centre in Oujda. He is considered a key partner because of his essential role in providing classrooms for the training, not only in his centre but also (through his contacts) in other parts of the city. He was well aware of the objectives of the training and was able to observe the evolution of the programme.

developed by SAD for each of these three groups. A minimum of four interviews with key participants was planned to take place.

3.1 Sample

A total of eight focus group discussions were held: these involved 30 participants, of whom 11 were male and 19 female. All the participants had completed the training in 2011, 2012 or 2013. The original aim was to divide the focus groups by employment status (employed/unemployed), then stratify them further by education level, separating those with high education levels (high school diploma/professional school diploma and/or beyond) and low education levels (young people who dropped out of education before finishing high school/professional school). However, due to difficulties in recruiting participants, this stratification was dropped, although three of the focus groups did end up including a mixture of young people with high and low education levels.

There were also difficulties in ensuring that the focus groups contained only employed or only unemployed beneficiaries. As a result, an additional five beneficiaries (four females and one male) were asked the focus group questions during one-to-one interviews. This means that a total of 35 beneficiaries were asked the focus group questions, of whom 21 classified themselves as unemployed and 14 considered themselves to be employed. These difficulties in creating strong focus groups and ensuring that stratification was maintained are discussed in more detail in the next section.

In addition to the focus groups, a total of 13 interviews with key participants were conducted. These interviewees included four trainers from MEDA Maroc, the key partner who provided the training centre in Oujda, and eight young people who dropped out of the programme. Two female trainers and two male trainers participated in the interviews and, of the eight young people who dropped out of the programme, five were male and three were female.

3.2 Analysis of the data

Once the transcripts of the focus group discussions and interviews had been translated into French by the moderators, they were coded by SAD using NVivo 10. A total of 26 separate transcripts were coded in two phases. During the first phase, the transcripts were read for meaning and coded using the nodes that emerged from the data. Larger nodes such as 'reasons for dropping programme' were then coded into more specific nodes, including 'time constraints' and 'gender issues'. Once this first round of coding had been completed, a second round used the objectives outlined in the ILO Terms of Reference to create a new set of nodes that directly addressed the ILO research questions on the impact of the training on skills, aptitudes, saving patterns and labour market outcomes. The nodes that emerged from the two phases of coding were then analysed for commonalities and differences. From this analysis a set of themes was developed; this is discussed at length in the 'Findings' section of this report.

Section 4: Problems encountered and limitations of the study

Several issues were encountered during the recruitment process for the focus groups and the data collection stage, as explained below.

4.1 Weakness of the participant database

One of the biggest issues encountered during the study was the weakness of the participant database. The weakness of the database permeated the qualitative evaluation in two ways. First, it was challenging for MEDA Maroc staff to find willing participants. SAD originally intended to hold a minimum of eight focus groups with between six and eight participants, but this proved to be impossible. Large numbers of both employed and unemployed young people were unreachable due to changes in their contact information. There were also numerous participants who agreed to attend the focus groups who either cancelled or simply did not show up on the designated day.

The database also affected the management of the data collection process. Seven focus groups, all the trainer and partner interviews, and five of the eight interviews with young people who dropped out of the programme took place in December 2014. An additional focus group and three more interviews with programme dropouts were conducted in January 2015.

The second problem caused by the participant database was the lack of structure it led to within the focus groups. As noted, these discussions could no longer be stratified by education level – and it also proved difficult to maintain the strict distinction between ‘employed’ and ‘unemployed’. This point is particularly important as the question guides created to assess the impact of the programme were specifically tailored to this distinction. Mixing education levels also presented a dilemma as it could lead to groups that were too heterogeneous, potentially making participants uncomfortable (especially as educational achievement is a critical topic when discussing employment).

4.2 Language barriers

Language also presented a challenge at various stages of the study. The questions produced by SAD for the focus groups and interviews were in French, as was the training session with the local team of moderators. MEDA Maroc provided Arabic translations of all materials, and the moderators tailored the discussion and interview questions for a broader audience by using *darija*. While this was the best scenario for the participants in the study, constant translation inevitably changes meaning, even if only very slightly. When the French transcripts were sent to SAD, it was noted that some of the questions asked by the

moderators were slightly different from the originals. The reformulation of questions in different languages opens up data to increased bias and inaccuracy. In order to mitigate this negative influence, three specific questions were omitted from the coding process because of inconsistencies in how they were asked.

Section 5: Findings

Analysis of the data from the focus group discussions and interviews reveals a number of relevant points about the 100 Hours to Success programme's impact on its beneficiaries. The results presented in this report do not offer a representative analysis of the impact of the 100 Hours to Success programme on the lives of beneficiaries. Rather, the study focuses on individual views and experiences.

The coding of the transcripts was not carried out to count the number of times a word or theme was introduced by a participant. Instead, information provided by participants in the focus groups and interviews was coded when an individual elaborated on a subject. For example, discussions on market research were coded when the beneficiary talked about his/her experiences with the material and exercises taught by the trainer. Those participants who simply agreed with other participants or who answered in one or two words were not coded. This choice was made because the qualitative study offers an opportunity to deepen understanding of why and how the MEDA Maroc programme impacted the young people, instead of remaining at the general level of counting responses.

This section begins with the results gathered on background information, such as what drew beneficiaries to the programme, what skills they acquired during the training, and the impact this had on their lives. This is followed by discussions on labour market outcomes, barriers encountered, effects on education pathways and friendships. The final sub-sections cover what beneficiaries felt was missing from the programme, themes around implementation (as explained by trainers and key interviewees) and results from the interviews with the young people who dropped out of the programme.

5.1 Recruitment and reasons for enrolment

The focus group discussions began with questions on why beneficiaries had decided to enrol in the training. Participants were asked how they had initially heard about the programme and what skills they remember wanting to acquire over the course of the 100 hours of training. The question on recruitment was asked not only to see how the 35 beneficiaries first came into contact with the programme, but also to gauge how those around them felt about it. The encouragement of friends, family and teachers can play a vital role in youth participation.

Of the 35 beneficiaries who participated in the focus groups and additional interviews, 31 per cent heard about the programme through a relative or friend. More than half of those individuals signed up for the training with the person who had encouraged them to take part. When it was a friend who first explained the goals of the programme, participants said that attending the training with a friend sounded like fun. In total, 45 per cent of participants were approached by MEDA Maroc staff or someone else affiliated with the programme. This usually happened in a school or community centre, and the participants

said that the staff member was able to inspire them to attend because of their description of the training content.

The encouragement of friends and family was an important element in ensuring that the young people who participated in the training signed up. Several of the beneficiaries said that their interest in the programme was largely due to having free time between school and home that needed to be filled. Knowing that a cousin or friend would also be participating in the sessions made the training more attractive. Other members of the young people's circles also played an active role in their participation. A total of 8 per cent reported being introduced to the programme by a teacher or professor. Several of the beneficiaries who first heard about the programme through MEDA Maroc staff also said that their teacher or professor had encouraged them to attend, stressing that the programme would be an important addition to their education. A further 2 per cent of participants saw an announcement on Facebook posted by one of the trainers who was putting up information on the programme. One young man explained that he was familiar with the trainer through another programme at his local community centre, and felt that he could trust the MEDA Maroc programme to be legitimate and useful. The remaining percentage of participants did not specify how they heard about the training, but rather emphasized their interest in its three core themes.

The trainers and the key partner (the manager of a community centre that hosted the training for several years) were also asked their opinions on the recruitment process. While the trainers did not provide much feedback, the key partner made some interesting observations on changes in the process over time. He felt that MEDA Maroc staff contacted potential participants in active, insightful ways at the beginning of the programme. However, he noted that communication around the programme lapsed over time. In the first year of the training, the information given during the recruitment process was clearer, MEDA Maroc staff were more active, and beneficiaries were better informed of the programme's goals and content.

5.1.1 Desired skills

Although many of the participants had been encouraged to take part by their friends and family, all of them were interested in what the programme could offer. They were asked to recall what types of skills they had initially wanted to develop during the programme (all the young people had learned about the three core themes and aim of the training during the recruitment and enrolment process). Of the 35 participants, about half did not list specific themes or skills. Most of their answers were limited to wanting to develop new skills that would be helpful to them in finding a job, or learning things that were outside their chosen discipline/profession. It is likely that one of the three core themes attracted these participants more than the others, but perhaps they could not recall this (some did their training in 2011), felt compelled to perform in a certain way in front of the others in the group, or felt shy about answering. This was the third question posed during the discussions, and participants may not have felt comfortable elaborating on their views at that stage.

The remaining 50 per cent of participants provided a variety of answers. Figure 1 illustrates the different objectives and desires beneficiaries had when they first enrolled in the programme.

Figure 1. Desired Skills of Beneficiaries Prior to training



Participants in the study who had objectives prior to the start of the programme were most interested in aspects of establishing or running a business. MEDA Maroc staff talked about entrepreneurship as a key component of the training, and this attracted a number of beneficiaries. Each of these four participants had a different reason for wanting to learn about business. One woman already knew she wanted to open her own restaurant and needed additional training in the business aspect of her goals. One man said that his education had never covered this topic and that he wanted to learn more. A business major who already had a background in the subject was curious about what would be taught on the programme. Finally, one woman wanted to know about running a business for young people in Oujda.

Life skills, particularly the building of self-confidence, were another core theme that attracted some participants to the programme. The three individuals who mentioned this as a goal said that they wanted to feel more confident in their interactions and how they presented themselves to potential employers. Two of the participants wanted to join the MEDA Maroc programme to have something to add to their CV. Their perception was that the training would show future employers that they had acquired skills outside a high school/professional school setting that would give them an edge over other candidates. Four of the participants were interested in the mechanics of finding a job, such as creating a CV and going about the job search, as this was not taught in their schools. One woman said that she was intrigued when a MEDA staff member mentioned creating a CV. She was not aware that a CV was required when applying for jobs, and did not know how to create one herself.

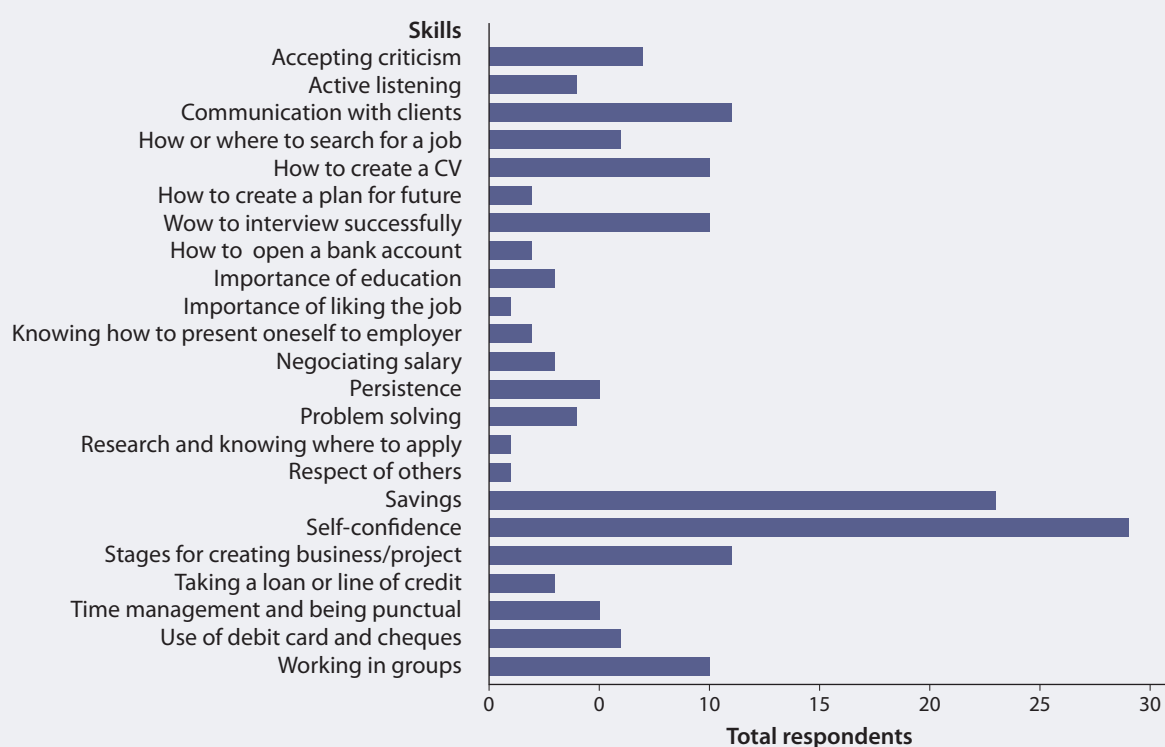
Other skills mentioned were time management (in terms of balancing school, life and work), managing personal finances, improving communication skills within school and work contexts, and obtaining a loan or line of credit for building a business. All the skills mentioned by the participants are covered by the MEDA Maroc training, suggesting that when these participants enrolled in the programme they were aware that some of the topics they were interested in would be covered.

5.2 Skills acquired during the training programme

The participants in this study were positive about their enrolment in the programme and the training they were offered. Each beneficiary felt that she/he came away with skills that are useful in everyday situations. The focus group questions delved into the themes of entrepreneurship, financial education and life skills separately to gain insight into what was of value to participants and what they found less useful in each module. However, as previously mentioned, during the pilot it was revealed that the three core themes were not taught in blocks but were rather mixed together over the 100 hours of the programme. Therefore participants occasionally had difficulty in remembering the topics covered in the training or the aspects of the training connected to each of the three core themes, particularly since they had completed the programme at least one year prior to their participation in the study. After this came to light, moderators would jog their memories by listing the topics covered.

Once the beneficiaries had talked about the different activities and themes of the programme, they were asked to discuss what skills they acquired that were/would be of most use to them when they entered the labour market. Figure 2 illustrates the various answers provided by the focus group and interview participants. Some beneficiaries talked about one skill, while others discussed at least two. On three separate occasions the transcripts indicated that participants answered with “I agree with that person’s statement” instead of expanding on the issue or providing a new viewpoint. If participants did not elaborate, their answer was not coded. As stated above, our analysis does not seek to count the number of times people used particular words or phrases, but rather to learn why the skills under discussion were important to the participants. Therefore, the numbers in the figure below do not represent

Figure 2 Impact of life skills training on beneficiaries



each mention of a topic but, instead, the number of respondents who joined in a discussion on that topic.

Participants discussed a number of skills from the life skills modules that they found beneficial, including increased self-confidence, persistence, the ability to accept criticism, active listening, how to succeed in an interview, knowing how to present themselves to an employer, respect for others and working in groups. The two most frequently discussed skills were gaining self-confidence and how to succeed in an interview. Self-confidence was discussed in a number of ways. Participants talked about learning to be more vocal and opening up to others. Both male and female participants spoke of having trouble knowing how to interact with others prior to the training. Their concerns included not being able to express themselves clearly and being unable to control their emotions. Thanks to the modules, several participants realized that they could now talk to acquaintances, friends and family more easily, both on an individual basis and in groups.

Building self-confidence helped the young people combat issues of doubt and fear, and increased self-confidence was seen as vital to entering the labour market, along with persistence and knowing how to present oneself to a potential employer. One respondent talked about how his newly gained self-confidence translated into a successful interview. Prior to the training he would be nervous and shy when being interviewed for a position. Now he feels that he can control his nerves and, even if he is not offered a job, his self-confidence does not suffer.

Persistence – knowing how and when to continue when facing obstacles – was an aspect of building self-confidence that resonated with the young people. On five separate occasions, participants discussed the importance of not giving up when they failed to reach their goals or were rejected by potential employers. Some of the participants explained that, prior to the training, one rejection would have influenced their opinion of their worth and their ability to obtain employment. Now, however, they knew how to control their emotions and remain optimistic about their future. This sentiment was echoed by both men and women, who said that self-confidence was essential to all aspects of their life.

Self-confidence is important not only in the workplace, but also in everyday situations. Many of the participants made comments about how their improved self-confidence had helped them to develop their personality and assert themselves. At least three of the participants who felt strongly that their self-confidence had improved talked about being able to communicate more effectively within their families. There was also talk about personal growth. For example, one woman stated:

Me, I was shy and I could not confront another person. When someone asked me to do something I could not say no even if I knew what they were asking of me, for example, would cause me problems or even when someone insulted me, I never responded. But now I can say NO and I can defend myself.

Active listening, respect for others, accepting criticism and working in groups also figured heavily in the discussions. When participants mentioned active listening, they tended to associate the concept with knowing how to communicate with others, either professionally or personally. Accepting criticism also figured heavily in discussions on self-confidence and communicating with clients/employers. When combined, these skills allow beneficiaries to solve problems. For example, one woman, who is a seamstress in Taourirt, told a story of how building her self-confidence and knowing how to accept criticism allowed her to

keep a particular client. After she had completed the training, a client of hers returned an article of clothing, complaining that the beneficiary had not measured its length properly. The seamstress was able to calm the customer down and offer to make her a new *djellaba* (outer robe) without incident. The beneficiary explained that she could never have accepted the client's criticism before the training, and would have lost her temper. Now she is able to think about her exchanges in a rational and business-like manner.

Several of the participants also discussed their positive experience of working in a group. This topic was raised in two contexts. First, there were beneficiaries who learned in the course of the programme that they enjoyed working in groups. The exercises that required partners or several people encouraged them to voice their opinions and problem-solve in new ways. These participants connected the exercises with the self-confidence training, explaining that they were quickly able to put the skill of working with others into practice.

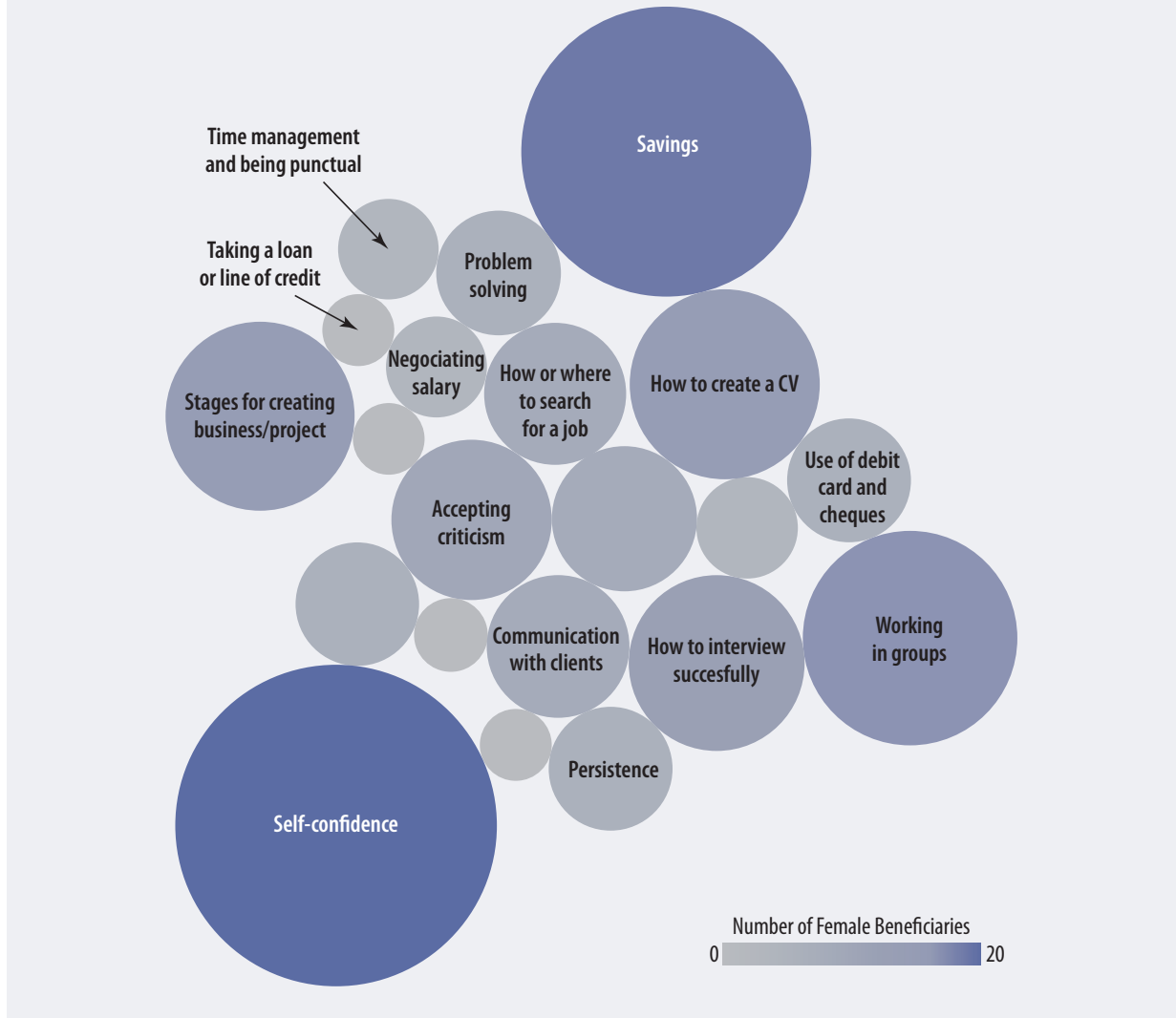
The second way in which group work was beneficial to participants was related to how the trainers demystified what 'working together' means. Two women talked about how they had assumed that they would never enjoy working with others because of their personalities. They did not appreciate being told what to do and became easily irritated. However, the group exercises, along with the modules on active listening and accepting criticism, revealed to them that working with others was not an uphill battle and could actually be enjoyable. For one woman, this translated into opening herself up to employment opportunities. She began the 100 Hours to Success programme under the assumption that she would start her own seamstress business as she felt that she could never work for another person, even though this was not financially feasible at the time. However, once she had completed the programme, she was able to reflect on the constraints she had set herself by rejecting the possibility of teamwork. Looking back on her experiences, she decided to take a job, knowing that she could cope and problem-solve if necessary.

During the coding phase, it became apparent that the skills participants found helpful to their lives were divided along gender lines. Figure 3 illustrates the number of women who discussed a specific skill they had acquired that they felt was of use to them.

Figure 3 shows that a higher number of women than men found the life skills of working in groups, self-confidence, how to save and accepting criticism useful and actionable. Active listening, how to create a plan for the future, learning about the importance of education, liking one's job and respecting others were topics raised exclusively by women. Many of these skills help women in their day-to-day interactions. One woman spoke of how the skills came together for her when she was thinking about future employment. Prior to the focus group discussion, she had been working in a shop. When an argument broke out with her employer, she chose to leave the job and never work for another person again. She explained that, after the training, she realized that she could have stood her ground, accepted aspects of the criticism and problem-solved to save her position. Now she feels equipped to deal with similar situations in the future and can imagine being managed in a work situation again.

Figure 4 illustrates the answers given by male participants, highlighting that self-confidence, saving and communication with clients were at the forefront of their discussions. Considerably fewer men than women engaged with the questions on the life skills training. Although many of the men answered with "I agree" or "Same as the others", only nine provided one or two sentences about what they actually found to be useful.

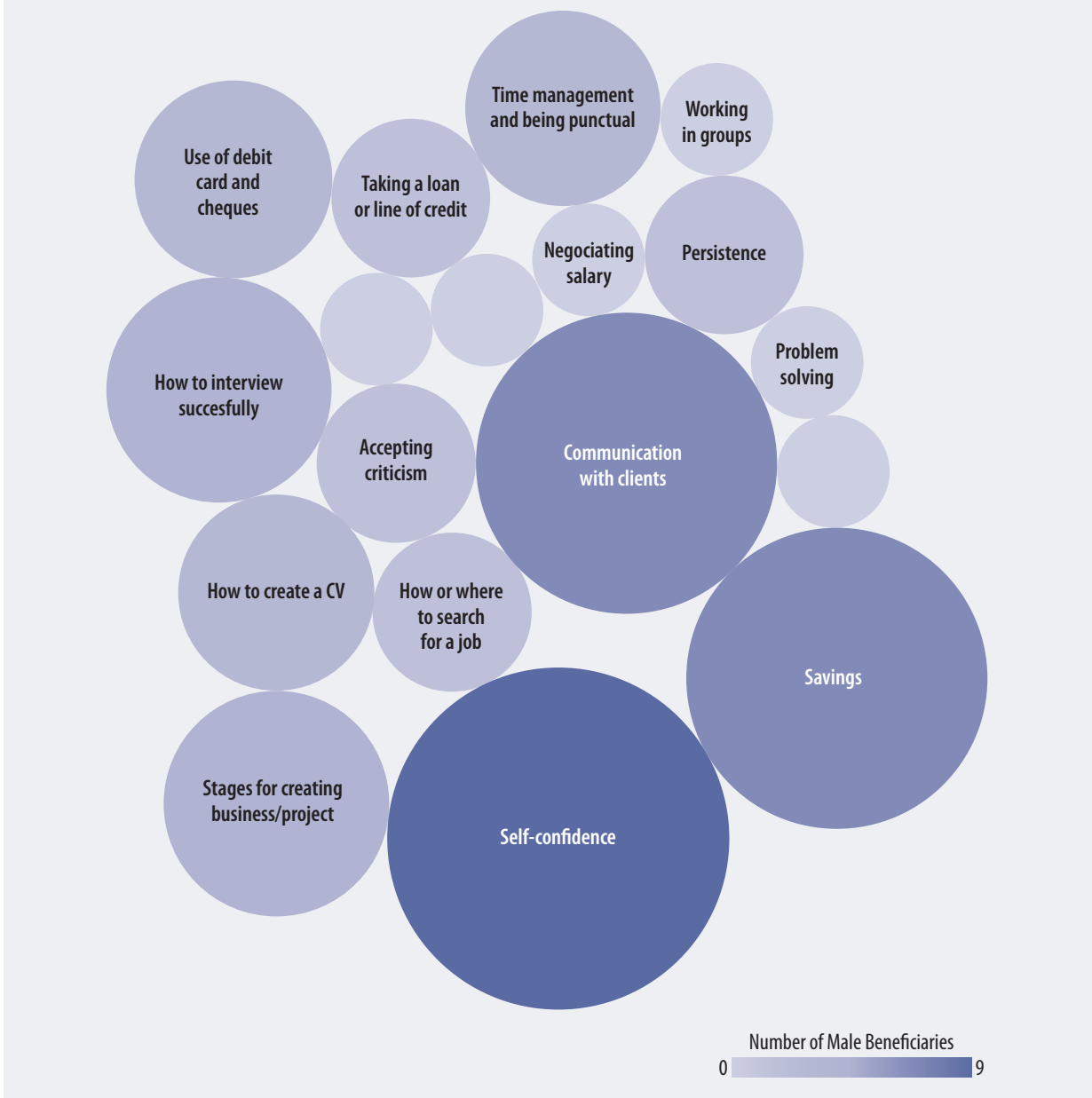
Figure 3 Skills acquired by female beneficiaries



The actual number of women who elaborated on their participation in the life skills training is less important than how these participants explored the impact of the training on their outlook and experiences. The women's ability to talk about the importance of self-confidence and to relay stories related to it was stronger than that of the male participants. Women were willing to give concrete examples and explain how an acquired skill translated into successful outcomes, while men tended to limit their exploration of the topic. Building self-confidence was also important to some of the men but, even when they talked about it, they did not probe the subject in any depth. Men were more willing to discuss the importance of dealing with clients and how to succeed in a job interview in greater detail, even if the numbers who responded to these topics were lower. These skills are more specific to the job market, whereas women favoured skills that are more broadly applicable. There could be several reasons for this difference: anything from individual preferences to gender norms and the cultural context, although these were not explicitly asked about by the moderators or explored by the participants.

During the one-to-one interviews, the four trainers were asked to elaborate on the skills they found easy to teach (and that the beneficiaries found easy to learn) and those modules

Figure 4 Skills acquired by male beneficiaries



that proved more challenging. All four of the trainers replied that the life skills modules were easy to teach and were well received by the beneficiaries. One trainer pointed out that, while a lot of the information presented in the modules was new to the participants, it recurred throughout the programme, giving them time to soak it in. A second trainer felt that the exercises on building self-confidence were well received because they could go through the material methodically and provide real life examples for the young people. A third trainer explained that active listening and conflict management were easy to talk about (and learn) because endless real life situations could be used in exercises and conversations.

The fourth trainer revealed that the ease of teaching the life skills modules was due to the background of the beneficiaries. She explained that no prior information, specific life experiences or education are needed in order to learn these topics. Communication and

control of oneself are universal skills and are therefore easy to absorb. These modules also had the benefit of being taught solely in *darija*, the local dialect. The trainer emphasized this point because she felt that having participants of different ages and educational backgrounds was a counterproductive decision by MEDA Maroc. In the case of life skills, the beneficiaries were all able to understand the material and keep up, but she constantly felt that she needed to cater for the younger, less educated members of the group. This meant that the older and more educated participants were often bored or insufficiently challenged. Although none of the beneficiaries who participated in this study voiced concerns about the heterogeneous nature of the groups, the trainer's observations point to how differences in a group may have affected how they learned and what skills they found most helpful in terms of entering the labour market.

5.2.1 Impact of financial education modules on beneficiaries

Beneficiaries talked about three specific elements of the financial education modules provided by MEDA Maroc: savings, the use of debit cards and cheques, and opening a credit line or obtaining a loan. When prompted to discuss the financial part of the course by the moderators, beneficiaries appeared to latch onto the idea of savings. As depicted in Figure 2, beneficiaries found savings the second most useful skill acquired on the course. During the training, MEDA Maroc had an agreement with the post office to provide beneficiaries with a savings account that they could open for a reduced sum. Trainers could then teach the beneficiaries both the theory of savings and other banking practices. The savings accounts proved to be very successful: over 40 per cent of the participants said that they still actively used the account they had opened during the training, and at least five participants had opened a new account with a local bank. Given that many of these participants are unemployed, their desire to keep saving with little to no income is an indication of how seriously they took the information.

The benefits of knowing how to save were discussed in two ways. First, participants voiced their belief that savings were important for both their present and their future. At least two beneficiaries who were not actively using their accounts said that they would apply the savings skills they had learned once they had more income. Many added that they originally believed that saving money was not possible unless one had a decent salary, but that this changed with the programme. The modules on saving helped beneficiaries restructure their spending habits and open up future opportunities. For instance, one participant said:

It's the savings training that greatly helped me – on a few occasions I was offered work in another city, so I was able to use the money I was saving for the paperwork needed and the cost of transportation.

Figure 3 shows that, again, women expressed themselves more freely regarding the savings modules and talked more about the benefits for their future employment of knowing how to read and use cheques. However, more men than women opened an additional bank account. Men were also more interested in learning how to open a line of credit and other banking processes. Given the responses in the transcripts, it does appear that either the training varied depending on the instructor, or the information was absorbed differently by the beneficiaries. For instance, two participants talked about how the savings module was well structured and methodical, allowing the trainer to explain all the steps involved in opening an account, depositing money, using a debit card, etc. However, in another focus group, two of the beneficiaries stated that, while they were introduced to the theory of saving, there

were no step-by-step instructions on how to use an account or the calculations required for a savings plan.

In addition, one group expressed trepidation about using the services offered by a bank. One female participant voiced her irritation with having to wait for a bank teller in order to withdraw funds. Others in the group chipped in, either agreeing or telling her to use a debit card instead. The woman explained that, when she first saw a debit card, she decided not to get one because of its size. She felt certain she would misplace or lose it. This was met with agreement. Although this is only one example, it does indicate that, for these beneficiaries, banking remains somewhat unfamiliar and potentially scary. They want to apply their knowledge, but aspects of the process were not clarified sufficiently to help them build the confidence they need to engage with the banking system.

Taking a line of credit or requesting a loan was not mentioned by many participants, but it should be noted that those individuals wanting to start their own business/project saw it as an important step in their success. As mentioned, men spoke more about this topic than women. One male participant explained that, while he had learned that opening a line of credit was possible, the training did not explain interest schemes, which he felt were a big part of the process. He also felt that the course should cover the topic more thoroughly, as banking (with the exception of savings) was a foreign concept to the other beneficiaries in his training sessions. About half of the participants were familiar with the concept of putting money away but had never tried it. Also, those participants who felt the most comfortable with banking (beyond savings) tended to be older and employed. They either had their own business or intended to start a business in the near future. They opened new bank accounts, discussed opening credit lines with the bank, and continue to put money aside for their future goals.

Overall, the financial training was motivating to this group of beneficiaries. Although the young people with jobs seem to have benefited most from learning about saving and how to use cheques, many of the unemployed young people are also either saving or intending to save. One woman, who is currently attending university, said that she has maintained her account, but has not actively used it since she quit her part-time job. It is, however, important to her that it remains open as she fully intends to use it once she is earning a salary. Her fellow focus group members agreed with this strategy and pointed out that savings are fundamental to staying in control. The power and independence provided by this training are important to these beneficiaries, both for short- and long-term goals.

The savings modules were also discussed by the trainers during their one-to-one interviews. One trainer felt that this was the most successful module because of the hands-on experience it offered. Beneficiaries were able to physically open an account and see the process in action. The group atmosphere and teaching methods made the participants more comfortable and encouraged them to do something they might otherwise never have considered. Two of the trainers also mentioned the importance of feedback from the beneficiaries, which they tried to collect over the course of the 100 hours. When asked about the savings modules, their beneficiaries spoke highly of the process and indicated that they understood what had been taught. However, reservations were voiced by one of the trainers working outside Oujda. She found these modules difficult to teach because the level of comprehension of the young people was so low. Beneficiaries had little to no experience of the concept of savings, bank accounts and loans. Many were either young or poorly educated. Without prior knowledge, the trainer felt that the participants struggled, particularly because the modules could not be

taught exclusively in *darija*. Most of the banking words are in French, making the content even less accessible to certain beneficiaries.

5.2.2 Impact of the entrepreneurship modules on beneficiaries

Beneficiaries were least able to elaborate on the skills acquired during the entrepreneurship training sessions. Although the node ‘entrepreneurship’ (which was used to code all references to this topic) came up 37 times, most uses were sentences limited to “yes, learning about how to sell a product was helpful”. Nonetheless, several of the participants found the modules on how to start a business productive and helpful for their future professional goals. In most cases, participants enjoyed the practice of coming up with a project and conceptualizing and determining the practical steps for building something feasible. One woman discussed the idea of setting up a day care centre, which she had developed during the programme. Although she is not currently pursuing this project, she feels prepared to start her own business in the future. Both the trainers and the beneficiaries felt that the exercises on market research, how to attract clients and how to be creative with ideas were successful. Some of the beneficiaries were given hands-on experience, going to the market or practising how to sell a product with colleagues. Others said that their modules only offered them the theory behind these ideas, with little hands-on experience.

The modules did seem to convince several other beneficiaries that starting their own business/project was a possibility. Five participants were convinced of the merits of being self-employed after the training, and two of these five have already started their own business. This is encouraging, as the baseline report from the quantitative study revealed that, before the training, most young people desired a job in the public sector (three of the beneficiaries now drawn to the idea of self-employment, for instance, originally said that they wanted the security offered by a job in the public sector). One woman felt that she had gained the necessary skills and self-confidence to put together a project with her friends. She explained:

After the training, a group of friends and I started teaching courses to help younger students – for example, I teach English and biology.

Although this had never been a goal of hers and is not financially lucrative, the exercises provided by the trainer developed the idea. She saw a need around her and was able to create something worthwhile for her and the students she teaches. She and others also found the information on market research to be valuable. This module appears to have included a strong practical component, and the beneficiaries felt that knowing how to conduct this type of research could help them find and keep a job.

Not all of the beneficiaries felt that these modules were helpful. At least six participants said that they were intrigued by the content, but the material was too theoretical. They were not convinced that they knew the first thing about how to become self-employed. It seems that each trainer had their own way of approaching the material and, as discussed in the section on life skills, one trainer reiterated that the mixture of age and education levels was difficult to navigate. She suggested that the material on entrepreneurship is more suitable for individuals above the age of 20 who have some experience in professional programmes or university. The beneficiaries who were 16 years old and/or still in high school were too removed and young to find the information helpful. Some participants also complained that there were not enough opportunities for real world experiences or exposure to former

trainees who had successfully started their own business. This contradicts the comments of other participants, who felt that they were given concrete advice and skills. Given the insight of the trainer and the varying opinions of the participants, it is possible that trainers had to make choices about the content of the module in order to include everyone in their group.

5.3 The impact of the training on labour market outcomes

One of the major goals of the MEDA Maroc 100 Hours to Success programme was to improve the labour market outcomes of young people in Oujda. The skills that beneficiaries wanted to acquire and those they developed during the training should theoretically have improved their chances of finding employment. Of the 35 beneficiaries who either participated in the focus groups or were interviewed, 14 classified themselves as employed and 21 considered themselves to be unemployed. Though the study originally intended to include at least 24 employed young people, this proved to be impossible. The MEDA Maroc staff who contacted participants for the study had difficulty locating beneficiaries with jobs – or, if they did, the beneficiaries were too busy to attend.

It is important to state that the way in which beneficiaries classified themselves as employed or unemployed did not always match the definitions used by SAD. For example, four of the young people who identified themselves as unemployed (two in focus groups and two who dropped out of the programme) held part-time jobs. Other participants had secured jobs for their summer break. These differences caused problems for the analysis because of the specificity of the questions. This was not an oversight by the local team; rather, the beneficiaries themselves did not view their jobs in restaurants and shops as legitimate employment. Though this point was never pressed by the moderators, the answers given by the participants suggest that part-time work is not considered to be employment, either because it is not their professional goal or because it does not fulfil their monetary needs. This report uses the beneficiaries' own definitions of 'employed' and 'unemployed' because their thoughts matter, and how they view their situation influenced their responses throughout the discussions.

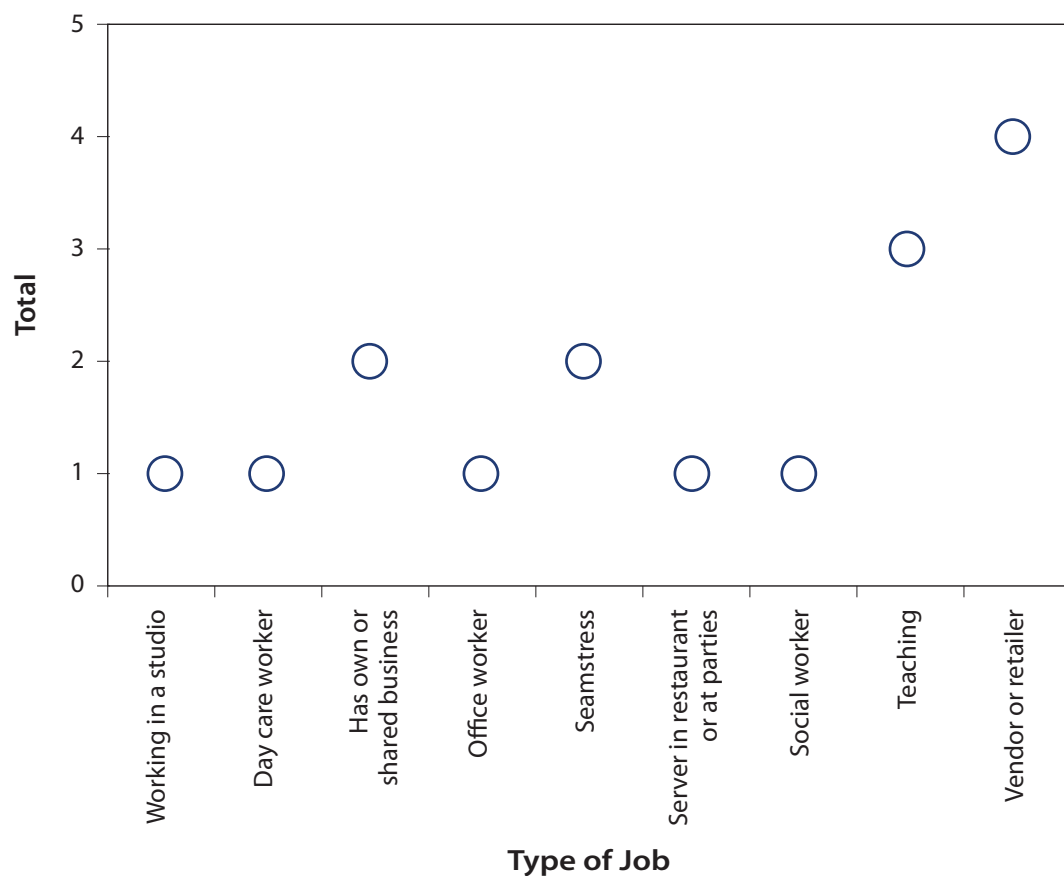
5.3.1 Outcomes for currently employed beneficiaries

The focus group question guides were tailored to both employed and unemployed young people. For the employed beneficiaries, the questions focused on assessing how the skills gained on the programme had aided them in finding a job and how the training was continuing to help them in their work and daily lives. Of the 14 participants who considered themselves to be employed, five were working in their current job before the training, two gained employment during the training, and six found their jobs after completing the programme. Figure 5 depicts the various jobs held by these participants.

The beneficiaries who held their positions prior to the training, such as the food vendors and the seamstresses, believed that the skills they had acquired helped them tremendously in their jobs. These individuals had low levels of education and, while they did not feel that the training replaced schooling for them, they felt better equipped to deal with the clients and family members with whom they work. The teachers and the office worker started their jobs after the programme and said that learning how to search for a job, increased self-confidence and improved communication skills all helped them to secure employment.

The beneficiaries who voiced the most enthusiasm about their new skills were those who own or share a business. For example, one man who has his own aluminium studio explained that the modules on entrepreneurship and finance were extremely helpful in starting his project. The exercises on market research and banking were instrumental in his success and, although he had the goal of creating his own project prior to the training, his confidence increased with the additional knowledge he gained. Beneficiaries who are not self-employed also utilize their acquired skills daily in the workplace. The participant who works in a studio has used his communication skills and self-confidence to further his position and gain the respect of his colleagues. The training helped him realize that his insights and opinions are valid and will be appreciated by others.

Figure 5 Current employment of beneficiaries



Some of the young people who are currently employed, such as the day care worker and the retailer, do not intend to keep their positions long term. Both women took the jobs to generate income and save money in order to continue their education. Once in the job market, they both realized that their diplomas were not in demand (this is discussed in more detail in the section on education pathways). Although both women recognized that the training had encouraged them to take jobs they enjoyed instead of focusing on salary, they felt that earning money and building a CV was a priority. The women talked about self-confidence, active listening and open communication as skills that had helped them secure and thrive in their jobs. The training had made them aware that the life skills they had developed are applicable in all situations.

5.3.2 Job satisfaction

Employed beneficiaries were asked about their job satisfaction to discern how they felt about their job opportunities after the training, and to gauge whether – and how – they were thinking about their future. All 14 beneficiaries claimed to be happy in their jobs, although at least two intend to change when they either stop attending university or return to university to take a more marketable degree. Two of the self-employed beneficiaries talked about how owning their own business has lived up to their expectations. Both plan to continue with their work and expand their business. One teacher and one seamstress both said that they had achieved a lifelong dream with their job, and would continue in it. The remaining employed participants all said that they were satisfied with their jobs, although they were not sure how the future would unfold. Before being asked this question, two of the participants talked about the importance of making plans for the future and having an alternative option if things go poorly. These discussions show that the young people are not only enjoying their work, but are implementing the skills they learned during the training to consider their future.

5.3.3 Barriers to succeeding in the labour market

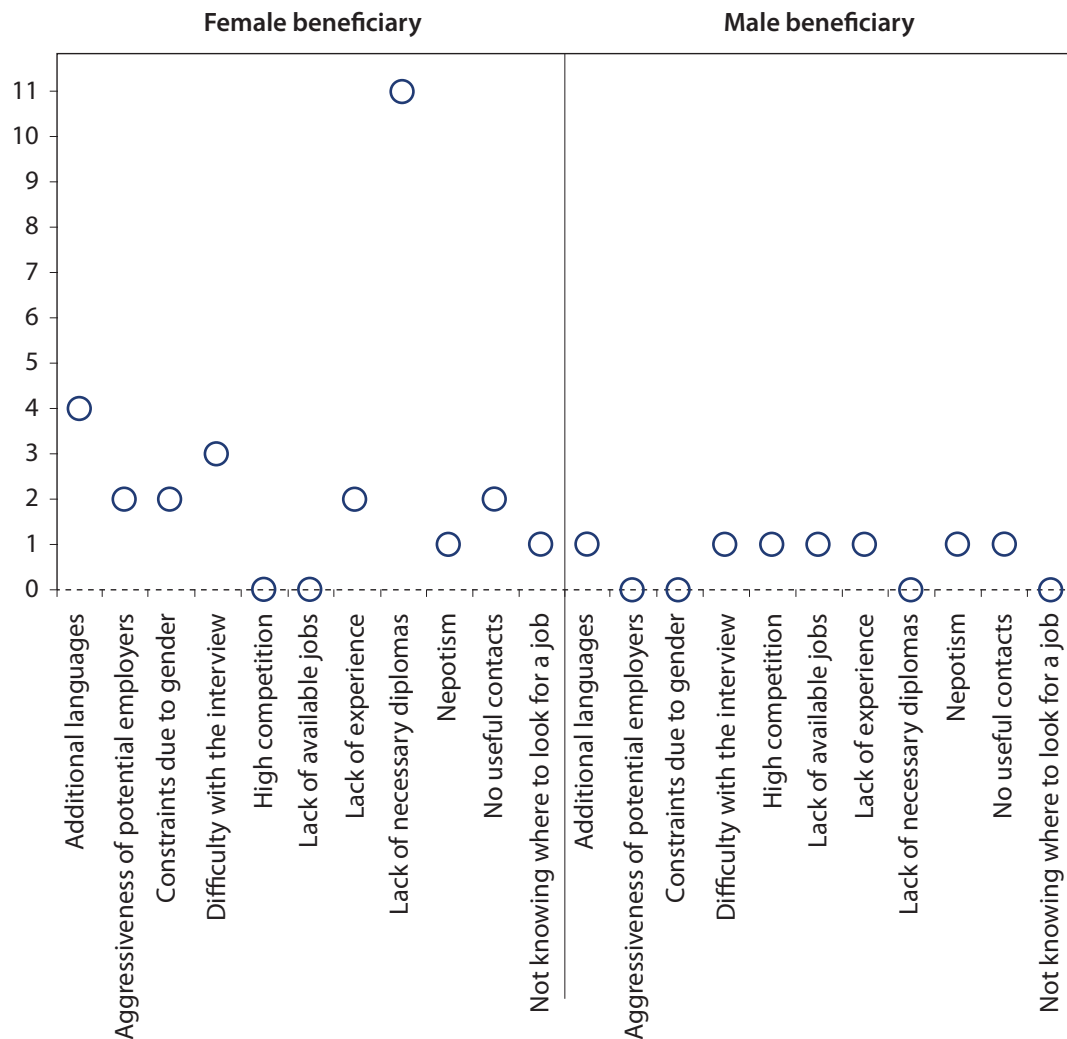
Unemployed participants were asked to identify the barriers they face to entering or being successful in the labour market. There were a number of participants who could not answer this question, either because they are not currently searching for a job or because they have a part-time job (although they still identify as unemployed). For those who are in the job market, a number of factors were listed as preventing them from working. Figure 6 shows a breakdown of these factors by gender.

The most common answer – the lack of a necessary diploma – was given exclusively by women. This was discussed in a number of ways. At least 50 per cent of the women who talked about the need for a diploma have a lower level of education. Some of these women left school at the age of 12, while others were not able to finish high school. They discussed their lack of a high school diploma as their number one hurdle in the job market because, in their minds, an employer always hires people with at least a high school diploma with ‘mention’ (a higher grade point average). No matter how important and useful they found the MEDA Maroc training to be for their personal development, their new skills cannot change the fact that they must compete with more educated people applying for the same jobs. This was true even for women who had marketable skills such as sewing or a background in cutting hair. Not all of these women provided stories or insights related to their job search, although all of them stated that they are actively looking for employment.

There were also female participants with a higher education level (high school/professional school diploma or beyond) who felt that they lacked the necessary diplomas to find a job. At least three women mentioned that they could not find work in their field. There is simply an absence of vacancies in certain professions. Although they have a higher level of education, at least two university graduates believe that they need to obtain an additional degree in a more marketable subject. This issue is discussed in more detail in the sub-section on how the training impacted education pathways.

‘Additional languages’ was another popular answer with women. Several of the participants stated that not knowing French, English or even Spanish was a disadvantage. Candidates who speak these languages, especially those who studied at university, are perceived as

Figure 6 Perceived barriers to gaining employment



having a higher chance of gaining employment. During the discussions on barriers to work, no men mentioned the need for knowing foreign languages, although several male participants did bring up the subject in other contexts. For instance, when men were asked what modules were missing from the programme, French or languages in general were cited as being necessary for success in the job market.

Female participants also stated that their lack of self-confidence was a barrier to employment, particularly when faced with aggressive employers³ or during interviews. These participants felt that the process of searching for a job could be disheartening, especially when they were dropping off a CV or asking if there were vacancies. This is an interesting point, as a large number of female participants also said that the programme had significantly increased their self-confidence. Those who brought up the issue of aggression from employers said that their self-confidence and drive had been shaken by these encounters. Other participants talked about the need for persistence in such situations, which they felt was covered in the

³ A couple of participants talked about how employers are often unpleasant or aggressive when beneficiaries enquire about job vacancies. Behaviour included yelling at the young people, telling them they had no chance of being hired, or dismissing them rudely.

training. These women, however, indicated that staying motivated was not possible in the face of so much negativity.

Two women argued that their gender places constraints on them finding a job. The first woman stated that there are no jobs available locally for women, particularly those who have a lower level of education. Therefore these women must look to the surrounding region for opportunities. As she put it, family responsibilities do not allow women to commute to other small towns or to a city like Taourirt. The distance and the time it would involve being away from home would be unacceptable to other family members. The second woman talked about the difficulty of finding a job due to the designated business hours. She said:

Here in Oujda, people go home at an early hour, so for the girls, if they find a job that requires them to stay late in the evening or at night, their families will not accept this.

As a few others explained, women with a lower level of education are more likely to find jobs that require them to work long hours. Seamstresses, when offered a job, are often told that they need to work until 7 p.m., which is impossible for them. They have to decline such offers because their families either need their help at home or expect them to be present when the family comes together at the end of the day. Although no men spoke of their gender roles as a barrier to finding employment, one unemployed man did talk about responsibilities interfering with certain jobs. When reflecting on the impact the training had had on participants' strategies for finding a job, he said:

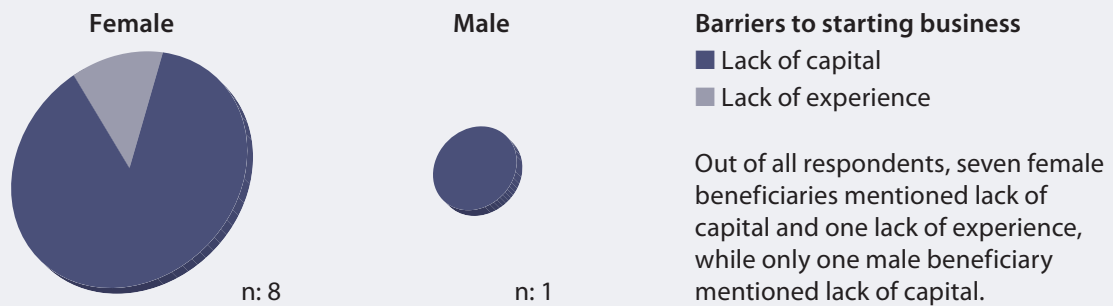
From the perspective of planning, nothing has changed for me – I am always a planner because I am the eldest of my brothers and my father is dead. Therefore I am responsible for my family, and maybe this training will help me create my own business to provide work for my brothers.

Although he does not specifically state that his responsibilities are a constraint, this participant points to an important aspect of the local culture. As the eldest male, he must generate income for his family, and taking a low-paid job or waiting for his ideal role are not necessarily options. In his case, the positive experience of the entrepreneurship training inspired him to consider opening his own business, but this might not be the case with all men in similar situations. Men with a lower level of education may find themselves struggling to find work that provides for their family. This is discussed further in the section on young people who dropped out of the programme.

The remainder of the barriers discussed mostly affected both men and women. The issue of nepotism and needing contacts in order to obtain a job inspired strong discussions in a few groups. These focus group participants felt that, regardless of the skills they learned or the diplomas they earned, Oujda is a city where employers will always hire family members or friends when possible. This is a barrier that numerous participants had encountered, and it inspired great frustration in them to see less qualified people obtain a job simply because of who they knew. All the participants agreed, however, that this is not something they can change.

Unemployed beneficiaries also saw barriers to becoming self-employed. While most of the participants found some aspects of the entrepreneurship modules useful and interesting, many of them continued to be sceptical about the realities and feasibility of self-employment after the training. Figure 7 shows the concerns voiced by participants.

Figure 7 Barriers to starting business by gender



Female participants felt strongly about the idea of lacking capital. This was mostly in regard to start-up money. When asked whether they would take a loan or a line of credit at a bank (something taught during the training), they explained that they either did not understand how this worked or were not willing to take the risk. One man said that he did not have the money needed to start his project, but did not elaborate on this. In addition, a few of the women said that they lacked the necessary human resources to help them start a project, and felt uncomfortable running a business without proper experience. The skills learned during the training were not enough to build their enthusiasm and self-confidence in this respect. In fact, only one of the female participants from all the focus groups and interviews said she felt confident that she would one day run her own business, a restaurant. Although she did not feel ready to start this at the moment (she is currently training to be a chef), she felt that the MEDA Maroc programme had adequately prepared her to meet her future goals.

5.3.4 Helpful skills for the job market

In addition to discussing the barriers encountered after the training, the unemployed beneficiaries were asked to talk about the skills they believe will help them find a job or start their own business. The modules on life skills – particularly the module on developing self-confidence – were cited as the most helpful for securing employment, even though this belief was inadvertently challenged by some of the women during their discussions on barriers to work. Participants in one focus group explained that their increased self-confidence and ability to listen actively would be their biggest assets when attending interviews, negotiating a salary and presenting themselves well, because these skills improve communication. Communication is seen as one of the most important aspects of securing employment, and participants felt that the skills they obtained developed their communication style in concrete ways. This was echoed in two additional focus groups, where the participants agreed that self-confidence is the foundation to being successful in the professional world.

Practical skills such as saving and writing cheques were also seen as important. A handful of participants believed that being able to save money was not necessarily a marketable skill, but it would help them with commuting costs or any needs they might have when attending an interview. At least ten of the unemployed beneficiaries felt that their increased knowledge of how to create a proper CV would help them find a job. The MEDA Maroc training also taught participants about online search engines and strategies for dropping off a CV. At least three individuals are currently using these strategies to look for employment.

Whatever the reason, the participants did not speak extensively about which skills relate directly to positive labour market outcomes. It is possible that they felt this topic had already been covered when they listed the positive aspects of each module, or because many are not currently searching for a job. There may also be a relationship between how they perceived their new skills and what they previously believed was essential for finding a job. The biggest factor mentioned was the need for additional education.

5.3.5 Job aspirations

Unemployed beneficiaries were asked to talk about the jobs they are either actively applying for or their future desires for employment. Their answers were evenly split between those who want to work in the public sector (for job security) and those who want to work in the private sector. The types of jobs they hope to obtain include, but are not limited to, policeman, retail worker, secretary, teacher and business owner. Of the young people who want to work in the public sector, at least two prefer waiting for a vacancy in their desired role to working short term in the private sector. Those who hope to start their own business either have experience in their chosen field (a seamstress) or are still in school. The importance of education was continually mentioned by beneficiaries, even in terms of planning for the future. The following section discusses how education figures in the lives of the 100 Hours to Success participants and the role that the training played in their education pathways.

5.4 Effects of the 100 Hours to Success programme on education pathways

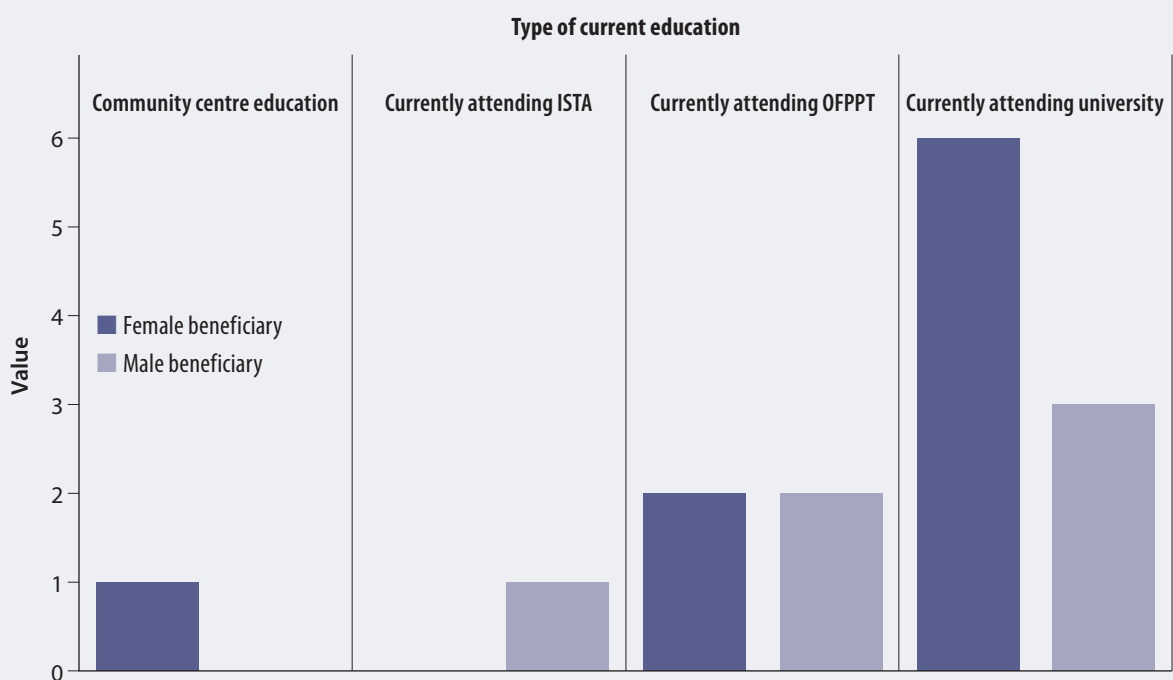
Almost every young person who participated in the discussions or was interviewed one to one talked about the importance of education when looking for employment. Education, particularly a diploma beyond high school, is considered one of the most important factors in finding employment. Beneficiaries either knew this beforehand or learned it during the training. Either way, education weighs heavily on the minds of both the employed and the unemployed. This became apparent while discussing three topics: barriers to entering the labour market, reasons for current unemployment, and information learned from the training.

Lack of education acts as a barrier to finding employment. Nine of the 35 young people who participated in the study talked about the importance of having a good education when searching for work. Eight of the nine are currently unemployed and are finding it impossible to obtain a job, whether they have a high school diploma, a professional degree, a university degree or no diploma at all. One of the participants, a woman who left school at the age of 12, said that even jobs such as sewing and cutting hair require proof of training and educational background. With family responsibilities and limited means, it is not always possible for young people to gain the necessary schooling. Another woman, who is currently employed, explained that having a diploma from a university is not always enough: it is important to have the ‘right’ diploma. Her background in Islamic Studies has not provided her with many opportunities and, although she is currently working in a day care facility, she plans to return to university to obtain what she believes is a more practical degree.

Acquiring a professional or university diploma is the most important goal for the majority of the unemployed young people in this study. Of the 21 beneficiaries who do not have a

job, 13 are currently enrolled in an educational institution. Nine are at university studying a variety of disciplines, including law, physics, social work, Arabic and Islamic Studies. Four of the beneficiaries are at the Office de la Formation Professionnelle et de la Promotion du Travail (OFPPT),⁴ studying management and other business-related topics, and one beneficiary attends the Institut Spécialisé de Technologie Appliquée (ISTA),⁵ studying accounting (in addition to his university course). One of the beneficiaries from the Taourirt region attends courses at a community centre to learn how to cut hair and how to be a seamstress. A further two beneficiaries are currently employed and attending university, and two more have part-time jobs scheduled for their summer breaks. Figure 8 shows the destination of these beneficiaries by gender.

Figure 8 Current educational institution attended by beneficiaries



Discussions with the young people enrolled in educational institutions all revolved around completing their programmes. Questions regarding their professional aspirations and strategies for entering the labour market were almost always met by someone reiterating how important it is to obtain a diploma before starting to think about the future. For instance, one 21-year-old woman said:

The first thing is the diploma: you need it to integrate in the professional world – also, obtaining a top percentage in the class for the diploma plays an essential role in the pre-selection of candidates. Then, of course, internships.

⁴ OFPPT is a professional school offering individuals between the ages of 15 and 30 courses in a variety of fields, such as business, the arts, industrial work and tourism.

⁵ ISTA is part of the OFPPT programmes.

Clearly the young people who participated in this study feel pressure not only to stay in education, but also to ensure that their studies reflect their hard work. Gaining a diploma as the first step in obtaining a job did appear to be emphasized during the 100 hours of training. However, only two of the 35 young people who were asked the focus group questions stated explicitly that the training taught them about the necessity of education. One young man, who is currently finishing his studies, explained that he learned during the training that a high school diploma is equivalent to not having an education: a university or professional degree is necessary for finding work. In addition, education not only leads to a job but also enhances one's understanding of culture and society. This is similar to the woman who talked about her diploma being a barrier to obtaining desirable work because it is not the 'right' diploma. One unemployed 22-year-old woman stated that the life skills module of the training encouraged her to continue her studies:

At the beginning I was an assistant in a bookstore, but now I have the courage and determination to finish my studies, then find a job or even start my own business.

Through the training, she was reminded that education was an important component of her future. It is possible that other beneficiaries did not directly state that the training influenced their views on education simply because many of them already saw obtaining a diploma as an obvious step towards their professional goals. At least three of the unemployed young people said that the MEDA Maroc programme did not change their minds about needing an education, because they already knew the importance of this.

The focus on education also influenced how beneficiaries saw the impact of the training on their learning goals. The emphasis on diplomas as the gateway to employment appears to be problematic. If individuals have marketable degrees, their options will obviously increase, but other important advice given during the training – such as how to start a business and how to research and assess the job market – may have been discounted by most of the unemployed participants. As noted by one of the local team members who moderated the focus groups, there is no shortage of young people in Oujda with degrees and internships on their CV. The idea of a diploma being a 'golden ticket' is misleading.

Surprisingly, few participants viewed their completion of the 100 Hours to Success programme as an additional form of education that would be attractive to future employers. Only two of the 35 beneficiaries talked about their participation as an asset for their CV that would demonstrate their commitment to professional development. However, all the beneficiaries discussed how the training helped them to develop their approaches to the job market, and how the skills they acquired are valuable in their lives. Clearly they found the programme useful and informative, but not something that can be added to a list of educational opportunities proving competence.

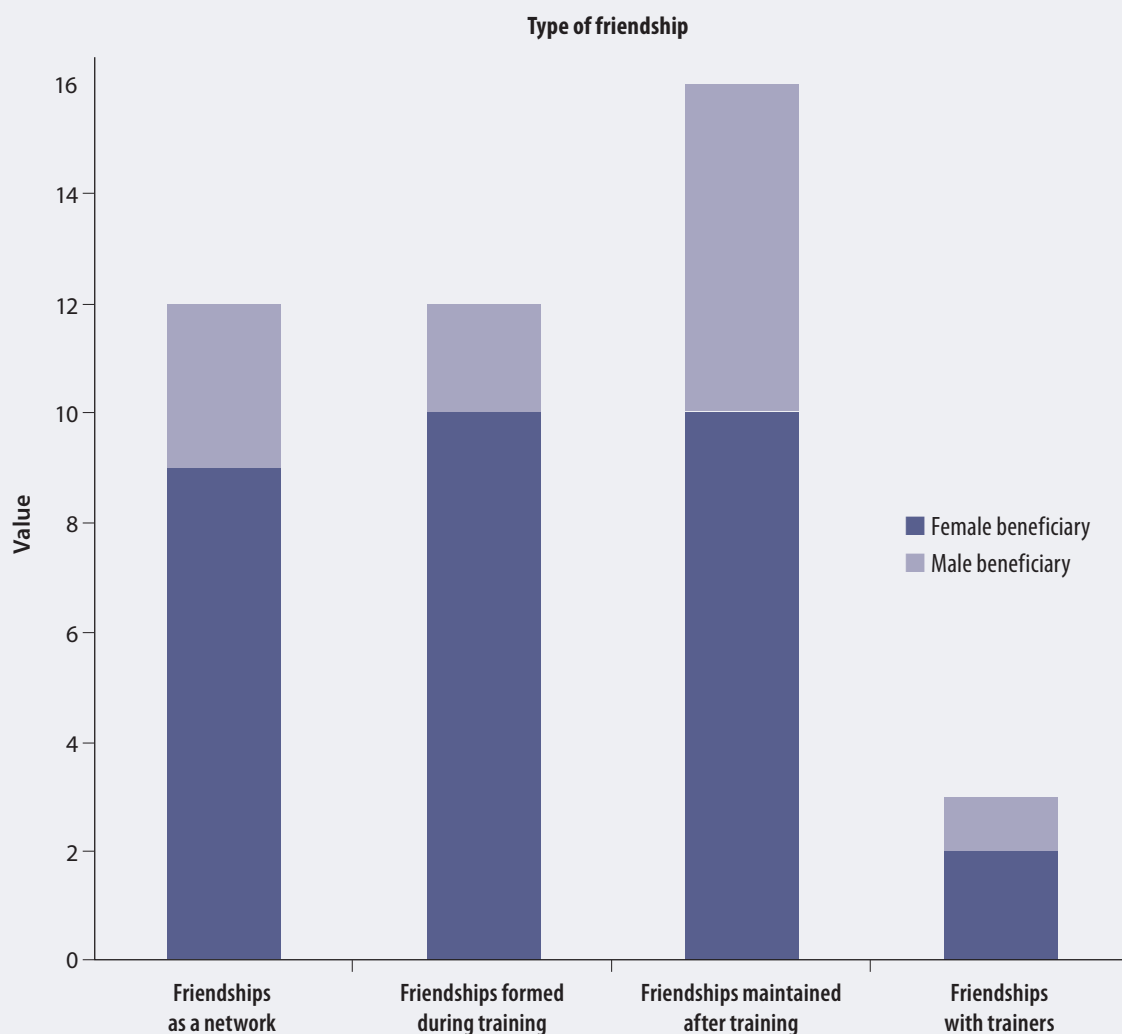
The only exceptions to this were three young women in Taourirt who left school at a young age. These women initially viewed the training as an unprecedented opportunity to learn new skills in a formal setting at no cost. Struggling with their lack of diplomas and with no financial means to invest in their future, they joined the programme not only in the hope of learning new skills, but also for the chance of gaining an internship and connecting with the trainers. These women find themselves in a precarious position where sewing and cutting hair are their only real options for generating income. These jobs are demanding and poorly paid, doing little to help the women meet their professional goals. While all three women felt that they had benefited from the programme, they insisted that, even in

the fields of cutting hair and sewing, employers often want diplomas or evidence of training in a professional centre. They personally felt as though the training represented a valid and important form of formal education, but were less sure that their employers would see their participation in the programme as an asset.

5.5 Benefits of social ties formed during the training

The training provided by MEDA Maroc not only focuses on preparing young people for the labour market, but also encourages them to establish friendships and potential networks. These connections could prove important later in their professional lives, especially for those searching for employment or wishing to start their own business. Questions regarding the relationships that the young people developed – both with other beneficiaries and with the trainers – were asked during the focus groups and the interviews with the trainers. The answers varied considerably. Figure 9 shows the different types of friendships discussed by participants. Beneficiaries did make friends during the training, but these friendships did not always continue after the programme had ended. However, some beneficiaries have not

Figure 9 Friendships amongst beneficiaries



only stayed in touch with their fellow graduates, but are using these connections to glean information about jobs and other opportunities. These are networks which will hopefully expand over time.

The 12 beneficiaries who are part of the 'Friendships formed during training' group all stated that they made friends during the training, but these friendships did not last once the programme had ended. Most of them expressed disappointment about this. One man said that he still occasionally talks to other beneficiaries, and one woman explained that she wished the programme could continue so that she could meet other like-minded young people, as she no longer talks to the other participants on her course. Of the beneficiaries who are no longer friends with their colleagues, most agreed that they did form friendships, but said that these were not maintained due to busy schedules, family constraints and responsibilities, or because their friends moved away from the region.

Bonds formed with trainers could also provide the young people with increased opportunities and lasting friendships. The trainers were asked to talk about their relationships with the beneficiaries, both during and after the training. All four trainers said that they got along well with the beneficiaries. They described their position as being somewhere between an instructor and a friend. Three of the four stated that they keep in touch with some beneficiaries, and one explained that her beneficiaries usually contact her when they find jobs. However, while three beneficiaries said that they had made friends with their trainer during the programme, none of the participants mentioned staying in touch with their trainers after the programme had ended.

In total, 16 beneficiaries remained friends with others from the programme. About half of them either knew these friends prior to the training (they were family members or established friends) or are currently enrolled in educational programmes with them. Of those who kept in touch with fellow trainees, 12 indicated that they were able to swap information about potential jobs ('Friendships as a network'). When asked about these friendships, participants were enthusiastic about the connections they had made with one another. They felt that the networks created during the 100 Hours to Success programme would be useful to them in the future. However, the most important aspect was the forming of the friendships themselves rather than the exchange of information on potential jobs.

5.5.1 Other successes of the programme

The skills gained by the beneficiaries and the positive labour market outcomes of some of the young people are not the only successes of the programme: it has also benefited those affiliated with MEDA Maroc. Trainers were introduced to a network of people with whom they have kept in touch. As one female trainer explained, the experience they gained through teaching the course material has helped them in their professional development.

The key partner also felt that he and his staff gained a lot from their involvement. As the head of a community centre in Oujda, he was asked by MEDA Maroc to provide space for the training sessions. MEDA held courses in his centre for over three years, allowing the key partner and his staff access to the content of the sessions. Once the programme had ended, the partner was able to hire some of the trainers to continue teaching language and computer-based courses in his centre: these have allowed young people in Oujda to continue learning valuable skills for the job market.

The key partner was able to find internships for ten beneficiaries, and has encouraged other community centre leaders to do the same. In addition, several beneficiaries from the programme have gone on to become trainers themselves, securing employment at the centre. The key partner also helped to secure different locations for the training, thanks to his network. During his interview, he noted that his knowledge of the space in other local centres that was not being used allowed MEDA Maroc to access additional locations in Oujda. By involving his contacts, the key partner in turn improved the profile of his own community centre. This proved particularly advantageous once the centre began offering its own training programmes to young people.

5.6 Elements missing from the programme

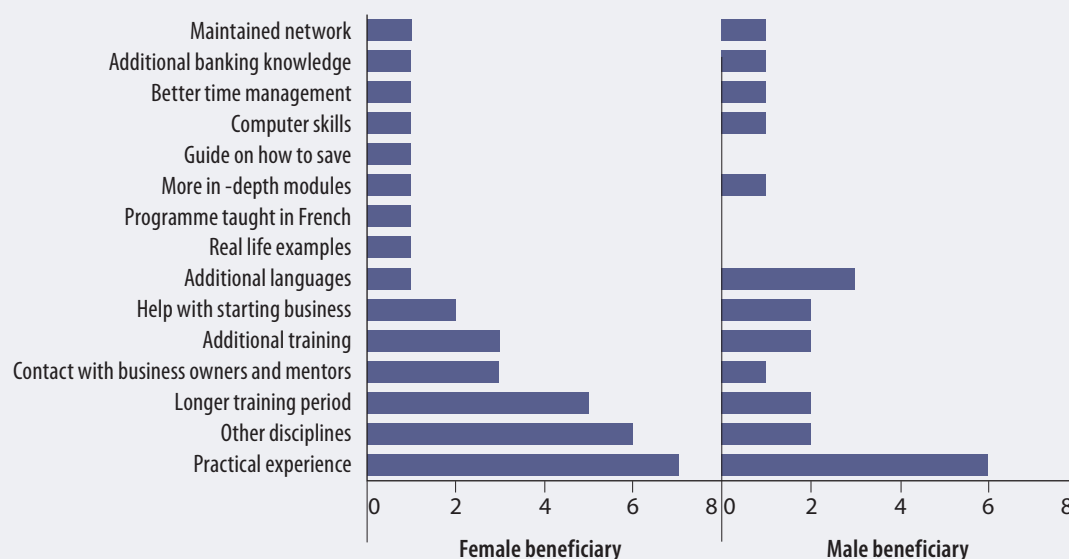
The final themes that emerged from the analysis of the focus group data are based around what participants feel was missing from the training. Beneficiaries had different viewpoints on what the programme lacked, both during the discussions on specific modules and in the final part of the discussions. Figure 10 provides a visual representation of the various ideas suggested by participants.

Both male and female beneficiaries taking part in this study appeared to agree on the elements they believe were missing from the MEDA Maroc programme. The most popular complaint from participants (both employed and unemployed) was the perceived lack of a practical component to the training, particularly in the modules on entrepreneurship. Though the trainers had the beneficiaries conduct market research, and taught them how to conceptualize their own projects, almost half of the participants felt that this was insufficient. They stated that more field trips and exercises would have better prepared them for becoming self-employed. Participants also raised the lack of internships or additional help from MEDA Maroc in realizing their projects. Although MEDA Maroc knew that securing internships for everyone would not be possible, internships were mentioned during the initial recruitment of the young people. Participants are eager to fill their CVs with internships as they believe they are valued by employers. Internships could also help participants make better job choices in the future.

Beneficiaries explained that continued support is necessary if they are to build their own business. Financial support is of course desired, but the young people also crave further guidance in these uncharted waters. In the same way, both men and women wished to have contact with previous beneficiaries who are currently self-employed, as well as with local business owners. One woman explained that learning about the experiences of these people would be informative, and could also lead to mentoring. The lack of role models and mentors on the programme was seen as a big disadvantage by these young people.

Unsurprisingly, given that all the participants seemed to find the programme advantageous, several beneficiaries either requested additional training or said that 100 hours was not enough. The length of the course was brought up specifically in relation to the modules on entrepreneurship. Participants said that they needed both practical experience and additional time to absorb and understand the theories behind these modules. Beneficiaries also listed other topics that they believe are essential in the job market but were not part of the training: these included accounting, psychology and management. Several felt that computer skills and languages (specifically French) needed to be taught by MEDA Maroc, as they are increasingly demanded by employers.

Figure 10 Missing content desired by beneficiaries



Discussion of the remaining skills, such as saving and better time management, led to criticism of how the modules were taught. One focus group felt that the modules were covered only superficially and that trainers needed to delve into topics more deeply. While the participants had criticisms on what was missing from the programme, their insights are actually a tribute to its success. MEDA Maroc could not have incorporated every topic into the course curriculum, but the skills that they did teach are useful for finding work – and the young people are now far more aware of the other skills they must develop in order to enter the labour market.

5.7 Challenges in implementing the training

Beneficiaries' experiences and opinions of the training are only one component of this qualitative study. Understanding how the programme was implemented from the perspectives of the trainers and the key partner is vital in assessing aspects of its impact on beneficiaries. The opinions provided by the four trainers and the key partner – particularly their views on the challenges of reaching the goals set by MEDA Maroc – offer another layer of insight. The interviews with the trainers and key partner focused on their successes and challenges with the material they were teaching and the logistics of the programme. According to the trainers, they were selected because of their previous experience of working with young people. They were given a three-day training course on the material to be taught, but all of them were familiar with at least some of the concepts prior to the programme. The key partner had had no previous involvement with youth programmes. Thanks to their experiences with MEDA Maroc, the trainers and key partner were able to provide a rich and multi-layered insight into how the programme was implemented.

Some of the points raised by the trainers and key partner have already been discussed in this report. This section will expand on those insights by presenting the themes that emerged from discussions on the programme's successes and difficulties. Overall, the trainers and key partner felt that the programme met the goal of teaching beneficiaries job-related

skills. They found the beneficiaries to be open, willing and able to learn, and saw many beneficiaries secure employment. The following sub-sections set out the observations made by these men and women.

5.7.1 Profile of the beneficiaries

The trainers and key partner all observed that the programme attracted more women than men. This seems to be at least partly related to where the participants were recruited. A trainer from outside Oujda noted that the training aimed at OFPPT and ISTA students tended to appeal to men, while other recruitment spots such as universities, high schools and community centres attracted more women. One trainer, whose group contained far more women (70 per cent) than men, believed that the high number of women was related to the recruitment and training that took place at the National Initiative for Human Development centre, a base for government-sponsored economic development projects. This centre has a reputation for offering classes aimed at women, so women were naturally more drawn to the MEDA Maroc training held there. Another trainer in Oujda, whose group comprised 80 per cent women, said that women in the city tend to have more free time than men, and are eager to fill this with productive activities.

The key partner felt that the high percentage of female beneficiaries was a weakness. He believed that there should be a specific ratio of male to female participants, something that MEDA Maroc should have considered prior to the recruitment and enrolment process. Although he was adamant that women need exposure to a curriculum focused on female empowerment, he also felt that men require additional attention. He was uncertain that the disparity in gender between the participants would have a positive outcome, either for the men or the women.

5.7.2 Logistical issues

When the trainers were asked what logistical issues they faced while implementing the programme, two mentioned the difficulty of teaching beneficiaries of different ages from diverse educational backgrounds. Having heterogeneous groups complicated the teaching, as participants' levels of comprehension and experience were so varied. The trainers pointed out that teaching a 16-year-old high school student and a 22-year-old university student at the same time is immensely difficult. Young people's ability to apply their own experience to a subject, the way they learn and the rate at which they absorb information change as they mature and are exposed to new things. Trainers complained that both the older and more educated beneficiaries suffered from these disparities. Unfortunately, trainers were not given the option of dividing participants into smaller groups, and were forced to teach to the level of the youngest and/or least educated participants.

One trainer in particular noted that these differences impeded learning across all the modules. The older beneficiaries were often bored and did not learn as much as the trainers would have liked. Another trainer, who worked both with young people from Oujda and those from more rural areas, explained that the entrepreneurship modules in particular should be taught in different ways to different age groups. Two trainers also recommended that future programmes include a category for older youth (26- to 30-year-olds). In a country like Morocco, many young people are still studying and applying for internships in their mid-20s. It is not until their late 20s that they enter the labour market in earnest.

Trainers observed that the programme suffered from a number of logistical issues. These included, but are not limited to: a lack of available spaces to hold the training; unsolvable timing issues (e.g. participants' schedules not aligning with training times); beneficiaries wishing to be paid to attend the training; absenteeism; participants' financial constraints, which led to poor attendance and a lack of materials; complaints about too much theory and not enough practice; and a lack of flexibility due to time constraints. In addition, two of the trainers believed that the content of the curriculum needs to be revised, as it is missing a variety of necessary skills such as administration, proficiency with computers and French. When asked why these skills are important, the trainers replied that not only had the beneficiaries voiced a desire to learn them, but they are crucial for finding a decently paid job in Oujda.

Time management was a problem for all the trainers. As the three core areas of the training were not separated out within the modules, trainers often had to skip portions of the financial education and entrepreneurship material because exercises took too long. As previously mentioned, life skills were easier to teach but, as they made up the bulk of the modules, trainers felt they needed to sacrifice material from the other core areas. The trainers recommended dedicating one block of time to each core area to ensure that participants could focus on the content. Trainers would have an easier time explaining the material and staying on schedule. Beneficiaries who had difficulties with a specific topic could then ask questions or get additional help in the time allocated to that core theme. Trainers also suggested reducing the amount of information in the course, as there is too much to cover in 100 hours.

The key partner was not as aware as the trainers of the rollout process or the logistical issues faced by MEDA Maroc staff. He did not participate in many aspects of the programme, although he was able to help MEDA Maroc find additional venues to host the training thanks to his connections within the city. While he could not comment directly on the content of the training or on which goals the trainers met, he felt that his personal goal of involvement was fulfilled. He did, however, mention two negative aspects of the programme. He was disappointed that the other community centres used by MEDA Maroc were not able to benefit from their involvement once the training had ended. These community centres no longer have activities to offer young people and remain empty. The key partner also felt that there was a lack of transparency in the way MEDA Maroc used its funds to pay for venues, staff, trainers, etc. However, when pressed on this issue he refused to elaborate.

5.7.3 Lack of community involvement

Both the trainers and the key partner noted the lack of community involvement in the programme. Many community members want to see young people succeed in their professional lives, and can be of great help to them in their search for employment. One of the goals of the 100 Hours to Success programme was for local extension officers to find internships for beneficiaries with local businesses (although opportunities were extremely limited). The key partner observed that the failure to secure enough internships was a weakness of the programme (even though his own centre provided ten internships). He believed that one of the factors behind this failure was the lack of community involvement. If community members from different backgrounds were aware of and invested in the programme, he stated, they would be more willing to offer opportunities to participants. One trainer who worked outside Oujda explained that the failure to secure internships for everyone caused uncomfortable inequalities within groups, affecting the desire of some individuals to continue with the

programme. This was also mentioned by the beneficiaries in terms of the lack of practical experience offered by the course. Internships are seen as a critical component of a CV, and young people are anxious to gain the advantage they provide.

On a personal level, the key partner expressed disappointment at not being more involved with the beneficiaries. He was never given the opportunity to meet the young people or talk to them about their experiences. While he has now encountered some of the beneficiaries who found jobs after the training, he knows nothing about how the programme impacted them. The partner emphasized that one of the greatest weaknesses of the programme was the way it isolated the young people, only putting them in contact with the trainers. Community members, especially those invested in the future of the young people, could have provided practical advice on the content and execution of the programme, and could have taken on mentoring roles. The partner recognized that entering the job market is hard for young people in Oujda, and said that more contact with community members could be helpful in this regard.

5.7.4 Continued support

The key partner also noted the lack of follow-up by trainers and other staff. He believed that the young people would be more successful if they had some supervision and encouragement after the programme ended, and that a second stage would enhance the training. Ideally, this would consist of a network of partners (developed by MEDA Maroc staff and trainers) helping participants integrate into the labour market, or at least finding them internships. The partner noted that he had seen similar job-related training programmes in the past, but that all fell short in the final stages. Follow-up help would be invaluable and, as the partner notes: “Fine, objectives were met within the programme in one way or another – but what next?”

While most of the focus group participants and interviewees claimed that they had not had contact with their trainers once they had completed the programme, the trainers told a different story. Although trainers do not follow up with beneficiaries in a structured, official way, many reported that they had stayed in touch with some of the young people. One trainer who worked with participants from both Oujda and rural areas explained that a number of them had contacted her to say that they had found a job, were at the final stages of a selection process, or had started their own business. She also gets follow-up questions (even two years after the training) about savings accounts and aspects of banking.

It was not just beneficiaries who missed the support that trainers and community members could provide. Trainers themselves felt that they could play a bigger role in helping participants transition between the programme and the working world. This idea was discussed by trainers when they explored possible future versions of the programme. Some suggested that they could make connections within the community and advise beneficiaries on other training courses, internships and possible jobs. They could also inform MEDA Maroc which beneficiary start-ups were suitable for funding.

5.7.5 Problems specific to beneficiaries

Trainers pointed out that a number of beneficiaries were bored and complained about the length of the programme. These participants felt that 100 hours was too much of a

commitment and would often skip sessions. However, focus group members voiced a completely different point of view. They saw the programme as too short and said that they would gladly participate in more training. One of the trainers from Oujda had mixed reviews from her beneficiaries, with most of them saying that the modules took too long or that the material needed to be changed. She agreed that the programme might be too long given the other calls on the beneficiaries' time, such as studying, working or being with their family.

Aside from boredom, trainers talked about the negative effects of the shyness that so many participants displayed. Two of the trainers noticed that many young people had trouble joining in, always hesitating or not knowing how to engage. Age played a role in this, as the younger beneficiaries were often intimidated by the older ones. Beneficiaries also appeared to be quiet around the trainers. Whether this was due to problems understanding the material or a lack of self-confidence, it proved challenging, as the involvement of the beneficiaries was a key ingredient in the flow of the training. Though trainers worked hard to change the dynamics of the professor–student relationship, attempting to take on a mentoring role, they found this difficult. This finding was surprising, as so many of the focus group participants were particularly impressed with the way the trainers had helped them with their self-confidence.

The influence of society on the young people also affected the trainers. One trainer working outside Oujda spoke openly about the social problems faced by the young people and how this affected their ability to learn and hone their skills. One of the difficulties she confronted was teaching participants who were using drugs. These individuals tended to be removed from the rest of the group and were awkward in their relationships with others. Integrating them into the training sessions was not easy, and she felt she would have benefited from more oversight and advice from MEDA Maroc staff.

In addition, this trainer felt that the changing cultural landscape (particularly in respect of romantic relationships between men and women outside marriage) was not accounted for, although it complicated the classroom dynamics. While this topic may not be directly related to the three core areas of the training, her point was that young people face scenarios and pressures – both in educational contexts and the outside world – that directly affect their ability to learn. The trainer also mentioned that economic inequalities caused divisions between the participants, adversely affecting the poorer beneficiaries. She found these young people less confident in their ability to learn and too uncomfortable to offer their points of view.

5.7.6 Gender issues

The key partner raised concerns about the age limit for participants in the 100 Hours to Success programme. He noted that this was especially problematic for women: he knew several women over the age of 25 who would have benefited greatly from the programme, but who were not permitted to attend. This was something he raised with the trainers, who in turn voiced their concerns to MEDA Maroc, but the age limit was maintained. The partner felt that women face different constraints in the job market, and need to be informed of their rights and how to tackle issues linked to their gender (he refrained from using the word 'sexism', although this was implied). Furthermore, he stated that women need more training in general leadership skills, and that this continues to be the case beyond the age limit set by MEDA Maroc. Trainers were more reluctant to talk about gender, although

they too were open to the idea that men and women face different issues in their daily lives. However, they felt that the material they taught was not gender specific, and they saw no evidence that one group had more (or fewer) problems absorbing the information than another.

The key partner also spoke of his reservations about holding the training in his centre. The centre is located in a quieter section of the old city that has a reputation for being dangerous, and he believed that this would deter women. While no one encountered any problems, he was initially worried that female participants would perceive the area as too risky to travel to. This subject was also raised by two female beneficiaries during the focus group discussions. They had heard of a girl who was assaulted in the old city one morning, and they had had reservations about going there. Although they did not personally experience any problems, they felt that the location was likely to be a deterrent for others.

5.8 Individuals who dropped out of the programme

This study also included eight interviews with young people who dropped out of the programme. As discussed in the baseline report, MEDA Maroc's target of having 600 beneficiaries participate in the training was not met. By 2013, only 505 had been enrolled. Many young people, especially those in the second wave of sorting, dropped out of the training – mostly before they even attended their first session. The baseline report found that difficulties in aligning schedules or lack of contact information for the young people accounted for most of these dropouts. However, the high number of dropouts requires further investigation. These are young people who initially invested time in the training by signing up and taking the survey. The reasons why they dropped out altogether are important for understanding the programme's overall impact.

One-to-one interviews were conducted with eight dropouts, of whom five were male and three female. It was decided that interviews would be more suitable than focus group discussions for these young people, in case the reasons they left the programme were too sensitive to talk about in a group environment. Four of the men and two of the women live in the Oujda area, and one man and one woman are from the Taourirt area. These individuals were asked about their reasons for joining the programme, the skills they wanted to develop, and their reasons for dropping out.

5.8.1 Profile of the group, recruitment and reasons for joining

All the young people who dropped out of the programme either have attended or are currently attending educational institutions. Two attended OFPPT, three either were or still are at ISTA, and four are currently attending university (one individual is simultaneously enrolled in ISTA and a local university). Just like the beneficiaries, the eight dropouts found the recruitment process positive. They were recruited by MEDA Maroc staff at OFPPT and ISTA, via Facebook or at their high schools. At least one of the interviewees was told about the programme by his friends, and one had already attended a similar training course in computer skills. Their interest in the programme stemmed from the content of the training and the encouragement they received from teachers, professors, friends and relatives.

Their reasons for joining the programme were similar to those of the beneficiaries. The majority were interested in gaining new skills not offered by other educational programmes,

including running their own business, developing communication skills, learning how to search for jobs and how to write a good CV, and meeting people and creating networks. All the interviewees saw the programme as a way to increase their chances of finding a job and to develop their interpersonal skills. Almost all of them had someone in their family or group of friends who had already participated in the MEDA Maroc programme. Because of these contacts, seven of the eight individuals had a sense of the core themes and types of training that were on offer. When they registered with the programme, they had a clear idea of what they wanted to accomplish and what was available to them.

5.8.2 Reasons for dropping out

The overriding reason for dropping out of the programme was lack of time. While these eight young people were excited to participate in the training, none of them could find the time to attend, for either academic or work reasons. High school students were revising for the baccalaureate, those with jobs could not get time off work, and university and professional school students were too busy generally to attend. This issue was also raised by the key partner and trainers. The partner noted that the beneficiaries appeared to have difficulty aligning their schedules with that of the programme. The trainers complained that the programme schedule often interfered with other aspects of the beneficiaries' lives. Of the young people who dropped out, two men started the programme but were unable to finish. The remaining six young people had to quit before they had attended their first session. All eight expressed regret at having dropped out.

In addition to academic and work commitments, at least two of the interviewees explained that their responsibilities towards family played an important role in their decision to quit. This is discussed further in the sub-section on gender differences. One 20-year-old man stated that he was not only short on time, but lost interest in the programme because of the low turnout and uninspired atmosphere. During the first few sessions he attended, only one or two people were present. This put pressure on the trainer and the participants and created an uncomfortable atmosphere. In addition, the training was scheduled for the weekend. If he had had fewer responsibilities towards his family and friends, or if the commute between his home and the training centre had been easier, he would have considered continuing with the programme. However, as things stood, he was not motivated enough to find a solution.

The young people were asked to talk about how they dropped out of the programme: that is, whether they contacted MEDA Maroc or the trainers, and whether anyone contacted them to follow up. Only three of the interviewees said that they had attempted to contact someone to let them know about their decision. There was also a lack of communication on the part of MEDA Maroc. Only two of the young people were contacted by MEDA Maroc staff to enquire about their reasons for dropping out. Follow-up could have been particularly useful in the case of one young man, who was living in Taourirt but attending university in Oujda. He originally enrolled in the training in Taourirt because it was there that he had learned about the programme. He was never made aware that the course was also running in Oujda and, when he realized that his commute to university would make participation impossible, he decided not to attend. When pressed further, he said that when he had explained to the trainer why he could not participate, the trainer had not mentioned the Oujda option to him. This was disappointing, as his schedule at the university would in fact have allowed him to take part.

The eight young people were asked to imagine what could have changed to allow them to attend the training. The majority of the interviewees could not see how anything could have changed, given the importance to them of their formal education. Six of the eight said they would never have prioritized the training over attending classes, preparing for exams or doing general school work. Diplomas are seen by this group as essential components of their CV, and key to their chances of finding employment. The other two young people said that they could not have quit their jobs because their families depended on their income. Even if the trainers had been able to offer sessions outside their working hours, they could not have attended because of their family responsibilities.

5.8.3 Gender differences among dropouts

When considering the possible constraints affecting young people's participation in the programme, the role of gender was a concern and a focal point when creating the question guide for the dropouts. No leading questions were asked, but interviewees were quizzed about outside pressures, the opinions of the people around them, and other potential barriers that were beyond their control. Though there was no evidence from the baseline report that gender played a role in young people dropping out of the programme, this is not a factor that can easily be identified through a survey. Interviews allow for more of a discussion, as well as the use of leading questions to allow individuals to bring up potentially sensitive or complex topics.

Gender as a barrier to the job market was something raised by several female beneficiaries (and one man) during the focus group discussions. Young people who dropped out of the programme were asked about the type of support they had had from their family and friends, and whether there was any outside pressure on them to quit the programme. On the basis of their answers, there is no evidence that women were subjected to gender-specific discrimination that prevented them from attending the training. On the contrary, all three women said that those around them encouraged them to participate. One woman stated:

[In addition to my family] a friend of my father's said that there would never again be free training of this kind, where people would not ask you for something in return, and that this training was not just empty words.

The example of these three women does not mean that young women in Oujda more generally do not face gender-related constraints when attending school or training. It does, however, offer an insight into what some women experience. These women felt encouraged not only to gain new skills but also to fill their time in a productive manner. This point was made by both the women who had dropped out and the focus group participants, who all expressed a need to fill empty hours with productive activities that would help them find employment. Of the three women who dropped out, one had already attended training in computer skills and was looking for programmes in French. She was particularly looking forward to the MEDA Maroc training as she wanted to learn about starting a business and improving her communication skills.

Although these three women did not experience any pressures or constraints linked to their gender, two of the five men interviewed faced their own gender-related issues. For these men, family obligations interfered with their ability to participate in the training. An 18-year-old attending OFPPT said that, while he would have been able to fit in the training with his class schedule, his father's illness prevented him from participating. The family

runs a small grocery shop which provides them with their income. Although the 18-year-old has helped in the shop over the years, he was forced to take over full time once his father became too sick to work. When asked how MEDA Maroc could have helped him resolve this scheduling issue, he replied:

It would be difficult to change the situation as I have younger brothers and sisters and my older brother lives in Tangier. It was my responsibility and mine alone to take the initiative and to run the business.

A similar situation arose for a 20-year-old man currently supporting his family following the death of his father. His father passed away during the first month of the training, forcing him to quit in order to find a full-time job:

I found work as a barber in Nador. Therefore I chose to quit the training because of the time issue. This choice was difficult for me to make but it was my obligation to be responsible for my family. I tried to find work in Taourirt but I could not find anything.

These experiences are similar to those of another male beneficiary, who felt that, as his father had died, it was his responsibility not only to support his family financially but also to find work for his brothers. In these situations, men cannot afford to put their working lives on hold to further their education or participate in programmes to help them develop employment-related skills.

5.8.4 Perceived benefits of completing the programme

Since seven of the eight young people knew someone who had attended the training, they were well aware of its perceived benefits. All eight felt that, if they had attended the programme, they would have benefited in several ways. One of the men stressed the importance of building networks and friendships during the course, something he longed for now that his personal situation had forced him to drop out. To him, forming relationships with the trainers and other participants would have been a key aspect of the programme, particularly as he would like to start his own business. The contacts he might have gained and, especially, the psychological and moral support this network could have provided, are all missing in his life. As someone who does not have the means to continue his education, the chances of him learning how to run a business in a formal setting are now low.

Other interviewees said that they would have greatly benefited from the financial education and life skills portions of the programme, particularly the information on how to search for a job. As many of them are still in school, they have yet to face the difficulties of the job market in Oujda and Taourirt. They did recognize, however, that the MEDA Maroc training would have taught and exposed them to relevant work-related skills which they will not gain through their formal education. All the eight young people interviewed are motivated to learn, and all said that they would like the chance to participate in other training in conjunction with their work and/or schooling.

Section 6: Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The results from the focus group discussions and the one-to-one interviews reveal a number of successes and challenges related to the 100 Hours to Success programme. The beneficiaries who participated in this study felt that the training provided them with many of the skills they need to gain employment. From the entrepreneurship modules, beneficiaries gained an understanding of how to conduct market research and how to start a business, two skills that they felt would help them in the future. However, female participants who are interested in starting their own business said that a lack of financial capital and previous experience are preventing them from achieving their goals. Training on taking out a loan and establishing a credit line was insufficient to convince them of the feasibility of striking out on their own. These concerns were not shared by the men in this study, who felt that the only issue preventing them from starting their own business was the need to finish their education.

The financial education modules successfully imparted knowledge on how to save. Learning how to deposit money in a savings account and how to plan for future expenses were cited as important skills, and almost every participant either continues to use them or intends to pick them up again once they are earning a salary. While women talked about the importance of saving for future employment (e.g. for transportation costs) as well as for personal reasons, their experience did not go beyond opening a savings account as part of the training. By contrast, some male beneficiaries had opened new bank accounts and expressed interest in taking a line of credit. A number of women did not feel ready to use their debit card, as they claimed this had not been clearly explained during the training. Although none of the participants said that they were using cheques, several women agreed that knowing how to write and read a cheque was potentially important for getting a job.

Life skills such as increased self-confidence, accepting criticism and active listening are not only perceived as fundamental to finding and keeping a job, but have also helped the beneficiaries in their personal lives. Women felt that the training on self-confidence was particularly useful for interacting with their family and friends, and that it is also valuable during job interviews or when dealing with customers. They also enjoyed the exercises on working in groups. Several beneficiaries noted that they could not have imagined working with others before the training, but that these exercises have opened their minds to new possibilities and they are now willing to apply for jobs. Men were more interested in the training on how to deal with clients and how to build self-confidence for job interviews.

These combined skills have helped 14 participants find a job, start their own business or improve the working conditions of the job they already hold. The majority of the unemployed participants are not yet in the job market as they are enrolled in educational institutions. These individuals have made education their priority, as they believe that diplomas are

fundamental to finding employment. Unemployed participants who are searching for a job also feel that education is key to their success, whether or not it is feasible for them to attend a professional school or university. Those with a lower level of education said that even low-paying jobs require a high school diploma, while participants with high education levels explained that it is difficult to find employment without a university diploma. The training encouraged participants to view education as a cornerstone of their professional future. However, while education is clearly of benefit in the job market, it cannot be considered a 'golden ticket'. Beneficiaries may be overestimating the power of the diploma. This was illustrated by the comments of two women who felt that their diplomas were not attractive to employers and that they should return to university to take an additional degree.

In addition, beneficiaries who are currently looking for work report that the training has helped them with their search by teaching them to use online platforms and increasing their confidence levels. Unemployed participants were asked to talk about the potential barriers they faced, both to finding a job and building their own business. A variety of answers were given: these included not having the right diplomas, lack of self-confidence, the inability to speak and understand a second language (French, English or Spanish), lacking work experience, constraints related to family members, and the widespread role of nepotism in Oujda. On the whole, beneficiaries have maintained the friendships they formed during the training and have exchanged information about potential jobs with one another.

When beneficiaries were asked what they felt was missing from the training, they made a number of suggestions related to the content. They also recommended extending the programme and offering mentoring and additional training. Participants were very keen to see more practical exercises included in the entrepreneurship modules. The market research exercise was described as one of the highlights of the training, and the beneficiaries felt that similar hands-on experience would help them understand the process of starting their own business. Participants talked about the importance of having a second language (in this case French, English or Spanish) and computer skills in securing a job. They also wanted meetings with other young people who had started their own business, or contact with business owners more generally. The 100 hours of training were considered to be insufficient given the substantial course curriculum, and many beneficiaries would like the opportunity to continue with a similar programme in the future.

Trainers and the key partner faced a number of challenges in implementing the programme. The heterogeneous mix of participants in terms of age, income and education levels made it difficult for trainers to pitch the material at the right level and keep participants engaged. Ensuring that the youngest, least educated young people were comfortable with the material often meant that the older, more educated ones did not benefit from the programme as much as they could. Levels of interest and maturity were also linked to age.

Trainers felt that the modules contained too much information, and that dividing the material into the three core areas and increasing the length of the programme would benefit participants. However, trainers also reported that many of their beneficiaries complained that the programme was too long. This contradicts the feedback given by the participants in this study, who felt that the training needed to be lengthier. Meanwhile, the key partner claimed that the lack of community involvement in the programme was counterproductive, as local people with an interest in its outcomes could mentor beneficiaries and help them during their transition to the labour market.

Finally, all the young people who dropped out of the programme did so because of scheduling issues. Jobs or enrolment in educational institutions prevented them from attending. All of them had been encouraged to participate by their friends and family, and all agreed that they would have benefited from the skills they could have learned. Constraints related to family obligations were discussed by two young men who were forced to find work to support their families instead of attending the course. Just like the beneficiaries, all the young people who dropped out of the programme said that they would enrol again if MEDA Maroc were to offer additional training.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on this analysis of the qualitative data and the examples given, a number of recommendations can be made for future versions of the training. These relate to recruitment of participants, improvements to the curriculum and implementation.

6.2.1 Recruitment

The young people in this study felt that the recruitment strategies used by MEDA Maroc were successful. In future versions of the programme, staff should continue to attend educational institutions and community centres in order to create awareness. The encouragement of friends, family and other individuals trusted by young people (teachers, professors, etc.) is also important. This study's participants responded particularly well to multiple people pushing them to enrol in the training. The positive reactions of those around them and the willingness of friends to join them are both key.

In future, MEDA Maroc should aim for a stronger online presence to draw in additional beneficiaries. A systematic, multi-site approach should be taken, utilizing various social media (not just Facebook) to promote the programme regularly. Content should focus not only on the goals of the training, but also on the personal stories of participants who have benefited from their enrolment, both during and after the programme. Positive stories encourage young people to take part and help keep them motivated throughout the training process.

6.2.2 Make-up of groups

The make-up of groups (in terms of age, education and gender) needs to be reviewed. Training 15- to 25-year-olds is important as this age group continues to experience high rates of unemployment. The young people in this study benefited in multiple ways from learning job-related skills that are not taught in other educational settings. However, this age range encompasses young people at very different stages in their lives. Decision-making, life experience, family obligations and planning for the future are all influenced by age.

Education level is another important factor to consider when putting together groups. The interviews with the trainers show that differences in age and education levels will always lead to certain demographics benefiting more than others. For example, ensuring that the youngest and least educated in a group understand what is being taught often leads to the older, better educated participants losing interest. In addition, it is important that the groups contain roughly equal numbers of men and women. We therefore recommend that

the 15- to 25-year-old age range is maintained, but that trainers divide beneficiaries into smaller groups using age and education levels as stratifiers.

Trainers must also consider beneficiaries' education levels when advising them on how to seek work. Strategies for job search and employment opportunities are very different for young people who have not attended high school and those who are attending university. Beneficiaries with lower levels of education will have fewer options in the job market. Future programmes should consider how to configure groups that cater to those who have less education and need more concentrated training in job-related skills. The possibilities that entrepreneurship training could offer these young people should also be explored. Equally, training on how to start a business may need to be altered for those with higher education levels.

6.2.3 Content

Based on the insights provided by the beneficiaries and trainers, recommended changes to the curriculum include: tailoring the content to different age groups; grouping modules in terms of the three core themes; and teaching in blocks. The curriculum needs to be suited to several age groups instead of providing the same information and exercises to the entire age range. As noted above, life experience and exposure to job-related information change over time. The curriculum should take this into account. All ages should cover the three core themes, but more time should be devoted to specific skills within smaller groups segregated by age. For instance, 16- to 20-year-olds could spend longer on the life skills modules, as developing self-confidence is especially important at that age. Entrepreneurship modules could figure more heavily for groups of 20- to 25-year-olds, as this is the age at which they are better able to understand the information and begin planning their own projects.

The trainers interviewed felt that mixing the three core themes made them difficult to teach at times and led to gaps in the curriculum. Revising the modules to focus on more specific aspects of entrepreneurship, life skills and financial education would greatly benefit the teaching and make the content easier to understand. The trainers also recommended offering training in smaller blocks of time. In addition, the curriculum of future programmes could be revised depending on conditions in the labour market at the time. Young people will benefit from learning any number of job-related skills, but knowing which skills are the most in demand is vital if they are to succeed in finding employment.

6.2.4 Involvement following the training

Following the training, mentoring by community members and/or trainers should be encouraged for young people who need it. Several participants in this study felt that, while they had benefited from the training, they still needed guidance while they were looking for work. Fears of nepotism or not having the right contacts gave some of them the impression that finding a job is impossible. Pairing beneficiaries with community members who have knowledge of entering the labour market or experience in a relevant profession would be extremely helpful. The young people could ask questions and gain insights into specific aspects of their professional goals that were not covered by the training. In turn, community members would benefit by building networks and learning more about the challenges faced by young people seeking work.

Future versions of this programme should also prioritize the building of a network of beneficiaries who have completed the training. Depending on young people to create these networks themselves is unrealistic. MEDA Maroc staff have always wanted to do this, but they need to develop creative ways of keeping beneficiaries tied to the programme once it has ended. Those who have succeeded in finding a job can share their stories and motivate others. Beneficiaries who are searching for employment can exchange information about strategies and available jobs. Trainers should also be heavily involved in this process as they know the young people and are invested in their future. Contact can be maintained through online platforms, a newsletter/LISTSERV or meet-ups.

6.2.5 Measuring impact

Age and education level have a significant influence on the short-term outcomes of the MEDA Maroc training and the ability to measure its impact. This became obvious when we assessed the labour market outcomes of the participants in this study. Young people who are still in school at the age of 16 are likely to continue their education where possible. While the training influences aspects of their lives, these young people do not intend to enter the labour market for several years. Therefore it becomes difficult on both quantitative and qualitative levels to assess the impact of the programme, as they are actively using only a limited number of the skills they acquired.

In future versions of the programme, MEDA Maroc should decide how they want to measure the impact of the training: should they look at its effects on all participants, or focus more specifically on young people who are not attending educational institutions? Concentrating on individuals who have dropped out of school or finished their formal education will provide a much clearer understanding of the impact of the training. However, some aspects of the training, such as the life skills modules, are relevant to all participants, and measuring their impact on young people in different situations (searching for a job, employed or still in education) would further strengthen the programme.

Given the weak participant database, staff should also consider how they wish to keep in touch with the young people who enrol in future programmes. This is not only essential for measuring impacts, but also helps the trainers and young people build a sense of community. The programme has long-term goals for participants, and strengthening the bond created during the training should be part of its vision. Staff need to know the characteristics of beneficiaries and how best to reach them over time. As young people in Morocco frequently change their mobile numbers and email addresses, MEDA Maroc needs to think of other ways to keep in touch with participants. Online groups, meet-ups advertised in schools and word of mouth are a few ideas for keeping beneficiaries invested in the success of the programme.

6.2.6 Dealing with dropouts

Large numbers of young people dropped out of the 100 Hours to Success programme, many of whom realized they could not attend before the training had even started. A more thorough system for keeping in touch with these young people would help trainers understand what constraints they are facing and how to help them. This would require staff to set up and maintain a database of dropouts, which would include their contact information and their reasons for leaving the programme. Once it became evident that a young person was not

attending the training (either because they had informed staff or because trainers noticed their absence), a staff member could follow up with a short set of questions to understand what the problem was and decide on the best course of action. In some cases, young people simply need more information about the programme's other locations and timings to fit in with their schedule. If young people are facing other constraints, staff may be able to delay their enrolment or give them advice on different options. Even if there are no alternatives, it would be helpful to know why the programme cannot accommodate certain people.

References

- Kluve, J; Dyer, P.; Gardiner, D. 2013. *MEDA Maroc's 100 Hours to Success Impact Evaluation – Baseline Study*. Available at: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_237077.pdf
- MEDA Maroc. 2014. *MEDA Maroc's '100 Hours to Success' programme*, paper presented at the Doha Evidence Symposium: Increasing Youth Productivity in the Middle East and North Africa, Doha, 6–8 Mar. Available at: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_237069.pdf
- The Challenge of Youth Inclusion in Morocco*, World Bank, News Section, 14 May 2012, www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/05/14/challenge-of-youth-inclusion-in-morocco
- Youth employment*, International Labour Office, Topics Section, 2015, www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/lang--de/index.htm



Boosting Youth Employability in Morocco - I

Qualitative assessment of MEDA Maroc's 100 Hours
to Success programme – September 2015

Youth Employment Programme – Taqueem Initiative
International Labour Office (ILO)
4, route des Morillons
1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland
tel: +41 22 799 7824
taqeem@ilo.org

www.ilo.org/taqeem