



< Higher Education for Life and Work (HELW) project – Independent Final evaluation >

QUICK FACTS

Countries: EGYPT

Evaluation date: 24 June 2024

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: Decent Work Team / Country Office Cairo

Technical Office: Decent Work Team / Country Office Cairo

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DC Symbol: EGY/20/04/GBR

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Key Words: HELW, STEM, MoHESR, Quality, Equity, Relevance, Consortium



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The present document is the final independent evaluation report of the Higher Education for Life and Work (HELW) project. The proposal that led to the HELW project identified gaps in the quality and relevance of university curricula as the weaknesses in Egypt’s higher education system. These weaknesses are seen as contributing factor to constrained economic growth. However, employers in Egypt are demanding better core skills for employability. As a result, the country has experienced high youth unemployment and underemployment rates due to the above weaknesses. To deal with this, the project initially aimed to build the capacity of universities and students, with a particular focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), to better align with the labour market, improve career guidance, leadership and core skills curriculum amongst higher education institutions.

Present situation of the project

The International Labour Organization (ILO) signed the agreement of HELW with the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) on 14 October 2020 to 31 March 2023. Funds from FCDO was disbursed to ILO as consortium lead. HELW project was designed to be implemented across 30 months for a total amount of 8 million GBP. But due to COVID-19, delay of security clearance, delay of implementation starting also due to challenges on the donor side, caused by the merging of government ministries and changing priorities, there were budget uncertainties from FCDO side that were beyond the project’s control, resulting to significant budget cuts in July 2021 (from 8 million GBP to 2.4 million GBP); and then the budget decreased from 2.4 M to 1.8 M. As a result of previous: duration of implementation became 18 months in addition to staff shortage yet achieved most



	<p>project’s activities and outputs. The project completed in September 2023.</p>
<p>Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation</p>	<p>HELW project works in consortium with 4 partners, which are the ILO (lead), ICareer, the Al Alfi Foundation (AAF), and Advance Higher Education (Advance HE). Also, partnered with the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI) and governmental entities to implement the project as: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR), 7 Egyptian Universities to build their capacity and ensures sustainability. The objective of this evaluation is to assess the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, impact and sustainability (evaluation criteria) of project implementation and, in particular, to document the results of the project in relation to its overall objectives and expected results as defined in the project document. Additionally, the evaluation identified good practices and lessons learned, both of which can be used when designing similar interventions in the future.</p>
<p>Methodology of evaluation</p>	<p>The evaluation was based on common evaluation standards, ethical standards, and adherence to gender equality and human rights-based approaches. The OECD-DAC evaluation criteria for humanitarian action (OECD 2019) which assesses relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability; in addition to Gender Equality guided the evaluation assignment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Document Review:</u> All available documents were consulted during the evaluation process • <u>Quantitative & Qualitative Technique</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stakeholders IDIs – 19 IDIs 2. Beneficiaries Questionnaire – 43 Respondents out of 70 Contacted 3. Beneficiaries Database



Data Analysis and Triangulation

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

- **Programme Design:** The HELW project's theory was generally relevant but lacked explicit definition post-design and inception phases.
- **Relevance:** Aligned with Egypt's 2030 strategy and UN SDGs, HELW contributed to education, gender equality, and economic growth, resonating with ILO's objectives.
- **Coherence:** Unique partnerships succeeded, but outcomes varied among partners, impacting Egyptian higher education development positively.
- **Effectiveness:** Achieved goals, notably benefiting students through comprehensive training systems, job connections, and high beneficiary satisfaction.
- **Efficiency:** Generally cost-effective but faced financial complexities between ILO and FCDO, with management challenges due to staffing and information flow issues.
- **Impact:** Extended employability impact beyond students to employers, equipped MoHESR with technological solutions, empowering over 7,000 beneficiaries.
- **Sustainability:** Project objectives aligned with MoHESR's vision, supporting governmental partners and universities, but faced challenges in integrating a comprehensive sustainability study.
- **Cross-cutting Approaches:** While gender-sensitive, the project lacked tailored actions for socially excluded groups like Persons with Disabilities, revealing an inclusivity gap.

To conclude the evaluation of the HELW project highlights commendable progress in partnerships and financial efficiency, leveraging the International Labour Organization's expertise. However, challenges persist in technical support, policy adherence, and consistent outcomes across project components. Management gaps, including inadequate staffing and fragmented information flow, hinder reporting and evaluation. Despite notable impacts in empowering beneficiaries, employment challenges for trainees raise

concerns about sustained effectiveness in meeting market demands. The project's efforts toward sustainability align with MoHESR's vision, but the absence of clear criteria and challenges in implementing sustainability studies threaten its enduring impact. Overall, while successful in specific areas, the HELW project requires focused improvements in management, impact assessment, and sustainability planning for long-term effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

1. Establish Project Steering Mechanisms and Baseline Studies – **Addressed to ILO**;
2. Engage Governmental Bodies and Streamline Coordination - **Addressed to ILO and Consortium Partners**;
3. Develop Clear Partnership Policies and Prioritize Sustainability Planning - **Addressed to ILO and Consortium Partners**;
4. Consolidate Consortium Efforts and Conduct Organizational Assessment - **Addressed to ILO and Consortium Partners**;
5. Implement Comprehensive Electronic Monitoring Systems and Focus on Capacity Building - **Addressed to ILO and Consortium Partners**;
6. Enhance Outreach to Persons with Disabilities and Gender Transformative Approaches - **Addressed to ILO and MoHESR**;
7. Facilitate Knowledge Exchange - **Addressed to ILO**;
8. Maintain Budget Stability - **Addressed to FCDO**.

Main lessons learned and good practices

Lessons Learned:

- Inception & Planning Phases: Ambiguity in program theory during design led to unclear activity-outcome connections. Strengthening this phase enhances implementation plans, clarity, and alignment with stakeholder vision.



- Execution & Monitoring Phases: Assessment tools must inform decisions for effective monitoring. Lack of tool harmonization hindered evaluation of project outcomes.

- Closure Phase: Implementing an electronic monitoring system ensures updated beneficiary data and accurate project outcome tracking. Absence of comprehensive reports impedes closure and results interpretation.

Emerging Good Practices:

- Selection of High-Quality Management: Rigorous recruitment faced staffing challenges, resolved by a consultant with ILO policy experience, kickstarting progress despite security clearance delays.

- Unique Partnership Model with MoHESR: Carefully selected partners aligned with project components. The project equipped MoHESR with technological solutions, fostering better communication and needs assessment via the CSM portal for engaging university students.