

Egypt

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Scoping Highlights Report



CHALLENGE
FUND
FXR
YOUTH
EMPLOYMENT

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The Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE) is a 6-year programme funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, managed by Palladium, VSO Nederland and Randstad.

1. Why this report?

The Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE) was recently launched by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to create more, better and more inclusive jobs for 200,000 young people in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and North Africa. The fund is looking for private sector-driven proposals from Implementing Partners that have solutions to create and improve jobs and better placements for young women and men.

Egypt is the second country where the Fund will launch a call for proposals. A scoping study was performed to get a better understanding of the country context and specific challenges affecting youth employment in Egypt. The study also aimed to identify the key opportunities and solutions to increase youth employment and assess how the Fund can play a role in supporting them. Information was collected through desk research, interviews with around 50 key informants – including government representatives, NGOs and private sector firms – and workshops with youth in Egyptⁱ.

ⁱ The research took place in the period February-April 2020

2. What is the problem?

Egypt has an extremely young population, with a median age of 24.6. In 2015, youth of working age (15–34 years) accounted for an estimated 37.5% of the total populationⁱⁱ. The country has witnessed huge population growth from 20 million in 1950 to over 100 million today. But job opportunities have not kept pace. According to ILO estimates, the unemployment rate for youth from 15 to 24 stood at 32.4% in 2019ⁱⁱⁱ. Another study estimated the unemployment rate for youth from 15 to 29 at 30%, as compared to the overall unemployment rate of 12.8% in 2015^{iv}.

In fact, youth underemployment is even higher than that. First of all, because many youth – in particular women – do not even bother to look for a (formal) job or look for work abroad. Many young women withdraw from the labour market when they get married or have children. Secondly, because many youths work in the informal sector, often working below their qualification level, for a meagre income. Put simply, the economy is not growing fast enough to absorb the surge of new entrants to the labour market. Thus, there is an urgent need for new sources of productive employment.

Informality is widespread in Egypt. This extends beyond work, encompassing living arrangements, financial lending and health care, to name a few. Unregistered informal businesses constitute the main type of private enterprise employing youth, accounting for more than 90% of youth's off-farm work^v. Many young people prefer to work in an informal arrangement. Several interviewees cited the example of the tuk-tuk (auto rickshaw) as the most salient representation of this. As a tuk-tuk driver, a young man enjoys flexible working hours and daily, cash-in-hand pay, allowing him to meet his immediate needs. Yet there is absolutely no job security, no fringe benefits, and extremely dangerous working conditions. Although perhaps engendering short-term gains for the worker, this precarity has important, negative long-term repercussions on young people's mental health and wellbeing^{vi}.

There are around 18 million informal establishments, including 40,000 factories or workshops. Informal enterprises employ most young workers and account for a large part of Egypt's total economic activity, with a combined worth of USD 135-169 billion, 60% size of the formal economy^{vii}. Increasingly, even graduates take on informal employment in private sector. Meanwhile, only 42% of wage workers with at least secondary education, have access to a formal work contract. Just 14.8% of recent entrants to the labour market have social insurance, which is a key marker of informality^{viii}.

2.1 Decent work

The economically vulnerable in Egyptian society are forced to find work in the informal sector, in jobs that are often insecure and unsafe. Thus, focusing on youth unemployment is not enough; we need to also consider the trend of young people trapped in jobs that guarantee neither stability nor security. Egypt's official policies and laws around some of the key issues underpinning decent work, as brought out through the in-country interviews, are outlined below. It is, important to note that these rights are largely denied to workers in the informal economy and often not guaranteed for employees in the formal private sector, which has a poor record of adherence to statutory requirements for workers.

Wages and income

Officially, the national minimum wage in Egypt is LE 2,000 per month (about € 120), but this only applies to formally employed workers. Moreover, this minimum wage was not yet been formally implemented. The minimum wage de facto still sits at the former level of LE 1,200, and even that is not always paid, in particular in rural areas. However, even the official minimum wage of LE 2,000 is below the living wage for a single person in Egypt, which is estimated LE 2,370, as indicated by WageIndicator^{ix}.

ii Data taken from Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, 2015

iii <https://www.statista.com/statistics/811968/youth-unemployment-rate-in-egypt/>

iv Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) "Egypt in Figures" March 2015, see: <http://www.msrintranet.capmas.gov.eg/pdf/EgyptinFigures2015/EgyptinFigures/pages/english%20Link.htm>

v Bremer "Youth Unemployment and Poverty in Egypt", *Poverty and Public Policy*, 2018

vi Rashad & Sharaf "Does precarious employment damage youth mental health, wellbeing and marriage?", 2018

vii Ghafar "Educated but unemployed: The Challenge Facing Egypt's Youth", 2016

viii Barsoum "Job opportunities for the youth: Competing and overlapping discourses on youth unemployment and work informality in Egypt", 2016

ix WageIndicator, see: <https://wageindicator.org/salary/living-wage/egypt-living-wage-series-september-2018>

For government employees and public business-sector workers, the government has also set a maximum wage limit at 35 times the (former) minimum wage, i.e. LE 42,000 (\$2,500) per month. Labour laws provide for equal pay rates for equal work for men and women in the public, but not in the private sector. This explains why, for many people, working for the government – in whatever capacity – is highly desirable because of the better conditions and the higher prestige these jobs offer.

Work time and work-life balance

Egyptian law stipulates a maximum 48-hour workweek for the public and private sectors and provides for premium pay for overtime and work on rest days and national holidays. The law prohibits excessive compulsory overtime, but it excludes agricultural, fisheries, and domestic workers from regulations concerning wages, hours, and working conditions.

“The tuk-tuk represents everything we need to consider in employment programmes.”

— CEO, Egyptian NGO

Health and safety

The government sets worker health and safety standards, for example, prohibiting employers from maintaining hazardous working conditions. By law, workers can remove themselves from situations that endanger health or safety without jeopardy to employment, although authorities do not reliably enforce this right and workers may risk losing their job if they complain.

Despite these legal provisions, many people in Egypt face poor working conditions, especially in the informal economy. Domestic workers, agricultural workers, workers in rock quarries, and other parts of the informal sector are most likely to face hazardous or exploitive conditions, not to mention the risk posed by traffic that street vendors and tuk-tuk drivers face daily. There have been reports of employer abuse of undocumented foreign workers, especially domestic workers. Very little information is available on workplace fatalities and accidents^x.

Job security and social protection

Over half of the employees do not have a contract, pension or health insurance^{xi}. The government provides services, such as free health care, to all citizens, but the quality of service is often poor. Other benefits, such as social insurance, are available only to employees in the formal sector. Women, particularly rural women, as well as youth aged 20 to 29, are the most vulnerable groups in terms of health insurance coverage. Among the insured, the main source of health insurance is through the general agency for health insurance for those above 30 years old, and through university or school for those between 6 and 24 years old. This pattern shows that the health insurance gap occurs mainly at the transition from school to work and becomes persistent afterwards^{xii}.

Labour relations and social dialogue

In the Global Rights Index 2020, Egypt is ranked among countries where the rights of workers are not guaranteed. According to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), “Since the dissolution of all independent unions in 2018, workers and their representatives have sought the re-registration of their unions but have faced an arduous and arbitrary process. As of December 2019, 27 independent unions at national level awaited their official recognition.”^{xiii}

x USDL, see: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/egypt>.

xi ILO “Key Labour Market Trends in Egypt”, 2018

xii Economic Research Forum “Social Protection and Vulnerability in Egypt: A Gendered Analysis”, 2019

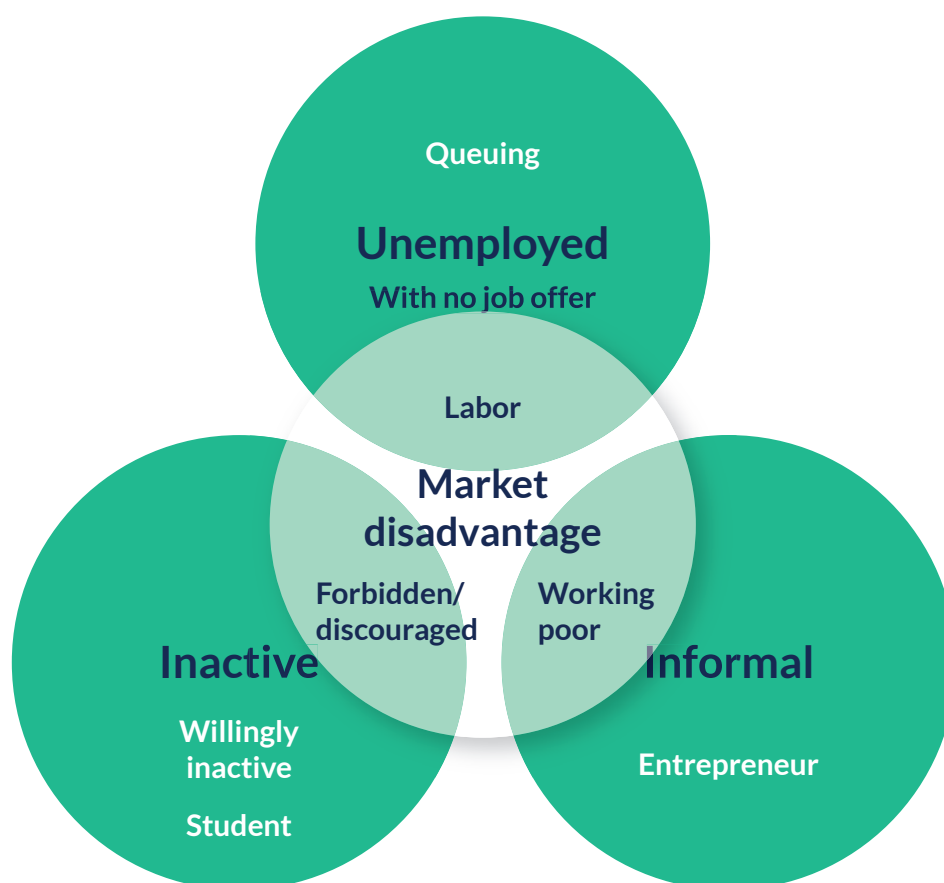
xiii ITUC Global Rights Index 2020

3. Who are the youth?

Unemployment in the Egyptian context masks a more complex reality. The World Bank offers a useful framework to understand the youth labour disadvantage^{xiv}.

Some 29% of Egyptian youth are NEETs: Not in (formal) Employment, Education or Training^{xv}. This illustrates the extent to which young Egyptians are not participating in the labour market, nor building the necessary skills to be able to join the labour market in the future. Disaggregated by gender, it is clear that the situation is a lot worse for women: 49.5% of young women are NEET, compared to 9.3% of young men. What explains this phenomenon of widespread labour market inactivity?

Figure 1. A framework for interpreting labour market disadvantage.



^{xiv} Gatti et al "Jobs for Shared Prosperity: Time for Action in the Middle East and North Africa", 2013
^{xv} Barsoum, Ramadan and Mostafa "Labour market transitions of young women and men in Egypt", 2014

3.1 Different categories of youth

Youth is not a homogeneous group; this is true for any country and Egypt is no exception. It makes a huge difference if you are a young university graduate in Cairo or a rural youth in Upper Egypt. We have identified 6 groups into which different types of youth can broadly be clustered:^{xvi}



Rural youth from modest farming families, in Upper Egypt and elsewhere



Low-skilled, self-employed youth (urban or rural) in 'survival enterprises'



Low-skilled, employed youth in unskilled, low-paid jobs, both formal and informal



Young vocationally trained in rural or urban individual enterprises, mainly formal sector



Young urban educated youth employed or seeking wage-employment in the formal sector



Young urban educated youth with or starting their own enterprise

^{xvi} Adapted from AFD (2017) 'Les dispositifs d'appui à l'insertion des jeunes sur le marché du travail en Afrique', Available at: <http://bibliothèque.afd.fr/14-etudes-afd-emploi-jeunes-afrique>

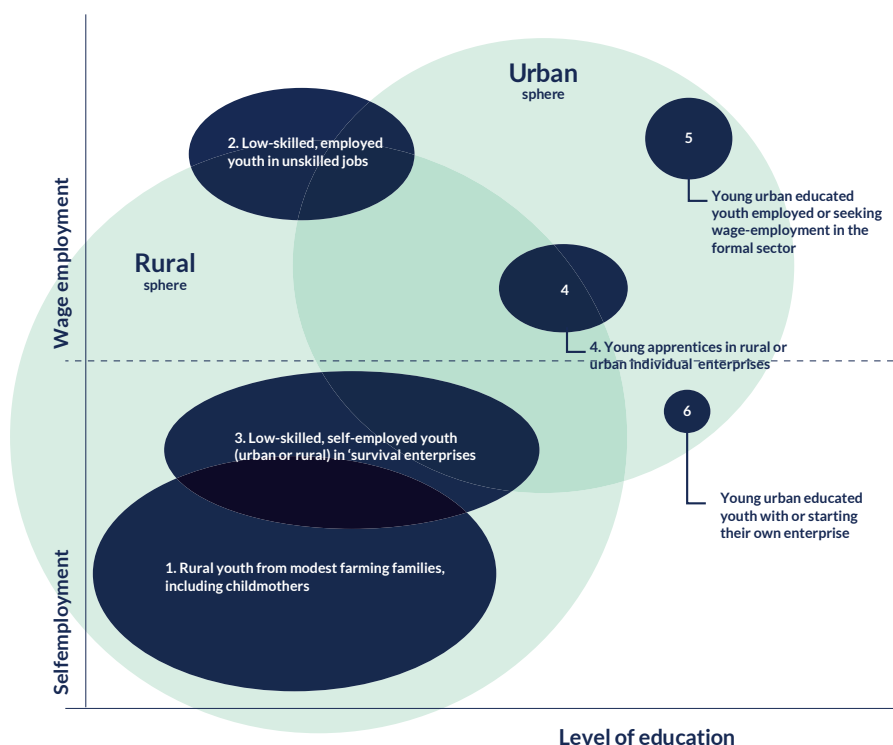


Figure 2. Different youth categories based on their education and employment status

Categories 1-3 represent by far the largest youth groups, both in rural and urban areas. The youth that are most likely to be impacted by the economic crisis following the COVID-19 pandemic are those in categories 2 and 3 plus those who are just starting to look for work. The dearth of new jobs is further compounded by the increase in young people who recently became unemployed as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown and who are now also looking for work.

Unemployment is also high in Category 5 – young urban educated youth employed or seeking wage-employment in the formal sector – which is a specific Egyptian phenomenon, which can be explained by the high educational level of Egyptian youth compared to other countries in the region, on the one hand, and the lack of high quality jobs that meet the young graduates' aspirations. Nearly half (44.5%) of Egypt's total unemployed youth have completed tertiary education. Many interviewees mentioned the inadequacy of a university degree in preparing a young person for work. Young people leave higher education with a piece of paper that builds their social status, but does not help them finding or retaining a decent job. In 2012, nearly 50% of unemployed Egyptian men and 75% of unemployed Egyptian women – most of them highly

educated – were unemployed for over 2 years, far more than in other countries of the region^{xvii}.

Traditionally, university education and subsequent employment in the public sector was the main vehicle for social mobility. An increasingly educated youth population came to expect that a degree would guarantee them a stable and decent job in the public sector. But this expectation no longer applies in the realities of the job market, especially since the early 1990s, after the Economic Restructuring and Structural Adjustment Programme, which accelerated the privatisation of public sector enterprises. Since then, the public sector has been gradually down-sizing, though it is still an important player in the Egyptian labour market, providing more than a quarter of total employment^{xviii}.

“University education in Egypt is for status only. It does not prepare students for work.”

— Chief Technical Advisor, ILO Egypt

The increasing informality of jobs for new entrants and the slow growth of the formal private sector are further symptoms of weak labour demand. Agriculture, which until the 1960s played a crucial labour-absorbing role, has now been replaced by the informal economy, the ultimate stopgap^{xix}. Most young Egyptian males today 'are engaged

^{xvii} Assaad and Krafft "Labour market dynamics and youth unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa: Evidence from Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia", ERF, 2016

^{xviii} Barsoum, Ramadan and Mostafa "Labour market transitions of young women and men in Egypt", 2014.

^{xix} Assaad et al "Job creation or labour absorption? An analysis of private sector job growth in Egypt", 2018

in a perennial struggle to cobble together whatever patchwork of temporary low-paying jobs, petty trading, and other tenuous money-earning activities they can devise to contribute to their family's income^{xx}.

Categories that look more promising as an alternative to formal (white-collar) employment in the private or public sector are categories 4 and 6, resp. young graduates from TVET institutions and private technical schools and entrepreneurial youth that set up their own business. Unfortunately, neither of these two categories has a high participation rate of young women.

3.2 Young women

Women bear the brunt of total economic inactivity in Egypt. Those with higher education have less job opportunities that meet their qualifications and aspirations. Most of the less educated women end up working in the informal sector: they do not have the luxury of choosing when, where and how they work. The main issues around decent employment for women in Egypt are listed below.

Unemployment after marriage

Marriage is a major cause of the low labour participation of women, with women either abstaining from seeking employment because they and their male relatives believe that work, especially in the private sector, decreases their chances of marriage; opting for work that is less demanding; or exiting the labour market after marriage^{xxi}. However, this trend appears to be changing, based on comments from the young, educated women in several youth sessions in Alexandria and Cairo.

"I studied journalism and now I am working in marketing from home. Day-care is expensive and they close after one o'clock in the afternoon. Believe me, if you want to build a career: do it online!"

— E-Youth Focus Group in Alexandria

Convincing her husband and other family members

Women's traditional role is seen as nurturing and child-rearing, and most women themselves, and their fathers/spouses prefer not working in order to care for the household. This is particularly the case for women in Upper Egypt and the Delta region. Related to the issue of 'gender-appropriate' work, women struggle to convince their husbands or other family members of the importance of work, not just for financial reward, but as a vehicle for self-fulfilment^{xxii}.

The burden of unpaid care work

Given that most of the workforce is employed in the informal sector or in the unregulated formal sector, the labour law that aims at facilitating women to combine market work and household work only provides protection to a few elite women^{xxiii}. In 2012, 18% of women employed in the private sector did not receive any paid maternity leave after having their first child and in most cases, maternity leave was between 2 and 6 weeks, which is lower than the 90-days legally mandated leave duration. Most large companies do not comply with the legal requirement to provide childcare for their female employees^{xxiv}.

The need for flexibility of working hours and location

Caretaking duties are an important reason why many women leave the workplace after marriage. Thus, there is a need for flexible working arrangements for women, including digital work, which would allow them to work from their homes. Such a working arrangement is particularly pertinent in the current circumstances of social distancing, triggered by the coronavirus pandemic.

Fewer options for work

Gendered expectations of what women can and should do for a living limit them to certain professions deemed 'appropriate'. Men are more flexible in this respect as they may for example decide to start driving an Uber, which offers flexibility and a reasonable income. This is simply not an option for women. They must find other ways of working flexibly that conform with societal and familial standards of putative decency. Things are changing for the better, but very slowly.

xx Bremer "Youth Unemployment and Poverty in Egypt", *Poverty and Public Policy*, 2018

xxi <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/861491551113547855/pdf/134846-WP-PUBLIC-march-2-WB-Women-Study-EN.pdf>

xxii <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/861491551113547855/pdf/134846-WP-PUBLIC-march-2-WB-Women-Study-EN.pdf>

xxiii <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620811/rr-counting-womens-work-unpaid-care-mena-region-030619-en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

xxiv <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/861491551113547855/pdf/134846-WP-PUBLIC-march-2-WB-Women-Study-EN.pdf>

Violence against women

Violence against women comes with social and economic costs, as it results in lost employment and productivity. Social costs include physical and emotional insecurity, psychological stress, decreased confidence, and reduced self-esteem. In monetary terms, a 2015 survey calculated the economic cost of gender-based violence at EGP 2.17 billion p.a. The survey estimated that 7.9 million Egyptian women experience violence yearly, perpetrated by spouses, close relatives or strangers in public spaces, including on public transport.

3.3 Youth in Upper Egypt

Upper Egypt and the Delta region have much higher poverty rates than Cairo or Alexandria. According to the latest government figures, 66.7% and 59.6% respectively live in poverty in the Governorates of Assiut and Sohag^{xxv}. Inevitably, youth in Upper Egypt face very different, and more challenging obstacles to accessing decent employment. Through our in-country interviews, several key challenges for youth accessing decent employment in these underserved, underdeveloped regions emerged:

Private sector opportunities in Upper Egypt are extremely limited

The availability of private sector jobs in rural areas, and especially in Upper Egypt, is weak. There are no industrial parks and infrastructure is limited. As a result, companies are reluctant to set up operations and there are low levels of entrepreneurial activity, especially for women. Access to markets is a major problem for farmers and local businesses, and most value-adding activities takes place elsewhere. The region also lags behind in internet connectivity. Only 14% of women entrepreneurs use a smartphone and only 4% have a fixed line internet connection, compared to 78% resp. 76% in Greater Cairo^{xxvi}.

Working conditions in local companies based in Upper Egypt are poor

Workers in Upper Egypt suffer from much worse working conditions than in other, more developed parts of the country. Women working in textile factories in Assiut earn around LE 600 a month, routinely doing 12-hour

shifts every day^{xxvii}. This is half the legal minimum wage and only about 25% of the estimated Living Wage for families in Egypt of LE 2,370. Despite such low salaries, the cost of marriage for young men in Upper Egypt is higher than for young men in urban areas, which explains why they end up taking jobs that are insecure and unsafe but meet immediate financial needs.

Youth in Upper Egypt miss out on employment interventions, as these are almost entirely directed at youth in Cairo and Alexandria

The bulk of youth employment programmes are directed at young people in the Greater Cairo region, who arguably need them much less. There is a real need to decentralise services and programmes, to give underserved youth in Upper Egypt a fairer shot at accessing decent work. A few experts mentioned the potential for online services in facilitating access to decent work, although this may pose challenges due to low internet connectivity, so that the most marginalised youth would remain excluded.

3.4 Youth Aspirations

Youth is by no means a monolithic category. We have highlighted just a few different broad groups, which themselves can be further cut in a myriad of different ways. It is worth briefly looking into what kind of employment young people from these different groups aspire to. Based on the youth sessions we conducted in Cairo and Alexandria, most youth expressed the universal desire to 'start their lives'. In the Egyptian context this means to earn enough money to be able to get married and settle down. Thus 'decent work' is defined as work that pays enough to cover these immediate needs.

However, while almost everyone agreed that a decent wage was fundamental, most expressed a more holistic understanding of decent employment. Some of them mentioned the need to feel secure at work, or health and safety provisions in the workplace, especially when working with heavy machinery, or career prospects. When asked whether they would prefer a fixed salary of LE 5,000, with no opportunity for a raise, or to start off at LE 3,000, with the potential to increase to LE 10,000 after 12 months based on good performance, 12 out of 13 in the group chose the latter option.

xxv Egypt Today, 2019

xxvi ILO "Women's entrepreneurship development assessment", Cairo, 2016.

xxvii Interview with CEO of Eyouth.

4. What are the main challenges and opportunities for youth employment in Egypt?

This Chapter is divided into sub-sections, each focusing on a different thematic obstacle that Egyptian youth typically encounter in accessing decent work. The conceptual framework we present for understanding

these obstacles is depicted in the diagram below.

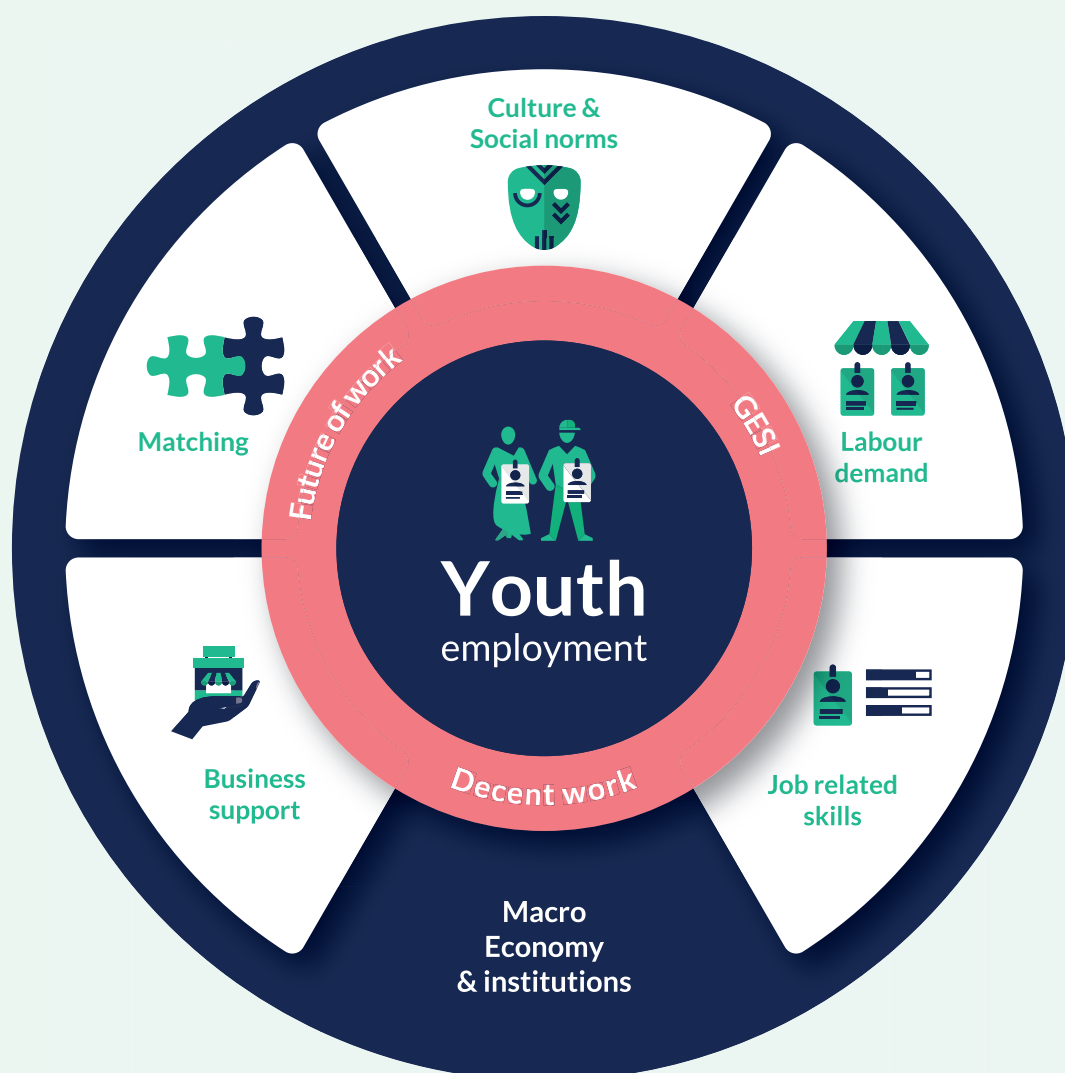


Figure 1. Different thematic domains of youth employment

Adapted from: Wellington et al., 2010⁵



4.1 Labour demand

Key facts

- ▶ Business activity is clustered around a few large firms and a multitude of very small ones, the latter finding it difficult to scale up due to lack of access to capital and a regulatory environment, which is anti-competitive, privileging the interests of well-connected business elites.
- ▶ Public sector employment is still widely seen as the most attractive option to young, educated jobseekers, providing high returns (relatively high wages, benefits, job security etc.).
- ▶ The shrinking of the public sector and decrease in available jobs have disproportionately affected women, who have historically worked more in Egypt's public sector.
- ▶ The expansion and increasing dominance of the informal sector in Egypt can be attributed to systemic failures on the labour demand side. Egypt has struggled with jobless growth since the implementation of structural adjustment policies in the early 1990s.

Challenges

- ▶ Growth of SMEs restricted by business elites and lack of access to capital
- ▶ Lack of public sector jobs due to privatisation, affecting women disproportionately.
- ▶ Informal business and informal jobs in formal business result in a lack of decent jobs.
- ▶ Negative effects of Covid-19 on labour demand in certain sectors.

Opportunities

- ▶ Facilitate the access to finance for SMEs with growth potential
- ▶ Promote value chain strengthening projects that can link SMEs to large firms.
- ▶ Stimulate initiatives to formalize firms and/or the jobs that they offer to youth.
- ▶ Identify sectors with growth potential and resilience in the face of Covid-19

Relevance for Challenge Fund for Youth Employment

Youth employment initiatives funded by CFYE should focus on:

- ▶ Early stage, innovative SMEs, with growth potential and ambitious employment goals
- ▶ In high potential sectors with a value chain vision and are resilient against external shocks
- ▶ Formal or semi-formal employment that meets minimum standards of decency

Practical Example

A project in the agribusiness sector that aims to link smallholder farmers in Upper Egypt with a food processing company in Cairo and create/improve jobs at both levels.



4.2 Job related skills and employability

Key facts

- ▶ Increasing the technical skills of youth is top of the agenda for the Egyptian government. In 2018, the Minister of Education and Technical Education signed a cooperation protocol with private firms to implement the Egypt Makers' initiative, under the slogan "Learn... Improve... Work".
- ▶ University level graduates have the highest rate of unemployment in the youth bracket at 34%, compared to 2.4% for youth with less than primary level education.
- ▶ Young men with secondary education are able to get a job quicker than university graduates, but the type of job that they are able to obtain is usually of a lower quality.
- ▶ At the same time, 20% of girls in rural Egypt aged 17-22 do not complete their school education, posing a real threat to young women's ability to find decent work in remote areas.
- ▶ The Egyptian school system does not put much emphasis on soft skills. While soft skills training is important, it does not - by itself - provide any guarantee to decent employment.
- ▶ There is a skills mismatch, meaning training at a TVET institution does not equip a young person with the requisite skills to meet the demands of industry.
- ▶ There is a huge challenge in sustainability of training, with the demand side being disconnected from and uncoordinated with the supply side.
- ▶ There is no clear or standardised certification for TVET.

Challenges

- ▶ Standard curricula at TVET institutions does not focus on labour market requirements
- ▶ There are many vocational training initiatives from the private sector, but they tend to focus on Cairo and Alexandria
- ▶ Many young girls in rural Egypt do not complete school and hence are not reached by these initiatives

Opportunities

- ▶ Support private sector initiatives that combine relevant theoretical content with on-the-job practical training
- ▶ Support such initiatives that focus on Upper Egypt and other less privileged areas
- ▶ Develop a gender strategy aimed at giving female school dropouts a second chance, including non-traditional TVET areas

Relevance for Challenge Fund for Youth Employment

- ▶ Youth employment initiatives funded by CFYE should focus on:
- ▶ Initiatives that focus Upper Egypt and other areas outside Cairo and Alexandria
- ▶ Initiatives that aim to transcend the gender barrier in technical education and employment

Practical Example

Replicate the example of the VTEC Academy – a collaboration of ABA and private sector firms in Alexandria, aimed at training and placing young people in private sector jobs – in Upper Egypt



4.3 Business support and access to finance

Key facts

- ▶ With a young population of 20 million tech-savvy consumers, Cairo provides a perfect test bed for innovation and an attractive market for scalability of high potential start-ups (GEN report 2020)
- ▶ Entrepreneurs can draw talent from over 150 universities and institutes producing 500,000 annual graduates, access a network of over 40 incubators/accelerators and 80 co-working spaces, and tap into ITIDA's support to exhibit at international events (GEN report 2020)
- ▶ Cairo attracted the largest number of investment deals in MENA in 2019, above all in Fintech. Egypt has 95 million mobile users, the highest penetration in EMEA, 14 million e-wallets, a young population, and several government initiatives aimed at financial inclusion (GEN report 2020)
- ▶ Backward linkages and technology transfer have proved extremely difficult, resulting in very slow or non-existent productivity gains for most businesses.
- ▶ There is a growing number of angel investors; most have close ties to business accelerators. However, none of these mainly tech-oriented investors have a strong focus on women.
- ▶ Access to finance is very different in urban or rural areas, and between men and women. Some 23 million Egyptian women are still excluded from the formal financial system (Gueguen, 2018)
- ▶ There is a lack of business support and access to finance outside of Cairo and Alexandria.

Challenges

- ▶ Business support services are well-developed for entrepreneurs in Alexandria and Cairo, but this is not the case in other parts of Egypt
- ▶ Access to finance is still very limited in rural areas, in particular for women
- ▶ Productivity gains have been disappointing due to lack of backward linkages

Opportunities

- ▶ Expand accelerator and other business support services to Upper Egypt
- ▶ By making financial services more widely available and lowering costs and barriers to access finance, Fintech can democratize financial services to the masses
- ▶ Promote collaboration between businesses in same sector to stimulate innovation

Relevance for Challenge Fund for Youth Employment

- ▶ Youth employment initiatives funded by CFYE should focus on:
- ▶ Expanding business support services to other geographical areas and/or women
- ▶ Fintech solutions that democratize the access to financial services for one and all
- ▶ Collaboration by growth-oriented SMEs that can lead to win-win solutions

Practical Example

Supporting an ag-tech solution to strengthen the supply chain of a young entrepreneur based in Cairo sourcing agricultural supplies in Upper Egypt and supporting young farmers to set up agro processing facilities themselves.



4.4 Culture and social norms

Key facts

- ▶ The unemployment rate among young women is more than five times that of young men, at a high of 38.1% compared to 6.8% (Barsoum, 2019)
- ▶ Young women face major discriminatory barriers to work, including the structure of the labour market, the economic environment, and employer discrimination
- ▶ Married women who work must contend with feelings of guilt and social disapproval, while for unmarried women, the notion of job quality intersects with ideas of propriety and appropriateness of work, which often results in young unmarried, educated women choosing to stay at home
- ▶ It is an unwritten rule that a woman must not be alone with unmarried men, must not use public transport that could involve close contact with strange men, and cannot stay out too late.
- ▶ Women also face threats of gender-based violence, both while travelling to work and at work.
- ▶ Not only do women struggle to enter and stay in the Egyptian workforce, but once in work, they struggle to progress to leadership roles.
- ▶ English is used, often unjustifiably, as a 'basic filter' to disqualify the majority of candidates. The ones remaining tend to be from elite, educationally privileged backgrounds.
- ▶ Vocational education in Egypt is looked down upon by many, although this is now gradually changing as people start to realise that it is possible to make good money in TVET jobs.
- ▶ Leveraging on connections with relatives or friends is often the secret to finding a job ('wasta').

Challenges

- ▶ Disproportionately low participation of young women on the labour market, partly due to social and cultural norms.
- ▶ Lack of women in leadership roles.
- ▶ Lack of prestige of vocational education and 'blue-collar jobs'.
- ▶ Lack of recruitment based on merits.

Opportunities

- ▶ Support private sector initiatives that aim to take pro-active HR measures to promote job opportunities for young women.
- ▶ Raise awareness of private sector firms of the benefits of recruiting young women in (or with prospects for) leadership positions
- ▶ Stimulate initiatives to make blue-collar jobs more attractive to young men and women

Relevance for Challenge Fund for Youth Employment

- ▶ Youth employment initiatives funded by CFYE should focus on:
- ▶ Private sector initiatives that are aimed at increasing the prestige of blue-collar jobs.
- ▶ Private sector initiatives that take pro-active HR measures to promote job opportunities for young women, ranging from setting quota to providing child-care facilities or maternity leave
- ▶ Highlighting success stories of women in leadership positions, as role models

Practical Example

Factory producing ready-made garments that already has a considerable number of young women in its workforce, but a high turnover rate due to women leaving upon getting married, wishes to implement measures to keep them on board, such as child-care facilities at the factory, safe transport arrangements and/or maternity leave.



4.5 Matching

Key facts

- ▶ The Egyptian education system does not equip young people with relevant skills and knowledge to meet the requirements of the labour market.
- ▶ Almost half of working youth (47.7%) are in occupations that do not match their education: 8.8% are overeducated and 38.9% are undereducated. Young overeducated workers do not reach their productive potential, while undereducated workers may feel job insecurity (Barsoum, 2014)
- ▶ There are several quality, demand-driven matching initiatives by the private sector, based on a partnership approach that actively engage employers to ensure required skills are being nurtured. These include vocational skills training, digital skills training and matching platforms.
- ▶ In certain sectors, such as hi-tech and digital, the main issues preventing women from achieving equity in workforce participation rates lie more on the supply side.
- ▶ Significant barriers to matching still exist, in the form of 'wasta' and limited investment in Public Employment Agencies (See section 4.4)

Challenges

- ▶ Despite the large number of young people that graduate from existing TVET institutions, there is still a lack of well-skilled workers.
- ▶ Not all skills development initiatives result in sustainable, decent jobs being created.
- ▶ Women are over-represented in some jobs and under-represented in other jobs.
- ▶ Many firms still prefer to hire someone they know instead of the best-qualified candidate.

Opportunities

- ▶ Set up / promote skills training combined with job placement initiatives that can bridge the skills mismatch in the labour market.
- ▶ Ensure that private sector companies put in place policies to ensure adequate working conditions that build employee loyalty.
- ▶ Reward pro-active HR measures aimed at recruiting the best-qualified candidate, in combination with a gender strategy.

Relevance for Challenge Fund for Youth Employment

- ▶ Youth employment initiatives funded by CFYE should focus on:
- ▶ Private sector initiatives that focus on matching labour supply and demand and combine skills development with job placement.
- ▶ Private sector companies that are willing to improve their recruitment procedures and develop an internal HR strategy aimed at career development and employee satisfaction.

Practical Example

A company that wishes to expand its operations to regions outside of Greater Cairo or Alexandria and is prepared to invest in skills development, both outside and on the work floor, in order to be able to recruit employees from that same region.



4.6 Macro-economy and institutions

Key facts

- ▶ The economy is skewed towards capital-intensive production, e.g. by energy subsidies.
- ▶ Oil revenues have increased jobs in male-dominated sectors such as construction and extractive industries. Women tend to work in sectors that are poorly remunerated, such as agriculture and education, while men work in transport, tourism, retail and manufacturing, which pay better.
- ▶ Large numbers of young men migrate to neighbouring countries to seek work. Remittances are an important revenue stream for their families back home, but do not contribute to a structural solution to Egypt's labour market challenges.
- ▶ Productivity in Egypt is a major challenge. Egyptian firms increase their productivity at a much slower rate than those in other comparable emerging economies, e.g. Turkey and Mexico.

Challenges

- ▶ Jobless growth has been a feature of Egypt's economic development since the 1990s.
- ▶ Growth sectors do not tend to create a lot of (decent) jobs for women.
- ▶ Job opportunities in the Gulf region make it difficult for Egyptian firms to compete.

Opportunities

- ▶ Invest in sectors that have growth potential and offer decent work opportunities to young women, e.g. digital businesses.
- ▶ Channel remittances towards productive investments, so that they can leverage access to funding for SMEs.

Relevance for Challenge Fund for Youth Employment

- ▶ Youth employment initiatives funded by CFYE should focus on:
- ▶ Sectors that are labour-intensive and have potential for job growth (see Annex C).
- ▶ Assess ways to channel remittances into productive investments that create jobs.

Practical Example

Early stage business set up by tech entrepreneur who returned to Egypt after working in Dubai for several years and joined forces with ex-classmates from university, pooling her own savings with funding from a local angel investor.

5. A call for solutions

In light of all the above findings and considerations, we have determined some key parameters for CFYE's call for concept notes in Egypt, which we have outlined below.

CFYE partners in Egypt must take a gender transformative approach

The limited career options available to women result in extremely high unemployment and inactivity rates and wasted economic potential for the country. The over-representation of educated young women in public sector employment is a thing of the past. Young women also face unprecedented challenges in accessing decent work due to the current global pandemic. Now is the time for private sector partners to step forward with initiatives to increase women's economic participation and provide decent work opportunities for them.

This means they should go beyond GESI-sensitivity, actively targeting young women in their gender-transformative interventions. In this sense, they should be addressing unequal power relations by removing systemic barriers that prevent women from benefiting from and contributing to decent work opportunities. To this end, flexible working (in both hours and location) will be essential, given the care expectations and burdens that fall predominately on women, and the current Covid-19 circumstances.

Beyond the specificities of the current challenges, a smart solution will account for the fact that women in Egypt tend to drop out of the labour market when they get married. They will need to think of innovative approaches to tap into this demographic of young women, which holds huge potential. This might involve outlining a strategy for balancing working life with family responsibilities, bearing in mind that most women have responsibilities to care for children. Implementing partners will also need to demonstrate consideration of the family power balance, showing how they will address the issue of women's employment potentially causing ruptures, and the repercussions this might have on the family dynamic.

CFYE implementing partners in Egypt must prioritise decent work

Egypt faces a major challenge in the quality of work available to young job seekers. This came up time and again in the interviews as the critical pain point for Egyptian youth. Informality is the norm, and informal work plays a crucial labour-market absorption role. Yet this work is characterised by precariousness. The formal, private sector does not offer enough incentives to enter or stay in its jobs, so Egyptian youth end up resorting to informal, cash-in-hand, but insecure work. The result is that young Egyptians are struggling to put away savings and make plans for the future.

With this in mind, CFYE partners need to make the decent work element paramount in their interventions. This means actively presenting a strategy for combining 'create' or 'match' interventions with 'improve' elements. The sustainability of CFYE interventions must be explicitly substantiated and detailed. If formal, private sector companies are to compete with the 'quick-win' pull of the informal labour market, they must improve retention rates by providing on-the-job training, increasing wages, enhancing career development prospects and improving overall working conditions.

CFYE partners in Egypt must be led by a private-sector entity

Given the difficult operating environment for NGOs in Egypt, we will not look to partner with NGOs as lead partner in a consortium. Rather, we will focus on private implementing partners, who will still be permitted to form consortia with NGOs in a supporting role.^{xxviii}

"The private sector makes the change in this country"

— Head of HR, Seoudi Supermarkets

^{xxviii} Provided the NGO/INGO has full security clearance and license to operate in Egypt.

Apart from the fact that CFYE is a private sector-driven fund, the restrictions that apply to NGOs in Egypt and implications for foreign funders makes it incumbent to introduce this stipulation for this call. Moreover, any programme that works in TVET or education more generally requires buy-in from Egyptian government authorities. This is an important factor to consider for any potential partner planning to work in this space. They will need to demonstrate that they have full security clearance, license to operate and show appreciable evidence that they have gained – or will be able to gain – government buy-in at whatever level necessary.

CFYE partners in Egypt must have a decentralised geographic reach

Working conditions in Upper Egypt and other remote areas of the country are generally far worse than in Greater Cairo. Wages are extremely low, and there is very little private sector activity; where it does exist, it struggles to link to other markets. Yet 40% of Egypt's population lives in Upper Egypt. Youth in these regions are the most economically vulnerable, though also widely believed to be extremely eager for decent work opportunities; many experts that we spoke to regard them to be more motivated than their counterparts in more economically vibrant regions.

CFYE partners must therefore present a decentralised approach to allow young people to benefit from decent work opportunities. This does not mean that partners cannot focus interventions on the Greater Cairo area, but if that is the case, there must also be a strategy for delivering interventions in more remote, less well-served regions such as Upper Egypt.

CFYE partners in Egypt should focus on sectors with job growth potential

In the Annex C we have highlighted seven business sectors – agriculture, manufacturing, retail trade, ICT and digital, energy, health and hospitality – and one cross-cutting activity (accelerators and business angels) as having employment growth potential for young women, both for blue collar workers as well as for highly educated, university graduates who are currently facing serious challenges to find decent employment. While these sectors are considered to be priority sectors, we do not plan to rule out any sector off-hand, as long as minimum conditions of legality and sustainability apply.

Each intervention by a CFYE partner in Egypt must benefit at least 700 youth or at least 350 young women

In order to have a significant impact on employment, the scoping team considers that a minimum threshold of 700 jobs is not too high. Applying the overall CFYE requirement that at least 50% of the jobs should be for women, we propose to also consider projects that benefit at least 350 young women, regardless of the total amount of beneficiaries. In other words, if the project benefits at least 350 women, then the total number may be less than 700.

Annex A: List of Acronyms

ABA	Alexandria Businessmen Association
CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics
CDDRL	Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law
CFYE	Challenge Fund for Youth Employment
EBA	Egyptian Businessmen Association
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EIB	European Investment Bank
ERSAP	Economic Restructuring and Structural Adjustment Programme
FEI	Federation of Egyptian Industries
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GLO	Global Labour Organisation
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
LE	Egyptian pounds
LMIC	Low- and Middle-Income Country
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MNC	Multi-National Company
MoMM	Ministry of Manpower and Migration
MSMEDA	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency
NASS	National Academy for Science & Skills
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PEA	Public Employment Agency
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VTEC	Vocational Training and Employment Centre (in Alexandria)
WAP	Working age population

Annex B: Persons interviewed during scoping study

Organisation	Name	Function
(Semi-)Government		
<i>Ministry of Planning</i>	Ghada Khalil Mai Mohamed	Director of Rowad project
<i>Ministry of Int'l Cooperation</i>	Moataz Yeken	Senior Advisor to the Minister
<i>Ministry of Education</i>	Ahmed Ashmawi	Advisor to the Minister
<i>MSMEDA (former Social Fund for Development)</i>	Tarek Monir Shash Amira El Sayed	Head of Planning and Int'l Cooperation Head of Foreign Agreements Dept
<i>IMC (Industrial Modernisation Center)</i>	Amr Taha Ahmed Amin	Executive Director Sr Manager Export
International organisations		
<i>British Council</i>	Riham Boutros Alex Lambert	Programme Manager Dep. Director and Head of Programmes
<i>EBRD</i>	Khaled Hamza Kristine Grun Rami Samain	Assoc. Director, Deputy Head of Egypt
<i>GIZ</i>	Andreas Adrian Jonas Naguib	Head of SEDE Head of Project Promotion of SME
<i>Hivos (Netherlands)</i>	Ahmed Sameh Hussein	Project Manager MENA region
<i>ILO</i>	Ms. Neshwa Balal	Chief Technical Adviser EYE project
<i>Netherlands Embassy</i>	Louis Martens Aziza Shaat	Deputy Head, Economic Development Economic and Trade Advisor
<i>UNIDO</i>	Ahmed Rezk	??
<i>World Food Program (WFP)</i>	Nirvana Farrag	Director, Africa Knowledge Platform; former MD of Min. of Int'l Cooperation
Donor-funded projects		
<i>Masaraat</i>	Amr Mohamed	Country Director
<i>SEED (Strengthening Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development)</i>	Dalia El Molla	Team Lead-MSMEs Integration into value chains
<i>TVET Egypt Programme</i>	Ms. Shoroke Zedan	Executive Director

Consultancy companies

Chemonics Egypt	Dr. Ahmed Huzayyin	Manager of ECO-Industrial Dept
Dcode Economic & Financial Consulting	Aly El Sherei Mohamed Youssef	Co-founders and directors
North-South Consultants Exchange	Dr. Zohra Merabet	Executive Director

Local NGOs

Masaraat	Amr Mohamed	Country Director
Nahdet el-Mahrousa	Jackie Kameel Rannia Elsayed	Managing Director Director of Partnerships
Terous ("gears")	Hatem Khater Hend Abdelmeguid	General Secretary & CEO

Membership organisations

ABA (Alexandria Businessmen Association)	Marwan El Samak Hesham Aboul Ela	Former Chairperson Vice Chairman
EBA (Egyptian Businessmen Association)	Mohammed Youssef Rabab Rezeika	Executive director PR manager
EDBC (Egyptian Dutch Business Club)	Tarek Tawfik	Chairman of the Cairo Poultry Group, chairman EDBC, president of AmCham, deputy chair FEI and CEO Farm Frites
FEI (Federation of Egyptian Industries)	Dr. El Sayed Torky Khaled Abdel Azim	Senior Advisor

Enterprise Support Organisations

AUC Venture Labs	Ayman Ismail	Lab Director
ChangeLab	Ali Agag Jameel	Country Director Egypt Country Director Lebanon
EYouth (Cairo & Alexandria)	Mustafa Abd Ellatif	Founder & CEO
Flat6Labs	Ahmed El Alfi Ibrahim Ramadan	Founder & CEO Sr Associate
KMT Business Accelerator	Mazen Helmy	Founder & CEO

Financial institutions

Alex Angels/Cairo Angels	Tarek El Kady Loay El Shawarby	Executive Chairman KD Group Legal Advisor & Co-Founder
Change Rock Capital	Karim Samra Ahmad Ashkar	Principal
HIMAngel	Khaled Ismail	Managing Partner
Prime Finance	Shireen Al Kady Mervat Erian Fadi Rafla	Chairman CEO Digital Finance
Sawari Ventures	Ahmed El Alfi Ibrahim Ramadan	Founder & CEO Senior Associate
Sawiris Foundation for Social Devt	Ahmed El Banhawry	

Education institutions

<i>American University in Cairo (AUC)</i>	Ali Awni, Maha Guindi	Ops Management Professor VP Advancement and Employability
<i>Ghabbour GB Auto Academy</i>	Mariam Helal George Sedky Samuel Amira Issa	Talent Manager
<i>National Academy for Science and Skills</i>	Dr. Amr Abdel Kawi	Managing Director
<i>VTEC (Vocational Training and Employment Centre) Alexandria</i>	Mohamed Talaat Ahmed Ebrahim	Executive Director Inter-company Training Manager

Private sector companies

<i>Brimore</i>	Ahmed El Sheikha Rania	Co-Founder/Chief Business Officer Training Director
<i>Coca Cola Egypt</i>	Shereen Shaheen and various colleagues	Public Policy, Communications and Sustainability Director
<i>Edita</i>	Neveen Bakhaty, Hani Berzi	Learning & Devt Manager CEO
<i>Jinni</i>	Mostafa Ghannam	Co-Founder and CEO
<i>Mumm</i>	Waleed Abdel Rahman	Founder and CEO
<i>PepsiCo</i>	Sarah Youssef Hanna Hatem Safwat	Head of Corporate Communications Communications Senior Analyst
<i>Seoudi Supermarkets</i>	Nariman El Kasheer	
<i>Sprints</i>	Ayman Bazaraa	Founder and CEO
<i>Wuzzaf</i>	Ameer Sherif	Head of BD and Strategic Programmes

Annex C: Sector Analysis

Sectors	Potential to create jobs for youth (especially Post COVID-19)	Opportunities for women	Interest of women to work in the sector	Required skills level
Agriculture/ Agribusiness	High <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The biggest employer in the country, accounting for 21.1% of total employment in 2019, both for men and women, and the largest sector for youth employment. ▶ Projects could build on MSMEDA's work of formalizing organic clusters run by women, e.g. artichokes, dairy, papyrus, carpets, silk, cotton and others. 	Medium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Agri-business has potential to create productive employment opportunities for young women. ▶ Various interesting projects such as MSMEDA and Pepsico-CARE focus on female farmers. 	Low-Medium	Unskilled - Semi-skilled - Skilled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Depends on the value chain and the type of job. ▶ Agri-processors need technically skilled workers and digital skills are required for ag-tech activities.
Wholesale and Retail Trade	High <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A major employer, with 13.6% of total employment, including substantial numbers of women and youth, with 11.7% and 16% respectively – the fourth largest sector for employment for both demographics. 	High <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Opportunities for women in last mile distribution and e-commerce, allowing them to combine their business with domestic responsibilities. 	High	Unskilled - Semi-skilled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Low skills required for trade, but medium skills will be needed for digital jobs
Manufacturing	Medium - High <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Another major employer, with 12.8% of the total workforce, just after retail by total employment share. The second highest in youth employment (18%). ▶ Interesting subsectors are clothing and apparel, food processing, electrical equipment, followed by rubber and plastics, pharmaceuticals and motor vehicles. ▶ High demand for blue collar workers 	Low - Medium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Slightly lower in terms of employment of women, but not insignificant at 7.4%. ▶ Opportunities for young women in light manufacturing and clothing, but working conditions need to be improved. ▶ Options include providing transportation and childcare services and reducing the length of the working day. 	Low - Medium	Semi-skilled to High skilled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Depends on the type of job. ▶ Additional skills development necessary for blue-collar jobs
ICT	Medium to High <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Relatively small in terms of total employment at 0.8% and 1.1% of total female employment, we consider ICT and digital to be a priority sector, not least due to its ability to adapt to changing external situations. ▶ ICT sector employs a more educated workforce: nearly two thirds of workers have a tertiary level qualification. ▶ The sector has great growth potential, varying from e-lancing to e-commerce, including ag-tech, fintech, health-tech and ed-tech. 	Medium - High <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The sector lends itself to flexible work arrangements, which benefit women especially, allowing them to work from home and at hours that suit them. 	Low - Medium	Semi-skilled to High skilled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Mostly skilled individuals with post-secondary education ▶ Targeted at educated youth in urban areas
Renewable Energy	Medium - High <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ This sector has significant potential for job creation, particularly in combination with other sectors, such as agriculture. 100 million tons of waste is generated in Egypt every year, of which 35% comes from agriculture. Collection and treatment of waste in a coordinated way could create many jobs. 	Medium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Traditionally viewed as a male dominated sector. Opportunities for women at several levels in the value chain. 	Low - Medium	Semi-skilled to High skilled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Depends on the type of job ▶ More skills required when combined with tech
Health	Medium - High <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Employs 3.2% of the overall employment by sector. ▶ Significant opportunities for private sector companies and (angel) investors, particularly in the field of health-tech. Like ICT, health requires a relatively high skill level, and therefore has potential to absorb new labour market entrants who graduate university. 	High <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Traditionally female-dominated, employs 12.5% of the total female workforce, but most of them in low-skilled jobs ▶ Potential for more responsible jobs for women, including leadership positions 	High	Semi-skilled to High skilled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Depends on the type of job ▶ From relatively low-skilled nurses to medical specialist
Hospitality	High / Low <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Important for GDP growth, but not a major employer. ▶ There is a lot to do in terms of improving quality of work, various initiatives are already underway to formalize and improve job quality. ▶ The sector is also much less able to pivot and adapt to changing circumstances and is the first to experience heavy losses as a 'non-essential' domain. ▶ One of the industries most affected by COVID-19. Some areas such as catering have taken a smaller hit. Recovery will take some time (projections are 2021) 	High / Low? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Has great potential for creating decent work opportunities for women. ▶ Just subsector of cleaning and domestic work already constitutes 2.7% of total female employment ▶ High prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; not clear what the future will bring ▶ There may be opportunities for innovative approaches 	High	Unskilled to High skilled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Depends on the type of job ▶ From chambermaids/waiters to hotel managers and tour operators
Accelerators and Business Angels	High <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is a growing number of angel investors – mainly tech-oriented – with close ties to business accelerators. ▶ Significant opportunities to improve start-up / growth-stage firms' access to capital by working with sector- or thematic-focused accelerators and business angels. ▶ As the entrepreneurial ecosystem matures, it offers real alternatives to the unproductive, mature private sector, as well as struggling early-stage firms. 	Medium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ None of the angel investors have a strong focus on women. ▶ Access to finance is very different for men or women. For instance, 23 million Egyptian women are still excluded from the formal financial system. 	Low - Medium	Unskilled to High skilled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Depends on the type of job ▶ Most entrepreneurs will be high-skilled, but their workers can be of all skill levels