MENA Skills for the Future Initiative (SFI)

Equipping the youth of MENA with skills critical for the future of work

World Bank
MENA Education Practice Group
Overview

SFI aims to prepare the youth of MENA to compete in the global economy by equipping them with skills necessary for the future of work, including essential cloud computing skills and 21st century skills.

*SFI interventions focus on the intersection of skills, technology and youth.*

Context

*Too many young people lack the skills needed in a digital world that has too few skilled workers.*

Technology is altering the end-goal of education, employment. In the changing future of work, skills that can be substituted by technology are fading in demand but skills that complement technology are becoming highly valued.

Unemployed youth in Middle East and North Africa [1]

Youth of the region faced difficult choices, and several found themselves jobless, and worse, hopeless, when the education systems failed to equip them with skills that are valued by the labor market. The economic disengagement of youth was a fueling factor leading up to the Arab Spring. This disengagement has lifelong implications that not only constrain future earnings at an individual level, but also undermine human capital formation in the region.

Companies reporting difficulty in finding soft skills

A survey of the skills gap in MENA found that creative thinking was considered an important skill for junior/mid-level positions, and especially important for senior-level positions (YouGov and Bayt, 2016). Difficulties in finding these skills were encountered by 63 percent of companies from the region that responded.

Among the top ten open positions in the MENA region [2]

Digital talent is scarce in the region and the fast-growing digital economy is increasing the demand for skilled youth. Technology is not only changing the demands of the future workforce but also how we prepare today’s youth for it; it influences the means but also the ends for education. Technology’s role as a demand-shaper for the future of work is certain, but its role as a delivery catalyst is one waiting to be explored and exploited, a unique opportunity to help deliver quality education in a more efficient and effective manner.

Daily YouTube video views from MENA [3,4]

MENA is undergoing a digital boom on the consumer side. Social media usage is widespread: The region is ranked second in the world by number of daily YouTube videos; consumption per Head of Facebook embedded videos is twice the global average. The tech-native and savvy youth in the Middle East will only further boost the digital adoption rate in the coming years.

Expected growth in Middle East and Africa cloud traffic [5]

The expectation is that the region’s cloud traffic will grow from 31 Exabyte in 2013 to 262 Exabyte in 2018, at a CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) of 54 percent. The public cloud services market in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is projected to grow 22.2 percent in 2017 to total $1.2 billion according to Gartner, Inc.

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[1] ILO modeled estimate from World Bank Reported Data (extracted from ILOSTAT database Nov 2017). Excludes High Income countries in MENA. The national estimate for 2014 was 26.84%.


SFI Objectives

Empower Youth in the region with digital skills that prepare them for the future of work

Strengthen an ecosystem for skills development

Create a model for partnerships with private sector to build digital skills and leverage private sector linkages to provide short-term market-relevant skills trainings to the youth in the region

SFI Model

SFI has three key mechanisms for digital skills development;

- Short-term training boot camps to provide an opportunity for the youth to (i) understand the changing nature of work and identify key skills needed for the future of work (iii) receive introductory training in these skills and (iv) be exposed to different virtual skills development platforms;
- Expanding access to online skills development platforms; and
- Creating partnerships between education institutes and the private sector to address the digital skills gap.

Key Partners

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<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Partner</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cloud Computing Skills</td>
<td>Amazon Web Services</td>
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<td>Digital Skills</td>
<td>Code.org</td>
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<td>21st Century Skills (4Cs)</td>
<td>Al-Ghurair Foundation</td>
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