



International  
Labour  
Organization

SYNTHESIS REVIEW  
OF ILO EXPERIENCE IN  
**YOUTH AND WOMEN'S  
EMPLOYMENT IN THE  
MENA REGION:  
SUMMARY VERSION**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ARAB STATES  
& COUNTRY OFFICE FOR EGYPT, ERITREA, SUDAN  
AND SOUTH SUDAN

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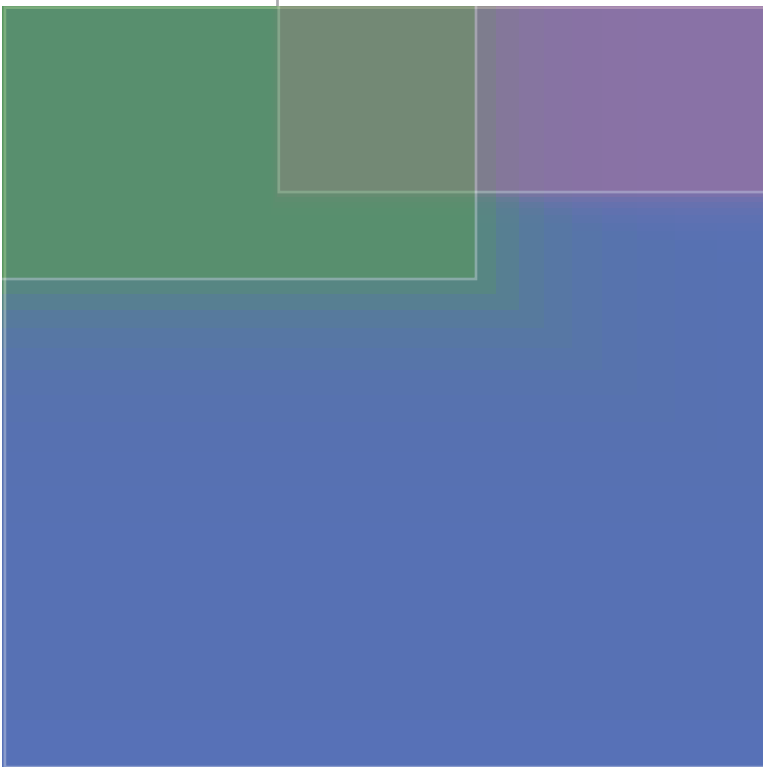
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# INTRODUCTION



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## SUPPORTING THE ILO ROLE AS A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN YOUTH AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

An important feature of the wide-spread unrest in the MENA region in 2010-later to be known as the Arab Spring - was the highly visible role of youth as protagonists. Pent up discontent with a development model no longer providing opportunities for economic and social enfranchisement for those outside of well-connected elites brought youth to the streets in unprecedented numbers.

The resulting crisis has highlighted the urgency of promoting a new development paradigm driven by productivity and inclusivity.<sup>1</sup> The ILO as a global tripartite institution incorporating the interests of member states, employers' associations and organized labour is ideally positioned to play an important enabling role in this transformation. An extensive global and regional history promoting the decent work agenda<sup>2</sup> as well as a significant body of experience in youth employment and gender have established the ILO's credibility with regional stakeholders and provide a sound technical foundation for advisement and collaboration.

To further strengthen ILO capacity as a centre of excellence in youth and women's employment in the MENA region the ILO has undertaken a synthesis review of ILO regional experience in youth and women's employment since 2003. The synthesis is intended to provide support to ILO programme development in the region and contribute to the wider discussion on youth employment with regional stakeholders. Projects implemented during this period were reviewed applying a forward looking perspective intended to synthesize lessons learned and insights for ongoing program development in youth and women's employment in the region. While the source material for the review was project evaluations and other supporting project documentation, the unit of analysis for the synthesis was the technical approaches and strategies implemented in the projects.

The performance (impact, efficiency) of a project can vary for many reasons – many of them contextual and unrelated to the relevance and effectiveness of the technical approaches and strategies applied. Not infrequently a number of approaches and strategies are consolidated into a single project for

administrative efficiency. For these reasons, the forward looking perspective prioritizes understanding the success and constraints of the technical approaches in improving employment outcomes for youth and women rather than the performance of a particular project.

### THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CRISIS GLOBALLY AND IN MENA

The report of the 101<sup>st</sup> session of the International Labour Conference describes the youth employment crisis as having reached unprecedented proportions.<sup>3</sup> The global youth unemployment rate in 2013 was 12.6 per cent - a figure nearly as high as those observed during the recent financial crisis and global rates are expected to increase at least until 2018. There is evidence of increasing length of job search for youth in many developed economies and in some developing economies. In 2012 an estimated 73 million youth were considered unemployed and globally youth represent four of every ten unemployed persons.



The impact of the youth unemployment crisis is far more pervasive than a high rate of open unemployment. Young people who are employed increasingly find themselves with casual work or work in an informal sector where protections are limited and low productivity jobs offer few opportunities to build new skills. In developing economies as many as two thirds of the youth

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1. ILO/UNDP (2012).

2. Job creation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue, with gender equality as a crosscutting objective.

3. The Youth employment crisis: Time for action, Report V, International Labour Conference, 101<sup>st</sup> Session 2012. International Labour Office, Geneva, 2012.

population is considered underemployed; that is: unemployed, irregularly employed in the informal sector or neither in the labour market nor education. The overall impact of the crisis goes beyond the individual losses to economy-wide productivity losses as the skills level of young workers are eroded over time through long term unemployment and underemployment.

Youth unemployment rates in MENA at 23 per cent are higher than any other region. A large portion of the difference between youth unemployment rates in MENA and global rates is explained by the very high unemployment rates for young women in the region. While unemployment rates for young women are high, the number of unemployed young men is greater because of low labour force participation rates for women. Unlike unemployment in many other regions, youth unemployment in MENA tends to impact young people at all levels of education.

While the current high rates of youth unemployment reflect modest improvements since 1990, the social and economic impact of the youth employment crisis is still keenly felt in the MENA region. The tangible gains in employment resulting from the liberalization of many of the region's economies in the 1990s have proved to be short lived and constrained by demographic trends, global economic conditions and the lack of coherent macroeconomic policy (industrial, labour, trade) focused on quality employment growth. The result is a private sector that is globally uncompetitive and characterized by low productivity technology and industries, low wages and high rates of adult and youth unemployment.

The liberalization process has also marginalized the public sector from its traditional role as employer of last resort (despite still high levels of public employment in some countries). Employment opportunities have shifted from public sector jobs with relatively strong social protections to private sector jobs in industries characterized by high rates of informality and casual labour and low levels of social protection (construction, services, and commerce) and where labour migration plays an important role.

As employment outcomes have stagnated or declined since the 1990s, young people have responded by significantly increasing their investments in education. Gains in educational attainment are particularly pronounced for women, where in a number of countries they now outnumber men at the tertiary level. However, educational quality is generally low – with almost all countries scoring in the bottom 50 per cent of countries assessed in the International Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and access to quality education is generally much less available to children from poor households. Education and training systems have remained largely supply driven, as policy and administrative structures provide few incentives and little support for a responding to changes in demand from providing qualifications for public sector jobs to skills development responding to private sector demand and national development priorities of life-long learning.

In the absence of coherent macroeconomic policies promoting quality employment, the investments of youth in additional education are likely to produce limited returns. Even as regional measures of poverty and vulnerability have improved modestly, the share of wages and household consumption in GDP has declined more and faster in MENA than in any other region in the world. Considering well-being more broadly, all but three MENA countries have a lower Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>4</sup> than other countries with similar levels of income. With this erosion of opportunities it is not surprising that the Arab region was the only region where survey respondents were less optimistic about future standards of living in 2010 than they were earlier in the decade.<sup>5</sup>

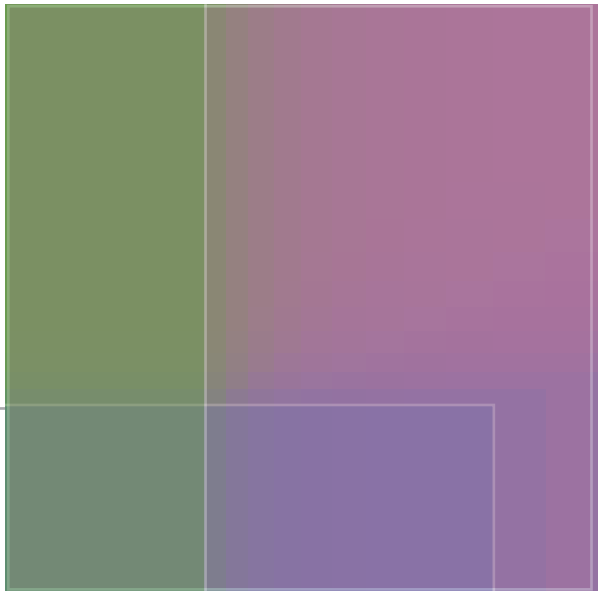


The youth unemployment crisis in the MENA region is further complicated by an environment of momentous political/social unrest – including armed conflict. The unrest and conflict has produced substantial damage to the economies and resulted in large numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees. These conditions create complex – in some cases competing – demands requiring consideration of both immediate relief/recovery needs and longer term development goals. This reality has important implications for many youth and women's employment initiatives in the region and must be considered when reviewing recent ILO experience.

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4. United Nations Development Programme.

5. ILO calculations from Gallup World Poll Database. Not true for GCC countries.



# METHODOLOGY



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## 2. METHODOLOGY

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The objective of the synthesis review is to identify good practices and lessons learned from ILO supported initiatives for improving employment outcomes for youth and women in the MENA region and document them in a form useful for possible replication.<sup>6</sup> The methodology for the synthesis is forward looking; informing future program development to address the regional challenges of youth and women's employment. This forward looking orientation has implications for the criteria for inclusion of projects in the synthesis and for the analytical framework for reviewing the included projects. While project evaluations examine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of a single project implementation; the synthesis draws on experiences across individual projects to identify what can be learned about improving the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of technical approaches and strategies for enhancing employment outcomes for youth and women.

The core research material for the synthesis review consisted of independent evaluations (final and/or midterm) of ILO employment promotion interventions undertaken between 2003 and 2013. In addition, other types of documents were incorporated into the analysis when they were linked to these initiatives. These additional documents include: project documents (proposals); internal reviews; studies and products elaborated as part of the initiative like guidelines, concept notes, and manuals. In total, 84 documents informed the review.

### SYNTHESIS REVIEW STAGES

Methodologically, this review was carried out in three stages:

- 1. In a first stage the Regional Office for Arab States and the Cairo ILO Office identified a list of relevant evaluations from employment promotion projects targeting youth and women. This identification was based on the following criteria:**
  - Type of document: mid-term and final, internal and independent evaluations;
  - Content of the evaluations: ILO interventions related to youth and women's employment promotion, skills development, entrepreneurship development;
  - MENA geographical coverage;
  - Date of completion of interventions: 2003-up to one year prior to the synthesis.

Other supporting documentation was included in the submission when available.

- 2. In the second stage documents provided by ILO offices were reviewed for determining the inclusion of projects in the synthesis. The selection of projects was conducted by the consultant based on:**

- **Independence:** The projects selected for inclusion were accompanied by an independent evaluation.
- **Completeness of documentation:** The quality and comprehensiveness of the final evaluations can vary significantly depending on the resources allocated and other factors. The completeness of the documentation was assessed through a review of the description of strategies, results, challenges and constraints contained in all the available documentation for a project (mid-term evaluations, project documents and concept notes).
- **Relevance to the challenges of youth and women's employment in the MENA region:** As a proxy for relevance to the challenges of youth and women's employment in region, the submissions were assessed for their coherence with any of the five strategic priority areas for enhancing capacity and strengthening ILO global leadership in youth employment described in the 2012 Youth Employment Crisis call for Action.<sup>7</sup>

**Employment and economic policies for youth employment:**

Promoting coherence of macroeconomic policy, industrial policy and employment policy in a manner that maximizes the impact of private sector investment on job growth and job quality for young persons. Investments in public employment infrastructure projects.

**Employability – Education, training and skills, and the school-to-work transition:**

Improving access to education and training through expanding traditional and non-traditional opportunities to develop skills and qualifications. Enhancing the relevance of training through closer links to private sector demand and expanding systems for recognition of skills. Targeted support to facilitating the transition from school to work and improving the career guidance available to students in formal schooling.

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6. Terms of Reference.

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7. The youth employment crisis: A call for action. Resolution and conclusions of the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference, Geneva, 2012. p.13

### Labour market policies:

Active labour market policies that encourage employment of youth. Consolidation and improvement of employment services.

### Youth entrepreneurship and self-employment:

Ensuring that there is an enabling environment for the establishment of new youth run enterprises. Support the development of integrated support for young entrepreneurs that combine knowledge and resources. Promote entrepreneurship for women and disadvantaged youth. Promote social enterprise and cooperatives.

### Rights for young people

Ensuring equal treatment and protection – including social protection - for young workers. Establish laws and collective agreements concerning young workers and mechanisms for monitoring and enforcement.

As ILO offices had identified submissions relevant to youth and women's employment in the first stage, the few projects submitted that were excluded from the synthesis were rejected on the basis of the level of description available. A total of 29 projects were included in the scope of the synthesis review; seven relating to skills development, eleven in the area of enterprise promotion and entrepreneurship promotion, seven pertaining to employment services and emergency employment services, and five evaluations of women's economic participation and empowerment initiatives.

- 3. The third stage consisted of the review of the selected projects. Projects were reviewed identifying findings and lessons learned regarding the design and implementation of technical approaches and strategies for addressing the challenges of youth and women's employment in the MENA region. The ILO/UNDP authored publication, Rethinking Economic Growth<sup>8</sup>, was used as a reference for identifying the priority youth and women's employment challenges to be addressed. The review of documents was supplemented when possible with interviews with key technical experts involved in the selected projects. The results of the review were organized adopting the categories of strategic priority areas for enhancing capacity and strengthening ILO global leadership in youth employment described in the 2012 Youth Employment Crisis call for Action.**

## LIMITATIONS

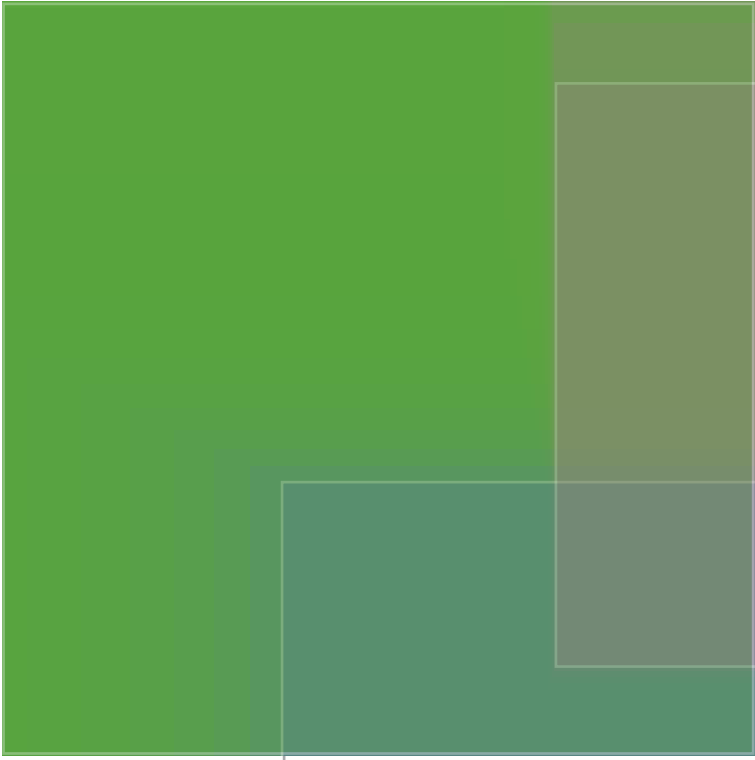
Utilizing independent final evaluations of completed projects as the principal source of information enabled the synthesis exercise to examine a large number of ILO experiences addressing the challenges of youth and women's employment in the region in a cost-effective manner. Reliance on existing documentation also imposed limitations. In some cases evaluations focused on administrative and logistical concerns as those were important determinants in whether a project was able to deliver on its short term outputs and longer term outcome/impact objectives. While important to a project evaluation, some administrative and logistical challenges are contextual and may not provide insight into the application of technical approaches and strategies in another context.

The depth of the evaluations also varied with respect to the level of detail provided concerning the underlying theory of change and assumptions regarding the project. This variation in detail also applied to the description of the technical approaches and strategies implemented. When possible, additional detail was provided through discussions with technical experts with knowledge of the particular project and through additional supporting documentation.

Perhaps the most common limitation concerns how impact was described in the evaluations. A characteristic of many of the evaluations – and projects – was the inclusion of medium/long term outcomes in short duration projects. In many cases these outcomes cannot be assessed as they could only be observed at some point subsequent to the project cycle. In some evaluations this limitation was acknowledged and the emphasis of the evaluation was describing the delivery of outputs and/or intermediate outcomes. In other cases evaluations treated short term outputs as long term outcomes (i.e. considering an initial job placement or apprenticeship as the equivalent of new employment). This linking of long term objectives to short duration projects was further complicated in the MENA region in the recent time period as stakeholders increasingly emphasized support for relief/recovery. Reconciling short term relief and longer term employment outcomes is an important programming challenge for ILO work in the region.

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8. Rethinking economic growth: towards productive and inclusive Arab societies, Beirut, International Labour Organization, 2012



# FINDINGS

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## 3. FINDINGS

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### 3.1 IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

#### REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE: UNRESPONSIVE, LOW QUALITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS

Recent trends in many MENA region economies have included declining shares of wages in GDP, high levels of youth and women unemployment/underemployment and low levels of female labour force participation. The unfavorable prospects for young people have resulted in widespread alienation and are reflected in polls where growing proportions of the region's population anticipate that living standards are likely to decline.<sup>9</sup>

Expanding quality employment opportunities for young men and women requires macroeconomic policy reforms<sup>10</sup> that promote “equity based” growth<sup>11</sup>. An important characteristic of these reforms is the shift from state led growth to one where policy facilitates private sector growth and productivity – especially the SME sector. Many education and training systems in the region evolved to satisfy the state led development model with an emphasis on preparing human resources for the public sector. These systems are typified by weak links to private sector demand and low levels of quality for the vast majority students as measured by international assessment results. Reforms improving the responsiveness to labour market demand and quality of education and training systems are necessary to fully capitalize on growth oriented macroeconomic reforms.

#### ILO RESPONSE: ENHANCING THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF SKILLS TRAINING

The ILO has a notable history of support for skills development in the region. Technical and financial assistance has been provided at the policy and systems level for analysis, capacity development and the elaboration of materials and guides. Support has also included more direct engagement with the education and training systems and individual institutions through projects modeling effective strategies for improving the quality and relevancy of

skills development and the transition from school to work. Two approaches that feature prominently in project support for skills development in the last decade are Competency Based Training (CBT) and upgrading informal apprenticeships.

CBT is a methodology where training content is linked to measurable performance competencies expected in the workplace - rather than training/education inputs, number of courses or grades. As a consequence, applying the CBT methodology requires extensive private sector involvement in specifying training outcomes and establishing criteria for assessment. While CBT was initially applied primarily in the trades (skilled manual labour), a number of education and training systems globally are extending CBT into higher levels of technical and professional training (degrees, advanced diplomas, etc). The ILO formally endorsed CBT in R195 - Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195).

Informal apprenticeship – the tutelage of a young person by an experienced or “master” craftsman – has been widely practiced in both developed and developing economies up until the present time. ILO initiatives upgrading informal apprenticeship systems in the region have demonstrated strategies for ensuring that apprentices are provided basic protections; that apprenticeships focus on building new marketable skills and that the skills developed are recognized and portable.

#### IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH ENHANCED LINKS WITH PRIVATE SECTOR ENTERPRISE.

The United Nations Development Group for the Arab States identified social dialogue as one of the greatest deficits in the region. This lack of effective dialogue between citizens and government is reflected in a skills development system that has traditionally been supply driven and unresponsive to private sector demand.<sup>12</sup> CBT methodology requires formal collaboration between management of the training system,

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9. ILO calculations from Gallup World Poll Database. Not true for GCC countries.

10. Labour market, industrial, migration, fiscal and others).

11. Rethinking Economic Growth p.103.

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12. Rethinking economic growth: towards productive and inclusive Arab societies, Beirut, International Labour Organization, 2012.

training institutions and staff, and the private sector (especially SMEs) to develop training content (individual courses) and systems for assessing the learning outcomes. The ILO has applied variations of the CBT methodology to skills development initiatives in the occupied Palestinian Territory,<sup>13</sup> Lebanon<sup>14</sup> and Iraq.<sup>15</sup> While the context and target populations for the CBT initiatives differ, the basic methodology of identifying market demand and structuring the training programme around competencies identified through engagement with the private sector was applied in each case. Stakeholders in evaluations of each of the ILO supported CBT initiatives highlighted the method as an important contribution to changing practices in the region. In Lebanon decision makers expressed interest in expanding the CBT approach to other programs in the education and training system. CBT also had some impact on collaboration within the government sector. In Lebanon the CBT collaboration and consultation process for course content development in the construction sector resulted in courses being formally recognized by both the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Labour.



In Egypt the ILO has provided technical and financial support for projects demonstrating upgraded informal apprenticeship.<sup>16</sup> The goals of these initiatives were to demonstrate a model of apprenticeship that provides appropriate incentives to both apprentices and enterprises, establishes basic protections against exploitation of trainees and results in formally recognized

marketable skills for the participants. As is the case with CBT, this upgraded apprenticeship model requires a high degree of dialogue and collaboration between the public sector, private enterprise and communities. In each of these initiatives links were established between the Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MoMM), the private sector and the NGO sector at the national and sub level. Most operational management of the apprenticeships was decentralized to Local Steering Committees. These Local Steering Committees included representation from the Labour Directorate (MoMM) of each governorate, private employers, NGOs and other community groups. Formal collaboration and dialogue was utilized to identify locally relevant skills, recruit appropriate apprenticeship sites, and monitor the apprenticeship outcomes. The collaboration resulted in influencing the labour inspection process (MoMM) to also include consideration of the needs of apprentices in the inspection process.

The application of CBT methodology and upgraded informal apprenticeship projects demonstrate approaches where relevance and quality of skills development opportunities is improved through collaboration, dialogue and responsiveness to private sector demand. Refinement and wider adoption of these approaches would help address widespread concerns about the quality and relevance of skills development programs for young people. The considerable challenges to incorporating these approaches more widely in national education and training systems are administrative rather than technical. In Lebanon, participating instructors expressed positive views of the effectiveness of the new courses and their willingness to continue providing CBT training. However the same instructors also said that without increases to the budgets of their institutions that they would be unable to continue the courses. In Egypt government administrative rules and constraints necessitated that the Local Steering Committees be organized as standalone project bodies rather than being integrated into existing government manpower and training structures. At the same time, other administrative rules did not permit non-government stakeholders working with these steering committees to supplement the inadequate number of labour inspectors in assessing and certifying learning outcomes for apprentices.

## PROMOTING THE PORTABILITY OF SKILLS TRAINING AND ENHANCING THE EFFICIENCY OF REGIONAL LABOUR MARKETS

An essential aspect of upgraded informal apprenticeship is the mechanism for formally describing, assessing and recognizing learning outcomes acquired through workplace apprenticeship experiences. Similarly, while there was a degree of variation in how short courses were developed and implemented in Lebanon, Gaza and Iraq, the use of CBT as an underlying methodology for courses across countries enables a regional comparability of recognized or certified skills for occupations not usually included in formal degree or diploma programs.

13. Skills development and employment services for the construction sector in the Gaza strip (PAL/10/01M/SDC).

14. Skills development, employment services and local economic recovery for the construction sector in South Lebanon (LEB/07/03M/ITA).

15. Skills development to support employment generation in Iraq (IRQ/07/01/UNQ),

Improving quality and relevance of technical vocational training in Iraq (IRQ/07/03/UNQ).

16. Final evaluation report ILO pilot project: continuous apprenticeship project in Egypt, Combating exploitive child labor through education in Egypt project (CCLP), Strategy for improving informal apprenticeship in Egypt, Combating worst forms of child labour by reinforcing policy response and promoting sustainable livelihoods and educational opportunities in Egypt, Upgrading Informal Apprenticeship in Egypt.



Migration plays an important role in many of the economies in the region both in terms of the numbers of migrants and the impact on labour markets. National policies that have treated migrant labour distinct from domestic labour have tended to result in incentives for exploiting migrants and favouring labour intensive low productivity industries and production technology. Low skilled migration and exploitation of migrants also suppresses wages for workers in the receiving country labour market. The suppressed wages reduce living standards as well as lower the incentives for young people to invest in new skills development.

A greater regional comparability and recognition of skills development outcomes – especially for semi-skilled occupations that do not require degrees and diplomas – could encourage changes in employer behavior. Less uncertainty about the skills of potential workers (both migrant and domestic) would reduce risk for employers and enable them to pay higher wages based on better information about the capabilities of a worker. When combined with institutional reforms promoting transparency and regulation of labour migration a shift to a more skills-focused migrant labour market could improve regional efficiencies in the labour market and lessen the negative consequences for unregulated low-skilled labour migration.

## EXPANDING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR POOR, MARGINALIZED YOUTH.

Youth from the poorest households generally have little access to adequate quality formal education and training opportunities. Even when free of charge, the length and attendance requirements of a formal TVET programme often yield opportunity costs that the poorest youth are unable to bear. ILO support for CBT and upgraded informal apprenticeship illustrate cost-effective models for addressing obstacles to skills development for this important underserved group.

Apprenticeship has traditionally been an important means of acquiring skills for young people from poor households. Upgrading informal apprenticeship through provision of efficient subsidies that promote participation by youth and private sector employers, establishing formal protections against exploitation and incorporating formal recognition of new workplace skills developed can expand the reach and effectiveness of apprenticeships as a cost-effective strategy for expanding skills development opportunities for the poorest youth.

The CBT programmes developed in Lebanon, Gaza and Iraq also demonstrate strategies for addressing the skills development needs of the most disadvantaged young people. Courses developed through these initiatives were designed as quality short duration courses with very specific occupational focus on skills identified as high demand. The short term nature of the courses have lower opportunity costs than more traditional courses and the CBT methods result in more immediate employment prospects.

Quality training focused on in-demand skills that is accessible because it is either short term (in the case of CBT) or allows young people to earn wages while they develop new marketable skills (upgraded informal apprenticeship) is clearly relevant to improving employment outcomes for poor and marginalized youth in the region. The initiatives reviewed provided strong demonstrations of skills development strategies and methods that address the particular needs of this underserved group. While the projects also engaged at the policy level, the short duration of the projects wasn't conducive to facilitating the changes in policy and practices (staffing, rules/regulations, resource allocations) necessary to integrate these approaches into existing education and training systems.

The primary skills training initiatives reviewed in the synthesis review: CBT and upgraded informal apprenticeship; demonstrated approaches for developing high quality training that is responsive to labour market demand. These initiatives provided examples of training models that respond to the widespread concern regarding the quality and market relevance of skills training opportunities available in many of the MENA countries.



While access to quality, market-relevant skills training is important for improving employment outcomes for youth and women, the impact will be limited unless employment opportunities to exercise these skills are also expanded. In the next section the review examines ILO initiatives for increasing employment through promotion of entrepreneurship and improving access to business development knowledge and skills.

## 3.2 EXPANDING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH PROMOTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

### REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE: SLOW EMPLOYMENT GROWTH AND LOW PRODUCTIVITY OF ENTERPRISES

Despite growth in private employment resulting from economic liberalization in the region in the 1990s, the number of new opportunities has been insufficient to significantly improve youth unemployment rates. Many of the new jobs have also been created in industries characterized by low productivity, low wages<sup>17</sup>, high rates of informality and low levels of social protection<sup>18</sup> (construction, services, and commerce among others). There is a broad consensus in the region that the transition from the state-led growth model to a new model of inclusive growth depends on a vibrant and productive SME sector. A stronger and more dynamic SME sector requires a conducive policy environment, greater entrepreneurial activity and growth in the number and productivity of businesses.

### ILO RESPONSE: CHANGING ATTITUDES, IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE AND ENHANCING SKILLS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

The ILO has supported SME development in the region through initiatives that promote entrepreneurship, and enhance access to business development knowledge and services. These initiatives have capitalized on existing ILO tools adapted to the country context.<sup>19</sup> Capitalizing on these well-established and tested methodologies has enabled the ILO to support a wide variety of entrepreneurship and business development initiatives tailored to the needs of diverse groups without the need for a long program development period.

### RAISING AWARENESS, CHANGING ATTITUDES AND IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUTH MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

The objectives of the Know About Business (KAB) program are to raise awareness of self-employment and entrepreneurship as a career option and to provide basic knowledge about business development to students in education and training institutions. The documentation reviewed described the pilot phase<sup>20</sup> implementation of KAB in vocational and educational institutions in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt)<sup>21</sup>, Egypt<sup>22</sup> and Tunisia.<sup>23</sup> In each case the program was adapted to local conditions through consultation with policy makers, managers of training and education institutions and teachers. National KAB Facilitators were trained and a program of training teachers and managers was completed. The pilot program was implemented in secondary vocational schools, vocational training centers, and in some post-secondary institutions in the case of oPt.

In the pilot phase KAB is accompanied by an evaluation. The evaluation measures changes in attitudes and knowledge about entrepreneurship and business development. In the evaluations available at the time of the synthesis review, the results were consistent with global ILO experience with students demonstrating generally more positive perceptions of the viability of self-employment and entrepreneurship as a potential career path and greater depth of knowledge about the personal, legal and financial requirements for business development.

In the evaluations of the pilot phase teachers, directors and students expressed positive impressions of the approach and the quality of the materials. However, in both the Egypt and oPt evaluations concerns were registered about conflicting expectations. In both contexts there were stakeholders who had expectations that the program would provide the technical and financial support for starting a business and have an immediate impact on business formation and employment. Similar concerns

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17. As evidenced by the declining wage share in GDP (ILO 2012).

18. When compared to the employment and social protections typical of public sector jobs.

19. Know About Business (KAB) and Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) for entrepreneurship and business development; Participatory Value Chain Analysis (PVA) and Managing Your Agricultural Cooperative (My.COOP) for strengthening social enterprise and Gender and Entrepreneurship together (GET Ahead) for promoting self-employment and business development for women.

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20. The KAB program is designed to be implemented in phases; a pilot phase where the approach is demonstrated and evaluated and a mainstreaming phase where the approach is more widely integrated into the education and training system.

21. Introduction of "Know About Business" in vocational and technical training in Palestine PAL/08/01M/UND.

22. International Labour Organization ILO Know About Business Programme KAB Pilot Phase Egypt.

23. Entrepreneurship development in the Mid-East and North Africa: Tunisia KAB pilot.



were raised by participants in the Tunisia pilot that the training did not provide specific marketable skills. Teachers in Tunisia also indicated that some of the more advanced modules were difficult for them and for the students and that maintaining student participation in the more advanced modules was a challenge as the KAB pilot did not formally evaluate students or award credits toward a certificate or diploma.

At the time of the synthesis review there was no available documentation regarding the mainstreaming phase of integrating KAB more widely into the training and education systems in the three countries. Subsequent discussions with ILO technical experts indicated that working with the education and training authorities to establish the program as part of the regular study programs was ongoing. While an adequate foundation of technical expertise in the KAB approach was established in each pilot phase and the program was viewed by decision makers, teachers and students as relevant to the needs of graduates, mainstreaming the program is a considerable challenge. Full mainstreaming can require a formal assessment of program content for integration into a system of credits for certificate and diploma programs. Incorporating the program as a new course or integration of the content into other courses may also have budgetary implications. While technical experts maintain their contact with the relevant authorities, mainstreaming entrepreneurship programs is highly dependent on political and administrative factors where ILO may have little influence.

## STRENGTHENING ENTREPRENEURIAL AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

Regional ILO support in entrepreneurship and business development skills has been provided to a diverse group of stakeholders including: members of existing cooperatives in Egypt and Lebanon; returnees displaced by the conflict in South Sudan and a government affiliated social development foundation in Qatar. In both Egypt and Lebanon members/managers of existing cooperatives (primarily agricultural) were provided business development and management training.<sup>24</sup> The training was delivered through a network of trainers established in each country. In addition to the business development and management training, entrepreneurship training (modified KAB and SIYB) was provided to some cooperative members to support development of new businesses. The final evaluations rated the technical inputs highly. Concerns were raised by participants regarding the wider context of cooperative development including access to financing. While not evaluated as projects the ILO has been providing ongoing technical assistance and advocacy with governments for strengthening the cooperative sector in a number of countries in the region.

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24. Supporting local socio-economic recovery and development in war-affected areas of south Lebanon (Phase II) Pro-poor horticulture value chains in Upper Egypt (MDG Fund).

Together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), ILO provided basic entrepreneurial and business development training to returnees displaced by conflict in South Sudan.<sup>25</sup> The programme combined vocational skills training (provided by IOM) with basic business development training (Generate Your Business Ideas – GYB) and GET Ahead provided by the ILO. Business development training was provided by a network of promoters trained in utilizing the ILO tools. The initiative had a strong gender focus and nearly 65 per cent of those completing the training were women. As part of the business skills training participants developed basic business plans. Through an evaluation process the most promising plans were identified and a startup kit to support the new business was provided. About 75 per cent of the business startup kits were awarded to women. While the evaluation of the program took place near the end of the project cycle before longer term impact on employment and livelihoods could be assessed, there was a consensus among informants for the evaluation that in the short term the program had resulted in more women being active in local businesses and in a wider variety of businesses.

The Qatar government has identified the lack of a developed private sector with capacity to provide attractive employment to Qatari nationals as a significant challenge to growth and diversification of the economy. With financing from Q-Tel, a Qatar telecommunications company, the ILO provided technical assistance for the establishment of a small enterprise development unit (SEDU) within the Social Development Centre (SDC) - an agency within the Qatar Foundation that supports Qatari families.<sup>26</sup> The ILO provided capacity development to enable the new unit to adapt and implement the SIYB programme in Qatar.<sup>27</sup>

Additional integrated support was contemplated in the original project design – micro finance and marketing for enterprise development. The short time period of the project and the difficulties in identifying appropriate local leadership for the programme limited the ability of the project to develop the enterprise financing and marketing components. The project did successfully produce a suite of SIYB training materials adapted to the Qatari environment; recruited and trained eight SIYB trainers to the level of certified SIYB trainers; established a web presence; held an initial round of seminars in various SIYB tools; developed a business plan for the new unit and an operational manual for the training. While the project fell short of meeting its broader goals of business development due to difficulties in establishing the anticipated links with other services like financing for new businesses, a strong skills and knowledge base was established that would enable the new unit to expand and improve its ability

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25. Stabilisation and Early Reintegration Support for Returnees in South Sudan.

26. Setting up a small enterprise support unit at the social development centre in Qatar: Start and Improve Your Business Project QAT/05/01M/SDQ

27. The family of SIYB programs: GYB- generate your business idea, SYB- Start Your Business, and IYB- Improve your business.

to support new businesses. The initial programme activities also helped established ILO credibility with the Government of Qatar and the project's final evaluation gives it high marks for what was accomplished in a short time. However, the same evaluation highlights the need for additional investments (training, and materials) in expanding the services of the unit, improving the capacity of the new institution (TANMIA) through ongoing content training (SIYB) and institutional development support.

The ILO has supported the promotion of entrepreneurship and increasing access to business development knowledge and skills as a means of expanding quality employment opportunities for young people and women. While careful attention to cultivating new entrepreneurs and providing business skills can increase the formation of new enterprises and improve their productivity, most young people and women will not become entrepreneurs. For this majority who seek opportunities in the labor market, the ILO has provided support for improving the efficiency of the labour market through projects demonstrating effective strategies for linking job seekers with employers. These initiatives are reviewed in the next section.



## 3.3 ENHANCING THE EFFICIENCY OF LABOUR MARKETS

### REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE: INEFFICIENT LABOUR MARKETS RESULTING FROM A LACK OF INFORMATION AND TRANSPARENCY

A common observation of youth in MENA region is that information about employment opportunities is difficult to find and frequently available only through informal networks. Improvements in the efficiency and transparency of the labour market are especially valuable for marginalized or disadvantaged groups that are likely to lack access to reliable information about employment and training opportunities; have limited capacity to engage in effective job search; are excluded from informal “insider” networks; have few options for acquiring formally recognized skills, or are victims of systematic discrimination.

### ILO RESPONSE: ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Public Employment Services (PES) has been an area of ILO activity and support since its founding in 1919. PES promote efficient labour markets by: providing reliable and accessible information about employment opportunities; assisting with job search and providing placement services; administering unemployment insurance benefits; administering other active labour market programmes and generating labour market information for policy analysis and development.

Systems for providing PES have evolved over time to include diverse organizational structures and partnerships that may include other public entities such as social protection/social welfare, public and private training institutions and private employment services.<sup>28</sup> PES also differs from country to country in the range of services provided between active labour market support such as job search/job placement, training and targeted subsidies for employment and passive labour market support like unemployment insurance.

The evolution of PES also includes the incorporation of employment services into crisis recovery.<sup>29</sup> These Emergency Public Employment Services (EPES) emphasize responding to the immediate impact of job losses and the loss of income and productive assets through strategies tailored to the needs of a particular type of crisis. As some of the emergency strategies are similar to non-emergency strategies - such as registering job seekers and matching them to employment opportunities - there

is ample opportunity for these services to support the transition from emergency/crisis to the development or strengthening of permanent employment services.

The recent ILO experiences in employment services in the MENA region include supporting emergency employment services for a refugee population; a demonstration project incorporating a specific youth focus and methodology into an existing public employment services system and capacity development and general technical support for another national employment system. ILO support also included technical assistance to an innovative project providing counseling and placements services for outward bound migrants combined with support for migrants transitioning back to their country of origin.

### EMERGENCY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR REFUGEE POPULATIONS

The ILO in collaboration with UNWRA implemented a series of projects developing employment services for youth in the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon through UNRWA Employment Service Centres (ESC).<sup>30</sup> The goal of the projects was to improve employment outcomes and reduce poverty in the refugee population. The technical approach combined employment counseling/guidance and other services for young job seekers with systematic engagement with private sector employers to identify employment opportunities and to market the placement services and registered job seekers to private employers. The ESCs also linked job seekers to training opportunities in order to improve their skills and promote a more advantageous participation in the labour market.

The destruction of the Nahr El-Bared Camp (NBC) following the May 2007 attacks by Fatah al Islam in Tripoli resulted in the displacement of many of its more than 30,000 Palestinian refugees to other camps in the region and other settlements. In a rapid assessment of the situation after the conflict UNRWA estimated that 93 percent of the displaced population had suffered significant economic disruption and 79 percent identified themselves as unemployed. Emergency Public Employment Services were incorporated into the relief effort for those affected by the damages to the NBC camp. The initial focus of the programme was to support Palestinian NBC (and Bedawi Camp) residents secure employment in the reconstruction of the NBC.

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28. C181 Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997, ILO.

29. First guidelines on Emergency Public Employment Services produced by ILO in 2003.

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30. Enhancing local employment, skills and enterprises in Nahr El Bared, Lebanon LEB/08/05/UNR  
Strengthening Information and Access to Employment for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon LEB/09/02/CAN  
Employment Services For Palestinian Refugees in South Lebanon LEB/11/02/UNR

As reconstruction projects experienced delays in implementation, the ESC was required to consider additional/alternative sectors of employment and expand the geographical focus in order to provide sufficient numbers of employment opportunities.

The ESC implemented communication and mobilization strategies to encourage young Palestinians to enroll in the ESC. Staff from the UNWRA ESC were provided training and support to improve knowledge and capacity in: employment services methodology, career/job counseling for job seekers and outreach and engagement with private sector employers. Support to Job seekers included: counseling, help in preparing CVs and covering letters, assistance for securing necessary working permits, referrals and financial support for attending vocational training and job placement.



Building on the experiences with the ESC in the NBC area, ILO and UNWRA collaborated in expanding services to other areas of Lebanon where the Palestinian refugee population is concentrated (Saida, Tyre and Beirut). These additional ESCs provided services similar to those provided by the NBC centre, but their engagement with the private sector extended beyond a relief/recovery focus to include more industries and occupations – essentially providing Palestinian youth services similar to those provide by Lebanese government PES. Support to the additional centres included capacity development for UNWRA ESC staff and other UNWRA staff as well as materials and references. Technical and financial resources were also provided to support advocacy for legal and administrative reforms to expand the right to work for the refugee population.

In the case of all of the employment services initiatives for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, the targets for the number of enrolled participants was easily met. Relative to current participation in the labor force, women were somewhat over-represented in the enrollment figures suggesting that employment services may provide conditions that encourage higher labour force participation for women. Inconsistencies of definitions and data collection practices made it difficult to assess how much counseling was provided or how effective this counseling was in improving employment outcomes. In the centres established subsequent to the initial NBC project the youth enrolled in employment services tended to have higher levels of education than the resident Palestinian population. This created more

challenges for the ESCs as more educated job seekers faced somewhat greater formal legal restrictions on their employment choices and wage offers were frequently not acceptable to more highly educated participants.<sup>31</sup>

Not surprisingly, given the formal and informal constraints on Palestinian participation in the Lebanese labour market, there was little to no impact of the project on wages. It was acknowledged that the ESCs did make efforts to monitor basic conditions like working hours and the prohibition of child labour but that these efforts were inconsistent as monitoring of conditions was to be undertaken by the same counselors who were responsible for recruiting employers for participation<sup>32</sup>. There were also a number of job seekers who did not pursue opportunities identified because of unacceptable conditions and wages. This was more prevalent among better educated participants and is another indication of the challenges of improving conditions and wages for a population that has its opportunities limited by legal and social constraints.

The experiences of providing employment services to the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon may provide useful guidance regarding approaches to promoting employment for refugee groups – or other groups whose participation in the labour market is subject to limits or discrimination. However, it must also be kept in mind that the experiences in Lebanon respond to unique and specific legal constraints and political norms that have existed for decades. One achievement of the initiatives noted by stakeholders was to change the nature of the discussion about Palestinian youth from one focused on relief and solidarity to one that looked to engagement between the Palestinian population, the Government of Lebanon and the private sector as a means of addressing the systems level challenges to better employment and livelihood outcomes.



31. Labour markets where legal norms and protections are applied differently to different populations also create incentives for employers to pay workers from the less protected population wages lower than those paid to other similarly skilled workers.

32. In principle PES should operate with separate officials making placements and monitoring workplace conditions in order to avoid conflicts of interest and confusion over roles and authority. Typically, regular Ministry of Labour inspectors rather than employment counselors assume the responsibility of assessing workplace conditions. However in the case of Lebanon the special status of the Palestinian population with respect to government services made this type of arrangement impossible and monitoring of conditions remained within the PES project.

## ENHANCING THE CAPACITY OF PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO MORE EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND IMPROVE THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

The ILO provided technical support for a 3-year project in Egypt to improve youth understanding of the labour market and to establish Youth Employment Units (YU) in existing Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MOMM) Public Employment Services (PES) offices in 5 governorates. This effort was subsequently expanded to an additional 10 governorates in a second phase of the project.<sup>33</sup> This support included study at the ILO training centre in Turin on career guidance and employment services methodologies as well as a study tour to Rome in collaboration with trade unions and business associations where there was the opportunity for an exchange among tripartite counterparts on career guidance and school to work transition.

The supported activities for establishing the YUs included: a needs assessment study; the development of career guidance and orientation materials; provision of necessary equipment for the five offices; training of staff in the new units as well as relevant staff in the employment sector at the central level MoMM. Teachers in selected secondary and technical schools, training institutions and youth centres also received training and materials for career guidance. A multimedia campaign to promote the new PES offices to young people and expose them and their families to labour market opportunities was also implemented.

Multimedia and other outreach campaigns encouraged youth to visit the PES. Upon visiting the PES basic information for the job seekers was captured in a registration process. Job counseling utilizing the new youth-focused approach developed was provided to youth enrolling in the PES. PES staff also engaged with local private sector employers to collect information on available employment and job requirements. Basic information from job seekers was used to match them with information about appropriate job opportunities. Support was also provided for sponsoring youth employment events. In each of the five PES there was one youth career guidance event as well as one job fair. In each governorate a task force was created including representatives of youth centers, training centers, trade unions, employers, and teachers from technical schools. The task force operated under the leadership of the career counsellors in the Public Employment Services offices.

Because of limitations in data collection methods, it was not possible to make an estimate of how much counseling had been provided or the scope of outreach to employers. There was a strong consensus across all of the stakeholders that ILO support had some success in shifting the PES approach from

‘intermediaries’ passively relaying information from employers to job seekers to ‘negotiators’ who more actively developed opportunities for young people. Summary data was difficult to aggregate as it was collected in different forms across the MoMM offices but the data that was analyzable indicated that about 15,700 youth had registered for services. The level of participation far exceeded original project targets and confirmed the existence of demand for effective employment services.

Men predominated in registering with the services (about 75per cent)<sup>34</sup> while the rate of placement of participants was roughly equivalent for men and women. These placement rates for women were higher than employment rates for women in the general population. While far below parity with men, the relatively better employment outcomes for women participating in the PES initiatives suggests – as did the experiences with the Palestinian population in Lebanon – that the enhanced transparency and support provided by PES may be an effective means to promote economic participation and employment for young women.

Staff in the YUs that had received the training and materials had a favorable view of the quality and relevance of the training as did teachers from technical schools who received career guidance training. Employers reported that new recruits contracted through the PES YU tended to remain in their positions longer than other new hires, addressing one of the private sector’s most immediate concerns- the retention of workers. Project stakeholders expressed a very positive view of value of the employment events sponsored through the program, with young job seekers and employers alike airing their concern that job fairs be continued after the end of the project and extended to other areas of the country. A student book and a teacher’s guide on career guidance developed through the initiative were utilized in participating technical schools and subsequently piloted in all 5-year technical schools in 2013 reaching some 20 thousand students. Stakeholders felt that the task forces established at each PES were valuable as a means to encourage exchange between MoMM, private sector employers and education and training institutions. Concerns about sustainability were raised in the evaluations. While capacity and materials to work with job seekers could be incorporated into the YUs and disseminated to other EOs in the country, the resources and capacity for the important task of engagement with private sector employers was still weak at the conclusion of the projects. Limited budgetary resources would likely erode this capacity once the external funding was no longer available

The ILO provide technical support for strengthening the capacity of the National Employment Office (NEO) in Lebanon to deliver job counseling and placement services. Through ratification of ILO Convention 88 on Public Employment Services<sup>35</sup> Lebanon is committed to the provision of a national system of employment

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33. Effective School to Work Transition Through Career Guidance Information and Guidance for Youth EGY/08/01/ITA  
Transition To Employment: Career Guidance for Youth and Job Creation  
EGP/11/07/EGY

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34. Not all centers consistently reported data disaggregated by gender.

35. ILO Convention 88 on Public Employment Services. 1977

offices. NEO staff received training through the ILO International Training Centre in Turin (ITC) as well as in Lebanon. The focus of the training included counseling and placement methods as well as labour market analysis. Project investments also included technical assistance to strengthen the Labour Market Information System (LMIS). Initial efforts were made to develop a map for consolidating and systematizing labour market information – including the development of a common occupational classification and coding system. A model methodology for labour market analysis was applied in an analysis of the needs of the hospitality sector undertaken in collaboration with a hospitality industry association.

Subsequent implementation of improved counseling, placement and analysis was significantly constrained by the very limited resources (both human and financial) available to the NEO. At the projects conclusion there was considerable interest expressed by both government and non-government stakeholders for continuing/completing some of the technical tasks for improving the LMIS. A decree enabling the NEO to add staff and possibly open additional offices had also recently been promulgated. The project team prepared and disseminated a paper describing options for the future development of the NEO.



## IMPROVING THE GOVERNANCE OF MIGRATION THROUGH INNOVATIONS IN EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

In Tunisia ILO support for strengthening PES<sup>36</sup> was extended to include developing an orientation manual for employment services staff working with job seekers pursuing employment in external (migration) job markets. These materials (orientation manual) were developed complementing IOM/Government of Tunisia efforts to utilize partnerships with public entities (Canada) and private employment services both within Tunisia (International Express Solution) and internationally (ADECCO) to develop linkages with external job opportunities. This support included technical assistance and guidance on self-employment

and SME development as well as material/financial resources for equipment and materials.

ILO support to improve employment outcomes for youth and women were strategically focused on

- demonstrating new models for developing quality market-relevant skills;
- supporting the expansion of employment through promotion of entrepreneurship and access to business development knowledge and skills and
- improving the efficiency of labour markets by strengthening employment services.

ILO initiatives in each of these thematic areas included strategies for addressing the significant challenges to economic participation and empowerment faced by many women in the MENA region. The next section synthesizes ILO experience promoting women's economic participation and empowerment in the projects reviewed.

36. Promouvoir l'emploi productif et le travail décent des jeunes en Algérie, Maroc, Mauritanie et Tunisie RAF/08/11/SPA.

## 3.4 WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

### REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE: LOW LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES AND LACK OF ACCESS TO HIGH PRODUCTIVITY/HIGH WAGE WORK FOR WOMEN.

Labour force participation rates for women in many of the MENA countries are significantly lower than those for men. In countries where participation rates for women do approach parity with men traditional gender division of labour often results in fewer opportunities for quality employment with protections in high productivity/high earnings occupations. The obstacles manifest themselves differently for women with differently levels of education and from different communities. Regardless, these barriers to full economic participation and empowerment have significant negative impact on the livelihoods of many women, the well-being of their families and on the overall productivity and dynamism of the economy.

### ILO RESPONSE:

*i) Incorporating a gender focus in skills development; entrepreneurship and employment services.*

*ii) Strengthening the policy, legal and institutional framework for women's economic participation and empowerment*

### PROMOTING EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR WOMEN

CBT and upgraded informal apprenticeship feature prominently in ILO regional efforts to demonstrate approaches for improving employability and skills development. Both approaches address the challenge of improving the quality and relevancy of skills development opportunities by strengthening and formalizing the participation of the private sector in identifying and assessing relevant competencies.

CBT course development focused on occupations identified by stakeholders as high demand and feasible for delivery in a condensed time period. These types of occupations tended to be skilled manual labour- a sector where women are virtually absent in MENA labour markets. There were limited examples of courses developed specifically to attract women participants; for example training in mosaic in the construction sector in South Lebanon and sewing and food processing in Iraq. While participants in the CBT courses were overwhelmingly male, technical support for policy development, labour market studies associated with CBT course development and training for government officials and teachers did incorporate considerations of gender.

Women represented roughly one-third of the participants In the ILO supported upgraded informal apprenticeship initiatives in Egypt.<sup>37</sup> The predominance of skilled manual labour apprenticeships and traditional views regarding appropriate employment for women limited the participation of women. While these were important barriers to the participation of women, an evaluation identified a number of benefits for female participants. The additional protections and monitoring provided by the upgraded apprenticeship model reduced the use of women apprentices to run household errands for business owners as well as normalizing work hours and increasing pay. The model also increased formal recognition of workplace learning in female dominated industries like sewing with the awarding of certificates equivalent to those provided by a technical school.

For both CBT and upgraded apprenticeship there was limited success – and admittedly limited opportunity – to promote changes in the gender division of labour that is a prominent feature of the labour markets in the MENA region. The relief orientation of the projects necessitated a focus on quick employment outcomes that tended to reinforce the segregation of women into the low productivity sectors available to women.

### EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

KAB entrepreneurship pilot programs supported by the ILO were implemented with consideration of ensuring the participation of young women in education and training intuitions. In the development of certified KAB trainers, there was also an effort to achieve parity between men and women. Training of trainers in business development tools (SIYB family of tools and Coop development and management tools) also strived to ensure adequate representation of women as trainers as a strategy for providing a more conducive environment encouraging women to pursue entrepreneurship and enterprise development.

As a component of child labour initiatives in Egypt, the ILO utilized basic business awareness and business development tools to support enterprise groups for rural women whose children were child labourers or at risk for child labour. Drawing on initial experiences promoting these enterprise groups, a subsequent child labour project supplemented the basic business tools with technical training on relevant production techniques and the development of local financing resources (savings groups) for supporting start up and ongoing capital requirements for the new cooperative businesses.

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37. Reported in final evaluation of Combating Exploitive Child Labor Through Education in Egypt Project (2010)

Within a project to promote social enterprise development in Egypt, the ILO supported the establishment of business develop skills (BDS) units managed by women. These BDS units managed by women were to serve the needs of small agricultural producers – also often women. The establishment of new women owned and managed cooperatives was supported through ILO technical assistance and capacity development in cooperative management, participatory value chain analysis and other technical training focused on production.



In South Sudan the ILO provided basic business skills capacity to support South Sudanese returnees establish new enterprises. The project strategy prioritized female heads of households and youth for the enterprise development support. Participants completing the training developed a business plans and those plans were evaluated in a contest with winners provided a business start-up kit. Of the more than 1,300 individuals who completed the GYB training more than 60 percent were women as were 75 per cent of the approximately 400 persons who were awarded the start-up kits. While the evaluation of the initiative was unable to directly measure the number of new women's enterprises, there was a widely expressed consensus in the communities that the initiative had resulted in greater participation of women in the local markets and more diversity in the types of businesses where women are present.

As a complement to previous ILO support and investments on the part of other development partners in enterprise promotion in Palestinian refugee camps in northern Lebanon, the ILO provided capacity development in Business Group Formation (BGF) for women entrepreneurs in the camps. The initiative was specifically developed to address the need for individual women entrepreneurs to ensure the sustainability of their enterprises through expansion of their markets outside the camp environments. The technical approach was to encourage women to form business groups to facilitate greater efficiencies in production and marketing of their products. Prior to the initiative formal collaboration among women entrepreneurs was uncommon.

The ILO provided training in the Get Ahead: Gender and Entrepreneurship Together as an initial orientation for both

women entrepreneurs and local implementers (national and international NGOs, UNWRA). This initial basic orientation was followed by training in the Business Group Formation tools and local implementers worked with existing women enterprises (most often individual enterprises). Links were established with high profile marketing initiatives like Souk el Tayeb (popular farmers' markets in Lebanon) to promote the expansion of markets for products produced in the camps. Support for the concept of BGF was well received by local implementers and local women entrepreneurs, but both also stated that overcoming the natural inclination of camp residents to work independently would require additional support and investment in promoting the BGF strategy.

As is the case with support to skills development, entrepreneurship support has tended to focus on new businesses development as a survival mechanism to cope with crisis. This type of entrepreneurship and enterprise development also is subject to the informal social constraints (attitudes, household division of labour, household decision making) that limit the types of opportunities for women. Without integration into a more explicit and comprehensive focus on women's economic empowerment the impact of entrepreneurship and enterprise development initiatives on women's wellbeing may prove limited.

## ENHANCING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN THROUGH EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

ILO support was provided for developing or strengthening PES in Lebanon in Egypt. While there were important differences between the two initiatives,<sup>38</sup> in both instances women's participation in PES during the project periods was higher than prevailing labour force participation rates (although still lower than men). The percentage of women job seekers successfully placed was also higher than the prevailing employment rate for women.

The regional PES experiences suggest that appropriate counseling and support of women job seekers and improving the transparency of the recruitment and hiring process can improve participation rates and employment rates for women in the region. Effective outreach to employers through PES is also a means to raise the awareness of employers about the untapped productive capacity of women as well as provide support in adapting workplace conditions (hours, supervision, availability of child care, security of the workplace) that enable more women to engage in formal employment.

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38. In Lebanon the support to PES was for the development of a new system for job counseling and placement for the Palestinian refugee population that does not have access to the government PES. In Egypt the ILO supported the development of youth units in already established PES entities.



## STRENGTHENING THE POLICY, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

The ILO supported a number of country-specific and regional initiatives to strengthen the policy, legal and institutional framework supporting women's economic participation and empowerment and in enhancing the capacity of stakeholders for policy analysis, programme development and promotion of improved opportunities for women. In a short-term (15 months) sub regional initiative involving Syria, Jordan and Lebanon<sup>39</sup> the ILO supported the establishment and/or strengthening of institutional structures and enhancing the technical capacity of tripartite constituents to integrate five key ILO gender and work conventions: Convention 100 Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951; Convention 111 Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958; Convention 156 Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981; Convention 177 Home Work Convention, 1996; Convention 183 Maternity Protection Convention, 2000.

In each of the three countries a Tripartite National Taskforce was established to oversee the technical support and capacity development initiatives. In Jordan a body (National Tripartite-Plus Committee on Pay Equity) was formed to examine gender based pay inequity. In Syria, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development established a National Tripartite Committee on Gender Equality at Work.

In each country there was an emphasis on building awareness and knowledge of the relevant labour standards and gender and employment issues. A policy round table was held for relevant national officials and approximately 100 mid-level staff of tripartite constituents received training in gender related International Labour Standards.

The ILO was a participating partner in an MDG joint programme, Gender Equality at Work and Women's Empowerment in the occupied Palestinian territory.<sup>40</sup> The joint program had three primary objectives: i) reducing gender-based violence and all forms of violence against women; ii) increasing representation of women and women's issues in decision-making bodies; and iii) advancing equal opportunities for women's economic participation, especially survivors of gender-based violence. During the project period, the ILO and other international and national partners supported the establishment of the National Committee for Women's Employment. This committee brings together ILO constituents, civil society organizations and other UN agencies in an advisory role in promoting women's employment

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39. Sub-Regional Initiative on Promoting Gender Equality in the World of Work in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.

40. Gender Equity and Women's empowerment in the occupied Palestinian territories (MDG Joint Program).

and the integration of women's employment issues into national development strategies and plans.

In keeping with ILO comparative advantage in experience and technical expertise, ILO support was focused on strengthening the economic participation of women through work. Awareness raising and capacity development workshops were held for Ministry of Labour officials and staff from NGOs. A study of labor laws and gender was completed and endorsed by the Ministry of Labour. ILO also supported elaboration and dissemination of a situation analysis of gender-based violence in the workplace.

The opportunities for skills development for women in oPt TVET centres were assessed through a situation analysis. As a result of this assessment, the ILO with support from international and national partners developed training courses in photography and construction project management for women with 17 women completing the photography course and 40 female engineers completing the construction management course. Greater opportunities for women were also promoted through enterprise promotion for women. Technical support was provided for an analysis of the cooperative sector and training of relevant stakeholders utilizing ILO social enterprise tools like MATCOM; the Training Manual for the Management of Cooperatives.

The ILO strengthened tripartite constituents' capacity to provide ongoing promotion of equality of opportunities in work through training in the Participatory Gender Audit (PGA) methodology. Initial training was provided for participants from the tripartite constituents, other UN agencies and educational institutions. Subsequent to the training on PGA, the Ministry of Labour, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture carried out a PGA within their institutions. The Ministry of Labour and Women's affairs subsequently established a national PGA team under the patronage of the Prime Minister.

In Yemen the ILO provided support for two initiatives<sup>41</sup> strengthening Government of Yemen Knowledge and capacity to promote decent work and gender equity. Throughout the projects ILO tools and expertise were integrated with hands-on logistical and technical support for institutional development of the Directorate General for Working Women (DGWW). The DGWW was established as a directorate within the Ministry of Labour in 1997. Subsequently the Ministry of Labour mandate was expanded and it was reorganized as the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs – MOSAL. While the DGWW had been in existence for some time before the initial ILO support, few processes had been established, its mandate was ill defined, there was no organizational structure, professional staff had no job descriptions and there was no budget for activities other than salaries. Subnational units at the governorates level had been

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41. Strengthening the National Machinery for Advancing Women's Employment in Yemen. Promoting Decent Work and Gender Equality in Yemen (second phase).

established (DWW) but there was little if any contact between the DGWW and DWWs.

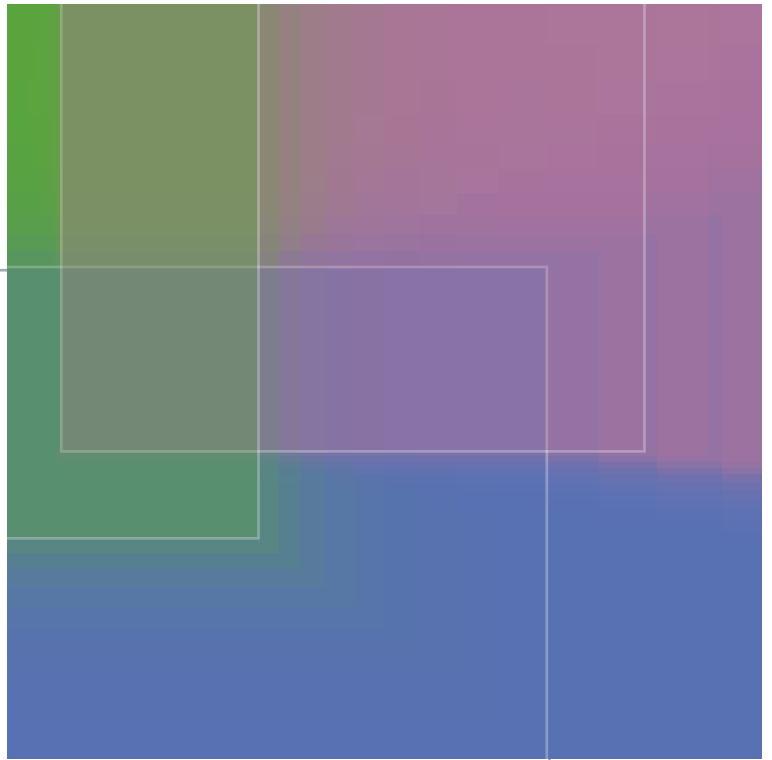
The approach applied in both projects went beyond typical capacity development activities that provide information and tools and instead integrated new knowledge and tools into an intensive effort in institution building. Support – financial, logistical and technical - was provided to strengthen coordination mechanisms between DGWW and other relevant directorates within MOSAL and between DGWW and the DWWs in the governorates. Project investments were also made in networking activities that established working relationships between the DGWW, other government entities, civil society organizations and national/international NGOs.

This institutional development support was realized through activities such as: project retreats that included staff from governorate level DWWs; DGWW supervisory and training missions to the DWWs in the governorates; weekly project meetings to consolidate capacity development activities and for joint activity planning and reporting. The project invested in developing a platform for coordination and networking. Orientation meetings were organized with relevant partners including directorates within MOSAL and other organizations working in the area of gender and employment. These organizations included a national business association and a confederation of trade unions as well as the National Women's Committee. An 'in-house' monthly coordination meeting (within MOSAL) was also established. The goal of both the internal coordination activities and external networking efforts were to develop common work plans and to promote the integration of gender concerns into work plans of other government and non-government entities.

A number of studies providing new country-specific information about gender and employment were commissioned, completed and disseminated within the networks established. These studies included: an analysis of chambers of commerce and women's entrepreneurship; an assessment of gender issues within the trade unions; an analysis of employment trends for women in Yemen; a report on domestic labour in Yemen; and a statistical profile of women in Yemen.

These project investments reached beyond the primary partners and collaborators in a number of ways. Through the DGWW collaboration with the National Women's Committee and other technical partners the DGWW developed a booklet and training programme on labour rights and responsibilities that has reached more than 12 thousand workers. Policy briefs addressing gender and employment were developed for the Health, Education, Agriculture and public sectors. Materials and inputs were provided to the Directorate of Labour inspection and Occupational Health and Safety on gender aspects of workplace inspection and occupational safety and health. The focus on institution building raised the profile and established the credibility of the DGWW and created a strong foundation for expanding DGWW impact on economic participation and women's empowerment.

The ILO experience in Yemen also illustrates the risks and limitations of sustained, high quality support for institution building. When states are weak and governments do not enjoy broad-based support events can quickly undo these investments. The significant political transition in Yemen has – at least in the short term – resulted in changes in personnel and resource allocations that have constrained the ability of government to build on these investments in promoting women's economic participation and empowerment.



# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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## 4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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The synthesis review has examined recently completed ILO supported initiatives in the areas of youth and women's employment in the MENA region for the purpose of identifying good practices and lessons learned and documenting them in a format that would be useful for possible replication.<sup>42</sup> The source documents were primarily project evaluations from completed projects supplemented by interviews with ILO regional staff and other documentation where appropriate. These evaluations – and projects – varied with respect to the number of technical approaches that were demonstrated with some projects focused on one approach while other projects incorporated several types of interventions. In some cases ILO support was a component of a joint project supported by a variety of agencies (joint programmes). In order to assess ILO experiences, the synthesis review has focused on reviewing and synthesizing lessons learned from specific practices supported by the ILO within projects rather than entire projects. In the completed evaluations for 29 initiatives there were common characteristics:

1. Short-term targets for participation and the implementation of activities were most often met or exceeded.
2. Participants, government partners and other stakeholders had very positive views of the quality of the strategies and tools developed and implemented.
3. Project objectives were frequently expressed as gains in employment during the project period. These objectives were often not evaluable because time periods were too short, objectives were not written in a measureable form or the necessary data was not collected.
4. In a number of cases individual short term projects were linked together to provide ongoing support for a particular technical approach within a country or to promote a common approach across countries within the MENA region.

While project evaluations examine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of a single project experience, the goal of the synthesis review is to draw upon recent experiences to identify lessons learned about enhancing the effectiveness and impact of future ILO support. Lessons learned were usually included in the source documents (project evaluations), however these lessons learned often applied to project implementation and management rather than the suitability or effectiveness of a particular technical approach for improving employment outcomes for youth and women. Given the relatively short time frame typical in the projects reviewed, it is unrealistic to expect

the establishment of clear causal relationships between ILO supported practices and improvements in youth and women's employment within the project timelines. What can be derived from examining practices described in project evaluations is 1) the strategic relevance and coherence with the region and country-specific challenges to youth and women's employment and 2) lessons learned for translating relevant and quality practices into improved employment outcomes for youth and women.

### LESSONS LEARNED:

#### THE COHERENCE OF ILO SUPPORTED APPROACHES WITH STRATEGIC REGIONAL AND COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FOR IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH AND WOMEN

##### **Challenge: Absence of coherent macroeconomic policy focus on equity based growth**

Most projects reviewed involved a mixture of demonstrations or pilots of approaches for working with youth and/or women, capacity development for important stakeholders and support for the development of policies, regulations, guidelines, manuals and other macro or meso level support. One important limitation of relying on completed projects as the primary source material for the synthesis review is that significant ILO support to youth and women's employment in the region is not reflected in project documents or in project evaluations. ILO staff and experts work to promote youth and women's employment through policy analysis and advice, development of action plans, elaborating concept papers, sponsoring and/or participating in meetings for exchanging information and other types of support not well described or absent from project evaluations.

##### **Challenge: Low quality and unresponsive education and training system with weak linkages with the private sector**

ILO support has been utilized to develop CBT courses, pilot the implementation of CBT courses, sensitize and orient decision makers to the important characteristics of CBT and foster capacity for CBT course development in a number of countries. Upgraded informal apprenticeship models have also been developed and piloted in the region. Developing these initiatives has involved sensitization and orientation of decision makers to the concept of upgraded apprenticeship models and the development of mechanisms and processes for systematizing and recognizing the workplace learning experience for apprentices.

Both the CBT and upgrading informal apprenticeship methodologies require significant private sector input into the development of training programme content and the recognition

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42. See Terms of Reference Annex 3

of skills. These initiatives have demonstrated for national stakeholders two effective strategies for improving the quality and relevance of skills development through strengthening and formalizing private sector input into training defining competencies and assessing/recognizing skills. The quality improvements resulting from more systematic links with private sector demand have been widely recognized and commended by stakeholders.

The CBT and upgraded informal apprenticeship initiatives incorporate mechanisms for formally describing, assessing and recognizing workplace skills/competencies acquired. When implemented across countries these approaches promote a regionalization of skills training and qualifications for non-degree/non-diploma training. The recognition of skilled labour workplace skills development across country boundaries has potential for promoting efficiencies and transparency in the regional labour market – including the market for migrant labour. Supporting this regionalization of skills development, a draft regional manual on CBT curriculum development is being finalized.

CBT short courses and upgraded apprenticeships have demonstrated potential as cost effective strategies for expanding opportunities for poor, marginalized youth. The short duration and workplace skills focus of CBT and the opportunity to earn wages while acquiring formally recognized skills in an upgraded informal apprenticeship significantly reduce the opportunity costs of acquiring in-demand skills for participants. Models of CBT and upgraded apprenticeship are still dependent on external support and management. Translating the potential impact from these promising initiatives into meaningful improvements in employment outcomes– especially for the poorest young people – will depend on the administrative and budgetary reforms necessary for the integration of these approaches into the education and training system.

### **Challenge: Inefficient labour markets and lack of transparency**

The ILO has supported a number of initiatives to strengthen employment services in the region – and in particular the capacity of public employment services to address the needs of youth and women. The support has included technical assistance such as the elaboration of manuals and capacity development for decision makers and for employment services staff who work directly with young people. The technical support for systems and capacity development for job counseling and job placement was recognized as high quality by stakeholders. The regional experience suggests a number of ways strengthening and expanding PES can improve employment outcomes for youth and women.

Strengthening PES shifts the emphasis on improving opportunities for youth and women from one of solidarity to a more sustainable mutually beneficial partnership between job seekers, government and the private sector. In this partnership youth are provided access to information and greater transparency about

opportunities, required skills, and opportunities to acquire market relevant skills. Employers are motivated to be active participants through improving the efficiency of recruiting processes and reducing the costs of turnover through pre-employment preparation/orientation and screening of potential employees provided by PES.

Female participation in the PES initiatives was somewhat higher than female labour market participation rates. This suggests that providing career guidance and orientation and increasing transparency in recruitment and hiring processes may encourage more women to seek paid employment. PES may also improve employment opportunities for women by raising the awareness of potential employers about the untapped skills of women job seekers and sensitizing employers about the workplace norms and conditions of employment necessary to attract women to the workplace.

The potential impact of strengthening PES also includes gains from improving the efficiency of the migration labour market. The ILO supported the development of an orientation manual for PES staff in Tunisia in supporting job seekers seeking employment in niche external markets. In this initiative the identification of employment opportunities (supported by IOM and GoT) has been expanded beyond the national borders through partnership with private and public entities in countries where Tunisian labour enjoys a possible niche market.

### **Challenge: Weak private sector employment growth and low productivity; especially among SMEs**

The unsustainability of the previous state led development model and the withdrawal of the public sector as employer of last resort has had considerable impact on the number and quality of opportunities for young job seekers in the region. A development model that supports improvements in living standards for the many rather than the few will depend on a growing and increasingly productive private sector – especially the SME sector where most employment is created.

An important focus for ILO efforts to promote inclusive growth has been transforming attitudes toward entrepreneurship and business development as well as providing greater access to new knowledge and skills about business formation and development. Country and regional offices have drawn on well-established and tested ILO tools and expertise in entrepreneurship, business skills development and enterprise promotion adapting global practices to the country-specific challenges. KAB pilots have been implemented in education and training institutions in a number of countries in the region. When formally evaluated, the pilot experiences have demonstrated effectiveness at raising awareness and improving knowledge about entrepreneurship and enterprise development. Stakeholders have expressed very favourable impressions of the quality of the programs. Indeed, the quality of the programs and the relevancy to regional/national needs have at times created unrealistic expectations on the

part of stakeholders about short term employment outcomes despite the clear messages from ILO staff regarding the goals and objectives of KAB. Broad institutionalization of KAB building on initial pilot projects is also being pursued and supported in a number of countries. While the approach is highly valued by national partners, the complexity of integrating the approach into national curriculum as well as ensuring the continuing capacity of instructors and the availability of materials is a considerable challenge. Without technical support and advocacy for effective institutionalization, the medium term impact of efforts to transform attitudes and knowledge about entrepreneurship and business development could be quite small.

The ILO has supported a number of initiatives in enterprise promotion. Support for enterprise promotion has included support for the development and strengthening of social enterprise (cooperative sector), improving value chains and enterprise development as a conflict recovery strategy. While relevant to the regional challenges to youth and women's employment, enterprise promotion initiatives have suffered from the inherent conflict between short term crisis recovery demands and the longer term requirements for sustainable enterprise development. Cooperative managers and members were able to develop new skills through ILO provided support, but stakeholders identified institutional/legal constraints and access to finance as continuing barriers to growth in the cooperative sector. In the case of enterprise promotion as a conflict recovery strategy there were indications that some new business were formed. However, it was also noted that the support network for continued assistance in business skills development and access to finance was very weak. The sustainability of these enterprises and their impact on crisis recovery is difficult to assess.

Enterprise promotion activities with links to strong national partners did demonstrate good potential for sustainable impact. Technical support utilizing ILO tools (SIYB and others) was provided to a national development institution in Qatar. This institution in collaboration with a local mobile telecommunications provider utilized the ILO technical support to develop a business skills support unit for new enterprises. This institution recently requested that the ILO provide additional technical assistance to expand the number of business development trainers and enhance the capacity of the unit some six years after the original ILO support.

## **TRANSLATING RELEVANT AND QUALITY TECHNICAL SUPPORT INTO SUSTAINABLE IMPROVEMENTS IN EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH AND WOMEN**

Finally, a common challenge across many of the ILO initiatives was the tension between implementing technical approaches developed for addressing systemic challenges to youth and women's employment in short term projects where objectives were stated in terms of immediate improvements in employment and incomes. While this tension impacts some types of initiatives more than others, the focus on short term results of employment generation and quick improvements in income may divert project investments away from areas of potential long term impact toward activities that produce short term but unsustainable results. In a number of cases, project evaluations characterized the short term employment objectives as not evaluable as data was inconclusive or in some cases was not collected. This inability to meet or report on the short term employment and income impact was common - even for projects that were evaluated as very successful in terms of capacity development, awareness raising, knowledge transfer and favourable views of participants and other stakeholders.

Regional and country offices have responded to this challenge by linking short term projects with diverse funding sources to maintain a continuity of support for strategically relevant technical approach over time within a country. These innovations enabled the ILO to provide strategic ongoing support for systems change in an environment where financial resources and the attention of governments and development partners has been understandably focused on addressing acute crisis conditions.

While this linking of short term projects enables ongoing development and refinement of high quality and relevant practices, translating these practices into large scale impact for youth and women cannot be realized without government adoption and implementation.

While project evaluations must focus on immediate objectives, building a convincing investment case for wide scale adoption requires developing estimates of the likely magnitude of impact on the basis of robust evidence from country experience. While short term projects often succeed or fail on the basis of strategies for "work arounds" of institutional/administrative/legal constraints, the investment case must identify the necessary enabling changes in the institutional/administrative/legal environment. Short term projects often involve minimal or no financial outlays by governments while an investment case should present sound estimates of the costs of adoption expressed in relation to the expected benefits.

Presenting a sound investment case for system-wide implementation of practices and approaches does not ensure adoption on the part of governments. However, developing an investment case for practices that are relevant and tested through country experience and are consistent with government policy and priorities may have more potential for meaningful impact than additional short term projects. In order to improve the impact of ILO initiatives in promoting youth and women's employment the ILO must utilize its significant technical capacity to more effectively promote systems change. This capacity can be enhanced through strategic investments in programme learning to support the elaboration of investment cases for selected practices in countries where adoption possibilities are most favourable



