

# Evaluation Summary

## CSO INITIATIVE – Final External Evaluation of the Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship Booster Project (YEEB)

Country: Egypt  
Governorates: Cairo and Assiut

Sector: Youth Employability, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Empowerment

Evaluator: Iman Elibary  
Evaluation Date: June 2026

### Key data on AFD support

OSC: **People Power Inclusion - PPI**  
 Project Number: **CEG1150**  
 Amount: **600,000 euros**  
 of which AFD grant: **360,000 euros (60%)**  
 Project Start Date: **15/3/2023**  
 Project End Date: **14/3/2026**  
 Duration: **36 months**

### Context and Challenges

The Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship Booster (YEEB) project was implemented across two governorates with distinct social, economic, and labor market realities: **Cairo**, a large urban center characterized by a competitive labor market and diverse employment opportunities, and **Assiut**, a predominantly urban-rural governorate where access to jobs, finance, and business development services remains more constrained. Designing and implementing a single project across these two contexts required continuous adaptation to local needs while maintaining a common strategic vision focused on youth economic inclusion and gender equality and inclusion to all vulnerable groups equally.

The project responded to persistent challenges affecting young people, including unemployment, skills mismatches, limited access to finance, and barriers preventing women from fully participating in economic life. These challenges were further compounded by inflationary pressures, economic uncertainty, and changing labor market conditions throughout the implementation period.

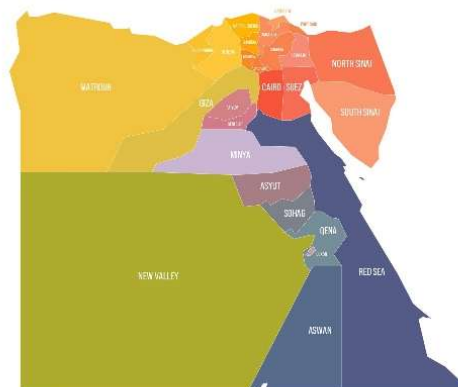
At the institutional level, local civil society organizations faced sustainability challenges, resource constraints, and the need to strengthen systems capable of supporting young people beyond the life of donor-funded interventions. Despite these complexities, the project demonstrated that locally anchored solutions can generate meaningful results when combined with strong partnerships, adaptive management, and community ownership. The contrasting realities of Cairo and Assiut ultimately became a strength of the intervention, allowing the project to establish two employability centers, focus on entrepreneurship, achieve inclusion, and quality service delivery. The experience highlighted the importance of tailoring interventions to local contexts while maintaining a shared commitment to youth empowerment, gender inclusion, and sustainable economic development.

### Implementation Partners

The project was implemented by People Power Inclusion (PPI) in partnership with Association of Business Women of Assiut (ABWA) and the Egyptian Association for Community Development (EACD). ABWA contributed strong community outreach, employer engagement, and microfinance experience, while EACD provided technical training capacity and inclusive support for women, refugees, and vulnerable groups. Together, the partners established complementary local ecosystems that strengthened project delivery, inclusion, and sustainability.

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### Objectives

The project aimed to strengthen youth employability and entrepreneurship in Cairo and Assiut while promoting gender equality and economic inclusion. It focused on building the capacity of local civil society organizations, supporting young people to access employment or start businesses, and creating more inclusive labor market opportunities for women and vulnerable groups.

### PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

- 670 young women and men accompanied** through employability and entrepreneurship services.
- 313 youth integrated into the labor market**, including 216 young women.
- 127 businesses established** by project beneficiaries six months after support.
- 24 CSO staff trained** and **2 employability and entrepreneurship centers established** to strengthen local service delivery.
- 60 linkages established with financial institutions**, exceeding the project target.
- 962 young people selected** from more than 3,400 applications and provided with tailored support pathways.
- Approximately 110,000 people reached** through digital awareness and gender equality campaigns

## Assessment of the project

### Relevance of the Project Intervention Strategy

The YEEB project remained highly relevant to Egypt's priorities for youth employment, entrepreneurship, economic inclusion, and gender equality. By combining employability support, entrepreneurship development, and institutional capacity building, the project addressed key barriers facing young people in both Cairo and Assiut. The intervention was particularly relevant because it adapted to changing labor market realities and responded to the different needs of urban and urban-rural communities while maintaining a strong focus on inclusion and opportunity creation.

### Assessment of the Project Partnership Strategy

The partnership model between People Power Inclusion (PPI), the Association of Business Women of Assiut (ABWA), and the Egyptian Association for Comprehensive Development (EACD) was a key contributor to project success. The two local partners brought complementary strengths and local knowledge that enabled tailored implementation across different contexts. The partnership approach strengthened local ownership, improved service delivery, and enhanced the long term capacity of both organizations to support youth employability and entrepreneurship beyond the project period.

### Effectiveness: Achievement of Objectives and Changes to Which the Project Contributed

The project achieved most of its intended objectives and generated meaningful economic and social outcomes for beneficiaries. It strengthened the capacities of local civil society organizations, improved employability and entrepreneurial skills among youth, expanded opportunities for business creation and employment, and promoted greater participation of women in economic activities. While employment outcomes remained below the original target, entrepreneurship results exceeded expectations, demonstrating the effectiveness of tailored coaching, mentoring, and business support services, especially financial and psychosocial support.

### Sustainability of Outcomes and Effects

The project established a strong foundation for sustainability through strengthened local institutions, trained staff, operational counseling centers, and enhanced relationships with employers and financial institutions. Both partner organizations demonstrated commitment to continuing services after project completion. However, long term sustainability will depend on the successful implementation of diversified funding models, full functioning of centers, stronger private sector partnerships, and the development of revenue generating services that reduce dependence on donor funding.

### Potential for Scaling Up and Replication

The YEEB model demonstrates strong potential for replication and scale due to its integrated approach combining employability, entrepreneurship, institutional strengthening, and gender inclusion. Especially with more focus on technology, AI and labor skills needed in different markets. The project showed that locally managed service centers, supported by strong partnerships and adaptive implementation, can effectively respond to different regional contexts. Lessons learned from Cairo and Assiut provide a practical framework that can be adapted and expanded to other governorates and youth focused programs across Egypt and the wider region.

### Strengths and Unique Features of the Project

The YEEB project stood out for its ecosystem-based approach, recognizing that sustainable youth employment requires more than training alone. Rather than focusing solely on short-term service delivery, the project combined employability support, entrepreneurship development, institutional capacity building, financial inclusion, and gender equality within a single intervention framework. This integrated approach enabled the project to address both the supply and demand sides of the labor market while strengthening local institutions that will continue serving young people beyond the project period.

A distinctive feature of the project was its implementation through two different local ecosystems in Cairo and Assiut. Rather than applying a standardized model, the project adapted to the realities of an urban environment and an urban-rural context, allowing partners to respond to local labor market conditions, social norms, and economic opportunities. This flexibility strengthened local ownership and increased the relevance of services provided to beneficiaries.

The project also demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusion. Women were not treated as a target group alone but were actively integrated across project activities, resulting in significant participation in employability and entrepreneurship pathways. Refugees and vulnerable groups were also included, contributing to a more equitable and accessible model of economic empowerment. Combined with adaptive implementation, strong partnerships, and continuous learning, these elements represent some of the project's most important strengths and distinguishing characteristics.

## Lessons Learned

The evaluation confirmed that youth economic empowerment is most effective when projects build ecosystems rather than deliver training alone. The strongest results were achieved where skills development was combined with coaching, mentoring, employer engagement, financial linkages, and continuous follow up. Entrepreneurship support generated clearer economic outcomes than short vocational training on its own. The evaluation also highlighted the importance of adaptive implementation and local ownership. The different realities of Cairo and Assiut required flexible approaches, and the ability of partners to tailor services to local needs strengthened both relevance and effectiveness. While the project successfully improved employability skills, confidence, and readiness for work, stronger job matching mechanisms, private sector engagement, and placement support are needed to translate preparedness into sustained employment outcomes. The findings further demonstrated that inclusion is most effective when integrated across all project activities rather than treated as a standalone component. Finally, stronger integration and enforcement of MEL systems from earlier stages enhanced learning, adaptive management, and evidence-based decision making, reinforcing the value of institutionalizing existing tools and processes as part of long term sustainability.