



Country
Morocco



Implemented by



Budget

300.000€

Duration

10/2020 - 06/2023

Contributions to SDGs



Implemented by



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Learning from the *Take IT Forward Project: Empowering Moroccan Youth Through Digital Skills and Jobs in the ICT Sector*

Can digital social innovation contribute to closing the digital divide for vulnerable groups (youth, women, unemployed, refugees and migrants) by improving digital literacy and skills through D4D initiatives in education, training and the world of work?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Reason

The digital sector is the second **largest job-creating sector** in Morocco (10% of job openings based on needs) with outlets such as IT development, customer services, web marketing or community management.

However, 45% of companies in the sector have difficulties finding suitable candidates because of the **inadequacy of training**, a **high turnover rate** (30%) and the lack of profiles with the **required professional skills** (hard skills, mindset and soft skills).

In addition, although formal degrees do not necessarily meet the ICT/Tech companies' skills needs, employers continue to require **formal higher education** background rather than to look for specific skills.

This contributes to **youth unemployment** and brain drain since the technology sector is fostering tech professionals and talent mobility.

Finally, the proportion of women in digital professions remains very **low**.¹

Yet, an increasing number of companies offshores IT services to Morocco, creating opportunities. Better and more **inclusive needs-based training in ICT** would support inclusive economic growth and stimulate the competitiveness of Morocco's digital economy.

Digital social innovation

The objective of Take IT Forward project is to provide (18-35-year-old) unemployed youth, including women, in Morocco with high-demand digital skills to find a job in the ICT sector.

The first phase of the project was dedicated to the collection and analysis of real-time labour market data through **machine learning** in order to create typical **job profiles** and develop **relevant, specific training**. In the second phase, the project opened **calls for applications** and created groups of learners (both IT and non-IT profiles), who went through several steps:

1. Online skills assessment leading to a **personalised learning path** and allowing for the **creation of homogenous classes**.
2. In-classroom training (30h) to develop soft skills and work readiness, based on findings of the **market assessment** and **employer consultations**.
3. In-classroom, "Advanced coding" training (720h) to acquire computer programming skills. This training focuses on **full-stack web coding** and does **not require computer coding pre-requisites**. Yet, participants needed to achieve a minimum score of 4/6 on the assessment of their "logical reasoning" skill.
4. Job coaching and placement in a **career-launching job** in the ICT sector.



330 young people (aged 18-35), of which **167** women, participated in a skills assessment leading to an individual learning path.

222 young people, of which **103** women, followed a training course to develop soft skills

61 young people were trained in computer programming skills (of which **18** women)

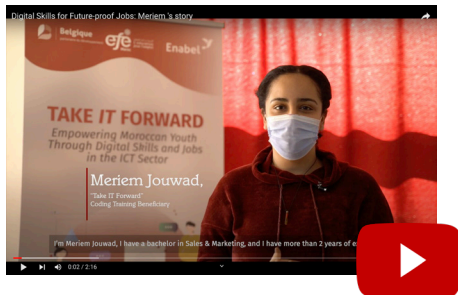
123 graduates, including **60** women, have found jobs in the ICT sector. 65 of those have secured a long-term position (more than 3 months in the same company).

¹ All statistics are from ANAPEC, « Rapport de l'Étude de Veille Prospective sur le Marché de l'Emploi », 2019

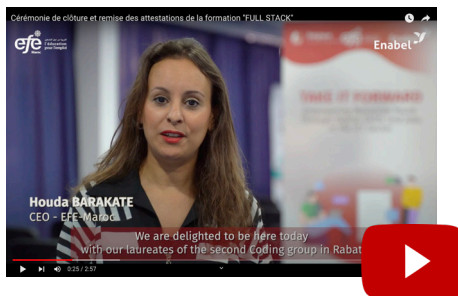


The big plus of this training is that our mentors and trainers are people who are already active in the job market, which is a huge help! We now know which programming languages are the most required in the market and which we should focus on.

Meriem Jouwad, a 24 year old girl, is one of the participant of the project Take IT Forward

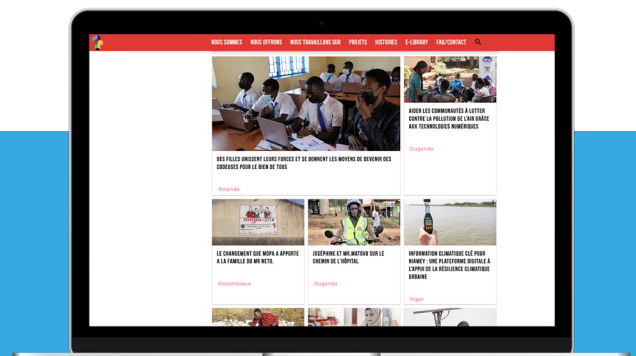


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KEY MESSAGES

In-classroom training for both IT and non-IT profiles facilitated a **strong** and **positive group dynamic**, leading to the creation of a community of tech talents. This community continued to be active after the course. Young people who took part in the training are conveying the message that tech is for everyone (irrespective of gender and academic background).

Learners who went through the whole process acquired **comprehensive digital skills** in coding, which can facilitate their career in ICT, as well as they also acquired many soft skills, which can help them in any kind of career and thoroughly boosted their confidence, especially women.

Employers who followed the project have changed their perception about talent acquisition for ICT positions: candidates don't necessarily need to have a degree to have the **relevant soft** and **hard skills**.

Data collected by machine learning tools enabled efficient identification of in-demand technical and **behavioural skills**, facilitating personalised training modules aligned with **individual profiles** and **orientations**.

LESSONS LEARNED

Inclusion and equity

In the framework of the **outreach** and **communication** of the calls for applications, strong advocacy has been developed regarding the **participation of women**. Mainly because of wrong perception, (young) women don't usually move towards a career in tech and ICT. However, digital jobs offer many advantages, such as **work hours flexibility**.

The mix between soft and hard skills training has increased the confidence among female learners (all) as well as **non-IT male learners**. These specific learners needed a push at the start of the process to convince them their attendance was **legitimate**.

Gender quotas have been determined at each stage of the learning process: minimum 50% of women had to be selected.





Users and stakeholders' responsiveness

EFE-Morocco established a strong feedback culture in which the **trainees are partners**. It was especially needed for coding training that lasted for 6 months and gathered diverse profiles: **the lack of motivation** and **drop-out risks being higher**. Weekly surveys were shared and frequent focus groups were organised to make sure coding training was well adapted to the specific groups, **creating a strong relationship** of trust between EFE and the learners. For example, EFE adapted the learning pace and learning methods so it suits all learners, who are coming from different backgrounds and have different digital literacy levels. The mentorship programme was one of the **new methods introduced based on feedback**.

There was a very strong interest in the training course, especially as no specific background was required. EFE received a **very high number of applications** and had to go through a long selection process. This affected the planning.

The main selection criteria that were used for processing the thousands of applications received by EFE-Morocco were **motivation** (checked through phone interviews); **commitment** – especially for the coding classes because of their length; French level; and technical and logical reasoning tests.

Tech and ICT companies were consulted at the start of the project to identify their **needs** in terms of skills, in order to create the soft skills and coding training courses. However, companies were still reluctant to hire EFE graduates when the training was over. The project could not overcome the strong **mindset barrier regarding credibility** of self-taught talents and **non-classic learning paths** compared to a standard academic background.

EFE partnered with IBM to give learners access to IBM's free learning platform: **IBM SkillsBuild**. The platform offers access to a large variety of digital topics and the possibility of earning digital credentials, which can boost jobseekers' chances of getting a job and entering the labour market.

Use of digital tools beyond project's end

Partnering with the public sector (particularly ANAPEC - Moroccan National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Competences) could ensure/guarantee **long-term collaboration** and **continuation** of training, without **donor-led funding**.

Based on a (feasibility) study on how to meet the increasing demand for digital skills, EFE is launching a Digital centre – DigitUp – which will centralise **their training programmes on said digital skills**.

PERSPECTIVES

DigitUp will facilitate the generation of job placements for programme graduates and increase the involvement of Moroccan IT enterprises. The centre will be located at Technopark Casablanca, an institution federating the **innovative entrepreneurial ecosystem in Morocco** and offering spaces to start-ups and organisations. EFE and its learners will join the Technopark network and community.

In April 2022, EFE launched the **EFE-Maroc Academy**, a social enterprise affiliated to EFE-Maroc. The EFE-Maroc Academy offers innovative training, consulting and coaching services to companies, helping them develop their HR skills and organizational effectiveness. The net profit generated by the Academy will be reinjected into EFE-Maroc as co-financing for its sustainable initiatives, with the aim of **developing a self-financing strategy** and sustaining EFE's impact over a longer period.

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in collaboration with*

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