



## Independent Final evaluation of the project “Decent Jobs for Egypt’s Young People-Tackling the Challenge in Damietta.”

### QUICK FACTS

**Countries:** Egypt

**Evaluation date:** 30 July 2023

**Evaluation type:** Project

**Evaluation timing:** Final

**Administrative Office:** ILO Country Office for Egypt

**Technical Office:** Decent Work Team (DWT) Cairo Office for North Africa

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**DC Symbol:** EGY/18/01/MTX

**Donor(s) & budget:** Egyptian Methanex Methanol Company S.A.E. – US\$ 1,355,657.00

*Key Words: Employment, Decent Work, Sustainable Enterprises, Inclusive Growth.*



## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

### Summary of the project purpose, logic, and structure

Increasing employment and ensuring **decent work** for all is essential for sustainable development. Quality employment and proper work conditions help reduce inequalities and poverty and empower people, especially women, young people and the most vulnerable such as people with disabilities, guided by the gender and women’s empowerment principles of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

**Project background:** The *project’s development objective* is to increase decent job opportunities for young women and men in the governorate of Damietta. Therefore, the project aims to employ a multi-prolonged approach to provide decent and productive work opportunities by building the skills of young women and men to generate more and better jobs through enterprise development, employability skills, job-matching services, as well as enhancing the capacities of local partners on the ground.

### Present situation of the project

The project’s time frame took place between 1 April 2019 and the end of September 2023 after a year of cost extension and four months of no-cost extension; the project got on May 2023. The project worked on three outcomes with the objective of “Increased decent job opportunities for young men and women in Damietta”. They are as follows:

- Increased capacity of local government, employers, trade unions and civil society organization partners to implement youth employment initiatives.
- Increased business start-ups and improved youth livelihoods through self-employment opportunities.
- Increased decent work job placements for young people through better labour market matching.

### Purpose, scope, and clients of the evaluation

The overall **objective of the evaluation** is to “Provide an objective assessment of the accomplishment of project activities in terms of Coherence and Relevance, Efficiency, effectiveness, Impact orientation, and Sustainability” of the project. This includes the identification of the specific strengths and weaknesses in the project design, strategy, and implementation, as well as specific lessons learned, good practices, and recommendations for future similar programmes. **The Project time frame** covered through the independent Final project Evaluation process from 1 April 2019 to the end of May 2023. The **Clients of the evaluation** are ILO’s constituents and national and international partners, including the governorate of Damietta, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Education and Technical Cooperation, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency, National Council of Women, Civil Society Organizations. Furthermore, the findings of this final evaluation are destined for ILO’s management (the Decent Jobs for Egypt’s Young People: Tackling the Challenge Together in Damietta (DJEP) team, the ILO DWT/CO Cairo, EMPLOYMENT, ENTERPRISE, SKILLS, ACRTAV, ACTEMP and the Regional Office for Africa), as well as for the project’s donor (Egyptian Methanex Methanol Company S.A.E.).

## Methodology of evaluation

The Final Independent Project Evaluation process adopted the **Contribution analysis approach**, which examines how the project and the respective system adopted have contributed to more considerable scale outcomes and outputs, as well as the project's contributions towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and country priorities linked to Egypt 2030 agenda. The evaluation was sequenced in three phases: (a) inception, (b) data collection (c) reporting and learning. Following a preliminary document review and virtual consultations with the project's primary stakeholders, the evaluation consultant produced an inception report outlining the evaluation methodology, matrix (Appendix II), and data collection tools. Data collection took place between 11 March 2023 and 30 March 2023- with 20 KIIs and 26 interviewees (12 males and 14 females) covering all the key five categories of stakeholders. Also, 7 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) combined or not combined with the application of both the Outcome Harvesting (OH) or the Most Significant Change (MSC) facilitated with a sample of end target beneficiaries with a total of 85 participants (7 Males and 78 Females). Once all data were collected, data were analysed systematically and summarized, informing the formulation of preliminary findings. Preliminary findings were shared and discussed during an online validation workshop organized on 22 May 2023 with the ILO relevant team members and the critical project stakeholders for validation purposes. A round of final review and approval processes by the ILO evaluation manager and other ILO relevant teams followed this.

## MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

### Relevance and strategic fit

- The project is aligned with Damietta's relevant employment sectors, evident by the local government buy-in, yet stakeholders' engagement level varies.
- The project adopted an innovative public-private partnership approach with stakeholders by having employers as partners and funders.
- The absence of market assessment/study at the beginning of the project was tackled by flexibility from the project responding to emerging needs.
- Overall, the project shows alignment with the national development priorities, UNPDF, and ILO outcomes.
- The project capitalized on ILO's previous project on-ground network and learnings besides ILO knowledge products and toolkits.
- While the project faced delays because of COVID-19, the project used this delay to restructure and adopt a flexible structure to respond better to the emerging situation.

### Coherence

- The project capitalized on ILO expertise and knowledge products related to entrepreneurship and is aligned with the ILO strategic objectives and other national and regional initiatives.
- The synergies and interlinkages between the project and other ILO country-level interventions must be improved. However, synergies were mainly with other national organizations, such as MSMEDA and MoYS, with which ILO works.
- The project introduced new standards for managing CSR activities in the oil and gas industry and forced gender measures on the project's monitoring system.



### Validity of project design

- The project's unclear theory of change and changes under outcome one challenge assessing the validity of the project design.
- While the indicators proved to be appropriate and helpful in the design, the lack of indicators update to capture changes in the project's activities and results and poor indicator reporting negatively affected the assessment of the project's progress.
- The project has an exit strategy for design and a sustainability plan for SIYB.

### Project Effectiveness

- The project offered and secured 711 jobs (on a self-employment basis), exceeding the targeted jobs in design. Outcomes achievement and output achievements vary. Outcome two (Increased business start-ups and improved youth livelihoods through self-employment opportunities) was the highest intervention contributed with jobs to the program, with 472 jobs created from different programs. GET Ahead created 174 jobs, while SIYB created 298 jobs. Both programs exceeded the 300 targeted jobs under Outcome Two. On the other hand, Outcome One and Outcome Three failed to meet the targeted jobs as JSC activities resulted in 138 jobs, while training for employment created 101 jobs.
- The evaluation concludes the following elements as critical enablers of the project's success. They are as follows:
  - ✓ Project's adopted partnership model is one of the critical enablers of the project's success.
  - ✓ Adding counselling and mentoring support via business clinics to services offered by the project added value and maximized positive results generated by the project.
  - ✓ ILO's strong learning products added value to end-beneficiaries and contributed to the project's success.
  - ✓ The project coordinator enjoys high dedication, interest, and passion for the project implementation and maximizing the project results, adopting some non-traditional approaches and successful mitigation strategies to deal with the challenges encountered.
  - ✓ Using the incentives model with the GET Ahead and SIYB project interventions.

The following are some critical challenges encountered during the project's life, where all have used some mitigation strategies. They are as follows:

- ✓ The project was challenged by delays due to COVID-19 and Security permits at the beginning of the project and other operational delays.
- ✓ Damietta's internal cultural challenges challenged the project.
- ✓ The weak presence of labour unions in the private sector.
- The project built a partnership model with multiple organizations supporting the results' sustainability.



- The project focused on empowering women in Damietta, which led to positive results.
- There is room for better inclusion of people with disabilities in project design with dedicated resources.
- The project had a gender lens since the project's design and during implementation to ensure equal opportunities and inclusion of women.
- While project activities were delayed because of COVID-19, the project used the time to restructure and adopt an agile approach to respond to emerging needs.

#### **Efficiency of the resources used.**

- Overall, the project interventions were cost-efficient.
- The project-built partnerships with relevant stakeholders to enhance the project results and contribute to the project's objectives.
- At design, the project had a strong management arrangement with a clear division of roles and responsibilities with the absence of a steering committee during the project's life.
- While the M&E system allowed close follow-up on the conducted activities and tracking of Outcome 2 and 3 indicators, the effect on progress must be clarified from the reported data and the absence of disaggregated data per gender of some of the outputs.

#### **Impact Orientation**

- The project changed women's perceptions of sustainable economic empowerment, Non-Governmental Organization NGOs' perception of development work and employers' perception of corporate social responsibility activities.
- The project developed new partnerships with unexpected partners such as Horus University and the Chamber of Food Industries (CFI).
- The project was flexible in adapting to the partner's requests and responding to emerging needs.
- Some private sector companies joined the whitelist after the food and safety support they received from the project.
- The project shared its learning with the donor via presentations and progress reporting and invited them to field visits to Damietta. The project did not deliver design learning products.

#### **Sustainability**

- The project cultivated multiple sustainable impacts in different target groups such as organizations, end-beneficiaries, and service providers.

- The project engaged stakeholders by delivering direct support and maintaining ongoing communication and strong partnership to ensure their ownership of the project's results.
- Some stakeholders, such as CSOs, need more financing, which could hinder replication or scaling up results.
- The project's in-place sustainability plan for the entrepreneurship and training unit inside Horus University is a clear example of scaling up project results.
- Other opportunities exist for scaling up or replicating the project results by the stakeholders supported by the project (e.g., Horus University and the private sector).

## RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

### Key recommendations

1. **Complementarity model of partnership adopting a better participatory approach.** While the project succeeded in building a robust partnership model with a diverse pool of stakeholders, the project can further explore complementarity between the partners from the designing phase by integrating the stakeholders and partners in the planning phase by applying a participatory approach. Long-term frequent communication and exchange between different stakeholders can maximize the project results. Activating the role of the steering committee can enable such communication.
2. **Capacity-building activities should target the CSOs/NGOs in Damietta,** particularly those with previous experience in similar interventions with the collaboration of NCW and MSMEDA to strengthen their role in the social marketing of the project in case of replicating or extending the project to a new phase. Also, it is advised to assess the training centres affiliated with the Labour training centres at the Ministry of Labour in Damietta to see how the ILO can capitalize it to play a specific role in facilitating technical skills of different employment sectors when needed by some of the target groups. Finally, it is highly advised to better engage the men in the project interventions, as only 27 % of the men participated in this project. Also, learnings about virtual alternatives can be further studied, and the project can adapt relevant solutions.
3. It is highly advised that the **job search club model can be further developed by engaging the Ministry of Youth and Sports more** at different project stages, contextualizing the training, and selecting more appropriate training times to fit the participants' language, stereotypes, and culture in the targeted areas. Also, it is recommended to include an awareness session, whether under the JSC training workshop or in a separate additional one addressing the decent work standards in addition to the rights and obligations of each employer; there will be a significant contribution to achieving the decent work standards when they enter the labour market.
4. **The application of business clinics as one of the Sustainability mechanisms** should be continued and promoted. In this regard, a specific well-structured mechanism with the collaboration of the Entrepreneurship Centre at Horus University and not depending only on external consultants and master trainers to maximize the success opportunities

of the entrepreneurship and business projects. In this regard, a business clinic sharing knowledge workshops can be organized to combine both master trainers certified at the HUE and the master trainers who facilitated and led the SIYB to develop a specific well-structured coaching & mentoring strategy and respective mechanism shows how the business clinic can be activated and used as a helpful tool to track the SIYB graduates to ensure a higher level of sustainability of the project results.

5. **Adopting the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model with other promising national donors** is highly advised. There are further opportunities to work with the private sector as development partners, which need interventions to change the mindset of the private sector and offer the right incentive for them to engage in the project. This can be done with the collaboration of the ILO and the Governorate of Damietta, where Methanex Co as the donor of this project, can play an advocacy and learning role and exchange experiences with the other private sector companies inside Damietta who can be invited to similar initiatives and projects.
6. To respond to the labour market's actual needs, especially **in a new promising community like Damietta, there should be a labour market study in partnership with the private sector** to identify constraints and explore opportunities to work with the private sector as development partners guided by the vital role of the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI) in this area. Also, the ILO can invest more in the information centres under the Ministry of Labour (MOL) to contribute to this study. Moreover, reliable data needs to be accessed, compiled, and translated to the ground. Such data can be collected by encouraging the project's stakeholder's feedback. This can help ensure that implemented activities are relevant, practical, and sustainable.
7. **People with Disabilities (PWD) must be integrated into the project's activities as one of the vulnerable groups. Involving organizations like the Business Disability Network** in the project can promote PWD inclusion through a well-structured strategy and advocacy efforts. Moreover, a mapping for the NGOs supporting PWD can advise the project's work towards better inclusion of PWD.
8. **The ILO should give special attention to developing a communication strategy with the key partners.** With the collaboration of the key stakeholders, the ILO should develop a well-structured communication strategy that includes specific pillars to promote project results and achievements on different levels. These pillars involve a sharing/dissemination mechanism among the tripartite constituents, learning mechanisms of the good practices among the different types of beneficiaries, creating a workable **project steering committee** to track, manage and monitor the project in addition to promoting the role of social media to advocate for the thematic areas of the project. This needs to be agreed upon with the donor.
9. **The ILO should establish a robust M&E system for the projects.** The ILO, with the collaboration of the different actors, should develop a well-structured M&E system to track progress during the life of the project, not only concerning short-term results (outputs) but including medium-term results (outcomes)-including the skills acquired and the quality-of-life indicators following a well-structured assessment process led by the Entrepreneurship Center. Also, this system should track the decisions and actions



proposed in the different meetings and workshops and promote collective learning among other actors at different levels, reporting on the trainees' performance considering specific indicators on both knowledge, attitude & practice pillars, in addition to the partner assessment, even every year, to maximize the benefit of the partnerships developed. Also, it is highly advised to use resources allocated under monitoring to recruit an M&E person (based in Damietta) to oversee the different M&E activities in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the project, where they can work closely with the national project coordinator to track the progress more effectively during the life of the project and inform ILO and other key partners to do the corrective actions-when needed.

**Main lessons learned and good practices.**

**Good practices**

- The **partnerships and networking model** adopted between all parties in the project, especially public and private sector representatives, to achieve the project's goals is an area of development. The Multi-stakeholder partnerships developed under the scheme have allowed ILO to share its policy structure, capacity-building programs, and outreach tools with partners. They proved to have a positive impact on the commitment and engagement of different actors to achieve sustainability goals.
- The evaluation considered the **Business Clinics** as one of the critical steps and strategies adopted in the project to promote sustainable impacts among the different targeted groups, particularly the end-beneficiaries, focusing on the SIYB project intervention beneficiaries and entrepreneurs who needed business-related advice.

**Lessons learned.**

- Women received support such as soft skills allowed women to be more confident in costing and pricing and increased their competitive edge. Moreover, **replacing direct financial incentives with competition prizes** attracted women with passion and dedication towards their businesses to join, raising the quality of program participants.
- The ILO successfully utilized the COVID-19 period in re-evaluating the project and bringing new ideas to the ground, adopting **innovative mitigation strategies** (e.g., applying the business clinics) and responding to the key stakeholders emerging needs.