

A woman with long, dark, wavy hair is shown in profile, speaking into a microphone at a podium. She is wearing a white, ruffled top. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor event setting.

**Translating Research Into Scaled Up Action:
EVIDENCE SYMPOSIUM ON ADOLESCENTS
AND YOUTH IN MENA**

First Edition November 21-22, 2017

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The First Edition of the Evidence Symposium was led by a Steering Committee, formed by:

- Adolescent and Youth researchers, advocates and activists, involved in the organizations listed below or independent.
- Representatives from UNICEF, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, International Labour Organization (ILO), No Lost Generation, European Civil Protection And Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), American University of Beirut, Columbia University, Action Aid, GAGE and Danish-Arab Partnership Programme.

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1. OVERVIEW: FIRST EDITION OF THE EVIDENCE SYMPOSIUM ON ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH IN MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (MENA)

120 young people, policy makers, donors, researchers, academics and representatives of UN, NGOs and CSOs gathered on 21 November 2017 in Amman, Jordan, with the purpose of sharing evidence and recommendations around key priorities for young people living in the MENA region.

With over one third of the participants being adolescents and youth researchers, advocates, activists and reporters, the symposium gave an opportunity to today's generation to engage and be heard. As young people heartily expressed throughout their participation, 'now is the time for action'.

On November 21, 2017, **No Lost Generation (NLG)**¹ and the **UN:NGO Adolescent and Youth Forum**² held the **First Evidence Symposium on Adolescents and Youth for the MENA Region “Translating Research Into Scaled Up Action”**, bringing together 120 participants: young people, policy makers, donors, development and humanitarian professionals and practitioners, researchers and academics. This intergenerational event, which will be organized in annual basis, aims at increasing evidence and visibility on the issues of relevance for adolescents and youth in the region. The specific objectives of the annual event were:

- Identify key takeaways based on in-depth evidence on issues of relevance for adolescents and youth in the region.
- Build a process of systematic learning based on good/promising practice documentation interventions.

- Initiate and/or enhance cooperation and partnerships between local researchers, young people, donors, policy makers, development and humanitarian professional and practitioners towards integrating the evidence into policy and programming strategies.
- Catalyse new partnerships and increase the capacity in MENA to implement initiatives by, with and for adolescents and youth.
- Identify regional evidence gaps, propose priorities for evidence generation in 2018 and leverage resources to support continuation of this work.

In the 2017 edition of the symposium, recent global and regional evidence, as well as good practices, were shared by a diverse group of speakers, who represented many countries from the region. The dialogue focused on three thematic areas, deemed of high relevance for the region: Adolescents and Youth Civic Engagement; Adolescents and Youth Employment; and Violence against Adolescents and Youth (to access the full Agenda, [please click here](#)). Building from the evidence, adults and young people worked together to generate recommendations around key priorities for adolescents and youth (*See section 5. “What Did We Learn at the Evidence Symposium: Key Evidence and Recommendations”*).

The symposium was followed by a donor briefing, on November 22, 2017, attended by over 12 members of the international donor community, as well as young people, practitioners, policy makers and researchers. The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate an open dialogue among participants, provide donors with evidence on the situation of adolescents and youth as well as with an update on the current programmatic successes and challenges concerning the “Adolescents & Youth Pillar of No Lost Generation”¹. [For more information please click here.](#)

¹Launched in 2013, No Lost Generation is a strategic framework for the responses to the Syria and Iraq crises. The initiative brings together key partners to achieve agreed outcomes under three pillars: Education, Child Protection and Adolescents & Youth. No Lost Generation is led jointly by UNICEF, Mercy Corps, Save the Children and World Vision.

²The UN:NGO Group is a regional interagency coordination mechanism consisting of United Nations and non-governmental organizations that work together to advocate and support work with adolescents and youth in the Middle East and North Africa region.

2. WHY NOW?

Young people (10-24 years old) in MENA represent about one third of the total population and recently have been at the forefront of global, social, economic and political developments. **Investing in the capacities of these millions of young boys and girls and enlarging their opportunities can reap huge social and economic benefits for themselves, their communities and their countries.**

Nevertheless, the region has been unable to translate the knowledge we have on the issues for adolescents into scaled action, with respect to health, education, protection as well as social, civic and economic participation. As a result, young people especially young girls continue to remain socially, economically and politically excluded. Conflicts, climate change and political instability have further increased the vulnerabilities of young people, exposing them to violence, exploitation and abuse.

Several successful initiatives are being implemented in the MENA region for, with and by adolescents and youth, to address these realities. However,

there is a consensus over the need to get better, larger, quicker, sustainable and more equitable results. The first edition of the Evidence Symposium on Adolescents and Youth was an opportunity to share promising/good practices targeting the most vulnerable and marginalized adolescents and youth, and to highlight the need for increased visibility and focus on these populations. **Data disaggregation is critical to unmask what is happening at the individual level, to ensure inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalized, and to measure progress.** The event was also an opportunity to have an open dialogue on how scale up programmes/initiatives around **key priorities for young people: violence, employment, engagement; and promote the sustainable involvement of young people at all stages of decision-making and in various roles, as researchers, advocates and implementers.**



3. THE VOICE OF ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Adolescents and youth from the MENA region urged and celebrated the organization of the first evidence symposium. Below are a few testimonials about their needs and concerns, as well as their views on the need for this space:

To learn more see [videos](#) prepared by young people.

“Through the participatory action research, we were able to discover the hopes, aspirations and challenges of young people, and now we are trying to share our results with decision makers and advocate for change.”
Fadila Wehbi, Lebanon, young researcher and advocate, 23 years old ♀

“When we set our minds to something, we can accomplish it. We need to depend on ourselves. We can build our future with power of will and determination. [...] We should be independent and don't let any obstacles affect us.”
Nurhan Mohammad, ♂
Yemen, adolescent advocate

“We continue to remain excluded and we face the highest youth unemployment rate in the world. We face conflicts, climate change and political instability. But this can change! It can change if we all come together...it can change if our voice –the voice of adolescents and young people- is heard. This Symposium is an excellent opportunity to address our current challenges and to plan for the future. We need spaces like this one to have a dialogue and to develop more effective and innovative policies and programmes that promote our development.”
Muzoon Almellehan, 19, a Syrian refugee and education activist ♀

“Youth must have high ambitions and strive to make these ambitions and ideas a reality.”
Maria Elissa Makhlof, Lebanon, young researcher and advocate, 20 years old ♀

“We need collaboration between schools or the ministry of education with different NGOs to reach a large number of people to make a change.”
Azezeh Abo Ayash, Jordan, young researcher and advocate, 20 years old. ♀

“Despite the challenges, there is hope... We've learned that we need and we want to be part of the change... Empowering youth, making differences, changing lives”.
Ayman El Kadi, Lebanon, young advocate and activist, ♂
20 years old.

“Nepotism leads to unemployment; which means putting the wrong person in the wrong place.”
Raghd Ghonmien, Jordan, young researcher and advocate, 22 years old ♂

“Young people must participate in decision-making because they are the citizens of today. They should engage in CSOs and advocate for their causes.”
Maria Elissa Makhlof, Lebanon, young researcher and advocate, ♀
20 years old ♀

“It is essential to change people's minds on how they perceive people with special needs. This is why it is important as young people to start working on this and prove that we can make a change in our society.”
Ayman El Kadi, Lebanon, young advocate and activist, ♂
20 years old ♂

4. PARTICIPANTS AT THE EVIDENCE SYMPOSIUM

The Evidence Symposium involved a diverse group of stakeholders in the planning and implementation to ensure inclusion and representation of their priorities and needs:

- **Adolescents and youth** formed an Adolescent and Youth Advisory Team, which provided guidance during the planning stage, to ensure their rights and needs were met at the event. Young people also participated in a poster competition, designed to ensure young researchers, advocates and activists involved in development and humanitarian efforts had a space to share their experiences, learnings and recommendations. To learn more click [here](#).
 - **Policy Makers:** The Symposium involved government and private sector partners working towards / or with a proven experience of translating evidence into policies and actions for adolescent and youth programming. Policy makers, particularly from Jordan and Lebanon, had opportunities to share their views on key priorities for adolescents and youth, exchange lessons learned from their programmes, and answer questions from adolescents and youth about remaining needs and accountability of Governments.
 - **Implementers:** The Symposium actively involved national/regional civil society organizations/groups/movements with proven (evidence-based) experience in providing adolescent and youth programming including opportunities for adolescent and youth programming including civic, social and economic engagement. Representatives from different organizations and entities, including the MENA UN:NGO group³ were instrumental
- both during the planning and implementation phase of the Symposium, contributing to the Steering Committee, submitting posters on good practices on adolescents and youth programming, developing papers to share recent evidence and participating as speakers and/or attendees.
- **Researchers (including adolescent and youth researchers):** The Symposium involved academics, evaluators, investigators, young researchers and other partners who study adolescent and youth programming (including engagement) and who had results/demonstrable evidence to share. Their support was essential to ensure adequate selection of evidence to share during the event, as well as to identify existing evidence gaps that should be addressed in the near future.
 - **United Nations Agencies:** Representatives from the UN Interagency Technical Team on Adolescents and Youth⁴ were involved in all stages of the process. They played a key role in the identification of evidence, good practices, participants, speakers; and in the development of recommendations about how to continue collaborative efforts among different stakeholders.
 - **Donors:** Representatives of donor agencies who have shown interest in adolescent and youth engagement; and those supportive of No Lost Generation (NLG) as a whole were invited to join the event, both the 21st and 22nd of November. Donor representatives welcomed the recommendations formulated during the event, and committed to continue their active involvement in dialogue around how to best meet the needs and rights of adolescents and youth in the region. [To learn more click here.](#)

[Click here for the list of participants.](#)

³The MENA UN:NGO Group is a regional interagency coordination mechanism consisting of UN and NGOs that work together to advocate and support the results for adolescents and youth in the Middle East and North Africa region.

⁴The MENA UN Interagency Technical Team on Young People is a regional UN group comprising of 17 UN agencies coordinating and supporting strategic joint actions for adolescents and youth in the Arab States /Middle East North Africa Region.

5. WHAT DID WE LEARN AT THE EVIDENCE SYMPOSIUM: KEY EVIDENCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The breadth of evidence and good practices shared during the Symposium has been summarized in the following brief papers. To access full documentation of the evidence and recommendations on issues of

high relevance for adolescents and youth in the MENA region, as well as key recommendations for future action by policy makers, practitioners, young people, researchers and other actors concerned with the rights and needs of these populations see the **Comprehensive Evidence Symposium Report** [here](#).

What did we learn? Key facts

- Adolescence provides an **unique window** and critical period of opportunity to build on early investments and offering a **second chance** for those who have not fared well in early childhood.
- Young people across MENA feel a sense of disillusionment, frustration and acute anger however participatory research reveals that **young people are still positive, hopeful that their reality will change and keen to engage positively to change that reality** - presenting an opportunity for governments, donors, practitioners, researchers and UN agencies an opportunity to invest in their rights and foster a new generation that shares responsibility to eschew conflict, discrimination and violence.
- Whilst Intersecting vulnerabilities and violations of rights limit the opportunities for many adolescents and young people affected by conflict in MENA, the current **responses provided by local and international organizations are limited** in scope and duration as a result of the conflict and short term humanitarian funding.
- **The MENA region is most dangerous in the world for adolescents** today. More than 70% of adolescents who died in 2015 due to collective violence globally were living in MENA.
- **1 in 5 girls in MENA are married before the age of 18** and the rate of child marriage is increasing in conflict affected settings.
- **MENA has the highest youth unemployment rates in the world**, particularly for young women whose unemployment is twice that of young men; this is further exacerbated in conflict affected settings.
- **Adolescent and youth engagement works** when done right and has an impact both at the individual and community level.

We know what works in the MENA context there is now an urgent imperative to dramatically increase investment and invest in solutions that work for adolescents and youth in the MENA region.

³The MENA UN:NGO Group is a regional interagency coordination mechanism consisting of UN and NGOs that work together to advocate and support the results for adolescents and youth in the Middle East and North Africa region.

⁴The MENA UN Interagency Technical Team on Young People is a regional UN group comprising of 17 UN agencies coordinating and supporting strategic joint actions for adolescents and youth in the Arab States/Middle East North Africa Region.

5.1 GLOBAL EVIDENCE

5.1.1 ADOLESCENCE OFFERS A UNIQUE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

By **Perna Banati** and **Elena Camilletti**, [UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti](#)

Research has identified the adolescent years as a 'unique window' of development, with profound social, psychological, economic and biological transitions, but also as a 'second window' of development to redress adversities that may have been experienced earlier in childhood.

Adolescence is not just a developmental period bridging childhood and adulthood. It is part of a developmental trajectory which builds upon early childhood developmental processes and extends until adulthood. **Adolescence is a time of opportunity and vulnerability**, as many needs and risky behaviours are activatedⁱⁱ during this period, including mental illness and risks of suicideⁱⁱⁱ. **Bullying, violence and exclusion often leave a long-term mark on the individual^{iv}. These are worsened by growing up in stressful environments, such as armed conflict, violence and extreme poverty.** It is therefore vital to consider the interface between youth biological changes and their relation to society and their environment^v.

What Have We Learned From Interdisciplinary Evidence?

NEUROSCIENCE

The adolescent brain is a “work in progress” element^{vi}. By scanning children's brains with an MRI year after year, scientists have discovered that the brain undergoes radical changes in adolescence. Excess gray matter is pruned out, making brain connections more specialised and efficient. The parts of the brain that control physical movement,

vision and the senses matures first, while the regions in the front that control higher thinking do not finish the pruning process until the early 20s. There can also be an increased sensitivity in the brain regions which respond to external factors. **This is as much defined by socio-cultural transitions as it is by biological maturation.** Interventions during this period will be crucial for life chances and resilience to previous experiences.

BIOLOGICAL, PUBERTAL AND HORMONAL CHANGES

Reiter et al. (1975)^{vii} notes “the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal system is maintained in a dormant state (with a low level of activity) during pre-pubertal years”. During adolescence, the reproductive endocrine system becomes increasingly active. There is an elevated secretion of gonadal steroid hormones, which produce signs of reproductive and physical maturation^{viii}. These endocrinal changes, reflected in physical appearance, can affect their perceptions, behaviours and relationships with others^{ix}. **This period is exemplified by internal and external stimuli that signal reproductive maturation^x. Boys and girls will experience biological changes in very different manners.**

PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

During this period, key brain functions will appear, such as abstract thinking, logical thinking, moral reasoning, self-identity and emotional development. There are also different expressions of temperamental emotional reactivity and self-regulation. Disruptions in physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development may limit an adolescents' ability to perceive and judge risk effectively. Early adolescence is a period of identity formation and the development of new interests. There is low resistance to peer influences, low levels of future orientation, and low risk perception, with an increased risk taking behaviours. School and family environments are important contexts at this stage. Older adolescents (15–19 years) continue developing executive and self-regulatory skills, with a greater degree of autonomy. Education settings still remain important during this phase^{xi}.

FAMINES AND STUNTING

The impact of shocks or events may have differing consequences depending on when in the life cycle the exposure to the shock occurs. Individuals exposed to famine in early childhood are more likely to be stunted as adults^{xii}. However, two studies have shown that the impact of exposure to famine is even greater if an individual is exposed to famine during adolescence rather than infancy. Women exposed to the Biafra famine (Nigeria 1968-70) as infants were 0.75 cm shorter as adults, while women exposed as adolescents were a remarkable 4.5 cm shorter^{xiii}. Similarly, women exposed to the severe famine in Cambodia in 1975-79 were more likely to be stunted if exposed during adolescence rather than infancy^{xiv}. There may be a variety of reasons, including the link between early life and later outcomes, the importance of timing, and that adolescents do not have a second window of opportunity for catch-up growth.

IMPACTS OF STRESSORS

The circumstances experienced in one phase of life can have consequences for later phases. For example, low birthweight predicts depression in adolescent girls^{xv}. Early adolescence is a sensitive developmental period for males. Population stressors experienced during the ages of 10-14 are more strongly associated with a decrease in life span compared with those experienced during infancy, ages 1-4, 5-9 and 15-19^{xvi}. Accordingly, 'adaptations triggered during adolescence in stressed cohorts came at the expense of reduced life span at age 20'^{xvii}. The impact of stressors is cumulative, making it hard for individuals to catch up once they fall behind.

Strategic interventions at an earlier age can lead to benefits at a later stage. Disadvantage is transmitted inter-generationally, often through the educational or health status of the mother. A better managing of the stressors is required to improve health of children and youth.



Recommendations

- Adolescence is a critical period to build on early investments and offering a second chance for those who have not fared well in early childhood.
 - Adolescents are biologically most prepared for learning. There is potential to create positive spirals of behavioural patterns, to prevent the development of negative spirals^{xviii}. The positive spirals of behaviour stem in part from the heightened sensitivity to the influence of peers and social hierarchies during adolescence. Interventions during this period can improve life chances of young people and mitigate the impact of deleterious life circumstances in earlier childhood.
 - Supporting learning and healthy habits during this period of rapid growth and development is important for supporting the adolescent's realisation of rights and empowering adolescents to actively engage in their world now.
- Gender norms and beliefs are dynamic over the individuals' life-course, but their influences are at peak during adolescence. Thus, adolescence is a key period for shaping gender norms and for implementing programs to influence social norms around gender.

5.2 REGIONAL EVIDENCE

5.2.1 THE SITUATION FOR ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (MENA): WHAT DO WE KNOW FOR SURE?

By **Melinda Van Zyl**, consultant UNICEF, Middle East and North Africa Regional Office with support from the UNICEF, Adolescent Development and Participation Section, Middle East and North Africa Regional Office and the MENA Regional UN: NGO Adolescent and Youth Group

In 2017, the Adolescent Development team in UNICEF's Middle East and North Africa Office, on behalf of the Regional UN Interagency Technical Team on Young People (UNIATTYP) and a sister group, the regional UN:NGO group on adolescents and youth (commonly known as the MENA UN:NGO adolescents and youth group), commissioned this evidence brief in the form of a summarized systematic review of available literature on adolescents and young people in the MENA, to complement evidence generation of good practices in adolescent and youth programming initiated in 2014, as well as the Interagency Participatory Action Research Project (2016-17) and collaborative development of an Adolescent and Youth Engagement Toolkit.

WHO ARE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA?

83 million adolescents⁵ call the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region home^{xix}. Together with the MENA's older cohort of youth, they constitute a large and diverse demographic of young people making MENA one of the most youthful populations in the world. Around 35 per cent of the population is between 10 and 24 years old, and 60

per cent is below the age of 30.^{xx}

Currently, around **228 million children and youth are living in the region**. In coming years, the numbers of children, adolescents and youth in the MENA region are projected to grow more slowly, reaching 257 million in 2030 and 271 million in 2050 meaning that between 2015 and 2030 over 33 million children and youth under the age of 24 will be added to the population. The numbers of adolescents and youth in MENA are projected to reach 152 million in 2030 and 158 million in 2050. Between 2015 and 2030, 29.9 million and between 2015 and 2050, 35.9 million adolescents and youth will be added to the population. This relatively slow growth presents a **demographic window of opportunity** to invest in human capital by improving access to health and education and enhancing prospects for productive employment^{xxi}. Yet young people in the region face many barriers when it comes to realizing their dreams and aspirations impeding the potential of reaping the demographic dividend for the MENA region.

WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOUNG PEOPLE FACE?

Inequity prevails across the MENA, and is at the heart of many of the challenges encountered by adolescents and youth in the region. These include:

- **A failing education system:** The number of young people that do not complete secondary education is on the rise. In 2015, 12 per cent of lower secondary school age children were out of school, and an additional 12 per cent in secondary school at risk of dropping out, affecting particularly marginalized groups such as refugees, the poor and children with disabilities. Main causes include gender discrimination, lack of access to legal status or documentation, and conflict. Those who do continue their education are, on the one hand, often over qualified for the job market or do not possess the necessary skills that are required,

⁵For the purposes of this document, the term "adolescent" denotes individuals between the ages of 10 and 19, and "youth" denotes individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 and "young people" refers to all aged 10 to 24.

due to the academic focus of the curriculum and limited teacher proficiency^{xxii}; on the other hand, there is a societal lack of appreciation of TVET – enrolling in TVET is demonstrating academic failure, rather than a pathway to engage in meaningful learning, skill development and employment.

- **Youth unemployment and socio-economic exclusion** is a major challenge for young people, both those for whom completion of formal education proved impossible or hard to attain, as well as those with relevant secondary or tertiary qualifications: youth unemployment stands at 24.9 per cent in the Middle East and 29.5 per cent in North Africa, with significant higher rates for young women. The unemployment rate of young women is the highest worldwide at 41 per cent in the Middle East and 38.7 per cent in North Africa.^{xxiii}
- **The prevalence of child labour in MENA has greatly increased with the increase in Syrian refugees;** Child labour in Jordan has doubled since 2007, now reaching 70,000^{xxiv}, while in Lebanon an estimated 180,000 children are engaged in child labour, including in its worst forms^{xxv}.
- **Discrimination against young women and girls** remains widespread in homes, educational institutions and in the work place.
- **Refugee adolescents and youth are more likely to forego essential services and be discriminated against,** with poor conditions in camps repeatedly cited as very demoralizing by children and adolescents alike^{xxvi}. Access to decent work or tertiary education is significantly more restricted for those whose status is undocumented. Harmful work is a significant reality for large numbers of underage refugee boys^{xxvii}.
- **Violence:** More than 70 per cent of adolescents who died globally in 2015 due to collective

violence were living in this region – with mortality rates having risen dramatically since 2011^{xxviii}. This includes **violence at school, in the classroom and on the playground^{xxix} and gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence^{xxx}.**

- The impact of war or political conflict, notably on **mental health and psychosocial wellbeing.**
- **The number of adolescents and youth living with disabilities** inside Syria as well as within refugee populations in transit or host countries has dramatically climbed in recent years.
- **Risk for radicalization** and recruitment to armed groups.
- Young people feel **disenfranchised** regarding opportunities for meaningful participation at local government level and **lack of political decision-making power.**

Yet, despite the acute frustration and anger, participatory action research with young people reveals that young people in MENA are positive and hopeful that their reality will change, and keen to engage positively to change that reality^{xxxi}. This presents an opportunity for investing in the long-term development agenda, fostering a new generation of children, adolescents and youth that is resilient, shares responsibility to eschew conflict, discrimination and violence, is prepared for positive engagement in lifelong learning and work.

WHAT WORKS, IN PROGRAMMING FOR ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH, AND WHAT DOESN'T?

The evidence brief summarizes approaches gleaned from evaluations and desk reviews of adolescent and youth programming. It emphasizes using an adolescent and youth-centred, asset-based approach, creating strategic opportunities for engagement for young people, and working collaboratively across sectors with government and

other inter-disciplinary partners, including academic institutions and communities, to address underlying social norms, create an enabling environment and improve support systems available to marginalized adolescents and youth^{xxxii}. Good practice includes delivering interventions through existing institutions such as schools, homes and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Drawing on community human resources to inform and deliver programmes that target local young people, and including skills-building components that are targeted to adolescents and youth, parents, teachers or relevant participants/beneficiaries further promote ownership and engagement.

WHAT IS THE STATE OF EVIDENCE AVAILABLE ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MENA?

The evidence brief underlines the need for ongoing research and measurement of programming that will contribute regional and country-specific data on adolescents and youth, with a particular focus on data disaggregated by gender and age and increased involvement of adolescents and youth. This is needed to alleviate the critical evidence gap which currently prevails, and which limits the potential of programming to apply age-appropriate initiatives that are accurately differentiated by target group. Improved availability of disaggregated data will improve relevance and effectiveness of government and (I)NGO initiatives.



Recommendations

1. **Change the way young people are perceived**, by addressing the data gap and disseminating disaggregated information to influence perceptions of young people as positive contributors and members of society, and to craft responsive, relevant programs and initiatives to address their multiple needs.
2. **Dramatically increase investment in adolescents and youth, in particular increase investments on adolescent girls and young women.**
 - 2.1 Scale-up MENA essential services and strengthen health, social welfare, protection, participation and employment systems, ensuring access to the poorest MENA families and addressing specific inequities for young women and refugees.
 - 2.2 Transform MENA's educational, skills and vocational learning systems through systems-strengthening, curriculum reform and access to technology, to enhance learning outcomes and match the skills of MENA's children and youth to current and future labour market needs.
 - 2.3 For young women, it is critical to address underlying social norms and ensure protection of girls from violence, exploitation and abuse, empowering them to participate fully in community, workplace and political life, as well as enhancing their access gender friendly education and employment services.
3. **Formulate and implement evidence informed policy and programs.**
 - 3.1 All actors should urgently reconsider the way in which young people are being engaged within the MENA and scale up age and gender appropriate adolescent and youth engagement programmes in partnership with adolescents and youth **fostering a new generation that is resilient, shares responsibility to eschew conflict, discrimination and violence;**
 - 3.1.1 Design programmes so as to create strategic opportunities for adolescent and youth leadership, co-learning and team work;
 - 3.2 **Address underlying social norms** and make space for intergenerational dialogue between older and younger generations;
 - 3.3 Within the context of protracted crisis, work collaboratively to ensure that humanitarian and longer term development agendas become more integrated, creating space for finding **sustainable solutions** for current problems through upstream engagement focused on policy reform and institutional capacity building.
 - 3.4 Advocate for and promote the implementation of **comprehensive, well-targeted youth employment initiatives;**

3.5 **Forge partnerships with the involvement of all stakeholders** - governmental and non-governmental actors, the private sector, the community, parents and boys and girls themselves -to ensure **a comprehensive approach**, simultaneously addressing multiple needs experienced by adolescents and youth.

4. Improve the **evidence base and visibility of adolescents and youth**, in humanitarian and non-humanitarian settings, by:

4.1 Ensuring **age and sex disaggregated data** about adolescent and youth across all sectors, including on adolescent and youth engagement;

4.2 Studying the **positive ways in which young people are contributing to society** across the MENA;

4.3 Generating more knowledge on **how to assist young people with disabilities**;

4.4 **Collaborating across disciplines and actors** to produce rigorous, relevant information;

4.5 Increasing the **knowledge base on addressing gender-based barriers** to adolescent and youth wellbeing, and increase the availability of knowledge, evidence and data on violence;

4.6 Improving the availability of **data and strategies to prevent and counter violent extremism through the engagement of adolescents and youth**.

5. **Do no harm**. Ensure that efforts to improve adolescent and youth engagement do not put them at risk or are exploitative in nature and that they are always aligned with relevant international child rights norms and standards. It is therefore critical that, power and gender dynamics are understood, GBV risks are assessed and measures taken to continuously monitor and reduce vulnerability to threats for girls and boys.

5.2.2 PERSPECTIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SYRIA, JORDAN AND LEBANON: HOPES, ASPIRATIONS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Adolescent and Youth Researchers
Aoun, JOHUD, NRC, Masar Association
UNICEF, UNFPA, UNESCO

In 2016, UNICEF and partners launched a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project in partnership with young researchers (14-24 years old) in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. This brief paper summarizes key findings from the research conducted by young people.

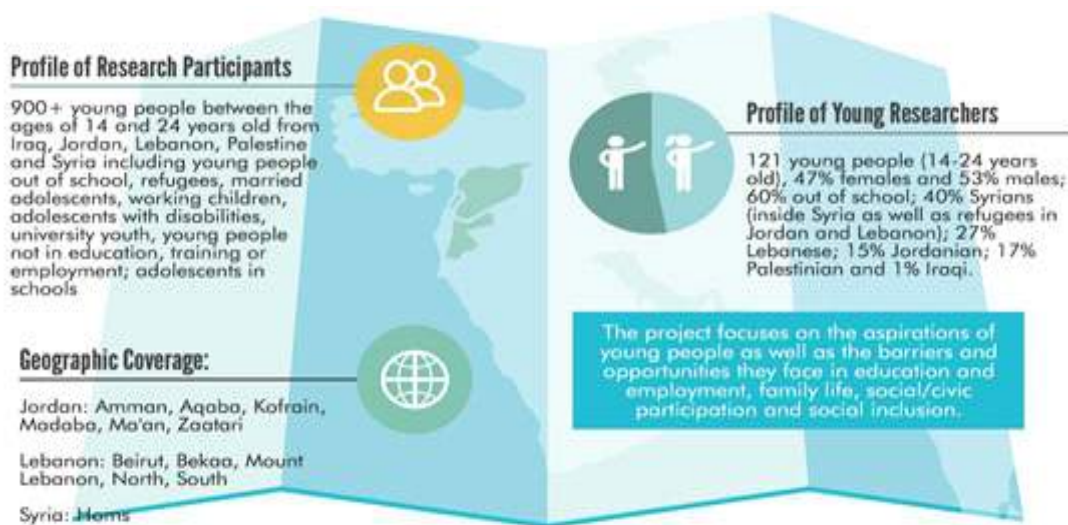
CONTEXT

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is home to 83 million adolescents. Despite the potential of this demographic for economic and social development, unemployment rates for youth are the highest in the world and children entering

their second decade of life have very limited opportunities for self-realization. Poor quality of education and limited educational opportunities for the most marginalized is a critical issue, and for those young people who do graduate, decent work is extremely hard to find. The prevalence of protracted conflict in the region is reversing the socio-economic gains made to date and destroying the social fabric through displacement and massive loss of lives and livelihoods. Violence against women and children – especially adolescent girls – is prevalent and takes many forms: gender-based violence - especially sexually and domestic violence against refugee girls, child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Discriminatory legal provisions and frameworks reinforce gender inequalities and traditional gender roles and attitudes continue to limit women's empowerment.

Within this context, adolescents and young people in the MENA construct hopes and plans for adult lives, and combat barriers that obstruct realization of such aspirations.

RESEARCH ON HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS: REACHING THE MOST VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE



METHOD

For this study, 121 young researchers were trained and collected data from 985 peers using five qualitative data collection tools.^{xxxiii} Basic selection criteria for the young researchers was to include

the most vulnerable and marginalized, taking into account educational level (in and out of school); employment status (working and not working); age (young adolescents 10-14 and youth 15-24 years old); nationality (representative of the population

in each of the countries – refugees and nationals); sex (male and females); and place of residence (balanced representation of the regions of the country).

ANALYSIS: KEY FINDINGS

1) Aspirations

Aspirations are consistent across countries, but their realization varies across the region according to a young person's sex, legal status, location, origin, ethnicity and disability

Aspirations related to education and employment

Aspirations related to education and employment were the two most common aspirations across the three countries. Gaining some form of education, either formal or informal, was a priority for young people across the age spectrum, in and out of school, but the preferred educational trajectories varied.

Out-of-school young people constituted 56% of research participants in Jordan; 34% in Lebanon and 53% in Syria. Out-of-school young people tend to aspire to education pathways that will rapidly link them to a job, including vocational training. Especially out-of-school girls valued non-formal educational opportunities as well as opportunities to do home-schooling. The younger out-of-school youth (15-19 years old) aspired to a larger extent than the older youth (20-24 years old) to return to education. For the younger youth, accessing education and continuing to higher education was a key aspiration; however they were not hopeful of being able to achieve so against the social realities they live in. For the older youth, formal education seemed unattainable and they aspired first and foremost to make a living and access some form of education that would allow them to improve their livelihoods.

Young people in school tend to aspire to complete their education and access higher education as a means for gaining a job relevant to their specialization.

For girls, education was also perceived as a way for increasing their agency at the family and community levels, and for gaining independence in their life choices.

*"We are looking to work with all of you to address these issues and implement the solutions we have identified
– 23-year old female, Jordan"*

Marriage and family formation

Consistent with existing literature, young people made reference to desires of marriage and forming a family; however, it was clearly not seen as an immediate priority in their lives. In contrast, young women at university considered marriage as a potential barrier to their aspirations of completing education and obtaining a job.

Youth voices and meaningful participation as active citizens

Girls and young women described their communities as "oriental" or "conservative", where attitudes and social expectations for boys and girls differed. At the same time, girls and young women aspired to contribute to the community and be active members of society. They recognized the benefits of volunteering as experiences that could increase their understanding of the community and provide them with opportunities for the future, not only related to the labour market but also related to their role in society and how to deal with others, including changing perceptions and gender norms. Similarly, male research participants viewed volunteering positively. However, their aspirations to engage in these opportunities were more closely linked with gaining practical experience and skills for a job.

The positive views on the communities were countered by feelings of disenfranchisement, where young people expressed a sense of lacking a voice and place in the community, and that adults are not available for mentorship or support.

"I think I will fail in many things now because there are no possibilities, but (if) I will succeed in something that will make up for me all the things I have lost I will keep forward and even if I failed, I will try repeatedly to achieve what I want"
 – Male, Lebanon

2) Barriers to the fulfilment of hopes and aspirations

Poverty and economic barriers

Young People Carry the Burden of Family Poverty

As families face increasing economic pressures, young people often unexpectedly become heads of households to contribute to family subsistence. Although young people wish to continue their education, few manage to juggle their educational aspirations and their newly-acquired financial responsibilities towards their families. Many are forced to drop out of school to work full-time, especially male youth.

Economic Barriers to Higher Education

A dire economic situation also affects young people in secondary education aiming to pursue higher education and those already in it and aiming to complete a university degree. In Jordan and Lebanon, young people feared their inability to pursue higher studies due to the high costs of education. These students also feared the low return on investment that education would provide them. With high unemployment rates among university graduates, they feared "wasting" time and money on an education that would not be able to get them a job. At the same time, the chances of accessing what they deemed as decent and "suitable" employment were perceived as meagre without a university degree.

Inequity and limited social mobility

Inequity persists across countries targeted by this research, and the reality for many marginalized



groups of young people is that they are seldom heard or included in the opportunities or decisions that affect their lives and the life of their communities. Although there is comparatively broad agreement when it comes to aspirations, the barriers faced by young people and the extent to which they have access to opportunities, skills, platforms or technologies, or are operating in environments that are conducive to adolescent and youth engagement, can vary significantly depending on their country of residence, ethnicity, gender, origin, legal status, or other factors such as able bodied/disability status.

Social and cultural barriers

Gender-based discrimination

Social and family norms that restrict young girls and women's agency at the family and community levels significantly affect the type of opportunities and choices they have in the future. For research participants below the age of 18 years old, family members have a determinant role in their possibilities of continuing their education and deciding the course of their life, including marriage.

*"I really would like to change their ways of thinking, challenge them and change the way they perceive women in the society in general."
- 17-year-old girl,
Marka, Amman, Jordan.*

Early Marriage

The issue of early marriage was raised across the three countries but among different profiles of young people and associated to various socio-cultural and economic factors. In Jordan, early marriage was a prominent issue among out-of-school girls in deprived, suburban areas of Amman (Marka), as well as in the south and some rural areas. Inside Syria, the practice of early marriage was associated as a coping mechanism for families facing mounting economic pressures and as a "protective" measure in the face of insecurity and instability. In Lebanon, early marriage was specifically raised as an issue in Palestinian camps and among Syrian refugees. Young girls that are married early are also at risk of early child bearing, conditions that obstruct any possibilities of continuing or returning to education.

Discrimination against Youth

Young people across the three countries expressed frustrations with the perceptions and attitudes that communities tend to have of young people. In Jordan, young people said that communities do not value and listen to them, that young people are viewed in negative ways, and that their right to be involved in decision-making is ignored.

National Origin Discrimination

National and ethnic origin discrimination was identified in Lebanon by Syrian refugees and Palestinians. To a lesser extent, this was also identified as an issue in Jordan.

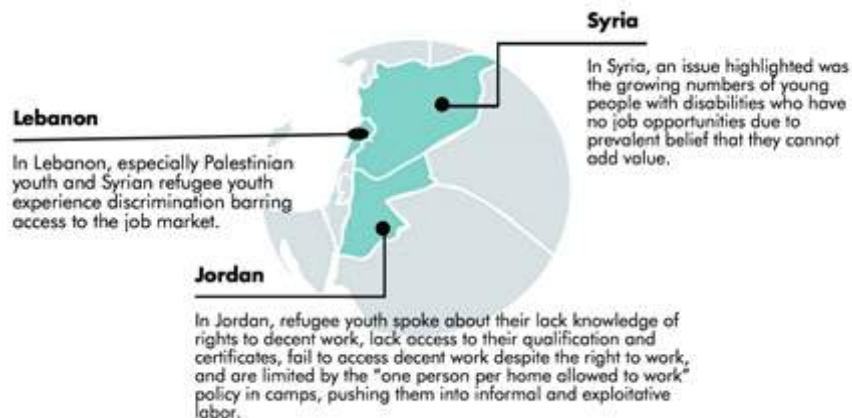
Structural and institutional barriers

Inadequate Education

Poor quality of education, violence in schools against young people and ill-treatment of teachers were some of the causes identified by young people for dropping out. Young people described education as repetitive, outdated, not relevant and insufficient for the knowledge and skills that are required in the job market. The educational environment was therefore considered not conducive to learning: ill-treatment of teachers and lack of interest towards students' learning and performance, and violence exerted by teachers towards students as well as among peers hinders the learning process.

Skills Mismatch for University Students and Graduates

For university graduates, securing a specialized position in line with university qualifications, or a well-paying job, is inextricably linked to the level of education attained; therefore out of reach of many who are forced to drop out of school. Participants expressed frustration at the outdated curricula and mismatch between what is taught in higher education and what is required in the modern job market in order to secure a decent position in line with their professional aspirations and qualifications.



Lack of Job Opportunities and Alternative Pathways for Certain Groups of Young People

Lack of job opportunities was highlighted by specific groups of vulnerable young people, specifically girls, refugee youth and young people living in rural areas. For out-of-school young boys and girls, the lack of alternative pathways obstructed them from improving their conditions. Out-of-school girls considered that accredited, non-formal educational opportunities would give them a second chance. For out-of-school boys, vocational training and linking to a profession were perceived as opportunities for improving their future.

Unequal Access to Opportunities: Wasta, Nepotism and Favouritism

The practices of wasta, nepotism and favouritism were flagged as concerns by young people in the three countries, and were described as primary drivers for obstructing them from accessing equal opportunities in education and the labour market.

Lack of Documentation for Syrian Refugees

Lack of documentation for young Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon was a barrier for accessing education, employment and other opportunities. Without proof of education, refugees are unable to access services and continue in the formal educational systems.

Conflict-driven instability and insecurity

Insecurity and instability as a result of conflict were raised by young people in Syria and Lebanon.

In Syria, lack of security and instability was identified as a key driver in young people's truncated aspirations. In Lebanon, the issue of instability and insecurity was particularly raised by young people residing in the Palestinian camps and in the South.

3) Young people rely on migration as dominant coping mechanism but also value other supportive factors

Migration was most commonly cited as coping mechanism, despite associated risks. Supportive factors most commonly cited included **family and peer support**, volunteering in organizations to gain experience, **civil society and UN and partner efforts aimed at financial support or advocating for social change**. Substance abuse emerged as an example of a negative coping mechanism (principally for Beirut, Aqaba and Maan).

ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

- a) Participatory Action Research - if implemented effectively - **empowers** the most vulnerable young people and also has a positive impact at the family and community levels, through:
 - the acquisition of employable skills;
 - an increase in opportunities to influence decisions at different levels (family, community,

national) with evidence generated by young people, and also more broadly to positively influence the narrative on young people (see Evidence Symposium on Adolescents and Youth: Translating Research into Scaled Action on Young People (<https://esay2017site.wordpress.com/>);

- a positive impact at the personal level: Young researchers cited changes in their perception of their own value and augmented status in their family and community

b) Partnering with vulnerable young people in evidence generation and advocacy ensures nuanced information that reflects their experiences especially in difficult situations;

c) Simplification of action research tools and use of innovative approaches enable more quality and in-depth data collection for younger adolescents;

d) By actively partnering with UN sister agencies,^{xxxiv} young people, NGO partners at regional^{xxxv} and country levels,^{xxxvi} this work promotes institutional capacity building to support, guide and mentor young people as change makers, leaders and advocates for children's rights and ensures their meaningful engagement in programming.



Recommendations and Next Steps

The recommendations and some of the planned next steps for the Adolescent and Youth led Participatory Action Research developed in partnership with the young people and NGO partners at country level include:

- a) Support the young researchers and their participants in implementing the action plans developed based on their action research.
- b) Improve the availability of critical data on most vulnerable adolescents and youth and increase the number of young people and partners who can conduct participatory research, advocacy and linked action:
 - Expand the scope of the research and increase the number of young researchers being supported in MENA.
 - Support the establishment of an NGO/UN supported Young People Participation in Programming (YPPP) 'observatory' for centralized and accessible mapping, compilation and presentation of core information on the value of adolescent and youth participation.
- c) In partnership with adolescents and youth, increase visibility of the issues of relevance for most vulnerable adolescents and youth, through partner capacity building to conduct advocacy, and support to relevant fora.
- d) Support institutionalization of adolescent and youth participation in humanitarian programming, building on existing systems to support adolescent and youth systematic participation in shaping, implementing, monitoring and advocating for adolescent and youth programmes.
- e) Technical support and capacity development of Government and NGO partners at country level in positively engaging adolescents and youth in social cohesion, civic engagement and entrepreneurship/self-employment initiatives.

5.2.3 IT IS TIME TO SHIFT FROM A RISK PERSPECTIVE TO A 'PROMISE' ONE

By **Rima Afifi**, PhD, MPH. Professor Department of Community and Behavioural Health College of Public Health. University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA USA

There are over 184 million adolescents (10-24 years) in the Eastern Mediterranean region⁶, ranging from 16% to over 30% of the population^{xxxvii}. Adolescents and youth in the Middle East and North Africa region are assets and can be agents of change towards more prosperous present and future for themselves and their communities. For this to occur, a significant paradigm shift needs to take place, from viewing young people as problem to viewing them as assets and solutions. From a youth at risk paradigm to a youth at promise paradigm.

HEALTH ISSUES AND RISKS FOR ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Based on the analysis of the recently published article using Global Burden of Disease data 2015, 249 causes of death, 310 causes of diseases and injury, and 79 behavioural and environmental risks were identified. The data was disaggregated by gender and 5-year age-bands between 10 and 24 years of age.

Young people are particularly vulnerable to the effects of conflict and civil unrest: The analysis found that all-cause mortality in the Eastern Mediterranean region (EMR) in 2015 ranged from 63.3 per 100,000 for females aged 10–14 years to 253.2 per 100,000 for males aged 20–24 years. Also, in 2015, war and legal interventions (law enforcement) was the *leading cause of death* for adolescents of both sexes, accounting for 27.7%

(ranging between 14.2–38.4) of deaths amongst male 20- to 24-year olds and 7.2% (ranging between 3.1–10.9) amongst female 20- to 24-year olds.

In terms of morbidity, overall, all-cause years of life with a disability (YDL) rates were similar for males and females in the region; and have seen little improvement since 1990. In 2015 alone, NCDs - particularly mental health disorders, migraine, asthma, skin conditions, and musculoskeletal disorders - were major contributors to YLDs for both sexes. Also, in 2015, major depression emerged as the leading cause of morbidity amongst males aged 15–19 and 20–24 years and for females aged 20–24 years. And among older males, opioid use disorders and war were important causes of disability. The paper further notes that adolescents living in Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia experience amongst the largest burdens of disease and injury of all adolescents globally.

The report further finds that unintentional injury (including motor vehicle-related injuries), mental health, sexual health, substance use, and self-harm are increasingly important health issues for adolescents in the EMR. But that religious and cultural sensitivities result in many of these issues being ignored in the region with grave consequences for young people.

Further analysis on GBD 2015 data shows that:

- The death rate for 15-19 year old female living in a high income country of the region is 28.10/100,000 in 2015; as opposed to a **death rate for a similar female aged 15-19 and living in a low income country of the region or 154.25 – 5.5 times higher.**
- **For males living in countries of conflict in the region, life expectancy has actually decreased between 2000 and 2015**, a shocking finding – whereas for their counterparts in non-conflict countries of the region, life expectancy has expectantly increased.

⁶Afghanistan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, The Occupied Territories, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, U.A.E., and Yemen Arab Republic

WHAT WORKS TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH?

It has been documented that “meaningful engagement of adolescents and young adults contributes to improvements in health and in turn broader societal outcomes^{xxxviii}”.

The report of the Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing stated: “Adolescents are biologically, emotionally, and developmentally primed for engagement beyond their families. We must create opportunities to meaningfully engage with them in all aspects of their lives.” And the report confirmed that: “The idea that meaningful engagement of adolescents and young adults contributes to improvements in health [policies and services], and in turn improves health and broader societal outcomes is well established.”

UNICEF MENARO and the Faculty of Health Sciences Center for Public Health Practice – supported by the MENA UN Interagency Technical Team on Young People, recently assessed 221 initiatives in the region and globally to identify ['good practices in youth programming'](#). Each of the programs was rated on certain criteria (Effectiveness, Sustainability and/or Replication, Equity, Innovation, Evidence base, Values orientation, and Youth involvement). Only 22 of them met the criteria judged as a 'good practice'.

A further 49 programs were judged as 'promising' . Further study of good practices led to the identification of 13 over-arching elements of success: Forging partnerships with the involvement of stakeholders; the intervention is delivered through existing institutions; utilizing existing community 'human' resources in programme implementation; working on documented needs; skills-building; flexible programming; creating safe spaces for youth; clear and detailed implementation guides for sessions; institutionalization (or having a plan in place for institutionalization); youth 'presence and voice'; diversified funding; progressed and adapted through phases; conducting a pilot test.

Based on these the report identifies 'best bets for successful youth programming' including:

- An assets based perspective looking at youth promise and focusing on their strengths.
- Ensure that skill-building and experiential learning is a key component of any intervention.
- Encourage and emphasize participation of the 'community'.
- Response to the needs and priorities of youth.
- Flexible programming: ability to be flexible and adapt programming to context.



Recommendations

Adolescents and youth in the Arab region are assets and can be agents of change towards more prosperous present and future for themselves and their communities. A significant paradigm shift is needed, from viewing young people as problem to viewing them as assets and solutions, shifting from a risk perspective to a 'promise' one. We have evidence, but we need to scale in an inclusive participatory manner.

There are promising initiatives on adolescent and youth health. The UN Every Women Every Child (EWEC) 2016-2030 strategy looks at adolescent health, adding Every Adolescent to its purview. The Lancet Adolescent Commission report includes an accountability framework that promotes youth engagement through: (i) sharing the account, (ii) holding to account, (iii) responding to the account, and (iv) taking action. In addition, an independent accountability panel (IAP) has been established to track progress on the objectives of the EWEC strategy. Their [second annual report](#) (2017) was focused entirely on adolescents.

The recommendations included:

- Ensure Accountability to Achieve the Global Strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals
- Make Adolescents Visible and Measure What Matters
- Foster Whole-of-Government Accountability to Adolescents
- Make Universal Health Coverage Work for Adolescents
- Boost Accountability for Investments, including for Adolescents' Health and Well-Being
- Unleash the Power of Young People, Move Away from Tokenism

5.3 EVIDENCE ON KEY THEMATIC AREAS

5.3.1 ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE MENA REGION

By **UNICEF** (Veera Mendonca and Marcela Rueda Gomez), **AUB** (Aline Germani and Rima Afifi), **GAGE** (Ingrid Gercama, Nicola Jones, Bassam Abu Hamad, Elizabeth Presler-Marshall)

This brief provides clarification of relevant concepts and consolidates available evidence on adolescent and youth participation and civic engagement in MENA.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION: WHO ARE “ADOLESCENTS” AND “YOUTH” AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THEM TO “ENGAGE”?^{xxxix}

There is a lack of consensus on the concept of youth participation, which affects the effective delivery of programmes in the Middle East. Participation is often equated to 'take part in'^{xl}, and the words 'engagement' and 'involvement' are used interchangeably. 'Empowerment' is less ambivalent yet can be perceived as something aggressive and political. Based on recent UNICEF literature, we intend to clarify some concepts.

- Adolescent Participation can be defined as adolescent girls and boys engaging with opportunities to form and express their view and to influence matters that concern them directly or indirectly. A key outcome of participation is the empowerment of adolescents both individually and collectively^{xli}.
- Meaningful adolescent participation^{xlii} entails the opportunity to express opinions in a safe space where the audience is open and receptive to influence. It requires that adolescents have

influence on both horizontal relationships with peers and on vertical relationships with parents and other adults^{xliii}.

- Adolescent and youth engagement can be defined as the rights-based inclusion of youth people in areas that affect their lives and their communities including dialogue, decisions, processes, programmes, etc^{xliiv}.
- Adolescent and Youth led Civic Engagement interventions are those interventions that support young people to make a difference in their communities.

AGE AND DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS^{xliv}

- **Early Adolescence (10 to 14 years):** biologically, this phase is dominated by puberty and brain development and is a time of identity formation and development of new interests. It is a 'sensitive period' for sociocultural processing, meaning that young adolescents have a low resistance to peer influences.^{xlvi}
- **Late Adolescence (15-19 years):** period of transition into young adulthood. Young people develop the capabilities to fully engage with broader society and higher education and/or employment.^{xlvii xlviii}
- **Youth:** Defined by UN are 15-24 years old, is the period of late adolescence and young adulthood.
- **Young People:** This is the umbrella term for adolescents and youth, aged 10-24 years old.

UNDERSTANDING THE MENA CONTEXT FOR ENGAGEMENT

Young people in the MENA continue to remain socially, economically and politically excluded, with some of the highest youth unemployment rate in the world, more so for young women. Albeit some

exceptions, there is a culture of generational hierarchies, control and obedience and young people often feel unenthusiastic^{XLIX L LI}. Girls are highly restricted by their gender, as regional norms limit their mobility, access to jobs and decision-making power^{LII}. There is evidence that these norms are worsening. Girls who attempt to access agency may face backlash^{LIII}, and in extreme cases honour killing. Young men are also vulnerable, due to poor employment offers and often trapped in their parents' homes (waithood) or exposed to risk until opportunities arise.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH CIVIC AND ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE MENA REGION?

Outcomes of engagement and participation at individual, household and community level

Civic engagement can have an impact on job opportunities, trust, accountability, and attitudes towards domestic violence^{LIV}. Peer education and youth-led participatory action research can help identify leaders and promote civic and political engagement, skills development and positive attitudes to family and society^{LV LVI}.

Engagement with parents, teachers and the community helps changing perception from viewing young people as problems to seeing them as a valued asset to the community.^{LVII}

Key positive findings and challenges in the MENA region

Positive findings: There is nascent progress towards supporting adolescent and youth engagement. About 1 million young people in the region have been involved in socio-economic programmes,^{LVIII} typified by a wish to promote social cohesion and help others rather than pursuing personal objectives^{LIX}. Digital and social media has helped with new ways of engagement but also bring considerable dangers^{LX LXI}.

Remaining challenges: Scaled-up and sustainable engagement is a long way off in MENA
Civic engagement among young people in the

region is the lowest in the world^{LXII}, and given the conflict in the region, which has focused goals more on life-saving, humanitarian relief, there are few longer-term programmes aimed at civic engagement^{LXIII}. As a result, young people feel disillusioned with political systems and lack of support. Refugees, those with disabilities, and the poor are also marginalised and underrepresented. War and conflict limit the chances for engagement and even pro-youth programmes seldom include them in consultations. There are few spaces where young people, especially girls and young women who are often excluded from decisions and participation, can create and enjoy their own world.

Summary of supportive factors and barriers for adolescents and youth engagement in the region

The table on the next page summarizes the factors that contribute to effective adolescent and youth participation in MENA, and common barriers faced by adolescents and youth engagement in the region:



SUPPORTIVE FACTORS AND ENABLERS

- Partnership with adults.
- Greater level of control and responsibility to adolescents and youth whilst supporting them to build skills and experience.
- Access to education and skills training initiatives.
- Access to work.
- Personal motivation/civic knowledge.
- Availability and accessibility of social media.

BARRIERS

- Patriarchal system hinders engagement and participation.
- Lack of attention at the household, community, and local governance decision-making level.
- Disillusionment with political systems and with the lack of action on their key concerns.
- Lack of (the implementation of) national legislation and policies enabling adolescents to raise their voice in a meaningful manner.
- Intersecting vulnerabilities and violations of rights.
- Lack of sustained efforts by national, local and international organizations.
- Lack of economic opportunities.
- Inequities and challenges within the school systems.
- Lack of safe spaces/recreation opportunities.
- Easy access to distorted information via social media.

Summary of gaps and institutional challenges

- a. Insufficient evidence, lack of age and sex disaggregated data, participatory studies, evaluations and data systems, etc.
- b. Limited scale-up, impacted by a lack of funds, lack of knowledge on effective sectoral interventions, and challenges in engaging young people in conflicting situations.
- c. Sustainability of interventions, due to limited funding, lack of wider community involvement and insufficient long-term planning. Engagement is often for the duration of a specific project or programme, and not linked to existing sectoral systems and structures.
- d. Weaknesses in policies impacting the creation of an enabling environment and access to adolescent and youth friendly services.
- e. Security agenda, which affects the scale up of good practices focussing on an asset development approach and can endanger young people.

Good practices on adolescents and youth engagement in MENA

Two good practices and several promising practices have been identified in the field of civic engagement through a documentation initiative commissioned by the United Nations Inter-Agency Technical Task Team on Young People (UNIATTTYP) of the Middle East and North Africa region in 2014.^{LXIV}

- **Adolescent-Friendly Spaces - United Nations Children's Fund Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (2004-2013):** The goal was to fulfil the rights to self-development, education, protection and participation of Palestinian adolescents (age 10-18 years) living in Palestine and in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. It has had positive outcomes such as better skills, attitudes, independence and resilience.
- **Y-PEER (UNFPA) (2001-ongoing):** The goal is to enhance collaboration among youth-led and youth-serving organizations to improve

participation in sexual and reproductive health, including advocacy for better policies. It has been successful in creating networks quality peer education and building capacity.

KEY MESSAGES

- Adolescent and youth engagement works when done right, with formative and lasting effects on the extent and kind of political and social participation undertaken throughout the life cycle.
- Adolescent and youth engagement in MENA (particularly girls and young women) is overall limited, in part due to strict age hierarchies that shape space for young people's engagement in family and social circles.
- For scaled up adolescent and youth engagement to take place sustained efforts are needed by national, local and international organizations, and that both adolescents and powerholding adults have to be engaged to create safe spaces of expression.
- There is a need for better data, proper documentation and more inclusive knowledge-sharing. Better evaluation, proper documentation and knowledge sharing must be encouraged.
- Meaningful engagement can pose a risk for young people. It is important to ensure adolescent and youth engagement is underpinned by the Do No Harm principles.



Recommendations

- **Do no harm.** Ensure that efforts to improve young people's participation do not put them at risk.
- **Approach young people from an assets-based perspective**, convinced of young people promise and focusing on their strengths
 - Emphasize youth presence and voice as essential facets of implementation of programmes and projects.
- **Scale up age appropriate adolescent and youth participation programmes**, and ensure that they are embedded in a wide range of sectors and offered in a variety of venues to enable different opportunities:
 - Invest intelligently in financial and technical resources.
 - Establish linkages with sectors and integration within sectoral systems to ensure a sustainable model.
 - Increase sustainable opportunities to build adolescents' and youth's skills.
 - Increase access to digital media and broadband technologies for girls, boys and those marginalised.
 - Create strategic and sustainable opportunities for adolescent and youth engagement leadership at the lowest and highest level of decision-making, co-learning and teamwork, promoting ownership of change.
- **Make sure that girls and young women, and other marginalised groups (refugees, and young people with disabilities), are provided with opportunities for participation**, considering their constraints and also work to reduce them over time.
- Make space for **intergenerational dialogue between older and younger generations** to ensure that young people's decision-making power in the household, community, state level is appreciated.
- Develop the **capacities of governments, partners, adults and young people** to ensure adolescent and youth engagement is done right.
- **Improve the evidence base—and the visibility of the evidence base:**
 - Ensure age and sex disaggregated data about adolescent and youth participation
 - Document and study the positive contribution of young girls and boys in building equitable societies.
 - Institutionalise measurement of participation/engagement through research and evaluation.
 - Build capacity around monitoring and evaluation of youth participatory aspects in programs.
 - In research projects targeting youth, firmly support involvement of young people as co-researchers.
 - Institutionalize systems to monitor and coordinate adolescent and youth engagement.

5.3.2 YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (MENA)

By **Dahlia Roque**, Consultant, UNICEF, Adolescent Development and Participation Section, Middle East and North Africa Regional Office – with support from ILO (Regional Office for Arab States), and UNICEF, Adolescent Development and Participation Section, Middle East and North Africa Regional Office

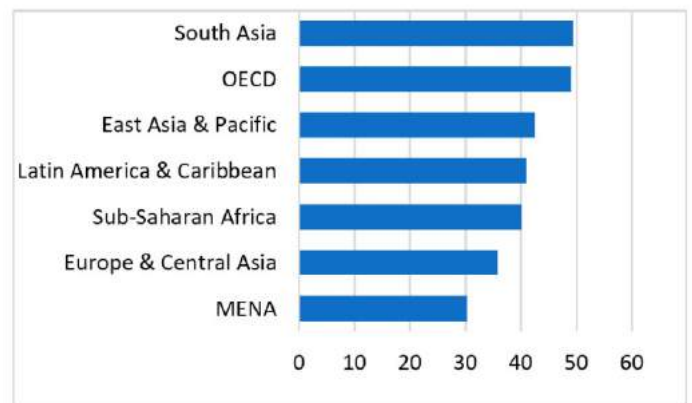
Youth is an imperative time in the lives of each of us as it signifies a period where we begin to realize our ambitions, find our place in the world of world and gain independence through our transition into adulthood. The youth employment challenge in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), however, has placed serious impediments on young people from achieving these key milestones.

Youth unemployment in MENA is the highest in the world, at 24.9 per cent in the Middle East and 29.5 per cent in North Africa^{LXV}.

Characterized by a 'youth bulge' whereby young people aged 15-24 represent approximately 30 per cent of the entire population, the MENA region has failed to utilize the opportunity of having a large cohort of young, comparatively well-educated population that can effectively contribute to the economic growth of the region. Instead, the youth bulge has continued to place pressure on the labour markets of countries within the region, which now struggle to provide sufficient employment opportunities for the millions of young people that stand ready to start working.

The MENA region has been unable to make substantial progress in reducing persistently high unemployment rates since the private sector has not been able to create sufficient jobs for young entrants. The MENA region is experiencing rates of real economic growth at 3.1 per cent^{LXVI} and weak competitiveness within the global market. The region has a poor ranking in its ease of doing business, ranging from a rank of 21 in the United Arab Emirates, to 103 in Jordan, 133 in Lebanon and 186 in Yemen^{LXVII}. The lack of interregional economic integration has also hindered the MENA region's potential for economic growth and large-scale job creation. Barriers include high tariffs, trade and transportation costs. There is a need for MENA countries to design and implement integrated macroeconomic and sectoral policies for a job rich growth. This is particularly challenging in contexts of fragility and conflict, and with an over-reliance on oil revenues.

Figure1: SME employment as percentage of private employment



Source: Nasr and Pearce, 2012

SMEs account for 30 per cent of private sector jobs in the MENA region^{LXVIII}, despite the fact that they continue to face many obstacles which hinder their growth and development. Promoting entrepreneurship and the start-up of SMEs is considered to be effective in creating employment opportunities, reducing poverty, and achieving upward social mobility. Yet the creation of start-ups and their transition into larger formal enterprises is

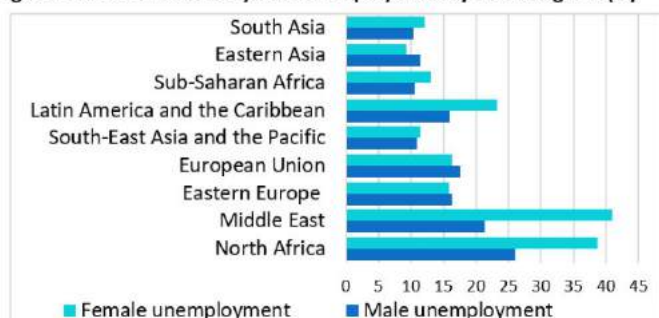
hindered by a number of constraints in the region. These include, a weak entrepreneurship culture, regulatory and legal frameworks that are often weak and not conducive to enterprise set up and growth, and limited lending capacities from financial institutions as well as poor financial infrastructures. Entrepreneurial skills amongst young people need to be built so that they have the know-how to successfully start a business, or grow an existing one. In addition, an efficient business environment that supports enterprise development is vital. This includes reducing the high costs and complex bureaucracies related to registering and starting a business, and easing the requirements to provide flexible and accessible loans to youth and women.

The MENA region is plagued by the highest unemployment rates in the world, with rates exponentially high for women. For young women in the region, their unemployment rates are the highest worldwide at 41 per cent in the Middle East and 38.7 per cent in North Africa^{LXIX}. In addition, against global trends, the youth unemployment rate for young women and men in MENA increases consistently with the level of education attained. This is particularly the case for young women in the MENA region who now have higher shares of university enrolment rates than young men, but continue to have twice the unemployment rate. Young women have a particularly difficult time entering the labour market because of social norms which dictate culturally appropriate jobs, the lack of family-friendly work environments in the private

sector, and difficulties in balancing their traditional family duties with their jobs. In the short term, there is a need to accommodate cultural characteristics in order to ease access of women to employment (part time, day care services, separate teams etc.). At the same time, there is a need to empower women and to challenge the boundaries of what is considered “a woman's job”.

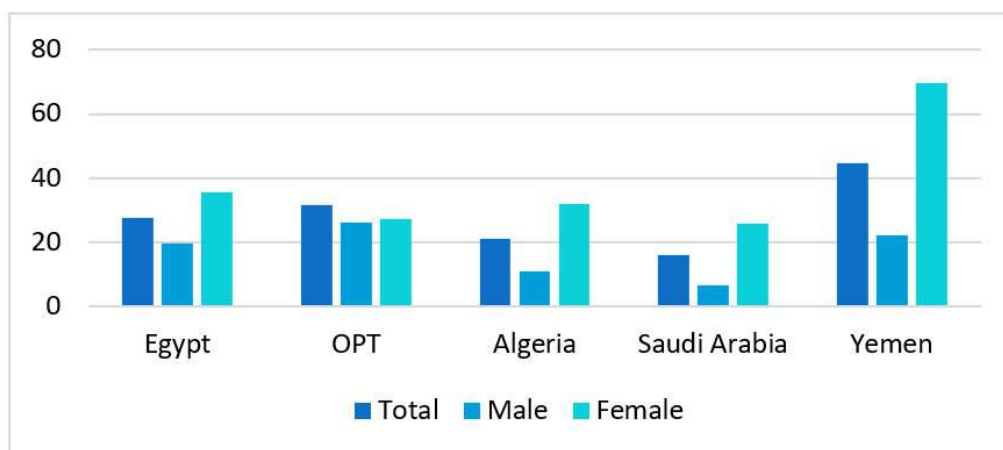
The MENA region lacks efficient employment services for young people that can effectively match them into suitable jobs. This is namely due to a lack in labour market information systems (LMIS) across the region and the absence of effective intermediation systems. In addition, financial constraints have left public employment services in the region understaffed and undertrained without the necessary expertise to provide quality services. Consequently, youth in MENA have high NEET rates where they are not in employment, education or training. Social networks have become an increasingly popular means for young people to search and find employment. The heavy use of personal connections, known as “wasta” has led to inefficient matches between labour demand and supply, and further lowers productivity rates. Active labour market policies (ALMPs) are needed to focus on strengthening employment services and facilitating job search and counselling. In addition, improving labour market information systems will enhance the efficiency of employment services and career guidance in effectively matching supply and demand in the labour market and guiding young people into high demand areas.

Figure 2: Male and female youth unemployment by world regions (%)



Source: ILOSTAT, 2017

Figure 3: Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET), in selected countries (%)



The mismatch between the skills demanded by employers and the skills offered by the labour force is a key barrier to effective job facilitation in MENA. This is due to the fact that educational systems are not adequately preparing students for the current and future labour market. Despite the fact that greater numbers of MENA students are attaining education, particularly at a higher level, this does not always translate into higher employment rates and better quality productive work for youth. ALMPs need to be implemented through well-targeted and designed programmes that include skills and improved vocational training to address current mismatches between the skills that youth possess and those in demand by the labour market, and fill in private sector vacancies in various sectors. Coordination and involvement with private sector employers also needs to take place in order to ensure that youth are gaining the right skill set in education.

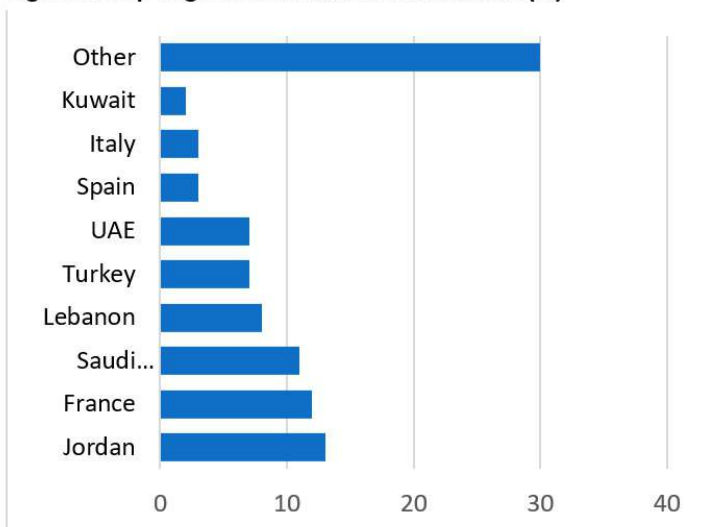
MENA labour markets have become highly segmented, contributing to youth employment disadvantages and decreasing work quality. The labour market in the MENA region is highly segmented with a considerably large public sector (roughly 40 per cent of all work) that provides decent job quality for its workers. Since the public

sector has curbed its employment, and formal private sector job growth has been very small and is highly selective in its employees, a significant and growing unregulated informal sector has now given way in the MENA region. It is estimated that 80 per cent of youth in the region work in the informal sector^{LXX} where they are more likely to be concentrated in poor quality, low productivity work^{LXXI} in the informal sector where they endure precarious work, irregular and insecure incomes and little or no access to social security^{LXXII}. As a result, vulnerable employment disproportionately affects youth in the MENA region who often make up a large portion of the working poor. The working poor are those who continue to live in poverty despite the fact that they work. One in every four (25 per cent) working youth in North Africa and 28 per cent of working youth the Arab States is living in moderate or extreme poverty^{LXXIII}.

The MENA region has one of the highest migration rates in the world, with an estimated 24 million international migrants from MENA countries^{LXXIV}. While MENA youth often find it difficult to find work and compete in labour markets in their own country, they appear to have better chances once they emigrate or immigrate. Over half of migrants from MENA (53 per cent) have remained in the region, while the remaining 47 per cent moved

outside of the region^{LXXV}. Within the region, labour migration growth has primarily occurred in the oil-rich GCC countries, where young people intend to emigrate temporarily to earn money and gain experience. Internationally, there are an estimated 32 million migrants in the Arab States (GCC and Mashreq countries). An estimated 64 per cent of migrants to the MENA region are from outside the region while the remaining 36 per cent are from other countries within the MENA region^{LXXVI}. The top three international destinations for MENA migrants within the region is Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. MENA also hosts approximately 18 per cent of the world's refugee population^{LXXVII}, which are mainly concentrated in Jordan and Lebanon. Outside the region, Europe is the chief destination for migrants, hosting an estimated one third of all people migrating from MENA.

Figure 4: Top migrant destinations from MENA (%)



Source: IOM, 2016

The influx of Syrian refugees, particularly in Lebanon and Jordan, is adding pressure to an already difficult labour market situation.

Unemployment levels for Syrian refugees are particularly high in host countries (30 per cent in Lebanon^{LXXVIII} and 60.8 per cent in Jordan^{LXXIX}), and for those who do work, an overwhelming majority are concentrated into low-quality, low-productive

employment. Their presence has also contributed to downward wage trends among the local communities, especially for low skilled occupations. At the same time, in order to protect the national workforces, the regulatory frameworks often prevent them from accessing occupations that match their competencies. It is further estimated that 99 per cent of Syrians are engaged in the informal economy^{LXXX}. It is now recognised that adopting a policy of decent work for all and strong enforcement of the labour codes is key to prevent further depreciation of wages, and create a level playing field for nationals, Syrian refugees and migrant workers.

The prevalence of child labour in MENA has greatly increased with the rise of Syrian refugees.

Due to stalled economic activity, restrictions on formal employment, and loss of savings over time, many Syrian refugee households have had to resort to child labour. Child labour in Jordan has doubled since 2007, now reaching 70,000^{LXXXI}, while in Lebanon an estimated 180,000 children are engaged in child labour, including in its worst forms^{LXXXII}. Across the remainder of the region, child labour continues to exist at varying rates ranging from one quarter of Yemeni children aged 5-14 years engaged in child labour, to 7 per cent in Egypt, 5 per cent in Iraq and 2 per cent in Tunisia^{LXXXIII}. There is a need to operationalize the national frameworks on child labour with a joint identification of vulnerable children by labour inspectors, teachers and social workers, an individualized case management for education support and livelihood interventions for the families, as well as a close monitoring of progress. Finally, increased awareness raising amongst employers on the harms of child labour is required, in addition to more regiment enforcement of child labour laws in the workplace.

GLOBAL EVIDENCE OF WHAT WORKS IN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

SKILLS TRAINING

- Multi-service interventions that combine class-room learning with on-the-job training; soft-skills and technical skills
- Gender sensitive design that meets the needs of young women
- Demand-driven approaches and collaborations with the private sector
- Ensuring relevance of skills in the labour market

ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROMOTION

- Cash grants and micro-credits are effective for business start-ups, but less for business growth
- Disadvantaged groups benefit most from access to finance
- Combine finance with other services (skills and mentoring)

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

- Combine job search assistance with skills training
- Target specific populations in smaller sectors
- Digital employment services and job placements

SUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT

- Employer-side or employee-side wage subsidies
- Public work programmes in infrastructure development projects and in social development and community work
- Targets specific populations and allows youth to gain skills (duration of typically 12-18 month)
- Sustainability of created jobs is often unclear



Recommendations

1. Implementing active labour market policies (ALMPs) through well-targeted and designed programmes:

- Skills training to improve skills and vocational training can address current mismatches between the skills that youth possess and those in demand by the labour market, and fill in current private sector vacancies in various sectors. This includes investments into the enhancing of TVET programmes, and the integration of life skills in both vocational and non-technical skills training to address current and future labour market skill demands.
- ALMPs focused on strengthening employment services can make the connections between young people and employment more efficient and systematic. Improving labour market information systems will enhance the efficiency of employment services and career guidance in effectively matching supply and demand in the labour market and guiding young people into high demand areas.
- Entrepreneurship training to build youth capacities on how to successfully start a business, or grow an existing one. An efficient business environment that supports enterprise development is also vital. This includes reducing the high costs and complex bureaucracies related to registering and starting a business, and easing the requirements to provide flexible and accessible loans to youth and women.
- Subsidized employment programmes have been shown to reduce high rates of youth not in education, employment or training in the region by acting as an intermediation in the school-to-work transition through the provision of temporary employment.

2. Developing a comprehensive and integrated framework for employment promotion.

In addition to ALMPs, countries in the MENA region need to develop comprehensive and integrated national employment frameworks that provide a vision and practical approach to promoting and achieving employment goals. Such a framework should bring together diverse approaches, programmes and institutions that influence both labour demand and supply and the functioning of the labour market.

3. Improving or developing labour market information systems (LMIS) that provide evidence on skill needs.

LMIS provide a much needed foundation for employment and labour policies by informing the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of policies that are better targeted. LMIS are key to the facilitation and following labour market analysis for policy makers and stakeholders and constitute a means of coordinating various institutions that produce and use labour market information. Through effective LMIS, countries in the MENA region will also be able to better anticipate future skill needs in the labour market and guide students into education and employment sectors based on skill demands.

4. Increasing private sector investments and interregional integration for job creation.

The countries of MENA need to put in place a comprehensive set of macroeconomic policies that will effectively drive employment growth. This includes a particular focus on employment intensive sectors, trade, investments, industry and agriculture. Local and FDI need to be allocated to high-value added areas, while greater efforts and agreements must be made between the countries of MENA to allow for full regional integration, with increased access to global value chains.

5. Increasing women's employment opportunities. Working conditions in the private sector must be improved to facilitate women's employment. This includes offering family-friendly policies such as the availability of part time work, and access to maternity leave and childcare services. Targeted approaches and opportunities for career development should be used in order to address gender imbalances. Social norms and barriers should be addressed by encouraging women to take on more employment options.

6. Supporting the integration of Syrian refugees into labour markets. The facilitation of work permits should be of high priority amongst host governments to increase the integration of Syrians into decent work. This includes areas of skilled demand and in sectors that do not directly compete with jobs of nationals. Greater efforts must be made to enforce labour laws, including minimum wage, the payment of overtime and legal work hours. Governments also need to ease barriers for refugees in enterprise development.

7. Preventing and reducing child labour. Priority must be given by governments to operationalize national child labour frameworks to effectively identify and withdraw children from labour and to provide counselling, support services and reintegration into education. Efforts also need to be made to raise awareness amongst employers, and to support families vulnerable to child labour through awareness raising, counselling and linkages to livelihood activities.

8. Increasing monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) for evidence-based youth employment programming and policy making. To ensure the right course of action and proper allocation of government and donor funds into youth employment programmes, effective and robust monitoring and evaluation systems need to be put in place and supported through ICT structures. This way, lessons can be effectively learned for evidence-based programming and future policy making to enhance youth employment in the MENA region.

5.3.3 VIOLENCE AGAINST ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (MENA)

By **Save the Children** (Middle East and Eastern Europe Regional Office) and UNICEF (Child Protection Section, MENA Regional Office)

The Middle East and North Africa is one of the most dangerous and deadliest places in the world for adolescents to live^{7 LXXXIV}. Staggering numbers of adolescents are experiencing violence in this region, often by those who have a duty to protect them or entrusted to take care of them and it start early in the life of an adolescent.

Context

Girls and boys forced into sexual acts; adolescents murdered in their communities – violence against adolescents spares no one and knows no boundaries^{LXXXV}. For example, In MENA⁸ while only about 6% of the world's adolescents live in the Middle East and North Africa, more than 70% of adolescents who died in 2015 due to collective violence were living in this region – with mortality rates having risen dramatically since 2011. If all adolescents faced the same risk of dying due to collective violence as those in the Syrian Arab Republic, there would be an adolescent death in the world every 10 seconds. The levels of collective violence have grown exponentially in countries affected by conflict whereas the middle and high middle-income countries in the region are among the countries with some of the highest levels of violence⁹ in the home and schools, globally. In conflict affected countries, some recent evidence suggests that child marriage is increasing¹⁰

especially among displaced populations due to the impact of the conflicts.

Despite this overwhelming evidence, overall, there is a need for more data on violence in the region, particularly sexual violence. Whilst there has been some notable progress by governments in acknowledging the scale of violence in this region, as well as growing consensus on the need to prioritize and address it, the social welfare and justice systems remains one of the most under invested in systems in the region with the least budget and capacities. Linked to this, there is also an urgent need for other sectors, like education and health to take accountability for their role in preventing and responding to violence against children as no one sector can do this alone.

Key Evidence

Violence occurs in places where adolescents live, socialize and learn. Adolescent girls and boys report use of physical and psychological violence at home, by caregivers as well as other relatives. They report how caregivers are not only unable to play a positive role in helping them manage conflicts in their lives, but are often the source of conflict and violence. Adolescent girls report feeling imprisoned by their parents, as they are forced to stay home and not allowed to go to school or even to go out with or speak with friends, for fear of their reputation being negatively affected. They report violence, physical and psychological, consistently perpetrated against them by male relatives.^{LXXXVI}

*“Parents neglect us and they use us for work and violence [they] abuse us physically and verbally.”
Adolescent girl 12-14, Yemen.*

⁷ The prevalence rates for percentage of children in the region up to the age of 15 who experience various forms of violent discipline are among the highest globally in the region with over 80% in a number of countries (see full symposium paper for further details. Also see additional data on collective violence below)

⁸ The main countries affected by this in MENA are Syria, Iraq, Yemen

⁹ Collective violence and legal intervention: Injuries to civilians and military personnel caused by war and civil insurrection, or injuries inflicted by the police, other law-enforcement agents and on-duty military personnel in the course of arresting or attempting to arrest lawbreakers, suppressing disturbances, maintaining order and other legal action. Because deaths due to legal intervention are rare in most countries/regions, this cause of death is frequently referred to as 'collective violence' in this report for readability. Interpersonal violence: Homicides or injuries inflicted by another person with intent to injure or kill by any means.

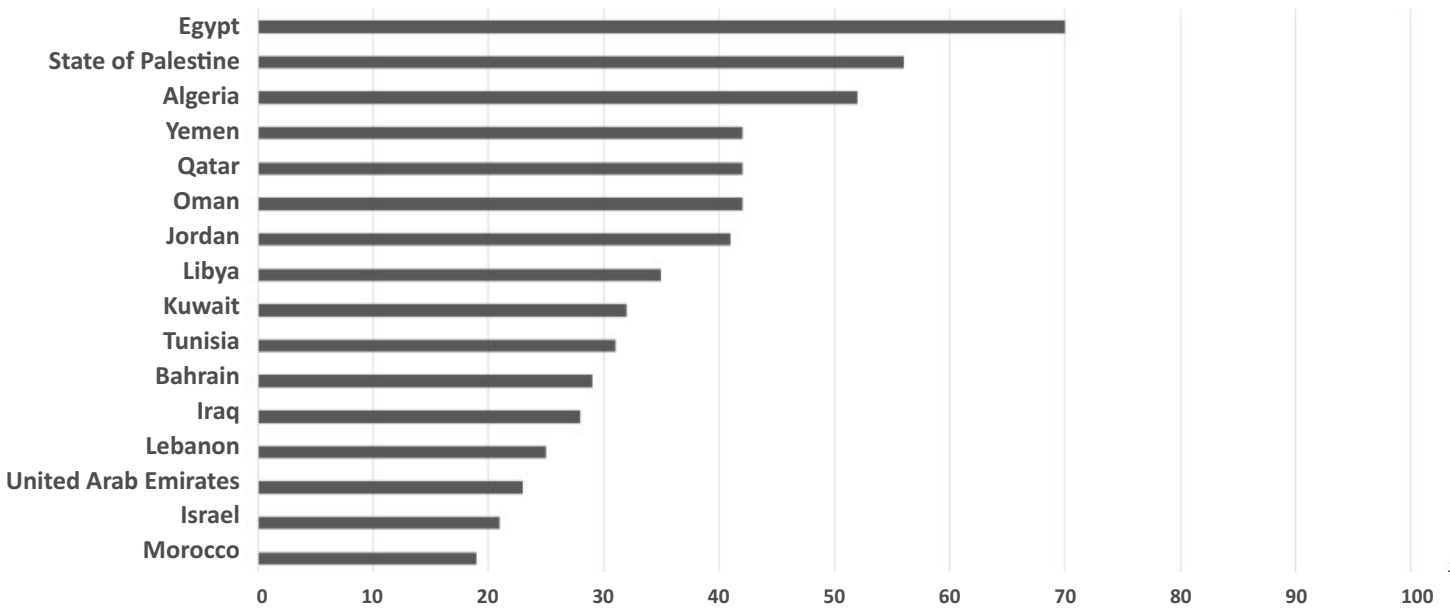
¹⁰ In Yemen a survey undertaken in 2013 showed the prevalence of respondents married before the ages of 15 and 18 had increased since the start of the conflict

(<http://www.unfpa.org/news/families-increasingly-resort-child-marriage-yemen%E2%80%99s-conflict-grinds>). This is also true of girls affected by the conflict in Syria, as evidenced by the growing number of Syrian refugee girls being married in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey (<http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage-and-the-syrian-conflict-7-things-you-need-to-know/>)

In 13 of the 16 countries in MENA with available data on bullying, more than 1 in 4 adolescents aged 13-15 reported being bullied at school at least once in the past couple of months; in Egypt, the State of Palestine, and Algeria, more than 50% of adolescents reported being bullied. Corporal

punishment by teachers at school is not prohibited in several countries: Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, and the Syrian Arab Republic. Only partial prohibition exists in the State of Palestine.^{LXXXVII}

Percentage of adolescents aged 13 to 15 years who reported being bullied at school at least once in the past couple of months

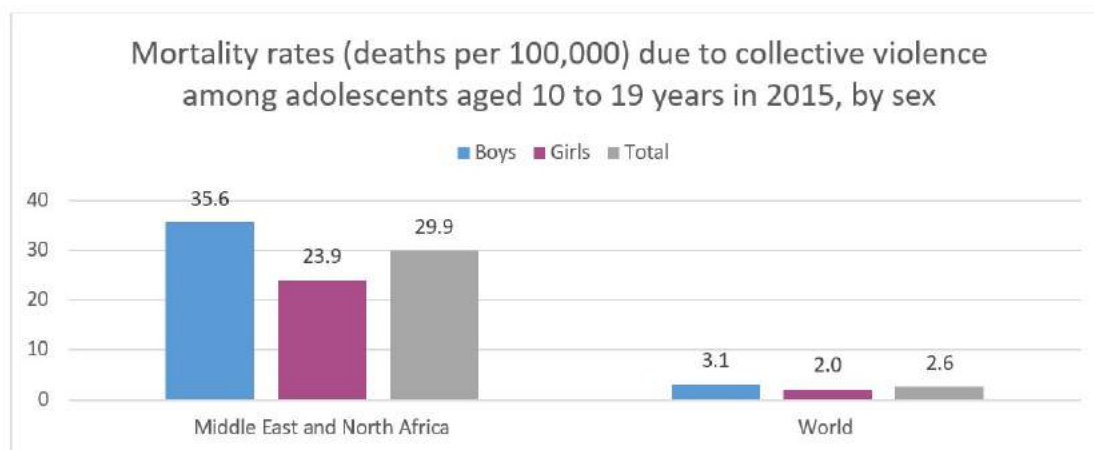


Note: Data for the State of Palestine are not nationally representative.
Source: HBSA 2013/2014 and GSHS 2007-2016

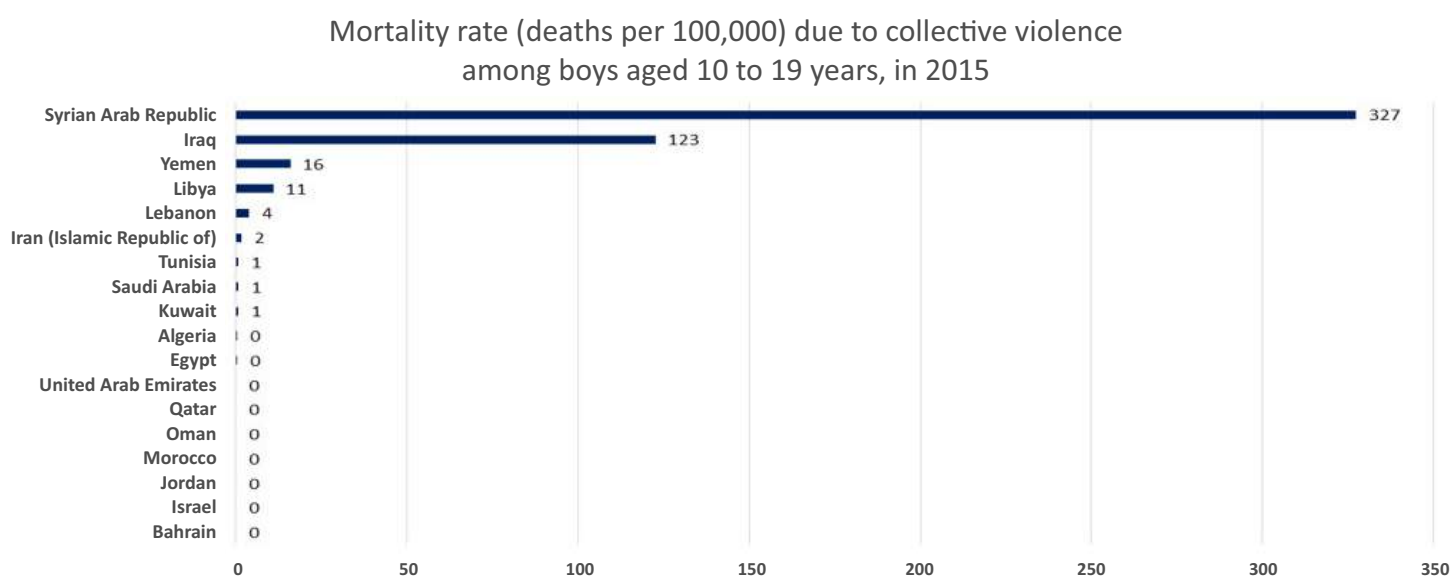
MENA region among the most dangerous places to live in the world for adolescents. While only about 6% of the world's adolescents live in the Middle East and North Africa, more than 70% of adolescents who died in 2015 due to collective violence globally were living in this region – with mortality rates having risen dramatically since 2011. If all adolescents faced the same risk of dying due to collective violence as those in the Syrian Arab Republic, there would be an adolescent death in the world every 10 seconds compared to global average of 1 every 7 minutes. For adolescent boys, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq were among the top ten most deadly places, having the world's

highest mortality rates from collective violence and homicide. For adolescent girls, it's Syria, Iraq and Libya (see tables below).

Violent deaths among adolescents: Collective violence.^{LXXXVIII}

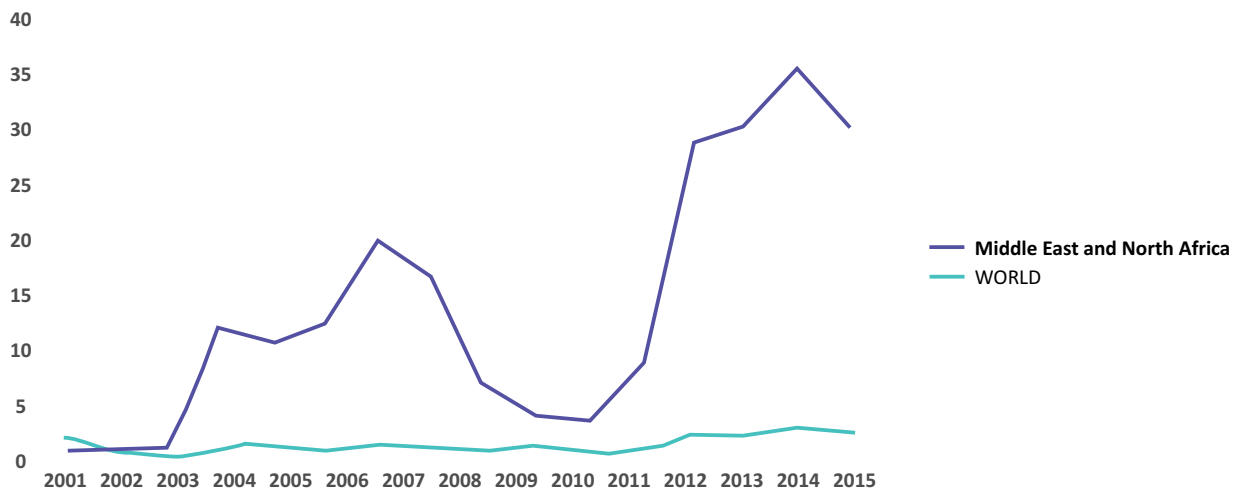


Violent deaths among adolescent boys: Collective violence (Syria, Iraq at the top)^{LXXXIX}



Violent deaths among adolescents: Trends in mortality from collective violence¹¹

Mortality rate (deaths per 100,000) due to collective violence among adolescents aged 10 to 19 years in the Middle East and North Africa, 2000 to 2015



Sexual violence among adolescent girls including experience of forced sex committed by a husband or partner¹². Among ever-married adolescent girls in Jordan, more than 1 in 10 reported having ever experienced forced sex by a husband or partner. There is however, a significant and worrying gap in data regarding all forms of sexual violence among adolescent girls in this region. This presents a critical challenge, given we know that gender and sexual based violence tends to increase significantly during conflict and given the trends recorded by the GBV sector in this region in relation to GBV in conflict affected countries.

Harmful Practices among highest in the world in MENA¹³. Child Marriage on the increase in conflict affected countries in MENA. The overall rate of child marriage in the MENA region has been declining for decades and is now meaningfully lower than the global average. The current rates remain nonetheless alarming, with serious

concerns about the impact of instability on child marriage within the region. At the regional level, 18% of girls or 1 in 5 girls in the MENA are married before the age of 18 whilst 3% of girls are married before the age of 15¹⁴. However, prevalence varies across the region, masking the wide variation in prevalence between different countries in the region which ranges from 3% married before 18 in Algeria to 32% in Yemen. Moreover, data on national average do not capture trends of child marriage prevalence at sub-national level where rates are much higher, for example in Jordan and other countries affected or impacted by conflicts where child marriage tends to be higher among displaced and refugee populations or in the north of the country. Although the relationship between conflict and increase in the incidence of child marriage has not yet been clearly established, this is a worrying trend in what is a fragile region affected by conflict and prevailing humanitarian contexts in many countries.

¹¹ Multiple years of national death registration data with high completeness and quality cause-of-death assignment were available for Israel. Multiple years of national death registration data with low completeness and/or moderate quality issues were available for the Islamic Republic of Iran and Kuwait and comparison among countries should be interpreted with caution. Multiple years of national death registration data with low completeness and/or severe quality issues were available for Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan and Qatar and comparison among countries should be interpreted with caution. National death registration data were unavailable or unusable due to quality issues for Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen; therefore, the estimates are uncertain and should be interpreted with caution.

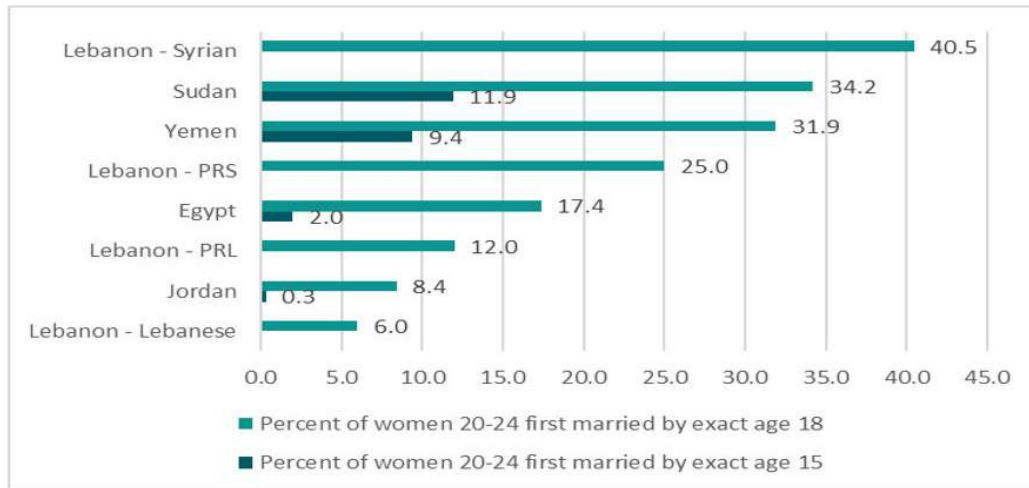
Source: World Health Organization, Global Health Estimates 2015: Deaths by cause, age and sex, by country and by region, 2000–2015, WHO, Geneva, 2016, recalculated by UNICEF.

¹² Forced sex includes sexual intercourse or any other sexual acts that were forced, physically or in any other way

¹³ In UNICEF this focus on mainly child marriage and FGM/C.

¹⁴ UNICEF MENARO Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa, published December 2017.

Figure below shows that despite overall decline in Humanitarian contexts in the region and countries affected by conflict CM is actually increasing significantly at alarming rate. Percentage of women 20-24 first married by exact ages 15 and 18^{xc}.



FGM/C prevalence in the region among the highest globally and mainly affecting adolescent girls. The Latest prevalence rates of FGM in the region is as follows: Egypt: 87% aged 15-49 (EDHS, 2015); 14% aged 0-14 (UNICEF 2016); Sudan: 86.6% aged 15-49 (Sudan MICS, 2014); 32% aged 0-14 (UNICEF 2016); Djibouti: 78% aged 15-49 (Djibouti

DHS, 2012); Yemen: 19% aged 15-49 (Yemen DHS, 2013); Iraq: 8% MICS aged 15-19 (MICS 2011). Egypt is one of three countries in the world where half of the women and girls have been cut. Egypt has the highest rate of medicalization¹⁵ of FGM in the region, at 82%.

CONCLUSION

Violence is both common and widespread – and no society is without some level of violence against its younger members. For example, conflicts or civil insurrections kill more adolescents in the Middle East and North Africa than in all other regions combined. Only 6 per cent of the world's adolescents live in this region, yet it accounts for more than 70 per cent of the adolescent deaths from collective violence. Two of the world top five most deadly places for adolescent boys are in the region – the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq. For girls, the risk is highest in the Syrian Arab Republic, followed by Iraq. The data also point to some groups of adolescents being at greater risk of

violent death based on individual characteristics, such as sex and race. The global homicide rate is four times higher among adolescent boys than girls. Perpetrators of homicide also reflect a distinctly gendered pattern: Males are much more likely to be killed by strangers. Almost half (47 percent) of female homicide victims are killed by family members or intimate partners compared to about 6 per cent of males. While boys face a substantially higher risk of dying from violence, girls are generally more vulnerable to sexual victimization. However, the limited availability of data on boys related to sexual violence constrains our understanding of the risks they face.

¹⁵Medicalization is when FGM is conducted by doctors or other medical personnel.

*Recommendations*¹⁶

Address violence in adolescents' lives:

1. Donors to invest in longer term programming for adolescents and youth.
2. Engage young people in conducting research about their own issues. Develop platforms for young people to engage in research.
3. Young people should not accept violence. Support young people to mobilize and speak out against it.

Address violence at home:

4. Work with caregivers in positive parenting to address corporal punishment.
5. Invest in Child Rights committees so that adolescents have a voice and are able to influence decisions about their lives.

Address violence in the community including collective violence:

6. As violence is widely accepted in our society¹⁷, invest in programmes that address social norms, and raise awareness in communities about the impact of violence in adolescents lives.
7. Ensure military and other personnel including police, other law-enforcement agents and on-duty military personnel acting in the course of arresting or attempting to arrest lawbreakers, suppressing disturbances, maintaining order and other legal action act in accordance with national and international law and standards concerning the protection of children including those who come into contact with the law and that children have access to justice.
8. Ensure existing laws to prevent and respond to violence are enforced at community level, empowering community leaders to have the means to enforce the law.
9. Establish (more) safe spaces for young people to interact with each other, in an environment of tolerance and acceptance

Address violence in schools:

10. Improve the social support to young people from parents, teachers and school supervisors, so that they are better able to adapt to the school environment, especially for those who missed years of schooling.
11. Institutionalize national programmes that address violence in schools, and consult and involve young people as key actors in designing and implementing these programmes.
12. Address discrimination in schools, from teachers, social workers, and fellow students.
13. Ensure there are accountability mechanisms for teachers, to hold them accountable when using violence in the school.

¹⁶These recommendations are based on "What works?" For more information, see the Comprehensive Report for the Evidence Symposium.

¹⁷Young person who participated in the Violence Against Adolescents session.

14. Create Student Councils, for the voice of young people to be heard in educational institutions.

Core recommendations to donors:

- Make long term investment in multi-sectoral, integrated programming for adolescents and youth in the region, in both humanitarian and development contexts.
- Commit to action and increased finances to end violence against adolescents at home, in schools and in the community: positive parenting programming; positive discipline in schools; programmes making schools safe; work with military, police, law enforcement and judiciary to protect adolescents.
- Focus efforts on interventions on sexual related violence both in terms of evidence and data but also programming that addresses gender norms
- Support programmes that address root causes of violence: economic hardships, exclusion and discrimination, social and cultural norms

Priority action points for 2018 based on the main recommendations coming out of the Symposium:

1. **On Evidence: address the evidence and data gap on sexual violence in MENA.**
2. **On programming: with the education sector, accelerate programming at scale to address violence including psychosocial distress through education/skills/learning programmes in/out of school settings including the home.**

6. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

Below, a summary of general recommendations and proposed actions for the future:

There is an urgent imperative to dramatically increase investment for adolescents and youth in the MENA region.

- Investing in adolescents and youth will be paramount for MENA to realize the rights of its growing children and youth population and reap a potential demographic dividend. This includes:
 - Scaling-up MENA essential services and strengthening health, social welfare, protection, participation and employment systems, ensuring access to the poorest MENA families and addressing specific inequities for young women and refugees.
 - Transforming MENA's educational, skills and vocational learning systems through systems-strengthening, curriculum reform and access to technology, to enhance learning outcomes and match the skills of MENA's children and youth to current and future labour market needs.
- Investing in **adolescent girls and young women** is particularly pressing. **It is critical to address underlying social norms** and ensure their protection from violence, exploitation and abuse, and empower them to participate fully in community, workplace and political life, as well as enhance their access to gender friendly education and employment services.
- Invest in the participation rights of young people and foster a new generation that shares responsibility to eschew conflict, discrimination and violence through, life skills and citizenship education; promoting participation of adolescents and youth in decision-making that affects their lives; promoting access to positive engagement opportunities and support to lead and implement civic and economic initiatives

in their communities.

- Investment cannot come from the humanitarian sector alone. Longer term development funding should also be used as well as greater involvement from private sector.
- All investments should build on existing structures and capacities in order to achieve scale and sustainability.

Work with and for young people must be based on proven approaches. The following three elements are essential:

- An integrated package meeting needs in Protection, Education, Engagement, Social Protection and Health;
- Inclusion of the public sector, private sector, families, communities and adolescents and young people as partners; and
- Addressing underlying drivers such as social norms, unemployment and inequity.

Humanitarian actors can and should take steps now to increase visibility and improve outcomes for marginalized adolescents and youth through:

- Systematic tracking of results for adolescents and youth interventions through age and sex disaggregated indicators;
- Improvement of intra and inter-sectoral learning and coordination in adolescent and youth programming;
- Systematic engagement of adolescents and youth in the design, implementation and review of all programming affecting them; and
- Amplifying the perspectives and voices of young people and advocating for platforms to facilitate young people's engagement in planning and decision-making which will affect their present and future.

The second edition of the Evidence Symposium will be held in 2018. Keep tuned!

<https://esay2017site.wordpress.com/>

To access the comprehensive report for the Evidence Symposium, visit

<https://esay2017site.wordpress.com/comprehensive-report/>

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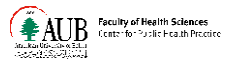
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