

Terms of Reference (ToR)

For a Final External Evaluation of the EFE – “SMILE Project: Supporting Major Improvements to Livelihoods in East- Jerusalem” (2022-2026)

Request for Proposal (RFP): Deadline: 21 November 2025

Background and Context

In order to nurture the positive potential of youth in the MENA, EFE has pioneered training programmes that are shaped by employer demand and link youth to tangible jobs, startups, and economic opportunities. In addition, EFE has developed significant expertise in convening private and public sector actors to further youth employability and catalyse systems change.

The EFE Network is comprised of locally managed EFE Affiliates in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, as well as project consultants in Algeria, Lebanon, and Bahrain. We link these organisations to each other and to international expertise and resources through Global offices in Europe, USA, and UAE. EFE's network structure has made it possible to develop the region's most effective programme for linking youth to the workplace and tangible employment opportunities. Since EFE began serving youth in 2006, we have connected over 221,000 unemployed youth to the world of work, with 55% female participation. See www.efe.org for more information.

Evaluation Purpose, Scope, and Objectives

EFE is dedicated to ongoing monitoring and evaluation to gauge the impact of its programmes on the lives of young people in the MENA. We believe that evaluation is key to ensuring EFE's continued success as the number of youth receiving our services increases, enabling EFE to scale with impact and quality. With an aim toward expanding EFE's exploration and understanding of programme effects and the mechanisms by which EFE programmes create change in young people's lives, EFE seeks an evaluation consultant (individual or firm) to produce a utilization-focused and methodologically sound mixed methods evaluation of the **SMILE Project: Supporting Major Improvements to Livelihoods in East- Jerusalem**. Funded by the European Union, the consortium includes EFE-Europe, EFE-Palestine and co-applicants Bait Byout, Al Quds University (AQU), and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The SMILE project aims to improve the livelihoods and resilience of vulnerable populations in East Jerusalem through employability, employment, and self-employment trainings linked to increased market access, decent jobs, and self-employment opportunities for business creation and/or consolidation, over the course of 48 months (January 26, 2022 – February 28, 2026).

The *theory of change* posits that if vulnerable populations in East Jerusalem, particularly women, are empowered personally, professionally, and economically through skills development, market access, job opportunities, and business creation, they will be able to

increase their income and resilience. This empowerment will generate positive ripple effects for their families and communities, strengthening social cohesion and civic participation, while also stimulating private-sector growth, competitiveness, and job creation. With the support of governmental and educational institutions, these efforts will foster broader policy dialogue and systemic change, ultimately paving the way for inclusive and sustainable economic development. More details on the project description, and activities will be provided at a later stage.

The project comprises five key training tracks, as well as a career counselling component and partnership-building, all aimed at improving the livelihoods and resilience of vulnerable youth in East Jerusalem.

The first track focuses on *digital online training through Fundaula platforms* which offers a broad range of training modules to advance participants' career readiness. The second track, *FJJJ*, is a class that teaches essential job-searching skills such as finding one's career path, performing a successful job search, writing a CV and cover letter, performing in an interview, and faring better once employed. The third track is for *soft skills and technical skills*. The soft skills training focuses on skills such leadership, critical thinking, assertiveness and teamwork. *The* technical skills consists of integrated green technical training or targeted technical training in online freelancing and virtual jobs training. In addition, the project includes a Trainer of Trainers component to upskill trainers, counsellors, and teachers to provide effective educational and career counselling for high school students (ages 15–18).

The fourth and fifth tracks focus on the Entrepreneurship track paired with coaching and mentorship support, either through a *pre-incubation training programme for aspiring entrepreneurs* or a *startup acceleration training programme for established entrepreneurs*. The pre-incubation programme for aspiring entrepreneurs equips participants with the basics of market exploration, opportunity identification, and business planning. While the startup acceleration track focuses on supporting established entrepreneurs by providing them with advanced skills such as market sizing and pricing strategies.

The evaluation should document and analyse programme activities, outputs and outcomes, and compare observed results against EFE's theory of change for the project, forming hypotheses to explain any divergent results.

The evaluation should also seek to understand and capture the short- and medium-term effects that EFE's programmes have had on the life trajectories, career opportunities, and economic wellbeing of youth and their immediate family members. The evaluation should provide actionable recommendations regarding approaches to improve future programming.

Learnings about trends and youth attitudes and behaviors gained through this initiative will be shared with other stakeholders in the youth economic opportunities space with the intention of contributing to improved approaches to youth workforce development programming in Palestine.

The objectives of the evaluation are summarised below:

1. To evaluate the project in terms of its effectiveness, relevance, coherence, efficiency, sustainability, and impact focusing on assessing project results against expected outcomes;
2. To identify key lessons and potential best practices to support learning;
3. To provide actionable recommendations to improve future programming.

Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation is expected to generate information through evaluation questions. These questions should address outcomes for project participants, including those with different education levels, and vulnerability levels (women), when relevant:

Overall Project Questions:

- What are the most significant medium-term effects of the project for youth and their families?
- How has the project affected youths' economic wellbeing?
- To what extent did the project provide support for youth that was not available through other initiatives in Palestine, whether through local providers or international NGOs?
- To what extent has the project effectively addressed the needs of youth in the area targeted?
- To what extent has the project been cost-effective and timely?
- To what extent has the project built the capacity of the partner organisation?
- What steps can EFE take to improve service delivery and programme effectiveness?

Fundaula questions

- To what extent was the installation of the online platform Fundaula efficient?
- To what extent did the Fundaula online platform contribute to advancing youth's career readiness?

FJIJ questions

- To what extent has the FJIJ training helped youth overcome barriers to job search?
- To what extent has the FJIJ training helped youth improve their labor market outcomes?
- To what extent was the project effective in upskilling trainers to deliver employability trainings?

Job Training and Placement (JTP) questions

- To what extent did the JTP programme help youth overcome barriers to employment opportunities?
- How have the project's JTP program improved?
 - Youth job search behavior;
 - Labour market outcomes; and
 - Participants' economic wellbeing?
- To what extent was the project effective in upskilling trainers to deliver technical skills, in particular Sustainable Cleaner Production concepts and tools?

Pre-incubation training programme for aspiring entrepreneurs and startup acceleration training programme questions

Each question should be addressed separately for each track:

- To what extent did the entrepreneurship programmes help youth overcome barriers to starting and/or developing their own businesses?
- How has the project's entrepreneurship programmes affected youth's ability to engage in entrepreneurial activities?
- To what extent did the financial support assist youth in launching and/or developing their businesses?

- To what extent did the post-training mentorship support assist participants in their entrepreneurial activities?
- To what extent was the project effective in upskilling trainers to deliver entrepreneurship trainings?

Partnerships

- To what extent was the partnership building process efficient?
- To what extent have EFE contributed to build the capacity of partners in the project?

The proposals may include other evaluation questions and/or sub-questions that will help respond to the key questions outlined above.

Career Counselling

- To what extent was the training of trainers effective in strengthening the capacity of counsellors, teachers, and trainers to deliver career counselling services?
- How has career counselling supported high school students (15–18) in making informed education and career choices?
- What short-term and medium-term effects has career counselling had on youth's readiness for employment or further education?
- How sustainable is the career counselling component in schools and TVET centres beyond the project period?

Methodology

The evaluation should follow a mixed-methods participatory approach including the following components:

- Desk review of project documents and analysis of project data
- Remote and/or in-person interviews and/or focus groups with EFE stakeholders including youth, employer partners, implementing partners, and EFE-Europe and EFE-Palestine staff:
 - 6 focus group discussions: one with the Fundaula programme participants, one with the FJIJ participants, one with the JTP programme participants, one with Career Counselling beneficiaries (counsellors), one with the Aspiring Entrepreneurs programme participants, and one with Established Entrepreneurs programme participants
 - 5-6 interviews with employer partners
 - 8-10 interviews with relevant trainers from each track mentioned above.
 - 5-6 interviews with EFE-Europe, EFE-Palestine staff, and co-applicants Bait Byout, Al Quds University (AQU), and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).
- Completion of at least 8 case studies of project graduates (2 from the FJIJ programme, 2 from the JTP programme and 4 from Entrepreneurship tracks (2 from the Aspiring Entrepreneurship programme and 2 from the Established Entrepreneurship program) that are both **descriptive** and **explanatory** in nature.
- Random sampling will be used to select youth and stakeholder interview/focus group participants. Gender balance and different education levels will be considered in the selection of youth interview participants and case study participants.
- Quantitative analysis (pairwise comparison) of EFE's pre- and post-training survey data.
- Quantitative analysis of Employment Status data

- Additional data collection, as needed.

Proposals can include additional proposed data collection activities and/or methodology that align with the goals of the evaluation.

Evaluation Deliverables

Project deliverables will include:

- An inception report prepared after the initial review of relevant documentation. The report should include evaluation questions, sub-questions and methodology, a data collection plan, sampling strategy, and key indicators, as well as the specific timeline for the evaluation, drafts of the data collection instruments, and an outline for the final report.
- A draft of the final evaluation report that should include draft recommendations.
- A detailed, utilisation-focused final report of the evaluation findings informed by both quantitative and qualitative data that includes case studies of at least 8 project graduates, including 2 from the FJIJ programme, 2 from JTP programme and 4 from Entrepreneurship tracks (2 from the Aspiring Entrepreneurship programme and 2 from the Established Entrepreneurship program). The report should include an executive summary and recommendations on how to improve future programming and should be designed with an external audience in mind.
- A one-pager containing infographics highlighting the main findings and recommendations of the evaluation, designed for an external audience.

Evaluation Team Composition and Required Competencies

- Experience in conducting mixed methods evaluations in the Middle East and North Africa;
- Experience conducting remote and/or in-person evaluation using a variety of methods and tools, including programmes such as Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp and Google Hangouts;
- Experience with youth employment programmes in the Middle East and North Africa a plus;
- Fluency in Arabic and English required;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills;
- Ability to manage key stakeholders' meetings and contacts;
- Proactivity;

Implementation Arrangements

The evaluation will be managed and supervised by the EFE-Europe Strategy and Learning team composed of the Senior Evaluation and Learning Manager and Project Manager. The evaluation will be implemented in close cooperation with the EFE-Europe and EFE-Palestine programmes teams.

The evaluation consultant will be responsible for leading the evaluation, collecting the relevant data, interacting with stakeholders, and completing the deliverables described above. The evaluation draft will be reviewed by EFE and the European Commission.

Timeline for the Evaluation Process

The anticipated timeline for this evaluation will be November 2025-May 2026. The estimated timeframe is as follows:

Task	Responsible person/team	Timeframe
Briefing evaluation consultant on the project; sharing programme data and	Evaluation Consultant	November-Early December 2025

documentation with Evaluation Consultant; Review project documentation		
Prepare and submit a draft inception report to the Organisational Learning team	Evaluation Consultant	December 2025
Approve inception report, ensuring any necessary adjustments by evaluation consultant	Organisational Learning team at EFE	January 2026
Interviews with project stakeholders and data analysis	Evaluation Consultant	January - Early February 2025
Programme data analysis	Evaluation Consultant	February 2026
Preparation and submission of the draft report to the Organisational Learning team	Evaluation Consultant	Early March 2026
Presentation of preliminary learnings and results to the Organisational Learning and Programmes team	Evaluation Consultant	Mid-March 2026
Comments on the draft report sent to the Evaluation Consultant	EFE-Global Organisational Learning team and European Commission	End of March 2026
Finalisation and submission of the final report to the Organisational Learning team	Evaluation Consultant	Mid-April 2026
Preparation of one pager	Evaluation Consultant	Mid-April 2026
Approval of final report and one pager	Organisational Learning team at EFE and European Commission	End of April-Early May 2026

Budget

Applicants should submit a detailed budget that includes all costs related to the project. The budget should include a breakdown of cost components including rate(s) and number of hours estimated for the individual consultant or team members, guided by the timeframe above.

The maximum budget allocation for this evaluation is 25,000€.

Application Submission Process and Criteria for Selection

Based on this RFP framework, please send your application to europe@efe.org (subject: SMILE External Evaluation). Please ensure your application includes a brief proposal (3-5 pages excluding team bios and references) that includes a work plan with objectives, activities, deliverables, timeline, budget, effort level (cost per hour), team bios, and references.

Deadline: 21 November 2025.

Submissions will be evaluated based on the consultant(s)' expertise and qualifications as well as on the cost competitiveness of the proposal. After an initial shortlist, candidates will be interviewed via Zoom.

Evaluation Ethics

The consultant must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees, and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing the collection of data and reporting on data. The consultant must also ensure the security of collecting information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information, knowledge, and data gathered in the evaluation process must also be solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses without the express authorisation of the European Commission and EFE