



Contributions of the Non-Profit Sector to the Creation of Dignified and Fulfilling Work for Young People in Egypt

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ABSTRACT



This literature review critically examines the contribution of Egypt's non-profit sector (NPOs) to addressing youth unemployment and promoting dignified and fulfilling work. Against a backdrop of rapid demographic change and a persistent youth bulge, Egypt continues to face complex labour market challenges characterised by high youth unemployment, informality, and mismatches between education and employment. Drawing on academic and grey literature, supplemented by semi-structured expert interviews, the study analyses how NPOs complement state and private-sector efforts to integrate young people into the workforce through skills training, entrepreneurship promotion, job matching, and policy advocacy. It situates NPO interventions within Egypt's evolving civil society landscape, shaped by shifting state-society relations over the last 15 years. The review finds that NPOs play a central role in implementing youth employment programmes, often in partnership with government agencies and international donors, across all major economic sectors. However, the sector's impact remains constrained: systemic barriers such as scarcity of data, insufficient capacity to meet demand, and irregular donor cycles limit the sector from reaching its full potential as a partner in national youth labour force development. By mapping these dynamics, the study contributes to emerging scholarship on the socio-economic role of civil society in contemporary Egypt and offers a foundation for future research on how non-state actors can foster dignified and fulfilling work for young people in Egypt.

Keywords: Non-profit organisations, civil society organisations, youth employment, dignified and fulfilling jobs, Egypt

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CAPSI Director

DISCLAIMER

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AUC	American University in Cairo
CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EPP	Employment Promotion Project
EYE	Employment for Youth in Egypt
EYE RAWABET	Egypt Youth Employment: Jobs and Private Sector Development in Rural Egypt
ECES	Egyptian Center for Economic Studies
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ITI	Information Technology Institute
IZA	Institut zur Zukunft der Arbeit (Institute of Labor Economics)
MOY	Ministry of Youth
MSMEDA	Micro, Small and Medium Entrprises Development Agency
NACDW	National Alliance for Civil Development Work
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFD	Social Fund for Development
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNTFHS	United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
YEGP	Youth Employment Generation Programme
U.S.	United States

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INTRODUCTION



Africa stands at a critical moment in its development, where demographic trends will play a key role in shaping its development trajectories. Factors such as rapid population growth, a youthful age structure, and rapid urbanisation rank among the most important demographic shifts taking place in the contemporary context. In 2024, Africa's population reached approximately 1.56 billion (United Nations, 2024), which will rise to 2.5 billion by 2050 (United Nations, 2022). This rapid population growth is a double-edged sword, offering both opportunities and risks. With a median age of 19.2 years in 2024, Africa's population structure is the youngest globally (Worldometers, 2024).

Many scholars view Africa's youthful population as a valuable opportunity and a potential driver of growth. Grounded in demographic dividend theory, this perspective holds that as fertility rates drop and the share of the working age population rises, countries can experience accelerated economic growth (Bloom et al., 2003). Comparative evidence from East and South Asia supports this argument, showing how countries like China and India have managed to leverage their expanding labour force and expanding market base to drive industrialisation and boost their economies (Mason, 2021). However, to capture the benefits of a growing population, absorb new entrants into the workforce, and prevent rising unemployment, the job market must expand at a higher rate than the labour force. Policymakers and practitioners are grappling with this challenge across the continent. Whether Africa's rapid population growth becomes a blessing or a burden depends on how governments and societies across the continent navigate these challenges and harness the opportunities associated with a vibrant, youthful population.

Youth unemployment remains a critical challenge to economic development. Recent estimates indicate that youth unemployment¹ stands at 49.1% in South Africa, 19.2 in Egypt, 17.8% in Zambia, and 19% in Nigeria (ILO, 2023; World Bank, 2023). These figures highlight the urgent need for job creation, skills development, and economic reforms to absorb the continent's rapidly expanding labour force. As a result, governments and policymakers worldwide regularly prioritise youth employment in their development agendas. Across Africa, the non-profit sector has prioritised reducing youth unemployment as a central pillar of its economic development programmes—Egypt is no exception. Given its geographical location, economic size, military power, and historical influence, Egypt is considered one of the key players that shape the African continent. Egypt is the second-largest economy on the continent with a nominal GDP of approximately \$380 billion in 2024, and the third-largest population in the continent, with an estimated population of 114.5 million in 2024. As of 2025, the country's youth (ages 18–29) make up 19.9% of the population, or 21.3 million people (Al-Ahram, 2025).

1 Percentage of total labour force ages 15–24.



According to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), Egypt's labour force in the fourth quarter of 2024 was 32.22 million, a 2.5% increase from 31.42 million in the second quarter of the same year. The national unemployment rate for all individuals in the workforce was 7.1% in 2024 (World Bank, n.d.) . At the same time, the youth labour force participation rate was 23.5%, while the unemployment rate hovered at 19%—roughly three times the national average. In addition to these, Egypt's youth bulge and moderate population (roughly 1.6%) continue to put pressure on the economy in general and the labour market in particular. These underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to enhance youth employment opportunities, strengthen their role in the labour market, and address broader labour market inefficiencies.

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As this literature review demonstrates, non-profit organisations (NPOs) or civil society organisations (CSOs) can play a vital role in combating youth unemployment. Beyond providing direct employment, NPOs contribute to reducing youth unemployment through programmes and initiatives that encourage skills development, enhance employability, provide entrepreneurial support, and advocate for policy to create job opportunities for young people. This literature review explores the contributions of the non-profit sector to Egypt economic development, including creating jobs for the youth. It also seeks to highlight the contributions of the sector to creating dignified and fulfilling jobs for young people in the country. It aims to understand the current state of knowledge and showcase research opportunities about the role of the non-profit sector in the Egyptian youth labour force. In doing so, it fills a critical knowledge gap that can help practitioners, scholars, and policymakers to identify and analyse the dynamics between the non-profit sector, youth employment, and economic development. As such, this study helps to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the economic contribution of the non-profit sector to youth employment in Egypt?
2. What is the economic contribution of the non-profit sector to dignified and fulfilling work for young people in Egypt?
3. Within the non-profit sector in Egypt, what are the sub-sectoral contributions to dignified and fulfilling work for various categories of young people?
4. What are the emerging knowledge gaps within the sector and sub-sectors? What is the state and nature of youth employment and or youth engagement as work in these sub-sectors?
5. What are the possibilities and opportunities for increased employment in the sector?

To address these questions, the study begins by reviewing key concepts and demographic features related to the Egyptian youth labour force. Subsequently, it provides an in-depth analysis of Egypt's civil society sector and its evolution. The literature review then provides a thorough survey of NPO contributions to youth employment, from both typological and economic sub-sectoral perspectives. In closing, the review highlights knowledge gaps in the field and identifies opportunities for expanded NPO work in the area of youth employment.





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METHODOLOGY

The primary methodology employed in this research involved a desk-based analysis, utilising a combination of academic and grey literature to gain an understanding of the subject matter. To ensure a robust and evidence-based analysis, a wide range of sources were used. These included peer-reviewed academic journals, research papers from reputable institutions, policy reports, think tank publications, and reports from national and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). The literature search was guided by a set of carefully selected keywords to maximise the relevance and comprehensiveness of the results. These keywords include employment, CSOs, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), CSOs in Egypt, NPOs, unemployment in Egypt, youth unemployment in Egypt, and unemployment in Egypt.

In addition to the review of primary and secondary literature, semi-structured interviews with subject matter experts were conducted to gain current insights into the current state of the non-profit sector in country. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for flexibility in data gathering and qualitative insight, enabling respondents to elaborate on key themes while also allowing for the exploration of emergent topics relevant to the research. The interviews were particularly helpful in harnessing localised knowledge that is often absent from academic literature or NGO reports. By employing a combination of secondary research and expert interviews, this methodology ensured that the findings were both theoretically informed and practically relevant, capturing both academic and practice insights.

The review primarily focused on analysing the current role of the non-profit sector in the Egyptian labour market. However, given the structural and regulatory landscape of Egypt, it is critical to acknowledge the state's significant role in shaping CSOs' activities. The relationship between the state and the non-profit sector is particularly complex, given the state's repression of the sector following the 2011 revolution. As a result, this research did not assess the role of CSOs in isolation but instead examined it within the broader context of government policies, regulations, and interventions that impact non-profit activities. It is therefore important to note that government policy in the last decade has not only significantly impacted and shaped the NPO sector itself but also determined the shape and nature of data accessible to the research community.



The background features a warm, golden-brown color palette with a pattern of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs and carvings. A large, thin white circle is positioned in the upper left quadrant, partially overlapping a solid, semi-transparent orange circle in the lower left. The text is centered in the lower half of the page.

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DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

This section outlines and explains key concepts central to this study, providing contextual insights that establish how these concepts are defined and applied in the Egyptian context.

3.1 Youth in the Egyptian Context

Defining youth has always been a challenging issue, given the diverse ways in which age, maturity, and identity are understood across different societies and cultures. Several organisations have tried to set a threshold age to categorise youth while still recognising the importance of cultural and societal context in shaping how youth is defined. For instance, the United Nations (UN) defines youth as individuals between the ages of roughly 15 and 24 (United Nations, 2013). This age range is commonly referred to as young adulthood when individuals typically transition from childhood to adulthood. During this phase, young people often pursue higher education, enter the workforce, and make important life decisions. The World Bank does not have its own definition of youth. In general, it adopts the UNs' 15-to 24-year-old definition; however, based on the scope of its programmes and strategies, it sometimes extends the definition to 29 (World Bank, 2019) or even 35 (World Bank, 2022).

The United Nations (UN) defines youth as individuals between the ages of roughly 15 and 24 (United Nations, 2013).

Individual countries have their own national definitions of youth based on their legal systems and demographic structures. In Egypt, the law does not specify an exact definition of youth. The CAPMAS, for instance, defines youth as persons between 15 and 29 years. However, the Ministry of Youth (MoY) and Sports' definition of 18–35 is frequently used in national policies and strategies (Islamic Development Bank, 2019). This study employs the African Union's definition, which reflects the continent's demographic realities. According to the African Youth Charter, "Youth are individuals between the ages of 15 and 35, reflecting the continent's demographic realities and socio-economic conditions" (African Union, 2006).

Dignified and Fulfilling Work in the Egyptian Context

Scholars and practitioners consistently note that the answer to unemployment involves more than simply providing income-generating job opportunities to those seeking to enter the workforce. Rather, sustainable solutions to unemployment must ensure that jobs created are also meaningful, decent, and dignified. According to the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, launched in 1999, decent work is defined as "productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity." The work is considered decent if:

- It provides fair wages, guarantees a secure form of employment, and safe working conditions
- It provides equal opportunities and treatment for all
- It includes social protection for the workers and their families
- It offers prospects for personal development and encourages social integration
- Workers are free to express their concerns and to organise.



However, recent scholarship argues that "dignified" and "fulfilling" work extend beyond the decent-work framework by emphasising intrinsic meaning, social recognition, and self-realisation (Deranty & MacMillan, 2012; Lucas, 2011; Sayer, 2007). "Dignified work" implies that individuals with respect and autonomy, while "fulfilling work" concerns the personal sense of purpose and growth derived from the person's own occupation. In developing countries, youth entering the workforce often face the uncertainties and vulnerabilities associated with informal labour, educational-employment mismatch, and lack of livable wages.

In Egypt, existing legal and policy frameworks, such as the Egyptian Labour Law No. 12 of 2003, govern labour and work-related affairs. These frameworks define work narrowly as any form of physical or intellectual activity that an employee performs under the direction and control of an employer in exchange for remuneration. While this law outlines formal employment relationships, it does not explicitly address dignity, fulfilment, or informal and freelance work, which comprise a large share of Egypt's labour market (ILO, 2024). The Ministry of Manpower is the main governing body responsible for enforcing the labour law and its provisions. While the law acknowledges various kinds of work—including full-time employment, part-time employment, temporary employment, and fixed-term employment—freelance or independent work is not explicitly regulated under the current law and it typically falls outside the scope of its protections.

Most academic and policy studies about work in Egypt address issues of employment, informality, or decent work in the ILO framework, but rarely engage with the broader dimensions of dignity, fulfilment, or meaning in work. For instance, the ILO (2025)'s Diagnostic of Informality in Egypt and the Decent Work Country Programme focus on productivity, fair income, and social protection but do not explicitly examine the subjective experience of dignity or fulfilment in employment (ILO, 2018). Similarly, studies on Egyptian labour tend to focus on youth employment and job quality (Assaad & Krafft, 2021), without expending the analysis to include workers' sense of respect, purpose, creativity, and self-fulfilment. Thus, the literature on dignified and fulfilling work in Egypt remains limited. The absence of an articulated framework that defines what "dignified and fulfilling work" means within Egypt's cultural and socio-economic context represents a critical gap in the literature. This gap highlights the need for future research to develop, conceptualise, and operationalise notions in relation to Egypt's cultural norms, socio-economic structure, and policy environment.

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Although the concept of dignified and fulfilling work has not been explicitly articulated in the programming language of most NPOs in Egypt, many organisations are implicitly working towards this goal. As will be shown later in this report, most of the NPOs' interventions often fall under the banners of decent work, livelihoods, entrepreneurship, or youth economic empowerment; however, the underlying objectives, such as promoting fair income, social protection, skill development, and meaningful engagement in society, align closely with the broader notion of dignity in work.

While these interventions do not employ a formal framework for "dignified and fulfilling work," their activities suggest an emerging recognition that quality of work, not just quantity of jobs, matters for NPOs. This reflects a subtle but important evolution in NPOs, signalling a shift beyond short-term livelihood assistance—a development that will be discussed in subsequent sections. The following section will provide an overview of the NPOs sector in Egypt.

Non-Profit Organisations

In their widely cited work, Salamon and Anheier (1992) define the non-profit sector as comprising organisations that are *private, voluntary, organised, self-governing, and non-profit-distributing*. This structural-operational definition has been widely adopted for cross-national studies of the non-profit sector (Salamon & Anheier, 1992). The UN similarly recognises that such non-profit or CSOs are essential partners in development and social change. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) emphasises that CSOs co-design and implement development programmes rooted in community needs, strengthen citizen participation in governance, and ensure policymaking is inclusive and accountable (UNDP, n.d.-a). Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly call for multi-stakeholder partnerships—including civil society—to mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, and resources to achieve the goals by 2030. The United Nations Global Compact also highlights that non-business organisations contribute expertise, convening power, and accountability to enhance the collective impact of the SDGs (United Nations Global Compact, n.d.). Through these roles—service delivery, advocacy, resource mobilisation, and the promotion of transparency and accountability—CSOs can amplify the voices of marginalised and ensure diverse perspectives inform decision-making in pursuit of the SDGs.

In her seminal work, Kandil (1993) built upon this framework by contextualising the definition within the Egyptian socio-economic and political landscape. According to Kandil (1993), the non-profit sector in Egypt is characterised by organised entities with formal structures, a private nature independent from government control, self-governance, and non-profit-distributing activities, where surpluses are reinvested into the organisation's mission. The sector heavily relies on voluntary participation, both in governance and service delivery. Its boundaries are shaped by Egypt's legal framework, which regulates registration and activities, cultural norms that influence public engagement, and economic conditions affecting funding. Perhaps most importantly, the Egyptian regulatory environment shapes the NPO sector's relationship with the state. This, in turn, impacts its capacity and scope for service provision. These factors collectively define the scope and functions of NPOs in the country (Kandil, 1993).

Kandil (1995) subsequently categorised NGOs based on their functions and affiliations as follows:

1. *Philanthropic associations*: These organisations primarily focus on supporting the poor and vulnerable by providing financial or material assistance, often regularly or during specific occasions such as Ramadan.
2. *Charity associations*: These organisations are dedicated to specific objectives, offering care and support to particular groups such as the elderly, orphans, and individuals with disabilities, usually operating within an institutional framework.
3. *Service associations*: Focused on delivering essential services to the general population, these associations emphasise areas such as healthcare, education, and combating illiteracy. Their activities often intersect with those of charity associations.
4. *Development associations*: These organisations prioritise the economic, social, and political empowerment of individuals, involving citizens in human development through training programmes, skill-building initiatives, and job creation opportunities.
5. *Human rights associations*: Unlike other categories, these organisations are not primarily service providers. Instead, they focus on advocating for and defending individual rights, including human and women's rights (Kandil, 1995, pp. 6–7).

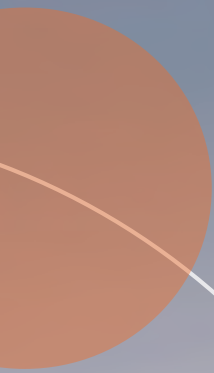


These categories of NPOs provide an overview of the various types of services and activities provided by CSOs and NGOs in Egypt. Further details on the development and landscape of Egyptian civil society are provided in the next section.



04

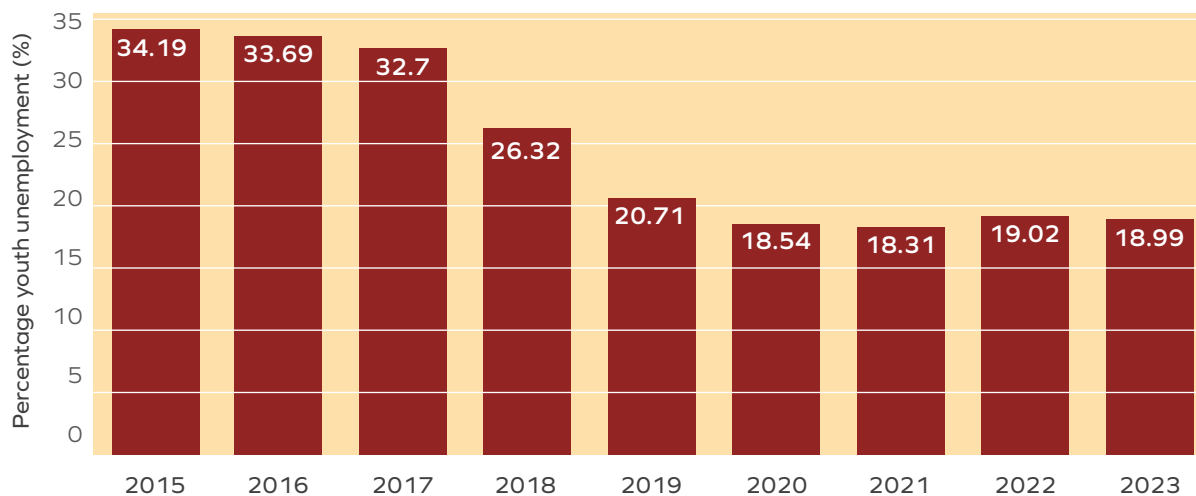
UNDERSTANDING
YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT
AND THE EGYPTIAN
LABOUR MARKET



As mentioned earlier, a country's ability to successfully absorb a growing population and its corresponding expanding labour force depends on its capacity to simultaneously expand the job market and the overall economy. With this context in mind, Egypt experienced a rapid population growth rate of 2.5% per annum from the early 1960s to the 1980s (Awad et al., 2005), resulting in today's youth bulge (further details below). Although recent trends show a decline in population growth, the mismatch between population growth and labour market performance persists.

In the past few years, unemployment in the country has declined to 6.4% in the fourth quarter of 2024, 3.9% among men and 6% among women. Despite the decline in overall unemployment, especially among youth, it remains persistently high. According to the World Bank, the youth unemployment rate reached 19.02% in 2023, which constitutes 64.6% of Egypt's unemployed population. While these numbers are high, it should be noted that it has masked even higher unemployment figures given that the youth workforce participation rate remains just at 23.5%.

FIGURE 1: Youth unemployment



Source: World Bank (2015–2023)

Figure 1 shows that youth unemployment decrease from 2015 (34.19%) to 2021 (18.31%) but marginally increased in 2022 (19.02%) but it decreased in 2023 (18.99%).

4.1 The Youth Bulge and Unemployment

Youth unemployment in Egypt is a critical issue that has garnered significant attention in scholarly and policy research. The roots of the labour market imbalance can be traced to the post-independence era (the 1950s–1970s) when the social contract between the state and citizens included a commitment to guaranteed public employment to university graduates, an arrangement that later proved fiscally and structurally unstable (Asaad, 1997). This era was preceded by the economic liberalisation era (Infitah) in the 1980s–1990s, during which the informal labour market began to expand. During this period, the country witnessed a significant population boom accompanied by an improvement in healthcare and a fall in the child mortality rate. All this led to a youth bulge that peaked in terms of labour market entry from the early 2000s to the mid-2010s, that is, when it was the time for the 1980s–1990s babies to enter the job market. A youth bulge is a demographic pattern that occurs when a disproportionately larger share of the population comprises children and young adults, typically between the ages of 15 and 29 (Fuller, 1995).

The youth bulge created a significant burden on the job market, which led to an increase in unemployment among the youth, especially the educated ones. This youth bulge continues to shape Egypt's demography to this day. Recent estimates show that over 60% of the population is composed of young people under 30 years old, and 40% is between the ages of 10 and 29, which creates significant pressure on the labour market (Population Council, 2022). In fact, some scholars such as LaGraffe (2012) argue that the youth bulge was one of the key structural causes of the 2011 revolution. After the 2011 revolution, youth unemployment in Egypt remained persistently high, reflecting deep structural problems in the labour market. Work opportunities that were available to young people during this period were concentrated in the informal economy and were of poor quality, characterized by limited security and inadequate work conditions. As such, these jobs did not meet the criteria of decent work set out by the ILO (ILO, 2017).

4.2 Structural Problems with Youth Unemployment

As in other countries, the problem of youth employment in Egypt is multifaceted. Here, we review key structural problems that contribute to the persistent problem of youth unemployment in the country.

Informality

Informality is commonly found in areas where unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and income inequality are widespread (ILO, n.d.). Informal employment is a key aspect of informality: workers in the informal sector lack formal contracts, social protections, and social security (Gatti et al., 2014). This includes self-employed individuals, casual labourers, migrant and refugee workers, and unregistered wage workers. Informality is particularly prevalent among women, youth, and low-skilled individuals (Ulyssea et al., 2025). According to the ILO, “The informal economy refers to all economic activities by workers and economic units that are—in law or in practice—not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements” (ILO, para. 1).

The Egyptian labour market is characterised by a high level of informality. According to data from the ILO, informal employment in Egypt accounted for 71.3% of total employment in 2023. Informality is particularly acute among young people, nearly nine out of 10 employed youth are engaged in informal employment in the job market, indicating that youth involvement in the job market occurs overwhelmingly through informal and low quality jobs. (ILO, 2024). Comparable patterns are reported in national statistics. According to the CAPMAS Labour Force Survey results for Q1 2024, official government coverage notes that around 18.7 million workers were engaged in the informal sector, which composes approximately 60% of Egypt’s labour force, with this employment concentrated in agriculture and fishing, construction (including quarrying), and transport (CAPMAS, 2025).

For Q1 2024, official government coverage notes that around 18.7 million workers were engaged in the informal sector, which composes approximately 60% of Egypt’s labour force.

The Egyptian labour law does not explicitly define “informal labour.” However, Article 26 recognises what they call “irregular” labour to seasonal agricultural workers, maritime workers, miners and quarry workers, and construction workers. In addition, Law No. 152 of 2020 on Medium, Small, and Micro Enterprises defines the informal sector economy as “Each medium, small or micro project that carries out its activities without obtaining a building or operating license, or any other license or approval that is necessary for the practice of the activity and determined by a decision of the Prime Minister” (Government of Egypt, 2020). The Egyptian Labour Market Panel Survey provides a compliance-based definition of informal enterprises as “active, non-governmental, non-agricultural businesses with one or more workers that do not fully comply with legal requirements such as obtaining licenses, business registration, tax payments, and maintaining regular accounts,” while informal employment is defined as private sector work that is not covered by a legal contract or social security (Assaad and Krafft, 2021).

While informality can become a means of survival for individuals in economies that do not provide enough jobs, its persistence usually leads to unfair working conditions to workers in the informal sector. These workers are more vulnerable to economic shocks and face unstable employment conditions, which leads to their financial and social insecurity (Gatti & De la Torre, 2014). In addition, informality affects government revenues and economic development. For example, lower tax revenues reduce the government’s ability to fund public services (Ulyssea et al., 2025). The effectiveness of labour laws is also weakened, leading to increased exploitation and job insecurity (Gatti & De la Torre, 2014). In sum, the impact of informality on employment is mixed, while it can act as a buffer during economic downturns, it also reduces incentives for formal job creation (Gatti & De la Torre, 2014). As will be shown later, many NPOs are dedicated to helping bridge the gap between informal and formal employment in the Egyptian workplace.

Luxury unemployment and the mismatch between education and labour market

Among the most glaring structural problems contributing to youth unemployment is the problem of “luxury unemployment,” wherein university graduates refrain from entering the job market in fields for which they are not trained or at levels for which they are over-qualified. This phenomenon appears due to the mismatch between the young people’s qualifications and the available job opportunities. Research indicates that youth unemployment

increases with each level of educational attainment. According to Ghafar, writing for the Brookings Institute, “in a labor survey conducted by the ILO in Egypt, 30% of unemployed youth refused a job because they felt it ‘did not match their level of qualification’” (Ghafar, 2016, p. 6).” This is corroborated by researchers at the Dutch-based Institute for Labor Economics (IZA). According to them:

Youth in Egypt are increasingly attaining high levels of education and have rising expectations for achieving middle-class status primarily by accessing formal employment. Some Egyptian youth continue to experience traditional transitions from school to work, but those who attain secondary education or above and who strive to achieve a modern transition to adulthood are increasingly struggling (Assaad & Krafft, 2017).

The phenomenon of luxury unemployment is exacerbated by the rise in educational attainment, which, paradoxically, increases youth unemployment, as many youth are reluctant to accept jobs that do not align with their level of qualification (Assaad and Krafft, 2021). Some scholars frequently emphasise the need for public-private sector partnerships to develop opportunities for absorbing the increasing number of university graduates (Assaad & Krafft, 2021; World Bank, 2019). While it may be assumed that NGOs can and should play an implementing role in such a process, the existing literature does not adequately address the role of the sector in the labour market.

Gender imbalances in the labour market

There is a significant gender disparity in Egypt’s labour market. According to the World Bank, as of 2023, the labour force participation rate among females in Egypt was 18.3%, compared to about 69.8% for males (World Bank, 2025). Female labour force participation has declined since 1990, and the gender gap in Egypt remains notably wider than the average for countries in the lower-middle-income group (World Bank, 2025).

Among those participating in the labour force, young women in Egypt face significantly higher unemployment rates than their male counterparts. According the ILO, the female unemployment rate stood at 15.3% in 2023, compared to 4.6% for males (ILO, 2024).

Gender gaps are also evident in job quality. In 2023, vulnerable employment affected a higher share of women (26.7%) than men (22.7%). While the male rate is broadly comparable to the Middle East and North Africa regional average, women’s rates exceed the regional benchmark (World Bank, 2023).

Marginalisation in the Egyptian context

According to Hall (1997), marginalisation involves the exclusion of certain groups from access to power, resources, and representation within dominant cultural and social structures. Similarly, marginalisation is closely linked to broader dynamics of social exclusion, whereby individuals or groups considered undesirable or deviant are systematically denied access to social recognition and institutional support (Kealy & Ogrodniczuk, 2010). Marginalisation in Egypt is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that affects various segments of the population across economic, social, geographic, and political dimensions.



Gender-based marginalisation is also a very critical aspect in Egyptian society, especially in rural and traditionally conservative areas like Upper Egypt, where limited access to education, social norms, and other structural barriers continue to limit women's economic participation and social mobility (World Bank, 2022). They tend to suffer from limited labour market access, lower wages, and restrictive social norms. Additionally, persons with disabilities encounter systemic barriers to education and employment, mainly because of inadequate public services and social stigma (UNDP, 2016). Geographic-based marginalisation affects slum dwellers and residents of informal settlements and rural areas. They suffer from persistent infrastructure and service delivery gaps (UNESCWA, 2023).

Religious and ethnic minorities, including Copts, Nubians, and Bedouins, have historically faced some cultural and political marginalisation (Minority Rights Group International, 2019). Given that Egypt sits at the nexus of various migrant flows from Africa to Europe as well as serves as an unofficial host to millions of refugees from the region, undocumented residents can be counted among the marginalised in Egypt. As shown later in this review, some CSOs have dedicated programmes that target marginalised groups.

4.3 Egyptian Economic Sub-Sectors and NGO Intervention Potential

To be truly impactful, NGO programmes designed to support and enhance youth employability must be grounded in a deep understanding of what economic sectors have the greatest potential to create jobs for the youth. Fortunately, several youth employment programmes conduct labour market diagnostics to pick high-growth and competitive sectors and occupations before designing their interventions.

In Egypt, agriculture and fishing remain the largest sectors in terms of employment. According to CAPMAS's annual aggregated Labour Force Survey results for 2024 (published in 2025), agriculture and fishing employed 5.594 million workers, representing 18.7% of total employed persons (CAPMAS, 2025). The agricultural sector has significant potential as a labour-intensive activity with broad geographic reach, particularly in rural areas where employment opportunities are limited and livelihoods remain heavily dependent on low-productivity work. The skills required in this sector are modern farming techniques, irrigation, machinery handling, and cooperative management.

Wholesale and retail trade employ around 4.63 million individuals, which is 15.5% of the workforce, while the construction sector employs 4.04 million, which accounts for 13.5% of the workforce. Manufacturing is also a key sector for employment in Egypt, as it is a highly labour-intensive sector that can absorb semi-skilled labour. According to the CAPMAS annual labour survey, the manufacturing sector showed robust growth, employing 3.95 million workers (13.2%), a 5.4% increase from 2023 (CAPMAS, 2025).

Tourism is also a critical labour-intensive sector that has great potential in job creation and economic stability. The sector supported around 2.7 million jobs in 2024 (8.5% of the national GDP) and is expected to increase to 2.9 million jobs in 2025. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the tourism sector's positive impact is expected to continue to grow, and it is projected to create 3.8 million jobs by 2035. Other transformative sectors, like information and communication technology (ICT) and the digital economy, are also key sectors as they require higher-skilled labour and demonstrate potential to offer longer-term dignified and fulfilling work and opportunities for young people. The ICT and tourism sectors, in particular, have the potential to address structural problems in youth unemployment such as the phenomenon of luxury unemployment and the lack of full participation in the labour market among the youth.

According to a report developed by the Economic Research Forum and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), several global trends such as digitalisation, technology and innovation, demographics, migration and labour mobility, climate change and the green economy, in addition to globalisation of financial markets and supply chains, will affect the future of work in Egypt. The report forecast that the fastest growing jobs in Egypt between 2015 and 2019 were garbage collectors (+29.3% annually), construction workers (+19.5%), food quality control specialists (+19.5%), dental professionals (+18%), and civil engineers (+17.3%) while the shrinking ones were animal-drawn vehicle drivers (-22.2% annually), livestock workers, and clerical roles like accounting clerks because of automation and industrial agriculture shifts (ERF & GIZ, 2023).

In sum, NGO programming and interventions designed to enhance and support dignified and fulfilling work for youth must take into account macroeconomic trends and market dynamics in order to be effective and have a meaningful impact.

05

UNDERSTANDING CIVIL SOCIETY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT



According to Barsoum et al. (2014), CSOs or NPOs in Egypt are the main implementers of employment-related youth programmes. The sector supports nearly five times more interventions than government agencies in the country. However, it is worth noting that the majority of funds for such programmes come from international donors, especially the EU, GIZ, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (prior of the elimination of USAID during the second Trump administration) and in most cases with the involvement of the ILO and the World Bank as technical advisers (Said, 2015).

To explore the contribution of NPOs to youth employment in Egypt, it is essential to first establish an understanding of the country's civil society sector. This section aims to trace the evolution of civil society in Egypt and shed light on its current state. This will provide the necessary context before examining the specific role it plays in addressing youth employment challenges.

5.1 The Evolution of the Sector

Throughout history, civil society, or the third sector, in Egypt has played a pivotal role in addressing critical social, political, and economic issues. From mobilising resistance against foreign occupations to spearheading efforts to alleviate poverty, CSOs have served as engines of change. The dynamic adaptability of Egyptian CSOs has helped them remain relevant and impactful across different eras (Shoair, 2023). The current landscape of the third sector is highly affected and influenced by the social, economic, and political changes that followed the 2011 revolution. These changes have redefined CSOs' roles, challenges, and opportunities, making it essential to analyse their evolution in a structured manner.

In the early 20th century, a few CSOs that had both charitable and nationalist missions emerged in Egypt, attracting the interest of the society. The structure of civil society was later transformed by the political changes that took place in 1952 after the military coup, leading to the abolishment of the monarchy and eventually to the establishment of Gamal Abdel Nasser's presidency. President Nasser's regime redesigned Egypt's social contract and minimised the efforts or roles of non-state actors and philanthropic institutions. The state sees itself as the sole agent for guaranteeing the welfare of the people and meeting their basic needs (Shoair, 2023). Under the successive regimes of Sadat and Mubarak, Egypt's policies shifted towards free trade and neoliberal reforms, thus reducing the state's role in social provisioning, and unwittingly allowing civic networks to expand through charitable work. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) also grew with the expanding influence of business elites through their family and corporate foundations (Shoair, 2023).



In the years leading up to the 2011 revolution, youth civic engagement increased significantly, thanks to support from CSOs through advocacy and capacity-building initiatives. These combined efforts played a crucial role in challenging the Mubarak regime and drawing global attention to Egypt's struggle for democratisation. Initially, the 2011 uprising appeared to offer a conducive environment for NGOs to flourish. However, this period of openness did not last long. According to Herrold, by 2014, NGOs faced increased governmental constraints. New and evolving policies at that time fragmented and weakened the NGO sector (Herrold, 2015). In 2017, a significant event that altered the power dynamics between the government and civil society was the enactment of Law No. 70 of 2017. This law imposed strict regulations on the activities, funding, and collaborations of NGOs (Sadek, 2017). However, it was later replaced by Law No. 2019, which introduced more flexible regulations. Law No. 2019 currently governs the civil society landscape in Egypt. Many human rights organisations have, however, critiqued it for retaining several restrictive provisions from the preceding one (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

5.2 The Current State of Civil Society in Egypt

As of April 2023, nearly 35,653 organisations had officially registered with Egypt's Ministry of Social Solidarity under the 2019 NGO Law. While earlier estimates suggested around 52,500 civic groups were operating before this law, only a portion have completed the registration process, and the number of actively operating NGOs remains significantly lower. CSOs in Egypt are primarily located in the most populous cities, with the largest number of organisations concentrated in major governorates such as Cairo, Alexandria, and Giza. Most NPOs focused on the provision of social services such as education, health, poverty alleviation, and vocational training. Only a smaller subset focused explicitly and directly on employment and economic empowerment.

Among the formal CSOs, some are known in the space as the "Mega NGOs." These are relatively large with strong national reach, high fundraising capacity, and strong ties with government and business elites. They control the largest share of capital in the philanthropic market. These NPOs include Misr El Kheir Foundation, Resala, Orman, the Egyptian Food Bank, Caritas, and Dar El Orman, among others. Due to their financial and political advantage, these mega NPOs often play a supervisory role, providing guidance and resources, and sometimes enforcing compliance with regulations when working with smaller organisations.

Umbrella organisations—such as associations, federations, or formalised networks of CSOs—play a crucial role in the non-profit sector in Egypt. These organisations unite various CSOs under a single coordinating body and typically represent member organisations in governmental contexts. Additionally, they offer technical assistance and opportunities for capacity building. One such example is the umbrella organisation is the National Alliance for Civil Development Work (NACDW), a coalition of 24 civil associations established to unify efforts in serving Egypt's development goals and Vision 2030. Most of the significant programmes that address youth employment are led and managed by umbrella organisations in coordination with the government. These organisations work with smaller NPOs to implement and execute their programmes. According to observers, most of the smaller CSOs often lack a clear vision, adopting instead the goals of the mega organisations rather than defining independent objectives (Interview with senior official, Ministry of Social Solidarity, November 2024). In effect, then, it can be argued that civil society actors in the Egyptian context rarely operate independently of the government's vision, reflecting a broader trend in the MENA region and consistent with centralised governing structures.

Regarding youth employment, there is no comprehensive registry that captures the exact number of NPOs engaged in youth employability initiatives in the country.

Regarding youth employment, there is no comprehensive registry that captures the exact number of NPOs engaged in youth employability initiatives in the country. Thus, it is challenging to have an accurate figure of the number of NPOs working directly on youth employment. Moreover, (according to one informant) even if a researcher were to survey the registration forms of NPOs to identify areas of specialisation, they would find that most organisations list multiple areas of work to ensure ease of approval and flexibility in operations.

Nonetheless, the sector's role in promoting youth employment remains significant. In its 2015 review of policies and interventions on youth employment in Egypt, the European Training Foundation mapped a broad set of actors across government, civil society, and development partners, highlighting extensive NGO engagement in service

delivery and programmes designed to improve youth labour market outcomes (European Training Foundation, 2015). Another source, the World Bank, through the Emergency Employment Investment Project, convened 16 of Egypt's most prominent NGOs including organisations such as Nahdet El Mahrousa (NM), Misr El Kheir Foundation, and Education for Employment Foundation to strengthen impact evaluations of youth employability programmes which shows that at least 16 of the largest and most prominent organisations are directly involved in youth training (World Bank, 2025). Moreover, given the pressing issue of youth unemployment, most of the NPO programmes across sectors often contain a capacity-building or training component. In general, NPOs address youth unemployment through a mix of direct service delivery (training, job placement, entrepreneurship) and systemic interventions (policy advocacy, awareness campaigns, research).

5.3 Sector Focus by Region

In terms of geographic concentration, Cairo and Giza dominate in NPO numbers, but Upper Egypt governorates (Assiut, Sohag, Qena, and Aswan) have a strong NGO presence in agriculture, crafts, and youth employability due to higher poverty rates. As for the sectoral spread, from mapping of various programmes implemented in urban and rural areas, the former (Cairo, Giza, and Alexandria) have diverse programmes on youth employability, ICT, education, women empowerment, and health. In Upper Egypt (Assiut, Sohag, Qena, and Aswan), the activities of NGOs focused mainly on poverty alleviation, agriculture, and youth employability. These programmes are often donor-funded (Ex, EU, USAID, and GIZ). In the delta areas (Fayoum and Dekhela), most of the recent programmes focused on agriculture, youth training, and women's empowerment. In tourism hubs (Red Sea, Luxor, and Aswan), the latest focus is on hospitality, eco-NGOs, women, and youth training.





06 NPO CONTRIBUTIONS TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The challenge of establishing, maintaining, and securing dignified and fulfilling work for youth in Egypt is a long-standing problem that has captured the attention of policymakers and practitioners for decades. While youth unemployment is an economic challenge, it is also a security concern for developing countries and fragile political contexts. For these reasons, most CSOs' initiatives in Egypt have come under the purview of close state supervision or outright control since the 2011 revolution. Therefore, CSO work in youth employability has taken a variety of shapes.

Although sectors such as manufacturing, food and beverage, agribusiness, and ICT offer the strongest potential for youth employment, there still remains a persistent skills mismatch that undermines the opportunities offered by these sectors. Employers frequently report challenges in finding qualified workers. They emphasise that life skills, reliability, and workplace readiness are often more important than technical skills, which they are willing to teach on the job (World Bank, 2021). Experts note that existing training programmes are outdated and poorly aligned with labour market needs. Compounding the problem is that career counselling, mentoring, and structured internships are rarely provided. This hinders young people's ability to transition into dignified and fulfilling employment (Assaad & Krafft, 2018); International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2022). As for the youth, they expressed a desire for job stability, contracts, and career ladders. They still continue to rely on personal networks to find opportunities (Population Council, 2021). Entrepreneurship remains underdeveloped—fewer than 1% of young people are self-employed—largely due to bureaucracy and lack of business planning skills rather than lack of finance.

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According to local researchers and also following global standards, the types of youth employment programmes and interventions undertaken in Egypt usually fall within one of the following categories: “training programmes, entrepreneurship promotion programmes, employment placement and matching services; and subsidized employment programmes” (Barsoum et al., 2019: 13). NPOs participate in this matrix of activity, whether independently or through collaborative efforts with larger institutions, government agencies, international donors, and the private sector. The point should be underscored that the Egyptian government does not monitor, track, or provide official statistics on employment numbers within the non-profit sector.

6.1 Skill Training

The first category, skills training, is by far the most prominent form of youth labour programming in Egypt, being sponsored by the government/public and private sectors. NPOs also participate in this area and often receive funds from major national and international donors to carry out these programmes. Leading examples of these models include but are not limited to: Better Future for Youth National Egyptian Development Association (NEDA), Social Coptic Foundation for Development, the Don Bosco Institute, Ebtsama Foundation Training Programme (focusing on serving the mentally disabled), and the Alexandria Business Association's Middle East Training Center (Barsoum et al., 2019).

One notable example of this is the Employment Promotion Project (EPP) implemented by the GIZ in cooperation with civil society and Egypt's Ministry of Education and Technical Education. This project adapts technical education reform strategies to meet the demands of the green economy. It aims to align education and training with labour market needs by developing new training programmes and modifying existing ones to focus on the green economy. Additionally, the EPP provides support for creating an educational module that emphasises essential environmental competencies and integrates them into technical education. It also implements gender-responsive measures to enhance employment opportunities for women in the green economy. Furthermore, the project supports ongoing efforts to establish labour-market-oriented career advisory services that prepare students, along with their parents and guardians, for potential employment in a green economy (GIZ, 2023).

6.2 Entrepreneurship

Promoting entrepreneurship is another area where NPOs are contributing to job creation for the youth in the country. NPOs have become a central actor in promoting and supporting entrepreneurship and self-employment across Egypt, complementing government and private-sector efforts to create sustainable livelihood for youth. Their contribution span training, incubation, microfinance, and business support. Large development-oriented NPOs such as Misr El-Kheir Foundation have established innovation hubs like GESR, which support technology-driven social enterprises and early-stage start-ups through incubation and funding. Similarly, INJAZ Egypt, in partnership with the private sector and educational institutions, delivers large-scale entrepreneurship and financial literacy programmes that reach schools and universities nationwide.

There have also been programmes dedicated to marginalised communities – for instance, in Upper Egypt, organisations like the Egypt Network for Integrated Development (ENID) and the El Nidaa Foundation, working with UNDP and local banks, provide entrepreneurship and vocational training for women and rural youth. It should, however, be noted that the private sector has played a large role in promoting entrepreneurship by, among others, supporting early start-ups with seed funding, mobilising venture capital, and other forms of targeted investment activities. Philanthropic actors also participate in this ecosystem with foundations offering support in the form of venture philanthropy, micro-credit, or impact-oriented funds. International NPOs with deep, local ties in Egypt also participate in supporting young entrepreneurs. For example, Caritas and the Agha Khan Foundation both have strong microcredit and enterprise development programmes, for example, that target youth and women entrepreneurs, especially in rural areas (Barsoum et al., 2019).

Another notable example of how NPOs promote entrepreneurship in Egypt is the work of the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development (SFSD). As part of its economic empowerment strategy, the foundation integrates entrepreneurship into broader efforts to create sustainable employment. Through programmes such as Developing Small Enterprises and Uplift 4 Upper Egypt, SFSD provides small grants, low-interest loans, incubation, mentorship, and business development services to young entrepreneurs, particularly in underserved governorates such as Qena, Luxor, and Aswan. These initiatives aim to strengthen self-employment, encourage innovation, and expand access to finance for micro and small enterprises (Sawiris Foundation for Social Development, 2024).



Examples of field building in the entrepreneurial space in Egypt can be found in the work of NM and the AUC Venture Lab (V-Lab). Established in 2003, NM is one of the first social-enterprise incubators in the Arab region, dedicated to supporting young innovators who develop solutions to social and economic challenges. Through initiatives such as Khaleeha wa Gaddedha, NM provides seed funding, mentorship, and capacity-building for early-stage social enterprises, helping them grow into sustainable ventures that create jobs and local impact. Similarly, V-Lab, founded in 2013 as Egypt's first university-based start-up accelerator, develops entrepreneurship capacity by offering intensive training, mentorship, networking, and investor access for early-stage start-ups. To date, V-Lab has supported more than 400 start-ups across key sectors such as fintech, health, education, and renewable energy, mobilising over EGP 3 billion in investment and creating thousands of jobs. Together, these initiatives demonstrate how NPOs and university-linked programmes contribute to strengthening Egypt's innovation ecosystem and expanding opportunities for youth-led enterprise development (Nahdet El Mahrousa, n.d.; AUC Venture Lab, 2025).

6.3 Job Placement and Matchmaking

NPOs in Egypt actively engage in job placement, matching, and subsidised employment initiatives that bridge gaps between job seekers and employers. For example, the The Sawiris Foundation for Social Development (SFSD) has developed a notable "Backwards Job Creation Model," whereby they first collaborate with employers to identify job vacancies and secure their commitments to hire; only then do they deliver tailored, certified training to prospective employees (SFSD, 2016). This ensures jobseekers are equipped with market-relevant technical, vocational, and soft skills—facilitating a direct pipeline from training to formal employment (SFSD, 2016).

Another critical actor, Alashanek Ya Balady for Sustainable Development (AYB-SD), employs an integrated training, placement, and employer-preparation strategy. After delivering soft skills and technical training, AYB-SD matches graduates with job vacancies in both formal and informal sectors. Their approach includes advocating for better wages and working conditions and bolstering employers' capacity to absorb new entrants (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung[FES], 2019). They also tailor programmes based on labour market research and assessments and, since launching, have reached thousands of youth and women with successfully placed candidates (FES, 2019).



In addition to AYB-SD and SFSD, a broader ecosystem of employer-ready placement models exists across Egypt's social sector. These initiatives align with the broader active labour market approach, supporting job seekers through direct placement or subsidised opportunities, often within broader empowerment frameworks (ILO; El-Mahrousa). These programmes demonstrate how combining demand-driven training with employer engagement and job-matching infrastructure can significantly reduce youth unemployment by ensuring smooth transitions into formal, sustainable employment.

6.4 Transition from Informal to Formal

Many NPOs in Egypt tackle the informal-formal divide by organising dispersed, informal producers and integrating them into regulated value chains. For example, Fair Trade Egypt aggregates home-based artisan groups across regions such as Fayoum, North Sinai, and Upper Egypt, equipping them with training in fair pricing, quality standards, and export compliance. As a member of the World Fair Trade Organization, it enforces the organisation's ten fair-trade principles—including transparency and safe working conditions—which effectively pull informal workshops into formalised production and markets (Fair Trade Egypt, n.d.; WFTO, n.d.).

A second approach involves incubation and venture philanthropy models that help informal participants formalise their operations into registered enterprises. NM, a pioneer in social-enterprise incubation in the region, offers mentorship, governance training, and non-dilutive "green round" grants, supporting founders as they transform ad-hoc work into contract-based businesses (Nahdet El Mahrousa, n.d.; Talloires Network, 2015). Meanwhile, Alfanar complements this with performance-linked funding and business advisory services; its impact reports show meaningful increases in revenue, formal employment, and opportunities for youth and women—the groups most prevalent in Egypt's informal economy (Alfanar, 2023).

Finally, some non-profit organisations play a bridging role by linking skills development directly to employment at the point of production. UNDP-supported programmes implemented through the Egypt Network for Integrated Development (ENID / El Nidaa) have facilitated the establishment of rural micro-enterprises and ready-made-garment units in Upper Egypt as part of broader local development and women's economic empowerment initiatives. These programmes integrate vocational training with access to income-generating activities and more formalised employment arrangements for local women, including garment production initiatives in governorates such as Qena (United Nations Development Programme Egypt, n.d.; UNDP Egypt, 2023).

6.5 Advocacy and Labour Rights

Trade unions have also sought to address the problem of youth employment. While not typically classified as NPOs or NGOs, unions are nonetheless organic civic associations that, when properly mobilised, can make a significant contribution to securing dignified and fulfilling jobs. In the Egyptian context, prior to and shortly after the 2011 revolution, labour unions, both official and independent, were active in pressuring industry leaders to address job security, working conditions, equitable pay, and a range of other issues regarding fundamental workers' rights. Advocates of labour union organising argue that "increasing youth participation in unions is a way towards stability, not increased tension, which can create a more attractive environment for investment and job creation" (JustJobs Network, 2014). Beyond collective bargaining, labour unions can also serve as a powerful instrument for gathering data and insight into real-time youth labour dynamics, in ways that are often out of reach for traditional NPOs and government agencies. In theory, labour unions could also extend their influence to address the problem of informality. Despite this potential, Egypt has witnessed a dramatic decline in the number of recognised labour unions since the 2018 mandate requiring all unions to re-register, effectively curbing much of the independent labour movement's momentum (Nilsson, 2021).

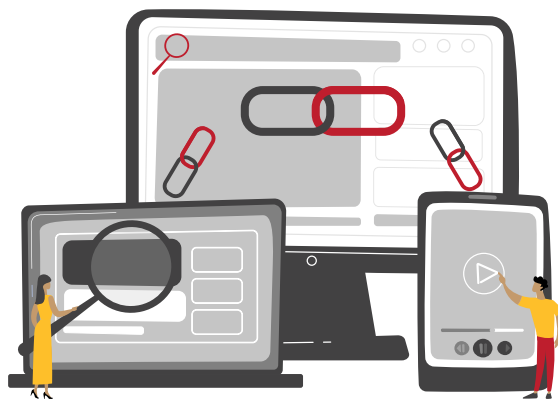
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6.6 Multi-Sector Collaborations

As noted earlier, the third sector in Egypt must be understood within the context of the state, in which there are high levels of supervision and coordination between government agencies and NGOs. In effect, local NPOs have become implementation partners for large-scale development programmes. Again, in this context, umbrella organisations often play a critical role as a convening and coordinating body. At this juncture, it is important to highlight some examples of NPOs' engagement that addressed the problem of youth unemployment.

The Employment for Youth in Egypt initiative is a good example of large multi-stakeholder projects taking place in Egypt between January 2021 to June 2024. The project is a collaboration between governmental and non-governmental entities such as the Ministry of Trade and Industry (lead partner), Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency (MSMEDA), and the ILO in partnership with the government of Norway, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), UNDP, and the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS). The project was first implemented between 2017 and 2020, with a second iteration between 2021 and 2024 under the auspices of the Egyptian government's Ministry of Social Solidarity "Forsa" programme and in coordination with its Takaful and Karama initiatives. The high-level integration of this project between INGOs, domestic NGOs, and central and local government agencies, as well as the layering of objectives, illustrates how the boundaries and goals between the state and civil society in Egypt remain blurry and opaque (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2024).

The Youth Employment Generation Programme (YEGP) is another example of a collaborative project that targets youth aged 18–32. This project was a collaboration between 30 NGOs and youth centres, the MoY, SFD, MS Egypt, ITI (Edu Egypt program), and ELCC. The UN was involved in the project through UNDP, and it was undertaken in 2012 and 2013. The YEGP was part of a multi-country initiative launched to respond to the youth unemployment challenge in the Arab transition countries of Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen. This initiative was structured around several core components tailored to the specific needs of each country and market. It focused on building the capacity of youth to ensure their employability, with an emphasis on ICT. Given this focus, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology was the leading government ministry in the programme's implementation process.



07

NPO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT
INTERVENTIONS: A SUB-SECTOR
PERSPECTIVE



This section focuses on the various sub-sectors of the Egyptian economy, highlighting their role in the overall economy as well as highlighting various NPOs' employment-related interventions. It aimed to serve as a roadmap for scholars and practitioners concerned with designing effective employment-related programmes.

7.1 Textiles and Apparel

NPOs in Egypt play a pivotal role in promoting youth employment within the manufacturing and textiles sector, a cornerstone of the national economy. The textile and ready-made garments industry contributes around 34% of Egypt's industrial output and approximately 11% of total exports (Better Work Egypt, 2024). It employs about 1.5 million people across an estimated 6,500 companies (Better Work Egypt, 2024). These underscore the sector's importance as both an economic driver and a significant site of youth employment.

One notable initiative is the *Yalla Neshtaghal* ("Let's Work") programme by the SFSD. Through the Traintex partnership, this project trained and employed 900 young people in garment manufacturing in Qalyubia, providing them with accredited certificates from Traintex and Helwan University's Faculty of Applied Arts (Sawiris Foundation, 2011, 51-52).

Another significant programme is the *Egypt@Work* initiative, led by the International Youth Foundation (IYF) in partnership with NM and supported by the Mastercard Foundation. This four-year project estimated at US \$5 million initiative trained over 12,600 youth—surpassing its original target of 10,000—with 78% of graduates securing employment or starting businesses. The programme provided technical training, life-skills development via the "Passport to Success®" curriculum, job search assistance, and mentoring to the youth (International Youth Foundation [IYF], 2016: 1). It not only provided sector-relevant technical training but also emphasised employability through soft-skills development—significantly boosting access to opportunities in textile production and beyond.

Although there is a growing recognition of the importance of upskilling the workforce within the apparel industry, vocational training remains largely in-house, particularly in larger firms equipped with internal Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centres. Smaller enterprises often lack the capacity to invest in human capital, resulting in weak linkages between industry needs and training programmes. In this context, CSOs are increasingly seen as potential service providers to help fill critical training gaps in the textiles value chain.

7.2 Tourism

NPOs in Egypt are also playing a pivotal role in promoting youth employment within the tourism sector, a high-impact economic driver. In 2024, the sector supported approximately 2.7 million jobs, accounting for nearly one in every 11 jobs in Egypt (WTTC, 2025a). It also contributed around 8.5% of GDP, equal to EGP 1.4 trillion, the highest economic contribution on record for the industry (WTTC, 2025b). NGOs help with training and upskilling youth and others in the tourism and hospitality sector, focusing on soft-skills development, technical training, communications, language, and information technology (IT).

One notable programme is the Employability Programme, launched by the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance in collaboration with GIZ under Germany's *Decent Work for a Just Transition* initiative. Operating in Cairo and Hurgada, the programme aimed to develop a scalable model for integrating more youth, especially women, into entry-level hospitality roles. It emphasised sector-endorsed soft-skill training and practical job preparation, facilitated through partnerships with major hotel chains (Marriott, IHG, Four Seasons, and Radisson) and local training NGO Etijah (Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, 2023).

Another impactful effort for youth employment is Doroob, an entrepreneurial incubation programme managed by Enpact. It supports students and recent graduates in developing sustainable tourism innovations by offering tailored training, mentoring, workspace access, external expertise, and financial support (Enpact, 2025).

The project "Fostering Employability and Entrepreneurship for Egyptian Youth and Women in the Tourism Sector"—started in February 2017 and concluded on 31 January 2021—implemented by ANCE in partnership with Alashanek Ya Balady (NPO) trained 600 unemployed individuals across Aswan, Dakahlia, and Greater Cairo and placed 480 in tourism jobs. It also nurtured 400 aspiring entrepreneurs in tourism handicrafts, resulting in the launch of 30 new businesses (ANCE-Hellas, 2022).

In Upper Egypt, the Om Habibeh Foundation under the Aga Khan Foundation runs a Continuing Education Programme in Aswan. It provides youth with locally tailored vocational training, soft-skills development, English language instruction, IT, and management courses—all aligned with the local tourism industry’s demands (Aga Khan Development Network, 2019). These complementary initiatives collectively strengthen youth employability in Egypt’s tourism sector by blending practical training, entrepreneurship scaffolding, and strategic job placement.

7.3 Agriculture

Additionally, NPOs are playing a critical role in youth employment within the country’s agriculture sector—a cornerstone of the nation’s economy. Agriculture contributes approximately 11% of GDP and provides about 28% of jobs, making it a critical part of rural livelihoods and poverty reduction efforts (IFAD, 2023; UNEP, 2025). NPOs’ interventions in the sector are essential to equip young people with skills, foster innovation, and create sustainable livelihoods in rural areas.

One notable initiative is SEKEM, founded in 1977 by Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish. SEKEM has been instrumental in promoting biodynamic agriculture and sustainable development. Through its vocational and field training programmes, SEKEM has supported approximately 15,000 farmers transitioning to biodynamic agriculture, covering about 19,000 hectares of farmland since 2022 (UNEP, 2024). The UNEP celebrates SEKEM’s success: “From a tent in the untouched desert, SEKEM has burgeoned into a leading development organisation. It runs schools, training centres and a university, preparing farmers and youth to combat land degradation and desertification” (UNEP, 2024).

The UNEP celebrates SEKEM’s success: “From a tent in the untouched desert, SEKEM has burgeoned into a leading development organisation.”



Life Vision for Development is an Egyptian non-profit foundation that is active in rural and slum areas. It designs and delivers capacity-building programmes spanning women’s empowerment, vocational training, literacy, and agricultural development. Its Farmer Field Schools integrate improved farming techniques, literacy and numeracy learning, and life-skills development—particularly targeted to marginalised women and youth in El Minya Governorate (Life Vision for Development, 2024)

Another youth employment initiative is YouThinkGreen Egypt. It was established in 2013 as a youth-led development social enterprise that fosters sustainable development through hands-on educational programmes, consulting, and entrepreneurship supports, specifically empowering youth to innovate in areas such as clean technology, environmental conservation, and sustainable agriculture. Since its inception, the organisation has benefited 10,000 youth (50% of whom are female) and has supported more than 150 start-ups and small enterprises (YouThinkGreen Egypt, 2022).

Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate how NGOs strengthen Egypt’s agricultural sector by providing targeted training, supporting entrepreneurship, and facilitating pathways to employment, especially for young people and women in rural communities.

7.4 Information Technology

Furthermore, NPOs are playing an important role in equipping Egyptian youth to acquire digital skills and facilitating their entry into the IT sector. Specifically, NPOs are contributing to reducing youth unemployment in the country by providing targeted digital training, fostering entrepreneurship, and enhancing access to job placements within the IT sector.

The IT/ICT industry is becoming a key in Egypt’s economy—growing by approximately 14.4% in 2023–2024 and contributing 5.8% of GDP (ITIDA 2024). This figure is projected to reach 8% by 2030 (ITIDA, 2024). The sector generated EGP 315 billion in revenue in 2024 (ITIDA, 2024), supported over 300,000 outsourced/offshoring jobs—more than 30% held by women (ITIDA, 2024), and generated US \$6.2 billion in digital export revenues, up 26% year over year (ITIDA, 2024). It is projected that the sector will expand from US \$23.6 billion in 2025 to US \$53.1 billion by 2030, at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 17.6% (Mordor Intelligence, 2025). Meanwhile, the number of tech specialists is expected to grow from about 130,000 to 550,000 by 2026 (Manpower Egypt, 2025).

The IT/ICT industry is becoming a key in Egypt’s economy—growing by approximately 14.4% in 2023–2024 and contributing 5.8% of GDP (ITIDA 2024).

One prominent initiative is the Digital Egypt Youth programme, spearheaded by the National Telecommunication Institute. This programme offers specialised training in areas such as electronics and embedded systems, aligning with the “Egypt Makes Electronics” presidential initiative. It operates through Creativa Innovation Hubs across seven governorates. Participants—targeted university graduates and final-year students—receive 90 hours of technical training, 30 hours of freelancing readiness coaching, and a two-month “Freelance Guidance Camp” designed to help them secure initial paid freelance gigs (TechAfrica News 2025; MCIT via Facebook, 2023).

The *Tawar w 3’ayar* program, supported by Microsoft in partnership with government and non-profit stakeholders, operates through over 800 youth centres across Egypt. It delivers hybrid digital skills training—spanning app development, web design, coding, business management—and has reached more than 1.4 million youth, with 13,000 participants directly matched to jobs, effectively creating pathways from learning to employment (Microsoft/NTI, 2024).

Additionally, ArabDev, a Giza-based NGO, leverages ICT to promote development projects and innovative initiatives. By providing educational opportunities and skill development in ICT, ArabDev empowers youth to engage in livelihood ventures and micro-enterprise development (ArabDev, 2019).

7.5 Construction/Infrastructure

Also, NPOs are key actors in role in promoting youth employment in the construction and infrastructure sectors in the country, critical engines of the nation's economic development. In the third quarter of 2024, the construction sector contributed approximately EGP 409.6 billion to GDP, reflecting its significant economic presence (CEIC/ Ministry of Planning, 2024). The sector is also expected to grow by approximately 8.4% in real terms in 2024, driven by expansions in infrastructure, housing, and energy projects (Business Wire, 2024). According to market analysis, public funding accounted for 70% of construction investment in 2024, with private investment projected to rise steadily (Mordor Intelligence, 2025).

One prominent actor in construction-related vocational training is the Salesian Don Bosco Institutes in Cairo and Alexandria, which provide multi-year technical and vocational education in fields such as mechanics, welding, electrical engineering, and electronics. These institutes operate as non-profit schools but also as hubs for private-sector partnerships, aligning training curricula with Italian/EU standards and Egyptian industry demands. Graduates are well-positioned to secure employment in construction and infrastructure trades, often through company-linked apprenticeships (Don Bosco Cairo, n.d.; ILO, 2024).

The Egypt Green Building Council (Egypt GBC) contributes to workforce development by offering professional training and certification programmes in green construction and sustainable building practices. Through short courses such as the TARSHEED Residential, Commercial, and Communities modules, delivered in collaboration with AUC and accredited assessors, Egypt GBC prepares young engineers and technicians to participate in Egypt's growing green construction market (Egypt Green Building Council, n.d.).

Another significant initiative is the Elsewedy Technical Academy (STA), established by the Elsewedy Electric Foundation. Operating under a dual-system vocational education model, STA combines classroom instruction with company-based apprenticeships. The academy collaborates with private firms such as Legrand, which sponsors dedicated training labs in electrical installation and maintenance, thereby equipping youth with directly marketable construction-sector skills (Elsewedy Electric Foundation, 2023).

Another notable initiative is the vocational training programme implemented by the NGO Think and Do, in partnership with Hands Along the Nile (HANDS). Since 1998, this programme has provided vocational training to nearly 15,000 Egyptians, focusing on skills such as carpentry, professional driving, and computer maintenance. The programme targets marginalised and impoverished residents in both rural and urban areas, offering them opportunities to learn marketable skills that can help them find employment and improve livelihoods. Upon completion of the ten-day training, trainees receive a tool kit and can work as apprentices in their communities. Approximately 80% of those trained have found work upon completion (HANDS, 2025).



Finally, INJAZ Egypt, in partnership with Orascom Construction and ExxonMobil Egypt, has implemented the *San3ety* programme, which targets technical school students with a mix of soft skills, work-readiness modules, and practical training exposure. In its most recent phase, the programme graduated dozens of youths, many of whom secured jobs in technical trade. This project demonstrates the potential of NGO–corporate partnerships to create construction-relevant employment opportunities (ExxonMobil Egypt, 2025; Zawya, 2023).

7.6 Renewable Energy

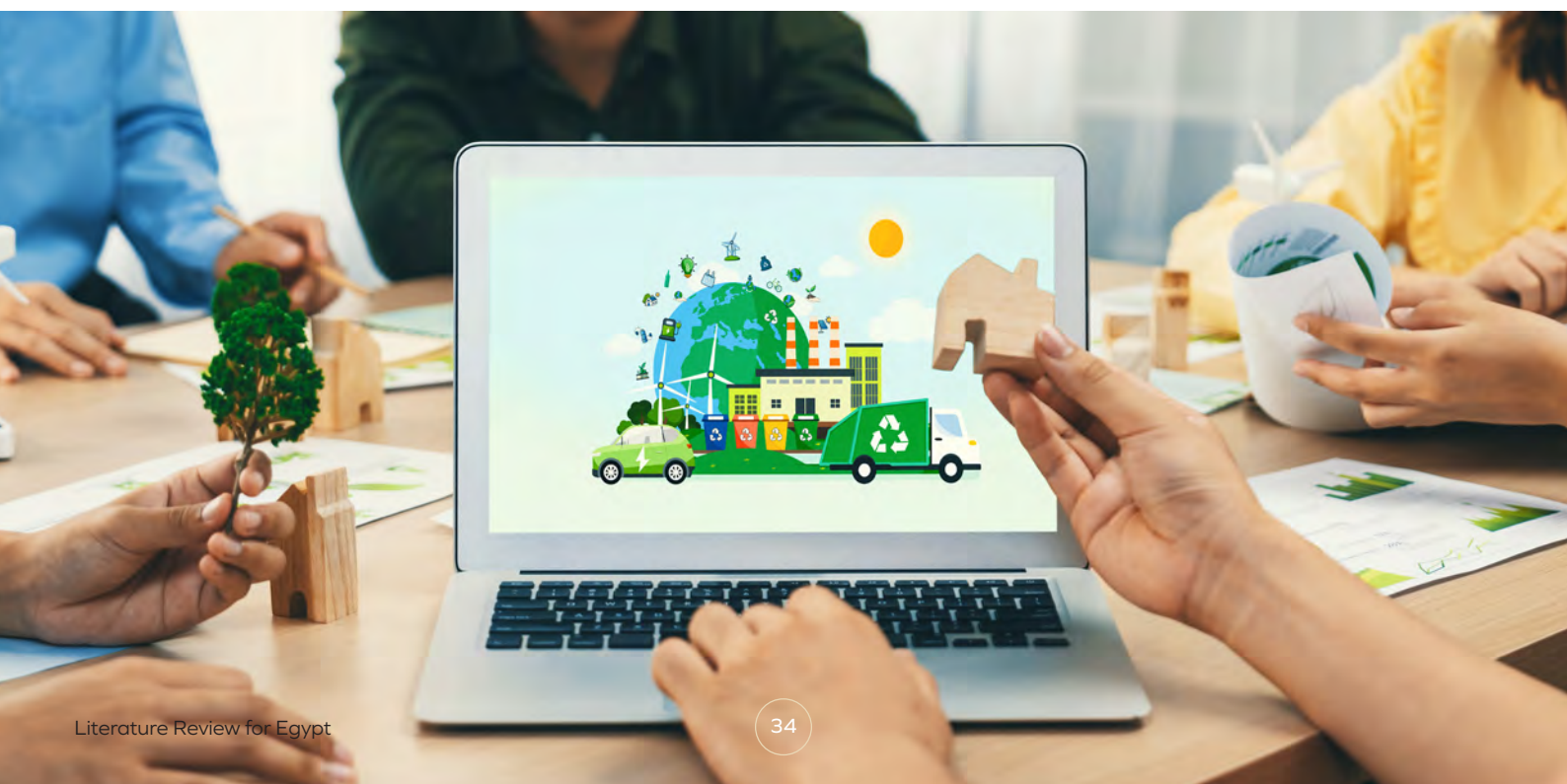
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Egypt are increasingly instrumental in promoting youth employment within the renewable energy sector. The sector currently supplies about 11.5% of Egypt’s electricity, with the government target set to 42% by 2030 (Reuters, 2024b). Meeting Egypt’s clean-energy goals across solar, wind, rooftop PV and energy-efficiency could generate around 2 million net job-years by 2050—an average of roughly 67,000 jobs per year (World Bank/ESMAP 2022). At the project level, the Benban Solar Park—one of the world’s largest—has roughly 1.465 GW contracted capacity and has been pivotal to scaling Egypt’s renewables since 2017 (EBRD, 2022). Momentum is also building in green hydrogen: Egypt signed seven MoUs worth up to \$40 billion over ten years in the Suez Canal Economic Zone, signalling significant future investment and downstream job creation (Reuters, 2024a).

The Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship Booster (YEEB) programme focuses on empowering green entrepreneurship or “ecopreneurship.” It provides sustainable assistance to entrepreneurs and MSMEs to develop green initiatives that tackle climate-related challenges. In Assiut Governorate, the programme has directly trained 100 youth (60 women, 40 men) and reached 400 indirect beneficiaries, fostering a supportive environment for income generation and job creation in sustainable sectors (UfM, 2023).²

The Youth Loves Egypt Foundation, a civil organisation focused on environment, education, and sustainable development, leads multiple awareness and action campaigns. These include clean-up initiatives, climate adaptation workshops, and programmes that aim to create green jobs and engage youth in environmental protection and renewable energy adoption (Youth Loves Egypt Foundation, 2025).

Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development, established under the SEKEM initiative, integrates sustainability into academic life. It now operates on 100% renewable energy through two solar installations generating 124 kW and has connected its solar system to the North Cairo Electricity Grid. The institution also embeds sustainability, energy efficiency, and renewable energy topics within its academic and practical training programmes (Illuminem, 2025) (sekem.com, illuminem.com). The St. Antonius Coptic Orthodox Church

2 See ufmsecretariat.org



runs a Vocational Training Center for Renewable Energy, offering practical training in solar energy systems, electronics, and soft skills. Their projects include operating solar water pumps, providing renewable energy workshops, and empowering youth with employable green energy expertise (St. Antonius Coptic Orthodox Foundation, 2025).

These initiatives collectively demonstrate how NGOs and educational institutions are building a skilled workforce in Egypt's renewable energy sector—through entrepreneurial support, environmental mobilisation, academic innovation, and technical training—that is poised to power the country's sustainable future.

7.7 Handicrafts and Creative Industries: NGO Initiatives Supporting Youth

In Egypt, the handicrafts sector is an export-oriented, labour-intensive segment of the economy. According to official Egyptian export statistics, handicraft exports totalled approximately US \$254 million in 2021, making it one of the country's notable non-hydrocarbon export sectors (General Organization for Export and Import Control, 2022), contributing substantially to Egypt's creative goods exports, valued at US \$2.2 billion in 2020 (UNCTAD 2022). Specifically, NPOs are contributing to creating employment for the youth through initiatives to revitalise traditional crafts, foster entrepreneurship, and create pathways for artisans to thrive in both local and international markets.

Kiliim, a Cairo-based lifestyle brand, collaborates with weaving cooperatives in the Nile Delta to preserve Egypt's centuries-old kilim rug tradition. By blending contemporary design with traditional weaving, Kiliim sustains livelihoods for artisans while opening global markets for Egyptian crafts. Its fair-trade practices ensure artisans are compensated fairly, reviving a craft at risk of decline and attracting new generations into handicraft-based employment (The Spruce, 2023).

NPOs are contributing to creating employment for the youth through initiatives to revitalise traditional crafts, foster entrepreneurship, and create pathways for artisans to thrive

Alwan wa Awtar, in collaboration with the Youth Participation and Employment program, delivers arts-based soft-skills development through visual and performing arts education. Its non-formal learning environment encourages creative self-expression, resilience, and confidence among youth (Alwan wa Awtar, n.d.). The Arts for Economic Development initiative provides rural artisans with handicraft training, collaborative opportunities, and access to monthly markets—enabling them to generate income and pass on skills as trainers. Cultural hubs like Darb 1718 and The Townhouse Gallery also play important roles, offering workshops, exhibitions, and residencies that foster skill development, public exposure, and networking for emerging artists (Darb 1718, 2024; Townhouse Gallery, 2024).

7.8 Healthcare

In the health sector, NPOs are increasingly contributing to youth employment by providing training, mentorship, and practical exposure. The sector itself is a significant economic force—health expenditure reached approximately 4.7% of GDP in 2019, while government spending on health rose by 16.3% in fiscal year 2021–2022, totalling around LE 108.8 billion (US \$6.9 billion) (Oxford Business Group, 2022). Despite these investments, Egypt faces a doctor density of just 12.8 per 10,000 population, compared to the global average of 17.2, signifying a gap in healthcare workforce capacity (Reuters, 2025). The infrastructure deficit is also stark: by 2030, Egypt will need an additional 38,000 hospital beds, requiring investments estimated between US\$ 8 billion and US \$13 billion to address growing demand (Colliers via World Health Expo 2021). These numbers underscore both the economic scope of the health sector and the urgent need to recruit and train new healthcare professionals. NPOs are contributing to address the gaps in the health sector.

One leading initiative is the Egyptian Pharmaceutical Students' Federation (EPSF), which represents about 80,000 pharmacy students and recent graduates across 37 institutions. EPSF organises health awareness campaigns, public health workshops, and professional development events, offering hands-on experience while enhancing their employability in the pharmaceutical sector (EPSF Profile, 2021).

The African Centre for Women's Healthcare (ACWH), formerly the Suzanne Mubarak Regional Centre for Women's Health and Development, is another cornerstone. Based in Alexandria, it provides specialised clinics, training programmes, and research collaborations, focusing on women's health issues while cultivating a new generation of health professionals committed to gender-sensitive care (ACWH, 2024).

The Young Health Programme, implemented by Plan International Egypt with AstraZeneca and the Egypt Health Foundation, targets youth aged 10–24 with training in non-communicable disease prevention, peer education, and community mobilisation. To date, it has reached over 43,700 youth directly, as well as more than 615,000 people indirectly, while also training teachers and community leaders in health promotion (Plan International Egypt, 2025).

Similarly, the Egyptian Youth Association for Health Development (EYAHD) is a youth-led NGO that engages young people in sexual and reproductive health (SRH) programmes, gender equality initiatives, and awareness campaigns to address issues such as hepatitis and HIV/AIDS across eight governorates (EYAHD, 2025).

Innovative digital health initiatives are also emerging. AI Mouneer, focused on diabetes management, provides a multidisciplinary mobile health platform that empowers youth to work in health technology and care coordination roles. By integrating digital monitoring with employment creation, it combines improved health outcomes with opportunities for young professionals (AI Mouneer, 2025).

Another vocational pathway is offered by Care with Love (CWL), which began in 1996 and institutionalised its programme in 2003. CWL provides certified training in Arabic for youth to become professional home healthcare providers. By formalising caregiving as a respected career, CWL has created employment opportunities for thousands of young Egyptians, while filling critical gaps in elderly and home-based care (Care with Love, 2025).

7.9 Transportation and Logistics Sector: NGO Contributions to Youth Employment

In the transportation and logistics sector, NPOs are offering specialised training programmes, certifications, and career support services to the youth. The sector itself is a vital economic pillar—accounting for 4.6% of GDP in 2020–2021, up from 4.1% in 2018–2019 (Oxford Business Group, 2022). The freight and logistics market is projected to grow from US \$10.93 billion in 2025 to US \$14.02 billion by 2030, reflecting a 5.1% CAGR (Mordor Intelligence, 2025). Egypt's geographic position and the development of key corridors such as the Suez Canal Economic Zone further reinforce the sector's role as both a driver of national development and a generator of youth employment opportunities (Market Research Future, 2023).

One initiative that directly addresses these needs is the collaboration between the Professional Development Foundation (PDF) and the Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport (CILT) Egypt, which introduced Continuing Professional Development courses and CILT-accredited qualifications for young graduates. The programme began in 2016 with a six-day logistics course for 21 students and was designed to expand into logistics hubs such as Cairo, Alexandria, and the Suez Canal corridor, aligning training with sector demand (CILT International, 2016). Similarly, the CILTR2S Logistics Academy, supported by the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE), provides young entrepreneurs and small business owners with skills in e-commerce, supply chain management, and digital business operations. By strengthening youth capacity to scale digital enterprises and linking them with manufacturing suppliers, the academy is opening new pathways into logistics employment and entrepreneurship for young people in the country (CFYE, 2022).

The CILTR2S Logistics Academy, supported by the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE), provides young entrepreneurs and small business owners with skills in e-commerce, supply chain management, and digital business operations.

The Allied Council for Commerce and Logistics (ACCL) provides specialised training in shipping, humanitarian, and agricultural logistics. By offering scholarships to underprivileged students, ACCL not only broadens inclusivity but also channels new cohorts of youth into specialised segments of the logistics workforce (ACCL, 2025).

7.10 Education

The education sector in Egypt is a key employer and a foundational pillar of the economy. Though comprehensive employment data is scarce, education—both public and private—accounts for a significant share of government staffing; it is a principal source of formal employment, especially for youth. In 2024/2025, Egypt allocated 295 billion EGP (approximately US \$6 billion) to education, equivalent to 1.7% of GDP, though this falls short of the 2014 constitutional mandate of 6% (Human Rights Watch, 2025). Education spending has declined from 2.3% of GDP in 2020/2021 to 1.7% in 2024/2025, limiting the sector's potential as a robust employer (Human Rights Watch, 2025). Nonetheless, with the number of universities rising from 50 in 2014 to 120 by 2025, including public, private, non-profit, and technological institutions, the sector's infrastructure expansion signals both increased demand for educational professionals and opportunities for youth employment in teaching, administration, and technical support (Almanassa, 2025).

Within this landscape, an NPO, the Education for Employment—Egypt (EFE-Egypt) plays a pivotal role. Since 2008, EFE-Egypt has delivered market-aligned educational programmes—covering career guidance, entrepreneurship, and employability skills—and reports that 73–84% of its graduates secure jobs, with around 58% of those being women—facilitating direct linkage between youth training and private-sector opportunities (EFE-Egypt, 2025).

The Egyptian Educational Resources Association (E-ERA), which serves as the national host for iEARN-Egypt, is a central actor in integrating digital learning and collaborative skills into the public sector. While its foundational work focused on roughly 85 public and experimental schools, E-ERA has since scaled its project-based learning model nationwide, building digital competencies critical for the future job market (iEARN-Egypt, n.d.).

Tahrir Academy, a platform launched by Nabadat Foundation in 2012, revolutionised self-driven learning for youth aged 13–18 through an open-access library of Arabic educational videos. Over 4.5 million views attest to its reach and its role in boosting youth critical thinking and self-education (Wamda, 2013).

Coptic Orphans' "Not Alone" programme targets youth from fatherless households, ensuring they have access to quality education. The programme has supported over 65,000 children since its inception, enabling them to continue schooling and breaking intergenerational poverty cycles (Coptic Orphans, 2025). INJAZ Egypt, a member of the Junior Achievement (JA) Worldwide network, equips young learners with work readiness, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and STEM and technology skills. Since its founding in 2003, the organization has impacted over 800,000 students in more than 300 schools and 38 universities across the country, utilizing volunteer-led programming in partnership with the private sector (INJAZ Egypt, 2026).



08

EMERGING
KNOWLEDGE
GAPS WITHIN
THE SECTOR



The problems and challenges of youth unemployment in Egypt have been addressed by policymakers, researchers, and practitioners for decades as part of a larger focus on the Egyptian labour market in general. However, specific studies that directly address the non-profit sector's role in employment generation, much less youth employment generation, are substantially lacking and thus warrant continued research. To explore and assess the contribution of NPOs in youth employment, it is important to highlight the knowledge gaps that persist within the sector and identify means to approach them.

8.1 Knowledge Gaps within the Sector and Sub-Sectors

Most scholarship concerning civil society in Egypt has historically focused on legal and political challenges and constraints, leaving a gap to be filled concerning the sector's economic contribution. Existing research often takes the form of fragmented case studies or donor-driven programme evaluations, rather than comprehensive, sector-wide analyses. This is due, in part, to the absence of official labour statistics on the non-profit sector. The current state of data in the sector poses a substantial challenge for researchers attempting to quantify the sector's role in employment creation.

Currently, there is no updated comprehensive mapping of NPOs working directly on youth employment. This lack of data infrastructure causes inefficiencies in resource mobilisation and distribution. There is also no systematic sub-sectoral mapping of the contribution of NPOs across key economic areas such as agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, ICT, and renewable energy. As a result, policymakers and funders face significant challenges to determine which sub-sectors offer the strongest potential for scalable, dignified and fulfilling youth employment. Future research should focus on filling gaps in quantitative data to better inform scholars and practitioners about the non-profit sector's role in the labour market.

8.2 Measuring Social Impact

There is a significant methodological gap in evaluating programme outcomes. Much of the available evidence focuses on output such as the number of trainees and workshops delivered rather than outcomes such as job placement rates, employment retention, income stability, or the quality and dignity of the work provided. Without this information, the actual contribution of NPOs to sustainable youth employment remains under-documented. More recently, there has been some interest within the CSO community in working with researchers to measure the long-term social impact of their intervention in youth employment. The work of J-PAL MENA is a notable example of such effort. J-PAL MENA, in partnership with local NPOs, conducted rigorous randomised impact evaluations to test the effectiveness of social programmes. Projects on job creation for youth are one of the main areas of the organisation's focus. Though randomised impact evaluations are known to be an effective, they are costly methods to measure impact. There is therefore a need to develop other innovative but cost-effective methods and tools to measure social impact.

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Measuring the social impact of CSOs programmes remains an underexplored area that needs further research. In addition to active fieldwork, researchers will need to develop new frameworks that not only survey non-profit programming but also map out their economic impact (e.g., as an employer, service provider).

8.3 Dignified and Fulfilling Work

The conversation of moving beyond creating jobs to creating fulfilling jobs is still embryonic in Egypt. Most youth employment initiatives are heavily focused on numerical targets such as the number of jobs created or the number of trainees employed, rather than on the quality and sustainability of those jobs. Official statistics (CAPMAS, Ministry of Manpower) measure employment and unemployment, but not job quality. Such absence of reliable national data on employment quality, combined with limited programmatic attention to dignity and purpose at work, makes it difficult to evaluate whether youth employment interventions are contributing to long-term, meaningful change.

Moreover, data about the informal sector where the majority of Egyptian youth are employed is essential to address the issue of dignified and fulfilling work. As noted earlier, informality in labour market is often associated with poor working conditions, low pay, and the absence of social protection. Without robust data about the informal sector, promoting and advocating for dignified and fulfilling work will remain a challenging issue.

8.4 Future of Work

Civil society must remain closely aligned with labour market dynamics to be able to provide a meaningful contribution to youth employment. The concept of the “future of work,” primarily shaped by automation, digitalisation, and demographic shifts, has been an appealing area of research globally, as it helps policymakers to anticipate which occupations are likely to grow, which will shrink, and what new skills will be in demand. While this research is advancing internationally, it is underexplored in the Egyptian context. Only a few studies, such as “Growing and Shrinking Occupations and the Demand for Skills in Egypt” (Economic Research Forum & GIZ, 2023), have started to address this issue, and even these remain preliminary. Without such data, NPOs stay at risk that their initiatives, especially those focusing on training and employability, may misalign with the actual needs of the future labour market.





09

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE NPO EFFECTIVENESS

To strengthen their contribution to creating dignified and fulfilling youth employment, NPOs in Egypt must not only focus on designing relevant training programmes but also secure sustainable financing and improve transparency in documenting their impact. The following three areas present concrete opportunities for enhancing effectiveness and scale.

9.1 Sector-Focused Training

In addition to developing the general life and professional skills that employers in Egypt report lacking among the labour pool, providing sector-specific programming is essential for economic development and sustainable youth employment. That is, to achieve meaningful impact, NGO programmes supporting youth employability must be grounded in economic sectors with high growth potential and job creation capacity. Research by the Growth Sectors for Youth Employment Programme highlights that identifying and focusing on sectors with high employment multipliers can significantly enhance impact (INCLUDE et al., 2022). For instance, the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment in Egypt has strategically partnered with private-sector firms to target high-potential sectors such as agriculture, retail trade, manufacturing, ICT, renewable energy, health services, hospitality services, and SME support/accelerators to boost youth job creation (Challenge Fund for Youth Employment, 2022). Moreover, employer-connected training models like in-class training, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training improve market relevance of skills and labour connections, thus enhancing youth employability in Egypt (FES, 2019).

Evidence shows that aligning training with labour market demand and sector growth leads to better outcomes. For example, a World Bank review highlights how programmes in Panama, South Africa, and El Salvador first identified high-growth industries (such as logistics, tourism, construction, ICT, and agro-industry) before designing youth training interventions (World Bank, 2019). Similarly, the Brookings Institute finds that sector-based training programmes generate lasting impacts on youth employment by focusing on industries with strong demand and employer partnerships (Ross, 2016). The Skills for Employment Investment Program in Bangladesh, which targeted garments, IT, construction, and healthcare, demonstrates how sectoral alignment can achieve over 70% job placement rates (Asian Development Bank, 2014).

The Skills for Employment Investment Program in Bangladesh, which targeted garments, IT, construction, and healthcare, demonstrates how sectoral alignment can achieve over 70% job placement rates (Asian Development Bank, 2014).

In the Egyptian context, the economy is growing with potential for expansion in labour-intensive sectors such as non-oil manufacturing (17.7%) and tourism (18%) sectors. Moreover, sectors that offer high-quality dignified jobs like ICT (10.4%) and green energy are significantly expanding. NPOs should pay close attention to these sectors and be in close communication with the private sector operating in these sectors to understand their needs and design relevant programmes.

9.2 Innovative Finance for Social Impact

While sector-focused training ensures that youth acquire skills aligned with market demand, such programmes cannot achieve scale or long-term impact without innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms. Civil society funding has always been a challenge and has become especially acute after the decline of USAID support and the budget cuts or redirection of many international donors. As noted earlier, although local NPOs are the main implementers of the youth employment programmes in Egypt (Barsoum), these programmes consistently rely on international organisations for funding. This leaves many NPOs with the burden of finding alternative and sustainable funding models to continue their work in times of crisis. Reliance on short-term, project-based grants has created instability, making it challenging for NPOs to scale successful youth employment programmes or invest in long-term monitoring and evaluation systems.

In such a context, CSOs should explore new financing pathways such as impact investing, blended finance, social bonds, and CSR partnerships, in order to diversify revenue streams and reduce dependency on a single donor base. Faith-based and community-based philanthropy, which are the major modes of funding for service provision, could also offer innovative but sustainable solutions.

While most local NGOs still rely on external donors to fund their youth employment programmes, many “mega” ones like Misr El-Kheir have worked on establishing close CSR partnerships to support their programmes. It should be noted that there is an increasing interest in the country in finding innovative funding solutions to youth employment. For instance, CFYE operates on a co-investment model, covering 50–90% of project costs for youth employment programmes across agriculture, ICT, and renewable energy. Such a model is designed to ensure that private-sector partners are financially committed while also creating measurable impact in terms of job growth, including opportunities for young women.

The country is witnessing the emergence of an impact investing ecosystem. Organisations like Enroot Impact Catalyst and Hivos have taken initial steps towards launching an impact investment fund to support social enterprises, reflecting growing interest in aligning financial returns with social outcomes. However, the ability of local NPOs to engage with this kind of capital remains uncertain. Most NPOs face capacity limitations in financial management and outcome measurement. Additionally, the regulatory framework continues to constrain NGO access to impact-oriented finance. Addressing these barriers will be essential for CSOs to unlock the potential of innovative finance and scale their contribution to youth employment.

This calls for philanthropy and patient capital to provide sustainable and scalable support for NPOs. Philanthropic organisations and local high-net-worth individuals can play a catalytic role by investing in building the capacity of NPOs to enable them to meet the requirements needed to access innovative finance. This includes strengthening their financial management systems, governance structures, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and their ability to measure social outcomes of their interventions. Such investments are essential for building the financial resilience of NPOs.

9.3 Transparency and Data

At the same time, the success of new financing models depends on robust data systems and transparent reporting. Without reliable evidence of impact, NPOs will struggle to attract patient capital, impact investors, or CSR partnerships. Thus, a key opportunity for enhancing the contribution of NPOs to youth employment lies in strengthening transparency and data systems.

Unfortunately, there is no up-to-date, comprehensive, or reliable mapping of organisations working directly on youth employment, and official statistics measure employment and unemployment rates, but provide no adequate data about job quality, retention, or fulfilment. Also, there is no sectoral mapping of the third sector contribution to youth employment. This lack of data limits the ability of policymakers, funders, and CSOs to evaluate the actual impact of their interventions or to direct resources towards the most effective programmes. Addressing this limitation requires action at both the NPO and system levels.

Approaching this data limitation issue requires both internal (NPO level) reforms and system-level initiatives. On the former, capacity-building programmes for NPOs on reporting, documentation, and impact measurement could strengthen transparency and accountability. Investing in trust-building mechanisms between the government, NPOs, and donor agencies is also important, as it could encourage data sharing and adequate reporting practices. On the latter, cooperation and partnerships among CAPMAS, MOSS, ILO, and academic institutions to generate more comprehensive labour market data will enable policymakers, sector leaders, and practitioners to make better-informed decisions and to mobilise and allocate resources more efficiently.

Taken together, these opportunities, sector-focused training, innovative finance, and stronger transparency constitute the foundation of a strategy that can move NPOs from fragmented interventions towards a more systemic and sustainable contribution to youth employment in Egypt.

10 CONCLUSION



Despite recent declines in overall unemployment in Egypt, young people continue to face disproportionately high rates of joblessness, informality, and underemployment. These dynamics are further compounded by structural challenges, including educational-employment mismatches, gender disparities, and economic inequality. Within this context, NPOs have emerged as indispensable actors in helping develop pathways towards sustainable, dignified, and fulfilling work.

This review of literature shows that NPOs are the dominant implementers of youth employment programmes in Egypt. However, they rely on international donors to fund their projects. Their contributions to youth employment range from direct employment to indirect contributions such as training, job placement, entrepreneurship support, and advocacy. And their interventions span high-potential sectors such as agriculture, textiles, tourism, ICT, renewable energy, and creative industries. Also, the non-profit sector bridges informal and formal economies and serves marginalised populations due to its ability to access marginalised communities that are hard to access by government or international organisations. These efforts underscore the non-profit sector's potential ability to combine localised knowledge with programmatic innovation. Yet, the sector's full potential remains unrealised. Heavy reliance on international donors, fragmented data systems, and constrained autonomy within Egypt's regulatory environment limit the scope of NPOs' impact. Smaller NPOs, in particular, struggle to scale or innovate in the absence of resources and long-term support. These challenges also highlight critical opportunities for expansion, particularly if NPOs and research-based practitioners can align their work more closely with macroeconomic trends and evidence-based strategies.

As noted above, experts in the space confirm that there is significant potential for expanding youth employment in Egypt in the coming years. The economy is accelerating, with robust growth in labour-intensive sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, and construction. At the same time, sectors offering high-quality, dignified employment, notably ICT (which continues to grow rapidly and attract major investment) and green energy (benefiting from large-scale solar and wind projects), represent strategic priorities for sustainable and impactful youth employability programmes and thus have the potential to create dignified and fulfilling jobs for young Egyptians.

However, the challenge of sustainable funding and scalability remains pressing. CSOs need to develop innovative and sustainable financing models that would enable them to scale successful initiatives while also investing in innovative and cost-effective systems to monitor and evaluate the real impact of their intervention. Without such mechanisms, many promising interventions risk remaining small-scale or short-lived.

Additionally, the shift from merely creating jobs to ensuring dignified and fulfilling work requires more in-depth attention. This includes raising awareness about what constitutes dignified and fulfilling work. The sector's effort in this aspect is still insignificant and very embryonic. The success of youth employability efforts will therefore depend not only on economic growth but also on ensuring that growth translates into meaningful, equitable, and sustainable employment pathways. These challenges also highlight critical opportunities for expansion, particularly if NPOs and research-based practitioners can align their work more closely with macroeconomic trends and evidence-based strategies.

In sum, NPOs in Egypt need to move from being implementers of donor-driven projects to becoming architects of systemic solutions for youth employment. By deepening collaboration with research-based practitioners, aligning with economic growth sectors, and expanding evidence-informed practice, the non-profit sector can play a transformative role in shaping Egypt's youth labour market future.



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