



Session name: **3.1 Connecting young women and men with decent jobs:
Building systems and improving practices**

Session date: **Day 2, 24th May 2022, 11:00-12:30**

Brief Background on the session issue & objectives

The MENA’s rapidly growing young population, or what is known as the ‘youth bulge’, is a double-edged reality that unfolds numerous opportunities but also a myriad of challenges that the region struggles to navigate. Youth unemployment in the region has long been the highest in the world, and in 2019, just before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 29.7% of young people aged 15-24 were not in employment, education, or training (NEET). For young women alone, the NEET figure rises to a very worrying 42.4% (ILOSTAT, available at ilostat.ilo.org). Connecting young jobseekers to their first job and ensuring a quality of employment poses different challenges than for adult workers. The latest collected data shows that young people are still three times more likely than adults to be unemployed. Their search for decent work often lasts years, giving rise to persistently high rates of joblessness and unemployment.

Employment services are considered as the most cost-effective of the active labour market policies (ALMP), e.g., the cost per worker placed in a new job. Plenty of job matches happen, and should, without the intervention of an employment service; but impact evaluations have shown that well-run employment services can help jobseekers find a job faster, and often with better quality than if they looked on their own. This impact is understandably achieved in the short-term – a better job or job found more quickly – while other interventions affect longer-term job prospects, such as education and skills training. Employment services are designed to increase the promptness, efficiency, and quality of the match between jobseekers and available jobs. Assisting young people, however, often requires a combination of mainstream services and targeted approaches for a successful transition into employment. Employment subsidies can also have significant impacts on employment prospects in the context of human centric recovery by tackling the demand side of the labor market, which is a major issue in the region.

The session was an opportunity to share successful policies and programs for connecting the young people, including young women and vulnerable young people, with much needed job opportunities.

Objectives:

- Fostering a shared vision that mirrors young people’s aspirations;
- and identifying, based on promising practices, effective measures to address the bottlenecks young people, especially young women and vulnerable young people face in connecting with decent jobs.

Session Speakers

Setting the scene: A presentation on key challenges faced by MENA countries in connecting young people to jobs, and the policies/programmes/ and services.	
Donatella Di Vozzo,	European Training Foundation
Panel Discussion: promising practices for connecting young people with decent jobs	
Mr. Mohamed Hazim	Morocco’s Labour Market Observatory

Mr. Talal Hijazi,	Association of Lebanese Industrialists
Dr. Taghreed Al Badawi,	Jordan's Ministry of Education
Mr. Rami Mehdawi	Palestinian Employment Fund
Mr. Ashraf Sobhy,	Egypt's Ministry of Youth and Sports

Four young people :

- Mohammad Hazem Janineh (Syria)
- Samia Ghmimed (Morocco)
- Abdel Rahman Ahmed (Egypt)
- Atta Khaled Hammoda (Palestine)

Sessions Outcomes

The Moderator Mrs. Laura Schmid Skills Specialist from ILO Decent Work Team North Africa (Cairo), introduce the session and presented the panelists/presenters.

The session started by listening to the voices of the Youth and by outlining their challenges. The following four young people has presented their challenges in connecting with decent jobs:

- Mohammad Hazem Janineh (Syria)
- Samia Ghmimed (Morocco)
- Abdel Rahman Ahmed (Egypt)
- Atta Khaled Hammoda (Palestine)

During this session, young people highlighted the following challenges:

- Lack of market responsive skills with needed qualification for young people to meet the labour market needs;
- Lack of accessibility to public places for people with disabilities, particularly universities and training centers;
- Difficulty in accessing information on training, career guidance and in occupations that are in demand;
- Students without experience have fewer opportunities to access the labor market and sometimes, they have to accept a job with unsuitable conditions, in the informal economy
- the gap between education and labor market needs makes access to the labor market difficult, career planning could mitigate this gap;
- women are still disadvantaged in the labor market, suffer from poor working conditions such as harassment
- unstable political conditions in some countries such as Palestine make it difficult for young people to access training and the labor market

Afterwards, Mrs. Donatella Di Vozzo from European Training Foundation (ETF) has presented the key challenges faced by MENA countries in connecting young people to jobs, and the policies/programs/ and services (Employment services and other ALMP measure) that have proven effective in addressing youth employment issues in the MENA and/or across similar contexts. According to this presentation, the main challenges are:

- Underutilization of human capital hampering growth and job creation

- Social exclusion and gender gap, a substantial loss of human capital potential for socioeconomic prosperity;
- Insufficient preparedness to anticipate and address the future skills demands

The main measures to face these challenges:

- Job search assistance: most effective in countries with high level of institutional coherence; focus on engaging search assistance rather than rigid sanctions
- Employment incentives are highly efficient if focused on the correct targeted groups and properly designed; they can be prone to negative effects (displacement; deadweight) if not designed properly; effective counter-cyclical stabilizer in recession; most effective when delivered with training
- Start-up incentives effectiveness maximised during economic growth / positive business environment; also effective for delivering social and training benefits (esp. women)

Following the keynote speech, the panelist provided their interventions:

Hazim Mohamed (Morocco): Mr. Hazim presented the functions of the Moroccan labour market observatory that is responsible for monitoring the labor market. Regarding the COVID 19 pandemic, Mr. Hazim highlighted the main initiatives undertaken by his department to mitigate the effects of this crisis. These include a study on new forms of employment to adapt the offer to the needs of the labor market and also the adoption of the process of anticipating skills needs. The skills needs anticipation was done in collaboration with the ILO KOICA funded STED-AMT project. The outcome of which was the development of skills strategies at sectoral level. The Observatory also launched a project to set up a digital platform that uses big data and provides information on the recruitment needs of companies in order to have a clear idea of the labor market needs. He recalled the need for coordination between the monitoring systems and the bodies responsible for training to translate these labor market needs into training programs. Thus, the youth trained will be able to easily integrate the labor market.

Dr. Taghreed Al Badawi intervention (Jordanian MoL): Dr. Taghreed presented how the career guidance system works in Jordan. She recalled how labor market information is used to facilitate career guidance. This system has not only made it possible to serve young people, but it has the particularity of being inclusive by integrating vulnerable and marginalized groups, in particular refugees, women, people with disabilities, as well as young people from rural areas.

Mr. Rami Mehdawi intervention (Palestinian Employment Fund): Mr. Rami Mehdawi presented the Palestinian Employment Fund, especially how this fund is supporting young women and men, especially the most vulnerable. This support was focused on business development services. The support provided has helped build the capacities of young entrepreneurs and BDS providers categories and facilitate their integration to the labour market.

Mr. Ashraf Sobhy, (Minister for Youth and Sports Egypt):

HE. Ashraf Sobhy stressed the need to involve young people to integrate their vision into public policies. In Egypt, this involvement takes place amongst others through youth forums and national academies organized by the MoYS as well as in the Youth centers. He also stressed the need of the government to avail up-to-date LMI as well as support career guidance. Besides, he mentioned the importance of encouraging national mega projects in terms of infrastructure construction as one way to promote private sector and support youth employment.

Mr Sobhy cited some initiatives in Egypt for the involvement and integration of young people into the labor market, in particular:

1. **The ILO supported Job Search Clubs:** an employment and employability promotion peer-to-peer interactive training run by the MoYS,
2. **The UNICEF supported Mechway program** to support young people from training, personal development, integration to the labor market,

Key messages and takeaways

- Market responsive education and skills policies create long-term impacts and prove most effective for increasing employment alongside counselling
- More research on employment incentives and how they are used correctly is needed
- Labour market information especially about skills needs are key to develop evidence-based career guidance and provide education and TVET policies in line with LM needs
- LM Observatories can play an important role in analyzing data and developing country and sector specific LM intelligence and research
- Employment Funds can support LM access and self-employment but more research is needed what works and how international actors can best support
- Employment intensive infrastructure projects if linked to training and qualification can play an important role to boost youth employment

Policy recommendations

- More coherent impact evaluations of active labour market programs and skills policies are needed
- Development and funding of properly designed and targeted Employment incentives that address vulnerable groups
- Evidence based research on role and mandate of employment funds and how they can serve the most vulnerable youth
- Exchange platforms and study visits of LM information and skills development practitioners across the region is needed to learn from each other
- Integration of more youth and vulnerable people in policy making and program design
- Integrate training and qualification programmes with employment intensive infrastructure projects as one way to boost youth employment and skill up young people