GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP
FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS:

An Analysis of Life Skills Training in the MENA Region

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With support from the World Bank Development Grant Facility, in 2008 the International Youth Foundation, the Youth Employment Network, the Arab Urban Development Institute, and the Understanding Children's Work Project joined together to form the **Global Partnership for Youth Employment (GPYE)**. Its goal: to build and disseminate evidence on youth employment outcomes and effective programs to help address the challenges facing young people in their transition to work. The GPYE leverages the technical and regional experience of its five partner organizations in youth employment research, programming, evaluation, and policy dialogue. The partnership's work focuses on Africa and the Middle East, regions in need of better evidence on effective approaches to youth employment. This report is one in a series of assessments, research studies, technical guides, and learning papers produced by the GPYE to build the evidence base for improving policies, program design, and practices related to youth employability in the region. These resources can be accessed at ***www.gpye.org***.

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PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS:

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Executive Summary

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has the highest rates of youth unemployment in the world. In many cases, young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, do not have the skills required to successfully compete for available jobs. Employers in the region say that in addition to having technical skills, young people must possess life skills—such as problem solving, communication, and the ability to work in a team—to obtain and keep good jobs. Despite the relevance of life skills for youth employability, to date there has been no clear picture of the state of life skills programming in MENA. Therefore, in 2011, the International Youth Foundation (IYF) launched a mapping study to answer fundamental questions about life skills training in the region, such as, which organizations are providing life skills training to youth? What curricula and pedagogical methods are used? Are the trainers well qualified? Are life skills programs effective?

This report presents findings from IYF's six-month study, which mapped 57 organizations providing life skills programming in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Palestine. Researchers collected quantitative and qualitative data through surveys and focus groups with staff from implementing organizations, trainers, employers, and youth beneficiaries. (The instruments used in the mapping study are appended to this report.)

Researchers compared findings from the MENA Life Skills Mapping study with IYF's ten Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programs. As shown in table 1, study findings suggest that two of the ten minimum standards are met in the region; more attention must be paid to improve the quality of life skills training in MENA.

TABLE 1. Status of Life Skills Training Programs in MENA compared with Minimum Standards[1]

Standards met	Standards somewhat met	Standards not met
Life skills curriculum includes content related to core life skills. The classroom or workshop environment is conducive to effective and comfortable learning.	Life skills curriculum responds to needs identified by key stakeholders. The life skills curriculum has been pilot tested and adapted for the target audience. Specific criteria have been established for the selection of life skills trainers. Life skills trainers have received basic training in delivering life skills, whether starting up a new life skills training program or building on an existing program.	The time devoted to life skills training is of sufficient duration and frequency. Life Skills trainers consistently use appropriate teaching methodologies to deliver life skills sessions. Life skills trainers receive adequate support. Life skills training is monitored and evaluated.

1 See Box 1 on page 3 for detailed list of standards

The key messages of this report are that systems should be developed and implemented on the appropriate level to support the following components:

Curricula

The study shows that young people in the region need more hours of life-skills training than they currently receive. During the program design phase, donors and practitioners should work together to determine the most effective program duration and frequency and adapt curricula to meet these needs. Life skills curricula used by organizations in MENA cover critical topics, but lessons must be better tailored to meet the specific needs and local cultures of student beneficiaries. Curricula should be pilot tested on target populations and should also be tested and adapted throughout the program cycle.

Trainers

Most organizations in the region provide at least 20 hours of instruction to life skills trainers. But trainers—and their students—benefit when trainers receive continual evaluation and support. In particular, organizations should foster ongoing relationships between trainers and mentors or master trainers, which will help to reduce trainer attrition and improve overall trainer capacity. In addition, continued opportunities for training can help instructors apply effective, interactive, and innovative pedagogical methods, which improve student learning.

Meeting the Dual Needs of Youth and Employer

Life skills programs in the region lack systematic processes for assessing the needs of youth and employers. Organizations offering life skills programs must be equipped with the processes, tools, and capacity to conduct local needs assessments and to design flexible programs that are responsive to continuously changing employment opportunities and the particular needs of targeted youth.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Overall, systems for monitoring and evaluating life skills programs in the region are under-developed, and there is limited rigorous evidence of impact, especially in terms of employment and entrepreneurship outcomes. There is a dire need to measure what works in terms of training, mentoring, and instructional approaches, and to increase stakeholder understanding about which approaches are most effective and why. Donors and civil society organizations that support life skills programs should develop regional capacity building for monitoring and evaluation and should fund rigorous impact studies.

Scale

Youth and employers a like value life skills programs and believe that access to these programs prepares young people for the world of work. Youth also report that the emotional, mental, and practical skills they acquire in these courses positively affect other aspects of their lives. Many more youth could be reached if implementing organizations, donors, international organizations, and governments in the region would engage in joint efforts to test, evaluate, promote, and scale up life skills programming. In general, life skills programs operated by government or quasi-governmental vocational training centers and within public school systems are able to reach a large number of youth. NGOs and other providers of life skills programs in the region would benefit from creating networks and communities of practice to support standards, extend reach, and encourage cross-country learning.

Introduction

Increasingly, educators, employers, policymakers, and youth themselves are finding that in order for young people to succeed in today's rapidly changing and globalized world, they need an educational foundation that includes more than just technical skills. International Youth Foundation's field experience and program evaluations have shown that life skills programming helps youth do better in school, make healthier decisions, be more prepared for work, and engage constructively in civic life.

The WHO defines life skills as "abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life." In practice, this means helping youth develop communication skills, manage emotions, solve problems, and acquire other competencies. (See box 1, standard 2, for core life skills identified by IYF.)When well integrated with other employability training components, life skills programming can increase the likelihood that young people will find work. However, the evidence base for the mid- to long-term impact of life skills programming is limited. Even less is known about how providers and institutions approach life skills training, what particular skills are being taught, what standards and good practices are in place, and how responsive these programs are to local contexts and employer needs.

In the Middle East and North Africa region in particular, there has been no systematic assessment of who is providing life skills training to youth, the curricula and pedagogical models in use, the qualifications of trainers, the effectiveness of life skills lessons, or their impact on the lives and livelihoods of youth. Given the dynamic changes taking place as a result of the Arab Spring—and youth's critical role in shaping these events and demanding greater opportunity—it is important to understand the state of practice and the role of life skills in preparing youth for the future.

To help build the knowledge base, in 2011 IYF launched a study to map life skills programming in five MENA countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Palestine. Specifically, this study aimed to

- better understand the focus of existing life skills training programs and how these are being integrated within youth development or education programs in the region;
- determine how these programs are designed and delivered;
- identify gaps where capacity building and impact measurement are required in order to advance the state of practice, increase the evidence base, and ultimately enhance the quality and impact of these programs; and
- develop assessment tools.

Findings from the mapping study were compared with IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming, developed in 2009. After years of implementation and evaluation of IYF's standard life skills program, Passport to Success® as well as other life skills models in a variety of institutional settings and youth populations to test what works best in life skills programming, IYF developed its Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming. This set of Minimum Standards was designed as a tool and as means for IYF partners to benchmark their life skills programs against a set of best practices. These 10 Minimum Standards describe the critical aspects of successful life skills training delivery and support and are in regular refinement as additional evidence is produced. (The Minimum Standards are listed in box 1.) This report compares findings from the mapping study with the Minimum Standards and makes recommendations for improving life skills programming on the regional level.

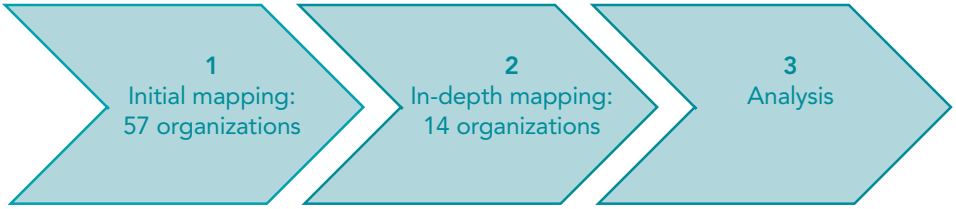
BOX 1 IYF's minimum standards for life skills programming

1. Life skills curriculum responds to needs identified by key stakeholders
2. Life skills curriculum includes content related to the following core life skills:
   - Self-confidence
   - Managing emotions
   - Personal responsibility
   - Respecting self and others
   - Cooperation and teamwork
   - Communication and interpersonal skills
   - Creative thinking
   - Critical thinking and problem solving
   - Decision making
   - Conflict management
3. Life skills curriculum has been pilot tested and adapted for the target audience
4. The time devoted to life skills training is of sufficient duration and frequency (minimum 30 hours of instruction)
5. Specific criteria have been established for the selection of life skills trainers
6. Life skills trainers have received basic training in delivering life skills, whether starting up a new life skills training program or building on an existing program (minimum 16 hours of basic training)
7. Life skills trainers consistently use appropriate teaching methodologies to deliver life skills sessions
8. Life skill trainers receive adequate support (i.e., supervision and mentoring)
9. The classroom or workshop environment is conducive to effective and comfortable learning
10. Life skills training is monitored and evaluated

Methodology

The process of mapping life skills programs in MENA was implemented in three distinct phases over an eight-month period (see figure 1). In the first phase, researchers identified life skills programs in each country that were offered to youth by leading youth-serving organizations. From this initial survey, 75 organizations in the region were approached, out of which 57 organizations participated in the initial mapping exercise. In the second phase, researchers conducted in-depth mapping to better define typologies and approaches currently used in life skills programming and to identify areas of innovation as well as areas for improvement. During this phase, two to three organizations in each country from the initial mapping were selected based on defined criteria for further study, for a total of 14 organizations. In the third phase, researchers compared study findings to IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming to make national and regional assessments. IYF researchers identified good and poor practices and made recommendations for strengthening life skills programs in the region. The details of these phases are discussed below.

FIGURE 1 Three phases of MENA life skills mapping study



Phase 1: Initial Mapping Survey

IYF selected the five countries involved in this study (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Palestine) because they capture a wide sampling of youth development efforts in the region, and also because IYF currently operates in these countries. When entering a new country, IYF conducts a thorough countrywide stakeholder analysis to select its local partners. Through these stakeholder analyses, IYF brought to the mapping effort a strong network of contacts and years of experience in the mapped countries.

To identify organizations to survey as part of the initial mapping exercise, IYF conducted a rigorous outreach process to ensure the sampling was representative of life skills programs throughout the country. First, the research team sought out recommendations from trusted local IYF partner organizations. Many of these organizations have direct experience implementing life skills programs and have close contacts with other heads of organizations doing similar work. At the same time, the team consulted other key informants in each country, including life skills experts and trusted contacts in the public and private sectors. Based on the results of the countrywide search, public sector organizations, NGOs, and privately funded programs conducting life skills training (solely or as a component of a broader youth-focused intervention) were invited to participate in the initial survey.

IYF sent a letter of introduction via email to each organization to explain the purpose of the mapping study and to build interest in participating. The letter briefly described the context of the mapping, the partners, the proposed outcome, and the process for conducting the initial mapping. IYF researchers followed up by telephoning each organization to determine the nature of each life skills program and whether it was in alignment with generally accepted

definitions of life skills, and to arrange for administering the survey. This process revealed that the definition of life skills (or "soft skills") was expansive and not universally understood or formalized in the region. As a result, IYF adapted survey instruments and focus group discussion tools to clarify the definition of life skills programs. IYF also informed participating organizations that, to ensure confidentiality, all data collected would be summarized on a countrywide level, rather than on the level of individual organizations.

IYF developed a comprehensive survey tool for the initial mapping. The survey was shaped by: (1) IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming; (2) IYF's experience in providing capacity building and support to more than 100 partner organizations implementing life skills programs globally, and (3) IYF's own development and testing of a life skills curriculum used in 15 countries around the world and in 16 languages, including a number in the MENA region. The survey tool allowed the research team to structure the dialogue with participating institutions and to standardize the information collected across organizations and countries for comparison purposes. The first part of the survey contained questions pertaining to the organization itself, its mission, sources of funding, and years of experience with life skills programming. The second part explored characteristics of the specific life skills program, including beneficiaries, geographic scope, type of curricula (original or adapted), program duration and structure, trainer qualifications, and monitoring and evaluation practices. (The survey is found in appendix 1.)

The survey was piloted with a participating organization in Jordan to test for clarity, relevance, and ease of use. The pilot demonstrated that the target audience could easily respond to the questions and that the information collected was relevant to the study's larger objectives. The survey was administered in person in Jordan, via phone in Palestine, and by using a combination of both methods in Egypt, Morocco, and Lebanon.

Once the initial mapping was completed, the research team looked for common practices, achievements, and gaps on the country level. Researchers also compared programs on a regional level.

Phase 2: In-Depth Mapping

Next, researchers used selection criteria and a scoring rubric to identify organizations to participate in phase 2. The selection parameters reflected key components of life skills interventions, including project scale, program design, curriculum structure, and quality assurance approaches. These criteria were identified to facilitate the selection of programs that would yield lessons learned and highlight best practices and gaps in life skills programming in the region. (See appendix 2 for the selection criteria.)

Based on the selection analysis, two to three organizations were chosen in each country: one high-ranking organization that appeared to be using best practices in its efforts; one mid-ranking organization in which gaps in programming perhaps would be identified; and one additional organization that appeared to present an innovative model or was using unusual methodologies. When two organizations received the same score, the organization that reached more beneficiaries was selected. (The In-Depth Mapping Tool is in appendix 3.)

The interview protocol was designed to collect qualitative data about how leading youth-serving organizations in each country approach life skills training and their perceptions about the value of these programs. The tool was administered in person in the form of a structured 3–4 hour interview with life skills program staff and sometimes more senior staff within the organization.

Following the in-depth interviews, IYF conducted focus group discussions with key program stakeholders, including trainers, youth beneficiaries, and employers (when applicable). All focus group discussions used standard procedures and protocols, including asking follow-up questions and seeking emerging themes, to enrich the data. (The tools used for each of these focus groups are found in appendices 4–6.)

On average, the following interviews were conducted for each program mapped:

- one focus group with 3–8 trainers
- one to two focus groups, each involving 8–12 youth
- one-to-one interviews with targeted employers who have hired graduates from the life skills programs in the study

All focus group discussions were conducted in person by mapping study researchers. Life skills trainers were interviewed to solicit their feedback on the effectiveness of the program design, support provided to them by the organization, challenges they faced during the training, and gaps in the life skills program they were facilitating. Focus group discussions with youth beneficiaries concentrated on understanding why youth joined the program, areas of program strength and recommendations for improvement, and the impact of the program on their personal and professional lives. Finally, employers affiliated with the program were asked about the key challenges they face recruiting and employing youth in general, their perceptions of the differences between program beneficiaries and other youth who had not undertaken life skills training, and their recommendations for additional life skills training.

Phase 3: Analysis

In the final phase of the study, researchers analyzed key findings to identify trends and gaps at the country and regional levels. Life skills programming in each country was examined individually and analyzed in relation to IYF's minimum standards. (See appendices 7–11 for individual country summaries.)

Limitations

There were some limitations to conducting this study using the methodology outlined above, most of which the research team was aware of and tried to address, as well as one limitation that arose during the study. Three limitations are particularly notable.

First, the data collected through surveys and interviews were self-reported. Researchers followed good practices in administering the surveys and asked probing questions in the initial mapping exercise, but they did not verify participant responses, such as establishing the existence of program materials by reviewing curricula, training of trainer plans, or monitoring and evaluation tools mentioned by respondents. The research team decided not to ask for copies of these documents because they felt organizations would have been less likely to participate in both phases of the study if they believed their materials would be under scrutiny or could be copied by a competing organization. To address this limitation, information provided by the organizational staff surveyed was triangulated in focus groups with trainers, youth, and employers. Many well-respected studies use self-reported data as a reasonable and cost-effective choice, especially when some corroboration is possible, as was the case for this mapping.

Second, the focus group interviews with youth, trainers, and employers were retrospective, which tend to elicit honest answers about the project's strengths and limitations. Stakeholders responded positively to the focus group questions, and were usually eager to share their experiences and opinions regarding the life skills programs, good and bad. However, some organizations preferred to be present during interviews with trainers and youth, which made it difficult for researchers to probe deeply into areas of program weakness. To address this limitation, researchers probed in different avenues and consulted data accumulated during other aspects of the study. Hence, despite this limitation, the researchers believe that the data gathered present a reasonably full picture of the life skills programs surveyed.

Finally, although this study was comprehensive, the conditions were not optimal given the events of the Arab Spring, which included civil uprisings and protests, and the resulting insecurity and intermittent business closures. During the initial mapping phase, the research team contacted an array of service providers who indicated that they would like to take part in the study. However, interviews were often delayed considerably or cancelled because of political unrest or changes in organizational priorities. The researchers were able to make adjustments in timing as needed in all countries. In Egypt, it was also necessary to make changes in the organizations selected for the in-depth mapping. This was done by substituting one of the organizations selected for another one that had a similar profile and ranking.

Key Findings

This section opens with a summary that compares study findings at the regional level to each of IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming. Next, key elements of the study are discussed under the rubrics of supply and demand. The supply side analysis is focused on aspects of program delivery, such as curricula, instructional approach, and trainer support. This section may be of particular interest to practitioners implementing life skills who want to improve the quality and effectiveness of their training programs. The section begins with an overview of organization experience and reach, and then moves into a discussion of findings on curricula, program structure, instructional methodologies, trainer support and mentoring, and monitoring and evaluation. Following, is the demand side analysis which presents findings about the value of life skills programs from the perspective of youth and employers in the region. We illustrate some of the findings with case studies. This section is intended to help donor agencies and local governments design life skill programs that are more responsive to dual clients (employers and youth) needs.

Key programming recommendations appear in the sidebars of this section, and policy recommendations are found in the report's conclusion.

Regional Summary

Standard 1 Life skills curriculum responds to needs identified by key stakeholders

Minimum standards are somewhat met.

Measure	Regional Status
Key stakeholders have been identified to give input on the life skills content	Organizations across the region are adapting international curricula and in some cases are developing their own to ensure local relevance. Key stakeholders are engaged to some degree in the adaptation process, although not from all sectors. Employers, for example, are not often significantly engaged in the process.

Standard 2 Life skills curriculum includes content related to core life skills

Minimum standards are met.

Measure	Regional Status
All of the 10 key life skills are addressed in the life skills curriculum	Curricula used by organizations across the five countries generally cover the core life skills, with additional lessons added to meet program goals. For example, employability programs tend to include work-related modules such as career planning, interviewing, and CV preparation, while civic engagement programs include lessons such as volunteerism and service learning. Variation among programs exists in structure of modules and types of instructional methodologies.

Standard 3 The life skills curriculum has been pilot tested and adapted for the target audience

Minimum standards are somewhat met.

Measure	Regional Status
The curriculum has been tested on 5 to 15 youth from the target population	The majority of the organizations mapped tested their curricula with small groups of youth prior to full implementation. However, when organizations used the curricula with subsequent groups of youth in different programs or in other geographic areas, the materials were typically not revised and piloted.

Standard 4 The time devoted to life skills training is of sufficient duration and frequency

Minimum standards are not met.

Measure	Regional Status
1. Participants receive at least 30 hours of life skills instruction	On average, programs provide 20 hours of life skills instruction; 10 hours less than the recommended 30 hours required to allow youth to acquire minimum competencies. Frequency ranges from 1–8 hours per day, 1–5 times per week.
2. The maximum interval between each life skills lesson is two weeks	

Standard 5 Specific criteria have been established for the selection of life skills trainers

Minimum standards are somewhat met.

Measure	Regional Status
1. The criteria for selecting life skills trainers are clearly defined and used	Organizations use established criteria to select trainers; however, in several cases organizations were unable to fully articulate these criteria. Interviews with program managers suggest that organizations review the CVs of candidates but do not verify levels of education or past work experience. In some cases, key skills such as effective facilitation and communication, confidence, flexibility, and empathy are not tested prior to hiring; in other cases, trainers that underperform during the TOT or in the initial phases of training are terminated.
2. Knowledge and skills of candidates verified	

Standard 6 Life skills trainers have received basic training in delivering life skills, whether starting up a new life skills training program or building on an existing program

Minimum standards are somewhat met.

Measure	Regional Status
1. All life skills trainers have received at least 16 hours of basic training delivered by a certified trainer	78% of organizations provide a basic TOT, which typically consist of 20–50 hours of training using an established training manual. There is little evidence that trainer competencies are evaluated after the training. Organizations also experience high rates of trainer attrition, which can cost the organization time and money to replace and can also negatively affect the course for learners who have less time to develop trusting relationships with their trainers.
2. Successful completion of basic training is based on a systematic assessment of the following competencies: • Ability to manage group activities used in life skills curriculum • Ability to demonstrate and serve as a role model for the skills being taught • Ability to give short presentations to explain life skills concepts • Ability to facilitate discussion questions	

Standard 7 Life skills trainers consistently use appropriate teaching methodologies to deliver life skills sessions

Minimum standards are not met.

Measure	Regional Status
1. One or more interactive teaching methodologies are used at all times during life skill sessions	Organizations, trainers, and youth acknowledged the value of interactive, hands-on instructional methodologies in teaching life skills, and many organizations have experimented with innovative techniques. However, the majority of organizations mapped did not provide such opportunities.
2. At minimum, each lesson should include the following four elements: • Introduction of the topic • Demonstration of concepts or skills. • Group activity/practice of concepts or skills • Personal application so that participants take what they have learned and practiced and consider how they might use it in their lives	

Standard 8 Life skill trainers receive adequate support

Minimum standards are not met.

Measure	Regional Status
1. Each trainer has access to a qualified mentor or coach	Ongoing support for trainers by mentors or master trainers is uncommon in the region; only 37 percent of organizations mapped reported offering mentoring to its trainers. Without such support, trainers have minimal guidance applying skills and dealing with challenges that may arise during training.
2. Trainers have contact with their assigned mentor via email, phone, or in person at least once every two weeks during the first two months of training, and monthly follow-up for the rest of program	

Standard 9 The classroom or workshop environment is conducive to effective and comfortable learning

Minimum standards are met.

Measure	Regional Status
1. The class size for life skills sessions is 8–25 students	Class sizes met the minimum standard, with 20–30 students per class and an average student to trainer ratio of 1:25. The study also indicated that, in general, infrastructure was adequate to allow for students to feel safe expressing themselves and for trainers to lead activities effectively.
2. The training room is adequate in size to allow students to move around and complete small group work comfortably	

Standard 10 Life skills training are monitored and evaluated

Minimum standards are not met.

Measure	Regional Status
1. Trainers log attendance for each youth participant to determine if they meet minimum attendance requirements and to document which lessons they received	All organizations reported doing some degree of monitoring and evaluation; however, the mapping could not evaluate the quality or rigor of M&E tools and processes. Eighty-two percent of organizations indicated they did pre- and post-tests to assess the outcome of the program on young people. Organizations have not established indicators for what completion means, making it difficult to assess the reliability of completion rates, which range from 60–92 percent across the region. In select instances in Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon, follow-up employer satisfaction surveys are used to evaluate youth performance on the job after they complete the life skills training, but these surveys are not used in a quasi-experimental impact evaluation to measure the difference against a control group that has not undergone life skills.
2. A log is kept of facilitator–mentor contact during the first two months of facilitator training	
3. A system exists to reliably measure if youth have acquired minimal knowledge and skills as defined by the curriculum	
4. Feedback on the quality of the life skills training is obtained from participants and other stakeholders (i.e., other teachers, parents, employers) at least once a year	

Supply: Life Skills Programming in the MENA Region

Overview

On average, the majority of the 57 organizations mapped have five or more years of experience providing life skills education. Ninety-three percent of organizations mapped in Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon, and 89 percent in Egypt, had more than five years of experience. In Morocco, only 54 percent of organizations reported five or more years of experience.

Data suggest a growing availability of life skills programming in the MENA region. Despite the growing availability, the number of young people benefitting annually from these programs, as well as the geographic reach of programs, remains fairly limited. In Jordan, programs sampled benefitted 300 to 100,000 youth annually, whereas in Morocco and Egypt the number of annual program beneficiaries was markedly lower, ranging from 20 to 2,000 per program in Morocco and from 150 to 28,000 in Egypt. These variances were less pronounced in school-based programs, which tended to reach more beneficiaries than non-school-based programs. Life skills initiatives that are

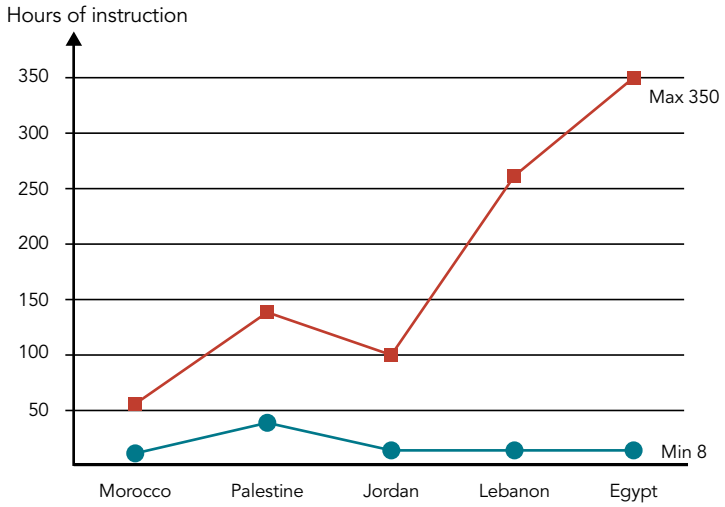
integrated into the Ministry of Education-mandated curriculum also appear to be better positioned to reach greater numbers of youth, given that they are rolled out in public schools as a compulsory part of a student's education.

Program Structure

Structure is a key factor in how effectively life skills programs achieve their objectives and positively impact the communities in which they operate. In this study, program structure is defined by the duration of the course (total instructional hours a beneficiary receives), the frequency with which life skills lessons are offered, and class size. Regionally, program duration and frequency fall short of meeting the minimum standard, but class size generally aligns with the IYF minimum standards.

Despite the fact that most organizations mapped have established a minimum number of program hours required to complete their life skills course, the range of hours delivered differs greatly across organizations and countries. The duration and frequency of non-school based programs mapped varied widely, from a minimum of three total hours provided in one day in Egypt and Morocco, to a maximum of 350 hours of instruction provided over nine months in Egypt (see figure 2).

FIGURE 2 Duration of life skills programs, in hours



The duration and frequency of in-school programs tended to be more consistent across countries, with instruction conducted according to the academic calendar, with an average of one hour of instruction occurring 1–3 times per week.

The structure of life skills lessons contributes to the long-term gains in life skills comprehension. Many life skills programs studied implement a "one-shot" training, in which all of the life skills lessons are delivered over a 5–10 day period for 5–8 hours per day. For many of the youth surveyed, these programs are often the first time they have been asked to apply interactive training techniques. While lessons can be exciting and interesting, an entire day of small group work, facilitated discussions, and self-analysis can be exhausting for both the young person and the trainer. Without a sufficient period between lessons, youth have little or no opportunity to practice basic life skills (such as listening skills) outside of the classroom before they are asked to absorb more complicated lessons (such as asking clarifying questions of their supervisor). Without time to self-reflect and practice, youth may confuse concepts or may not become adept at combining skills in response to certain situations.

Youth and trainers in nearly every country validated the recommendation that life skills should be taught over a longer period of time with fewer hours per day.In Egypt, for example, trainers said, "The life skills for employment trainings were delivered in just five days, and most attendees felt that they needed more time to process the learning." Trainers in Palestine and Lebanon said, "The implementation of the training was too quick, which limited reflection time for youth," and, "The number of training hours for the life skills intervention is not always well defined and is insufficient to cover appropriately the skills needed by the participants."

The mapping study also found that, although program duration and frequency vary widely, class size is fairly consistent at 20–30 students per class. The variance in class size ranged from a low of 10 students in Egypt to a high of 45 in Jordan. The student-teacher ratio averaged 1 instructor to 25 students regionally, ranging from a low of 1:10 in Egypt to a high of 1:45 in Jordan. Class size can have a profound impact on how well a learner absorbs and retains information. Study findings suggest that students preferred smaller class sizes, which gave them greater opportunities to interact in small groups and engage in one-on-one conversation with trainers.

Recommendations

- Establish minimum standards for training duration and frequency. Donors and practitioners should determine the duration and frequency that best suits the needs of employers and youth in a particular context and meets program goals.
- Teach life skills over a longer period of time with fewer hours of instruction per day.

Curricula

This study assessed the life skills curricula used by each organization to determine the structure, source, content, process for adaptation, and process to ensure relevancy. Findings indicate that curricula tend to be modular, meaning that the material is divided into units or lessons in which each life skill is taught separately. The majority of organizations obtained a life skills curriculum from an international source, most commonly a nongovernmental organization. Organizations typically delivered the course in its entirety, which was particularly true of school-based programs. The study found instances in which organizations tailored the curricula to meet the needs of the learners and delivered only select modules. In Palestine, for example, three of the four organizations teaching life skills for employability selected modules from their curricula that were related to the participants' professional goals.

Most organizations adapted curricula to the local context. The adaptation process varied across organizations and countries but always attempted to integrate examples and cases that made the curriculum representative of the local context and culturally relevant. Adaptation was often done with volunteers from the private sector, educators, trainers, and representatives from the local community.

BOX 2 Adapting materials for local needs in Jordan

In Jordan, an organization that provides employment-focused life skills training convenes a cross-sector team of professionals to advise the curriculum adaptation process. After translating the life skills curriculum, the individual life skills lessons are reviewed and localized in terms of examples, cases studies, names, currency, and success stories. Preferences are always given to national and Arab success stories over international examples. The organization also assesses the local labor market to ensure that the course reflected employer needs and that youth are recruited who are interested in the jobs available. One to two lessons are then pilot tested with a group of youth to ensure new concepts and instructional methodologies are received positively. Lessons are then fine-tuned, produced, and rolled out for full implementation.

A key lesson from trainers is that "it is important to develop the training based on the needs of the target group, not based on a rigid training plan, and this was not always achieved." Organizations reported that adapting curricula was a challenge. In Egypt, for example, despite efforts to use information from application forms completed by program beneficiaries to customize and adapt curricula, changes often failed to meet the needs of the diverse beneficiaries.

BOX 3 Pilot testing curricula in Lebanon

An organization in Lebanon develops new life skills curricula through a collaborative vetting process with its team of trainers, and then pilots the curricula with youth. When developing new materials, trainers first submit an outline of their proposed lessons to a team of master trainers for approval. The training team then provides feedback on all new content, and the trainers continue to revise the materials until they are approved by the master trainers. The trainers then test the approved materials at a TOT workshop in the presence of a master trainer. After revisions are completed, the lessons are piloted with a sample youth group and undergo a second round of revisions before being introduced to the wider target population. This participatory approach empowers trainers to apply their expertise with the beneficiary population and encourages them to take ownership of the materials they are using.

Many organizations demonstrated commitment to the initial creation or adaptation of their life skills materials, and several also pilot-tested the model before expanding it. However, few organizations regularly revisited their curriculum or model assumptions. Frequent customization, at least during the first few years, should be conducted according to the target group level, their backgrounds, and cultural context. This is particularly relevant for organizations that have adopted international life skills training material, such as the UNICEF curriculum, which need to be adapted significantly to be culturally relevant. Obtaining trainer feedback on each lesson using standardized forms, and consulting youth on how they understood and used each life skills lesson would be simple ways to revise and improve a given life skills program. Following up with youth after they have graduated from life skills programs, and interviewing employers who have hired graduates would help assess whether life skills programming is meeting local needs.

BOX 4 Frequent review of curriculum in Morocco

One Moroccan life skills program designs its curriculum with a team of stakeholders, including the program director, teachers, representatives from the Ministry of Education, and curriculum developer. The organization then reviews the training materials every year. During the annual review, new lesson components are added to address developments in the core skills or emerging needs of the target population. Case studies and other lesson elements are adapted to fit the current cultural and social context relevant to youth beneficiaries.

Recommendations

- Customize life skills programming frequently—at least every two years—to tailor lessons to meet the needs of the target group, their ages, backgrounds, and cultural contexts.
- Adapt and test the curriculum throughout the program cycle.

Instructional Methodologies

The instructional methodologies used by the programs mapped varied widely within and across countries. While all 57 organizations mapped recognized that interactive teaching methods were effective in engaging students and providing opportunities to practice life skills in a supportive learning environment, many continued to rely on traditional lecture-based instruction. Overall, life skills trainers in the region are not consistently using appropriate methodologies.

Improving the state of life skills programming requires that organizations increase opportunities for students to practice life skills in and out of class. Although this study did not determine whether particular instructional strategies were associated with higher completion rates or increased rates of achieving programmatic goals, youth voiced their strong preference for hands-on, project-based instruction (see the *Youth Perceptions* section of this report, below). Youth, trainers, and employers alike noted the importance of field visits to work sites, which allow young people to develop realistic employment expectations and to observe teamwork, responsibility, and other life skills operating in various settings. Service-learning projects or community-based volunteer opportunities allow youth to practice the skills acquired, give them a sense of accomplishment, and provide a chance for others to see youth making positive contributions to their communities.[2]

Despite a need for improved teaching methodologies in the region as a whole, examples of organizations using interactive methods and project-based learning surfaced in several countries. In Morocco, an organization working in schools integrated life skills instruction with student-led civic education projects, while in Jordan, an organization used student-led motivational talks, providing learners with an opportunity to practice self expression and communication. In Lebanon, students attributed their ability to successfully apply the life skills they learned to field visits to local markets, where they practiced communication skills with potential customers. Students said they also benefited from the formation of *Dabkeh* (folklore) groups, in which they practiced working in teams to resolve conflict.[3] In Egypt, trainers identified one of the program's strengths as its "high rate of interaction and activities in training sessions, as well as the practical nature of the program, which allowed students to apply the given skills in real life."

BOX 5 Lebanese youth earn community respect

Field-based learning is a critical component of one life skills model in Lebanon. Following 60 hours of life skills instruction, youth practice the skills in real life situations by forming groups to design and implement projects. Youth may work together to lead an advocacy campaign or to design small community projects over 3–6 months. One such initiative brought Palestinian and Lebanese youth together to implement an advocacy campaign in their neighborhood markets. Participants noted that working in teams with peers who had opposing political affiliations helped build consensus on local issues and gave them the platform to talk through their differences. They also indicated the projects gave them a sense of purpose and altered the way their parents and community viewed them. Once stereotyped as sources of trouble, youth felt empowered that they were now seen as change agents in their community.

Providing students with sufficient interactive or project-based learning opportunities is not only a matter of curriculum design, but also a matter of a facilitator's capacity to use executing those activities. Trainers must be equipped with the skills required to use complex instructional methods effectively. This requires significant pre-service training as well as ongoing in-service training and support from qualified master trainers or mentors. This is discussed further in the following section.

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2 Batlle (2006) and the World Bank (date req.) both suggest that integrating these sorts of opportunities for practical application of life skills for youth represents good practice.

3 These instructional techniques were not verified through on-site observations by the study's research team.

Recommendation

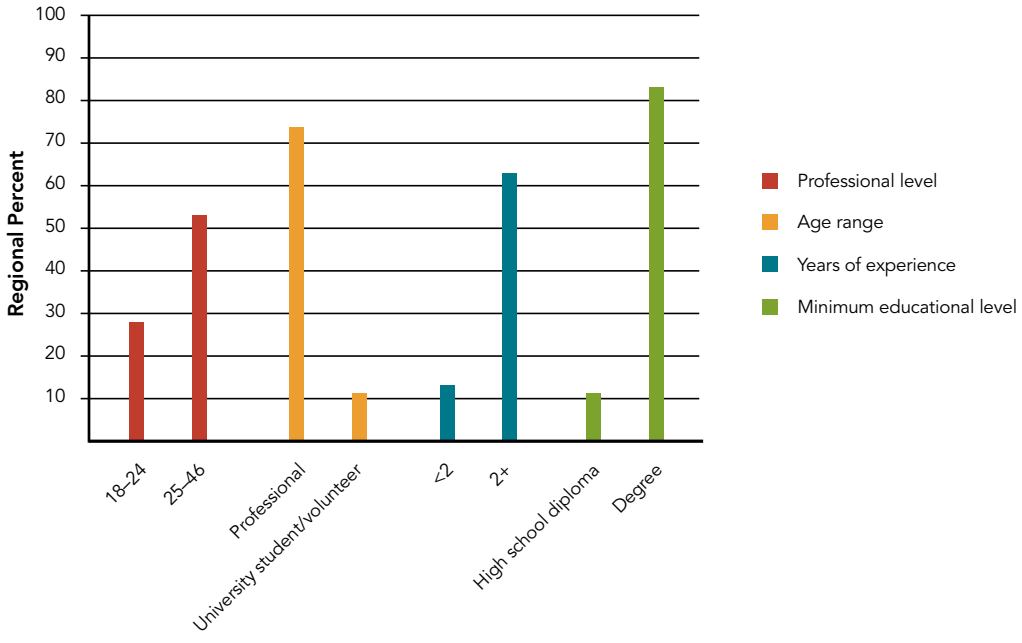
- Integrate interactive learning methods and opportunities into existing curricula, including experiential teaching methodologies and real-world opportunities to practice life skills.
- Provide adequate training to trainers on how to effectively deliver interactive instruction of life skills

Trainers & Trainer Support

Trainers are arguably one of the most critical inputs in any life skills program. They directly affect youth-related program outcomes and play a key role in a program's overall success. At a minimum, trainers should have experience working with the target youth population, effective facilitation and communication skills, as well as comprehensive training and opportunities to practice their skills with ongoing guidance from a master trainer.

A general profile of the standards that organizations have in place for life skills trainers emerged from the study. Many organizations reported having specific selection criteria for their trainers but did not require previous training with at-risk youth or experience teaching life skills. All 57 organizations surveyed required trainers to have completed secondary education at minimum; the majority also required trainers to have at least two years of experience (see figure 3). However, seven organizations relied on university students who had little or no previous experience providing life skills training.

FIGURE 3 Trainer qualifications



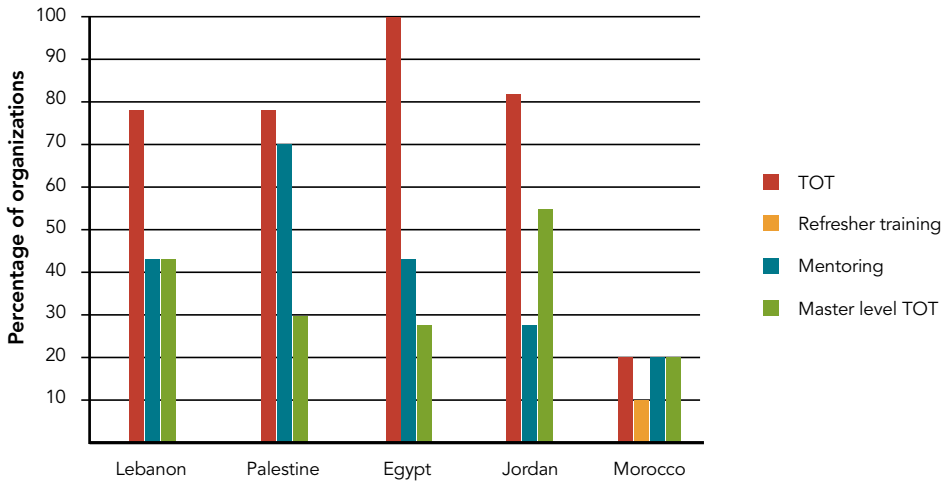
Organizations that employed trainers on staff or contracted freelance trainers established clear selection criteria in an effort to identify qualified trainers. Organizations that relied on volunteers from the private sector to serve as trainers relied on human resource personnel within companies to identify willing and qualified employees. Although the selection criteria set by organizations varied according to program goals and beneficiary profiles, a

pattern emerged in terms of the qualifications and selection criteria. In general, the criteria used were academic qualifications, practical experience (as trainer or as practitioner in their field), and personal qualifications, such as the ability to effectively communicate with young people. In some cases, the selection process included a review of the candidate's CV, interviews, and reference checks.

In contrast to the relatively uniform selection criteria and processes, the study found that organizations provide a wide range of initial and follow-up support to trainers, and that this level of support directly affects the quality of trainers, their comfort with the subject matter, and their ability to effectively engage students. The majority of trainers received 30 hours of TOT delivered by master trainers.

The in-depth study of 14 organizations found only one that reported providing refresher training for their trainers.[4] This organization conducts short refresher trainings two or three times a year to review life skills content and best teaching practices. The range and type of training and support provided by the organizations mapped is illustrated in figure 4.

FIGURE 4 Types of trainer support provided



Trainers also need mentoring beyond the initial training of trainers. Most organizations surveyed indicated that they agreed in principle with the importance of implementing a mentorship program for their trainers; however, few had actually developed such a system. Although more than 75 percent of organizations provided an initial TOT, fewer than half of the organizations in four of the five countries provide ongoing mentoring. Trainers from an Egyptian organization said, "The training was sufficient to start delivering the program; however, to further develop our skills and knowledge, much more ongoing support is needed." Even in Palestine, where 70 percent of the organizations reported that they provide mentoring, a representative from one prominent organization said, "Although we understand the importance of mentorship, it is not institutionalized. We still don't have the capacity to implement a comprehensive mentorship program."Furthermore, organizations that have some mentoring available for trainers do not have selection criteria for their mentors and do not provide mentors with training that would enable them to serve effectively in this role.

4 Data on the types of trainer support provided by organizations was collected during the in-depth phase of the study only.

BOX 6 TOT in Morroco

In Morocco, one organization has three stages in building the capacity of its trainers. The first stage is an intensive seven-day TOT that provides 56 hours of training delivered by master trainers. New trainers are introduced to the program and receive training on key life skills concepts, approaches, and interactive methods for training. During this TOT, trainers also participate in a practicum session in which they teach model lessons to their peers. After the initial TOT, trainers prepare work plans for implementing the training. Next, trainers attend a follow-up meeting to report on their work plans and receive feedback from the master trainer and their peers. Following this, the trainers begin implementing life skills training at their organizations. During the implementation phase, trainers receive ongoing mentoring. After training has been completed, trainers have a following-up meeting with the master trainers to report on the implementation.

Despite the lack of structured, follow-up support, trainers clearly valued and benefitted from ongoing coaching and mentorship when it was provided. In Lebanon, trainers said they most benefited from the ongoing feedback on the trainings they conducted in the field and from on-site coaching sessions provided by a senior trainer. Trainers from one Egyptian organization said they valued having master trainers periodically observe sessions and provide feedback to help trainers adopt more innovative instructional techniques to better engage the target group.

Mentoring is critical for new trainers who may not have experience with interactive teaching methodologies, or for trainers who have not had experience conducting life skills trainings. Mentoring also serves as an excellent tool for ensuring quality training, and, through regular constructive feedback to the trainers, it allows for constant improvement of the training itself and the program as a whole. Similarly, offering structured follow-up support is particularly important for small organizations that do not require trainers to have minimal experience or that use volunteers to lead the life skills courses. Volunteers and trainers with little experience can learn how to be excellent trainers and are a cost-effective option. However, without proper support, trainers may feel overwhelmed or may change the life skills course in ways that inadvertently degrade the quality of the training and thwart program consistency.

Passport to Success formative evaluations have demonstrated that trainers are more likely to drop out of the program or will continue using lecture-style training techniques if they do not have the opportunity to interact with and seek support from a mentor.[5] Ideally, mentors should participate in an organization's TOT program and should also be given a separate training on how to give effective feedback. Mentors should receive stipends for their time, and should be given specific feedback tools that allow organizations to monitor each trainer in a consistent manner.

Recommendations

- Clearly define the criteria for selecting high quality trainers.
- Provide more intensive initial and follow-up refresher training for trainers based on their needs/ competencies.
- Provide ongoing support for trainers through relationships with mentors or master trainers.
- Ensure that teacher –mentors also receive appropriate training in coaching and mentoring.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Assessing whether and how organizations monitor and evaluate life skills programs is critical to understanding the

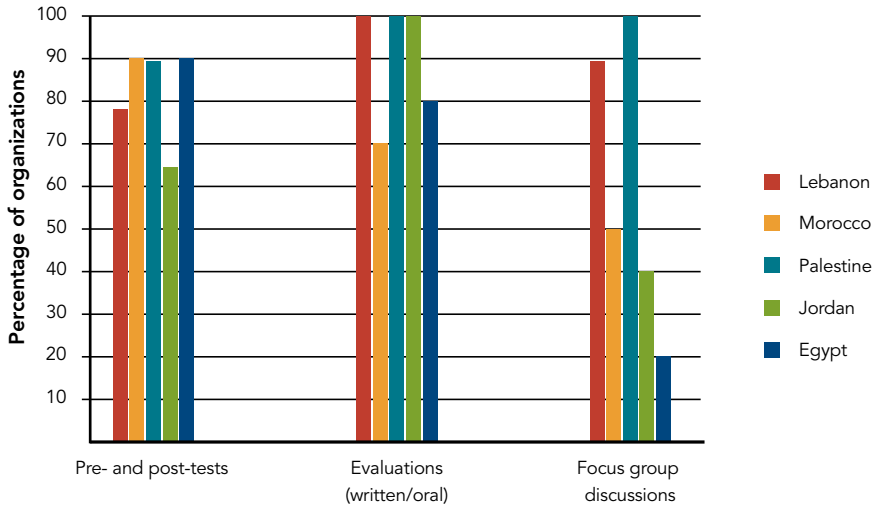
5 Hahn, Lanspery and Leavitt (2006). Measuring Outcomes in Projects Designed to Help Young People Acquire Life Skills: Lessons and Challenges [[Please confirm, complete, and add to biblio.]]

extent to which program outcomes and impact are being tracked and whether organizations are seeking to improve practices based on evidence. Determining whether a life skills program achieves its objectives requires a monitoring and evaluation system capable of monitoring student attendance, measuring learning gains, and assessing program efficacy in terms of design, delivery, and costs. Measuring the skills acquisition of youth and assessing the quality of the training from a variety of stakeholder perspectives is essential to determining if the program achieved its intended objectives or had a significant return on investment.

Although each of the 57 organizations initially mapped in the study had monitoring and evaluation strategies in place, the rigor of these practices varied in terms of the degree to which outcomes were measured (see figure 5). At least 60 percent of organizations in each of the countries mapped administered pre – and post-tests for program beneficiaries and relied on these instruments to measure changes in skills such as communication, teamwork, and conflict management. Wide differences were found in the percent of organizations conducting focus groups with beneficiaries and their parents to assess the relevance of the programs to youth needs, make necessary revisions, and capture qualitative outcomes from beneficiaries and parents.

Other critical stakeholders, such as employers, were not typically engaged in the monitoring and evaluation process. Regionally, 51 percent of organizations reported that they used focus groups or other means to assess the needs and interests of youth and employers, but many did so after curricula were designed and training was initiated. As a result, program goals were often not aligned with the demand from youth and employers. In addition, although numerous life skills programs mapped were employment focused, only one of these tracked the employment rate of program graduates and conducted periodic employer satisfaction surveys. None tracked longer-term employment outcomes as an indicator of job retention.

FIGURE 5 Types of monitoring and evaluation strategies used (percent)



More than 70 percent of organizations in each country conducted evaluations, but this study found very scant evidence that organizations conducted impact evaluations. The strongest examples of rigorous impact evaluation practice were found in Jordan and Morocco, where two organizations conducted quasi-experimental impact evaluations using treatment and control groups to identify the ways in which the training differentiated beneficiaries from their peers (see box for more details).

BOX 7 Impact evaluation in Jordan

Robust evaluation of life skills interventions is attainable, as demonstrated by the monitoring and evaluation practices of one organization in Jordan. This evaluation model includes pre – and post-evaluations of the participants, periodic focus groups with both youth and trainers, and written evaluations at the end of each training cohort. These tools assess employment behaviors, attitudes assessment, levels of community contribution, and job placement and retention rates. In addition, using questionnaires and focus groups, the organization assesses program impact by following up with graduates 3, 6, and 12 months after program completion and comparing their status with that of comparison groups. Finally, a comprehensive impact evaluation for the entire organization is conducted every three years.

Although organizations tracked program completion rates, only a few organizations had established criteria for program completion or kept attendance records to monitor how much of the life skills program an individual actually completed. Without such established criteria, program completion rates cannot be benchmarked against minimum standards and therefore say little about program effectiveness. In the Passport to Success program, for example, only youth who have completed at least 80 percent of the lessons can graduate.

Recommendations

- Conduct impact studies to increase understanding about which approaches to life skills programming are most effective for achieving desired outcomes such as increased civic engagement or decreased susceptibility to risk factors for youth.
- Use focus groups, client satisfaction surveys, and other assessment tools during program design and at regular intervals throughout program implementation to confirm that the dual needs of youth and employer are being met and are aligned with program goals.
- Donor support for life skills programming should include funding for building the capacity of monitoring and evaluation systems in the region.

A few organizations attempt to track why youth drop out of life skills programs; however, these data are not systematically analyzed. In Jordan, for example, two organizations reported completion rates of 92 percent for an in-school initiative, and 87 percent for an out-of-school program. In Morocco, the two organizations that participated in the in-depth study reported completion rates of 90 percent by the organization operating in schools and 60 percent by an out-of-school program. In both countries, reasons stated for the lower completion rates out-of-school included the following:

- unqualified trainers who volunteered with the program but lacked the ability to use interactive teaching methods and therefore could not motivate students
- parental pressure on youth to use their free time outside of school hours for studying rather than attending training
- student apathy and peer pressure to engage in other activities

Study findings suggest a need for more accurate and comprehensive impact evaluations. As a next step, it would be useful to conduct impact studies of selected programs to further understand what factors contribute to the effectiveness of life skills programs in the MENA region. Such studies would include devising more rigorous methods, processes, and tools for documenting and measuring the effectiveness of various training approaches, mentoring

models, and instructional methods. For example, evaluators could visit classrooms to confirm that trainers are using interactive teaching methodologies and compare outcomes and achievements with different teaching approaches.

Demand: Perceptions of Employers and Youth

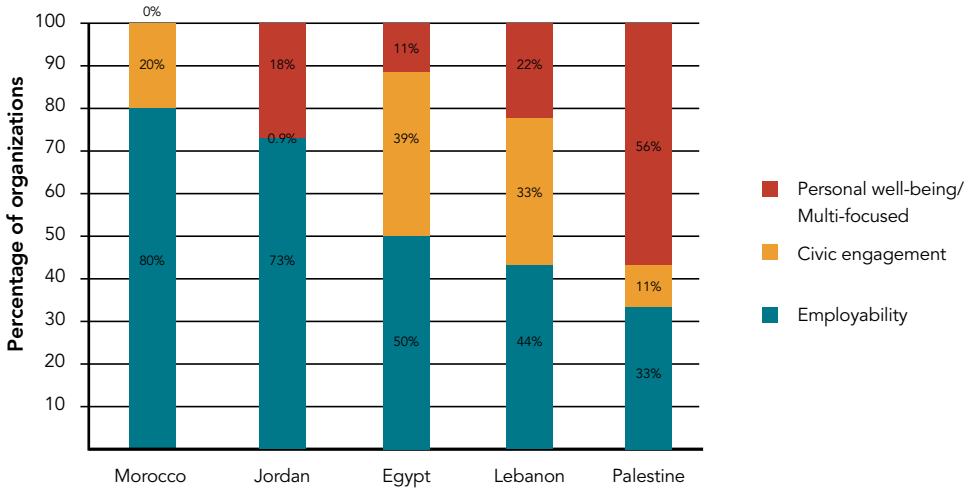
Overview

Youth and employers alike value life skills programs. Across the region, life skills programs are offered in response to high youth unemployment as well as to address a mismatch between the skills youth have and skills employers want to see in new employees. However, there is no systematic process for ensuring that life skills programs meet the dual needs of youth and employers.

Primary Focus of Life Skills Programs in the MENA region

Findings from the 57 organizations mapped indicate that, despite having diverse program objectives, a common goal of life skills interventions across the region is to support youth employment by minimizing the gap between the skills possessed by youth and those needed for employment. In this respect, life skills programs seem to be driven in part by the needs and demands of the private sector, particularly large multinational companies seeking employees who are qualified and equipped with relevant soft skills. At the same time, programs focused on civic-engagement provide a significant amount of life skills training in the region. In Egypt, for instance, 39 percent of the programs mapped were focused on civic-engagement, followed by 33 percent in Lebanon (see figure 6).

FIGURE 6 Percent of employability-focused life skills training by country



Fifty-six percent of the organizations studied regionally stated that they used life skills to help youth qualify for jobs in growing economic sectors. Organizations with close ties to the private sector view life skills training as a way to bridge the gap between skills taught in school and those needed in the labor market. Moroccan and Jordanian organizations that are partnering with private sector companies to deliver training tailor these programs to meet specific needs of the companies. Employment-related program goals included increasing job security and promoting advancement opportunities.

BOX 8 Demand-driven programming in Jordan

One organization in Jordan uses a demand-driven approach for operating its life skills interventions. The organization works in close consultation with private sector employers to identify positions that need to be filled. Youth are recruited into the program through announcements for specific job openings. Youth are required to complete the life skills course as a prerequisite for being considered for these employment opportunities. This requirement encourages youth to commit to the training as they know they are preparing themselves for a specific position.

As part of this approach, case studies and life skills activities are customized for the specific sector. In addition, the organization invites leaders from the industry to speak during life skills sessions, which provides an opportunity for students to engage with a working professional and practice life skills competencies critical for that field. As a result of the demand driven model, employers received well-trained applicants, and the organization has enhanced its reputation as an effective and demand-driven training provider.

Facilitating conflict resolution, fostering civic engagement, and promoting personal well-being were also cited as prominent program goals. In Lebanon, where prevailing social and political unrest has frayed the social fabric of many communities, civil society organizations have turned to life skills as a way to help youth address some of the negative consequences of prolonged sectarian violence, including rising unemployment, religious strife, and deteriorating infrastructure. To address these needs, organizations are supplementing the life skills curriculum with interventions such as psychosocial counseling, community activism, and civic engagement.

Recommendation

- Employment focused programs should implement systems to assess the needs of youth and employers before training programs are finalized, and following placement, to continuously ensure client satisfaction and relevance.

Youth Perceptions about the Value of Life Skills Programs

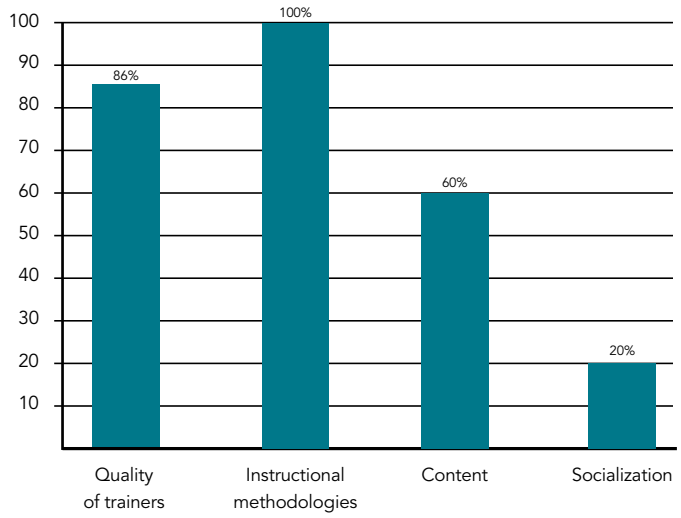
Assessing how youth view life skills training is fundamental to understanding the state of life skills programming in the region and provides valuable data that can be used to improve programs. Findings from 15 youth focus groups conducted across the region clearly indicated that, despite the wide range of program quality and effectiveness, youth value life skills programs. Youth beneficiaries in the five countries were asked to reflect on what they valued most about the life skills programs and how it affected their daily lives both personally and professionally. Ninety-three percent of respondents expressed overall satisfaction with the life skills training programs in which they participated. Youth identified the following program elements as those they valued most and which they felt had a profound impact on their daily lives:

- Quality of trainers: Trainers are open, flexible, friendly, supportive, and inclusive, engaging all students to encourage full participation in class. Youth respondents were unequivocal about the importance of having quality trainers to motivate them to actively participate in and successfully complete the program.
- Instructional methodologies: The blend of theoretical and practical instruction and opportunities to practice what is learned.
- Instructional content: A combination of technical and life skills in the program.
- Socialization: The chance to meet and work with new people.

Young people valued having quality trainers to motivate them to actively participate in and successfully complete the program. For many of the youth, participating in these programs was the first time they had engaged with people of the opposite gender or from outside their social circles. This required a strong, supportive, and friendly trainer in order to assuage cultural concerns on the part of the youth and their parents. As seen in figure 7, youth were happy with the quality of life-skills trainers. Several youth participants mentioned sentiments similar to the following: "We were very shy and it was difficult for us to stand in front of people and talk, especially in the presence of the other gender, but this has changed completely." Other youth mentioned that trainers were friendlier than traditional classroom teachers and this made them want to actively participate in the class, ask questions, and share ideas. "The trainers encouraged me not to be shy, and to share as much as possible the information I have to help my mates … and my mates will help me back," said a youth from Morocco.

Programs that used interactive, hands-on, and creative instructional methodologies were popular with youth beneficiaries. Role-playing, simulation games, and brainstorming activities allowed youth to practice skills such as effective communication, interviewing, and conflict resolution in a safe, nurturing environment. As one participant said, "Before the training, I wasn't satisfied in my current job, so I went to many interviews but did not do well. After the training, I was more confident from practicing my interviewing skills and I got a new job." Select programs created opportunities for youth to work together and apply learning outside the classroom. In Lebanon, youth committees were formed to give participants a chance to plan and execute recreational activities, and in Jordan and Morocco civic engagement projects were designed, implemented, and managed by youth. Participants valued how these programs differed from the traditional school environment. According to one male youth, "In regular classes, the students only sit on chairs and work individually with no interaction with classmates, whereas in the program we listen to the teacher, do exercises, and talk to friends. We get the opportunity to let our personalities out."

FIGURE 7 Percent of youth satisfaction with key program elements



Youth responded positively to programs in which life skills instruction was combined with technical skills training to give youth opportunities to practice the skills and prepare for employment or civic engagement. In Morocco, for example, where French is the national language and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have minimal opportunities to learn and practice English, language instruction was particularly valued. In more rural communities, the inclusion of entrepreneurship skills training was well received by the youth.

Employability-focused programs that linked life and technical skills training to jobs left youth feeling more prepared to meet the needs of employers in the local labor market. In Lebanon, sensitive social issues, such as HIV/AIDS awareness, smoking, and early marriage were addressed; topics that youth said were seldom discussed elsewhere, despite their prevalence and relevance.

Increased opportunities for socialization were also highly valued by the youth. Several focus group respondents commented that due to the conservative nature of their families and communities they often had trouble working and collaborating with people outside of their limited social circles. A female participant from Morocco said, "The group exercises helped me to become more socially and culturally engaged with different people"; a rare opportunity, given the closed community in which she lives where opportunities to socialize with others are minimal.

Youth also felt that the life skills training helped improve their ability to work in teams, communicate effectively, be self-confident, and become leaders in their lives and communities.

Regionally, program beneficiaries recognized the value of teamwork and felt that the program activities gave them opportunities to improve their ability to collaborate with their families and their peers. This increased collaboration was fueled by an increase in self-confidence and in their ability to express themselves and communicate effectively. Several female respondents explained how the programs had helped them to increase their confidence to express their ideas, concerns, and feelings with their families, particularly with their fathers, resulting in stronger relationships at home. A youth who was expelled from school said, "The life skills training helped me tone down my impulsiveness and realize that I can better express myself and deal with others without resorting to violence."

Youth also wanted to know how to take initiative and be leaders in their families, communities, and places of work. A program in Lebanon led one participant who had never considered running for an office to become a member of parliament at her school. Her father, an Imam, respects her role so much that he now asks her opinion when he is preparing for his Friday Mosque speech, and her mother, who does not believe in popular elections, now supports her desire to vote in future elections. Likewise, in Egypt, a female beneficiary used her improved self-confidence, communication, and leadership skills to convince her parents to allow her to work. According to her, "The life skills training helped me understand, negotiate with, and convince my parents that I can work, and now I am employed."

Understanding not only of the target demographic, but also of the social context in which youth beneficiaries live is a critical factor in developing effective and well-received life skills programs. Practitioners who have successfully implemented life skills training in one part of a country and are planning to scale-up the program to reach other communities in that country should not assume that the training will be equally successful. Careful needs assessments of both the youth and the community context in which the program will be delivered should occur prior to finalizing the program design and delivering the training. Focus groups with youth trainees, their parents, and other private and public sector stakeholders should be conducted before, during, and after implementation, as part of formative evaluations of what is working and where improvements are required. Life skills programs that resonate with, engage, and matter to young people and their parents are more likely to produce positive program outcomes and achieve their overall goals.

Recommendations

- Involve youth in the program design and curriculum development phases and solicit their feedback regularly to test the effectiveness of particular life skills lessons and clarity of selected M&E tools.
- Continuously assess and adapt programming in response to changing local needs.

Employer Perceptions about the Value of Life Skills Programs

Ten employers from small, medium, and large companies across the five countries were interviewed to determine what they consider to be the primary challenges facing young employees when they enter the workforce, the life skills that new employees lack, and whether life skills training produces better prepared employees. Employers asserted unequivocally that life skills programs positively affect young people and better prepare them for the world of work, but that more must be done to reach a greater number of young people and provide them real opportunities to practice these skills.

From a small beauty salon in Jordan to a large telecommunication firm in Palestine, employers identified similar challenges that young people face and the skills they lack when they start working. Life skills that youth lacked included:[6]

- weak communication skills, including an inability to listen carefully and communicate with supervisors, colleagues, and customers, and difficulty accepting feedback
- lack of self awareness of what they want to do and what skills are required
- low self-esteem and confidence in their ability to perform on the job
- minimal respect for authority, including managers and colleagues
- poor time management and lack of commitment
- difficultly working in teams and collaborating with colleagues
- inability to take ownership, responsibility, and assume a leadership role
- limited CV and cover letter writing skills

Overall, employers felt that these challenges directly contributed to the high rate of employee turnover facing many employers throughout the region.

Seventy-five percent of the employers interviewed noted positive changes in the behaviors and skills of employees that had received life skills training and were able to provide clear examples in which training resulted in more confident, qualified, and better prepared employees. Better communication skills, a greater capacity to manage emotional pressure from the job, and the ability to balance priorities and manage time were cited as tangible improvements in young, entry-level employees.

6 The skills identified by employers interviewed during this map align with two of the five "constraints" to employment identified by the World Bank: insufficient skills and job search constraints.

BOX 9 Employers involvement in employability-focused programs

In Palestine, one organization holds periodic career fairs for youth participants. Local employers are invited to attend, and youth are given the opportunity to talk with various types of employers and to practice their communication and interviewing skills. Employers who attended these career fairs reported that life skills trainings increase young people's confidence and customer service skills.

Several employers noted that youth who had completed life skills training could think independently, come up with creative solutions to problems, and articulate these ideas to supervisors and colleagues. Youth who had life skills training were also more respectful of authority and seemed generally more committed to the job. According an HR officer at a bank in Palestine, "Life skills training does make a difference. The program graduates we met during an NGO-hosted career day were more presentable, serious, and more self-confident."

At the same time, employers indicated that more needed to be done to prepare young people for work, particularly in the areas of interviewing skills, commitment, and self-confidence. As an HR manager at one medium-sized Palestinian investment company noted, "We participated in the career day that took place after a life skills training program, and we still found the youth not well prepared for the interviews. Many seemed careless and not very presentable." Employers in Egypt, Morocco, and Palestine said more English instruction needed to be integrated into employability training programs, given their need for English-speaking employees.

Regionally, employers recommended that life skills be delivered in secondary schools and universities to equip future employees with these skills before they enter the job market. A senior HR administer at a large telecommunications company in Palestine said, "It's important to work with youth while they are in university or even school. Usually graduates who participate in [life skills] trainings are the ones who are already finding it difficult to get a job because they lack skills, so working with all youth at the university level will benefit others with higher potential."Employers also indicated that, to reduce the turnover rate among youth, life skills programs must correct the widely held perception that factory and other blue-collared jobs are menial or temporary.

Finally, this study found that many organizations implementing life skills programs do not follow up with employers to determine how program participants perform on the job or if they remain employed. This lack of follow-up indicates that the level of post-program monitoring is minimal; therefore, organizations cannot accurately assess the long-term impact of their programs on young people and employers. This, in turn, hinders the degree to which organizations can adapt programs to meet the needs of employers and may result in poor employment outcomes and missed corporate funding opportunities.

Recommendations

- Involve employers in program design, placement, and monitoring and evaluation to increase the relevance and reach of life skills.
- Conduct longitudinal studies to better measure long-term impacts on employability, civic engagement, leadership or other program goals.
- Donors and policymakers must seek additional ways to actively engage both youth and employers in planning and promoting major initiatives.
- Follow-up with youth and employers to monitor relevance and client satisfaction over time.

Robust public-private partnerships in which employers are meaningfully engaged during program design, implementation, and monitoring is required to ensure that program goals are aligned with labor market demands and that the needs of employers are imbedded into program execution. During the program design phase, employers can review curricula and discuss with practitioners what skills they need entry-level employees to have. When youth are selected into the program, employers can host site visits and job shadowing days to give youth a sense of what the world of work is like. Once the training begins, employers and practitioners should explore possibilities for youth to work as interns or apprentices so that they can practice and apply their newly acquired life skills. Employers that help plan and attend career days can also make sure youth are prepared for interviews by reviewing and providing feedback on CVs, communication skills, and professional appearance. This comprehensive engagement of employers is likely to lead to better youth employment outcomes, and encourage employers to invest time and resources into life skills programs.

Conclusions and Cross-Cutting Recommendations

Many of the study findings suggest that policymakers and funding agencies have important roles in ensuring that all young people in MENA have access to high quality life skills training. The degree of national government support for life skills programs, ongoing donor support for life skills initiatives, and greater cultural awareness about the value of life skills are key to improving life skills training in the region and making it available to more youth.

Countries in the region with relatively prevalent life skills training opportunities tend to have large, internationally funded programs that dovetail with government-led initiatives supporting youth. The Government of Jordan's National Youth Strategy, for example, which was developed in 2005 to encourage the positive youth participation in all aspects of society, mandates that government ministries, NGOs, and other private sector training entities must incorporate life skills into youth development programs. The popularity and prominence of life skills programs in Jordan can also be traced back to a program that UNICEF launched in the 1990s to integrate Life Skills Based Education (LSBE) into the national education system. The Basic Life Skills Training manual that emerged from that program has been adapted and used by the majority of implementing organizations and continues to be the base of current programming.

In countries where life skills programming reaches fewer beneficiaries, such as Morocco and Lebanon, donor funding has been limited and there is less awareness among policymakers about the importance of life skills. With little support available, NGOs and other life skills providers tend to focus programs primarily in urban or densely populated areas. Youth living outside of these areas, who are especially disadvantaged with fewer employment opportunities, are more likely to be left behind, without access to life skills programs. However, an emerging emphasis on life skills from private sector employers and the government in these countries suggests that awareness of the need for life skills training is growing. In Morocco, the Ministry of Education adopted life skills education into its curriculum in 2009, following the government's Emergency Plan for the Reform of Educational System. In Lebanon, civil society is playing a central role in building support for life skills as a tool to mitigate the ongoing political and social unrest that is fueled by sectarian violence. Interest from the Higher Council of Youth in Lebanon to integrate life skills into every NGO-managed youth development program is indicative of the government's growing awareness and interest in life skills. However, funding for this effort remains limited and, thus far, has been insufficient in pushing life skills to the level of saturation found in Jordan.

Supportive donor and government policies and funding trends have engendered greater prevalence and reach of life skills programs at the country level. In particular, programs operated by vocational training centers (VTCs) and within the public school system are able to reach a wide range of youth. In Jordan and Palestine, government and youth serving agencies have launched initiatives to offer life skills on a countrywide level.

Donors, international organizations, and governments in the region may find it fruitful to consider joint efforts for advancing standardized life skills curricular standards that can be tested, evaluated, promoted, and scaled up to create economies of scale and opportunities for regional learning and cooperation. More research is needed to understand the effectiveness of existing programs as well as the most conducive policies for facilitating program scale-up at the country or regional level.

Recommendations

- Governments, donors, and the private sector should create supportive policies and put funding in place to better support high-quality life skills programs; operated by government or quasi-governmental vocational training centers and within public school systems, programs are more likely to achieve scale.
- Facilitate national and regional networks and communities of practice to support standards, extend reach, and encourage cross-country learning.
- Fund high-quality research and disseminate research results to encourage further investment.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Initial Mapping Survey

General Information about the Organization/Program

Name of the organization/program		
Type of organization	☐ Government ☐ Private sector	☐ NGO ☐ Other (please specify): _____
Primary source of funding for the organization	☐ International donors ☐ Self-financed ☐ Other (please specify): _____	☐ Corporate donors ☐ Revenues for training
Number of years of experience implementing life skills programs	☐ Less than a year ☐ 1–4 years	☐ 5–9 years ☐ 10 years or more(please specify): _____
How are the life skills programs funded?	☐ International donors ☐ Self-financed ☐ Other (please specify): _____	☐ Corporate donors ☐ Revenues from training
Physical address:	Country: _____ Street Number: _____	City: _____ Building Number: _____
Contact information	Tel: _____ Fax: _____	Email: _____ Website: _____
Contact person	Name: _____ Position: _____	Mobile No.: _____ Email: _____

Information about the Life Skills Program

Please answer the following questions by checking the boxes that best describe your program. Check all that apply.

Title/name of the life skills program		
Structure of the program	☐ Stand-alone training program ☐ Part of an Employability program ☐ Rendered based on demand	☐ Part of the organization's general training plan ☐ Other (please specify):
	Number of life skills training cohorts conducted per year: _____ Number of participants trained in life skills per year: _____	
Beneficiaries	**Target age groups:** ☐ 12–5 ☐ 19–25 ☐ 16–18 ☐ >25	
	Academic Qualification: ☐ In-school ☐ Enrolled in university ☐ University graduates	☐ Post-graduates ☐ School dropouts ☐ Other (please specify): _____
	Employment Status: ☐ Employed ☐ Unemployed	☐ Inactive

Please list any special characteristics of the beneficiaries that you would like to share with us:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Geographical scope of training services	☐ National level ☐ Local communities ☐ Capital city only ☐ Specific regions (please name them): _____ ☐ Special governorates (please name them): _____ ☐ Other specific areas (please list them): _____	
Design of the life skills program	**Total number of training hours:** _____	**Program time frame:** Duration (in days): _____ Frequency (# of days per week): _____ Number of training hours per day: _____
	Training Sessions: Number of sessions per day: _____ Number of hours per session: _____	Number of topics per session: _____ Number of participants per program: _____
Curricula	**Training is delivered using:** ☐ Organization's own curriculum Please provide the title: _____ ☐ Training material prepared by trainers individually ☐ Adapted curriculum from another organization Please name the separate or affiliated/parent organization: _____	
	If your organization has adapted another organization's curriculum: Who did the adaptation? ☐ In-house curriculum developer/trainers ☐ External consultant(s) What was the process for adapting and approving the curriculum? _____	
	What is the primary focus of the curriculum? ☐ Enhance personal competencies of youth to do better in school ☐ Support youth in leading healthy lifestyles	☐ Support employment ☐ Enhance youth civic engagement ☐ Other (please specify):
	Topics covered during the training program (please specify): _____	
	What additional training material does your organization use (e.g., leader's guides, training of trainers plans, student workbooks)?	

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="1">Program implementation</td><td>Methods of delivery:
☐ Topics as one package / curriculum
☐ Selection of topics customized according to needs</td><td colspan="2">Training methods used:
☐ Brainstorming ☐ Self-reflection
☐ Group work ☐ Role plays
☐ Games and exercises ☐ Short presentations
☐ Case studies ☐ Other: _____</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Trainers/facilitators</td><td>Status of trainers/facilitators:
☐ In-house trainers
☐ Freelancers (specify from which sectors, e.g., universities, schools, private sector, public sector, youth): _____
_____
_____</td><td>Academic qualification:
☐ High school
☐ B.A.
☐ Post-graduate</td><td>Age group:
☐ 18–25 years
☐ 25–35 years
☐ 35–45 years
☐ 46 years or older</td></tr>
<tr><td>Years of experience as a trainer:
☐ 1 year or less
☐ 2–5 years
☐ 5–8 years
☐ 8 years or more</td><td colspan="2">Training of trainers (TOT):
☐ Trainers are required to complete a minimum number of TOT hours of before they are allowed to deliver training
☐ Organization provides TOT training for life skills trainers commissioned
☐ Trainers are supported by mentors that provide coaching and guidance to commissioned trainers
☐ No TOT is required</td></tr>
<tr><td>If the organization provides TOT:
Who is the master trainer(s)?
☐ In-house trainer(s)
☐ External consultant(s)
Does the organization lead Master TOT?
☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, who does the training?
☐ In-house trainer(s)
☐ External consultant (s)
Is there endorsed Master TOT manual/curricula?
☐ Yes ☐ No</td><td colspan="2">If the organization has a mentoring system in place:
Who are the mentors?
_____
_____
_____
How is the mentoring carried out (virtually, face-to-face, by telephone, etc.)?
_____
_____
_____</td></tr>
</table>

Monitoring & evaluation	**Are pre – and post-evaluations administered?** ☐ Yes ☐ No
	What instruments/activities are used to evaluate training? ☐ Written evaluation forms at the end of the program ☐ Verbal evaluation at the end of the program ☐ Daily verbal evaluation ☐ Follow-up focus groups with participants
	Impact is measured by: ☐ Comparison groups ☐ Focus groups with stakeholders (e.g., employers, educators, parents)
	Monitoring attendance: ☐ Tracking participant attendance is stipulated by organizational policies ☐ Tracking participant attendance is conducted upon the request of the sponsoring client/donor
Cost	Training program fees per person (in $ USD):_____ **Training fees are covered by:** ☐ Individuals ☐ International donors (programs) ☐ Government ☐ Local sponsoring organizations ☐ Participating organizations

Please list any special characteristics of the beneficiaries that you would like to share with us:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.

Appendix 2. Selection Criteria For In-Depth Mapping

Goal: To identify three organizations in each country to undergo an in-depth exploration of their life skills programs. The in-depth exploration aims to better and fully understand the typologies, key elements, best practices, and lessons learned of the selected life skills programs.

Approach: Each organization mapped during the initial study was ranked according to the criteria in the table below. Next, two or three organizations were selected in each country: one was a high-ranking organization that appeared to be using best practices in its efforts; another was a middle-ranking organization in which possible gaps in execution might be identified. An additional organization was selected if it appeared to present a unique and innovative model or was using unusual methodologies. If two organizations received the same score, the organization reaching more beneficiaries was selected for the study. If a selected organization was unwilling to participate in the study, an alternative organization was selected.

In-depth mapping selection criteria

Criteria/Parameters	Yes	No
I. Outreach		
Does the number of direct beneficiaries exceed 750 a year, on average?		
Does the organization target two or more age groups as defined in the tool?		
Does the organization target youth with diverse educational levels?		
Does the organization implement life skills programs on a national level?		
II. Design of the program		
Does the program have more than 30 hours of instructional hours?		
III. Organizational profile		
Does the organization have more than two years of experience implementing life skills programs?		
Does the organization have in-house trainers?		
Does the organization have in-house master trainers?		
Does the organization have an established mentoring system and mentors?		
IV. Curricula		
Does the curriculum cover at least five of the ten core life skills competencies?[a]		
Does the organization have a facilitator's manual or set of endorsed training materials?		
V. Quality assurance		
Does the organization administer pre – and post-evaluations?		
Is there a training evaluation system in place?		
Are impact assessments conducted?		
Are new trainers offered training?		
Do trainers have access to a facilitator's manual?		
Total		

a Core life skills competencies (based on UNCIF's Core Life Skills Competencies): self-confidence, managing emotions, personal responsibility, respecting self and others, cooperation & teamwork, communication & interpersonal skills, creative thinking, critical thinking & problem solving, decision making, and conflict management.

Appendix 3. In-Depth Mapping Tool

Goal: To identify the key factors of the selected life skills programs, understand the details of these life skills programs, and explore their best practices and lessons learned, building on the information obtained through the initial mapping phase.

Approach: The in-depth mapping of a selected life skills programs constitutes the second phase of the mapping assignment. This comprehensive tool is based on the International Youth Foundation's Minimum Standard Assessment Tool.

FOCUS OF THE LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM			
Areas of exploration/criteria	Definition/explanation	Exploration against criteria	Comments
1. Focus of the life skills program corresponds to the organization's mandate and needs of the target population.	The program's focus should follow the organization's mandate and serve the needs of the targeted population. The focus could be building the competencies of a targeted group, supporting the skills that make participants more employable or that improve their employment conditions, supporting their engagement in civic affairs, or helping them make better health-related decisions.	1.1 How was the focus of the life skills program determined? 1.2 Were stakeholders, including beneficiaries, consulted prior to articulating the focus of the program?	
CURRICULUM			
Areas of exploration/criteria	Definition/explanation	Exploration against criteria	Comments
2. Key competencies to be covered in the curriculum are identified in consultation with stakeholders (youth, teachers/principles, employers, and parents).	To ensure that the program meets the needs and expectations of stakeholders by covering the key competencies needed to help the beneficiaries improve their knowledge, skills, and attitude.	2.1 Did consultations with stakeholders take place? 2.2 With whom did the consultations take place? 2.3 What form did consultations take (e.g., focus groups, structured interviews, questionnaires, etc.)? 2.4 At what stage did the consultations take place (at the outset, or during or after of the selection/development of the material/curricula)?	
3. The life skills curriculum observes the cultural, social, educational, and age contexts of the beneficiaries.	Consultation with stakeholders (employers, education authorities, parents, and youth participants) has been undertaken to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and appropriate in terms of language, culture, age, education level, and the like.	3.1 Was the curriculum adapted to fit the cultural and social contexts of the beneficiaries?	

CURRICULUM			
Areas of exploration/criteria	Definition/explanation	Exploration against criteria	Comments
4. The life skills curriculum has been pilot tested and adapted for the target audience.	A pilot test must be conducted to ensure the curriculum is appropriate and relevant for the target population, whether the curriculum is newly developed or adapted from another program.	4.1 Was the curriculum piloted tested? 4.2 How was the curriculum tested? 4.3 What was the process for adaptation?	
5. The life skills curriculum includes content related to the following core life skills: • Self-confidence • Managing emotions • Personal responsibility • Respecting self and others • Cooperation and teamwork • Communication and interpersonal skills • Creative thinking • Critical thinking and problem solving • Decision making • Conflict management	These ten topics constitute the core lessons that need to be present in a comprehensive life skills curriculum. Based on the focus of the program and consultation with key stakeholders, other life skills (e.g., healthy behaviors, negotiation skills, positive thinking) may be added to the core skills.	5.1 How were the topics selected? Was the selection based on core competencies identified by the stakeholders, and do the topics align with the program focus?	
6. The life skills curriculum is systematically reviewed and updated.	To ensure that the curriculum is routinely reviewed and updated to meet emerging needs and developments, organizations might seek to organize a comprehensive review of the curricula after a certain period of implementation.	6.1 Does the curriculum undergo comprehensive review and updating after a certain period of implementation? 6.2 When does the comprehensive review take place? 6.3 How does the review and updating occur, and who takes part?	
7. Additional material and tools are provided to the participants and trainers to support learning.	Additional training materials/handouts are made available for the participants to support learning acquired through the sessions. A leader's guide or training session plans are made available for the trainers to support the delivery of the training, ensure quality, and, as much as possible, standardized delivery of lessons according to level.	7.1 What materials/handouts are shared with participants? 7.2 How does the organization ensure quality and standardize level of delivery among different trainers? 7.3 What tools/material are available to the trainers?	

CURRICULUM			
Areas of exploration/criteria	Definition/explanation	Exploration against criteria	Comments
8. There are written terms and conditions for sharing life skills curricula with external trainers, participants, and other organizations.	To protect copyright and to ensure the quality of program implementation, certain terms and conditions may be put into effect such as signing a license agreement, attending specialized TOT, and prohibiting use without reference to the source.	8.1 Is the curriculum copyrighted? 8.2 What are the terms and conditions for sharing curricula with other organizations or participants and external trainers?	
PROGRAM DESIGN			
Areas of exploration/criteria	Definition/explanation	Exploration against criteria	Comments
9. The time devoted to life skills training is of sufficient duration to allow for change in participant attitudes and behavior.	Sufficient contact time with beneficiaries is critical to allow youth to acquire minimum competencies in life skills and to boost change in their behavior.	9.1 On what basis is program duration determined? 9.2 Is the duration of the existing program sufficient? 9.3 If not, what are the reasons for not allocating the sufficient duration? 9.4 If program duration exceeds four months, how is the momentum toward life skills sessions maintained, and how is dropping out controlled?	
10. The lesson frequency and spacing allows youth to practice their newly acquired knowledge and skills and to reflect on their gained experienced.	Holding frequent life skills sessions that are reasonably spaced apart, (e.g., two or three sessions a week) encourages strong group dynamics and allows for reflection and application of skills learned in previous sessions.	10.1 How is the frequency determined? 10.2 What is the maximum interval between each life skills session?	
11. The daily period of interaction between the trainer/facilitator and beneficiaries is adequate to achieve the goals of the sessions and maintain level of energy and focus for both parties.	An adequate number of interaction hours between trainers/facilitators and beneficiaries is imperative to maintain quality performance by the trainers as well as to keep beneficiaries focused and interested.	11.1 How is the daily period of interaction with the beneficiaries decided upon? 11.2 Is there flexibility to prolong or shorten lesson time according to feedback received from the beneficiaries or trainers? 11.3 What are the key challenges presented by the existing time of interaction?	

TRAINERS/FACILITATORS			
Areas of exploration/criteria	Definition/explanation	Exploration against criteria	Comments
12. Specific criteria have been established for the selection of life skills trainers/facilitators.	Life skills trainers/facilitators should have experience working with the target youth population, effective facilitation/training skills, and communication skills along with the confidence, flexibility, and empathy required to effectively lead the life skills sessions.	12.1 Has the organization established and does it use clearly defined criteria for selecting life skills trainers/facilitators?	
		12.2 Has the organization established and does it use clearly defined criteria for selecting life skills trainers/facilitators?	
		12.3 How are the knowledge and skills of the trainers/facilitators assessed?	
13. Life skills trainers/facilitators have received basic training in delivering life skills, whether starting up a new life skills training program or building on an existing program.	Basic training ensures facilitators understand the program goals, the life skills content, and effective training methodologies. An ideal basic TOT would include: • Instruction in effective training methodologies and facilitation skills • Instruction in how best to work with youth • A practicum • Feedback on the practicum	13.1 How does the organization ensure that life skills trainers/facilitators have received basic TOT on life skills?	
		13.2 How many days and hours of TOT do the organization's trainers/facilitators receive, whether carried out by the organization itself or by other organizations?	
		13.3 If the organization conducts its own TOT, does it use materials endorsed by a relevant government agency or reputable international NGO?	
		13.4 How many trainers/facilitators are trained per TOT?	
		13.5 What are the criteria for selecting master trainers to deliver the TOT?	
		13.6 What is the basis for a successful completion of basic training and endorsement as life skills trainer/facilitator?	
		13.7 How often is the TOT conducted?	
		13.8 What is the period between the TOT and the start of life skills training?	
		13.9 Are refresher training programs conducted for trainers/facilitators? When refresher trainings are conducted, what is the duration of training?	

TRAINERS/FACILITATORS			
Areas of exploration/criteria	Definition/explanation	Exploration against criteria	Comments
14. Life skills trainers/facilitators receive adequate support through mentors.	To support the trainers/facilitators in dealing with challenges that may arise during training, the organization provides a mentorship system that allows for frequent and in-depth contact between assigned mentors and trainers/facilitators.	14.1 Does the organization have an institutionalized system for mentoring trainers/facilitators?	
		14.2 What is the process for providing mentorship?	
		14.3 What are the criteria for selecting mentors?	
		14.4 Does the organization provide mentors with training that enables them to fulfill the mentor role?	
15. Master TOT is conducted to secure an adequate number of master trainers.	To ensure the continuous availability of trainers/facilitators and enhance program sustainability, some organizations seek to conduct master level TOT.	15.1 How are master trainers identified and recruited?	
		15.2 What are the selection criteria for master trainers?	
		15.3 Are the materials used to train master trainers endorsed by a relevant government agency or reputable international NGO? How often are the materials reviewed and updated?	
TRAINING ENVIRONMENT			
Areas of exploration/criteria	Definition/explanation	Exploration against criteria	Comments
16. The training environment is conducive to effective and comfortable learning.	A comfortable training environment is important for making sure that participants feel safe expressing themselves and facilitators are able to lead all interactive activities. Hence, the number of participants per session should allow for the exchange of ideas, self expression, and ability to engage in various work groups and exercises.	16.1 What is the maximum number of participants per training session?	
		16.2 What is the seating arrangement for the life skills sessions?	
		16.3 Are ground rules set at the beginning of the training? How are they set?	
		16.4 What methods are applied to ensure the active participation of all participants?	
		16.5 What measures are taken to address bullying or a lack of commitment to the training's ground rules?	

17. The training venue is adequate to host a participatory approach to training.	Training venues: • are adequate in size to accommodate participants. If the space is too small, movement will be restricted; if too big, participants may feel scattered and the trainer may have to shout to be heard. • are sound-proof and do not allow outside noise to disturb the proceedings. • have a comfortable temperature. • have operational, separate rest rooms for males and females. • have walls or stands that can be used to hang flip charts. • include required training material and tools, such as pens, cards, markers, flip chart boards, paper, tape, etc.	17.1 Is the training room adequate in size to accommodate the number of participants and allow for mobility within for small group work and exercises?	
		17.2 Is the training room accessible to targeted participants and does the training site have operational sanitary facilities?	
		17.3 What are the key materials and training tools that are available at the venue?	
MONITORING AND EVALUATION			
Areas of exploration/criteria	Definition/explanation	Exploration against criteria	Comments
18. Life skills training programs are monitored and evaluated.	An M&E system should be in place to monitor attendance and advancement. In addition, M&E systems can help demonstrate the efficacy of program design and implementation.	18.1 What system is in place to reliably measure whether participants have acquired minimal knowledge and skills as defined by the life skills curriculum?	
		18.2 What are the means and tools used to solicit feedback on the quality of the life skills training?	
		18.3 How often and from whom is the feedback sought?	
		18.4 What process is used to evaluate the performance of the trainers/facilitators?	
		18.5 What tools are used to ensure that the correct target group has been engaged with the training?	

MONITORING AND EVALUATION			
Areas of exploration/criteria	Definition/explanation	Exploration against criteria	Comments
19. Life skills impact is measured after program conclusion.	The impact of the training program is measured to set the organization's development and improvement efforts on the right track. Using various tools, the impact assessment highlights what is going well and areas that need improvement. More importantly, it reveals to the organization whether the program is achieving its goals.	19.1 What tools are used to assess program impact? 19.2 When is the impact assessment conducted? 19.3 How is the evaluation analysis used?	

Appendix 4. Trainer Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol for Life Skills Trainers

Researcher welcomes trainer/staff member and thanks him/her for participating. Facilitator then explains purpose and methodology of the interview:

- We are here to conduct some research around how life skills training programs are implemented in your country.
- We are confident that your voice and thoughts will lead us to better support youth.
- We plan to use your thoughts and ideas, not your names. Your information will be kept confidential.
- We encourage you to be honest and open. Feel free to express different opinions.
- You do not have to answer any question that you don't want to answer.
- If you have any questions, please feel free to ask at the end of our time.

Questions

1. What is your general impression about the training program in terms of design and implementation?

2. Do you receive any type of support provided by the organization (TOT, mentoring)? Please give examples. If you participated in a TOT, was the amount of training sufficient?

3. In your opinion:
   - What are the life skills training program's areas of strength?
   - How did this program affect the youth as individuals? As a group?
   - What are the challenges you face during training implementation?
   - Do you feel the program is too long/short?
   - Was the training space comfortable?
   - Are the training materials provided by the organization sufficient?
   - What are some of the lessons you have learned from facilitating life skills training?

4. What are your recommendations on how to make training program model more effective?

Appendix 5. Youth Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Discussions Protocols for Youth Participating in Life Skills Training Program

Researcher welcomes group and thanks youth for their participation. Researcher then explains purpose and methodology of the focus group discussion:

- We are here to conduct some research around your experience with life skills training programs.
- We are confident that your voices and thoughts will lead us to better support youth.
- We plan to use your thoughts and ideas, not your names. Your information will be kept confidential.
- We encourage everyone to be honest and open. Feel free to express different opinions.
- You do not have to answer any question that you don't want to answer.
- If you have any questions, please feel free to ask at the end of our time.

Questions

1. Please briefly introduce yourselves.

2. What are some of the key challenges youth face in your community?

3. How did you hear about the life skills training program?

4. How did you get engaged in the training program? Why did you decide to join?

5. Did the intervention/training program help to address your needs?

    - If yes, how did this program impact your daily life (at home, school, work, and civic engagement)?

    - If no, in what ways did it fail to address your needs?

6. In your opinion, what are the strong points of the training program?

7. What were the different activities you participated in as part of this training program?

8. What were the different activities you participated in as part of this training program?

9. What are the activities that you liked and benefited from most, and why?

10. Are there any improvements that you would like to suggest to make the training experience better?

11. What did you like or dislike about the trainers?

12. Was the program too long or too short?

Appendix 6. Employer Interview Guide

Interview Questions for Employers

Company name:

Name of person (or persons) interviewed:

Title:

Contact information:

Date of interview:

Type of business:

Products or services:

Number of years your business has operated in the country:

1. How many full-time and part-time employees does your company currently have?

2. According to your company's recruiting policies and procedures, is an applicant's prior training considered during the hiring process?

3. In general, what are some of the key challenges you face regarding employees in your country?

4. In your experience, what are some of the key challenges faced by entry-level employees?

5. What are the main technical and soft skills required in your line of business?

6. From your perspective as an employer, what are some of the key life skills (soft skills) that you think young employees lack?

7. Do you feel there is a difference between the employees that have completed life skills training and those who have not? In what aspects?

8. Based on your observations, what recommendations would you make to local organizations offering life skills training programs regarding the content and focus of their training?

Appendix 7. Egypt Minimum Standards Summary Table

MENA Life Skills Mapping Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming EGYPT	
COUNTRY CONTEXT	**Youth demographic** Percent of total population: 20[a] Median age (total population): 24.6[b] Youth unemployment rate: 24.8%[c] National unemployment rate: 12.2%[d] **National youth strategy/policy:** The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) was established to promote the protection and development of children and mothers. As one of its priority areas, the NCCM aims to include life skills training within the educational system. Further, the National Council for Youth aims to enhance youth engagement and contribution to public affairs by overseeing the operation of national youth centers, which provide life skills, vocational, leadership, and ICT training. **Political and social climate:** Events in early 2011 have led to a rapidly shifting political, economic, and social environment in Egypt. However, young people still face enormous challenges in making the transition to a healthy and productive adulthood. The rate of unemployment among youth is high, and it is highest among those who seek jobs for the first time. This can be attributed to the fact that public education does not equip youth with the skills required by the labor market and by the private sector in particular.
PREVALENCE OF LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMS	**Number of life skills programs mapped:** 18 **Number of beneficiaries reached:** 200–1200 **Target beneficiary groups:** All organizations target unemployed youth, ten target school drop-outs, and seven target university students. Street children and girls are also specifically targeted. **Primary providers of life skills training:** NGOs. **Geographic coverage:** Most NGOs do not implement nationwide programs, but instead target specific governorates within Egypt. **Years of experience in implementing life skills programs:** The majority of organizations have five or more years of experience; however, three have more than ten years of experience. Organizations delivering life skills interventions within employability-focused programs tend to have the least amount of experience.
Minimum Standard	Country Status
Life skills curriculum responds to needs identified by key stakeholders	**Types of stakeholders consulted:** Employers **Stakeholder's consultations:** Most commonly, youth and life skills facilitators were consulted during the curriculum development and adaptation process. Occasionally findings showed that life skills topics were selected based on findings from labor market assessments or needs of target participants and employers. Fourteen of the organizations mapped use life skills curricula that they developed themselves; however, the majority of these curricula have not been endorsed by a local government ministry or reputable international NGO.

MENA Life Skills Mapping Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming EGYPT	
Minimum Standard	Country Status
Life skills curriculum includes content related to core life skills	**Additional topics addressed:** Work-related modules (CV preparation, interviewing, career planning), healthy decisions and reproductive health, civic engagement, volunteerism, and entrepreneurship. **Focus of overall program:** Nine focused on employability; seven on civic education; two on health. **Supporting Materials:** Ten organizations use additional training material to support the life skills curriculum, such as trainer's guides, audiovisuals, student workbooks and handouts.
The life skills curriculum has been pilot tested and adapted for the target audience	**Percent of organizations adapting curriculum:** 55 **Percent of organizations pilot testing curriculum:** 11 **Adaption process:** Typically organizations used questionnaires and focus group discussions with youth and facilitators during the adaption process. When using curricula obtained by international NGOs, 38 percent of organizations relay on in-house life skills experts and trainers to adapt the curriculum into the Egyptian context. Exercises, language, topics, case examples are adapted to meet the needs of the target group and ensure relevancy to the social-cultural context.
The time devoted to life skills training is of sufficient duration and frequency	**Minimum number of instructional hours:** 8 Employability-focused programs tend to have the least number of training hours. **Maximum number of instructional hours:** 350. Programs focused on civic education tended to have the most number of training hours. **Duration of session:** 3–8 hours per session; however, health life skills sessions typically last 45 minutes. **Length of programs:** 3 days to 1.5 years **Maximum interval between sessions:** 1 week
Specific criteria have been established for the selection of life skills facilitators	**Minimum years of experience:** Fifteen of organizations require 2 or more years of experience **Age of facilitators:** 25–30 **Educational/certification requirements:** Bachelor's degree; five of organizations require facilitators to have a minimum number of TOT hours **Selection Process:** Not available **Trainer Profiles:** Eleven use freelance trainers or training firms, four rely on in-house trainers only, two organizations use volunteer university students.
Life skills facilitators have received basic training in delivering life skills	**Average number of hours for Training of Trainers:** 29 **Average number of facilitators trained per TOT:** Not available **Number of organizations offering TOT:** 11 **Frequency that TOT is conducted:** Not available **Prevalence of mastery-level TOT:** Low; 50 percent of the organizations mapped relay on in-house facilitators to deliver TOT, whereas other organizations hire external trainers or training firms.

MENA Life Skills Mapping Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming EGYPT	
Minimum Standard	Country Status
Life skills facilitators consistently use appropriate teaching methodologies to deliver life skills sessions	**Teaching Methodologies:** All of the organizations mapped use participatory approaches for facilitating life skills training. However, one organization conducts seminars throughout the training interventions on topics related to work preparedness. A common trend in Egypt is to take a "learning by doing" or practical approach to delivering life skills training. Many life skills interventions are incorporated into social activities at summer camps, participatory rapid research, and community or media projects. Further, three organizations use the peer-to-peer approach calling on university students to facilitate the life skills training.
Life skills facilitators receive adequate support	**Number of organizations with mentoring systems in place for trainers**: 5 **Number of organizations offering refresher trainings:** Not available
The classroom or workshop environment is conducive to effective and comfortable learning	**Number of participants per session:** 15–25 **Maximum facilitator to participant ratio:** 1:25 **Seating arrangement:** Not available
Life skills training is monitored and evaluated	**Number of organizations using pre – and post-tests to measure knowledge gains:** 16 **Prevalence of other forms of evaluation:** The majority of organizations mapped administer written assessments to youth at the completion of the course. In addition, eleven organizations conduct focus groups discussions to collect feedback. A few organizations conduct verbal evaluations at the end of each session to gage youth satisfaction with the training and interest in the topics covered. More than half of the organizations measure the impact of their life skills programs. However, in general organizations do not use proper M&E systems to measure training outcomes.

[a] EuroMed Youth Technical Assistance Unit, Studies of Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries: Egypt, (Marly-le-Roi: EuroMed, n.d.). Retrieved May 21, 2012 from: http://www.euromedyouth.net/Studies-on-EuroMed-Youth-Policies.

[b] Central Intelligence Agency: World Factbook, Egypt. Retrieved May 21, 2012 from:https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/.

[c] Ibid.

[d] World Bank, World DataBank: World Development Indicators and Global Development Finance, http://databank.worldbank.org/data/.

Appendix 8. Jordan Minimum Standards Summary Table

MENA Life Skills Mapping: Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming JORDAN	
COUNTRY CONTEXT	Youth Demographic Percent of total population: 23[a] Median age (total population): 22.1[b] Youth unemployment rate: 27%[c] National unemployment rate: 12.5%[d] National youth strategy/policy: In 2005, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was the first Arab country to develop a National Youth Strategy in consultation with 50,000 youth, which is implemented by the Higher Council of Youth through a multi sectorial approach in collaboration with other ministries and relevant actors. Life skills interventions are widely offered at Vocational Training Centers overseen by the Higher Council of Youth. Political and social climate: While great progress has been achieved in recent times, Jordan continues to face serious development challenges, including poverty, an education system struggling to meet 21st century needs, lack of citizen engagement in the political process, and a rapid population growth resulting in limited opportunities for youth in regards to quality employment.
PREVALENCE OF LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMS	Number of life skills programs mapped:11 Number of beneficiaries reached: 1,100–100,000. Life skills interventions that are offered through government-run education and vocational training programs tend to train a significantly higher number of beneficiaries a year than those implemented by NGOs. Target beneficiary groups: In-school youth and drop outs, unemployed youth Primary providers of life skills training: NGOs, government secondary schools, and Vocational Training Centers. The Jordanian Ministry of Education and UNICEF have supported the integration of Life Skills Based Education (LSBE) in Jordanian Curricula delivered in public schools. Thus, Jordan is a leading country in the region in terms of offering life skills training through various youth development programs implemented by public sector and private sector entities. Geographic coverage: Seven implement programs on national level Years of experience in implementing life skills programs: All organizations had five or more years of experience.
Minimum Standard	Country Status
Life skills curriculum responds to needs identified by key stakeholders	Types of stakeholders consulted: Employers, academic professionals, youth Stakeholder Consultations: Eight of the organizations mapped use curricula that have been obtained by UNICEF or a large international NGO. Life skills interventions incorporated into youth employability programs are typically based on local labor market needs identified through consultations with local employers and other stakeholders. However, the key competencies to be covered within the curricula are not always identified in consultation with key stakeholders such as youth, employers, or teachers.

MENA Life Skills Mapping: Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming JORDAN	
Minimum Standard	Country Status
Life skills curriculum includes content related to core life skills	Additional topics addressed: Career Planning, CV preparation, interviewing skills, leadership, entrepreneurship, health. Focus of overall program: Eight focus on employability; four were multi-focused on topics such as civic engagement, personal competencies, and employment. Supporting materials: Supporting materials such as student workbooks, TOT plans, and leader's guides are commonly used by organizations in Jordan to implement life skills training.
The life skills curriculum has been pilot tested and adapted for the target audience	Percent of organizations adapting curriculum: 45 Percent of organizations pilot testing curriculum: 45 Adaption process: The majority of the organizations use curricula that has been adapted it to local context; in some cases the curricula has been translated into Arabic. Most commonly, internal trainers were responsible for adapting training materials, while a few organizations consulted youth and employers in addition to trainers during the adaption process. Adapted curricula are typically pilot tested with several cohorts of youth before full scaling.
The time devoted to life skills training is of sufficient duration and frequency	Minimum number of instructional hours: 6 Maximum number of instructional hours: 100 Duration of session: 45 min to 1 hour Length of program: 2 weeks to 1 year Maximum interval between sessions: Weekly. In general, life skills programs in Jordan are delivered over a short time frame with consecutive daily sessions and long training hours per day. However, life skills interventions implemented in schools and universities tend to have shorter sessions overall.
Specific criteria have been established for the selection of life skills facilitators	Minimum years of experience: The general requirement is 2 or more years Age of facilitators: 18–24, 35+ Educational requirements: Post-secondary degrees, nine organizations require trainers to have completed a minimum number of TOT hours Selection Process: CV review, interviews conducted by a Master Trainer, reference checks, and continual observation once hired Trainer Profiles: Freelance, in-house trainers, or a combination of both
Life skills facilitators have received basic training in delivering life skills	Average number of hours for Training of Trainers: 45 Average number of facilitators trained per TOT: 15 Number of organizations offering TOT: 11 Frequency that TOT is conducted: Each academic semester, or according to need Prevalence of mastery-level TOT: High
Life skills facilitators consistently use appropriate teaching methodologies to deliver life skills sessions	Teaching Methodologies: All of the organizations mapped reported using a participatory approach which includes activities that encourage and allow students to practice specific life skills. However, one organization mapped used a more lecture-based approach. Two of the organizations mapped use the peer-to-peer approach to delivering life skills in which they recruit university students as life skills facilitators.

MENA Life Skills Mapping: Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming JORDAN	
Minimum Standard	Country Status
Life skills facilitators receive adequate support	Number of organizations with mentoring systems in place: 3 Number of organizations offering refresher trainings: None. Support to facilitators generally consists of shadow training with a master trainer, monitoring through in-class observations, and weekly check-in calls; however, the degree in which support is provided to facilitators was minimal across the organizations. It is apparent that the concept of structured mentorship is a weakness of the life skills programs mapped and organizations tend to confuse evaluation of performance with mentorship.
The classroom or workshop environment is conducive to effective and comfortable learning	Number of participants per session: 25–35 Maximum facilitator to participant ratio: 1:40 Seating arrangement: Comfortable; adequate for effective learning.
Life skills training is monitored and evaluated	Number of organizations using pre – and post-tests to measure knowledge gains:7 Findings show that life skills programs incorporated within educational and vocational systems do not administer pre – and post-test evaluations. Prevalence of other forms of evaluation: Focus group discussions and questionnaires were administered to youth, employers, and parents by one organization. Organizations conduct regular assessments to measure the impact of their life skills programs, and three organizations conduct impact evaluations.[e]

a EuroMed Youth Technical Assistance Unit, Studies of Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries: Jordan, (Marly-le-Roi: EuroMed, n.d.). Retrieved May 21, 2012 from: http://www.euromedyouth.net/Studies-on-EuroMed-Youth-Policies.
b Central Intelligence Agency: World Factbook, Jordan. Retrieved May 21, 2012 from:https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/.
c Ibid.
d World Bank, World DataBank: World Development Indicators and Global Development Finance, http://databank.worldbank.org/data/.
e The data were self-reported by program managers and evidence was not collected by the research team.

Appendix 9. Lebanon Minimum Standards Summary Table

MENA Life Skills Mapping: Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming, Cont. LEBANON	
COUNTRY CONTEXT	Youth Demographic Percent of total population: 18[a] Median age (total population): 29.3[b] Youth unemployment rate: 22%[c] National unemployment rate: 9%[d] National youth strategy/policy: Lebanon lacks a youth policy; however, key players on youth issues in Lebanon, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The Ministry of Social Affairs provides grants to NGOs to carry out activities related to training and workforce development for youth. Political and social climate: Most of the challenges faced by young Lebanese concern unemployment, security issues, and conflict, as well as their disadvantaged role in society, especially with young women. Lebanon has suffered from decades of civil war thus the Lebanese government struggles to meet the needs of the communities in general. Arguably, there is a demand for life skills interventions in Lebanon to provide youth with the skills needed to face the political and social challenges affecting their communities. The complicated political situation also contributes to the minimal involvement of the private sector in youth development initiatives.
PREVALENCE OF LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMS	Number of life skills programs mapped: 9 Number of beneficiaries reached: 30–70; however, life skills programs incorporated within the public school system reach a considerably higher number of beneficiaries: up to 1,200 a year. Target beneficiary groups: In-school youth and drop-outs, university graduates, youth with disabilities Primary providers of life skills training: NGOs. The Lebanese government recognizes the importance of life skills, which is demonstrated by life skills lessons slowly being added to the school curriculum; however, life skills training tends to be offered primarily by NGOs. Geographic coverage: Life skills programs are not widely prevalent in Lebanon; only four organizations mapped implement life skills programs on a national level Years of experience in implementing life skills programs: Six of organizations have ten or more years of experience
Minimum Standard	Country Status
Life skills curriculum responds to needs identified by key stakeholders	Types of stakeholders consulted: Ministry of Youth, parents, community leaders, psychosocial specialists Stakeholder consultations: Study findings show that the majority of organizations develop their own training materials and curricula in consultation with key stakeholders. Consultations with experts from relevant ministries and international NGOs as well as community leaders and parents were commonly conducted to ensure the project focus and curriculum addresses the needs of youth beneficiaries. Consultations generally took place at the outset of the program after the outline and materials were prepared, and before implementation began.

MENA Life Skills Mapping: Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming, Cont. LEBANON	
Minimum Standard	Country Status
Life skills curriculum includes content related to core life skills	Additional topics addressed: career preparedness, civic engagement, healthy life styles, human rights, advocacy, gender roles and equality, and conflict resolution. Focus of overall program: Four organizations focus on vocational training/employability; six are multi-focused. The selection of life skills topics and core competencies generally is dependent on the specific target groups' needs. Employability-focused programs commonly include lessons on CV writing and interviewing skills. One organization also includes topics on adolescent reproductive health, such as early marriage and HIV/AIDS within its life skills program. Supporting materials: NGOs in Lebanon commonly create their own life skills training material; thus, variation among programs exists in terms of how modules are structured. Of the organizations mapped, six use additional training materials to support the curriculum.
The life skills curriculum has been pilot tested and adapted for the target audience	Percent of organizations adapting curriculum: 55 Percent of organizations pilot testing curriculum: 44 Adaptation process: A common trend within the mapped organizations in Lebanon is that they all use training material that has been adapted from various sources or developed internally by trainers. Organizations adapt training material to ensure that it fits the cultural and sociopolitical context of the target groups. Twenty-two percent of organizations reported frequently customizing the curriculum to ensure exercises and case studies are relevant to the target group's educational level, background, and cultural/political context.
The time devoted to life skills training is of sufficient duration and frequency	Minimum number of instructional hours: 6 Maximum number of instructional hours:100 Duration of session: 3–8 hours Length of program: 3–5 days, 6 months to a year for programs within the educational system Maximum interval between sessions: 1 week. NGOs delivering employability-focused programs consist of a considerably low number of training hours, ranging from 2–6, whereas life skills interventions aligned with semesters or long vocational training cycles tend to have a lower number of hours per session carried out on a weekly or monthly basis.
Specific criteria have been established for the selection of life skills facilitators	Minimum years of experience: 1–3 years Age of facilitators: 20–46 Educational/certification requirements: Post-secondary degree; seven organizations require facilitators to have a minimum number of TOT hours Trainer Profile: In-house, freelance, and one organization commissions university students as trainers Selection process: Organizations reported using clearly defined criteria for the selection of facilitators such as successful completion of a TOT, experience with youth, and good communication skills. The knowledge and skills of the trainers/facilitators verified through reviewing the CV, conducting interviews, and cross-checking references.

MENA Life Skills Mapping: Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming, Cont. LEBANON	
Minimum Standard	Country Status
Life skills facilitators have received basic training in delivering life skills	Average number of hours for Training of Trainers: 48 Average number of facilitators trained per TOT: 15 Number of organizations offering TOT: 7 Frequency that TOT is conducted: Annually Prevalence of mastery-level TOT: Low One organization's TOT is conducted over a period of 5–7 training days and covers life skills topics and instructional methodologies. The training also includes a 1-day practicum in which each trainer practices training for 30 minutes then receives feedback from the master trainer and colleagues.
Life skills facilitators consistently use appropriate teaching methodologies to deliver life skills sessions	Teaching Methodologies: All organizations reported using participatory approaches for training delivery. Measures such as small groups, role plays, brainstorming, games, and changing seating arrangements and mixing the groups are applied to ensure the active participation of all participants.
Life skills facilitators receive adequate support	Number of organizations with mentoring systems in place: 4 Number of organizations offering refresher trainings: 2 The organizations that have mentoring practices in place rely on in-house experienced trainers to act as mentors; however, none of the organizations provide specialized training for mentors.
The classroom or workshop environment is conducive to effective and comfortable learning	Number of participants per session: 20–35 Maximum facilitator to participant ratio: 1:15 Seating arrangement: Round tables or at desks arranged in a U shape. In general, the training environment was sufficient.
Life skills training is monitored and evaluated	Number of organizations using pre – and post-tests to measure knowledge gains: 7 Prevalence of other forms of evaluation: Completion rates are not systematically tracked by organizations. However, organizations reported dropout rates of 15–25 percent. Six organizations measure the impact of their life skills programs. Results are used to guide modifications to the program structure and life skills content.

Appendix 10. Morocco Minimum Standards Summary Table

MENA Life Skills Mapping: Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming, Cont. MOROCCO	
COUNTRY CONTEXT	Youth demographic Percent of total population: 20a Median age (total population): 26.9b Youth unemployment rate: 29.1%c National unemployment rate: 9.2%d National youth strategy/policy: An Integrated National Youth Strategy that aims to improve collaboration among stakeholders to increase opportunities for youth is scheduled to be approved and rolled out in 2012. The Consultative Council for Youth and Collective Action was established to be an essential guarantor of the Integrated National Youth Strategy. Political and social climate: Currently, the age structure of the Moroccan population is predominately youth aged 15–24. This "youth bulge" contributes to high unemployment as well as other challenges for youth. In the wake of widespread protests across Morocco in early 2011, prompted by Arab Spring throughout the region, the Moroccan Government has undertaken a number of economic, social, and political reforms, including reforms aimed at upgrading the national education and health systems.
PREVALENCE OF LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMS	Number of life skills programs mapped:10 Number of beneficiaries reached: 80–2,000 Target beneficiary groups: University students and graduates, in-school and drop-outs. Primary providers of life skills training: Primarily NGOs and government public schools. Recently there has been an increasing interest and awareness of the importance of life skills by government and private sector employers in Morocco who are driving the demand for youth to be equipped with life skills. Since 2009, the Ministry of Education in Morocco has adopted life skills into its approved curriculum and extracurricular activities. Geographic coverage: Two work on a national level, whereas the majority of organizations operate in specific regions, mainly Casablanca. Years of experience in implementing life skills programs: Six of the organizations mapped have five or more years of experience, four have one to four years.
Minimum Standard	Country Status
Life skills curriculum responds to needs identified by key stakeholders	Types of stakeholders consulted: University professors and school personnel, employers, and civil society organizations Stakeholder consultations: For programs integrated within the educational system, the Ministry of Education was involved in the selection process of schools, teachers, and administrators to implement life skills programs. NGO donors occasionally require specific life skills competencies and additional topics to be covered.
Life skills curriculum includes content related to core life skills	Additional topics addressed: Career planning, interview skills, CV preparation, civic responsibility, conflict resolution, and advocacy. Focus of overall program: Eight focus on employability; two focus on civic engagement. The life skills content often reflects the focus of the program, whether employability or civic engagement, and the core competencies such as communication, creative and critical thinking, and conflict management are generally still covered.

MENA Life Skills Mapping: Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming, Cont. MOROCCO	
Minimum Standard	Country Status
The life skills curriculum has been pilot tested and adapted for the target audience	Percent of organizations adapting curriculum: 80 Percent of organizations pilot testing curriculum: Not available Adaptation process: A comprehensive approach used by one organization included adapting a curriculum obtained by an international NGO into the local culture, language, and context by establishing an advisory committee consisting of teachers, life skills trainers, academic supervisors, and a professional curriculum developer. The curriculum was then piloted with a cohort of students at the district level followed by a revision phase before fully scaling the implementation of training using the curriculum.
The time devoted to life skills training is of sufficient duration and frequency	Minimum number of instructional hours: 30 Maximum number of instructional hours: 53 Duration of session: 45 minutes to 2 hours Length of program: 1.5 months to 2 years Maximum interval between sessions: 1 week
Specific criteria have been established for the selection of life skills facilitators	Minimum years of experience: 2 or more years Age of facilitators: 25 or older Educational requirements: Eight of the organizations require trainers to have a university degree. A minimum of a high school diploma is the educational requirement for the remaining organizations. Selection process activities: Commonly CVs are reviewed, interviews are conducted, and references are checked. One organization relies on human resource departments at private sector companies to nominate employees to volunteer as trainers. Trainer profiles: The majority of organizations employ life skills trainers, whereas freelance trainers are used by a few organizations. One organization relies on teachers and counselors in schools to deliver life skills training.
Life skills facilitators have received basic training in delivering life skills	Average number of hours for Training of Trainers: 30 Average number of facilitators trained per TOT: 20 Number of organizations offering TOT: 8 Frequency that TOT is conducted: Twice a year Prevalence of mastery-level TOT: Low
Life skills facilitators consistently use appropriate teaching methodologies to deliver life skills sessions	Teaching methodologies: All organizations reported using participatory approaches for training delivery. Interactive teaching methods such as small groups, role plays, brain storming, games, and changing seating arrangements, and mixing the groups are applied to ensure the active participation of all participants.
Life skills facilitators receive adequate support	Percent of organizations with mentoring systems in place: 7 Number of organizations offering refresher trainings: 1
The classroom or workshop environment is conducive to effective and comfortable learning	Number of participants per session: 12–25 Maximum facilitator to participant ratio: 1:30 Seating arrangement: Round tables, pairs, generally adequate for effective learning

MENA Life Skills Mapping: Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming, Cont. MOROCCO	
Minimum Standard	Country Status
Life skills training is monitored and evaluated	Number of organizations using pre – and post-tests to measure knowledge gains:9 Prevalence of other forms of evaluation: Oral and written evaluations are commonly administered daily at the end of the life skills session by organizations to review the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation process and training material. To a lesser extent, organizations conduct focus group discussions with parents, school principals, and teachers to measure the impact of the life skills training on the participants.

a EuroMed Youth Technical Assistance Unit, Studies of Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries: Morocco, (Marly-le-Roi: EuroMed, n.d.). Retrieved May 21, 2012 from: http://www.euromedyouth.net/Studies-on-EuroMed-Youth-Policies.
b Central Intelligence Agency: World Factbook, Morocco. Retrieved May 21, 2012 from:https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/.
c Ibid.
d World Bank, World DataBank: World Development Indicators and Global Development Finance, http://databank.worldbank.org/data/.

Appendix 11. Palestine Minimum Standards Summary Table

MENA Life Skills Mapping: Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming, Cont. PALESTINE	
COUNTRY CONTEXT	Youth demographic Percent of total population: 29.4a Median age (total population): 21.3b Youth unemployment rate: 46.9%c National unemployment rate: 24%d National youth strategy/policy: The Palestinian Authority has spearheaded several youth-focused initiatives. Foremost is the establishment of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) that is dedicated to addressing youth issues. The National Youth Policy was developed in 2005 with support from UNICEF and aims to strengthen the involvement of youth in all policies. In addition, the Palestine Liberation Organization established a High Youth Council in 2011, which supports Palestinian youth at home and abroad. Political and social climate: Despite a relatively high level of education and marketable ICT skills as compared with their counterparts in the region, young Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza face significant obstacles to employment. The country's small, closed, and structurally constrained economy, coupled with an education system that does not align with local labor market demand, perpetuates unemployment.
PREVALENCE OF LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMS	Number of life skills programs mapped:9 Number of beneficiaries reached: 80–200 (NGOs), 1,000–9,000 (school-based programs) Target beneficiary groups: University students, out-of-school and unemployed youth Primary providers of life skills training: NGOs Geographic coverage: Seven operate on a national level Years of experience in implementing life skills programs: All of the organizations mapped have five or more years of experience.
Minimum Standard	Country Status
Life skills curriculum responds to needs identified by key stakeholders	Types of stakeholders consulted: Private sector employers, universities, Ministry of Labor, civil society organizations, experts in the field, and youth beneficiaries Stakeholder consultations: One organization's curriculum is certified by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Several organizations solicit feedback through questionnaires administered annually to private sector employers and youth.
Life skills curriculum includes content related to core life skills	Additional topics addressed: Conflict resolution, civic participation, leadership, gender, advocacy, networking, crises management, community development, and human rights and equality. Focus of overall program: Nine focus on employability; six focus on civic-engagement and enhancing personal competencies. Supporting materials: Training materials to support curricula and the implementation of life skills are not widely used by organizations in Palestine.

MENA Life Skills Mapping: Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming, Cont. PALESTINE	
Minimum Standard	Country Status
The life skills curriculum has been pilot tested and adapted for the target audience	Percent of organizations adapting curriculum: 3 Percent of organizations pilot testing curriculum: 2 Adaptation process: The majority of organizations in Palestine have developed their own life skills curriculum based on various sources, thus adapting the curricula to local contexts is not commonly completed. However, the exercises, games, and activities in the curriculum are often designed to fit the educational level of target beneficiaries. One organization mapped during the initial study takes a more robust approach, which includes engaging with volunteers from the private sector and public educational institutions to adapt the curricula into the Palestinian context. Two organizations pilot tested their curricula by conducting training sessions for up to 25 groups in the testing phase over a period ranging from three to six months and then adjusting the material based on trainer and participant feedback.
The time devoted to life skills training is of sufficient duration and frequency	Minimum number of instructional hours: 18 Maximum number of instructional hours: 132 Duration of session: 1.5–8 hours Length of program: 5 days to 1 year Maximum interval between sessions: 1 week
Specific criteria have been established for the selection of life skills facilitators	Minimum years of experience: 2 years Age of facilitators: 20–25 Educational requirements: Post-secondary degrees; six of the organizations require trainer to have a minimum number of TOT hours Selection process activities: CV review, interviews, completion of a TOT Trainer Profiles: The initial mapping showed that all organizations either have in-house trainers or hire freelance trainers who are generally qualified and have higher education degrees. However, one organization takes a considerably different approach and commissions volunteers from institutions within the private sector to facilitate life skills training after completing a brief TOT provided by that organization.
Life skills facilitators have received basic training in delivering life skills	Average number of hours for Training of Trainers: 85 Average number of facilitators trained per TOT: 15 Number of organizations offering TOT: 7 Frequency that TOT is conducted: Annually or when budget permits Prevalence of mastery-level TOT: Low
Life skills facilitators consistently use appropriate teaching methodologies to deliver life skills sessions	Teaching methodologies: Both youth participants and trainers reported the use of interactive in-class activities that included sharing experiences, discussion, brainstorming, role playing, and mock job interviews.
Life skills facilitators receive adequate support	Number of organizations with mentoring systems in place: 7 Number of organizations offering refresher trainings: Not available

MENA Life Skills Mapping: Benchmarking Against IYF's Minimum Standards for Life Skills Programming, Cont. PALESTINE	
Minimum Standard	Country Status
The classroom or workshop environment is conducive to effective and comfortable learning	Number of participants per session: 15–40. The number of participants per training sessions is relatively high with programs that are delivered within the public arena, such as at schools, compared with other life skills programs, which tend to have a lower number of participants. Maximum facilitator to participant ratio: 1:40 Seating arrangement: Circle, U-shape, or small groups.
Life skills training is monitored and evaluated	Number or organizations using pre – and post-tests to measure knowledge gains: 8 Prevalence of other forms of evaluation: Of the nine organizations initially mapped, seven conduct some sort of assessment to measure the impact of their programs. A common trend with youth development programs in Palestine is to conduct focus group discussions with the program participants and revise the structure of the program accordingly. Five of the organizations conduct follow-up focus groups discussions with program participants. In addition, half of the organizations conduct focus group discussions with employers.

a Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved June 3, 2012 from: http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/
b Central Intelligence Agency: World Factbook, Palestine. Retrieved May 21, 2012 from: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/.
c Ibid.
d World Bank, World DataBank: World Development Indicators and Global Development Finance, http://databank.worldbank.org/data/.

Researcher Biographies

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Hala served as the mapping study's lead researcher in all five countries. Hala is a freelance consultant and trainer specializing in capacity building, youth development, and life skills training in the MENA region. She has more than twenty years of professional experience working with regional and international organizations in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. Hala holds a B.A. in English literature and is a certified trainer in the domain of soft skills of Management.

Sherif Shoaib

Sherif conducted the in-depth survey in Egypt. Sherif is currently a Technical Advisor consultant for the Egypt@Work program with the International Youth Foundation. In this role, he assesses technical elements of the program and builds the capacities of partners to improve youth employment programs. Sherif holds an MBA and has over fifteen years of training, management, and marketing experience in the Middle East.

Ruba Musleh

Ruba conducted the in-depth study of life skills programs in Palestine. Ruba is a Program Officer for the international Youth Foundation's Youth Entrepreneurship Development program in Palestine. She has eight years of experience managing internationally funded development projects. Ruba holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Birzeit University, Palestine, and, as a Fulbright scholar, she received her master's degree in Conflict Transformation from Eastern Mennonite University, Virginia.

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