

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT



CHARTING THE COURSE:

Strengthening the Impact of
Youth-Serving Institutions
in the Middle East and North Africa



THE WORLD BANK



ABOUT GPYE

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.



THE WORLD BANK

The **World Bank** supports governments in developing countries on a wide range of child and youth development issues, including youth employment, by conducting research, financing projects and supporting rigorous evaluation. Learn more at www.worldbank.org/childrenandyouth.



The **International Youth Foundation (IYF)** invests in the extraordinary potential of young people. Founded in 1990, IYF builds and maintains a worldwide community of businesses, governments, and civil-society organizations committed to empowering youth to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens. IYF programs are catalysts of change that help young people obtain a quality education, gain employability skills, make healthy choices, and improve their communities. To learn more, visit www.iyfnet.org.

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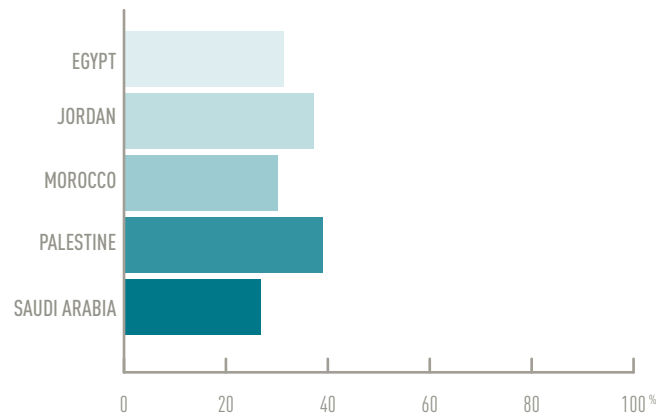
INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment rates in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are consistently the highest in the world, currently averaging about 30 percent. Youth-serving institutions (YSIs) can be an important resource for addressing unemployment, particularly among youth disadvantaged by poverty and low levels of education. YSIs can connect young people to labor markets by identifying what skills employers need in new hires, closing the skills gap through training and internship opportunities, and connecting job seekers and entrepreneurs with the resources required to launch careers. What types of YSIs operate in the Middle East and North Africa region? What services do they offer in the area of youth employability and entrepreneurship? What resources do YSIs need to better help young people prepare for and find jobs or start their own businesses? These are the questions that the International Youth Foundation (IYF) sought to answer in a 2013 survey of governmental, corporate, and nonprofit YSIs in the region.

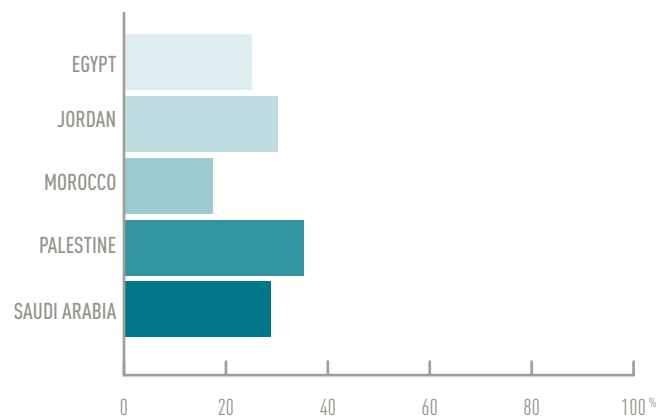
With funding from the World Bank under the *Global Partnership for Youth Employment*, IYF surveyed 75 YSIs in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia whose missions include addressing youth livelihoods, and who in total reached about two million young people in the 12 months prior to the survey. The study aimed to better understand their capacity to successfully implement existing youth employability and entrepreneurship programming and to make recommendations about how to strengthen the sector's impact in this area.

Organizations were asked about their annual budget, scope of services, number of youth served, and types of employability programming offered. The survey also asked respondents to assess their own organizational

YOUTH AS PERCENTAGE OF WORKING POPULATION



YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY COUNTRY



capacity (such as levels of program funding and training infrastructure), the operational environment (such as youth competencies and cultural norms), and organizational training needs.

This report presents the study's results and suggests next steps for increasing the effectiveness of youth employability programs in the region. Regional insights and findings are presented first, followed by a country-by-country analysis and recommendations of areas for future investment.

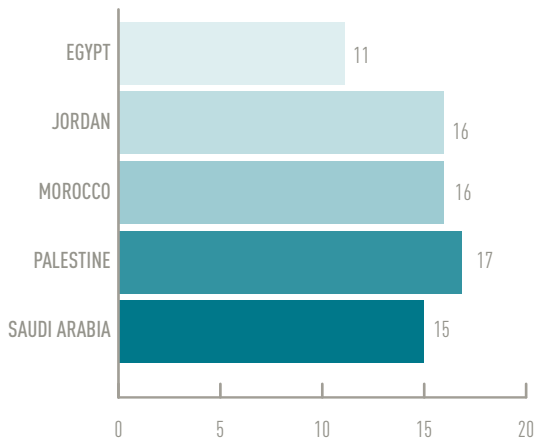
1. ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013*, Geneva: International Labour Office, 2013.

METHODOLOGY

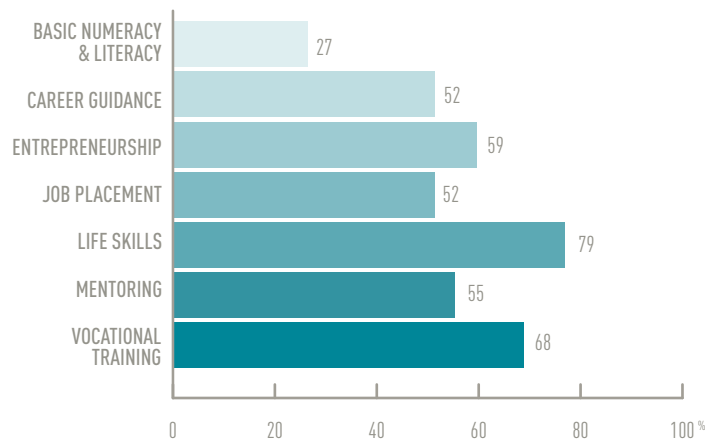
In partnership with local YSI partners, IYF generated a list of organizations in each country to invite to participate in the survey. The sample was purposeful, targeting organizations that had existing employability programs and intending to reflect a range of organizational types, sizes, and sectors. The YSIs surveyed tended to be clustered in one geographic area (usually the capital region), although many organizations had programs that were national in scope.

The survey instrument was piloted in Jordan and implemented in the remaining countries shortly thereafter using researchers based in each country. Researchers invited target organizations to complete the survey online and followed up with them by phone or in person as needed to complete the data collection. A total of 132 organizations across five countries were asked to contribute, and 75 organizations participated. Researchers in each country processed the data uniformly and a U.S.-based researcher analyzed country and regional findings to extract conclusions and recommendations.

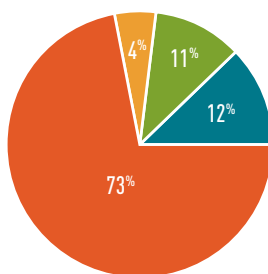
NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS SURVEYED



TYPES OF EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMS OFFERED (%)

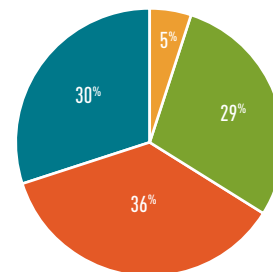


TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT PARTICIPATED



NON PROFIT/CIVIL SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL NGO
PUBLIC SECTOR
PRIVATE SECTOR

YEARS PROVIDING YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY OR ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMMING

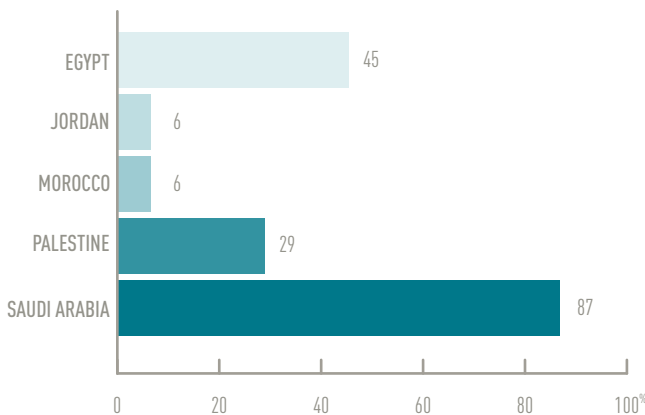


LESS THAN 1 YEAR
1-4 YEARS
5-9 YEARS
10+ YEARS

REGIONAL FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS

Across the five countries, organizational resources varied significantly. In Saudi Arabia seven of the fifteen organizations surveyed reported budgets over US\$10 million each, whereas among the other countries, only three YSIs, all in Jordan, had budgets of that size and the majority operated on less than US\$500,000 a year. However, regardless of financial resources and size of initiative, all YSIs faced multiple and similar challenges in terms of technical resources, capacity limitations and cultural impediments. Not surprisingly, respondents in all countries (though much less so in Saudi Arabia) noted the challenge of funding. Many expressed frustration around a lack of effective partnerships between YSIs and private sector entities and between YSIs and the public sector, which was a limiting factor in their impact and ability to reach more youth.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT REPORT HAVING ADEQUATE FUNDING (%)



Because a primary goal for the YSIs surveyed is to help youth get or create good jobs, IYF asked respondents an open-ended question about cultural norms or circumstances that pose barriers to young people’s employability. Respondents mentioned a tenacious

“culture of shame” that prevents young men and women in the Middle East and North Africa from considering employment in certain occupations or sectors, primarily vocational trades. Several respondents in Jordan, Morocco and Saudi Arabia noted that many youth favor public sector jobs due to their perceived security and more acceptable job tasks, despite the fact that more opportunities are available in the private sector.² Others noted a lack of “seriousness” or “commitment” among young people to accept some opportunities for gainful employment, which is at least partially connected to a cultural bias against certain jobs. In all countries, although most often in Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia, gender expectations and concerns for safety restrict women’s livelihood choices. Survey participants in Jordan mentioned repeatedly, for instance, that gender stereotypes discourage young women from working in certain fields and from working at jobs too far from home.

Many respondents noted a mismatch between the skills youth acquire in education or training and what the labor market is requiring, both in terms of technical and soft skills. This may be exacerbated by the region’s “culture of shame” if young people do not seek to acquire specific skills sought by employers. At the same time, many organizations felt that the private sector was not “committed to hiring youth” or did not recognize their potential. Sixty-nine percent

YOUTH HAVE ADEQUATE SOFT SKILLS



AGREE 44%

YOUTH HAVE SUFFICIENT EDUCATION

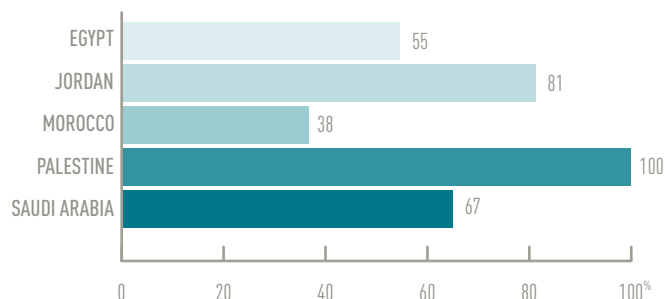


AGREE 59%

2. Although not the subject of this study, numerous studies and field accounts by IYF and others have documented the strong preference of MENA youth for public-sector jobs, which tend to bring come with benefits, job security, fewer demands, and hence, prestige. See, for example, D. F. Angel-Urdinola, A. Kuddo, and A. Semlali, *Public Employment Services in the Middle East and North Africa*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2012.

of organizations felt that they had good relationships with potential employers for young people, although there was a fair amount of difference among countries.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT REPORT STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS (%)



Entrepreneurship may represent untapped potential for youth livelihoods. According to one study,³ 76 percent of youth ages 18-34 in the Middle East and North Africa believe that starting a business is a good career choice. While more than half of the YSIs surveyed currently offer entrepreneurship training to youth, 45 percent of the organizations indicated that they would benefit from improving their skills in entrepreneurship programming, most notably in Jordan, Morocco and Palestine.

IT IS EASY FOR US TO CONNECT YOUTH TO KNOWLEDGEABLE MENTORS



AGREE 45%

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS CAN ACCESS LOANS OR OTHER FINANCING



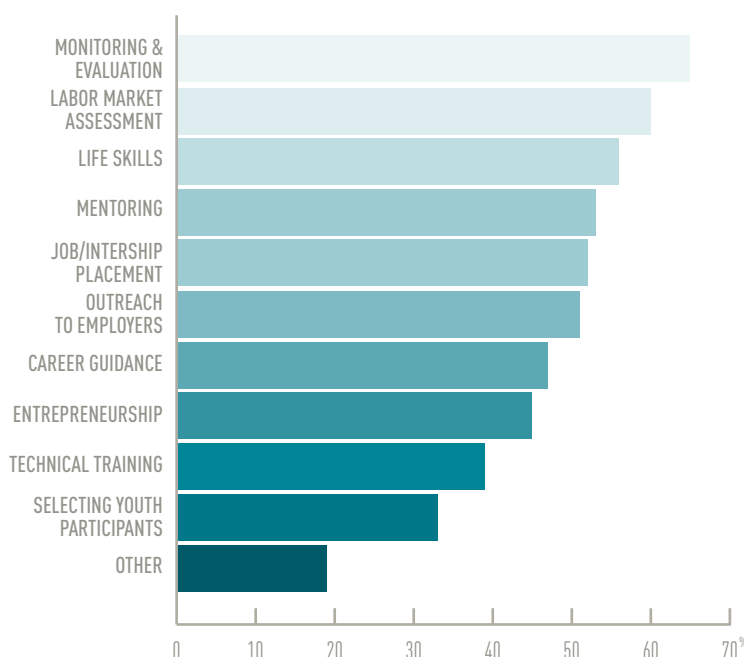
AGREE 43%

More than three-fourths of YSIs indicated that their organization would benefit from training or other support to improve their programming. Respondents most wanted to improve their capacity related to monitoring and evaluation (M&E), labor market assessments, and life

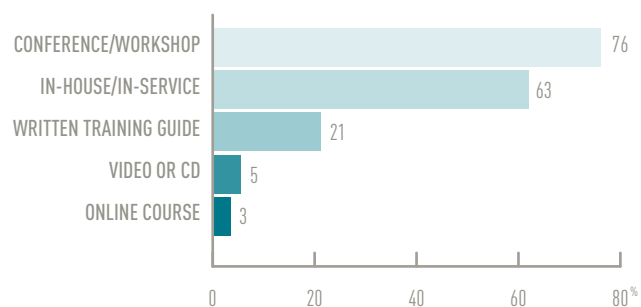
skills training. Respondents uniformly across all five countries communicated a strong preference for receiving training or technical assistance in a conference or workshop format and via in-house training over other methods.

These findings help identify critical areas for future investment in and technical support for YSIs in the region. In the coming pages, country profiles with additional details are presented, followed by recommendations for regional investments to address the challenges noted.

TOP TRAINING NEEDS (%)



PREFERRED METHOD TO RECEIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OR TRAINING (%)



3. J. Kew, M. Herrington, Y. Litovsky, and H. Gale. Generation Entrepreneur? The State of Global Youth Entrepreneurship (London: Youth Business International and Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2013).



COUNTRY PROFILES

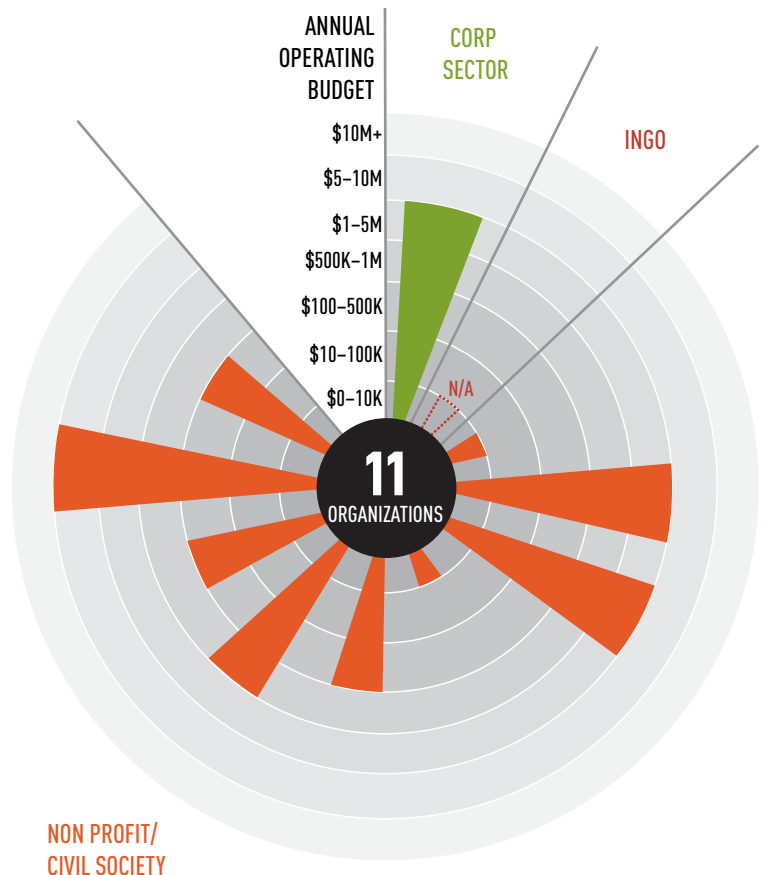
EGYPT: CREATING YOUTH-OWNED BUSINESSES

The Alashanek Ya Balady Association for Sustainable Development (AYB), an Egyptian NGO, launched the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) in 2010, working closely with the Ministry of Social Affairs in the district of Edko.

AYB, as the YEI umbrella organization, coordinates the services of numerous local partners. Through community-based organizations, young people receive the holistic training they need to land jobs or start their own businesses. AYB conducts feasibility studies and market assessments that ensure programming stays relevant to local conditions. AYB also trains youth on the life skills that are critical to workplace success. Partner organizations, in turn, impart a range of other employability skills, such as vocational and technical training, business management skills, and links to start-up financing or job-placement opportunities. In addition, AYB has successfully attracted resources for the YEI from local and international businesses, foundations, and governments, including the Vodafone Foundation and the Embassy of the Netherlands.

Because creating micro- and small businesses is a promising way to address the dearth of local jobs, a key component of the YEI is building the capacity of local organizations to provide entrepreneurship programming for youth. Among its other achievements, YEI has helped 400 youth launch successful microenterprises, filling market needs, creating local jobs, and generating income for young entrepreneurs.

ORGANIZATIONS SURVEYED



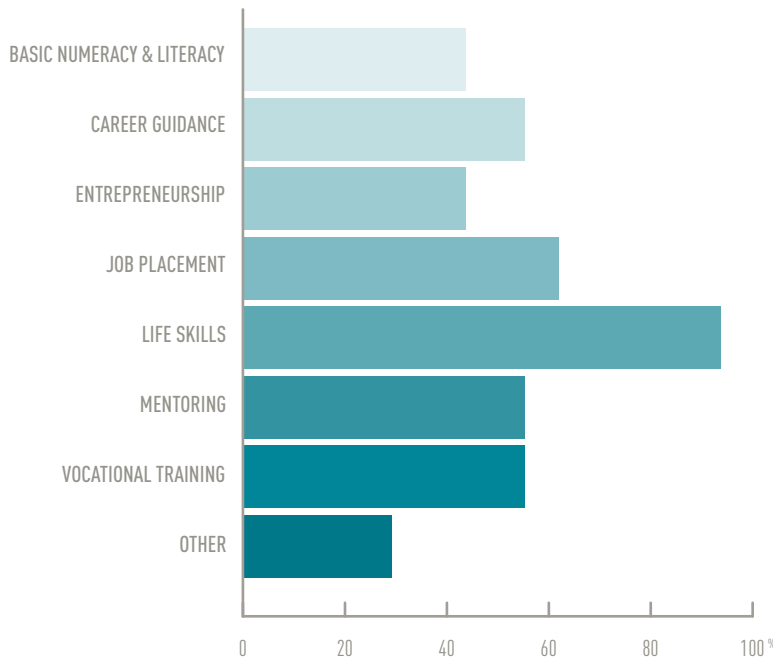
16,830 YOUTH SERVED
IN 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO SURVEY

COMMONLY MENTIONED CHALLENGES

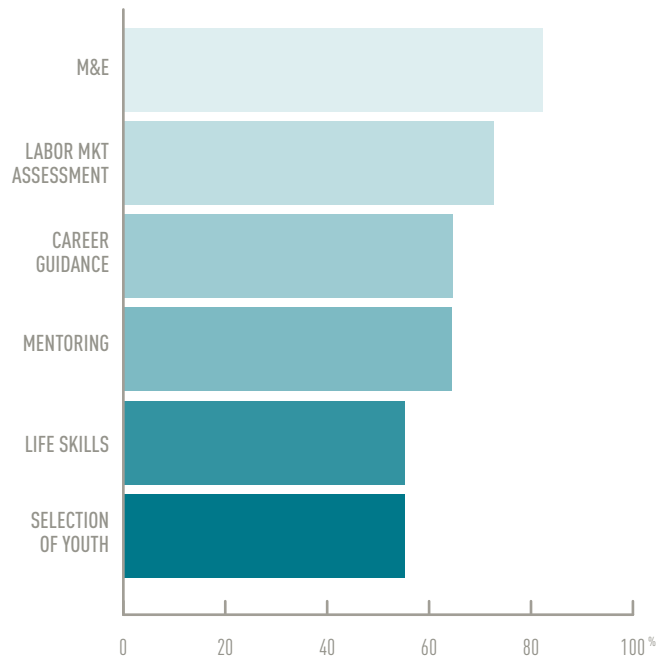
"Society has a negative view of vocational work."

"An increase in violence has stopped many girls and women from considering working or starting their own businesses."

TYPES OF EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMS OFFERED (%)



TOP TRAINING NEEDS (%)



OF THE ORGANIZATIONS SURVEYED

72%

HAVE A STRONG NETWORK OF PARTNERS

72%

SAY THEIR PHYSICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IS ADEQUATE

50%

FIND IT DIFFICULT TO FIND COMPETENT INSTRUCTORS

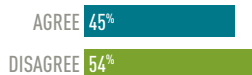
45%

HAVE ENOUGH FUNDING TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS EFFECTIVELY

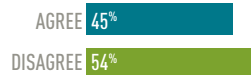
73%

WOULD BENEFIT FROM TRAINING OR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

YOUTH ENTER OUR PROGRAMS WITH THE SOFT SKILLS NECESSARY TO SUCCEED IN A JOB



YOUTH ENTER OUR PROGRAMS WITH SUFFICIENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION TO UNDERTAKE THE TRAINING



YOUNG PEOPLE CAN ACCESS FINANCING FOR A NEW BUSINESS



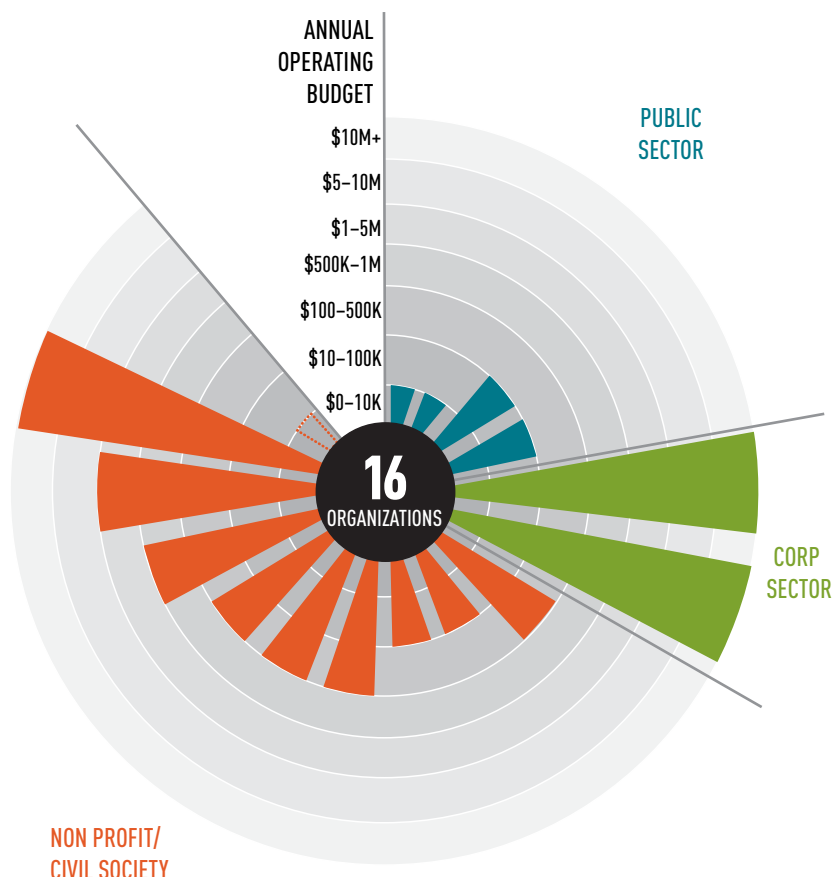
JORDAN: HOLISTIC EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMMING

Zarqa, one of Jordan's largest urban areas, is home to three organizations who address high rates of youth unemployment by expanding their focus on women's development issues to include holistic employability programming for young men and women alike. The three organizations, Shua'a Charitable Society, Khawla Bint Al Azwar Society, and the Training and Rehabilitation of the Jordan Women Charity Association first worked together in Youth for the Future, a five-year project funded by USAID and implemented by IYF.

Following this experience, the organizations began to offer a range of programming to enhance youth employability, including vocational training in growth industries such as hospitality and HVAC. The organizations also offered life skills training, using the proven Passport to Success® model. Employability programming included youth participation in volunteer and civic activities, as well as opportunities for internships with employers.

Funding remains a significant challenge, as does attracting and retaining skilled staff. Despite these challenges, in a three-year period the associations collectively trained more than 700 youth on employability skills, linking more than half of them with jobs. More than 700 young people also joined volunteer activities that benefitted their communities, such as renovating a local cultural center. The associations entered into several formal agreements with strategic partners in the government and private sectors, as well as with international NGOs such as Mercy Corps and AED, which enhances their ability to sustain youth programming.

ORGANIZATIONS SURVEYED



66,438 YOUTH SERVED
IN 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO SURVEY

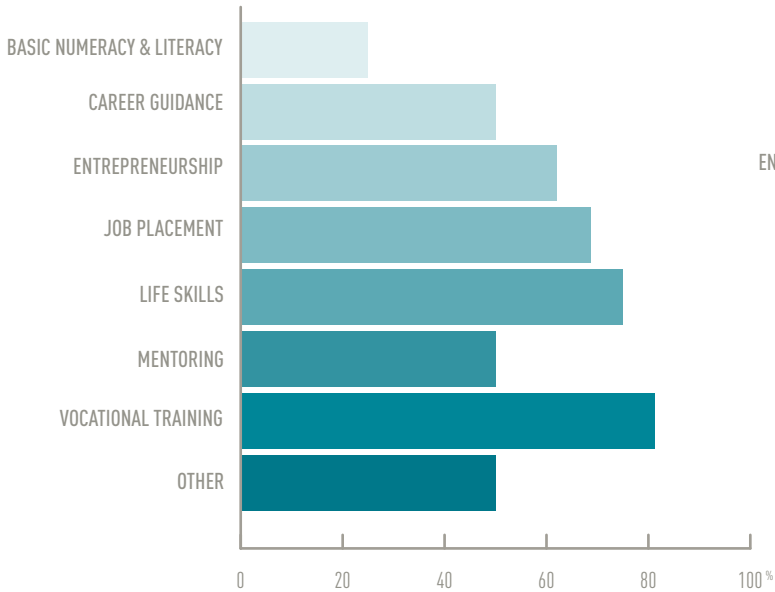
COMMONLY MENTIONED CHALLENGES

“There is a negative perception of women who work.”

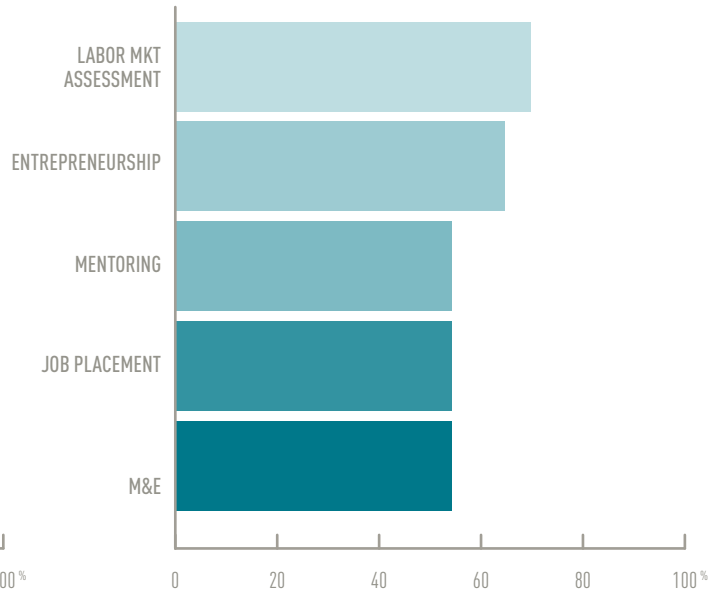
“The current educational & vocational training programs don't give youth skills that match labor market needs.”

“There is a culture of shame when it comes to certain jobs like hospitality and retail sales.”

TYPES OF EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMS OFFERED (%)



TOP TRAINING NEEDS (%)



OF THE ORGANIZATIONS SURVEYED

94%

HAVE A STRONG NETWORK OF PARTNERS

40%

HAVE DIFFICULTY FINDING KNOWLEDGEABLE MENTORS

44%

FIND IT DIFFICULT TO FIND COMPETENT INSTRUCTORS

6%

HAVE ENOUGH FUNDING TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS EFFECTIVELY

69%

WOULD BENEFIT FROM TRAINING OR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

YOUTH ENTER OUR PROGRAMS WITH THE SOFT SKILLS NECESSARY TO SUCCEED IN A JOB



YOUTH ENTER OUR PROGRAMS WITH SUFFICIENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION TO UNDERTAKE THE TRAINING



YOUNG PEOPLE CAN ACCESS FINANCING FOR A NEW BUSINESS



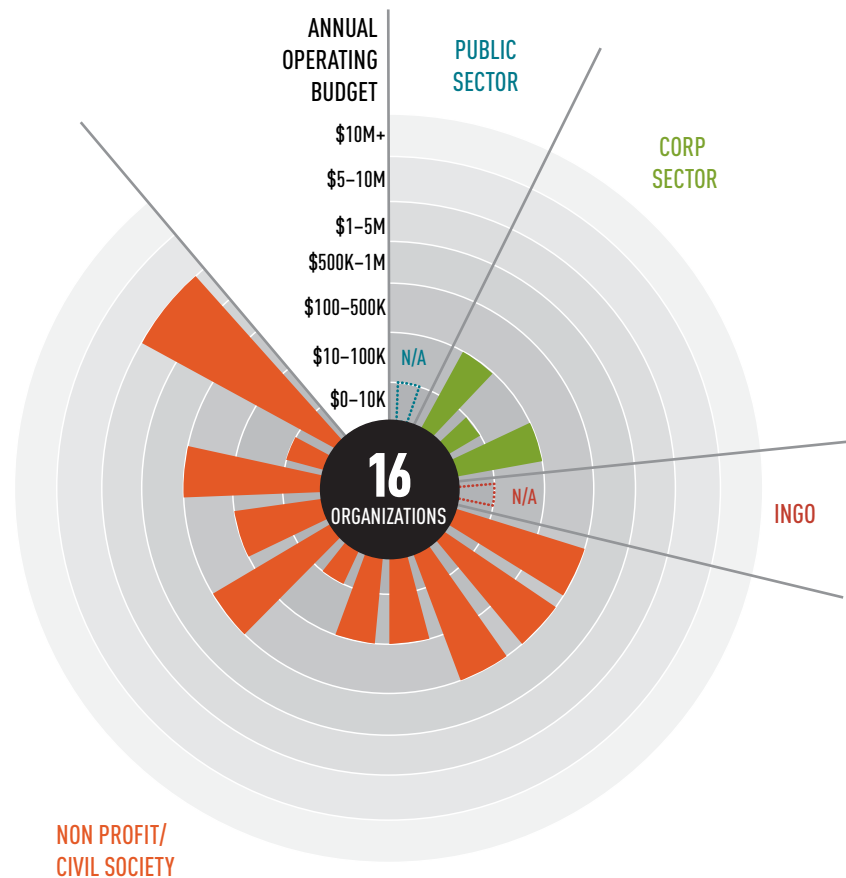
MOROCCO: COMPUTER REPURPOSING GIVES YOUTH NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Al Jisr Association, based in Casablanca, is an educational nonprofit organization that helps school dropouts train for jobs or start their own small businesses. Given the rapid expansion of computer use in Casablanca, in 2006 Al Jisr began to train youth on computer maintenance via the Digital Solidarity Workshop, a program to collect computers from companies that were upgrading to newer models and to repair these older computers for distribution to public primary schools.

This program proved a success, so in 2010, the association launched Project Greenchip to complement Digital Solidarity Workshop activities. In Project Greenchip, youth train for eight months on how to safely dismantle obsolete computers for recycling followed by a three-month internship. They also receive life-skills training, lessons in business management and French communication skills, and tailored coaching throughout training and internships. Greenchip is a partnership with the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, the Ministry of National Education, the DROSOS Foundation, and the metals company Managem-Holding.

To date, the project has trained and coached 120 young people, and approximately 50 percent have found jobs. Observation and focus groups conducted by the association confirm that young people develop not only professionally, but also personally, particularly improving their self-confidence and determination. Youth have also become more environmentally aware. Al Jisr and its partners have won international acclaim for the innovative project.

ORGANIZATIONS SURVEYED



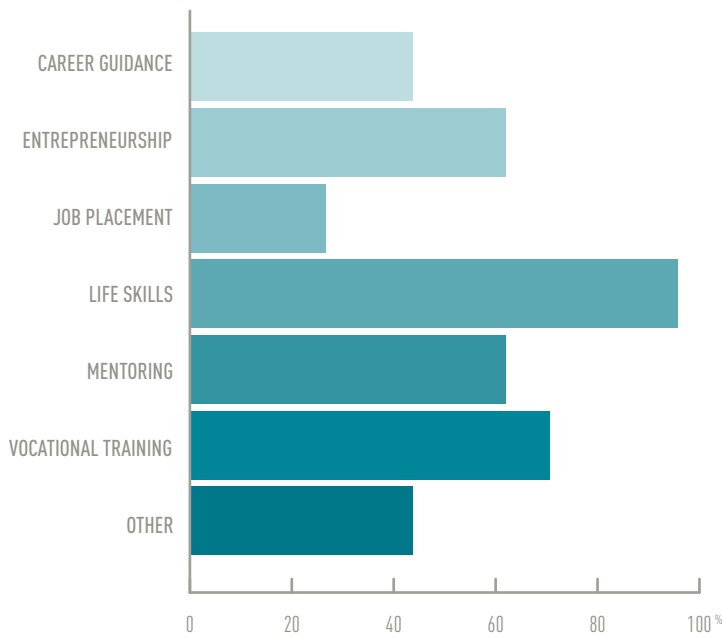
40,079 YOUTH SERVED
IN 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO SURVEY

COMMONLY MENTIONED CHALLENGES

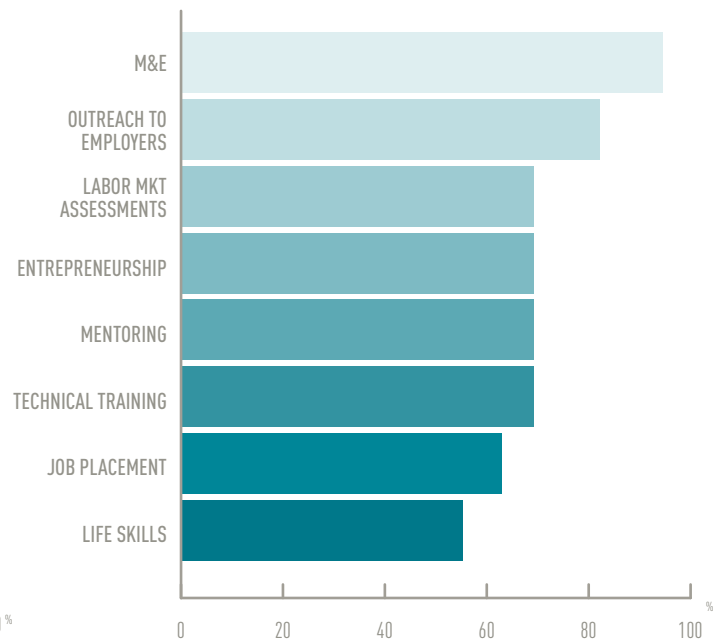
"Youth try to avoid jobs that do not carry a lot of cultural respect."

"Gender stereotypes prevent women from seeking certain jobs."

TYPES OF EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMS OFFERED (%)



TOP TRAINING NEEDS (%)



OF THE ORGANIZATIONS SURVEYED

50%

HAVE A STRONG NETWORK OF PARTNERS

50%

HAVE DIFFICULTY FINDING KNOWLEDGEABLE MENTORS

63%

FIND IT DIFFICULT TO FIND COMPETENT INSTRUCTORS

6%

HAVE ENOUGH FUNDING TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS EFFECTIVELY

100%

WOULD BENEFIT FROM TRAINING OR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

YOUTH ENTER OUR PROGRAMS WITH THE SOFT SKILLS NECESSARY TO SUCCEED IN A JOB



YOUTH ENTER OUR PROGRAMS WITH SUFFICIENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION TO UNDERTAKE THE TRAINING



YOUNG PEOPLE CAN ACCESS FINANCING FOR A NEW BUSINESS



PALESTINE: DEVELOPING CAPACITY FOR LIFE SKILLS TRAINING

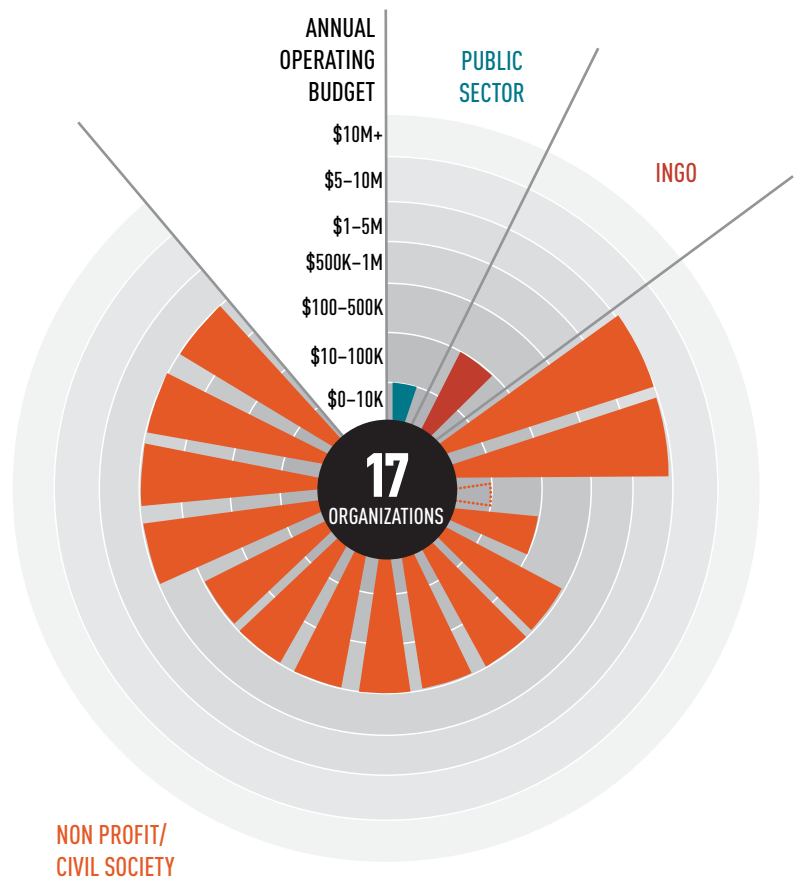
Palestine Polytechnic University (PPU) began to offer life skills training to its students as early as 2009. The training was provided through local NGOs, which did not have the capacity to deliver the array of necessary life skills on a regular basis. Only 200 PPU students were able to receive life skills training from 2009 to 2012.

Then, with a Youth Entrepreneurship Development (YED) grant from IYF, PPU began to develop its own capacity to provide such training. As a result, in the first year, PPU was able to increase enrollment substantially, training 350 students in life skills and business development, and incorporating service-learning and internship components. Of the 260 youth who were placed in three-month internships, about 80 obtained permanent jobs.

Prior to YED, PPU had to convince employers to accept its interns, but the success of the YED project motivated employers to proactively approach the university for student interns. Likewise, the university's Career Day, which linked employers and students, ultimately became so popular that employers were admitted by invitation only.

Fadi Sweiti, Chair of the graduate department, said, "The legacy of this project is that PPU had the chance to reposition itself as a leading institution in this field, and we acquired great capacities to sustain such a valuable intervention by which we can effectively enhance employability among the university's graduates while strengthening partnerships with the private sector on a more solid and strategic basis."

ORGANIZATIONS SURVEYED



41,345 YOUTH SERVED
IN 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO SURVEY

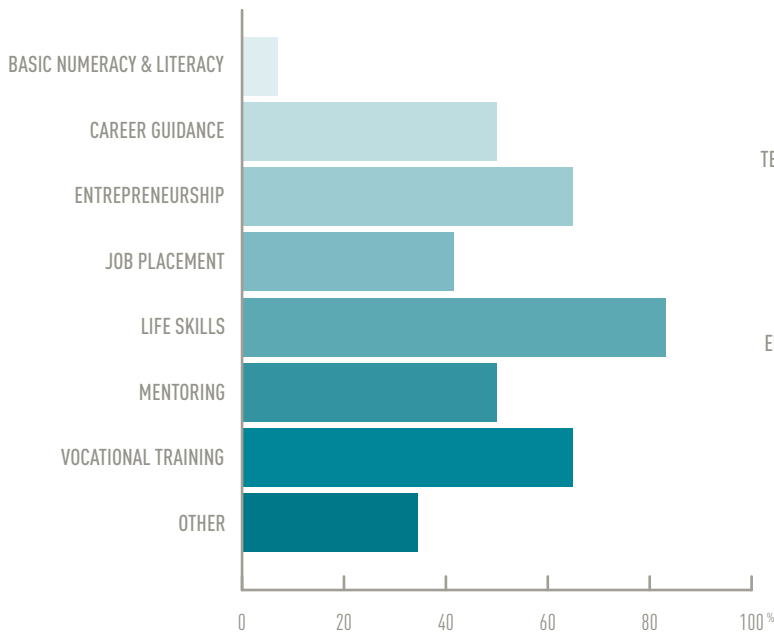


COMMONLY MENTIONED CHALLENGES

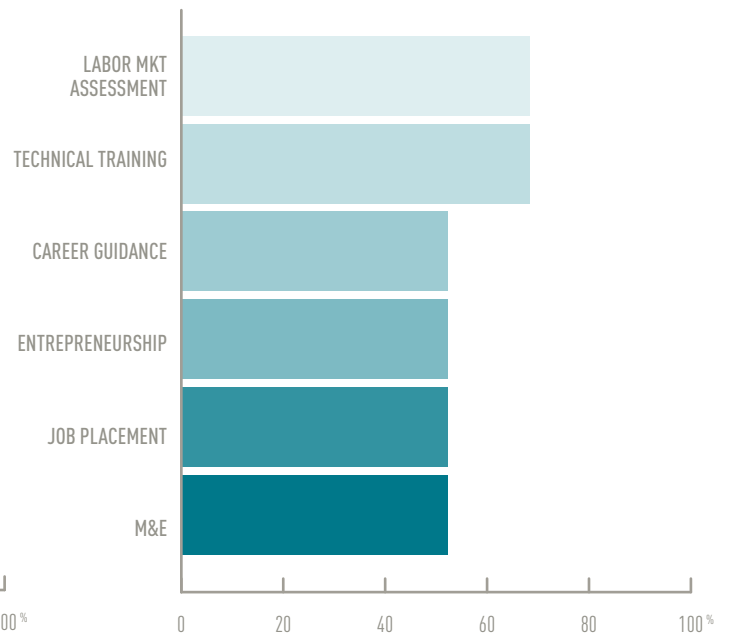
"Most employment and training opportunities are far from where students reside."

"Matching the capacities of graduates with the demands of the labor market is challenging."

TYPES OF EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMS OFFERED (%)



TOP TRAINING NEEDS (%)



OF THE ORGANIZATIONS SURVEYED

82%

HAVE A STRONG NETWORK OF PARTNERS

88%

SAY THEIR PHYSICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IS ADEQUATE

41%

FIND IT DIFFICULT TO FIND COMPETENT INSTRUCTORS

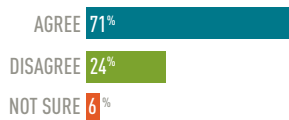
29%

HAVE ENOUGH FUNDING TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS EFFECTIVELY

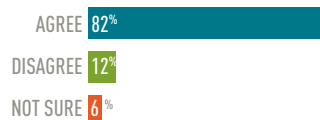
76%

WOULD BENEFIT FROM TRAINING OR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

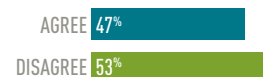
YOUTH ENTER OUR PROGRAMS WITH THE SOFT SKILLS NECESSARY TO SUCCEED IN A JOB



YOUTH ENTER OUR PROGRAMS WITH SUFFICIENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION TO UNDERTAKE THE TRAINING



YOUNG PEOPLE CAN ACCESS FINANCING FOR A NEW BUSINESS



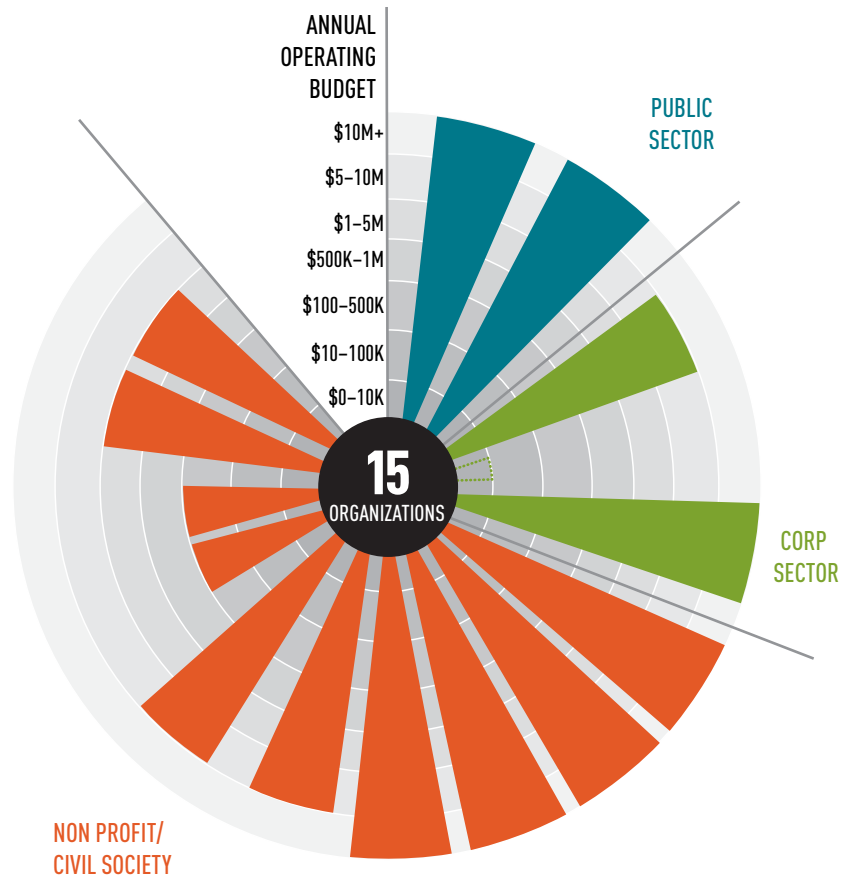
SAUDI ARABIA: BUILDING ALLIANCES TO MEET NEEDS OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

The Saudi Youth@Work Alliance (SY@W) is a multi-year initiative started in 2012 by IYF and the King Khalid Foundation (KKF) to leverage the resources and capabilities of multiple stakeholders to address youth unemployment in Saudi Arabia. The program serves as a platform to pilot program models and then scale effective interventions for larger impact.

At the start of the program, SY@W conducted a comprehensive assessment of youth and youth programs, as well as youth needs, interests, and resources available to them. Through the assessment, SY@W engaged numerous stakeholders and invited broad collaboration. Working with YSIs and private sector entities, SY@W then addressed the needs identified in the assessment. Initiatives include strengthening the technical capacity of YSIs and providing youth with life skills training and critical employability services such as career guidance, opportunities for civic engagement, and entrepreneurship training and services. SY@W also engages employers to improve entry-level recruitment and job retention.

Beyond the services provided, the program has successfully developed an alliance-based approach in Saudi Arabia. YSIs and private sector entities are collaborating to change the future prospects of youth and are sharing lessons about what works. As a result of the momentum created by the alliance, IYF's flagship life skills program, Passport to Success® (PTS) is currently being implemented with support from KKF, Hilton, AGFUND, Al-Rawabi Holdings, Arab Open University, and Aramco. As a result, over 5000 Saudi youth have taken PTS.

ORGANIZATIONS SURVEYED



1,904,802 YOUTH SERVED
IN 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO SURVEY

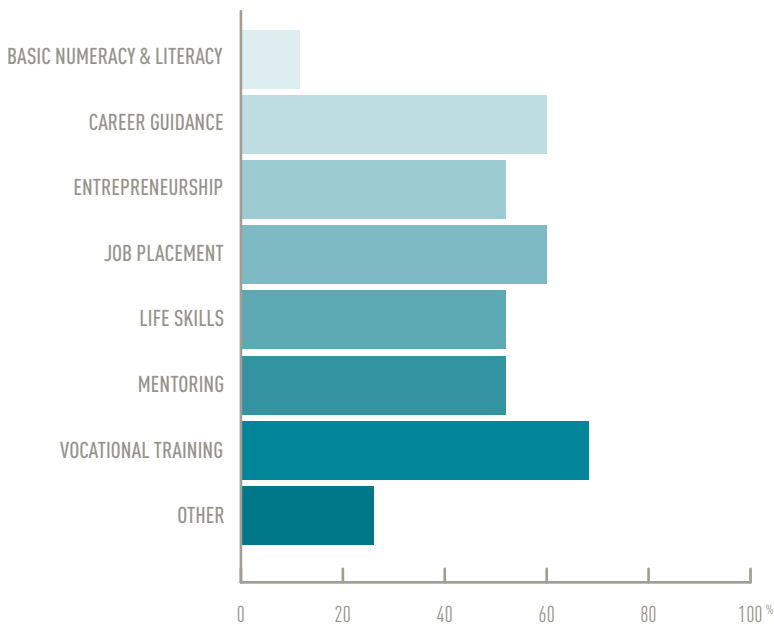


COMMONLY MENTIONED CHALLENGES

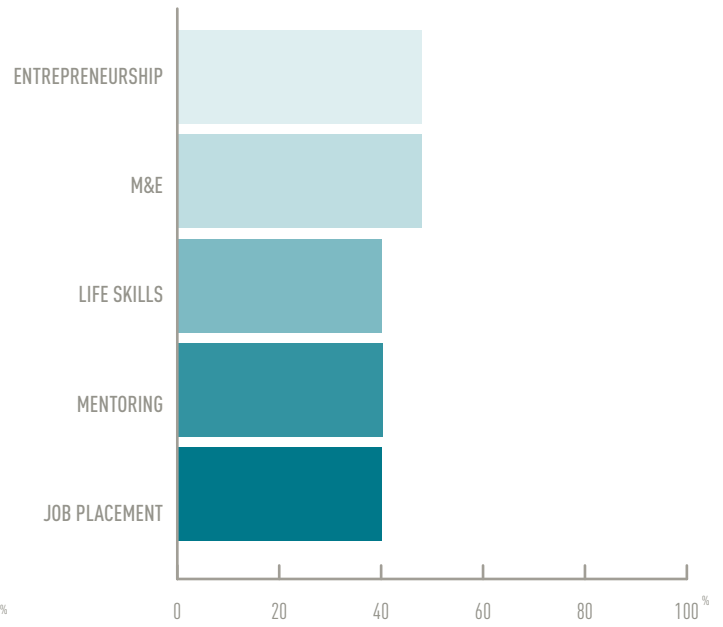
"Youth are reluctant to work in blue collar jobs."

"Social perceptions inhibit women from seeking employment."

TYPES OF EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMS OFFERED (%)



TOP TRAINING NEEDS (%)



OF THE ORGANIZATIONS SURVEYED,

87%

HAVE A STRONG NETWORK OF PARTNERS

80%

SAY THEIR PHYSICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IS ADEQUATE

53%

FIND IT DIFFICULT TO FIND COMPETENT INSTRUCTORS

87%

HAVE ENOUGH FUNDING TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS EFFECTIVELY

60%

WOULD BENEFIT FROM TRAINING OR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

YOUTH ENTER OUR PROGRAMS WITH THE SOFT SKILLS NECESSARY TO SUCCEED IN A JOB



YOUTH ENTER OUR PROGRAMS WITH SUFFICIENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION TO UNDERTAKE THE TRAINING



YOUNG PEOPLE CAN ACCESS FINANCING FOR A NEW BUSINESS



PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE INVESTMENT

Based on the results of the study, a number of areas emerge which donors and/or policymakers could prioritize in terms of further investment to support YSIs' efforts in youth employability and entrepreneurship:

1. Enhance program relevance to the labor market.

With improved capacity to assess labor markets and connect with potential employers, YSIs can better tailor programming to local market needs, address the skills mismatch, and improve job placement and internship rates. Labor market assessments can also be used to battle the “culture of shame” surrounding many promising occupations. Labor market research, combined with career counseling, family outreach, and life skills training, can foster better career expectations, understanding of career paths, and perceptions of available opportunities for young men and women.

2. Build entrepreneurship training capacity.

Increasing YSI knowledge about youth entrepreneurship programming will allow these organizations to better help young people launch small businesses and to encourage policies that make business start-up financing easier for youth to attain. Many survey questions that pertained to youth entrepreneurship generated relatively high rates of uncertainty among respondents. For example, a relatively high percentage of respondents were unsure whether it was easy for young people in their communities to get start-up loans or about whether their organization had access to knowledgeable mentors for young people. This uncertainty indicates that organizations would likely

benefit from training that helps them understand the structural conditions facing young people who would like to launch their own businesses, as well as from specific training on how to attract, develop, and retain mentors.

3. Improve YSI life skills training capacity.

Fifty-five percent of the organizations surveyed felt that young people need to develop life skills to become employable, and 56 percent desired capacity building in this area. By introducing YSIs to quality standards in life skills training, and to evidence-based tools, such as Passport to Success® life skills curriculum, more young people will be able to acquire the soft skills that employers desire. Capacity building in this area will support success in job placement and internship programming, as well.

4. Strengthen use of M&E.

Although 83 percent of organizations surveyed say they regularly monitor and evaluate their programs, M&E was the training topic desired by most respondents. This likely indicates both a strong recognition of the importance of measuring project results and that respondents feel their approaches could be strengthened. M&E can be an especially important skill for organizations facing financial constraints, as is the case in the Middle East and North Africa. Better understanding of program impact can help determine how to most effectively distribute resources while good documentation of program results can bolster support for funding.

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5. Invest in professionalization of those working with youth.

More than half of respondents indicated a difficulty finding competent instructors, trainers, counselors, and mentors to work with young people on employability-related programming. Investing in curricula and certified professional education programs specifically for youth workers would increase the availability of quality men and women working on youth employability programs.

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6. Encourage public-private partnerships.

Donors and policymakers can facilitate and encourage public-private partnerships that can help YSIs better collaborate with—and leverage resources from—private sector and public sector institutions. Researching and documenting examples of effective partnerships would be helpful to illustrate good practices in this area as would brokering win-win relationships when possible.

YSIs alone are not going to solve the large and long-standing problem of youth unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa. However, the kind of training they are seeking can go a long way towards helping them fill specific capacity gaps and mitigate crosscutting challenges to youth livelihoods such as low funding, the “culture of shame,” and gender stereotypes. To this end, by targeting their resources to build the capacity of local organizations that work directly with youth and researching how to improve regional services, interested funders can play a key role in supporting young people to find jobs and start their own businesses.

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