

## Impact Brief Series, Issue 9

# Promoting women's empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa

A rapid evidence assessment of labour market interventions

**The Taqeeem (meaning “evaluation” in Arabic) Initiative: What Works in Youth Employment** is a technical cooperation programme of the International Labour Organization. This report was produced in partnership with IFAD as part of an IFAD-financed project, titled “Strengthening gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment in the Near East and North Africa.” Through rigorous impact research, this capacity development and learning grant project aims to understand “what works” in the promotion of gender mainstreaming, with the ultimate goal of reaching gender equality in rural employment outcomes across the region.

**The Taqeeem Impact Brief Series** documents how organizations measure outcomes of their employment programmes, the tools that are applied and the findings and recommendations that emerge to assist them in improving impacts and programme design. This rapid evidence assessment analyses gender equality outcomes of Active Labour Market Programmes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

### KEY MESSAGES

- There is little robust evidence on the effects of Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs)<sup>1</sup> to promote gender equality in the Middle East and North Africa. Existing studies concentrate on Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia and are mainly focused on skills training. More evidence is needed to understand how decent work opportunities for young women in the MENA region can be improved.
- The available evidence in the MENA region on skills training shows positive short-term effects on women's self-esteem and entrepreneurial attitudes. Microfinance appears to have positive effects for already established businesses and works – similar to wage subsidies – rather in the short-run. Limited evidence on public employment programmes has not allowed the discernment of positive employment effects.

<sup>1</sup> Active Labour Market Programmes are interventions that typically target the most vulnerable members of the population, in order to promote equity and secure livelihoods. The most common types are skills training, entrepreneurship promotion, public employment programmes and wage subsidies in addition to employment services and job search assistance.

- When designing ALMPs and result measurement tools, gender aspects need to be taken into consideration at the programme formulation stage. In all cases, evidence on the barriers of female labour market participation and programme take-up should be taken into account. When conducting impact evaluations, a large enough sample to enable a robust analysis of treatment effects for women and men separately should be used.
- In order to better understand the complex effects of ALMPs on gender equality, analysis needs to go beyond gender disaggregation. Genuine empowerment measures, gender parity, time use, work-life balance and decision-making abilities within and outside the household can be included.

## Acknowledgements

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## 1. Gender equality and labour market trends for young people in the Middle East and North Africa

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**Gender equality is a critical concern to improve the labour market situation of young women and men in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.** MENA is the region with the highest youth unemployment rate worldwide. This situation is particularly severe for young women: In 2015, 27 per cent of women participated in the labour force, versus 77 per cent of men.<sup>2</sup> In 2014, the unemployment rate of young women exceeded that of young men in MENA by around 20 percentage points.<sup>3</sup> Young women with higher education have even less chances on the labour market than their lower educated peers. This is particularly the case for Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, while in Gulf countries higher education is associated with more promising employment prospects.<sup>4</sup>

**The gender gap is closing in education and health, but not in the economy:** Across countries in the region, established societal structures substantially limit the access of women to political and economic life. The Arab uprisings in 2011 have ruptured old structures and generated a wave of civic engagement with women as important actors. However, this transition has not yet led to an increased participation of women in the shaping of policies, laws and rights that determine their empowered role in their respective societies<sup>5</sup> and in some countries, researchers documented a regress in women's rights after the Arab uprising.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, this gender gap has started to narrow notably in the fields of education and health, while it stayed unchanged in the economic and political spheres. This phenomenon is often referred to as the *MENA paradox*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> ILO (2016). Women in business and management: gaining momentum in the Middle East and North Africa: regional report.

<sup>3</sup> ILO (2015). Global Employment Trends for Youth 2015: Scaling up investments in decent jobs for youth.

<sup>4</sup> ILO (2016), see footnote 1.

<sup>5</sup> Balamoune-Lutz, M. (2013). The effectiveness of foreign aid to women's equality organizations in the MENA: Does aid promote women's political participation? (No. 2013/074). WIDER Working Paper.

<sup>6</sup> Esfandiari, H., Heideman, K. (2015). The Role and Status of Women after the Arab Uprisings. IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2015, pp. 303-306.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank (2012). World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development.



**Career opportunities are limited for women in MENA countries.** On average, the unemployment rate of women with finalised tertiary education in the region is still over 50 per cent after one year of job search.<sup>8</sup> MENA is also the region with the lowest rates of women in management positions worldwide: even the occupied Palestinian territory and Tunisia, that rank at the top within the region, registered only 15 per cent of women in management positions – less than half of the global average.<sup>9</sup>

**Increased gender equality promotes economic growth.** A growing body of evidence shows the importance of gender equality for development and poverty reduction, and the significant contribution women entrepreneurs make to the development of the small business sector, promoting job creation and accelerated economic growth.<sup>10</sup> Estimates show that if females had similar labour force participation rates as men, household earnings in the region could rise by up to 25 per cent. Furthermore, women's empowerment frequently leads to an increased wellbeing of their families and communities.<sup>11</sup> The importance of women as contributors to economic growth and development, as well as the trend towards a closing of gender gaps in other spheres of MENA societies highlight the importance of looking at the reasons behind the low female labour force participation and developing effective strategies to address those challenges.

**However, little is known about the impact of ALMPs implemented in the MENA region, and even less regarding their impact for women.** ALMPs are an important tool used by government and development partners to address the youth employment challenge in the region. However, few of ALMPs in the region explicitly target young women. In Egypt, for example, only 9 per cent of ALMPs focus on young women as their primary target group, as reported by the Youth Employment Inventory (YEI), a global database of employment interventions targeting young people. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems to track progress and measure the results of these initiatives are often not in place or are weakly implemented. Moreover, there appears to be little systematic and rigorous evidence on “what works” to improve the labour market outcomes of young women.

**Where gender aspects are considered, the range of measured outcomes is limited.** The issue of gender equality is complex and multidimensional. In order to understand “what works” to promote women's empowerment through ALMPs, the focus on programme participation and relative outcomes for women versus men needs to be overcome. Existing gender-related measurement tools and indicators need to be assessed for their applicability for the design, tracking and evaluation of youth ALMPs.

<sup>8</sup> World Bank (2013). Jobs for shared prosperity: time for action in the Middle East and North Africa

<sup>9</sup> ILO (2016), see footnote 2.

<sup>10</sup> CAWTAR (2007), Women Entrepreneurs in the Middle East and North Africa: Characteristics, Contributions and Challenges. CAWTAR. Tunis.

<sup>11</sup> World Bank (2013), see footnote 8.

## 2. Uncovering the evidence through a rapid evidence assessment

To provide an overview of the existing evidence on “what works” in promoting gender equality in the MENA region, this brief presents results from a rapid evidence assessment (REA) of ALMPs. Through a structured mapping of available evidence, the REA helps to identify knowledge gaps where future research might be needed. Furthermore, by analysing ten impact evaluations, it provides an overview on **how gender equality aspects of ALMPs are typically measured**. It shows which indicators are used to gather information on gender and labour market outcomes. Based on the findings of the assessment, recommendations are formulated for improved measurement to better inform programme planning and implementation (see Box 1).

### BOX 1: Overview of the rapid evidence assessment procedure

I. What is a rapid evidence assessment?	
<b>REAs</b> aim to identify all available evidence on a specific research question through a systematic screening of studies from electronic and print sources. The results of the search are selected against a predetermined set of inclusion criteria, and consequently critically appraised for their methodological quality. Thus, REAs apply the same methods and principles like <b>systematic reviews</b> , but make concessions with regard to the exhaustiveness of the search in order to be completed in a shorter period of time. A REA is therefore more likely to be subject to different sources of bias than a full systematic review.	
II. Inclusion criteria for this study	
<b>Population</b>	Women and men of all ages, where the evaluation considers gender outcomes.
<b>Setting</b>	MENA region (Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen).
<b>Date of research/ publication</b>	No restrictions.
<b>Interventions</b>	All types of ALMPs (training and skills development programmes; employment services; wage subsidies and public employment programmes; enterprise development programmes).
<b>Outcomes</b>	Gender equality variables comprised in the OECD Gender, Institutions and Development (GID) Database. <sup>12</sup>
<b>Publication languages</b>	English, French.
<b>Research methods</b>	All impact evaluations that address attribution.
III. Screening	
A total of 19 electronic databases, comprising both academic sources and ‘grey’ literature, were screened in 2015 for a combination of relevant search terms according to the inclusion criteria. The reference lists of selected studies was used to identify additional studies.	

<sup>12</sup> OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database 2009, available at <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=GID2>.



#### IV. Critical appraisal for relevance of selected studies

1. Revision of relevance of titles and abstracts of search results (result: 72 studies).
2. Full text screening (24 studies remained).
3. In-depth analysis of full texts for gender-related outcomes and meeting of the methodological inclusion criteria (10 studies remained).
4. Quality assessment of included studies based on an adapted version of the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale (Sherman et al. 1997) and the framework for assessing qualitative evaluations developed by Spencer et al. (2003).<sup>13</sup>

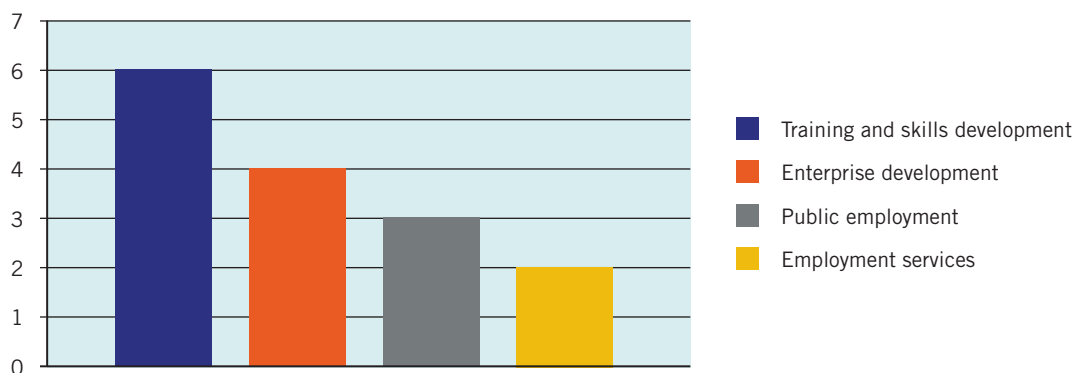
### 1. The evidence base: sources, countries and types of interventions

**The identified evidence was fairly recent and mainly derived from institutional sources.** The ten studies included in the rapid evidence assessment were mostly published in technical working papers from international research institutions and networks. In two cases, the sources were peer-reviewed academic journal articles and in one case an unpublished report. Apart from one exception, all included studies were published between 2005 and 2014.

**The included studies concentrate on a few countries and intervention types, most notably skills and entrepreneurship training.** With regard to the distribution across countries, Egypt and Jordan show the greatest number of included impact studies, followed by Morocco and Tunisia. For most of the countries of the region, there was no robust evidence at all available. The most common types of ALMPs among the included studies were skills training (including entrepreneurship training), followed by support for enterprise development (including microfinance services). Less evidence was available for employment services, public employment and wage subsidies (see Figure 1).

**Gender aspects were either the main focus of the intervention or were considered through subsample analysis.** Four of the assessed interventions targeted exclusively or mainly women. The other six studies covered gender effects by conducting subsample analyses, with some differences regarding the resulting statistical power. The screening process showed that even if gender issues were initially highlighted as important in the evaluation and this was often still reflected in the sampling, in many cases no gender-differential impact analysis was undertaken. See Table 1 for an overview of the included studies.

FIGURE 1: Coverage of ALMP types by included studies<sup>14</sup>



<sup>13</sup> Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., & Dillon, L. (2003). Quality in qualitative evaluation: a framework for assessing research evidence.

<sup>14</sup> Some studies comprised several types of ALMPs combined in one programme.

**TABLE 1: Overview of included studies**

No.	Country: Intervention	Description of intervention Source
1	Egypt: Microcredit	<b>Offer of microcredit for informally working women and their families in Cairo.</b> <i>Nader, Y. F. (2008). Microcredit and the socio-economic wellbeing of women and their families in Cairo. The Journal of Socio-Economics, 37(2), 644–656.</i>
2	Egypt: Ishraq	<b>Informal education (basic literacy, life, sports and financial literacy skills) and social support as a ‘second chance program’ for out-of-school adolescent girls in the age of 12-15 years.</b> <i>Elbadawy, A. (2013). Evaluating the Impact of Ishraq: A Second Chance Program for Out-of-School Rural Adolescent Girls in Upper Egypt. Economic development and the rise of Islamists parties. ERF Working Paper.</i>
3	Egypt: Public Sector Hiring	<b>National policy of guaranteeing employment in the public sector for all graduates of secondary and postsecondary institutions.</b> <i>Assaad, R. (1997). The effects of public sector hiring and compensation policies on the Egyptian labor market. The World Bank Economic Review, 11(1), 85–118.</i>
4	Israel: Occupational retraining for immigrants	<b>Vocational training and retraining courses, complemented by financial assistance for living expenses for female immigrants.</b> <i>Lerner, M., Menahem, G., &amp; Hisrich, R. D. (2005). Does government matter? The impact of occupational retraining, gender and ethnicity on immigrants’ incorporation. Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 12(2), 192–210.</i>
5	Jordan: New Opportunities for Women (Jordan NOW)	<b>Soft skills training and wage subsidy vouchers for young female graduates. The voucher pays the employer an amount equal to the minimum wage for a maximum of six months.</b> <i>Groh, M., Krishnan, N., McKenzie, D., &amp; Vishwanath, T. (2012). Soft skills or hard cash? The impact of training and wage subsidy programs on female youth employment in Jordan. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, (6141).</i>
6	Jordan: Jordan NOW 2.0	<b>Two experimental job-search assistance programmes for unemployed youth with tertiary education in Amman: Testing skills and traits, individual profiling and matching.</b> <i>Groh, M., McKenzie, D., Shammout, N., &amp; Vishwanath, T. (2014). Testing the importance of search frictions, matching, and reservation prestige through randomized experiments in Jordan. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, (7030).</i>
7	MENA: INJAZ al-Arab Company Programme	<b>Entrepreneurship education training for students through public-private partnerships in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.</b> <i>Reimers, F., Dyer, P., Ortega, M.E. (2012): “Entrepreneurship education in the Middle East: measuring programme impact”. Unpublished report. Harvard Graduate School of Education</i>
8	Morocco: Microcredit in rural areas	<b>Rural entrepreneurs in selected villages were offered microcredit through weekly visits by the credit agents.</b> <i>Crepon et al. (2011). Impact of microcredit in rural areas of Morocco: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation. MIT Working Paper.</i>

TABLE 1. (continued)

No.	Country: Intervention	Description of intervention Source
9	Tunisia: Stage d'Initiation à la Vie Professionnelle (SIVP)	<b>Employment subsidy for university graduates that covers one-third of a graduate's wage for one year and exempts the employer from social security contributions.</b> <i>Broecke, S. (2013). Tackling graduate unemployment in North Africa through employment subsidies: A look at the SIVP programme in Tunisia. IZA Journal of Labor Policy, 2(1), 1–19.</i>
10	Tunisia: Turning theses into enterprises	<b>Business training, including behavioural skills training for university students, personalized coaching to develop a business plan and access to seed capital for winners of business plan competition.</b> <i>Premand, P., Brodmann, S., Almeida, R., Grun, R., &amp; Barouni, M. (2012). Entrepreneurship Training and Self-Employment among University Graduates: Evidence from a Randomized Trial in Tunisia. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 6285.</i>

## 2. The evidence base: outcome measurement and methodology


**Evaluations tend to focus mainly on final outcomes and pay little or no attention to different pathways of change.** All studies address causal attribution of the identified outcomes to some extent: in half of the cases through an experimental design, in the other cases through analysing observationally equivalent comparison groups. However, only three of the ten studies showed a solid analysis of the intervention's theories of change – most studies focused exclusively on final outcomes, making it difficult to understand how and why changes occurred (or did not happen). In most of the studies, the follow-up data collection took place one or two years after gathering the baseline data and only one study featured repeated follow-up surveys (one and two years after finalising the intervention).

**Few indicators were used to measure gender-related outcomes and often focused on employment probabilities.** The following outcome indicators were used to measure gender equality (in order of the frequency of their consideration):

- Women's probability of employment and/or enterprise creation
- Women's job earnings (measured in income and assets)
- Women's aspirations, attitudes and self-perceptions
- Women's freedom and bargaining power within the private sphere (household/family)
- Men's attitudes towards women
- Women's employability (measured in peer networks, financial and literacy skills)

## 3. What works in promoting gender equality through labour market interventions? Summarizing findings of the rapid evidence assessment

- **Skills training affects attitudes rather than employment chances of women in MENA.** Skills training programmes consistently had a strong positive impact on women's self-esteem and entrepreneurial



attitudes. In some cases, it also led to positive impacts with regard to men's perceptions of women's roles in society and recognition of their entrepreneurial potential (e.g. for the Ishraq, Jordan NOW and INJAZ Al-Arab programmes). Often it seemed to have, however, no impact on employment outcomes, for example in the entrepreneurship programme in Tunisia and in the Jordan NOW programme. However, one has to bear in mind that the effects of skills training need some time to develop and the timeframe of the studies does not allow to analyse middle- and long-run effects. Another explanation for those findings could be that a lack of skills is not the main barrier for women in the region to access the labour market. This is in line with the observation that more highly educated women have particularly high unemployment rates in the region. The impact on earnings, conditional on having a job, was heterogeneous (no impact in Jordan NOW, positive impacts in Israel and Tunisia). The impact of entrepreneurial training on the probability of receiving support for business creation was lower for women than for men in the case of Israel. Those findings seem to be consistent with the results of a global review of recent evidence on women entrepreneurship programmes.<sup>15</sup>

- **Microfinance has some positive impacts for women and their families in the short-term, mainly in cases of already established businesses.** Financial support to promote enterprise development led to small but significant positive impacts on women's income and assets in Egypt, as well as to an increase in their children's schooling. In Morocco, positive impacts are evident for existing self-employment activities of households (sales and profits), for both non-livestock agriculture and livestock activities, while there is no impact on the probability of establishing new businesses, nor on women's empowerment. This finding is contrary to recurrent evidence from other regions, where such enterprise support programmes frequently show more effects on stimulating the establishment of new ventures, rather than the growth of existing ones.<sup>16</sup> It stands out that in both studies the positive effects vanish in the long run, which the authors attribute to the small amount of investment provided and express the need for a more sustainable approach.
- **Employment services might have potential for women, but experience low demand.** This programme type had no impact in Jordan, mainly due to a very low take-up by the target group. As far as it was possible to interpret the results in a gender-disaggregated way, the (low) positive impacts of those services were higher for women than for men. In Tunisia (SIVP) the services were combined with skills training and showed positive impacts, however, those findings might be affected by self-selection bias. A deeper analysis of women's attitudes towards employment services and potential access barriers would help to shed light on reasons underlying the low take-up rates and might provide important lessons for future programme design.
- **Wage subsidies can have positive impacts on the probability of women's employment, but the effects are limited to the short-term.** In the case of Jordan, Groh et al. (2012) refer to the level of minimum wage which is argued to constrain employers from extending work contracts beyond the subsidized period. No attitude changes towards women's role in the society could be observed from this intervention, but attitudes of programme participants in this regard have already been rather progressive at the start of the intervention.

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<sup>15</sup> Patel, P. (2014). Effectiveness of Entrepreneurship Development interventions on Women Entrepreneurs. ILO-WED Policy brief.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



■ **Limited evidence on public employment programmes has not allowed the discernment of positive employment effects.** The only example of public employment included in this rapid evidence assessment dates from 1997. The intervention guaranteed employment in the public sector for all graduates of secondary institutions in Egypt for several decades between 1960 and the end of the 1990s. The evaluation results show that the programme led to a reduction of employment rates in the private sector. Especially for young women, the development of a queuing behaviour could be observed. Considerable discrimination in the private sector can explain this pattern, showing the limits of even large-scale programmes in an otherwise unfavourable environment to empowerment. However, public employment programmes often accrue effects at the community or aggregate level rather than at the individual participant level. It is also recognized that these types of programmes they have an income support role and can sometimes facilitate entry into employment of participants – but this is not their main role.

**TABLE 2: Outcome matrix with evidence map<sup>17</sup>**

Intervention types Outcomes measured	Skills training (including entrepreneurship skills)	Enterprise development (including microfinance services)	Employment services	Public employment programmes	Wage subsidies
Women's employability	1				
Women's probability of employment and/or enterprise creation	4	1	1	1	2
Women's job quality (income and assets)	3	2		1	1
Women's freedom and bargaining power within the private sphere (household/family)	2	1			
Women's aspirations, attitudes and self-perception	5				1
Men's attitudes towards women	2				

<sup>17</sup> In order to analyse the different intervention types for the distinct outcome categories, the results of the present assessment were systematically mapped according to the evidence gap map methodology of the International Initiative of Impact Evaluation (3ie). The size of the circles in the map and their numbers represent the number of studies analysing the particular outcome for the corresponding intervention type. The colours represent the overall direction of the findings as indicated by the study authors (positive effects = green, mixed effects = yellow, negative or no effects = red). Importantly, the size of the circle does not refer to the magnitude of the impact.

## 4. How were the interventions evaluated? – Methodological aspects

**The majority of studies evaluated focused on employment probability as the main outcome variable. Especially in non-experimental designs, it is crucial to consider intermediate outcomes, such as attitude changes. To form a coherent picture of study impacts on empowerment, decent work dimensions and job quality aspects need to be considered.** The probability of employment is the most frequently assessed outcome of all of the reviewed evaluations. However, the consistently positive impacts of skills training on women's attitudes and self-esteem, as well as the fact that take-up rates for women are frequently higher and drop-out rates lower than for men, are clear indicators for the high importance of those programmes for women. As Table 2 shows, outcomes related to attitudes and perceptions (both those of women themselves and those of men towards women) have been evaluated less frequently and might deserve higher attention. Attitude changes, for example, could lead to an improved labour market situation in the long run, even though this does not materialize within a narrow evaluation timeframe. In order to assess the significance of attitude changes, consequent changes for intra-household bargaining and educational choices within the family should be considered. Even when working with a short time horizon, as it is the case in many evaluations, these changes can be considered as an early indicator for the sustainability of achieved attitude changes. Indicators related to the business practices, quality of work and job satisfaction should be included, particularly for evaluation designs where several waves of data are gathered. In order to correctly capture the net impact of ALMPs on life quality, autonomy of women in their own life decisions should be recorded.

**The array of methodological options for impact evaluations could be applied more broadly.** Half of the included studies had an experimental evaluation design, the others were quasi-experimental studies, mainly based on matching techniques. Only one third of the studies explored the causal mechanisms behind the intervention's theory of change. Qualitative impact evaluations and combined mixed-method approaches have potential to generate a more holistic understanding of the effects of labour market programmes in the MENA region and should also be considered for future study designs. Furthermore, global meta-analyses show that the effects of skills training are realised to a greater extent in the longer-term,<sup>18</sup> while in other cases short-term effects fade rapidly.<sup>19</sup> Valuable lessons for programming can be derived from both insights. Nevertheless, only one study (Tunisia –SIVP) in this assessment comprised two follow-up waves, capturing changes in effects over time.

## 3. Lessons learned and recommendations for improving gender equality in the MENA region

Rigorous evidence on the effectiveness of labour market programmes is scarce for the MENA region, and even scarcer with regard to an analysis of gender outcomes. Given this dearth of evidence and the overall amount of only ten studies that met the quality standard to pass the inclusion criteria, it is difficult to draw general conclusions from the present assessment. However, the following lessons and recommendations for future research and programme design emerge:

<sup>18</sup> Card, D., Kluve, J. and Weber, A., 2015. *What works? A meta analysis of recent active labor market program evaluations* (No. w21431). National Bureau of Economic Research.

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. section (3) above on effects of microfinance interventions.

**More evidence for countries in the MENA region and the intervention types is needed – in particular multi-pronged programmes that combine several ALMPs types should be evaluated in the future.**

Based on the findings of this assessment, skills training shows short-term effects on self-esteem and entrepreneurial attitudes and might be promising for women's employment prospects in the long term, while microfinance and employment services show positive effects -similar to wage subsidies- rather in the short-run. These findings are largely coherent with global evidence, demonstrating that those programmes designed to achieve quick labour market entry and not comprising a major investment component (e.g. in knowledge or skills) have often more immediate, but less sustainable effects.<sup>20</sup>

**However, for most of MENA countries no rigorous evidence on the effectiveness of labour market interventions on gender equality is available, with existing studies concentrating on Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia.** Strengthening and expanding this evidence base further, as well as promoting a culture of results measurement and learning across MENA would be desirable. Moreover, the global evidence base shows that multi-pronged programmes tend to be more successful, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the implementation and analysis of a broader variety of intervention types, alone and in combination with each other, could provide valuable lessons for ALMP decision making in the region.

**When designing ALMPs and result measurement tools, gender aspects need to be taken seriously from the start, for example by incorporating existing evidence on barriers of access to female entrepreneurship interventions.** There is a substantial amount of qualitative and quantitative evidence on the determining factors of female participation in the labour market in the MENA region, such as

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#### **BOX 2: Measuring women's empowerment**

Empowering women to gain decision-making authority and control over their lives is of crucial importance to building equitable and sustainable societies. Beyond the economic sphere, women's empowerment is important in many contexts, such as in intra-household power relations, rights and responsibilities, as well as participation in the political and social environment.

Different indicator systems have been developed in order to capture this multidimensional nature of women's empowerment. One example for such a measurement framework is the **Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)**. The WEAI is a composite tool to measure the empowerment, agency, and inclusion of women in the agriculture sector. It measures the roles and extent of women's engagement in five domains: (1) decisions about agricultural production, (2) access to and decision-making power over productive resources, (3) control over use of income, (4) leadership in the community, and (5) time use. Importantly, it also describes women's empowerment relative to men within their households.

The applicability of those indicators depends on the design and objectives of each intervention. The WEAI is designed for the agricultural context, but its indicators can be adapted for other occupational fields. While time, data access and resource restrictions come into play when designing an evaluation and selecting outcome variables, a functional selection and adaptation of these and similar indexes for planning and evaluating ALMPs is highly recommendable.

More information about the WEAI is available at <http://www.ifpri.org/topic/weai-resource-center>. Further interesting tools and information material on measuring women's economic empowerment in enterprise development interventions can be found on the website of the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED): <http://www.enterprise-development.org/implementing-psd/womens-economic-empowerment/>.

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<sup>20</sup> Card et al. (2015), see footnote 18.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



characteristics of women entrepreneurs, their motivations and main barriers. One aspect that stands out in this context is the access to and use of professional networks by women. These and other insights can prove useful to explain mechanisms behind labour market outcomes. Their findings inform future programme design and the conceptualization of impact evaluations.

**Furthermore, while several of the evaluated interventions seemed promising in their net effects on women, the research design did not provide reliable information to make clear statements.**

This happened mostly due to the lack of an appropriate sample size to conduct a corresponding subgroup analysis. Hence, in order to decide on the most appropriate targeting strategy of an intervention, it is strongly recommendable for further studies to choose sample sizes that enable a robust analysis of the treatment effects by gender subgroups.

**The measurement of gender equality should not be limited to an analysis of outcomes by subgroups. Genuine empowerment measures covering barriers to programme participation and helping to identify gender relations that limit programme outcomes for women need to be included.** Most of the studies focused on the probability of employment as the main outcome of interest. This assessment showed that intermediate and additional final outcomes that capture the pathway to more gender equality, such as women's self-esteem, the dynamics of their labour market participation, aspects of job quality, as well as attitudes and behaviour of men deserve more attention in future impact studies. Gender-related outcomes, such as those comprised in the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) and the Indicators of Gender Equality in Employment and Entrepreneurship of the OECD Gender, Institutions and Development (GID) Database<sup>22</sup> will help to gain a better understanding of a labour market intervention's effects beyond mere employment rates, and to establish further hypotheses with regard to their long-term impacts.

In addition, mixed-methods designs that focus on the pathway of the intervention's theory of change should be encouraged. Considering the great importance of understanding the pathways of change beyond the mere outcome measurement, there is still room for the application of a broad array of methodological tools and their combinations to carry out both robust and informative impact evaluations.

<sup>22</sup> OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database 2009, available at <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=GID2>



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