Final Report

Final Evaluation for Jobs, Job Search, & Entrepreneurship Training Program in Gaza

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CLIC-Consultants extends its sincere thanks to the interview respondents, including the project team members, trainers, youth graduates, and the employers engaged in the Jobs, Job Search, and Entrepreneurship Training Program in Gaza and to the 9 trainees who so graciously accepted to participate in the case studies and PhotoVoice component of the evaluation.

Dr. Jalal Al-Husseini
Team Leader and Senior Evaluator

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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CLIC</td>
<td>Canadian Leaders in International Consulting</td>
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<td>EEM</td>
<td>Evaluation Evidence Matrix</td>
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<td>EFE</td>
<td>Education for Employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>EQ</td>
<td>Evaluation Question</td>
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<tr>
<td>FJIJ</td>
<td>Finding a Job is a Job</td>
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<td>IRUSA</td>
<td>Islamic Relief USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>JTP</td>
<td>Job Training and Placement</td>
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<td>KII</td>
<td>Key Informant Interviews</td>
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<td>OLT</td>
<td>Organizational Learning Team</td>
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<td>RFP</td>
<td>Request for Proposal</td>
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<td>TOR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an evaluation mission conducted by Canadian Leaders in International Consulting (CLIC) from November 2021 to January 2022 about the relevance, the effectiveness, and the sustainability of a project managed by Education for Employment (EFE) and its local Affiliate Education for Employment Palestine (EFE-Palestine) since 2017: Improving the Livelihood of Youth in Gaza: Jobs, Job Search, and Entrepreneurship Training Program in Gaza (hereinafter ‘the Project’). The report also provides recommendations designed to inform future programming.

The evaluation found the Project to be highly relevant. Its objective indicators are sustainable, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Its relevance is further underscored by its business-demand driven approach, which aims to bridge the gaps between employers’ requests in terms of life and soft and technical skills and the youth’s professional capacities. Not only are the employers’ needs constantly investigated, they are also involved in the selection of the trainees and the contents of training courses. The relevance of the Project is also enhanced by consideration for the trainees’ employability skills and additional measures to guarantee decent work conditions following graduation.

The evaluation also found the Project effective. EFE has managed to carry out its activities despite serious challenges, including chronic political instability and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, notably by adopting e-learning approaches. All its objectives have been met, with results often exceeding performance indicators in terms of placement and job retention rates for JTP graduates, entrepreneurship graduates’ ability to produce business and financial plans and start their own businesses, and FJJ graduates recording increased confidence in their ability to find jobs. EFE’s internal surveys indicate that the trainees’ self-assessment of their technical and soft skills improved during the training period.

The positive changes resulting from the Project are sustainable. EFE graduates acknowledge that their heightened confidence in their skills had durably improved their job search behavior and overall labor market outcomes. The Project’s impact on economic well-being was harder to ascertain given the volatile political and socioeconomic conditions prevailing in Gaza. The sustainability of the Project is further strengthened by the durable networks (or ‘ecosystems’) established by EFE with its graduates following their graduation and with the employer community, notably through continuous contacts and special events involving alumni and private sector actors.
The conclusion section of the report recapitulates the ‘best practices’ that were used by EFE to achieve its objectives: making use of the lessons learned from a previous livelihood project, balancing private sector requirements with the technical skills and life and soft skills needs of the trainees, turning employers into partners, guaranteeing decent work conditions for graduates following their graduation through written commitments from the employers, and responding swiftly and efficiently to challenges resulting from political and COVID-19 pandemic related constraints.

The report also recognizes that all stakeholders interviewed over the course of the evaluation (EFE graduates, employers, trainers, and local EFE staff) recommend the continuation of the Project by virtue of its strong programmatic and operational bases. However, they also highlight several weaknesses. Based on their comments and on the evaluation team’s own conclusions, a series of recommendations broken down into programmatic and technical categories is proposed for EFE’s consideration.

Programmatic recommendations include the need to: explicitly embed the Projects within the framework of related international agendas, such as the SDGs agenda; expand the training’s soft skills curriculum so as to include worker’s rights in their place of work; enhance alumni and employer mentoring activities; and collaborate with other similar livelihood initiatives in Gaza.

Technical recommendations, which address the modalities of the Project’s implementation include: the extended length and range of skills taught in trainings (notably through the inclusion of technical English training courses); training facilities better adapted to the number of trainees; more comprehensive funding of transportation costs; and increased financial support for entrepreneurship graduates.
I. Introduction

The “Project” Under Evaluation

The “Improving the Livelihood of Youth in Gaza: Jobs, Job Search, and Entrepreneurship Training Program in Gaza” was a project implemented by Education for Employment (EFE) and its local Affiliate Education for Employment Palestine (EFE-Palestine) with the support of Islamic Relief USA (IRUSA). The Project aimed to respond to the increasingly difficult socioeconomic situation faced by youth in Gaza by providing them with skills demanded by the labor market and linking them to tangible jobs, startups, and economic opportunities—thus increasing their employability. The Project started in September 2017 with a budget of approximately $1.5 million for an initial period of three years and was extended through January 2022 in response to delays caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the related postponement of youth training activities. The Project was seeking to scale the impact of a previous three-year job training and placement program involving the same three actors (EFE, EFE-Palestine and IRUSA) that benefitted nearly 900 youth in Gaza and of whom nearly 60 percent were placed in jobs or internships between 2014 and 2017.

In order to identify possible economic opportunities for Gaza in terms of global private sector trends, EFE, with the support of IRUSA, conducted a private sector market needs assessment that identified the following constraints to employment faced by Gazan youth: diminished employment opportunities due to the limited capacity of companies to employ graduates, lack of workplace skills among graduates, and market limitations necessitating new solutions to ensure promising employment opportunities for youth.

Additionally, the Project was designed with the understanding that Gaza had the potential to be a strong outsourcing location with the following comparative advantages:

- Competitive labor costs compared the West or India and China.

- Relatively high levels of educational attainment and language skills (proficiency in both English and Arabic) among young populations; and

- The presence of a tech savvy workforce that can navigate the digital sphere while meeting the requirements of an increasingly globalized private sector targeting regional and international markets through platform economy tools.
Based on these assumptions and goals, the Project’s theory of change posited the following: If youth in Gaza have increased employability and professional competencies aligned with local, regional and international market needs, And If young entrepreneurs have the skills and resources to start their own self-employment activities, THEN the livelihoods for youth in Gaza will be improved through an increased number of youth securing gainful employment or creating micro-businesses, BECAUSE there are limited economic opportunities in Gaza as a result of market and mobility limitations, which will be addressed by equipping the youth with skills to access and thrive in alternate forms of employment. Training youth in virtual jobs has from the outset remained one of the pillars of the Project.

Project beneficiaries attended one of the following three program tracks:

**Job Training and Placement (JTP):** A training program consisting of a Work Readiness curriculum (life and soft skills) as well as technical skills curriculum to increase the employability and professional skills of unemployed youth. Upon graduation, youth were linked with employer partners to complete 3-month pre-committed internships subsidized by the Project. In order to boost the benefits from the subsidized internships, EFE signed agreements with employer partners which committed them to employ youth for at least 3 additional months following the completion of the internship program, thus giving youth a minimum of 6-months of work experience after graduation. The technical skills component delivered under this project included different specialties: virtual jobs, digital marketing, sales, construction work, and aluminum coaching. The JTP track graduated 432 youth between the ages of 18 and 34, with 45 percent of graduates being females.

**Entrepreneurship/Self-employment:** A training program on how to start a business and succeed in entrepreneurial endeavors in a variety of sectors. The program served youth with ideas for a viable business as well as existing entrepreneurs. The project aimed to help aspiring entrepreneurs develop and enhance their ideas during the training and to help existing entrepreneurs accelerate their businesses and gain resilience. Existing projects included businesses in ICT, agriculture, alternative...
energy, marketing, and retail. An important component of the training program was to orient youth toward their options to request financing for their businesses, informing them about the microcredit ecosystem and existing stakeholders, and ultimately connect them to microcredit institutions (including the Bank of Palestine and the Chamber of Commerce among others). The Entrepreneurship/Self-Employment track graduated 192 youth, with 67 percent female.

Pathways (“Finding a Job Is a Job” - FJIJ): A training program on job search and Work Readiness skills targeting university students. The FJIJ track graduated 4,184 university students, 70 percent female, in their final year of study at five universities across Gaza.

The illustration below shows overall project outcomes and activities undertaken.
Evaluation Purpose and Deliverables

In 2021, as the Project was drawing to a close, EFE requested that Canadian Leaders in International Consulting (CLIC) conduct a goal-based performance evaluation using three key OECD/DAC criteria: the Projects and its activities’ relevance (the extent to which the activities undertaken by each of the Project’s programs properly tackle the challenges at stake), their effectiveness in terms of quantitative/qualitative short-term outputs and medium outcomes according to initial objectives, and their sustainability in terms of the durability of their effects on the beneficiaries’ life trajectories, career opportunities, and economic well-being of their households. The other OECD/DAC criteria, namely coherence, efficiency and impact are also referred to insofar as they provide specific insights into the Project’s outputs and medium/long term outcomes.

Based on these findings, the evaluation provides an overall assessment that probes the usefulness and effect of the project within its local context. It is also designed to be utilized by EFE to facilitate its decision-making processes, orient future programming, and improve future performance by identifying lessons learned and best practices as well as providing recommendations.

Evaluation Report Plan

The following sections of the report firstly describe the Project’s local context in order to illustrate the situation of female and male youth in the labor market and highlight the opportunities and challenges that the Project and its beneficiaries faced during the period under evaluation (2017-2021), including the socioeconomic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic (section 2). The report then outlines the methodological guidelines of the evaluation including key questions, data collection methods (quantitative and qualitative) and approaches to data analysis (section 3). The report then presents and analyses the evaluation’s findings in terms of the project’s relevance, effectiveness and sustainability (section 4), and draws conclusions through lessons learned and recommendations (section 5). In order to better illustrate the Project’s effects on the trainees, section 6 includes case studies and PhotoVoices1 of 9 graduates—3 from each track. The annexes of the report include the questionnaires that served during the remote field research.

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1PhotoVoices are a qualitative data collection method by which youth were asked to reflect on their journey with the EFE training program and to provide a visual representation of those reflections. Visual representations could be photos, videos, poems, drawings, or any other illustrations that represented the youth.
II. Contextual Background

Gaza’s population, estimated at 2.1 million in 2021\(^2\), has been living in quasi-absolute geographic isolation since 2007. This has severely constrained economic growth (stalled at about one to three percent), augmented reliance on remittances, and reduced the quantity and quality of employment opportunities, especially in the private sector.\(^3\) As the UNDP has reported, the other traditional sources of employment are depleted: the public sector’s staffing of its institutions is near complete, and job opportunities in Israel were curtailed following the second intifada (2000-2003).\(^4\)

Between 2005 and 2021, the poverty rate climbed from 40 percent to 56 percent, while the unemployment rate jumped from 29 percent to 49 percent.\(^5\) The 2020-2021 period, marked by the continued fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and the resumption of hostilities with Israel in May 2021, has worsened the situation. Wages have declined by 50 percent, causing 84 percent of private sector employees to earn less than the 1,450 NIS minimum wage, and estimates of households living in poverty increasing from 53 percent in 2019 to 64 percent by the end of 2020.\(^6\) The reported decrease in the unemployment rate, down to 43.1 percent in late 2020, is not to be interpreted as an improvement in labour market conditions, but rather a decrease of the

“
Youth and women have been more affected by unemployment than other sectors of the population, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic started.

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workforce by 9 per cent due to outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.\(^7\) In comparison, the unemployment rate in the West Bank stood at 15 per cent.\(^8\)

Unemployment is not distributed evenly within the Gazan population. Youth and women have been disproportionately affected by unemployment, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic started.\(^9\) In late 2020, unemployment stood at 65.5 percent among economically active youth and 60.4 percent among economically active women, rising to 79 percent among university graduates.\(^10\) For youth, who account for 28.2 percent of the population, the percentage of unemployment among females is much higher than among their male counterparts: 91.1 percent compared to 58.8 percent, respectively.\(^11\) As evidenced in the literature, female youth employment in Gaza and across the Middle East is hindered by social factors, including (early) marriage and social conservatism, the absence of child care facilities at the workplace, the scarcity of decent and secure jobs, and substandard national employment services.\(^12\) Women’s vulnerability has been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the second quarter of 2020, as they suffered a 36.5 percent drop in working hours compared to 23 percent among Gaza’s general population. Women are believed to have suffered more than men from violations of their rights under the current labour law, including with regard to their average income, which is 25 percent lower than that of men in the private sector.\(^13\)

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8. Idem.


The Gaza Strip’s dire socioeconomic situation has prompted governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, including EFE, to launch livelihoods initiatives aimed at promoting youth employment and improving the living conditions of their households. However, these initiatives have been in turn affected by the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions in Gaza. The blockade, which has been in place since 2017, coupled with the debilitating socioeconomic effects of repeated conflicts in the area and, since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic, have deeply affected institutional governance, constrained livelihoods opportunities, and affected the population’s psychosocial status and feelings of insecurity. This fragile situation has threatened livelihoods projects, jeopardizing their short, medium, and long-term effects on beneficiaries and their households.

The macroeconomic effects of livelihoods projects in the Gaza Strip have been little documented. Yet, the few available studies indicate that despite the difficult economic conditions in Gaza, such projects could help address psychosocial issues and reduced poverty and unemployment. It enabled participants to meet their own and their family’s basic and crucial needs, thus enabling financial survival and facilitating greater economic security.

By giving a voice to all stakeholders involved in the Project, including EFE-Palestine’s staff and trainers, and youth beneficiaries and EFE employer partners, this evaluation report will help EFE and IRUSA better understand the short and longer-term effects of the Project. This will contribute to improved programming and enhanced outputs and outcomes for EFE and any other institution operating in the same field of activity.

15Idem.
III. Methodology

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation is guided by four central evaluation questions (EQs) related to the three OECD/DAC criteria referred to above (relevance, effectiveness and sustainability) and one EQ pertaining to the Project’s lessons-learned and recommendations. Each of these EQs was then broken down into several key questions elaborated jointly by EFE and CLIC.

Table 1: Evaluation questions and their sub-key questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Relevance EQ</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effectiveness EQ</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sustainability EQ</strong></th>
<th><strong>Lessons-Learned / Recommendations EQ</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How adequately have specific participants’ livelihoods needs and contexts been translated into the programming of the Project?</td>
<td>To what extent has the Project and its 3 programs achieved their objectives in terms of outputs and outcomes?</td>
<td>Are the Project’s outputs and outcomes sustainable, also generating a significant impact on the beneficiaries &amp; their households?</td>
<td>What are the lessons learned &amp; recommendations that could inform future interventions?</td>
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**Key Questions**

1. To what degree is the intervention logic clearly defined in terms of outputs and outcomes?
1. What are the short and medium-term effects of the program on youth and their families? Are they in line with the objectives?
1. To what extent can the Project’s positive changes and effects be considered durable?
1. What are the main positive aspects of the training? What are the aspects of the training that can be improved?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevance EQ</th>
<th>Effectiveness EQ</th>
<th>Sustainability EQ</th>
<th>Lessons-Learned / Recommendations EQ</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Questions</strong></td>
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<td>2. To what extent does the project address the needs and challenges of youth to become active actors of the labor market?</td>
<td>2. How have the project’s training programs/activities affected: a) Youth’s job search behavior, b) Labor market outcomes, and c) Participant’s economic wellbeing?</td>
<td>2. Has the Project provided for a sound and measurable approach to sustainability/exit strategy?</td>
<td>2. What steps can EFE take to improve service delivery and program effectiveness? Are there any gaps that should be addressed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To what extent is the Project in line with the hiring needs of the private sector?</td>
<td>3. To what extent has the Project been appropriately responsive to the needs of youth in affected areas?</td>
<td>3. To what degree has the Project improved job opportunities access for youth?</td>
<td>3. What steps can EFE take to improve service delivery and program effectiveness? Are there any gaps to be addressed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To what extent was the adequate representation of more vulnerable groups in the Project (females; rural/camp refugees) considered?</td>
<td>4. To what extent did the Project help youth overcome barriers to employment opportunities and mitigate the negative economic impacts of COVID-19?</td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Is there a role for EFE and partner institutions to help alleviate or eliminate existing factors constraining youth and the private sector from further involvement in similar livelihood projects?</td>
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<td>5. To what extent does this EFE project complement work among different entities in Palestine? (i.e., intergovernmental organizations, other international development agencies, CSOs, etc.)</td>
<td>5. Has the Project been implemented as intended? Why or why not? Were resources used efficiently?</td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Are there overlooked priorities for youth and the private sector that can be considered for future interventions?</td>
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<td>6. Are there any risks/circumstances that may jeopardize (or have</td>
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<td>6. Are there any further recommendations that can be made to improve program outcomes?</td>
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jeopardized) the Project’s outcomes?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevance EQ</th>
<th>Effectiveness EQ</th>
<th>Sustainability EQ</th>
<th>Lessons-Learned / Recommendations EQ</th>
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<tr>
<td>7. To what degree has the Project managed to mitigate internal and external risks/circumstances?</td>
<td>8. What are some of the unintended outcomes (both positive and/or negative) of the Project?</td>
<td>9. What steps can EFE take to improve service delivery and program effectiveness?</td>
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**Data Collection Methods**

The following data collection methods have been used to gather evidence to answer the Project’s Evaluation Questions:

1. **Desk review:** this included secondary literature on male and female youth employment issues in Palestine and the MENA region, as well as on the socioeconomic situation in Gaza. It also included EFE internal documents related to the design and implementation of the project, EFEs’ Project’s proposal, progress, and annual reports that include programmatic data and progress toward the targets of the Project, financial and operational documents, and proceedings of focus group discussions organized by EFE-Palestine with beneficiaries of each of the three programs in 2019.

2. **Monitoring files:** This consisted of quantitative pre- and post-training data collected through the Project implementation by EFE reflecting changes in trainees’ self-assessed technical and employability skills, confidence levels, expectations and plans for the future. This data was collected from participants in all three programs: JTP, Pathways, and Entrepreneurship/ Self-employment.
3. **Key Informant Interviews (KII)**: Interviews using semi-structured questionnaires (see annexes I-IV) developed by the evaluation team to address the evaluation’s EQs/key questions. All the KIIs were conducted adhering to trauma-informed protocols ensuring that the physical and emotional safety of each participant was prioritized throughout the evaluation execution. The evaluators endeavored to establish trust with interviewed beneficiaries, where individuals were free and active participants in defining program results. The evaluation team selected former trainees, employers, and trainers to participate in interviews. EFE-Palestine contacted and informed these participants about the interviews on behalf of the evaluation team and they scheduled the discussions. However, no member of the EFE-Palestine team attended the interviews. Selected participants who could not participate in the evaluation interviews were replaced by proxy beneficiaries of the same gender, age, and training program. EFE-Palestine staff and the survey team reassured the interviewees that their names would be kept confidential and that their participation in the evaluation was optional in order to encourage them to freely provide their objective views and opinions.

**KII were conducted with the following relevant stakeholders:**

- Five trainers from the different professional specialties, including those who provide instruction on life and soft skills (Work Readiness) as well as technical skills (virtual jobs and entrepreneurship). Two of the five trainers were ‘master trainers’ who trained other trainers in teaching and training methods.

- Four staff members of EFE-Palestine who have managed the implementation of the Project at different levels since its inception in 2017.

- 20 employers who participated in the selection and training of the trainees for the JTP program and hired them for a minimum of six months after the training (3 months in subsidized internships and additional 3 months in jobs). The selection of the interviewees was random but the evaluation team took into consideration different criteria to ensure variety in the employers selected to the interviews. The criteria included size of enterprises (17 small, 2 medium, and 1 large enterprise) and their professional occupation (ICT (7 employers), industry and handicraft (4), interior design (2), accounting and services (2), training and education (2), media and consulting (2) trade (1), Media (1)).

- 21 graduates from the program, including seven from each of the three programs: JTP, Entrepreneurship/Self-employment, and FJJJ (Pathways). Similar to the employer interview process, the selection of the beneficiaries was random but took into consideration several criteria, including gender (13
females and 8 males), duration since the end of the EFE training (11 in 2018 and 2019, 10 in 2020 and 2021). For the JTP program graduates, diversity of sectors of activity (3 in virtual jobs; 2 in marketing; 1 in vocational job; 1 in sales). Nine of the 21 graduates who were initially interviewed were selected for the case studies and Photo voice component of the EFE’s training quality and its impact on beneficiaries.

The list of trainers, graduates, and employers who participated in the KII is presented in Annex 5 of the report.

4. **PhotoVoices and Case Studies**: Nine of the graduates interviewed have been profiled in case studies and were also invited to document their perception of their training at EFE and its impact in their life through photographs, drawings, images from the internet, and/or digital art through PhotoVoices. These were used to promote discussion about the intervention, address concerns, and empower the participants to tell their own personalized story of change.

**Limits of the fieldwork**: First, given the mobility constraints due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions in access to the Gaza Strip, the evaluation employed electronic communication methods (Zoom) to reach targeted interviewees. The discussions with the stakeholders took place in December 2021 and January 2022. These discussions reconfirmed the limited of the number of interviewees to 21 as requested in the TOR. The short timeline of the evaluation set by the Request for Proposal also justified this limited sample size.

However, triangulating the information provided by the graduates with the other sources of information, including EFE documents and interviews with the other stakeholders, enabled the evaluation team to make solid judgements on the change brought about by the Project and to make suggestions for future programming.

**Analytical Methods**

The following methods were used for processing quantitative data generated from EFE monitoring tools, and the qualitative data drawn from the KIIs.

**Quantitative analysis**

The data included in the EFE performance monitoring and evaluation files (EFE’s pre- and post-training survey data) have been cleaned using excel and aggregated into one master SPSS data file for analysis. As seen in the tables further on in this report,
a test was conducted by comparing pre-and post-training results among the beneficiaries for the same group at different times.  

**Qualitative analysis**

Raw data and information drawn from the KII have been synthetized in accordance with the OECD/DAC criteria and related EQ and key questions set out in Table 1 above, and by stakeholder category. This enabled the evaluation team to provide multi-layered findings, conclusions, lessons-learned and recommendations.

**Process: Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

The evaluation team ensured pertinence and quality of findings by triangulating secondary and primary (quantitative and qualitative) data and information from the various sources mentioned above and corroborating findings with and against each other. This method has mitigated inherent constraints and limitations of the evaluation, such as biases in data collection or responses. 

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16 The results of the paired tests are illustrated in the charts and tables (page 25-27, 30–31, 35-36, 38-39).

17 The evaluation team did not encounter challenges in terms of unavailability of first-hand data or low response rate to the survey.
IV. Findings

The findings of the evaluation are presented below in the 3 key categories of Relevance, Effectiveness and Sustainability in compliance to the OECD/DAC guidelines.

Relevance

Relevance is examined through three key criteria responding to evaluation questions laid out above: first, the clarity of its intervention logic in terms of outputs and outcomes and related indicators, second, the extent to which the Project is in line with the hiring needs of the private sector and, third, the extent to which the Project is in line with the employability needs of the Gazan youth.

The evaluation team found the Project relevant to the specific livelihood needs of youth in Gaza’s specific context of high unemployment and dearth of job opportunities. The main Project documents clearly define the intervention logic in terms of outputs and outcomes. Moreover, its various activities simultaneously address the employability needs of youth job seekers (or future job seekers) and the employment requirements of the private sector. Some graduates of the program expressed that the EFE training approach was filling gaps in the landscape of youth training that is currently available in Gaza. Confirming this assertion, however, goes beyond scope of this evaluation.

1. Project design: SMART indicators\(^{18}\)

The Project has a clear theory of change based on an accurate diagnostic of the situation of the Gazan youth, as well as the private market requirements. In turn, the diagnostic has paved the way for the identification of performance objectives and related indicators that the evaluation team has found to be SMART:

\(^{18}\)SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound.
Specific: The Project’s documents, including logical framework, annual reports, and databases identify and define clearly and consistently outputs and outcomes.

Measurable: The Project’s activities and results are supported by a comprehensive results-based monitoring system where data is collected consistently using online survey platforms. During the Project, EFE measured programmatic performance and outcomes through pre- and post-training questionnaires for beneficiaries of all three programs. Additionally, employment status checks were conducted every three months and up to 12 months after graduation for JTP graduates, following EFE’s standard monitoring and evaluation methodology. Such post-graduation monitoring is one of the key characteristics of the Project that, as trainers and participants confirm, distinguishes it from other livelihood interventions in Gaza. The one objective difficult to measure is the extent to which increased incomes and new skill sets among beneficiaries had benefitted their households.

Achievable: EFE staff have drawn from the experience of an earlier EFE job training and placement project between 2014-2017 that benefitted nearly 900 youth in Gaza, nearly 60 percent of whom were placed in jobs or internships. It is during the implementation of this project that the idea of scaling up the JTP programming emerged. The training was then expanded to entrepreneurs/self-employed people and to university students, it engaged employers more in the Project's recruitment and design processes, and it strengthen monitoring procedures.

Relevant: The Project’s objectives fill to a large extent the employability needs of the beneficiaries of each of the Project’s three programs and the employment requirements of the employers, as explained in more detail below.

Time-bound: Project objectives determined and laid out on a yearly basis since 2017 and time frames have been linked to every indicator.

---

19In 2020, EFE adopted Salesforce to measure programmatic performance and effects on trainees by comparing their employability profile before, during and after the training.
2. A private sector demand approach

The Project adopts a private sector demand-driven approach aimed to bridge the gaps between employers’ requests in terms of life and soft and technical employability skills and the youths’ professional capacities. This approach was fully supported by the employers interviewed by the evaluation team, whether they were the representative of smaller (5-10 employees) or larger (40+ employees) companies. Employers highlighted the mix of technical and life and soft skills trainings offered by EFE during the trainings. However, they placed more emphasis on the life and soft skills that fewer youth possessed before the training and were able to professionally activate upon graduation. The JTP curriculum is in line with employer’s demands by devoting 50 training hours for the training to life and soft skills, compared to the 35 hours devoted to technical skills training.

EFE has adopted several steps to customize the training programs to the needs of employers (for the JTP and the FJIJ programs) and aspiring and existing entrepreneurs from the entrepreneurship program: large-scale market needs assessment (every 4-5 years) and bi-yearly labor market surveys. The results of these assessments are discussed by EFE-Palestine at the global level with EFE-US and, at the local level, with the EFE-Palestine Board of Directors, which brings together private sectors (such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry - GUCCI) and public sector actors (government officials). The results are discussed as well during regular meetings with employers. However, as EFE staff and employers concur, the Project’s operational orientations remains flexible and reactive to the local economy’s needs and, especially for the JTP and FJIJ programs, sensitive to the evolving hiring needs of private enterprises, the latter being tied to the evolution of the local, regional, and international market through the expansion of the platform economy.\(^\text{20}\) This has incentivised EFE to retrain its trainers (through specific ‘trainers of trainers’) accordingly. Our assumption is that the employers have evolving and new needs and that, to address their needs, EFE must retrain the trainers.

Additional characteristics of the Project have contributed to reinforcement of the employers’ involvement in the JTP program. Employers were invited to be involved in the selection of the participants to the Project. This helped them to increase their commitment to hire the youth upon graduation. Additionally, EFE’s follow-up with the graduates on their place of work and the feedback employers are invited to

\(^{20}\)The platform economy refers to the digitalization of human social and economic activities, enabling individuals or collective actors to reach out across national borders.
provide on the graduates’ employability subsequently influence the contents of the training curriculum. Another key aspect was the 3-month subsidized internship component offered to JTP graduates by which employers did not have to cover the costs of the first three months of employment of the youth. Employers committed, however, to hire the youth for a minimum of three additional months after the internship was over: an arrangement some employers encountering business difficulties found difficult to sustain. Ultimately, the limits of the Project’s design most frequently identified by employers included the limited period of EFE training, the limited amount of subsidized funding (according to one employer, another similar project offered up to 6-months of subsidized internships/work), and insufficient technical training in business administration and digital skills. Technical English, according to graduates and employers, was missing. As such, the EFE curriculum should be expanded so as to include these topics and more hours. The number of additional hours required would need to be further assessed by EFE.

3. Training and post-training adapted to the participants’ conditions

Most of EFE’s trainees bear the stigma of economic (financial) marginalization common to unemployment or short-term work experiences and relatively low (or a complete lack of) personal or household incomes. Their situation of poverty is often accentuated by the large size of their households. The table below, based on pre- and post-training questionnaires conducted by EFE, presents the data.

**Table 2: Socioeconomic profile of the youth who completed the pre- and post-training questionnaires by project track**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Characteristics</th>
<th>JTP (N=239)</th>
<th>Entrepreneurship/ Self-Employment (N=98)</th>
<th>FJIJ (N=1330)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Enrolment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Attainment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University diploma (BA, BS or higher)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some university education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school or less</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EFE pre- and post-training questionnaires data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Characteristics</th>
<th>JTP (N=239)</th>
<th>Entrepreneurship/ Self-Employment (N=98)</th>
<th>FJIJ (N=1330)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area of Residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee camp</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural area</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household (HH) Size</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 and above</td>
<td></td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household income</strong></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed/No HH income (from employment)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1000 NIS</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,001-2,000 NIS</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-3,000 NIS</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,001 - 4,000 NIS</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,001 - 5000 NIS</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 5000 NIS</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Monthly income</strong></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed/No HH income (From employment)</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued p. 27.
Underlying all the Project’s programs is the desire to facilitate an optimistic shift in the youths’ mindset towards a labor market that is generally considered inaccessible and improve their job search strategies. To achieve this, it is necessary to raise their awareness of the importance of life and soft skills in the world of work and trying as much as possible to link the more theoretical parts of the training to the realities of the labor market. In the JTP program, this is achieved by simulating job market experience in the classroom and in the entrepreneurship program by encouraging participants to engage in the preparation of each other’s business and financial plans. Also, it has been key to strengthen the participants’ self-confidence during the training by instilling a climate of trust between the trainees and their trainers and amongst themselves. Another pillar of the Project has been the involvement of the participants in internal monitoring and evaluation processes. This involvement has taken place, as mentioned above, through online surveys, in-class assessments, and focus groups.

As already mentioned, one key component of the Project was the inclusion of three-month subsidized internships among JTP graduates. Employer partners signed agreements where they committed to hire youth for at least 3 more months after the completion of the internship, ensuring a minimum of 6 months working experience with decent working conditions for JTP graduates. These written agreements specify the practical modalities (tasks and responsibilities) of the EFE graduates’ engagement in the company (period of employment) and their employers’ commitments and responsibilities. Given the prevalence of informal employment in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Characteristics</th>
<th>JTP (N=239)</th>
<th>Entrepreneurship/ Self-Employment (N=98)</th>
<th>FJIJ (N=1330)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1000_NIS</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>39% 37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1001-1500_NIS</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7% 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1501-2000_NIS</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1% 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2500_NIS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2501 - 3000 NIS</td>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1% 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 3000 NIS</td>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1% 1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gaza, the formalization of the JTP graduate’s working conditions is considered a key aspect of the Project’s relevance.

It is important to note that at the beginning of the Project only 75 percent of JTP graduates were selected to participate in the subsidized internships due to budget constraints. However, over time, the Project management team noted high commitment from all training participants and the differences that determined who would get the internship were too small. After discussions with IRUSA, in mid-2019, 100 percent of JTP graduates were selected to participate in the internships. This shift was also supported by the findings of the focus groups conducted in February 2019.

Additional operational changes motivated by the findings of the focus groups were the introduction of simulated job market training and decentralization of the training venues as much as possible and the establishment of a modest fund to reduce transportation costs for the most vulnerable trainees. Other recommendations could not be implemented because they were considered too expensive and/or difficult to implement such as securing adequate financial support for entrepreneurial projects, or funding the transportation costs for all trainees.

**Effectiveness**

The following sub-sections first examine whether EFE has managed to implement the Project as intended and to what extent it has managed to mitigate risks jeopardizing outputs and outcomes. They then examine the extent to which the training has resulted in progress in the trainees’ technical and life and soft skills and whether the Project’s short- and medium-term results have been in line with its initial objectives in terms of improved job search behaviour, resilience, and ensuing labour market outcomes and improved well-being.

1. **Effectiveness according to management of the Project**

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21 Employed workers in the informal sector represent 54% of the total workforce in Gaza. Workers are categorized as informal if they are self-employed in a business that is not registered and does not keep a complete record of accounts, or if they are an employee for which the employer does not contribute to a pension fund or provide annual leave and sick leave. In addition, all contributing family workers are classified as informally employed. In The Situation of Workers of the Occupied Arab Territories. The international Labour Organization, 2021.
At points during the Project, activities had to be temporarily postponed due to a variety of reasons, including political instability and the eruption of armed conflict. Despite its preparedness to face such contingencies, including securing safe training locations, EFE has, at times, been compelled to close its offices and reschedule key administrative, planning, and training activities. In other cases, participants have not been able to access EFE training centers. Power outages due to war conditions or, more generally, the blockade of Gaza, have also constrained the activities of the Project. Yet, the effects of such risks on the Project’s effectiveness have from the outset been mitigated by remedial steps, such as the distribution to participants of educational materials online and the purchase of an electrical generator to secure the supply of electricity.

Since 2020, the repeated closures of the economy and mobility restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 crisis have prompted EFE to conduct its trainings more or less exclusively online. EFE has trained its trainers on how to efficiently conduct online trainings since August 2020. This adaptation strategy enabled EFE to increase the number of participants in the three programs, even though other operational challenges have surfaced such as poor internet connections and limited participation of individuals suffering from poor electricity supply and/or not equipped with a 2G connection. Recordings of courses were provided by EFE to trainees affected by these technical issues.

Overall, the delays and resulting budget underspending due to the abovementioned challenges have prompted EFE to request on two occasions budget realignments and no-cost extensions from its donor (IRUSA). However, the project’s limited efficiency has not impacted on its overall success in terms of outputs and outcomes. It has nevertheless led EFE to review its target indicators in terms of outputs and outcomes as indicated in the following subsection.

2. Effectiveness according to alignment of results with objectives

a. The JTP Program

The objectives of this program were to improve trainees’ attitudes towards the labor market, to enhance their employability skills, and to secure subsidized internships and employment following graduation. EFE monitored the effects of the JTP training activities at two levels: first by looking at how the graduates themselves self-assessed changes in their technical and employability skills, confidence levels, and expectations and plans for the future, both at the beginning and at the end of the training sessions (a.1) and, second, by determining whether the quantified objectives
initially targeted for outputs and outcomes in the logistical framework had been reached (a.2).

**a.1. Training effects as perceived by participants**

The vast majority of the youth interviewed before the training had a relatively positive opinion of themselves and their life and soft skills. Over 90 percent of them defined themselves as self-confident and believed or strongly believed, for instance, that they possessed the soft skills necessary to develop their own skills, develop their career or to contribute to their community. A large majority of them also agreed that a good future lay ahead and had dreams for the future. Given the positive opinions that youth held prior to the training, the possibility for further improvement in these ratings following the training were limited. However, progress was recorded in youth perspectives on their ability to resolve conflicts (+11 percentage points -pp); having business skills (+11 pp.); and opportunities to achieve a career (+22pp). The following graph summarizes the pre- and post-training questionnaire results:

**Figure 3: I agree and strongly agree that I... (pre/post training-JTP 2019 2021:N=239)**

However, these results must be qualified: they may result from the enrolled trainees’ concern to present a good image of themselves to EFE as they are about to engage in its training. More solid findings may be drawn from their strong beliefs about their actual capacities: the differences between pre- and post-training assessments are more pronounced, especially for beliefs related to capacities directly targeted by EFE’s training: the ability to further technical skills and develop a career, and to communicate, as indicated in the following table:
Figure 4: I strongly agree that I…(pre/post training-JTP 2019-2021:N=239)

The table below shows the results for the JTP program. The * represents a positive change of at least 5%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have a dream for the future*</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>+6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good future ahead of me*</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>+7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a sense of responsibility*</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>+6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have self-confidence*</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>+10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work well with others*</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>+10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know how to develop my career*</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>+16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate well*</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>+14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the skills I need to have a successful career*</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>+20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give a good impression of myself*</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>+11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know how to further my technical skills*</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>+19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I contribute to my community and/or society</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are many opportunities for me to achieve my career goals</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>+2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know how to resolve conflict*</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>+8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews held in December, 2021 by the evaluation team with former JTP graduates provides insights into their motivation for embarking on the program—most had not managed to secure long-term employment and were either unemployed or part-time workers seeking to develop their employability skills. The EFE program was also attractive as it represented the unique opportunity to be
employed at the end of the training for the three-month internship subsidized by EFE and, possibly, for a longer period.

Regarding the training itself, interviewed JTP graduates concurred that the program provided them with the soft skills and confidence needed to more actively and efficiently meet labour market demands. It had also enabled them to become more conscious of their personal abilities, which had enhanced their sense of inclusion in the community and opened up new horizons. However, they also admitted that securing long-term employment in Gaza remained difficult, which contributed to their financial insecurity, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, in retrospect, the professional experiences they had managed to secure since their graduation had enabled them to find employment more easily, which had resulted, during employment periods, to contribute more effectively to the household income.

The JTP graduates also identified weaknesses in the training they had received, urging EFE to improve it through the extension of the length of the training (more training hours), more specialized courses in business administration and technical English, and more consideration for the specific needs of each trainee based on their different skills and genders. Logistical issues were also pinpointed. EFE’s training centres should be delivered closer to their place of residence (so as to trim transportation costs) and training premises should be adapted to the numbers of trainees. Trainers interviewed by the evaluation team agreed with the majority of these observations.

a.2. Effectiveness in terms of outputs and outcomes

The objectives established in the logical framework of the Project were measured by the following performance indicators defined for the JTP program: 1) # youth graduated; 2) the percent of youth having secured 3-month subsidized internships; 3) the percent of youth having secured employment (not internships) within 6 months of graduation from the training (placement rate); 3) the percent of youth continuously working (in the same or other job with no more than 14 days of unemployment in between) 3 months after beginning their employment (retention rate). The retention rate is only measured once the youth transition from their internships to other forms of formal employment.

By 2021, the JTP program had reached and even exceeded its targets for number of youth graduated, and placement and retention rates, although the latter has seemed more difficult to attain (notably due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020) as indicated in the following table.
Table 3: Effectiveness according to project results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1) # Youth Graduated</th>
<th>2) Secure 3-month internship after graduation</th>
<th>3) 6-month placement rate*</th>
<th>4) 3-month retention rate**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Targets</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results (End 2021)</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>84% (362/432)</td>
<td>90% (380/420 reached for employment status check)</td>
<td>78% (238/306 reached for employment status check)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EFE- Palestine Project monitoring records.
* The 6-month placement rate is measured as the # youth who were placed into jobs (not internships) within 6 months after graduation over the # graduated youth who EFE was able to reach to check their employment status in the relevant period of time.
** The 3-month retention rate is measured as the # youth who were able to retain the same job for at least 3 months after placement over the # placed youth who EFE was able to reach to check their employment status in the relevant period of time. Note that the retention rate is not measured for youth placed in internships, only those who managed to get jobs.

However, a closer look at the results highlights variation in the achievement of outcomes by field of specialization. EFE graduates in virtual jobs, sales and marketing (business sectors opened to regional and international markets) record high placement (within six months after graduation) rates and retention of the same job (for at least 3 months after placement) rates. Digital marketing graduates recorded relatively low placement and retention rates, which may be due either to insufficient skills that affected their employability or to the fact that freelancing digital marketers in Palestine experienced decreased demand after the start of COVID-19. TVET graduates fared less favorably. Construction work graduates have high 6-month placement rates (96%) but 3-month retention rates drop to 55%. Aluminum coaching graduates have both relatively low placement (41%) and retention (50%) rates, despite the innovative ‘learning by doing’ (training delivered at the workplace instead of inside EFE training facilities) methodology adopted. This may be explained by the downturn of the economy since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020,

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22 [Click here](#) to see the study completed in July, 2020 by Gaza Sky Geeks.
together with the fragile status of Gazan industry and the low wages generally offered to workers in this sector.

Table 4: Project results by JTP specialty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1) # Youth Graduated</th>
<th>2) Secure 3-month internship after graduation</th>
<th>3) 6-month placement rate*</th>
<th>4) 3-month retention rate**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Virtual Jobs</strong></td>
<td>226</td>
<td>92% (208/226)</td>
<td>100% (225/226 reached for employment status check)</td>
<td>80% (160/200 reached for employment status check)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Digital Marketing</strong></td>
<td>81</td>
<td>74% (60/81)</td>
<td>73% (53/76 reached for employment status check)</td>
<td>67% (20/30 reached for employment status check)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TVET Construction Work</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>75% (18/24)</td>
<td>96% (23/24 reached for employment status check)</td>
<td>55% (11/20 reached for employment status check)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sales</strong></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>76% (58/76)</td>
<td>97% (70/72 reached for employment status check)</td>
<td>88% (44/50 reached for employment status check)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TVET Aluminum Coaching</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>72% (18/25)</td>
<td>41% (9/22 reached for employment status check)</td>
<td>50% (3/6 reached for employment status check)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EFE- Palestine project monitoring records.

* The 6-month placement rate is measured as the # youth who were placed into jobs (not internships) within 6 months after graduation over the # graduated youth who EFE was able to reach to check their employment status in the relevant period of time.

** The 3-month retention rate is measured as the # youth who were able to retain the same job for at least 3 months after placement over the # placed youth who EFE was able to reach to check their employment status in the relevant period of time. Note that the retention rate is not measured for youth placed in internships, only those who managed to get jobs.

Employers interviewed by the evaluation team explained the relatively high placement and retention rates by the quality and relevance of EFE’s soft skills. Upon their hiring, as some observed, **EFE graduates had 70-75% of the skills they**
needed to perform job-related tasks, a fair performance which compared favorably with other training institutions in Gaza. This, and the subsidized three-month internship at the place of work, had encouraged companies to recruit trainees for three additional months or more, depending on their needs and financial capacity. As explained by interviewed employers, most of the EFE graduates who had not completed the three months of internship or the minimum three months of post-internship had left the company on their own initiative, either to pursue other trainings or because they had found more rewarding job.

b. The Entrepreneurship/Self-Employed Program

b.1. Training effects as perceived by participants
Similar to JTP trainees, before the training, most entrepreneurship/self-employment trainees indicated that they were optimistic about their future and had high opinions about their technical and life and soft skills, except for business skills: the percentage of them believing they possessed such skills was only at 48 per cent. After the training, this percentage had nearly doubled (93 percent). Post-training self-assessments improved for all items, especially with regard to ability to further technical skills (+16 percentage points - pp.), to develop one’s career (+12 pp.) or to considering that they had opportunities to achieve career goals (+16 pp.).

Figure 5: I agree and strongly believe that I...(pre-training and post-training)
Entrepreneurship participants survey 2019-2021 N=98
Progress is more marked when considering only strong beliefs, especially with regards to having business skills (+24 p.p.), knowing how to develop one’s career (+21 p.p.), giving a good impression of oneself (+15 p.p.), communicating well (+14 p.p.), and contributing to one’s community (+11 p.p.). However, strong beliefs in the existence of opportunities to achieve one’s career remained stable at around one-third of the trainees, as indicated in the following figure:

**Figure 6 I strongly agree that I... (pre-training and post-training) Entrepreneurship participants survey 2019-2021 N=98**

![Survey Results Chart]

The table below shows the results for the entrepreneurship/self-employment program. The * represents a positive change of at least 5%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Pre test</th>
<th>Post test</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have a dream for the future</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>+2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a sense of responsibility</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>+4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good future ahead of me*</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>+5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have self-confidence*</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>+7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give a good impression of myself*</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>+15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work well with others*</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>+15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I contribute to my community and/or society*</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>+11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know how to develop my career*</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>+21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate well*</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>+14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know how to further my technical skills*</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>+9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are many opportunities for me to achieve my career goals*</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>+5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know how to resolve conflict*</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>+11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the business skills*</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>+24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Entrepreneurship/self-employment graduates interviewed by the evaluation team in December 2021, indicated that their main motivation for participating in the training program was to develop their entrepreneurial skills and better develop their business, as they realized that their university education had not provided them with the necessary skills to start their own entrepreneurship projects. In one interesting case, an unemployed female head of household living with her physically disabled husband and two young children, entrepreneurship was the only economic activity allowing her to secure an income while remaining close to her family.

Participants in the interviews agreed that the EFE training approach was different from that offered by other training programs they had attended previously. Many agreed that the length of the training was insufficient to fully acquire all technical skills expected and that they would have appreciated a better follow-up from EFE after the training period. However, the unique and innovative life and soft skills curriculum and methodology, including the trainers’ encouragements to interact and contribute to other trainees’ business plans, boosted their self-confidence, and equipped them with the capacities required to deal with a competitive business environment.

Some also recognized that EFE’s assistance in locating and connecting them with microcredit institutions or companies seeking subcontractors at the end of their training was of help, enabling them, sometimes with delays, to open their businesses. This had contributed to improving their household’s living conditions to some extent. The main criticism voiced by the entrepreneurship graduates is the lack of (or the insufficiency of) EFE financial support for the graduates as they started their business.  

b.2. Effectiveness in terms of outputs and outcomes

The objectives set for the entrepreneurship/self-employment program were to enhance the trainees’ entrepreneurship mindset and equip them with the skills and resources enabling them to start their own self-employment activities. These program objectives were measured by the following performance indicators: 1) # youth graduated; 2) Percent of youth that started their own business; and 3) Percent of youth connected to microfinance institutions.

As indicated in Table 6, results have exceeded initial targets for graduation rates. The percentage of connections to microcredit institutions was 100 percent in 2021, the fact that nearly all of EFE’s graduates were able to start businesses and 98 percent of them were still operating them 6 months after their establishment in a variety of

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23Recently, grants of US $300 were offered to 28 female graduates from the entrepreneurship/self-employment program—a sum that was considered insufficient to start any business even among EFE staff.
industries, including food service, logistics, retail, sewing, educational tools, agriculture, mobile applications, and other services sub-sectors, is a good indicator of the program’s success.

Table 5: Effectiveness according to graduation, ability to produce business plans, and connection to microcredit institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># Youth Graduated</th>
<th>Started businesses</th>
<th>Connection to microcredit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Targets</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results (Late 2021/Dec. 2021)</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>98% (188/192) started businesses</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67% of females (110% of the indicator target)</td>
<td>98% (188/192) still in operation at least six months after they started</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EFE-Palestine Program Monitoring Data

c. The FJIJ (Pathways) Program

c.1. Training effects as perceived by participants

Before the training, most FJIJ trainees indicated they were optimistic about their future and confident about their technical and life/soft skills, although to a lesser extent than the participants in the two other programs. There were relatively fewer who believed that they would have opportunities to develop a career (43 per cent compared to 77 per cent of the JTP participants and 79 per cent of the entrepreneur program), although this proportion increased by 12 percentage points after the training. The proportion of positive self-assessments in other areas also increased after the training, especially with regard to having skills for a successful career (+19 percentage points - pp.) furthering technical skills (+16 pp); developing a career (+14 pp.); and communicating well (+10 pp.).
The analysis of findings based solely on the percentages of “strongly believe” answers is less conclusive than for the JTP and entrepreneurship programs. Nevertheless, it highlights marked progress on skills or expectations other than those discussed above, including communication skills (+18 p.p.); having a good future (+18 p.p.); and giving a good impression of oneself (+14 p.p.).
The table below shows the results for the FJIJ (Pathways) program. The * represents a positive change of at least 5%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Pre test</th>
<th>Post test</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have a dream for the future</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>+1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a sense of responsibility*</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>+9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have self-confidence*</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>+9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work well with others*</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>+10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate well*</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>+18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give a good impression of myself*</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>+14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good future ahead of me*</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>+18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had the skills I needed to have a successful career*</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>+16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know how to develop my career*</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>+12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know how to further my technical skills*</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>+14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know how to resolve conflict*</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>+10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are many opportunities for me to achieve my career goals*</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>+12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The FJIJ graduates interviewed by the evaluation team stated that their main motivation to participate in the program was the fact that the program was free of charge, was certified by their university, and was likely to help them acquire soft and job search skills useful to better access the labour market.

FJIJ graduates interviewed acknowledged that the training had subsequently facilitated their access to the labour market thanks to improved soft skills that are in high demand in the labour market, and the boost in confidence in their job seeking capacities. The training had also positively affected their job search behaviour and helped them better organize their lives.

However, they also noted that involving employers in the training through questions-and-answers sessions and/or field visits, which was outside of the scope of the training, would improve the training’s outcome. Moreover, it should be conducted by EFE or any other similar services providers earlier in their university studies. Furthermore, while direct employment is not one of the main objectives of the program, it may be important to note that few of the interviewed graduates were employed at the moment of the interview. This was partly because of the lack of job opportunities in Gaza, a challenge compounded by the downturns of the economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and partly because they did not have the means to open their own businesses.

**c.2. Effectiveness in terms of outputs and outcomes**

The initial objectives set by EFE were to increase FJIJ’s graduates’ confidence in core competencies required for a successful job search. Project objectives were measured
through the following performance indicators: 1) # Youth graduated; and 2) Percent of graduates reporting increased confidence in their ability to apply core competencies required for a successful job search.

As indicated in the following table, the FJJ tack has exceeded the objectives initially set by EFE, with the number of youth graduated reaching 144 percent in 2021.

**Table 6: Effectiveness according to graduation, increased confidence, and ability/job search**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># Youth Graduated</th>
<th>Increased confidence and ability/job search</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Targets</td>
<td>3,115</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results (End 2021)</td>
<td>4,184/3,115</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

70% of females (134% of the indicator target)

Source: EFE-Palestine program monitoring data.

**Sustainability**

This section of the report determines the extent to which the Project’s positive effects can be considered sustainable. Sustainability may be analyzed at individual and institutional levels.

a. **Sustainability at the individual level**

The sustainability of the Project’s effects on youth was acknowledged by all stakeholders. Given its focus on improved access by youth to employment through adapted trainings and professional tools, the Project represents a sustainable, lifelong investment in the future of its beneficiaries, whatever the courses of their lives. This aspect of the Project’s training was enhanced, as most graduates concurred, by virtue of its specific mix of life and soft and technical skills that had not only improved their employability in the labour market but increased self-confidence in their personal and professional capacities. As a result, graduates felt encouraged to engage more actively into the labour market in general, and employers have been prompted to recruit JTP graduates after the first three months of subsidized internships. Additionally, the majority of Entrepreneurship/Self-Employed graduates have been able to start businesses that were still in operation after six months of activity.
Longer-term sustainability is more difficult to ascertain. Durable employment also depends on a series of factors that lie beyond EFE’s reach, including the graduates’ capacity to maintain and enhance acquired skills in the long term and, more generally, their ability to navigate within Gaza’s highly unstable political and socioeconomic conditions that have been worsening since 2007. Such instability, which was compounded by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, has hampered all social/livelihoods initiatives, including EFE’s Project, whose activities were delayed on several occasions. Despite such uncertainties and the ups and downs in the graduates’ career paths, the technical and life and soft skills acquired by the graduates, be they employed or not, remain a potential key likely to be further (re)activated throughout their lifetimes.

b. Institutional sustainability

The Project has conducted several activities in support of its main training activities that have expanded its social and economic effects beyond short- and medium-term outputs and outcomes.

Establishing a sustainable ‘EFE ecosystem’: During their training sessions, trainees have been encouraged to interact and exchange experiences thus creating bonds that have at times endured after the training. Participants in the JTP and Entrepreneurship/Self-employment programs have also occasionally been integrated in the same training course in order to strengthen relationships and transfer expertise.

EFE has also sought to maintain its relationship with its alumni since the second year of the Project (December, 2018). JTP alumni have been invited to hone professional skills (strategic planning, communication, teamwork, working under pressure, dealing with different types of personalities) during one-day sessions, or to mentor JTP trainees in soft skills such as presentation skills. Entrepreneurship graduates have been given the opportunity to present their projects to incubator institutions and private sector representatives and were given the opportunity to participate in a competition where projects with the best management and financial mechanisms of development were awarded financial grants. The continuous relationship between EFE and its graduates are also illustrated by the recruitment of several graduates in the Project as trainers or as employer partners.

All in all, such initiatives have created an ecosystem bonding EFE, local institutions, trainees, and alumni together. In turn, such an ecosystem may also confer on the Project a multiplier effect through the enlistment of other private sector actors as EFE partners.
**Strengthening EFE-private sector relationship:** With EFE’s partnerships with local employers for the JTP program at the core of the Project, EFE has attempted to build a network of interactive and sustainable relationships with them and their representatives, such as the Gaza Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GUCCI), by engaging them in the recruitment of trainees and the selection of training activities. The tailored supply of employees, in addition to the subsidized 3-month internship component remain, for the employers’ interviewed by the evaluation team, key in their acceptance to pursue their partnership with EFE. The search for sustainable partnerships with the private sector, notably through regular meetings and invitations to events such as those organized by EFE mentioned above, has also targeted companies and institutions operating in the field of entrepreneurship (such as the Business Technology Incubator (BTI)), that have been invited to mentor graduates starting their own businesses. Here again, private sector actor partners may become ‘ambassadors’ of the Project, resulting in new partnerships supporting its various activities.

**Durable human and infrastructural training resources:** EFE has regularly endeavored to enhance the capacity of its staff and trainers involved in each of its three programs through regular training sessions in local and regional settings. The ‘training of trainers’ sessions, which have focused on e-education and digital tools since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, have also given participants the opportunity to exchange experiences and best practices. Four years on, the Project has spawned a group of experienced and well-trained trainers. This, together with the teaching material and network of training centers across Gaza, represents a durable technical and infrastructural investment in the human development of Gazan society, regardless of the continuation of the Project or its termination.
V. Conclusion: Lessons Learned & Recommendations

The Project “Improving the Livelihood of Youth in Gaza: Jobs, Job Search, and Entrepreneurship Training Program in Gaza” satisfies the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria selected for this evaluation: relevance, effectiveness and sustainability.

However, its theory of change based on the improvement of the graduates’ livelihoods is only partially validated. Due to the troubled security and health situation that has prevailed in Gaza during the period under evaluation (2017-2021) not all of them could secure employment beyond the three or six months of employment with the employer partner. Therefore, the extent to which incomes have benefitted sustainably to the graduates’ households, could not be verified. Rather, the EFE Project’s success - its main impact - resides chiefly in its ability to boost its graduates’ self-confidence in their capacity to integrate the labor market, and to rebound after spells of unemployment by virtue of the life and soft and technical skills provided in its training programs.

The Project owes its success to a series of appropriate practices that may be emulated by future similar projects, whatever the context they can call upon to operate:

- Making use of the lessons learned from its previous project (2014-2017) in order to maximize results. In this context, EFE expanded the scope of its interventions with the inclusion of entrepreneurship as a viable activity likely to promote the inclusion of youth in the labor market, enhanced partnerships with private sector actors, and strengthened its administrative and monitoring and evaluation processes. Performance indicators for the 2017-2020 Project were found SMART.

- Tailoring the employability needs of youth with the requirements of the private sector and of the economy at large through in-depth-studies of market needs.
Additionally, EFE’s training curriculum has remained flexible, in line with the evolving priorities of actual and potential employer partners.

- Turning employers into partners by having them participate in the recruitment of trainees and the selection of training themes and activities. The inclusion of paid internships during 3 months as part of the Project has also been a key incentive.

- Adapting the training to the employability needs of the trainees has induced a two-pronged approach combining life and soft and technical skills and a specific methodology based on interactions amongst trainees and between trainees and their trainers, and on their active involvement in the evaluation of their training experience.

- Promoting decent work conditions for its graduates through written commitments with employer partners in this regard.

The analysis of the Project’s implementation has underscored other good practices, including EFE’s capacity to respond swiftly and efficiently to challenges resulting from political and COVID-19-related constraints. In particular, e-learning has become the rule, allowing EFE to register a wider number of participants, thus boosting its effectiveness while reducing or eliminating transportation costs. By late 2020, EFE’s performance data indicated that, overall, the majority of its objectives had been met. By late 2021, owing to a no-cost extension granted by IRUSA, all activities had exceeded their targets.

The opinion of the Project’s stakeholders, including former beneficiaries and employer partners, is largely favourable. All recognize the relevance and effectiveness of the Project for both youth job seekers and for Gaza’s economy at large. Stakeholders also recommend the Project’s continuation. Yet, the evaluation has also identified weaknesses that need to be addressed in order to improve future programming and maximize the Project’s outputs, outcomes, and longer-term impact.

To that end, the evaluation team has put forward 10 recommendations based on either its own judgement on the Project (recommendations 1-4) or on the findings of interviews conducted with youth beneficiaries, employers, trainers and EFE staff. Recommendations are divided in two main categories: programmatic recommendations related to the Project’s design and relevance; and technical recommendations pertaining to the modalities of its implementation.
The implementation of most of the recommendations may entail additional financial and human resources; however, it is beyond the scope of this report to determine and cost them.

**Programmatic Recommendations**

1. **Embed the Project’s rationale in a normative context:** The rationale and goals of the Project should be embedded and explicitly presented within the framework of international and/or national economic and human rights agendas, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda that addresses several relevant issues: Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8); Gender Equality (SDG 5); No Poverty (SDG 1) Quality Education (SDG 4), and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10). Such connections with global agendas would underscore the Project’s relevance among international development and donor agencies interested in livelihood interventions.

2. **Expansion of the training’s soft skills curriculum:** Soft skills training material should be expanded so as to include labor laws and regulations related to workers’ rights and duties; and the promotion of balanced treatment of women and men at the workplace. Such issues may also be part of the ongoing discussions EFE holds with private sector actors.

3. **Enhanced alumni and employer mentoring activities:** EFE should expand its mentoring activities including its ‘alumni program’, whereby EFE graduates turned into successful employees and entrepreneur mentors, more regularly than it has been the case so far, and trainees and younger graduates during their search for employment or startup phase, respectively. In the same vein, private sector actors (employers, GUCCI, BTI, etc.) should also be directly involved during training sessions of the entrepreneurship/self-employment program (including the startup phase of the graduates’ business) and the FJIJ trainees should also be given the opportunity to meet private sector actors in order to better understand the realities of the labor market. The enhanced involvement of employers may subsequently turn them into ‘ambassadors’ for the Project within Gaza’s business community.

4. **Turning ‘drops’ into ‘flows’:** Despite the effectiveness of its activities, the numbers of EFE graduates represent no more than a ‘drop’ in a sea of Gaza’s youth employability needs, as an EFE staff member put it. EFE should try and coordinate with other similar government or NGO-led interventions in order to expand its business model and maximize its effects among the Gazan youth population. EFE has implemented different
initiatives in that direction already such as building the capacity of universities to conduct and institutionalize FJIJ trainings, and the work in this direction needs to continue.

**Technical Recommendations**

5. **Extend the length of the training and the range of skills offered:** A frequently shared opinion of EFE graduates and employers, who often rate the former's skills as 'fair' upon graduation, is that the training periods for the JTP program should be extended in order for trainees to acquire more basic skills and 'on-site' practice so they can be fully operational and obtain long-term employment. This is more the case for business management and digital marketing skills.

6. **The need for technical English training courses:** For university graduates, mastering technical business English is crucial to obtaining jobs in enterprises most EFE graduates are placed in, namely businesses working with and targeting regional and international markets. The inclusion of such a skill in the EFE's curriculum would boost graduates’ career trajectories and should therefore be reinstated.  

7. **A more formal follow-up of entrepreneurship/ self-employment and FJIJ graduates:** EFE staff has tried to maintain contacts with its graduates beyond the terms prescribed by the Project, either through alumni activities or more informally through ad hoc phone calls. These contacts may need to be organized more systematically for the entrepreneurship/self-employment and the FJIJ programs, in order for EFE to better understand the impact and value of its Project. EFE already does systematic follow-ups with JTP graduates.

8. **More adequate training facilities:** According to trainers and graduates, training rooms were said to be too small, thus affecting the quality of the training courses. EFE is advised to secure larger training rooms or to rely more on online training courses.

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24 Business English was included in EFE's first education for employment project 2014-2017.
25 Because of the large number of graduates engaged in the FJIJ program, only a sample of the FJIJ graduates may be selected for such monitoring.
9. **More comprehensive funding transportation costs:** The costs incurred by transportation to the EFE training centers continues to affect the livelihoods of the poorest trainees. In the future, funds earmarked by EFE to mitigate the problem should be increased based on an assessment of the trainees’ financial capacities.

10. **Increased support for entrepreneurship graduates:** Any grants EFE provides to entrepreneurs (recently, grants of US $300 were offered to 50 female graduates from the entrepreneurship/self-employment program) should be increased to no less than US $1,000 in order to secure minimal financial conditions for a successful start-up (pending the involvement of any credit institution).
VI. Case Studies

Job Training and Placement Program (JTP)

1. Aya’s Story

Aya is a 32-year-old married mother of two in Gaza. Both Aya and her husband provide income to the family, because “of the harsh economic situation in Gaza.” Aya graduated with a BA in Management in 2012.

A Light in the Darkness

Aya participated in the Job Training and Placement Program on virtual jobs, which she learned about both from her colleagues and directly from those who oversaw the training program. After her graduation and before she joined the program, Aya had worked in several organizations in Gaza, the last of which was focused on local marketing within Gaza. She worked there for two years, until she reached the point where she felt she needed to improve herself, so she left to begin freelancing, and then the area was hit with the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdown. Thus, in her own words, EFE became ‘a light in this darkness.’ “I did not have an income,” she explained, “and I was about to give birth, and then there was Corona. I lost all the projects that I had, and the income of my family fell to zero. The timing of the EFE was excellent, and definitely improved my economic status.”

The EFE is Only One Tool: Self-Development is Also Essential

Aya built her experience in the field of writing content in social media for marketing. Yes, she said, “I did face difficulty when I was searching for employment. I built my identity on social media through sharing information, and that is how I became known in this field and was able to get employment. This is what I recommend for others to do because there is this challenge of being recognized by others, whether in Gaza or abroad, due to the high competition in this field. For example, there are lower wages requested from Egypt.”

Given the extremely high unemployment in Gaza, and the unlivable wages offered by local companies, it became natural for Aya to choose to participate in the two-week EFE training program. The program was better than she had expected. Aya
had participated in a previous intense, 8-month long training program, which was much more focused on the technical side. The EFE training program, she explained, “trains you for a particular experience, whereas the other program builds your experiences and skills with intensity.”

The training program was, for Aya, “a valuable experience to increase income; a necessary training, even, particularly because of the limited jobs in Gaza.” The most important skill Aya gained was in negotiation: how to be flexible and how to reject a particular request. The program also presented sustainable solutions, but they were limited due to the short time of the program. Aya encourages her colleagues to participate in the program, to pay strong attention to the material presented by the coaches and to raise questions during the training.

Overall, she found the training to have fulfilled her needs. “As evidence,” she said, “I am still with the company that I found through EFE.”

However, Aya was careful to point out that the program cannot claim full credit for her employment, since she had work experience prior to the training and because of her own constant striving for personal development. “I worked hard on improving
myself and I still do. I do not rest. I must always improve myself. In digital marketing, I began social media management and worked on content development, and now on developing SEO. I did this on my own.”

Aya has been working for one month, with the same company she was networked with for 3 months from the training program. However, she does not have a contract. Rather, she has been told that any month, she can change to freelance.

Still, given that she is working online from home, Aya is enjoying the flexibility, finding it quite suitable for her as a mother. “I chose to work from home because I can give everything from home. I do not want a schedule from the office.” Nevertheless, online work can be challenging. “We have to be very careful,” she explained, “that our written communication is not misunderstood. And, of course, there are the larger issues of electricity and internet outages in Gaza.”

**Suggestions for Improvement**

Aya strongly recommended that the length of the program be extended. A mere two weeks is ‘a very tight and short’ period, particularly for the sustainability of the solutions presented in the program. With the extended length, there would be time to focus on a particular skill, such as digital marketing, and to have more follow-up from the coach. Aya also suggested increasing the number of coaches and continuing communication with the coach and the company to which participants are networked.

**2. Dina’s Story**

Dina is a 25-year-old, single woman, living with her parents and 6 siblings in Gaza. Her father is the main economic provider for the family, and Dina is the second financial contributor. Dina graduated with a BA in Management and Banking Sciences.

Before joining the Job Training and Placement Program, she was not employed even though she was actively searching for employment. However, she faced the real challenge of limited jobs in the private sector. Furthermore, she tried to search for internships in the finance sector and reached out to several banks but more than one bank said that they do not offer internships. Currently, though, she is employed!

**The Training: A Two-Way Street**

Dina quite enjoys participating in trainings, meeting new people, improving upon herself, and finding new opportunities for work, so it was only natural for her to join
this training program which she learned about when she applied to work in sales. She had expected the training to be about ‘life skills’, similar to a previous training she had taken, but she was quite pleased to discover that the program was ‘more expansive.’ She learned ‘how to have more confidence, how to better express herself. In addition, every trainer gave us a bit about sales, about what to do if you have a project or want to increase your income.” This training was more expansive than previous training Dina had taken in not only the breadth and depth of material, but also the number of trainings: EFE had 4 coaches, whereas the other training program had only one and only spoke about one skill. She also did not secure employment after the other training.

From the trainers to the topics, to the location and the timing of the training, Dina gave the EFE program high marks. She understood more about the needs of the marketplace and the skills needed. She learned to look for jobs that would suit her, and to communicate more effectively and successfully, and thus, she feels that the training did increase her employability in the local job market.

Photo Voice 2: Dina expressed that the tree represents her feelings as she acquired useful skills, experiences and enhanced her self-confidence and communication skills through her participation in the training and expressed that the land on which the tree stands (referring to it as desert land) represents the Palestinian land that is damaged from war and conflict. Nevertheless, she described proudly that she was able to gain these skills in a land where job and training opportunities are limited.
With regards to the sustainability of the Project, Dina placed responsibility not only on the program but also on the participants themselves. “If you build on the skills, then yes, the Project can be sustainable, but if you consider the training only as a work opportunity, then it won’t be sustainable. The skills, for me, could be sustainable because I will continue to search for work and continue to build and improve upon my skills.”

She strongly recommends this training. “You can meet new, kind, useful, vastly experienced trainers. You can meet new colleagues. I am still in contact with those I met, and we continue to support each other. I am also still in contact with a few of the trainers, and they also support me.” Her only suggestion for improving the program is to add a practical training.

**Working in Sales**

After the training, Dina found employment: a full-time sales position. Unfortunately, sales have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. And, while her income did improve, it did not improve enough to ease in a significant way the load on her father. “My income only assists in covering my own expenses and not the needs of the family as a whole. My father still carries the biggest load.”

**Entrepreneurship Training Program (ETP)**

**3. Abeer’s Story**

Abeer is a 35-year-old woman, driven by her passion and love for the land and people. She lives in the Mekhazi Camp, in the center of the Gaza Strip, with her husband and two young children, both of whom are in elementary school. Her husband was shot and paralyzed in 2014, and, since then, Abeer became the primary income earner in her household.

For years after her husband’s injury, Abeer had to stay home to take care of him. In 2019, when she became able to actively search for work, she came across a number of obstacles. In addition to the typical challenges of high unemployment and limited jobs in Gaza, she also had to face employers’ preferences for younger employees and the glaring five-year employment gap in her CV (from 2014-2019).

Abeer learned about the EFE-Palestine Entrepreneurship program through Facebook. She was eager to participate because she wanted support to develop her own entrepreneurship project. With her husband’s support, she was able to devote entire days (8 am to 4 pm) to the trainings. “We were satisfied,” she said. “We learned how to build a project, to develop a clear idea of the project, and to create a vision,
describe it, and visualize it. The EFE training provided the necessary information and skills to build the project, and it was the motivation for me to apply for other projects. The training gave me confidence to build and defend my project ideas, and I did build a successful project!”

From a Degree in Education to an Expert in Agriculture

Abeer graduated with a BA in Education in 2002. She worked on community education, and with numerous NGOs. After her husband was wounded, she began to look for a project that would allow her to stay close to her children and husband. Before joining the EFE training, Abeer had a small farm of chicks, and a clear, sustainable idea: to sell and market eggs from 100 women in rural areas to wider markets. Now, Abeer employs a 32-year-old man, who drives her Tuk-tuk, and a 35-year-old woman who accompanies her into the homes of the rural women to gather the eggs. She also now is building a new farm for the rural women. “These women,” Abeer said, “are beautiful! They work with dignity in a beautiful way. I learned a great deal from them.”

Equipped with the skills from the EFE training, Abeer became able to compete and win funding for her project. “I didn’t expect that I, someone with an education degree, would be able to compete with agricultural engineers -- and win! I learned that my project was a rural sustainability project!” The training provided her with technical, financial, and marketing skills and assisted her in networking projects, which were critical for the success of the participants. “During the training, from our discussions with each other,” Abeer explained, “I learned how others solve problems that I have yet to experience but may experience in the future.” The network also supported each other by sharing news of relevant funding opportunities. “There was encouragement and support from the group of women who took the training with me. ... One colleague even defended my project more vociferously than she defended her own project.”

“The funding I won and the network that was developed were both instrumental in the success of the project,” she explained, “but without the training, there would have been no funding and no network. I would not have built my personal development. I would not have been able to compete with others. After the training, I competed amongst agricultural engineers - and I was among one of those who won. I was chosen by the Ministry of Agriculture to attend a ten-day training in Egypt this year.”

26 Abeer referred to OXFAM international organization as a funding source for her project.
Building Towards Sustainability

Abeer’s work stopped during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even when Abeer was able to get the eggs from the rural women, she was not able to sell them due to the lockdown measures. “The impact was huge,” Abeer said. But, coupled with Abeer’s determination and ingenuity, and with the skills from the training, Abeer was able to develop new projects. “I learned how to find a problem and develop a solution. ... I never thought I would have an incubator and sell chicks myself.”

“I want to continue to work in agricultural projects.” she said. “I have land. I have the time. And, when you touch the land, then your negative energy dissipates. ... The best thing I learned in the training was the ability to build projects in the agricultural field, and the confidence to defend such projects and to search for funding.”

The challenge is for the training program itself to be sustainable amidst the difficult situation in Gaza. “We suffered from electricity outages during the training,” Abeer said. “Sometimes after the training, we would still need to do housework and work on our project and submit emails and have the trainers review them, and all amidst electricity outages.”

PhotoVoice 3: Abeer shared this picture that represents her growing business as a result of participating in the training program, as she had a small farm of chicks before joining the trainings. Now, Abeer is building a new farm for the rural women. Equipped with the skills from the EFE training, Amal became able to compete and win funding for her project. She expressed that training provided her with technical, financial, and marketing skills and assisted her in networking projects, which were critical for her success.
Suggestions: Continue and Be Passionate

“Have energy. Be passionate, joyous, and motivated to attend the training,” Abeer advises to all who she encourages to participate in the training. “We were happy attending the training, and we were excited to work with each other. When you have the passion, you will be able to determine the outcome and work towards it.”

As for the training program itself, Abeer suggests the program be continued. Also, “hold on to those who graduated and continue communicating with the alumni, even if only by phone. This continuity of communication did happen to our cohort, but it was not the case with previous groupings in the training.” It is also critical to learn of each other’s successes.

4. Rania’s Story

Rania is an articulate, committed 29-year-old woman living with 9 other members of her family and 4 cats in Gaza. In addition to her father, there are four others who financially contribute to the family’s livelihoods.

Rania earned a BA in Child Education. She waited one year for governmental jobs upon graduation, but without success. Due to the large number of Education graduates and the limited government jobs, there arose a high level of competition, her personal biggest challenge to finding employment. In addition, and of critical importance to her, Rania was not comfortable with the traditional way of teaching in the schools and did not want to see herself being forced to abide by this banking model of education. So, after one year of unemployment, she built her own project. She developed non-traditional educational material for students, materials that are engaging and not boring. “It is hard for a child to sit still for 15 minutes and remain focused,” she explained, “and, in Gaza, the class lessons are 45 minutes -- so the question arose of how to increase the attention of the child. The best way was using games and exercises to fulfill the goal of education while simultaneously increasing the ability for self-education for the child.”

The Training Equipped Me to Compete with Confidence …

Before joining the Entrepreneurship Training Program in 2017, which her uncle had told her about, the growth of her own project -- ‘Learn and Play with Rania’ -- had been halted by the COVID-19 pandemic. So, she joined this training program, with only 2 months of entrepreneurship experience. The training, she said, caused a large difference in my own project. “Before the training, I was working without any study or organization, in a chaotic fashion. Furthermore, before joining the EFE training, my project was making not more than $100 a month and I had considered this to be a
significant sum. The training helped me work and develop my project properly, and thus increased by own self-confidence.” Now Rania is not only financially responsible for herself but also, sometimes, is able to contribute to the financial needs of her family, even if only a small amount.

She joined the training without any background in management or entrepreneurship, and she was only expecting to learn a cursory overview on how to manage a project. However, when she took the training and discovered such a diverse list of topics -- including marketing, financial management, developing strategies, accounting for a session, etc. -- she found herself sometimes crying because she was overwhelmed by such new issues. “I thought I would only be taught how to manage a project in a very superficial manner. So, yes, the training spectacularly exceeded my expectations, and this allowed me to succeed in my project, particularly in comparison to the competitors who came out after me. .... The training assisted me with the project itself and with my own self-confidence, and I became able to present my project in front of anyone. I became confident enough to compete and talk about my project, regardless of the strength of other projects presented alongside of mine. I became equipped to face challenges. The credit goes to both EFE and the daily challenges and difficulties we face in Gaza.”

Rania spoke at length about the inclusion of focused marketing in the training. “Each project is different in the way it would be marketed. Each project has its particularities, and thus each needs to clarify its own audience. For my project, I learned that the best place for me to market was on Facebook, because there are numerous groups for mothers and teachers on Facebook and this is the website that they use to get educational material. Other projects might want to market themselves online in other sites - such as Instagram, or LinkedIn.”

The training assisted Rania in the workplace, most powerfully, she said, by building her own confidence and the strength of her personality. “When I was in the university, we did practical training in the schools,” she said. “Every day, I would leave the school crying and calling for my mom because my personality was so weak. After the training, I was no longer weak; I could speak with all confidence.”

The training was able to overcome the challenges caused by COVID-19 which limited face-to-face training. However, the over-riding challenge to the training itself was the infrastructural damage caused by the blockade: electricity outages. “Electricity outages: 8-hour outages at least every day,” Rania exclaimed. “Now in Gaza, we use car batteries to operate a meager light and the internet router. In our house, we had a battery that we used to keep up with the training during the electricity outage.”

... and To Benefit More Successfully from Other Opportunities
Rania participated in other trainings. The subjects and topics were similar, but the way the material was presented was different, with different examples and focus, “not necessarily better or worse.” “Each group, each organization,” she explained, “has its own way of presenting its training. As we say in Gaza, every sheikh has his method.” EFE, being the first training she took, did strengthen her ability to benefit from other trainings. “After the training with EFE, I’m now able to ask more questions and raise more critical issues and specific issues.”

Rania was also able to raise funds to fund her project. She was nominated by EFE and won third place in a competition by the Belgium Embassy for the Women Entrepreneur in 2018. “The training easily got me up 5 steps in the ladder, rather than one step by one step.”

*PhotoVoice 4: Rania expressed through this photo that training represents the horizon that illuminated her way to reach the skills she needed for success, increased her self-confidence, and gave her an incentive to continue developing her project.*

**Listen to the Educator to Improve the Program**

When asked for suggestions for improving the training, Rania said, “if only it were longer! Seventy to ninety hours of training would be much better, so that we could learn, focus, and have more time to discuss our own thoughts.”
In addition, Rania suggests involving people who graduated from those trainings. They should be present to support those currently taking the training because students learn more from their colleagues and peers than from trainers.

**COVID-19’s Impacts**

The pandemic significantly impacted Rania financially. Her project was tied to the schools (from 1st to 4th grades), but during lockdown, her materials were no longer needed. Her income dropped to almost zero.

Still, she adapted, as she had learned from the training itself which included discussions on how to adapt to the new situation derived from the COVID-19 pandemic. “With regards to my own project, so that people would not forget ‘Learn and Play with Rania,’ I developed interactive videos on the private page for the project for parents and teachers to develop educational tools from the simplest objects in their own household. I would encourage these games can be used during lockdown and thus educational objectives would be met.”

‘Learn and Play’- a real success story

After finishing the EFE training in 2017, Rania worked to implement what she learned and consequently, her project gained more attention. For example, she was interviewed on TV and print media to talk about her project.

More importantly, she noticed that after people learned more about the project, it became a model for teachers, and thus became a real success story. “I was able to achieve my objective. From the start, my project’s objective was not profit but a change in the educational system - to move it from traditional teaching method (the banking method of instruction) to an interactive, engaging method.” The importance of interactive education is vivid in Rania’s mind. “I am 28 years old now, and I still remember the interactive engaging lessons from first grade because the teacher brought a chicken to the class. I cannot forget that class or the teacher.”

**5. Nadia’s Story**

Twenty-five-year-old Nadia has found her passion: to help refugees regain their rights, “particularly now, at this time, when people are forgetting the struggle of refugees.” She lives with her father, mother and sister in Gaza; her brothers live outside Palestine. She and her mother work and support the family. She currently is applying for a visa to Germany where she wants to continue her education and work in the humanitarian field.
She earned her BA in English Literature and Translation, and an UNRWA diploma for organizing projects for NGOs. She also received trainings in business administration and entrepreneurship, learned German, and earned a mini-MBA from the Bank of Palestine. She has been working with GIZ in community development in Gaza to support the eight Palestinian refugee camps in Gaza. Nadia also has given numerous trainings “to increase the capabilities of refugees. … Refugees are the best ones to say what they need, since they are the ones living in the camp, and it is from their suffering that creativity can be borne.”

Training: Motivating, but More Networking Suggested

The EFE training for entrepreneurs taught Nadia how to build proposals and apply for funding, what an initiator means, and what problem-solving entails. Nadia joined the program to support her mother. “Actually,” she admits, “my mother was the one who was the entrepreneur and I only wanted to help her because she was too old to apply to the training program, so I applied for the training and then I found myself learning a great deal and expanding my horizons.”

For Nadia, the training was quite expansive and educational. She gained experience and was able to win funded projects, including from UNFPA. Nadia’s team was also chosen as one of the 5 best teams in the Arab region, won a project from Google and won first place in Palestine.

Nadia also participated in other training courses. She was chosen as one among eight in Gaza to be trained in humanitarian action: how to work in camps, how to help those who do not even have basic nutritional and health needs met. She joined a 2-year program funded by UNFPA. “We worked on initiators in humanitarian action. I learned from the refugees, and I got a lot of motivation to continue working in this field. My only objective in life is to help refugees: how to get the voices of refugees heard, particularly now, at this time, when people are forgetting the struggle of refugees.”

Nadia stressed that the training gave hope and motivation to young graduates, many of whom have wonderful creative ideas. “EFE works with the most depressed group in Gaza: the graduates, and this is a value that I appreciate a great deal. We need to give those youth more than ideas; we need to connect them with other groups overseas - and provide training in crowdfunding.” Nadia also suggested that participants be “sent to the companies immediately to improve themselves.” Furthermore, “the youth’s networks from the training should not be limited to those in Palestine, but to include those anywhere who have invented and been creative.”
In addition, Nadia proposed that “older generations help teach the younger participants. A lot of people have skills that are above the age limitation of the EFE.” Also, the length of the training can be extended - “to 120 hours instead of just 50 hours; to have mentors from outside Gaza; how to have crowdfunding; I do suggest training in the field of crowdfunding.”

**COVID-19, its Impacts, and Disillusionment ...**

Blessed with the financial support of her parents, Nadia was able to take advantage of the pandemic. The pandemic “gave me an opportunity to relax and examine my thoughts. It was a suitable time for me to work on myself at home.” However, COVID-19 also presented a challenge to the funding of the project.

Nadia and her mother developed a project of redesigning fabrics and clothes. The idea, she explains, is “in one category, to re-use and redesign your own fabrics, and in the second category, to purchase the already redesigned fabrics.” Their project started before the EFE training program began, but the training allowed her to further develop her idea. Her fabric project stopped, however, due to lack of support from donors to fund her project. “We were promised travel and start-up grants from other donors, but they were cancelled because of COVID-19. I felt depressed from the constant rejections in the funding, and the lack of sustainability for the project.”

**...Disillusioned**

After applying unsuccessfully to numerous funding opportunities for her project and facing the constant pressures and difficulties of life in Gaza, Nadia became disillusioned and is now seeking to move to Germany to continue her education there. Her hope is that EFE may come up with new ways to help graduates of its training programs to succeed in their employment search and in their personal start-ups. Such support would enable her to reconsider her plans and give her more hope for a future in Gaza.
Finding a Job is a Job Program (FJIJ)

6. Hanan’s Story.

Twenty-two-year-old Hanan lives in Rimal in Gaza City with her sister and parents. She is completing her fourth year towards a BA degree in Journalism and Media and is quite active in civil society in Gaza.

An Unexpected but Brilliant Accident

Hanan stumbled upon the EFE program by accident. She was going to the university when her friends told her about the training, and so she joined them. Her first impression was so positive that she was encouraged to continue to attend. The benefit of the training was much larger, she said, than the short time period of the training itself. “I was quite sad when the training was going to end.”

The trainer, she explained, was “brilliant -- beyond my expectations. He supported us completely. ... The first thing we learned was ‘how to build your objective.’ I had forgotten my larger objective while I was in the university. This training gave me strong motivation to actually determine my own objective” and to then search for a job to meet that objective. In essence, Hanan explained, “we need to have our dreams and hopes and goals.” Hanan also learned a variety of soft and hard skills through the training’s discourses, discussions, and interactive exercises.

What she considers to have been quite beneficial, for herself and her fellow participants, from the training was the ability to “identify both our weakness and our strengths, and how to tie the CV to the job itself.” Previously, she said, “I had thought we would write just any kind of CV. I discovered we were writing the CV incorrectly. I didn’t know there was an academic CV and a professional CV. ... The trainer showed us, in a very clear way, the difference between the two. We also learned how to write a cover letter, how to communicate with institutions, and how to build networks and relationships.”

Hanan strongly encourages “all the youth in Gaza” to take this “most brilliant training,” particularly since these essential skills were not learnt in the university. “I want others to benefit from the training as I benefited.” For example, she explained, this training helped us overcome our fears and anxiety in the face of a job interview. This training assisted us in building “our personal charisma.”

Hanan is currently volunteering in a non-profit organization, and not actively searching for employment even though she is confident that this training has made
it easier for her now to find work, particularly because of her new-found understanding of writing an appropriate CV.

When asked about any suggestions for improving the training, Hanan suggested both a longer training and for the training itself to be conducted outside the university for a change of atmosphere. “As beneficial as it was, we wanted to have longer hours for the training. We also wanted a different space for the training - one outside the university, so that we could get out of our comfort zone.

**COVID-19: ‘Another Kind of Sanctions’**

The pandemic, Hanan said, negatively impacted her own family. Her father’s monthly wage became insufficient, and her university expenses caused additional difficulties. Hanan made sure to place her family’s difficulties within the context of the besieged
Gaza Strip as a whole. COVID-19 impacted the economic situation throughout Gaza, she said, particularly because Gaza is suffering under an illegal blockade and “the virus imposed another kind of sanctions.”

Nevertheless, Hanan spoke about overcoming these difficulties and about the possibility and opportunity of digital education and online communication. Sometimes, she contemplated, even online meetings could be better than face-to-face meetings.

**Active in Research and Civil Society**

Although she is unemployed, Hanan remains a busy woman. She has been acknowledged for the second consecutive year by the Institute for Strategic Studies in Palestine as an exemplary researcher on issues of citizen engagement.

In the first year of the program, Hanan researched issues on how to ‘build an educated citizen.’ She has also learned about human rights and women’s rights through two trainings. She then took that knowledge and conducted a series of trainings within NGOs in Gaza. Afterwards, she was nominated and accepted to the second year of the program, during which she is working on a research paper: to identify a problem in Gaza and work to solve it through research and analysis.

**7. Maha’s Story**

Maha is a 22-year-old graduate who lives in Gaza alongside 9 members of her family, including her parents. Her father provides the only source of financial income for the family. When asked about her educational background, Maha responded with wonderful cheer that she had received ‘top grades’ in her BA in Accounting.
Maha has been continuously searching for employment, but has found numerous difficulties in finding work. “Work is limited to those who have 2 to 5 years of experience,” she lamented, “but how can we get that experience?” In addition, not only are the jobs themselves limited, but the wages are low and not stable. She had attempted working with a mobile company; her job was to persuade customers to pay their outstanding bills. Her ‘wage,’ though, was a mere 10% on the (possible) paid bill; and if no bills were collected, then she would not get paid for her 5 hours of daily work.

**Training: Expansive…but Requires More Focus**

Maha has also been searching for self-improvement opportunities and, thus, when she heard about the ‘Finding a Job is a Job Program’ from her university social media page, she got excited. She asked about the training, and all the comments she heard were positive and encouraging. She was not disappointed: the training fulfilled her expectations. She also preferred this training program to one she had taken earlier, since she found this training to be more expansive, used more examples, and presented more discussions.

The training offered, Maha says “something useful to participate in and improve my skills in my free time.” She stressed that her anxiety over developing a CV was lessened. She would definitely encourage friends to participate in the training, even if they already think they have such skills because the trainers explore the issues in depth. Nevertheless, still more depth is suggested. Specifically, Maha found that advanced skills, ones needed to increase employability, are missing, such as advanced computer skills.

**…and Was Incomplete**

When asked whether the gained skills are sufficient for employment, Maha reflected that she had gained skills for the workplace - including improved confidence - but those skills are insufficient to garner employment. “Later, the training did not assist me in improving my economic situation or in helping me overcome financial challenges.”
COVID-19 and Education

The training was successful in providing solutions amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent restrictions. Clear appointments were made, and all meetings were held online.

While the pandemic negatively affected Maha’s educational experience, since it shifted the energy levels and made the understanding and absorption of information more difficult, this online training did come at a suitable time, in her opinion, to assist Maha and her classmates to improve themselves, even despite the constant electricity and internet outages.

8. Abdallah’s Story

Background

Abdallah is 22, married, and lives with his extended family, including his wife and parents, in the City of Deir el Ballah in Gaza. The family is financially dependent solely on the income from Abdallah’s father.

Abdallah participated in the ‘Finding a Job is a Job Program’ (FJIJ) upon graduating with a BA in Physical Education. He heard about the program via the university’s social media and was thrilled to find a free training program since, previously, he had been searching for such programs but had only found paid programs, which he could not afford. Once he came across FJIJ, he shared the news with his classmates and encouraged them to join the program with him.
Even though Abdallah had not been actively searching for work before participating in the FJJ, he nevertheless was aware of the challenges facing graduates in finding employment. In addition to the overall challenge of a large number of graduates competing for a limited availability of jobs in the field, Abdallah is also challenged by his own geographic locale, within which there is even less employment opportunities than elsewhere in Gaza.

**Excellent Training...That Could Still Be Improved**

The training program provided him, in his own words, ‘solutions to many issues affecting his personal life.’ He learned necessary work skills, including how to improve a CV, how to be interviewed, and how to best communicate, both online and face-to-face with organizations. He found the training program to be ‘excellent,’ and particularly appreciated the ‘very talented trainers’ in their interactions with the diverse youth in the program. He particularly appreciated the strong emphasis given to support skills for youth to search for jobs, the particularities of the discourse and communication during an interview, and the increased positivity in dealing with life issues. He would tell a friend to join for both personal development and confidence building.

As ‘excellent’ as he finds the program, there remains room for improvement. He suggested certain key changes to improve the program, namely more presentation of practical issues on the ground to support graduates with particular skills to find work. The program could provide a clear structure for youth to find work, and the success stories, of those individuals who did find work, should be publicized. Abdallah also suggests organizing meetings with youth in universities and clubs, and with prominent personalities, to build their confidence. In addition, workshops could be conducted online to further discuss the training program. During the training, at the end of every day, every individual was asked to offer his or her opinion, both the negative and the positive, and, as Abdallah explained, important points were listened to and heard after the meetings, as was evident in the ongoing communication via WhatsApp.
Even COVID-19 Provided a Learning Opportunity

The training was not impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, since the trainings were held on Zoom and WhatsApp, and the trainers “responded well to our calls and questions.” Consequently, the pandemic actually provided a learning opportunity, since “what was special about the training was that it was on Zoom. The training helped us to meet over Zoom and taught us how to conduct meetings over Zoom, and this skill will help us set up meetings with companies online.”

Ironically, Abdallah was saying these very words amidst an online meeting that was constantly challenged by the poor Internet connection from Gaza. The greater obstacle to holding productive meetings online for Abdallah, thus, is not the lack of any particular skill but the lack of decent infrastructure in Gaza. As reported by numerous news outlets, routine electricity blackouts and shaky internet service have made online communication a serious challenge.

Yet, the Critical Challenge Remains

“In all honestly,” Abdallah said, “the program was beautiful -- but after the program, there was no step forward for introducing the participants directly to the workplace itself.” He acknowledges that such follow up was not a direct objective of the EFE program. Here-in, he believes, is the critical challenge: Although the program did improve Abdallah’s abilities to find work in the marketplace, his financial and economic burden remains the same. “We took the trainings,” he said, “and have been in contact with the trainer, but the program has not, until now, given us anything positive from an economic standpoint or even improved our morale from this perspective, despite how wonderful the individual trainers were.”

Do Continue Such Work

Overall, Abdallah strongly supports the continuation of free workshops and trainings and considers them a vital necessity for young graduates. “We need a diversity of trainings,” he concluded, “including a special training about advanced computer skills and increased support for us to find work and livable wages.”

9. Ibrahim’s Story

Ibrahim, 24-year-old single man, lives with his parents, two brothers and a sister in Khan Younes in Gaza. He also has married siblings, but they live outside the family home. All his siblings are university graduates. Ibrahim himself graduated in 2019 with a BA in physical education. Ibrahim and his father are the only two in the
household who work; his father, though, is the one who still carries the financial responsibility of the family.

The Program...

Ibrahim participated in two EFE trainings. The first of which was the one-week long Finding a Job is a Job Program (FJIJ) training in 2020. He had heard about the program through the university. He was directly nominated to the program because, in his own words, he was an exceptional student. After the first training, Ibrahim was then invited to another training from the university.

The training assisted him in numerous ways, including his employability in the workplace. “Even though I had learned about those skills in previous trainings, the EFE trainer himself provided useful, realistic, applicable examples and thus our horizons were expanded,” said Ibrahim. “In addition to what I learned from the trainer directly, I also learned a great deal from the other participants themselves. As a trainer, I also learned techniques from the training itself.”

“In comparison to other training programs,” Ibrahim explained, “the guest speakers were of great caliber and were international. The other training programs had primarily local speakers and didn't continue communication with the participants. In this program, there was care for the participants.” The program was open to suggestions and questions throughout the time, and strongly encouraged constructive criticism. In addition, the trainers are still in contact with the participants, and Ibrahim is still in touch with fellow participants. “There is even a group within which we are in constant communication.” In the second training, the trainer designed an agenda based on the needs of the participants themselves.

Even though Ibrahim had been informed that the training was through zoom, he would have preferred for the program to have been face-to-face and not online.
Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this was not an option. Online learning can be a challenge in Gaza due to the internet and electricity outages.

Overall, the program gave Ibrahim “more confidence, and more courage. ... The university gave me only 20 percent of the practical skills that I have now. I have gained financial and personal improvements from the training, and of course, these will have long-term ramifications. We are still learning and will always be learning.”

Given that Ibrahim noted one striking difference for this program was the ongoing communication, it was natural for him to then strongly suggest that the program “stays in contact with graduates. Let us know of other trainings. And go further: For the participants who excel, let them be nominated further, and support them through offering practical experience.”

...the Dire Economic Situation

Ibrahim is currently working as a trainer in physical education. He had been working with his father in his bakery, but upon graduation, he decided to pursue work building on his degree. He attended various trainings in personal development, and after a year and a half, he found numerous opportunities. Today, he is a coordinator for physical education in public youth centers. He began as a volunteer, and, after more than one year, an opportunity opened up and he was hired as a freelance worker. He has verbal contract.

Unfortunately, though, the wages only cover his personal expenses as a single man. His wages are closer to an ‘allowance’ than a livable wage (he earns a meager 500 shekels every month). Of course, he said, he would leave them, if he finds a better job, because he needs to ‘secure his future.’ However, finding sustainable work with a contract and a livable wage in Gaza today would be “almost impossible.” “Employment is not just by capability, but, more so, through personal contacts (wasta). We are suffering from this, particularly in our own field of physical education. Imagine: they want only 5 employees out of 13,000 graduates! Our situation is very, very difficult.”

His economic situation was also impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of Corona, he lost approximately three months of work. The meager support from organizations, both governmental and NGOs, extended only for a few weeks. Long-term support is needed as well.
Annexes

Annex I: Employers’ Questionnaire

BUSINESS EMPLOYERS SURVEY

PROFILE

- Consent
- Name of the interviewee
- Date of the interview

- Job position of the interviewee
- Name of business
- Type of business (Government - private - non-profit...)
- Type of work (consulting, marketing, financial...)
- Start date of business

- Number of employees
- Phone number
- Email of respondent
- District: Gaza
- Location:

- Age:
- Gender:

RELEVANCE/PROJECT DESIGN

1. Could you please indicate how you know about the EFE training project?

2. How many beneficiaries of the EFE project did you recruit? As interns? How many? As employees? How many? Were the interns retained as employees after completing the on-the-job training? How many? If the answer is no, why?

3. In your opinion, is the Gaza economy in need of such training and placement project (before and after the COVID 19 pandemic)? Explain why or why not?

4. To what extent has the EFE project been appropriately responsive to the needs of youth? (To a Large Extent, To Some Extent, Little, Not at All) Please explain
5. To what extent has the EFE project been appropriately responsive to the needs and the priorities of the private sector? (To a Large Extent, To Some Extent, Little, Not at All) Please explain

6. Is such a project in line with the local authorities' economic plans? (Yes-No), if the answer is no, explain why

7. What are the reasons and advantages for your company to participate in such a program: provide longer-term or short-term employment to beneficiaries, cover human resources, or specific skills?

8. What criteria do you use in the selection of beneficiaries from the Project?

9. To what extent do you give preference to youth, women and people with disabilities when hiring? (To a Large Extent, To Some Extent, Little, Not at All)

   • Please provide percent of women, youth, people with disability selected by the company Please explain (Text)

10. Did you have similar programs with other (NGOs, INGOs, CSOs)? (If yes) do you think that the EFE project complement work among different entities in Palestine (NGOs, INGOs, CSOs)? How?

**EFFECTIVENESS**

1. To what extent do you believe the skills gained by the beneficiaries meet the needs of the market and facilitate their employment in your/other companies? (To a Large Extent, To Some Extent, Little, Not at All)
If negative answer, Why?

2. What was the level of employability of the beneficiaries of the project when they first started working for you? (Very good - Good - Fair - Poor).
If negative, why?

3. What sort of issues/challenges (i.e. factors likely to jeopardize the experience) were brought to the attention of the management during training?

What sort of support did you receive from EFE? (Text)

4. How has the COVID-19 affected your institution? Your recruitment process, including vis-à-vis beneficiaries of the project?

5. What are some of the unintended outcomes (both positive and/or negative) of the project?

SUSTAINABILITY

11. Do you have any plan to provide longer-term employment to beneficiaries who participated in the EFE program? (Yes-No), if the answer is no, explain why

1. Are there any other social, political or any other risks/circumstances that jeopardized your engagement in the project? (Yes-No), if the answer is yes, what are the risks?

2. Would you like the project to continue or not (why?)

12. Did you notice any multiplier effect of the Project or other similar projects? (Yes-No), if the answer is yes, please explain
LESSONS LEARNED/RECOMMENDATIONS

1. What are the main positive aspects of your participation in the project?

2. The main negative aspects of the project?

3. What are the main lessons learned of your experience with the project’s beneficiaries?

4. Can you give examples of changes and or recommendations you would make to the approach to enhance job creation and technical skills of future beneficiaries (regarding overlooked priorities of the youth and the private sector or the training itself, for instance)?

5. In general, is there a role for EFE and partner institutions to help alleviate or eliminate existing factors constraining youth and private sector from further involvement in similar livelihood projects? (larger projects for instance)

6. Did you have the opportunity (or if not, have the intention) to give your feedback about the project to EFE, If yes, do you consider the feedback was taken into account?

7. Any other important issue we did not tackle during this interview that you would like to share?
Annex II: Trainers’ Questionnaire

Trainers’ questions

Profile

- Interviewer
- Date of the interview
- Consent
- Name of the interviewee
- District: Gaza
- Age:
- Gender:
- Phone number
- Email of respondent

1. How were you recruited by EFE?

2. Did you receive any training from EFE (or were the parameters of your training discussed between you and EFE)?

3. Was the training methodology and approach successful? Why or why not?

4. Did you receive adequate support and have access to adequate facilities and equipment for the training? (Yes-No), if not, was what missing?

5. To which extent the project addresses the specific needs and challenges of youth? (per gender, educational level, aspirations, personal difficulties, etc.) (To a Large Extent, To Some Extent, Little, Not at All)

If negative answer, Why?
6. To what extent does the project address the needs and challenges of the private sector? *(To a Large Extent, To Some Extent, Little, Not at All)*

If negative answer, Why?

7. To what extent do you believe the skills gained by the trainees have facilitated (or has facilitated) their employment? *(To a Large Extent, To Some Extent, Little, Not at All)*

If negative answer, Why?

8. Do you think that youth will be able to secure long-term employment as a result of participating in the EFE project? *(Yes, No)* If the answer is no, explain why

9. To what extent do you think the trainees represented all vulnerable groups, including women and people from rural areas? *(To a Large Extent, To Some Extent, Little, Not at All)*, if the answer was negative, please explain why?

10. Have you met with the representatives of employers participating in the project? *(Yes-No)* if the answer was negative, please explain

11. Have you participated in similar programs with other (NGOs, INGOs, CSOs)? *(Yes-No)* If the answer was yes, does this EFE project complement work among different entities in Palestine (NGOs, INGOs, CSOs)? Please explain how?

12. During the project’s life span, was the training affected and changed (positively or negatively) because of:
   - Feedback of youth (were they responsive to the training? Produce feedbacks?)
   - Feedback of employers (idem).
   - Your own feedback about the training process: if yes, what was EFE’s response?
   - the COVID 19 crisis and consequences
   - New factors in the local political and socioeconomic context
13. Did you have the opportunity (or if not, have the intention) to give your feedback about the project to EFE? (Yes-No) If yes, do you consider the feedback was taken into account? (Yes-No)

14. Can you give examples of changes and or recommendations you would make to improve the quality of training? And/or bringing it more in line with the needs with the youth and demands of the labour market?
Annex III: Youth Questionnaire

YOUTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Consent of the informant: should be obtained by EFE-Palestine prior to the interview

- Presentation of the evaluators - the goal of the evaluation
- Personal information about informant: can be obtained priori to the interview through EFE-Palestine and/or for some questions at the beginning of the interview:
  - Name of the interviewee:
  - Age:
  - Gender:
  - Phone number
  - Email of respondent

- Hometown:
- Location of residence: Camp/rural
- Marital Status
- Living with family (father mother, siblings, etc.) or with his family (spouse, children) or as on his own (single) …
- Whatever the size of the household (HH), who in the HH is the breadwinner? Other HH members working, contributing to the HH income?

- Highest education level
- Academic background
- Disability:
- What kind of training did you receive from EFE/ entrepreneurship OR business start-up training OR life/soft skills (pathways)?
- What was your employment status before the training with EFE?

- Are you currently employed?
- What are the main challenges you faced in finding employment before the training (or you were not seeking a job?)

RELEVANCE/PROJECT DESIGN

1. How did you know about the EFE project? What made you want to participate in the project?

2. To which extent did the Project seem to address your livelihood needs and challenges? ? (To a Large Extent, To Some Extent, Little, Not at All), explain how.
3. To what extent did the project take into account your training wishes (related to your gender, level of education, aspirations)? (To a Large Extent, To Some Extent, Little, Not at All), explain how

4. Did you participate in other training projects of the kind? Yes/No, what are the Similarities and differences? What is the Value added of the EFE project?

**EFFECTIVENESS**

*For all 3 programs:*

1. Did your participation in the project address your needs by providing skills you did not have to access the labour market (as employee or entrepreneur)? Yes/No, please explain

2. Do you think that the program gave you skill in demand in the private or public sector? Yes/No, please explain

3. How do you evaluate the quality of the training itself (regardless of outcome: employment)? Good - Very good - Fair - Poor, explain why

*If JTP:*

Were you recruited in the company/institution where you first worked or received training? Yes / No Do you still work there? Yes / No If the answer is no, have you worked in other places? Yes / No, if the answer is no, what is the reason?
• If not, what are the reason? (unemployment, family reasons (marriage for women, etc.))

1. Were the skills acquired during the training instrumental in your entering the labour market Yes / No, if no what other factors came into play?

2. Did you (and your Household) economic wellbeing following the project? Yes / No, please explain how

3. Have your livelihoods been economically affected by COVID 19? Yes / No, please explain how

4. Did the project helped you overcome barriers to employment opportunities and mitigate the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 or any other challenge? Yes / No, If not, how did you overcome these challenges?

5. Were there other factors that affected the projects and its outcomes? Yes / No, if yes please explain

6. Did EFE provide support to mitigate challenges (during and after the participation in the project? Yes / No, if not what was missing?

7. Are there some of the unintended outcomes (both positive and/or negative) of the project? Yes / No, please explain

**IF ESE:**

1. Did you manage to open and maintain your enterprise following the training? Yes / No, describe (if not, explain the reasons), (If yes, explain how, which factors helped you, what is type of business...etc)
2. Were the skills acquired during training useful in this? Yes / No, if the answer is no, what factors played a role?

3. Did you (and your Household) economic wellbeing following the project? Yes / No, please explain how

4. Have your livelihoods been economically affected by COVID 19? Yes / No, please explain

5. Did the project helped you overcome barriers to employment opportunities and mitigate the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 or any other challenge? Yes / No, If not, how did you overcome these challenges?

6. Were there other factors (positive and negative) that affected the projects and its outcomes? Yes / No (administrative regulations, partnerships, family issues, etc.)

   • Please explain

7. Are there some of the unintended outcomes (both positive and/or negative) of the project? Yes / No, please mention them

**IF PATHWAYS:**

1. Did you find your training useful?

   • Did it make you confident that CV writing and job interview skills and labor market information got you to find the right opportunity? Yes / No
   • To what extent did you find the training in line with the labor market requirements? (To a Large Extent, To Some Extent, Little, Not at All), explain how
   • Did your participation in the project affect your job search behaviour in general? Yes/No, please explain how
2. Did you find a job following your training? Yes/No, please explain

3. Were the skills acquired during training useful in this? Yes / No, if the answer is no, what factors played a role?

- To what extent has your income (and well-being) and that of your household improved as a result of joining the EFE project? (To a Large Extent, To Some Extent, Little, Not at All), explain how

4. Were you economically affected by COVID 19? Yes/No, please explain how

5. Did the project helped you overcome barriers to employment opportunities and mitigate the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 or any other challenge? Yes / No, If not, how did you overcome these challenges?

**SUSTAINABILITY**

1. To what extent are the positive changes and effects of the project to be considered durable (regardless of your present situation)? (To a Large Extent, To Some Extent, Little, Not at All), explain how

2. Do you think you will find a long-term employment/economic activity as a result of participating in the EFE program? Yes/No, please explain

**LESSONS LEARNED/RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. What is the main positive aspect of the participation in the project?

2. What are the less positive aspects of the training?
3. What are the main lessons learned of your experience in the project?

4. Can you give examples of changes and or recommendations you would make to the approach to improve the training? (regarding overlooked priorities of yours for instance)?

5. Did you have the opportunity (or if not, have the intention) to give your feedback about the project to EFE? Yes/No If yes, do you consider the feedback was taken into account? Yes/No

6. Any other important issue we did not tackle during this interview?
Annex IV: EFE Staff Questionnaire

EFE staff interview questionnaire

1. What is your position and what are your responsibilities at EFE?

2. What was your exact role within the Project?

3. Any prior similar involvement or experiences with another Agency?

RELEVANCE

1. To what extent have the project activities (training curriculum, procedures, etc) evolved since it started? In response to what factors (feedback from trainers, trainees, employers, etc.)?

2. How have the employers influenced the content of the Project’s activity(ies)

3. How have the beneficiaries influenced the contents of the Project’s activity(ies)

4. Have the activities been affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic? How?

5. What is the specificity of EFE approach to training and employment?

EFFECTIVENESS

1. Which activities was the most effective in reaching objectives?

2. Has the project been implemented as intended? Why or why not?
3. To which degree has the project managed to mitigate internal and external risks/circumstances? Were there in your opinion some activities that could have reached better results with better project design?

4. What is in your mind the Project’s best achievement?

5. Can you think of any unintended (positive or negative) effects project activities have had?

SUSTAINABILITY
1. To what extent are the positive changes and effects of the project to be considered durable?

2. Which risks and potentials do you perceive for the permanence (or: sustainable effectiveness) of positive changes?

GOOD PRACTICES
3. What are good practices in the effective planning and steering of project activities in the field of income and employment promotion?

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. How could the project be improved (at planning level; implementation level, at monitoring and evaluation levels)? What are the aspects of the training that can be improved? (For instance, better representation of segments of the Gaza population, longer training periods, better follow-up of alumni etc.)

2. Are there overlooked priorities of youth and the private sector that can be considered for future interventions?

3. In which direction do you think the projects should develop in the future?

4. Did we miss an important topic you would like to discuss with us?
## Annex V: Participants, Trainers, & Employers

### JTP Participants

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Please note that names have been removed to protect the confidentiality of participants.

### Entrepreneurship Participants

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Please note that names have been removed to protect the confidentiality of participants.

**FJIJ Participants**

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Please note that names have been removed to protect the confidentiality of participants.

**Trainers**

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**Employers**

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