

All these indicators can only be calculated if the corresponding questions have been introduced in the survey questionnaire.

More broadly, consultation and adoption of **common measurement standards** (type of sampling, quality assurance criteria, collection methods, collection timing, before-and-after measurements) would both improve survey data collection and allow for data comparison. Different collection methods and questionnaires lead to the production of specific and non-comparable indicators. If common observation tools were agreed upon, this methodological work could also be extended to other cooperation agencies where collaboration is possible, and to technical assistance to national authorities to help design survey systems for monitoring VET graduates at the national level.

### ***From observation to evaluation***

Describing what is being implemented provides a good understanding of the target audiences and what is being achieved, but does not provide information about how a particular intervention, through its design, is causing the observed changes. The challenge is to demonstrate, to bring proof that the intervention works. Causal inference, since that is what we are talking about, is the culmination of the theory of change: it is the proof that the mechanisms thought upstream have been realised on the ground. Quantitative evaluations are the reference in this area, but they are not the only ones, since causal mechanisms can be deduced from case studies, which are qualitative in nature.

Within quantitative evaluations, there are recurrent debates between the proponents of experimental evaluations (reproduction of laboratory conditions in which part of the population receives the treatment, the other not) and non-experimental evaluations

(attempt to reproduce laboratory conditions, taking into account the social reality without excluding people from the intervention). In the employment and vocational training fields, evaluation protocols are in most cases non-experimental, and it is up to the evaluator to take advantage of the context to adapt the method.

The major difficulty with these evaluations is the choice of comparison group. To counter this criticism, the selection of several comparison groups is a solution for assessing the stability and significance of the results. The implementation context itself can be designed to generate a natural comparison group. Thus, if an intervention is deployed incrementally, beneficiaries in later phases of deployment are appropriate comparison groups. In any case, the success of a non-experimental evaluation depends on the fact that it was thought out at the time of formulation as if it were an experimental evaluation. The main contribution of impact evaluations is to produce "a number" or "a value" to assess the magnitude of the effect, and to question the relative value of the intervention in relation to the group of indicators chosen for the evaluation.

Despite the difficulty of creating the most reliable comparison group possible, the fact remains that comparison with non-beneficiary populations provides answers, in mirror form, as to what would have happened to the beneficiary group if they had not received the intervention. Impact evaluations, regardless of the method chosen, help improve choices and decisions in interventions. In any case, they are complementary to other qualitative approaches, whose scope is certainly not that of a precise measurement, but to shed light on the mechanisms by which the impact is produced.



## **How Can the Contribution to Access to Employment of Cooperation Programmes in the Field of Vocational Training Be Measured?**

***Contributions and limitations of measuring the impacts of training and employment programmes***

Implemented by Sogerom  
for Enabel

**Enabel**

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# Introduction

Evaluating the action of cooperation is a crucial issue, especially in the context of the global challenges defined by the United Nations in 2015 which requires progress towards the achievement of the goals to be documented. In the fight against economic and social inequalities, measuring the contribution of interventions to improving employment and living conditions is in itself a challenge that this article intends to discuss. Intervention managers are increasingly working to produce achievement and monitoring indicators that describe in some detail the implementation of interventions, including the achievement of results and effects on access to employment. However, the question of whether the intervention itself caused the outcomes and effects are not yet sufficiently addressed in the Enabel's portfolio of interventions.

Yet this is where the impact of vocational training interventions to improve access to or return to employment can be measured.

The methodical setting up of monitoring and evaluation systems for each of Enabel's interventions in the field of vocational training and employment is an essential first step in laying the groundwork for more thorough evaluations, allowing us to assess whether what has been put in place is achieving its

objectives, and to measure the scope for progress. Monitoring systems produce useful information for improving interventions, but the addition of impact measures to the sets of indicators produced, along with the results of qualitative assessments, would provide a comprehensive and relevant approach.

In the monitoring systems set up in the Enabel interventions are mainly evaluated on the basis of outcome indicators describing work situations, usually six months after a person has been a beneficiary of the intervention. It should be noted that the assessments referred to herein concern only individuals and not companies or any entity that might be subject to individual monitoring.

## The Basis of Evaluation: Monitoring Systems and Measurement Indicators

The *tracer studies* are, in almost all cases, accompanied by additional quantitative or qualitative surveys of other stakeholders in the training-employment relationship (companies, training centres). Indeed, limiting ourselves to follow-up surveys of beneficiaries carries the risk of observing only part of the mechanisms for linking training and employment.

- Follow-up surveys are used to assess the **effectiveness of vocational training implemented in labour market interventions**. With objective indicators of detailed employment status, access to employment, income, durability of jobs, formality of jobs, correspondence with the field of training followed, these surveys document the way beneficiaries progress in the labour market and make it possible to assess if and how their employability has changed.
- Surveys of companies make it possible to assess the **effectiveness of the vocational training implemented in the interventions in terms of the recruitment of beneficiaries** and the relevance and use of their competences.

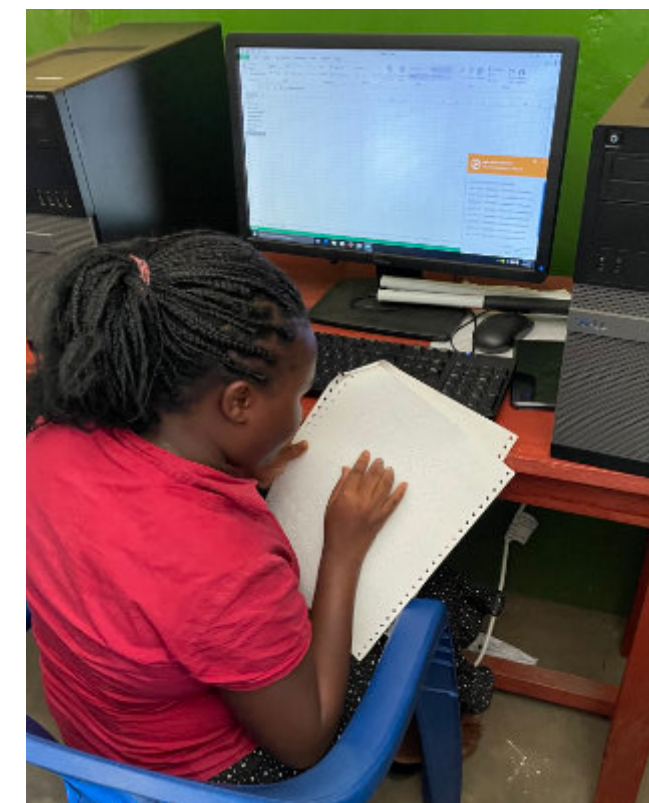
- **Qualitative surveys make it possible to examine a specific subject** (e.g. use of competences, migration, implementation of training) in **greater depth** with small groups (e.g. training centre managers, returning migrants). These surveys enrich our knowledge of situations that cannot be captured by quantitative surveys. They also reveal the possible existence of effects not foreseen by the theory of change, which can be either positive or negative. These are generally referred to as positive or negative externalities.

Combining different observation tools and methods is a good monitoring and evaluation practice. When deployed in a variety of contexts, it makes it possible to grasp the complexity of the situations and of the interventions implemented.

When it comes to measuring the effectiveness of vocational training on access to employment, the **definition of "employment" is fundamental**. The International Conference of Labour Market Statisticians definition of employment leads to the introduction of multiple questions in a questionnaire to precisely define employment and its nature. In the labour markets of African and Middle Eastern countries, the heterogeneity of employment situations (e.g. several informal jobs lasting a few hours, several employers, family helpers) further complicates data collection.

The experience in Palestine could be used as a basis for a transnational reflection (within the Enabel's interventions) to produce a common definition of what employment is. The same applies to the definition of **decent work** and the determination of the questions to be included in the questionnaires to collect agreed, validated and comparable information.

To describe the situations of intervention beneficiaries, users of monitoring data refer to a framework of measurement indicators previously defined in the same way as the disaggregation factors. These indicators



address different complementary themes and can be classified into two categories: objective indicators (static and dynamic) and subjective indicators.

- Objective indicators are obtained from situations collected by survey (e.g. employment, inactivity, self-employment);
- Subjective indicators come from subjective questions asked in the survey (e.g. satisfaction, outlook);
- Static indicators are calculated at a point in time. The dynamic indicators, on the other hand, report on the process after the end of the training. They include a notion of duration (e.g. duration of access to the first job with pay or profit), or of transition (e.g. share of youth who move from informal to formal employment in two points in time). Dynamic indicators require longitudinal data, making it possible to compare at least two situations over time: most often, follow-up surveys contain a description of the first job (or the first unemployment) and a description of the job at the date of the survey (several months later) (or of unemployment at the date of the survey).

