

READY OR NOT



The changing face of youth unemployment in Egypt: One public/private partnership offers a real-world solution

BY DR. IMAN EL KAFASS

Young people in Egypt have little access to practical job and entrepreneurship training. Indeed, despite positive economic trends, employers in the country are reporting that the lack of skilled graduates limits the growth and vitality of their businesses. Looking ahead, many Egyptian policymakers worry that the rapidly changing marketplace will make youth even less prepared to work in the nation's emerging economic reality.

Employment opportunities in Egypt are projected to shift dramatically from the public to private sector in the coming decade. By 2015, private-sector employers will need to generate some 8 million new jobs—most in small- and medium-sized enterprises—to compensate for the significant drop in government jobs. With current unemployment in Egypt hovering around 9 percent (even higher for young people), the economy needs to generate some 750,000 new jobs each year simply to keep pace.

This places a heavy burden on Egypt's government-run universities. Officials are asking themselves pivotal questions. Where will our bright university students gain the skills and practical experience they need to successfully move into the growing job market? How can real solutions be developed that will eventually lead to broad-based reforms in the school-to-work system? How can we engage a broader spectrum of stakeholders to begin working together to confront this challenge?

No easy answers exist. But government authorities and local employers alike can see good news on the horizon. The country is experiencing steady economic growth. Policies are now in place to encourage greater business competition and to strengthen small enterprises. And a handful of innovative youth employment initiatives, especially in Cairo, have begun to offer college graduates greater opportunities for meaningful employment.

The Campus Connection

One such public-private partnership, IYF's Egyptian Education and Employment Alliance (EEEA), leads an effort to bridge the gap between education and employers. Managed by Nahdet el Mahrousa, an Egyptian NGO, and funded in part by USAID, the Alliance operates under the direction of prominent government, business and civil society advisors. The innovative venture provides a platform for multiple stakeholders to come together around workable solutions for youth seeking quality livelihoods in the future.

One of the Alliance's initial projects—to launch Career Development Centers at the national government-supported universities—is now off the ground. One new Center, housed at Cairo University's Faculty of Engineering, is the first of its kind to be established at an Egyptian public university. The Center is already providing new graduates with practical job skills and linking them to training courses, mentorship opportunities, conferences, internships and businesses. In its first few months, the Center has provided more than 600 students with training and counseling and expects to reach more than 2,000 students in the next 12 months.

This model Career Development Center represents a wonderful opportunity for graduates to develop the technical and workplace skills employers increasingly demand. It



Above: Volunteers and staff celebrate the first job fair organized by the new Career Development Office at Cairo University's Faculty of Engineering, a program supported by the Egyptian Education and Employment Alliance (EEEA). PHOTO: COURTESY OF NAHDET EL MAHROUSA

also sets out to develop innovative cooperative relationships with 100 corporations—each of which will agree to consider hiring outstanding students participating in the program. The Alliance is now also implementing a similar model at Ain Shams University under the management of the Egyptian Junior Business Association.

Each university agrees to work closely with private-sector and civil society organizations to ensure its Center's success. Such programs, with this level of public-sector participation, are much needed in Egypt. Even more important, the partnership—to be tried and tested through this initial phase via the robust participation of partners—demonstrates real potential for sustainability and reaching true scale, to the benefit of thousands more university graduates seeking to join the global economy.

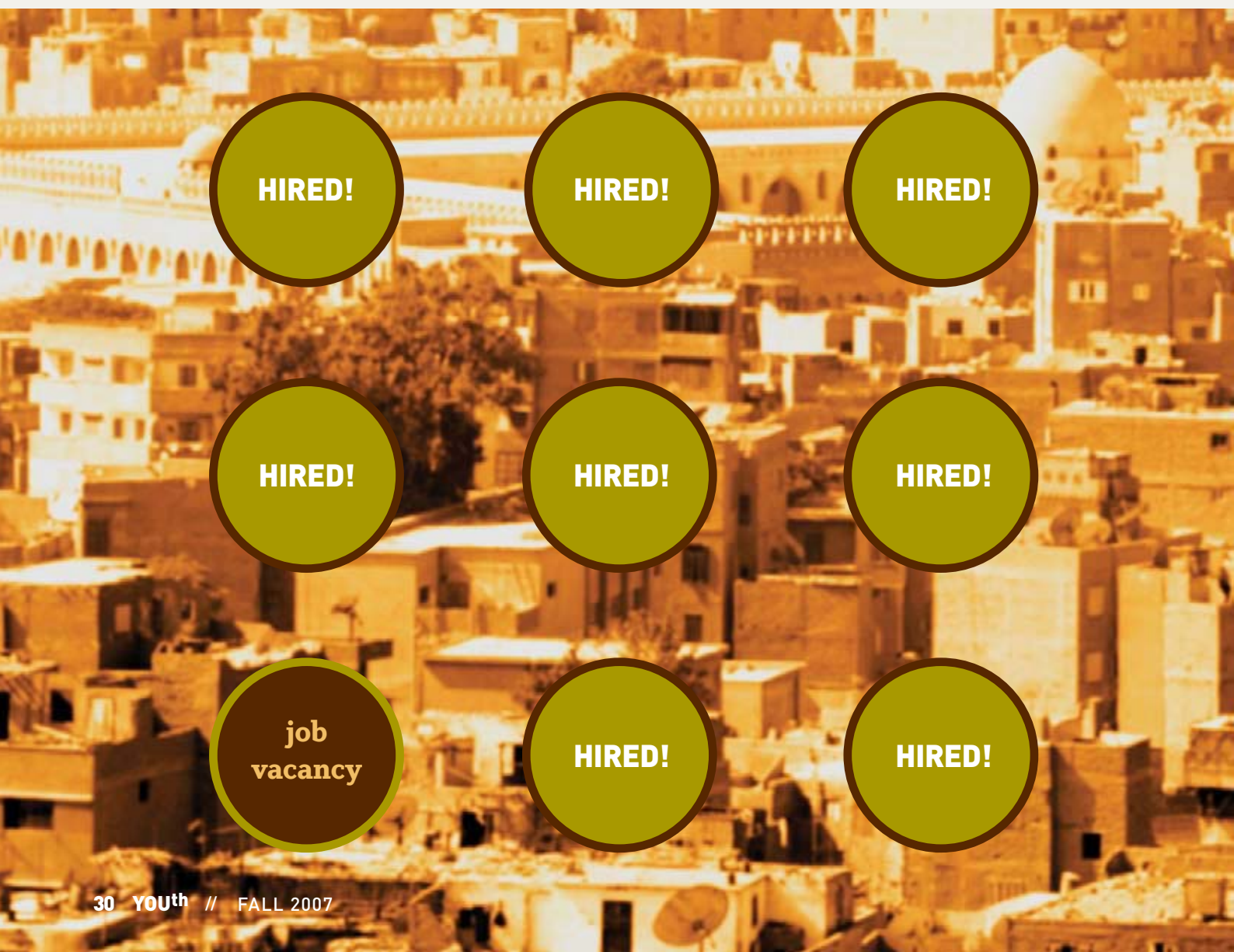
A Sustainable Solution

Building on the initial momentum, the Alliance has plans for another pioneering program—reaching out to a number of the country's 4,500 government-managed Youth Centers now under the direction of Egypt's National Youth Council. The plan calls for partnering with the Youth Coun-


cil—comprised of prominent, reform-minded leaders from all sectors of civil society—in establishing sustainable, locally managed youth centers. These centers would enable NGOs and local youth and other leaders to play a substantial role in operations. The new “one-stop shops” will offer youth leadership and training programs, as well as job placement services, health and lifestyle counseling, and social and cultural activities.

Both Alliance initiatives serve as successful models for how the government can not only help design and develop creative solutions to the challenges facing today's youth but execute and expand them as well. The more we can build alliances between different sectors of society that focus their combined resources on critical issues such as job preparedness, the more likely we will be able to unlock the enormous potential of our young people.

Countries in Asia and the Near East report some of the world's highest youth jobless rates: One out of every four young people are without work in a number of countries in the region. Overall, global youth unemployment has increased to an all-time high of 14.4 percent—or 88 million youth.



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Today's young people are the next generation of employees, entrepreneurs, policymakers and community leaders. We simply cannot afford—in either human or economic terms—to squander their energy and ingenuity. 

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IYF Builds Team to Boost Youth Employability

The Education & Employment Alliance (EEA) is a project of the International Youth Foundation supported by USAID. As EEA's Global Secretariat, IYF oversees the development of public-private alliances in Egypt, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Pakistan and the Philippines.

IYF also manages program grants, leads the effort to leverage additional funds and develops case studies and other learning materials to highlight employability issues in the region.


Through its partnerships, EEA increases education and employment opportunities for underserved youth in the six participating countries. Many new initiatives are currently being designed and will soon be implemented in EEA's participating countries.


EEA the formula for change


TOTAL INVESTMENT: **US\$22 million**


TOTAL BENEFICIARIES: **Targeting 1.1 million youth in six countries**

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

 In India, EEA is working with the Alcatel-Lucent Foundation to support programs that reach over **15,000** children and youth to improve their life and employability skills. EEA will also reach **17,000** vulnerable youth in India through the GE Life Skills for Employability program.

 In Indonesia, EEA is helping a dozen youth entrepreneurs create an additional **230** jobs in the country's earthquake-affected region. EEA also helps fund an entrepreneurship training project with the Oracle Education Foundation and Junior Achievement for **2,900** vocational school students in Jakarta. Other programs, in partnership with BP, will help employ close to **400** young people through entrepreneurship and employability training for businesses in West Java.

 Through EEA in the Philippines, nearly **2,500** out-of-school youth in the conflict areas of Mindanao will benefit from technical education programs providing direct connections to jobs and equivalency degrees. Among this group, **1,000** youth will be trained in seaweed production on the conflict-affected island of Tawi Tawi and **900** young people who are children of ex-combatants will receive civil trades training.

 In Morocco, seven innovative projects are underway that leverage private-sector contributions to improve the relevance of local educational systems. One program works with the largest association of women-led enterprises, providing training for **50** young women to fill employment needs in member enterprises.

To learn more about IYF's plans for EEA, please visit www.eeaonline.org



Above: More than half the graduates in the *entra 21* program have been hired in full-time jobs.

PHOTO: CARLOS ALBERTO FLOREZ

Repeat Performance

Colombian city officials adapt successful employment program

After decades of violence, drug trafficking and guerrilla and paramilitary operations, the Colombian city of Medellín has entered a period of social and economic renewal. In recent years, local government officials have upped efforts to clean up the streets—and image—of the country's second-largest city, home to more than 3 million residents.



Above: Medellín's mayor Sergio Fajardo is leading his city's campaign to invest in underserved communities with a focus on youth. PHOTO: COURTESY OF OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

With support from IYF, Mayor Sergio Fajardo has targeted the city's root causes of poverty and social exclusion, including an estimated 56,000 young people out of work. Central to the mayor's new urban policy: a youth employment program, **Youth with a Future** (*Jovenes con Futuro*), that will provide 12,000 disadvantaged youth with job training, counseling and job placement services.

"We seek to reward youth who display a positive attitude," Fajardo says, "who despite having the opportunity to engage in violent and illegal activities have avoided getting involved and are examples of how people can co-exist and behave like good citizens."

Youth with a Future builds on the success of *entra 21*, an IYF employment initiative currently active in 18 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean. Launched in 2004 in cooperation with the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) of the Inter-American Development Bank to address rising youth unemployment in

the region, *entra 21* operates on the combined support of MIF and the private sector totaling US\$29 million. To date, the exemplary program has reached more than 19,000 youth with IT and life skills training, internship opportunities and job-placement assistance—finding employment for more than half of the participants.

In line with Medellín's new focus on youth employment, Youth with a Future brings job placement services, a rigorous evaluation process and the best practices gained through *entra 21* to the city. IYF will invest approximately one-fifth of the total cost. The municipal government and the private sector will provide additional resources.

Jaime Velilla, the mayor's labor advisor, underscores the value of Youth with a Future for Medellín: "Its personalized approach, emphasis on new technologies and training in technological, life and job-seeking skills definitely motivated the city to seek this partnership." **Y**