



Egypt Youth Employment (EYE): Empowerment under FORSA Programme (EYE/FORSA)

ILO DC/SYMBOL: [EGY/20/01/NOR]

Type of Evaluation: Project

Evaluation timing: Final

Evaluation nature: Independent

Project countries: Egypt

P&B Outcome(s): Outcome 5 (current Outcome 3): Decent work in the rural economy

Outcome 4: Promoting sustainable enterprises

SDG(s):

Goal 1, Target 1.2

Goal 2, Target 2.3

Goal 8, Target 8.2

Date when the evaluation was completed by the evaluator: 31 August 2024

Date when evaluation was approved by EVAL: 16 Dec 2024.

ILO Administrative Office: DWT/CO Cairo

ILO Technical Office(s): DWT/CO Cairo

Joint evaluation agencies: [N/A]

Project duration: January 2021 – June 2024

Donor and budget: Government of Norway- 3 634 941,86 USD

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Evaluation budget: 16,400 USD

Key Words: *Social protection, Social security, Social services*

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

Since 2015, the Egyptian government has implemented major economic reforms, including the Takaful and Karama (T&K) cash transfer program, followed by the 2017 launch of the National 'Forsa' program to boost employment and income generation. Aimed at aiding beneficiaries in transitioning from cash assistance to economic self-reliance, the project aligns with Forsa's broader goal, supported by World Bank funding, to expand wage and self-employment opportunities.

Key project outcomes included:

1. Strengthening civil society, institutional, and private sector capacity to promote wage and self-employment for youth.
2. Enhancing access to wage employment.
3. Promoting self-employment, particularly among women.

Present situation of the project

The ILO's "Egypt Youth Employment (EYE): Empowerment under FORSA Programme" provided economic empowerment activities in Asyut and Sharkeya and capacity-building nationally. It included training and support for both self- and wage employment, especially for women. Running from January 2021 to August 2024 with two no-cost extensions, the project was managed by ILO Cairo with support from the Decent Work Team and officially concluded in June 2024, with two extra months for evaluation completion.

The EYE-FORSA project, funded by the Government of Norway with a budget of USD 3.6 million, aims to address capacity gaps by providing technical assistance and capacity-building to local institutions and civil society organizations. It targets young, unemployed jobseekers and females excluded from the labour market, focusing on promoting wage and self-employment opportunities, particularly through managerial skills training and access to capital. Although the project was delayed due to financial conditions set by the Ministry of Finance, which postponed fund transfers to NGOs, it continued to prepare and implement its activities. One key challenge faced by the project was beneficiaries' reluctance to participate, fearing the loss of their Takaful cash transfers, a concern that has been discussed with the Ministry of Social Solidarity to ensure the sustainability of the program.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The independent evaluation aimed to enhance accountability and foster learning within the ILO and among key stakeholders. It



	<p>assessed the entire project implementation, from January 2021 (when the protocol was signed with the Government) to June 2024, examining all results and key outputs produced during this period. The evaluation's geographical scope aligned with the project's structure at both national and local levels, covering the two governorates of Sharkeya and Asyut. The evaluation adhered to DAC criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability), UNEG guidelines, and ILO evaluation policies. Additionally, the evaluation addressed cross-cutting issues such as Human Rights, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and ILO themes, including Gender and Non-Discrimination (e.g., for people with disabilities), Social Dialogue and Tripartism, International Labour Standards, and the Just Transition to Environmental Sustainability. The primary users of the evaluation are the Government of Egypt, represented by several ministries, and the Government of Norway. Other stakeholders include local government bodies, service providers, partner NGOs, and ILO offices in Cairo, ROAF, and HQ, as well as relevant ILO departments.</p>
<p>Methodology of evaluation</p>	<p>The evaluation, guided by OECD/DAC criteria, unfolded in four structured phases. It began with an Inception Phase involving initial desk research and consultations with the project team to shape data collection methods, resulting in a finalized inception report. In the Data Collection Phase, a mixed-methods approach was applied, reviewing key documents, conducting 38 interviews with stakeholders, government representatives, and NGOs, and holding focus group discussions in Sharkeya and Asyut with 105 participants. Following data collection, a Stakeholder Workshop held in Cairo on August 28th provided an opportunity to present preliminary findings and gather feedback for the final report. In the Data Analysis and Reporting Phase, qualitative and quantitative data was thoroughly analyzed, coded, and triangulated to validate findings and fill knowledge gaps.</p> <p>Despite these efforts, the evaluation faced certain Data Limitations. A recent cabinet reshuffle restricted access to some stakeholders, and a condensed timeline led to the use of convenience sampling. Observational visits were limited, and beneficiaries of the training-for-employment component were unavailable for participation due to work obligations, with gaps addressed through desk research.</p>



MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

The EYE project aimed to support economic empowerment by addressing the needs of a vulnerable and often hard-to-reach population, sensitive to the risks of losing government benefits. Overall, the project effectively filled gaps in knowledge and skills, especially for those seeking self-employment, while aligning closely with Egypt's national Forsa programme and government priorities. The project's relevance was evident in its design, which was adaptable and inclusive, with adjustments made to better address women's needs, particularly in the self-employment track. However, the wage-employment component faced challenges in relevance, as the jobs offered often failed to meet the location and suitability needs of female beneficiaries or higher education levels.

In terms of coherence, the EYE project worked well within Egypt's national economic goals and ILO's objectives, enhancing support by allowing stakeholders to use ILO training materials. This cooperation reinforced the project's alignment with broader national efforts.

Effectively, the self-employment track proved more impactful than the wage-employment track, as it led to tangible business growth and job creation among beneficiaries, while the wage-employment track struggled with issues related to the quality and accessibility of jobs. Project effectiveness was supported by ILO's strategic flexibility and high-quality training materials, alongside efforts to involve local trainers and community leaders. The addition of financial literacy components also increased beneficiaries' independence in self-employment.

Efficiency was a strong point, with good use of project resources and staffing despite external challenges. Inflation and delays in the national Forsa programme caused some disruptions and led to project extensions, but overall, the project's management was efficient, with good communication maintained between ILO and stakeholders. However, the absence of outcome indicators made it challenging to systematically track the project's higher-level achievements, though external studies helped address this gap.

The project's impact on the beneficiaries, especially through the self-employment track, appears promising, with potential ripple effects in the community as some beneficiaries were able to hire employees. However, due to recent turnover within the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS), the long-term impact on the national programme is uncertain.



In terms of sustainability, while government and NGO stakeholders are motivated to continue the project’s work, financial resources are a limiting factor. Beneficiaries who have started businesses are expected to maintain them, although inflation presents a significant challenge to the stability of these ventures. Capacity-building at local and national levels is likely to ensure some continuation of the project’s impact in the future, supporting the project's sustainability beyond its initial funding phase.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Recommendations

- 1.Support Job Creation & Private Sector Development:** Continued support to the Egyptian government, particularly the Ministry of Labour, is recommended to foster decent job creation and local private sector growth. For areas with limited job opportunities, alternative empowerment initiatives are advised.
- 2.Integrate Marketing into Training:** Future employment training should emphasize digital and offline marketing, helping businesses grow and survive. Beneficiaries have expressed interest in online sales and digital business skills, suggesting a need for more digitalized training content.
- 3.Include Outcome-Level Indicators:** To better measure impact, future projects should incorporate outcome and impact indicators in the log frame, enabling clearer evaluation of program effectiveness and alignment with project objectives.
- 4.Flexibility in Training Selection:** Broadening criteria for training participation, beyond T&K beneficiary status, could prevent community disruptions and ensure genuine interest, addressing local needs while minimizing social tensions.
- 5.Explore Collective Income Models:** Alternative income-generating models, such as cooperatives and small production units, could reduce individual management burdens and enhance resilience. Market studies should guide the feasibility of these models within local contexts.
- 6.Extend Self-Employment Support:** Extending support beyond the current six-month period could improve sustainability for T&K beneficiaries. Mentorship from technical experts and support from local NGOs could strengthen long-term business viability.



	<p>7.Enhance Stakeholder Linkages: Improved coordination among MoSS, MoYS, MoL, and local NGOs is encouraged for better communication, idea sharing, and lesson exchange across national and local levels.</p>
<p>Main lessons learned and good practices</p>	<p>The design of wage-employment initiatives should align closely with available local job opportunities, which may vary significantly for men and women. If suitable job offers are scarce, alternative economic empowerment activities should be considered.</p> <p>While aligning with Ministry strategies brings advantages, it can also introduce risks if national efforts lack quality or timeliness. Although the benefits of close coordination generally outweigh these risks, projects should include risk mitigation strategies and flexible donor arrangements to address any national program issues.</p> <p>The lack of outcome-level indicators can complicate project monitoring and evaluation, as well as communications with donors, by causing misunderstandings about project goals. This gap also challenges evaluators in fully understanding the project’s intended outcomes when language is vague.</p> <p>To ensure project effectiveness, it is recommended to enhance project and budget flexibility to adapt to the diverse needs of beneficiaries throughout implementation. Additionally, combining business training with prompt asset delivery after training completion enables beneficiaries to select suitable assets, boosting their relevance and utility. Utilizing local staff, such as NGOs, trainers, and officials, is also key for reaching hard-to-reach beneficiaries, as these trusted community members are well-versed in navigating local dynamics.</p>