



Egyptian skilling initiative reaches 1m+ youth through cross-sector partnerships

A capacity-building model has enabled Tawar w 3'ayar to teach computing and other critical skills in more than 800 centers country-wide

In 2012, Sabry Mabrook felt the economic fallout of Egypt's participation in the Arab Spring. When he lost his job as an accountant, Mabrook struggled to make ends meet for his mother and sisters whom he supported, much less save for his upcoming wedding. Then an organization in his rural town recommended he learn computing skills at a nearby youth center, which offered courses through the skilling initiative Tawar w 3'ayar.

Mabrook seized the opportunity. Fast forward to today, when he is now training everyone from elders to children to the unemployed in digital literacy, foundational business skills, and programming. He also started a technology business, where he sells devices, software, and services.

Look further out and you'll see his impact stretch even more. Men he trained told him they got new jobs because of what they learned from Mabrook. Teachers sat for and passed technology exams. And women whose only income had been babysitting began teaching the children in their care how to use the internet and access online educational platforms—a skill more important than ever during the coronavirus-related lockdown.

The challenge

Nearly a third of all young people in Egypt were unemployed in 2019¹, and joblessness rates among youth actually increase along with education attainment.² What's more, roughly half of young people who are employed are working in jobs that don't match their skills and educational qualifications.³

Analysis from the Brookings Institution⁴ and the British Council⁵ suggests that there is a skills mismatch between what business need from employees and what people learn in technical, vocational, and academic settings. The result: staggeringly high unemployment among young people and unfilled skilled jobs.

A coalition formed to address the unemployment crisis. The Egyptian Ministries of Youth and Sports and Communication and IT partnered with private and nonprofit organizations—including Microsoft, UNDP, and Care Egypt Foundation—to provide young people the skills and confidence to succeed in technology-enabled jobs.

"Technology trainings had a great impact on me and my community," Mabrook says. "Technology has enabled us to create the jobs that we have now, instead of the jobs we lost due to the revolution. It allows us to find more and more opportunities."

The solution

Tawar w 3'ayar was founded in 2016 to focus on one of the central issues of the Arab Spring: employment. The program, which was initiated by and continues to be supported by Microsoft, focuses on building the capacity of government agencies to provide quality skilling and employability services for young people in Egypt.

"The initiative aims to empower a large sector of Egyptian youth," explains Manal Youssef, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. "To ensure sustainability, Tawar w 3'ayar empowers young employees to become effective trainers themselves." That's why Tawar w 3'ayar upskills government staff and helps them provide the job-readiness training to youth.

The program introduces or enhances skilling and employment services in youth centers, nonprofits, libraries, and IT clubs. These sites run courses that combine in-person instruction with a virtual classroom to teach technical skills such as app development and web design. Learners finish courses by taking an exam with the potential to earn certifications in topics such as coding, business management, and goal-setting.

800 youth centers offer employment, digital skills, and entrepreneurship training through Tawar w 3'ayar

The centers that have adopted Tawar w 3'ayar independently choose which trainings to offer and how often. That way, courses are driven by available job opportunities and skills gaps in each location. This flexibility allows centers to customize offerings to local needs and nearby industries, from tourism to agriculture.

Finally, these centers provide career guidance and actively match participants with career opportunities. They employ job scouts, who network with local hiring managers, host job fairs, coach unemployed youth, and run recruitment days.

13,000: The number of Tawar w 3'ayar participants directly matched with jobs



More than 1.4 million youth have been served by Tawar w 3'ayar

This strategy has proven effective: Tawar w 3'ayar has reached more than 1.4 million youth, boosting Egyptian young people's competitiveness in both national and international labor markets.

"This partnership brings together the strengths and resources of the government, private sector, and nonprofits," says Samar Halawa, a philanthropies lead at Microsoft Middle East. "It helps build long-term social and economic development by growing a full ecosystem for skilling and employment in Egypt, from career guiding to job placement or self-employment."

Promising practices for deeper impact

Develop private-nonprofit-governmental partnerships. "We cannot work alone if we want to achieve wide impact, and that's why this far-reaching partnership is so crucial," says Halawa. The initiative works with businesses to identify skills gaps and develop curricula, Microsoft to develop technology-related training, Care Egypt Foundation to create curricula that foster employability and soft skills as well as delivering "train the trainer" instruction, and both nonprofits and government agencies to host and deliver these trainings to youth.

Build capacity. The train the trainer model builds capacity of organizations that have the connections and social capital to reach communities across Egypt. This creates ripples of economic change in urban centers, rural villages, and everywhere in between—reaching exponentially more beneficiaries. Mabrook, for example, has trained hundreds of people in his village, including some who have gotten jobs as a direct result of their improved digital and technological skills.

Anticipate future opportunities. Tawar w 3'ayar works with the Egyptian government and private companies to assess the biggest skilled labor shortages, then train the skills needed in those openings. It also keeps tabs on global trends and develops programming so Egyptian youth are poised to meet that demand. For example, it worked with Microsoft to develop trainings on artificial intelligence so youth can work virtually and, eventually, fill jobs in-country as opportunities grow.

Create monitoring and evaluation systems.

Tawar w 3'ayar implemented a digital monitoring and evaluation system to track the number of youth served, the efficacy of trainers, and the popularity of trainings. The data help staff spot particularly skilled trainers (so they can teach them to offer more advanced courses), demonstrate impact to partners, and direct staff time toward refining programs instead of evaluating centers in-person.

Connect youth with jobs. Leadership within Tawar w 3'ayar found that skills training wasn't enough on its own to meet the program's end goal: getting young people back to work. That's why services that directly connect the unemployed to economic opportunity—job banks, one-on-one job matching services, and career counseling to complement trainings—are an integral part to the initiative's success. This direct connection to employment options helps participants understand which courses will make them more competitive for current openings in their communities.

Encourage entrepreneurship. Tawar w 3'ayar offers an entire entrepreneurship track, encouraging a new culture of start-ups and small businesses. Independent businesses power economic opportunity—especially for those who want to offer services outside of Cairo, where most business is centered, and for women and those with disabilities, who face barriers to working outside the home.

Microsoft is working with nonprofits to ensure every person has the skills, knowledge, and opportunity they need to succeed in the digital economy. Learn more aka.ms/skills-employability