



TAQEEM

Evidence to Improve Youth Productivity in the Middle East and North Africa

Background note on the Taqueem Evaluation Council

1. INTRODUCTION

Taqueem (meaning “evaluation” in Arabic) is a support programme of the International Labour Organization and Silatech whose goal is to increase effectiveness of youth employment and enterprise interventions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) through improved results measurement and evaluation practices.

Taqueem is a regional initiative of the Fund for Evaluation in Employment. During the period 2010-2013, the Fund built up a portfolio of nine randomized control trials and 15 improved M&E systems and carried out 16 evaluation and evidence workshops with nearly 1000 participants. Building on this experience, Taqueem’s goal today is to ensure sustainability of the project maximizing its impact across the MENA region. This will be achieved by strengthening the capacity of local evaluation institutions, researchers and M&E experts to conduct impact research and to provide technical assistance on M&E to implementing organizations.

A key to the success of Taqueem’s first phase (2011-2013) was knowledge transfer and collaboration between evaluators and practitioners. This was most visible through Taqueem’s “Community of Practice”, a group of 15 competitively selected organizations working in the MENA region and committed to knowledge sharing and improving their results measurement frameworks.

This document lays out the structure for the **Taqueem Evaluation Council**, the backbone of the project’s second phase. The overall objective of the Council is to provide strategic direction to Taqueem in order to guide funding decisions and actions based on sound knowledge and experience in the fields of youth employment and evaluation. In addition, Council members will directly contribute to strategic and research documents of the project.

2. BACKGROUND

The ultimate objective of Taqueem is to improve youth employment outcomes in the MENA region through more and better impact research and evaluation evidence.

Accordingly, Taqueem’s work is delivered over three iterative and interlinked components:

- **Capacity development:** training, knowledge sharing and coaching to produce a critical mass of evaluation expertise amongst youth practitioners and researchers. A Community of Practice facilitates knowledge exchange between researchers, evaluators and practitioners.

Evaluation Clinics are the flagship product of Taqueem to build capacity on M&E and impact evaluation. The Clinics are designed to share evaluation tools and techniques with youth practitioners, thereby “democratizing” M&E knowledge, and to assist projects teams design and conduct M&E and impact evaluation strategies. Clinic participants are exposed – over a period of 3 to 5 days – to an interactive curriculum that covers different topics within a building blocks approach, i.e. from M&E to RCTs. Since 2009, the ILO has organized 13 Evaluation Clinics involving over 500 participants and 40 project teams¹.

- **Impact research:** high quality applied research with a focus on understanding “what works” in youth employment programming and policy. Taqueem provides seed funding and technical assistance to both experimental and non-experimental approaches to measure a project’s long term effects.

In synergy with the global Fund for Evaluation in Youth Employment, Taqueem aims to build evidence for effective design and implementation of youth employment programmes. Technical assistance on and seed funding for impact evaluations is provided through annual call for proposals. The 2013 edition of the Fund received 70 proposals from 34 countries, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa and MENA. The call focused on youth enterprise and value chain development. [Winners of the competition](#) receive technical and/or financial support for designing and conducting impact evaluations.

- **Policy influence:** findings and recommendations from impact research are translated and transmitted to policy makers and practitioners with influence to use the evidence in programming and policy decisions. Strategic policy influence and communication plans are major tools.

With strong advocacy and a growing base of evidence in youth employment, the challenge becomes effective results dissemination and knowledge sharing to ensure that decision makers understand and use findings to improve policy and programming. To achieve this, Policy Influence Plans are carried out in select countries. Key tools used for policy influence are systematic reviews, country level youth employment inventories, and context analyses.

¹ In 2009, in Amman and Damascus. In 2010 in Nairobi, Beirut, and Turin. In 2011, in Geneva, Kampala, and Doha. In 2012, in Dar es Salaam, Casablanca, and Turin. In 2013, in Doha and Amman.

Key means for ensuring dissemination and engagement are evidence and evaluation symposiums, youth employment and development conferences, and social media.

3. TAQEM EVALUATION COUNCIL

The Council will be central to the aim of developing capacity to produce and use sound M&E, impact research, and evaluation evidence in the MENA region. This will be achieved by involving both local and international evaluation institutions and youth employment experts as members in the Council and by creating knowledge sharing modalities through online, virtual and face-to-face platforms.

Council's Mission:

The mission of the Council is to provide a strategic role to the Taqueem project on capacity development, production and dissemination of impact evaluation research on youth employment issues in the MENA region.

Strategy:

This includes the following priorities to ensure the Taqueem project meets its goals and objectives of developing evaluation expertise in the region:

1. Ensuring that impact evaluation research produced under Taqueem is of highest scientific quality and policy relevance.
2. Ensure evaluation training delivered under Taqueem is of highest quality.
3. Shape a forward looking research agenda and priorities for the youth employment and development research community.
4. Promote and disseminate evaluation evidence on youth employment with the goal of influencing policy

To accomplish this mission, the Council will develop and maintain planning and policy guidance for the Taqueem project. The Council will receive regular briefings and meetings from Taqueem technical staff and will be expected to provide advice wherever possible.