



YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROJECT (YEP) - ALGERIA SUMMARY FINAL REPORT

MIDDLE EAST PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE (MEPI)
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS ASSISTANCE COORDINATION

Implemented by:



World Learning

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World Learning is a US-based nonprofit organization founded in 1932 and dedicated to creating a more peaceful and just world through education, sustainable development, and exchange. Among its projects in over 100 countries, World Learning has worked in Algeria since 2005, including workforce development-related programming since 2010.

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Abbreviations

ANEM	National Employment Agency
HSE	Health, Safety, and Environment
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INSC	High Institute for Training and Communication [project partner school in Tizi Ouzou]
INSIM	International Management Institute [project partner school in Blida]
IVLP	International Visitor Leadership Program
MBI	Management Business International [project partner school in Setif]
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
ONS	National Statistics Office
PEACE	Promoting Education, Altruism, and Civic Engagement
SDH	Association Santé Sidi El Houari [project partner school in Oran]
TOT	Training-of-trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
YEC(s)	Youth Employment Center(s)
YEP	Youth Employment Project

Executive Summary

A. Major Achievements

Despite its considerable hydrocarbon wealth, Algeria has struggled in recent years to overcome a difficult colonial legacy and a decade of civil war in order to expand opportunity for its sizable youth population. Promised economic diversification has been slow to materialize, and young people suffer from a shortage of economic opportunities that leaves many frustrated and feeds emigration.

The Algeria Youth Employment Project (YEP) aimed to help 2,000 first-time job-seekers from disadvantaged communities in seven regions of Algeria successfully enter the job market via training in demand-driven Soft Skills and technical skills and access to new job placement and recruitment opportunities.

Launched in September 2015 and funded by the U.S. Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), YEP was implemented by World Learning in partnership with Youth Employment Centers (YECs) hosted by local technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutes and in close coordination with local employers. Through detailed labor market assessments in each region, regular consultations with recruiters, and robust program monitoring and evaluation initiatives, YEP tailored traditional career services to the unique contours of each local market.

World Learning offered YECs training for career counselors and technical trainers, regular support to business outreach and events, and subgrants that enabled them to provide all services at no cost. Substantial cost savings and an effective model of learning and revising program approaches enabled World Learning and its partner YECs to extend the project from three to nearly four years and to support the establishment of high-performing YECs in 10 regions rather than seven.

Under this expanded scope, YEP ultimately surpassed all project targets, reaching 9,500 beneficiaries—over four times the project's initial goal. In total, 7,443 job-seekers completed the entire seven-module Soft Skills package, 3,151 completed one or more of 30 technical training courses adapted to employer demand in each region, and 3,019 benefited from individual career counseling. Not counted in these figures are 37,570 youth who attended highly visible public career fairs to meet hundreds of employers across the target regions. The project produced a job-matching and career center management platform, and also organized two regional Youth Employment Summits to promote the YEC's demand-driven model and share lessons learned with government officials, private employers, fellow educators, and media.

The greatest testament to the success of the YEP model, however, is the employment outcomes that resulted from these activities. Through a combination of direct job placement and their own job searches, YEP enabled at least 5,279 beneficiaries to obtain employment—nearly fivefold the project targets. Amid a context of chronic high youth unemployment, six months before the project's close YEP had already achieved an effective employment rate of 79.7% among project alumni.

B. Achieving Development Objectives and Sustainability

World Learning and its project partners achieved these successes by building on lessons learned from previous workforce development projects in Algeria and by implementing a highly flexible adaptive management strategy. Adaptation to local conditions was at the center of the YEP project design, guiding selection of YEC partners, Soft Skills modules, and technical training fields. Five rounds of semi-annual

alumni surveys, a complementary qualitative research initiative, alumni interviews, frequent monitoring visits to meet YEC staff and local employers, and a real-time cloud-based reporting system provided project staff with a steady stream of data on the strengths and weaknesses of all project components. In response, World Learning made regular modifications to program approaches and materials. In 2019, for example, based on findings from alumni focus groups, World Learning undertook a comprehensive revision of its Soft Skills curriculum, helping to align it even more closely to the skills that employers and job-seekers report as most critical in today's Algerian job market.

World Learning also welcomed and supported YEC directors' initiative to establish a national career center federation, named Techghil (Arabic for "employment"). Growing out of workshop sessions on YEC sustainability planning, the federation was launched in December 2018. After overcoming early hurdles in its registration process, the federation is now operational and ready to carry forward the YEP legacy and expand the model to other sites. Limited financial resources are currently the federation's biggest challenge, and one it hopes to resolve in the future through corporate sponsorship. Such support is unlikely in the immediate term, however, as a nationwide protest movement launched in early 2019 has struck the country's economy hard, hampering Techghil's progress and complicating the already challenging immediate prospects of many young job-seekers.

While YEP refined and demonstrated the potential of a locally adapted, private-sector-driven Algerian YEC model, Algerian government officials have proven reticent to engage with YEP implementing partners at the national level and continue to pursue their own solutions to Algeria's economic and employment challenges.

World Learning and its partner YECs confronted many of these same challenges in the course of the project, generating numerous adaptive workarounds as well as many lessons learned. Under future programs, these lessons can serve to inform continued development of locally adapted, responsive solutions and expand economic opportunities for Algerian youth.

Introduction: The Youth Employment Project in Algeria

The Algeria Youth Employment Project (YEP) was launched by World Learning in Algeria on September 15, 2015 and intended to operate for three years. After successive no-cost extensions, it concluded on August 31, 2019 after nearly four years of operation. The project design emerged from a competitive bidding process and, following World Learning's selection as the lead implementer, included subsequent refinements agreed in coordination with MEPI staff. The design drew on lessons learned from World Learning's prior MEPI-funded youth development project in Algeria, the Promoting Education, Altruism, and Civic Engagement project (PEACE; S-NEAPI-12-CA-0010), which began in May 2012 and ran concurrently to the first 10 months of YEP before closing in July 2016.

The PEACE project succeeded in reaching over 10,000 university students via a combination of on-campus career services (soft skills courses and career counseling), civic engagement training courses, community service activities, and independent initiatives with local civic groups. Over the course of that project, however, it became evident that the Algerian public university system contained structural and cultural obstacles to adopting new modes of instruction or reorienting their offerings in line with market demand, limiting the scope and impact of career services delivered via public universities. At the same time, youth unemployment was a visible and pressing crisis, confirmed both by regular news of protests by unemployed youth and by official figures. (The official unemployment rate for 16-to-24-year-olds had reached a new high of 29.9% in September 2015, up from 25.2% a year earlier; see Figure 2.)

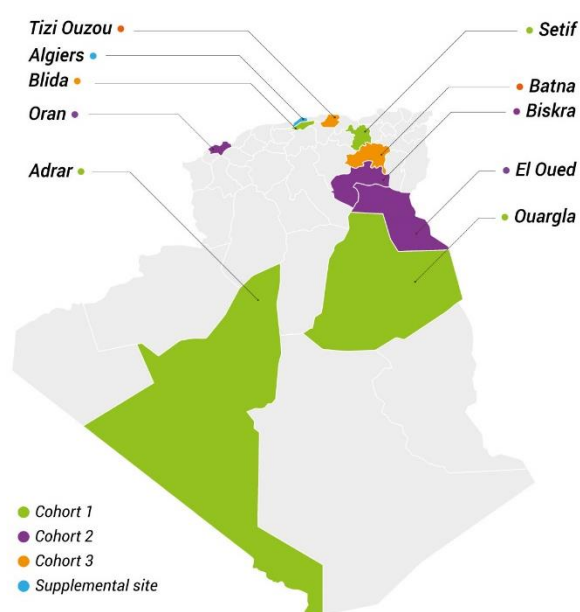


Figure 1: YEP's nine target sites and one supplemental site

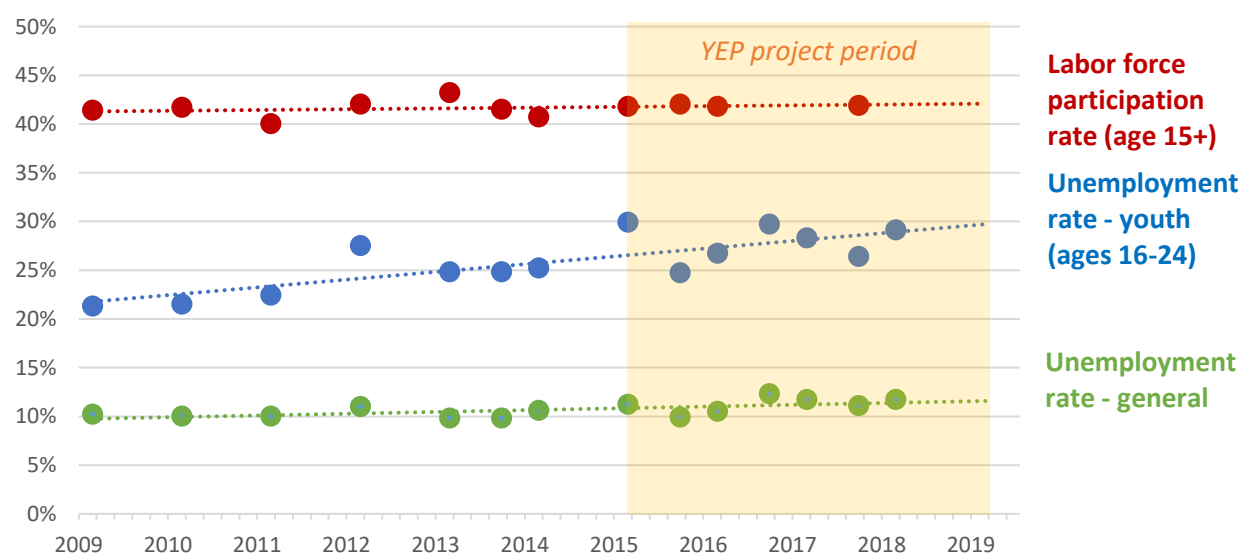


Figure 2: Selected Algeria employment statistics, 2009-2019. (Source: National Statistics Office, "Employment & Unemployment")

With a budget of \$3.2 million, YEP sought to directly confront Algeria's employment challenges by pivoting toward an approach anchored in private sector partnerships, aligned toward local market demands, and informed by evolving international best practices. More specifically, the project aimed to contribute to Objective C, "Merit-based employment of target populations increases," of NEA/AC Goal 3:

"Prosperous societies built where education, specialized skill training and an environment conducive to business development inspire innovation and create a foundation for long-term economic growth and an internationally competitive private sector."

Activities and results indicators were organized around the following project objectives:

1. Establish youth employment centers in local technical schools in seven rural communities;
2. Align youth soft skills and technical skills with local employers' needs; and
3. Place skilled youth in local job opportunities.

Over the course of the project, World Learning ultimately pursued these objectives in partnership with 10 local technical and vocational education and training (TVET) schools, as well as two international partners focused on technological solutions for employment promotion. This final report details the steps and activities taken by World Learning and its partners in pursuit of the project objectives, the results obtained, noteworthy successes, and lessons learned that can inform future programming. It also outlines evolutions in the implementation context and the project itself, which was ultimately expanded to target nine local communities rather than seven and awarded successive no-cost extensions totaling 11.5 months. After a three-month cost extension requested by World Learning to allow for final sustainability activities was not approved, the project closed on August 31, 2019.

This final report is intended to serve as a comprehensive overview of what activities World Learning and its partner activities undertook in pursuit of the project objectives, what outcomes resulted (including lessons learned and success stories), and what lasting impact the project may be said to have achieved. World Learning hopes that this report will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on designing and implementing effective youth workforce development programming, with particular relevance for the unique context of Algeria.

Objective 1: Establish youth employment centers in local technical schools in seven rural communities¹

A. Activities

Under the project's first objective, World Learning worked to develop durable partnerships with high-performing local Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) schools and render them capable of maintaining a regular pace, substantial volume, and high-quality delivery of career services oriented toward local market demand.

YEC host institutions were selected based on a competitive application process and informed by the findings of the labor market assessment conducted by World Learning in each region. (See Objective 2 for presentation of the labor market assessment process.) Partner schools were selected in multiple cohorts:

Cohort 1 (selection finalized in December 2015)

1. Adrar: Afaq School
2. Blida: International Management Institute (INSIM)
3. Ouargla: Laroui School
4. Setif: Management Business International (MBI)

Cohort 2 (selection finalized in October 2016)

5. Biskra: Bacha School
6. El Oued: Souf Academy
7. Oran: Association Santé Sidi El Houari (SDH)

Thanks to cost savings, with MEPI's concurrence World Learning was able to expand the program beyond the original target of seven regions to integrate a third cohort of schools:

Cohort 3 (selection finalized in May 2017)

8. Batna: Ilima Institute
9. Tizi Ouzou: High Institute for Training and Communication (INSC)

Following partner selection, World Learning assisted each selected school to establish its YEC, first through agreement of a subgrant, the amounts of which were set according to each host institution's financial support needs. (As per agreements with the schools, subgrant amounts were also adjusted as needed thereafter when substantive changes occurred, such as cancellation of a career fair or elimination of technical training offerings, thus ensuring that funds were directed from less productive YECs to more productive ones.) Subgrants financed the YECs' operations through the end of 2018. Then, in the project's final eight months, YECs progressed to implementation of individual financial sustainability plans while also collaborating under the umbrella of the Techghil federation, described in greater detail below. World Learning was unable to issue an anticipated subgrant to the federation in 2019 for multiple reasons, as discussed later in this report.

¹ Revisions to the project's Scope of Work expanded the number of target regions from seven to nine, but the language of this objective was not officially revised.

After subgrant setup, World Learning assisted the school to recruit YEC teams, typically comprised of an administrator and two career counselors, though exact composition varied. World Learning provided initial training for these personnel, including in financial and administrative requirements for subgrantees, program reporting systems, delivery of Soft Skills 1 and 2 training packages and Tamheed career counseling.² Refresher training workshops were held at regular points throughout the project to share improved practices and revised modules, as well as to ensure that staff were respecting project requirements and best practices. World Learning provided YEC staff with an online career center toolkit and real-time cloud-based reporting system.

World Learning also guided partner schools in conducting outreach to local business associations and public- and private-sector employers, who would serve as key project partners and play a key role in several YEC services, including employment fairs, internships, and job placement. In each region, local employers were invited to join an Advisory Committee that met quarterly with YEC staff to discuss program progress and opportunities to deepen their engagement with the YEC.

World Learning worked to help partner YECs to plot a sustainable course after the project's close, including via a sustainability plan for each YEC and, ultimately, technical support to the Techghil federation to facilitate its setup and launch. When establishing Techghil, partner YECs also integrated an additional member, MBI's new sister school in Algiers. World Learning's support to YECs under the umbrella of Techghil thus also extended to a tenth site in the project's final year:

Supplemental site (integrated in November 2018)

10. Algiers: The Campus

The Techghil federation was publicly announced at the second edition of the Youth Employment Summit, a national conference first organized by World Learning in July 2016³ then again in December 2018 to promote the career center model as a viable, locally adapted solution to Algeria's youth unemployment challenges.

B. Achievements

- Established and supported 10 YECs (three more than the original project target) in 10 regions of Algeria and helped them develop and reinforce linkages with local business to better orient career services toward market demand, bringing relevant career services to youth who could otherwise not access them;
- Trained 53 YEC counselors and coordinators (more than triple the original project target) to provide career services to young job-seekers;
- Supported partner YECs' establishment of Algeria's first career center federation, Techghil;
- Via two Youth Employment Summits which together united some 450 attendees at the beginning and end of the project, raised the profile of the career center model in Algeria, showing evidence of its

² Tamheed is an online psychometric assessment tool normed to the broader Middle East and North Africa region and provided by creator Silatech in Arabic, English, and French. As a longstanding partner of Silatech in Algeria, World Learning delivered training and certification (obtained after validation of five practice sessions with real beneficiaries) via Tamheed master trainer Latifa Dehane, a member of World Learning's YEP project staff. The Tamheed tool and further information are available at tamheed.org.

³ The first conference was held jointly with the concurrent PEACE program.

success to authorities and media and sharing best practices with aspiring career service providers nationwide.

C. Success Stories

YEC Profile: MBI Setif Makes Long-Term Investment in Career Services



While each of the ten YECs supported by the YEP project had its unique strengths, few shone as consistently as MBI, host of the YEC in the eastern economic hub of Setif. As one of four first cohort YECs, MBI set an early reputation for quality service delivery and surpassing all other YECs in numbers of job-seekers trained in Soft Skills (1,170), rate of improvement in Soft Skills tests (94.9%), and numbers of jobs obtained (428, according to the direct count method of indicator 3c). Under the leadership of its director, Mohamed Yahiaoui, MBI Setif rallied the other YECs behind the concept of the Techghil career center federation. Yahiaoui drew on his expertise as a business and financial advisor and served as the driving force behind the federation's setup, ultimately assuming its presidency at the project's close. Career services were so valuable to alumni that Yahiaoui chose to integrate his newly established school in Algiers, The Campus, into the federation at its founding. Since YEP's closure, he has also expanded MBI's physical space in Setif to accommodate a new space for free career services, which generate immediate social impact and indirectly help the school's bottom line by attracting more students, Yahiaoui says. After MBI grasped the YEC's value early on, says Yahiaoui, "We can't give up now. Even if conditions are challenging, it's the time to invest."

Passing the Torch: First Youth Employment Summit Laid Foundation for YEP Successes

In July 2016, World Learning convened over 250 educators, employers, and officials for the inaugural Youth Employment Summit in Algiers. The event marked YEP's public launch and was co-organized under the umbrella of YEP and its MEPI-funded predecessor, the PEACE program. The conference facilitated a transfer of knowledge from PEACE university career center staff to those of the newly established first cohort YECs, as well as to teams representing local technical schools, universities, and civic groups from 21 of Algeria's 48 wilayas. (Two of those teams, from Bacha School in Biskr and Souf Academy in El Oued, would later apply and be selected to serve as second cohort YECs.) At the conference, World Learning highlighted the career center model as a solution for Algeria's youth employment challenges, led interactive workshops on career services and YEC management, and distributed a career center toolkit presenting locally relevant best practices from PEACE that would form the starting point for career service delivery and further learning under YEP.

At Second Youth Employment Summit, YECs Take the Reins and Launch Federation



Held more than two years after the inaugural Youth Employment Summit, the conference's second edition in December 2018 gave YECs center stage to promote their locally adapted Algerian career center model as a key tool in combatting the country's youth unemployment challenges.

At the conference, World Learning invited YEC staff (alongside international experts) to lead workshops for fellow Algerian educators in how to deliver effective career services according to their latest best practices refined through three years of successful implementation under YEP. The two-day conference, which was officially opened by US Ambassador to Algeria John Desrocher, also offered a prominent spotlight for the YECs' launch of their Techghil career center federation before an audience of media, business leaders, public officials, and fellow educators.

Amid the political turbulence that followed in 2019, Techghil faced added challenges in completing the many steps required for full institutional registration as a business association, but by September 2019 had opened its bank account, drafted recruitment announcements and a first-year workplan, and completed an internal restructuring that leaves it well positioned to expand its work once prevailing economic conditions improve.

Objective 2: Align youth soft skills and technical skills with local employers' needs

A. Activities

Building on the foundation of institutional partnerships and capacity development established under Objective 1, World Learning worked closely with project partners to support delivery of services adapted to local market needs and conditions in each target region.

In each of the project's nine sites, World Learning began by conducting a detailed labor market assessment to identify vocational training fields most relevant to local youth and finalize selection of the local partner institution best place to meet that demand. Through meetings with local public officials, business associations, employers, training professionals, and job-seekers, World Learning honed its understanding of established key sectors, emerging sectors and firms, skills gaps, profiles in high demand, recruitment bottlenecks, and other facets of each regional market. (The findings would also feed subsequent adjustments to the Soft Skills curriculum used under the project, including an initial adaptation of previous modules used under the PEACE program based on lessons learned under subsequent programming and the market analysis findings.) Detailed information on the labor market assessment process, including the nine assessment reports, are available in Annex II.

YEC counselors were trained to deliver the following Soft Skills modules designed for the program, and provided with full course materials for delivery in their respective sites:

Soft Skills I

1. Leadership
2. Overcoming Obstacles
3. Career Planning

Soft Skills II

4. Resume Writing
5. Cover Letter Writing
6. Job Interviews
7. Job Search

Following TOT sessions in the Soft Skills I and II modules and Tamheed career counseling training and certification by World Learning project staff, YEC counselors began delivering career services, supervised and aided via remote support and quarterly site visits by World Learning project staff. When possible, World Learning conducted TOTs on-site, allowing master trainers to observe counselors in action and provide real-time feedback. Similarly, local project staff collaborated with international experts to develop a Technical Trainers Guide, then delivered TOT workshops from late 2017 to early 2018 to vocational training instructors across all nine target regions. Over 30 vocational training offerings were selected in collaboration with YEC leadership based upon the findings of the regional labor market assessments, as follows:

Cohort 1

- **Adrar:** Construction equipment operation; Secretarial administration; Microsoft Office suite; IT network setup and maintenance; Health, safety, and environment (HSE) agent.

- **Blida:** Industrial maintenance management; Website development; Sales techniques; Accounting.
- **Ouargla:** First aid and CPR; Fire safety.
- **Setif:** Marketing; HSE agent; IT security; Secretarial administration; Pharmaceutical sales representative; Graphic design.

Cohort 2

- **Biskra:** Microsoft Office suite and computer literacy; HSE specialist in lifeguarding and rescue; Accounting.
- **El Oued:** Administrative assistant; Pharmaceutical sales representative; HSE; Industrial machine operator.
- **Oran:** Ironwork and smithing; Masonry; Carpentry.

Cohort 3

- **Batna:** Industrial maintenance; Sales representative.
- **Tizi Ouzou:** Sales representative; Secretarial administration; 3D architecture; Construction.

To compensate for staff departures within the YECs and refresh the capacity of existing counselors, World Learning continued to provide periodic training sessions throughout the program. Project staff regularly reinforced lessons from these sessions via correspondence with career counselors as well as frequent site visits; this close collaboration, paired with a real-time cloud-based reporting system, allowed World Learning to quickly detect problem areas and work with YEC teams to correct them and share lessons learned and best practices with other YECs, helping to improve the efficiency and impact of career service delivery over time.

With support of staff at the U.S. Embassy in Algiers, seven YEC staff and one member of World Learning's project staff were selected to participate in a three-week International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) trip in September-October 2017 to visit public and private employment support institutions and initiatives in four U.S. cities.⁴

World Learning collected feedback from YEC alumni via five semi-annual telephone surveys and one round of qualitative research. (Further detail is provided below under Objective 3 and in Annexes III and IV.) Based upon the findings—particularly the qualitative research—project staff conducted a full-scale revision of the Soft Skills packages in 2019. (HSBC Bank Algeria provided a complementary grant that partially supported this revision.) The revision saw the modules restructured and their content substantially revised in line with the local research findings and international best practices:

WorkLinks Modules

1. Know Your Purpose
2. Know Yourself
3. Know the Market
4. Know the Workplace
5. Know your Next Steps

⁴ This IVLP exchange trip was also implemented by World Learning, but under separate State Department funding (grant no. S-ECAGD-17-CA-1004).

JobLink Modules

1. Your Job Launch Plan
2. Personal Branding: Online and CVs
3. Professional Writing: Cover Letters and Formal Emails
4. Professional Communication: Networking and Interviews
5. Workplace Problem-Solving
6. Overcoming Obstacles in the Job Search

(Further detail on the first series of the curriculum is available in the Annex.)

World Learning trainers delivered the first of a planned two-part TOT on the revised modules to YEC counselors in April 2019 but could not conduct the second TOT due to a lack of further funding.

Alongside these core support activities to service delivery, World Learning collaborated with subgrantee Souktel to develop a job-matching platform, DZCareer.org, intended to serve as an online extension of the YECs and facilitate progress toward job-matching targets under Objective 3. In lieu of a scoping trip, World Learning helped Souktel to administer an online survey of job-seekers across Algeria to assess their digital habits and usage patterns. Based on this information, Souktel began platform design, then worked to refine it based on extensive feedback from World Learning. Souktel was ultimately unable to deliver on its ambitions to integrate text messaging services (via local network operators) or social media linkages (Facebook, LinkedIn) into the platform, but did conduct initial training sessions for YEC staff and local employers in a basic prototype platform in November 2016. When Souktel raised concerns over budget shortfalls, World Learning assumed the task of completing subsequent workshops itself in 2017 and 2018, ultimately allowing for more flexible timing, fewer linguistic blockages, and better local adaptation of training delivery.

Details on the project's implementation timeline are available in Annex I and discussion of the project's key achievements, progress against indicators, lessons learned, and success stories are presented below.

B. Achievements

- Conducted a detailed labor market assessment in each of the project's nine target regions, providing a basis for demand-driven adaptation of career services (including selection of vocational training topics in each site and adaptation of Soft Skills curriculum for use nationwide);
- Trained 3,151 young job-seekers (more than triple the original target and more than double the revised target) in a range of vocational skills oriented toward local market demand;
- Trained 8,088 young job-seekers in Soft Skills I and 7,572 in Soft Skills II packages, including 7,443 in both series, which were designed to boost participants' job search skills, confidence, professional demeanor, interpersonal skills, communication and presentation capacity, and other essential capacities sought by Algerian employers;
- Delivered Tamheed career counseling sessions to 3,019 young job-seekers, providing them with personalized information on career options relevant to their skills and interests via one-on-one counseling sessions.

C. Success Stories

With Positive Incentives, Partners Innovate Services and Boost Inclusion



World Learning insisted on strict quality requirements around service delivery, but gave YECs substantial leeway in how they recruited for, structured, and sequenced career services. Regular monthly reporting on all YECs' performance and annual review workshops also helped instill a spirit of friendly competition between YECs while giving them opportunities to swap ideas.

This dynamic led to numerous innovations in service delivery. YECs in Adrar, El Oued, and Tizi Ouzou partnered with local universities to reach graduating students. The Ouargla YEC held Soft Skills training and Tamheed counseling sessions for students at several public vocational training centers nearby, and the Adrar YEC partnered with women's centers and youth centers in multiple communities to deliver career services to multiple populations. In addition to traditional service delivery, the Oran YEC organized intensive week-long "career camps" to deliver a mix of hands-on technical training and Soft Skills workshops in rapid succession. The Setif YEC organized job shadowing visits to local companies to complement its classroom-based services, helping to quickly build job-seekers' exposure to new workplaces.

In one case, providing relevant career services to job-seekers required more than just changes to service format. The Oran YEC, situated in the marginalized urban quarter of Sidi El Houari, served local youth with limited schooling, many of whom were not fully literate. YEC staff solicited World Learning's assistance in adapting the standard Soft Skills curriculum and exercises to make them accessible to these youth. Project staff worked on-site with the YEC team for a week to revise training materials to be more visual and use more familiar colloquial terms, and to adapt it more closely to the Oran job-seekers' priority fields of work in the construction sector. These adaptations helped to ensure that career services were accessible and relevant to youth in greatest need.

Soft Skills in the Job Market, Part 1: Listening to YEC Alumni

Partner YECs began offering YEP's first Soft Skills workshops in August 2016. Two years later, World Learning had collected many positive satisfaction scores from among the thousands of YEC alumni, but wanted to learn more about how Soft Skills was and wasn't meeting job-seekers' needs in the market.

In September 2018, project staff launched a qualitative research initiative that included focus group discussions with 90 YEC alumni from six wilayas. They described contextual obstacles and personal weaknesses that had hindered them in their job search and offered possible explanations for why some succeed in finding employment while others struggle.

The importance of self-motivation, perseverance, adaptability, and managing emotions stood out in the alumni's comments. One unemployed young woman said, "It depends on the level of motivation of the person. If you are a motivated person, you won't stop looking," while an employed man said "It all comes down to persistence—you have to be proactive during the search, you have to be aware of the job openings. Otherwise there is no way it is going to work."

In addition to these broader insights, alumni shared specific feedback on the existing Soft Skills curriculum, allowing World Learning to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of each module. Before coming to the YEC, one young woman said, "I did not know how to search for a job. I did not even have an idea about all the steps that job-seekers should follow." She learned to write a CV and cover letter and obtain her first internship and volunteer experiences. "These steps, although they seem small, they helped me to become more professional."

Senior Youth Workforce Specialist Dr. Catherine Honeyman and World Learning Algeria Field Director Andrew Farrand presented this research at the annual conference of the Comparative and International Education Society in San Francisco in April 2018, helping other workforce development practitioners and academics to benefit from the research insights. For the full research report, please see Annex IV.

Soft Skills in the Job Market, Part 2: Rebuilding Curriculum Based on Real-World Insights



The qualitative research process delivered rich findings that confirmed the value of many parts of the YEP Soft Skills curriculum while also pointing to important gaps.

Senior Youth Workforce Specialist Dr. Catherine Honeyman analyzed the focus group results, combined them with insights from earlier employer interviews (conducted in the labor market assessment process) and identified three categories of 12 essential soft skills that young Algerians need in order to obtain employment:

- Intrapersonal: positive self-concept, self-motivation, perseverance, adaptability, managing emotions (particularly stress), goal-orientation, conscientiousness or being hardworking;
- Interpersonal: social skills (building relationships with others and managing conflict), communication skills (combining oral, written, nonverbal, listening), and professionalism (as defined by Algerian employers, including self-presentation, work ethic, and etiquette);
- Cognitive: problem-solving, and planning and time management.

On this basis, Dr. Honeyman and World Learning Algeria's Assistant Director for Education Programs Hamza Koudri collaborated to reorganize and expand the seven existing Soft Skills modules, integrating soft skills in a cross-cutting way across thematic practical skills workshops to ensure that beneficiaries receive a mix of both. To support this effort to align soft skills training with employer needs, HSBC Bank Algeria provided a \$25,000 grant to partially fund the revision, which resulted in a robust 40-hour course package designed to provide core soft skills then to prepare youth for success under either an employment or entrepreneurship track. Mr. Koudri trained YEP counselors in the first half of the new curriculum before YEP closed, and it remains the new standard for all World Learning's workforce development work in Algeria.

Objective 3: Place skilled youth in local job opportunities

A. Activities

Through a final series of activities, World Learning and its YEP partners worked to convert the foundations of strong institutional partnerships and service delivery capacity established under Objectives 1 and 2 into tangible youth employment gains.

World Learning helped newly formed YEC teams to conduct outreach to job-seekers (including via “Open House” and “Information Day” events) and employers (including via the labor market assessment process, employer visits, and invitations to join each school’s YEC Advisory Committee). Advisory committees of leading local employers were established at each site and invited each quarter to provide updates on market conditions and feedback on service delivery, thus serving as the YECs’ primary link to the local business community.

YECs solicited local businesses to support job-matching by recruiting YEC alumni as employees or, in some cases, interns. Souktel’s development of the DZCareer.org job-matching platform (described above under Objective 2) was also intended to contribute to this effort. In 2019, with DZCareer.org effectively dormant and a final service contract with Souktel nearing its expiration, World Learning entered into a new partnership with Casablanca-based startup YM Africa to develop a new version of the DZCareer.org platform better adapted to YECs’ needs. A leader in technological solutions for recruitment in the Moroccan market, YM Africa was able to substantially revise the DZCareer.org design and content to provide tools for management of career service delivery, including but not exclusive to job matching. By the project’s end later that year, the revised platform was nearly ready for public launch.

Perhaps the project’s most highly visible service was the employment fairs, initially held annually and then semi-annually in most sites. In total, YECs organized 24 fairs across the nine sites. (A final round of fairs anticipated for Spring 2019 was canceled due to political unrest.) World Learning provided substantial organizational support to initial fairs but then was able to step back somewhat as most YECs demonstrated a substantial growth in staff capacity and enthusiasm for organizing these high-profile events, which frequently attracted high-profile guests such as regional governors and other officials. At least one World Learning staff member was nonetheless on-site to support each event.

To gauge the impact of YEC career services, World Learning conducted a cumulative series of five quantitative surveys of YEC alumni’s satisfaction with YEC services and their employment outcomes. The first survey, conducted online and by telephone in March 2017, reached 678 of then 1,118 alumni. Surveys were conducted semi-annually thereafter with support of a local call center, whose staff received increasingly robust data entry forms and training from YEP project staff. By the fifth and final survey, in March 2019, the call center was targeting over 6,400 alumni, of which it managed to contact a cumulative total of 3,601 by the survey’s final round (representing 46.5% of eligible alumni at that time). Dr. Honeyman analyzed results and identified significant trends and conclusions about YEC career services that WL shared with MEPI and partner YECs and used to make improvements to service delivery throughout the project. (See discussion below and Annex III for further details.)

In September and October 2018, World Learning staff conducted focus group research with 90 YEC alumni across six project sites, collecting insights that, when paired with other qualitative data from the project, guided decisions about adjustments to project implementation, including how best to revise Soft Skills

curricula to ensure their relevance to local needs (as described above under Objective 2 and presented in detail in Annex IV). A complementary “employer satisfaction survey” illuminate employers’ perspectives was also planned but could not be completed due to funding shortfalls in the project’s final months while awaiting the cost extension, which ultimately was not awarded.

Details on the project’s implementation timeline are available in Annex I and discussion of the project’s key achievements, progress against indicators, lessons learned, and success stories are presented below.

B. Achievements

- Organized 24 two-day employment fairs across nine regions, attracting 576 instances of participation by companies and 37,570 visitors⁵;
- Enabled at least 4,779 young job-seekers (nearly seven times the original target and nearly five times the revised target) across the 10 partner sites to obtain employment through their own job search (based on statistical analysis from last YEC alumni survey results);
- Placed a further 500 young job-seekers (more than double the original and revised targets) directly into full-time or part-time jobs or internships with leading local employers;
- Achieved an effective employment rate of at least 79.7% by the last YEC alumni survey (March 2019) in a context of chronic high youth unemployment.

⁵ Figures for participating employers and job-seekers could not always be tracked individually, and thus almost certainly contain some degree of duplication and overlap. These figures nonetheless provide a sense of the employment fairs’ scale, reaching an average of 24 employers and 1,565 visiting job-seekers at each two-day fair.

C. Success Stories

At Employment Fairs, Recruiters Connect with Local Talent



In collaboration with World Learning, partner YECs successfully organized 24 employment fairs across nine wilayas under YEP, helping many job-seekers test their chances in the employment market for the first time. All told, the public fairs brought 576 employers in contact with over 37,570 young job-seekers—an average of 1,565 visitors and 24 companies at each two-day fair.

“I didn’t know anything about how to get a job, so as soon as I heard about the fair I came to see, and talked to many employers. They explained to me what I should do to be part of their companies,” said Salim, a young job-seeker at the April 2018 fair in Setif.

Recruiters in mid-sized communities like Adrar, Biskra, or Tizi Ouzou are typically obliged to travel to Algiers for recruiting events, but thanks to these fairs were able to uncover local talent right nearby. “I used to have to fly all the way to the capital to recruit people from right here,” one human resources manager told World Learning staff at a March 2018 fair in El Oued.

Alongside many of the fairs, career center staff organized workshops on topics such as CV writing and job interviews to help young job-seekers in their quest.

Although fewer than half of employers responded to follow-up surveys conducted several months after each fair, they nonetheless reported over 2,200 youth hired thanks to the fairs, with the full impact likely being even greater.

With the YEP fairs delivering both strong results and high visibility, some public authorities have decided to follow suit. In October 2018, ANEM’s regional bureau in Boumerdes organized the first ever employment fair in that region, attracting over 80 public and private employers.

Alumni Profile: Chouaib Haddad (Entrepreneur, Setif)

After Chouaib Haddad obtained his law degree in 2016, he didn't know what to do next. He wanted to look for work but didn't know where or how to begin his job search. Then he saw a social media post about the MBI School's YEC in his hometown of Setif and decided to visit.

"I started out with a Tamheed [career counseling] session. We talked a bit about my past experiences, my ambitions, where I wanted to reach in my career. It was a positive starting note that motivated me to do more training." Chouaib joined a soft skills training workshop, then started applying for jobs with companies across Algeria. "I was contacted by a multinational company and went for an interview in Algiers. I took a copy of my professional CV, just like I was taught at the YEC and I ended up getting this job: delegate and representative of the company Lawahat."

Chouaib worked as a sales representative for the company for a year, then grew interested in marketing. Soon he was back at the career center: "The YEC offered a marketing training, so I enrolled in the training and took part in it. Many of us suggested project ideas and thankfully I had a trainer who motivated me to carry out my project." With encouragement of the YEC staff, Chouaib started his own wedding planning company, which is now thriving thanks to his hard work and determination. The YEC gave him his start, Chouaib says: "It helped me get my first job... which then pushed me to start my own company."

Alumni Profile: Akila Gouacem (Sales Consultant, Biskra)

After graduating from the University of Biskra with a degree in Communications and Public Relations, Akila Gouacem was unemployed for an entire year. She applied to communications jobs at many local companies in Biskra without success. In those days she felt lost, she says: “I didn’t have any goals in life. I only studied for the sake of studying. I didn’t know how to define my goals or search for a job.”

Akila came to the YEC at Bacha School in Biskra and took part in a Tamheed career counseling session and Soft Skills workshop series that helped her shape her personal career goals. “Every day, every hour, we constantly learned something new,” she said of the workshops. “It introduced me to new things every hour. While doing that, I was getting rid of old misconceptions and negative thoughts that I had.”

Guided by these learning opportunities, Akila applied to jobs with more focus, and was finally contacted for an interview with Ooredoo, one of Algeria’s largest telecommunications companies. “Everything I learned at the YEC, I put into practice during the job interview,” Akila said.

Drawing on her interview preparation course from the Soft Skills workshops, Akila aced her job interview and was offered the position as sales consultant at Ooredoo, which she accepted.

The YEC gave her the guidance she needed to launch her professional career, Akila says: “Honestly, the YEC changed my life. Thanks to this experience, I am now in the position that I dream of and on the career path that I was looking to reach.”

Alumni Profile: Amira Touafek (Graphic Designer and Architect, Setif)

Amira Touafek was looking for an internship in architecture when she graduated from university in Setif. She couldn't find one that fits her professional aspirations. Therefore, she remained inactive until she heard of the YEC at MBI School and decided to enroll in a Soft Skills training.

"On the first day of the training, we were introduced to four personality types and we tried to choose between the types. I did all alone, I didn't know anyone," she said.

"I instantly got out of my comfort zone – for the first time in my life. As I started choosing where I fit among the personality types, I realized there were others that identified with that type as well. So, I understood that I wasn't the only one, and that others must have encountered some of the same struggles that I have. That made me go home happy."

Amira was then contacted by an architecture firm where she had previously applied for the internship. She was finally offered a full-time job.

Amira believes that the YEC changed her life and gave her the motivation to face the professional world. "From that moment on, everything changed. My life turned upside down. Every time I fail, or when I get tired or feel like I can't do something, I remember what I learned back then and think like that again."

Conclusions

In the Algeria Youth Employment Project, World Learning and its implementing partners surpassed every original target and every revised target set for the project. In many instances, outputs exceeded targets by a factor of two, three, or more. Across the 10 YECs, 3,151 young job-seekers benefitted from locally relevant technical trainings, 7,443 from the full series of Soft Skills workshops, and 3,019 from Tamheed career counseling. Some 37,570 youth visited employment fairs, and 450 officials, educators, and activists took part in Youth Employment Summits dedicated to promoting the YEC model. Young women were well represented among all these output figures, even constituting a majority in several categories.

Large quantities were matched by strong quality of service delivery. Among technical trainers trained, 95.4% improved their instruction capacity, compared to a target value of 75%. Their technical trainees increased their performance scores by an average of 94.9%, besting the project target of 80% in every quarter that trainings were held and in all but one of the nine target sites. After two early quarters of lackluster performance, World Learning helped YECs beat the target of 80% improvement in Soft Skills training scores for every one of the project's 11 remaining quarters, and helped all nine sites surpass the target, achieving a final national improvement rate of 90.5% across the project.

Thanks to concerted efforts to build relationships with local employers and authorities, these outputs translated into strong employment outcomes that similarly surpassed project targets. YECs negotiated 500 internship and job placements (219 if counting jobs alone), exceeding the revised target of 210. Most importantly, according to a statistical estimate based on the last alumni survey, at least 4,779 job-seekers obtained employment through their own job searches, reaching a 79.7% effective employment rate among graduates. Even though this approximation almost certainly undercounts the number of alumni who obtained employment during the project (not to mention those who have likely already done so in the months since YEP's close), it nonetheless exceeds the original project target by nearly seven-fold and the revised target by nearly five-fold.

Nonetheless, Algeria's macroeconomic and political context presented significant challenges to the project. Just as World Learning and its partners launched YEP in September 2015, Algeria's youth unemployment rate reached 29.9%, the highest rate in recent memory, due to several converging trends: a national economy dominated by hydrocarbon extraction and suffering from stagnant global prices, a massive youth bulge coming of age and seeking to enter an already oversaturated job market, an education system oriented toward the needs of aging state-run enterprises rather than modern private companies, and major structural hurdles to self-employment that dwarfed public entrepreneurship support initiatives. As shown in Figure 2 (found under "Introduction"), these prevailing conditions have nudged average youth unemployment rates upward over the past decade.

During the project, which began just nine months after the December 2014 collapse in global hydrocarbon prices, the Algerian government instituted several years of austerity budgets, cutting spending by 9% in 2016 and 14% in 2017. During the austerity period, many employers expressed fear that cuts were hitting public works and other projects, telling World Learning and YEC partners that they were hesitant to hire until public spending revived. Policymakers reversed austerity measures in 2018, but the country soon entered a period of even greater uncertainty with the start, in February 2019, of a nationwide protest movement over profound political and economic grievances.

During this time, the few available indicators pointed unequivocally to young Algerians' challenging situation. According to a November 2016 United Nations report, over three quarters of Algerians consider the economic situation to be their country's leading challenge.⁶ A non-representative study of university graduates in three wilayas, presented by the International Labour Organisation in Algiers in November 2017, indicated that 2014 graduates, then already three years out of university, still faced a 39.2% unemployment rate.⁷ For 2015 graduates, the rate was even higher at 43.3% and for 2016 graduates it was higher still: 62.4%. Unsurprisingly, frustration abounds; over a third of respondents rated their university education as "poor" in preparing them for the professional world, and more than half (51.9%) affirmed an intention to move abroad. ONS statistics from April 2018 noted that six in 10 unemployed Algerians had been seeking work for over a year.⁸ According to other national statistics relayed to World Learning by a local partner in 2018, only 32% of university degree holders find work within one year of graduation and only 50% find work within two years. A global labor mobility survey published in July 2018 indicated that 84% of young Algerians would be willing to travel abroad for work.⁹

In early 2018, senior officials had announced that Algeria created 563,000 jobs in 2017 and had plans for a further 400,000 in 2018, including through new public hiring.¹⁰ But rumors soon circulated of an unannounced public hiring freeze.¹¹ Furthermore, many new jobs offered to first-time job-seekers come in the form of subsidized "pre-employment contracts", which many youth have described to World Learning as "a trap"; officials have admitted that three fourths of pre-employment contract holders have been waiting for over a year for these ostensibly temporary contracts to be converted to full-time positions.¹² Furthermore, there is insufficient available data against which to directly compare YEP's outputs. Since the protest movement began, ONS has even stopped publishing the minimal employment indicators it used to provide, further complicating efforts to understand broad employment trends in Algeria and assess the project's relative performance.

To improve outcomes even further, World Learning and partners could have better leveraged information technology, adapted technical training course formats, strengthened efforts to approach partnerships with public agencies, and engaged in greater depth with local employers. And as always, further effort is needed to help Algerian youth to overcome persistent obstacles in the Algerian context, including distance and transport, family attitudes toward female employment, military service requirement for young men, discrimination in hiring and the workplace, and perceived abuse of temporary employment contracts.

Overall, the achievements have been remarkable. At its start, YEP was intended to benefit 2,000 young job-seekers and help roughly half of them obtain their first jobs during the project. Ultimately some 9,500 benefited from YEC services (not including tens of thousands more who only attended career fairs) and at least 5,279 obtained employment—the ultimate measure of the program's success.¹³

⁶ ["2016 Arab Human Development Report", United Nations Development Programme, 2016.](#)

⁷ Unpublished study, International Labour Organisation and CREAD, presented November 2017.

⁸ ["Employment, April 2018", ONS.](#)

⁹ ["Decoding Global Talent," Boston Consulting Group, July 2018.](#)

¹⁰ ["Emploi: 563.000 postes créés en 2017 \(Ouyahia\)", APS, April 2018.](#) & ["Plus de 20 000 micro-entreprises et 400 000 postes d'emploi créés en 2018", APS, March 2018.](#)

¹¹ ["Emploi : Pas de recrutement dans l'administration et les sociétés étatiques", Algerie Focus, August 2018.](#)

¹² ["Emploi : priorité aux jeunes insérés dans la cadre du DAIP, en 2019", AlgérieEco, November 2018.](#)

¹³ Based on these outcomes, the project's cost per beneficiary can be estimated at approximately \$337 (\$3.2 million / 9,500 beneficiaries). Looking exclusively at service delivery and support costs (i.e., excluding platform

Annexes

- I. Labor Market Assessments - Combined Report from 9 Regions of Algeria
- II. Alumni Tracer Study Results - Final Tracer Study Report - March 2019
- III. Soft Skills for Youth Employment in Algeria: Qualitative Research Report
- IV. WorkLinks Launch - Trainer' Guide - Soft Skills Curriculum Summary

development), the cost drops to \$299 per beneficiary (\$2.84 million / 9,500 beneficiaries), or \$536 per beneficiary employed during the project (\$2.84 million / 5,927 employed). Limited publicly available information on cost-per-beneficiary ratios for other employment training programs suggests that these figures fall well below international averages.