“Regional desk review analysis of youth participation and country specific case studies of Tunis, Jordan, and Kuwait”

June 14, 2017

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1 This report was commissioned by UN-ESCWA in the context of the implementation of the project on “Strengthening the capacity of governments in the ESCAP, ECA and ESCWA regions to respond to the needs of youth in formulating inclusive and sustainable development policies”. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.
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I. Introduction

Background

The Asia-Pacific, Africa and Western Asia (Arab) regions are home to over a billion young persons aged between 15 and 24 years representing roughly one fifth of the population of the three regions. Noting the challenges youth face in accessing quality education and decent work opportunities, and in participating in decision-making processes, this significant population group requires particular attention and cross-sectoral efforts to guarantee their wellbeing and advance their development.

Over the past few years, youth in the Arab region have clearly and repeatedly expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of opportunities for socio-economic development. Arab youth indeed emerged as a leading force in the 2011 uprisings, as agents of change and vital stakeholders in conflict and in peace-building; confirming the potential of this demographically critical mass of just under 20% of Arab populations to influence social change. Among the key lessons learned from the Arab uprisings is the importance and urgency of creating development opportunities for youth so that they can thrive economically, politically, and socially and fulfil their role as productive members of society.

Since 2011, countries across the region have enhanced their efforts to respond to youth needs, aspirations, and development rights and priorities, mainly through policy reform and programmes that specifically target youth as a critical socio-demographic group. Some of these efforts have aimed to increase the number of opportunities for the active and positive participation of youth in decision-making processes, particularly those relating to the development of policies and programmes targeting youth. In this context, this project builds on recent and ongoing youth development programming initiatives in the ESCAP, ECA and ESCWA regions and is designed to help understand the situation of youth, and accordingly support governments in engaging with youth, and in the development of inclusive and effective policies. Its implementation in the three regions intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. Increased understanding among policymakers of the issues faced by youth, including young women, particularly with regards to their equal participation in economic development;
2. Strengthened capacity of policy makers to formulate cross-sectoral policies that enhance effective participation of youth in economic, social, and political life;
3. Enhanced engagement between policymakers and youth groups in jointly designing, reviewing, and/or implementing youth-based policies for inclusive and sustainable development.
Objective and scope of the regional analysis

To achieve these objectives, the project will undertake a regional analysis on the situation of youth in selected Arab countries, with a specific focus on youth participation in general, and the role of youth in policy making in particular.

The regional analysis will be guided by three key questions:

1. What is the degree of Arab youth participation in decision-making processes, particularly youth development policies, and how?
2. To what extent is youth participation in decision-making processes likely to improve the quality, responsiveness, impact and viability of development policies?
3. How can youth participation in the Arab countries be enhanced, and whose responsibility is it to ensure a larger space and stronger role for youth?

Addressing these research questions requires a thorough understanding on the situation of youth, including the existing channels for their participation in public life. The analysis report will also highlight the extent to which governments in the region engage with youth in policy-making processes, particularly in programmes that are of direct relevance to youth wellbeing and development. Finally, the analysis will try to examine the impact of youth participation in terms of relevance, ownership, effectiveness and impact of development policies in selected countries. The focus on youth participation in decision-making processes will be consistent throughout the regional analysis, considered both as a goal in policy making as well as an enabler for developmental objectives. The report findings, relying mostly on evidence from the region, and the recommendations will be disseminated with a view to advocate for engaging with youth and institutionalizing their participation in development policy processes in the region.

II. Methodology

In mid-2016, the Center for Public Health Practice at the Faculty of Health Sciences at the American University of Beirut was contracted by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to produce a regional analysis report on youth participation in decision-making processes in the Arab region. As part of the regional analysis report, a desk review report encompassing a thorough and detailed review of the available literature on youth engagement in decision-making was commissioned.

The main output of this regional analysis is a report synthesizing the findings of a thorough literature review (regional/country mainly, with selected international practices), as well as three case studies in Tunisia, Jordan, and Kuwait that aim to gather information reflecting youth perceptions, aspirations, and vision for
development within their respective contexts. The report will also include analysis of findings as well as conclusions and recommendations.

1. Desk Review
The desk review was guided by the main research questions and relied mostly on the available literature and documented experiences and impact of youth participation, and engagement in decision making at local and national level. Documents included national reports; publications by UN agencies and other international organizations; reports of national, regional and international NGOs; academic literature; and other relevant sources. The desk review covered global and regional literature in countries other than the target countries (Tunisia, Jordan, and Kuwait), which were explored in more detail in the case studies.

1.1. Thematic scope of the desk review
The desk review aimed to find documentation with regards to:

1. General information on the status of young people in the Arab region
2. Identifying key players and stakeholders in advancing youth development
3. The presence of official representation of youth associations or national youth policies
4. Channels and practices of political participation and decision-making
5. Channels and practices of civic participation and decision-making

1.2. Geographic scope of the desk review
The desk review looked for documentation on the above themes in the 22 Arab countries: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen

1.3. Search Process
The search process took place over 6 months and consisted of a primary broad search and then various searches following leads from initial results.

Out of the 177 results kept in the first English search, only 59 were case studies/programs. In addition, more than 60% of the 268 results of the Arabic search were newspaper articles. Although mainstream media articles rather than reports, most of these results were kept with the rationale that they would be able to give an idea about the state of youth in the Arab world and their involvement in the community. Secondary searches also supplemented the results from the news articles. Despite the small number of UN reports rendered by the search, those found were comprehensive and tackled the different issues for the youth population.

Most of the results of the first Arabic search were from newspapers, forums, and blogs. Few official reports were retrieved.
The French search in general retrieved more results for empowering youth to engage in the community rather than information on initiatives done by youth and their engagement in decision-making and the evaluation of the latter.

Once the results of the first search were read, secondary searches were carried out using information identified in the first search as a launching point. For example, the primary search resulted in many Arabic articles from mainstream media outlets that would mention specific seminars or policies, and secondary searches were often needed targeting some of the information found in the first search.

1.4. Approach and Rationale
As mentioned, the desk review was guided by the main research questions of the regional analysis. As such, a specific approach was followed in synthesizing the data:

- First, the aim was to cover the literature on youth participation in decision-making (both academic and otherwise) in various contexts, in order to properly define and operationalize the indicators of youth participation. Once defined, these definitions of youth participation were used as a lens with which to view the other reports in the region, in order to be able to evaluate the level of participation currently taking place in the Arab region.

- Both broad and specific literature on the Arab region was consulted, including the UNDP Arab Human Development Report published in 2016 that focused on the issues of youth in the Arab World. A general picture of the situation of youth in the Arab region, and especially in the wake of the Arab uprisings, is presented, before presenting a review of the situation of youth policy and of participation in decision-making.

2. Review of background documentation for each country
For the three target countries, documents were reviewed on the current status of youth participation and engagement in decision making and the process that led to this state. In addition, a search for reflective pieces and commentaries on both the current status and the process was conducted. This review would start before a phase of qualitative data collection, with the aim of understanding the background and informing the data collection. The background documentation also comprised documents suggested by or made available by the different stakeholders identified during qualitative data collection.

3. Qualitative Data Collection for Case Studies
3.1. Focus groups with youth in the three target countries
Focus groups were conducted to gather information reflecting youth perceptions, aspirations, and vision for development within their respective contexts. The focus group discussions initially aimed towards ensuring the participation of youth from different segments of society and, to the extent possible, from different geographic
locations, although in Jordan only enlisted youth from the Irbid area due to time constraints.

3.2. Interviews with key stakeholders
Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in the process of youth engagement in each country. These include a) ministries of youth; b) representatives of youth-led non-governmental organizations, c) others as needed. The interviews were used to validate and complement the findings from the literature review and bridge some knowledge gaps, particularly regarding recent changes in government policies, legal frameworks, participation channels, obstacles and success stories if any.

4. Research Limitations
4.1. Desk review
The country-by-country search revealed large gaps in results between countries, in terms of both the quantity and quality of literature retrieved. It is unclear if this gap in results is purely due to a lack of activities or whether it is also due to lack of documentation.

Also, there is a lack of up-to-date data, where follow up on youth policies or organizations was unavailable. Many of the Youth Parliaments in few countries had deactivated social media (such as Facebook) pages, others had empty content on their websites. The situation of youth in conflict countries or countries in transition (such as Egypt, Libya, and Syria) was also difficult to determine since some of the data has become outdated with the deterioration of conditions in those countries. In the case of Syria, for example, almost no data could be found.

It also quickly became apparent that a great amount of complex and nuanced literature existed around certain countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, and Iraq, whereas most of the Arab states in Africa (Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia, and Sudan) and in the GCC had little documentation on youth policy and participation. Oman, for example, came up with practically no results. In addition, there was a difficulty in capturing data on youth in conflict countries (Syria, Yemen, and Libya).
III. Youth in the Arab Region

1. Overview of Youth in the Arab Region

1.1 Definition of youth
The UN defines ‘youth’ as young persons between the ages of 15-24 years old\(^2\). Extending the definition of ‘youth’ beyond adolescent years allows for capturing a segment of the population that may be unemployed or searching for a livelihood, is married or sexually active, participates in politics, etc.\(^3\) However, taking into account the variations in defining youth across different countries and socio-cultural contexts\(^4\), flexibility in the definition of youth is necessary for a holistic approach to understanding youth and youth participation as it stands today. Indeed, definitions of youth have changed continuously in response to fluctuating political, economic and socio-cultural circumstances.\(^5\) Also stressed in UN definitions is the heterogeneity of young people as a group due to the vast variation of these circumstances within and between different contexts. It is critical to keep these variations in mind in any attempt to describe youth or guide research into youth-related issues.

Children and Young people under 30 years old make up around 60% of the population of the Arab World\(^6\). Although the United Nations defines young people as between the ages of 15-24, the official definition of “youth” varies from country to country in the Arab region, as illustrated by Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Youth definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>No official definition was found</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^2\) Secretary-General’s Report to the General Assembly, A/36/215, 1981

\(^3\) DFID (2010) “Youth Participation in Development.”


\(^7\) This table was initially compiled from various factsheets on youth policy found on the Youth Policy think tank website (youthpolicy.org) which, in turn, compiled data from various international NGOs and UN agencies such as the World Bank and...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Youth definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>No official definition was found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comoros</td>
<td>No official definition was found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>No official definition was found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Varies between 18-30 and 18-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>10-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>12-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>15-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait®</td>
<td>14-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>15-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>No official definition was found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>12-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>15-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>No official definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>13-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>No official definition was found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>No official definition was found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>No official definition was found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>15-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>15-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE®</td>
<td>15-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>15-24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2. Demographic statistics

Table 2 Percentage of youth* in Arab Countries stratified by gender10 (year and sources)

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the UNDP. Due to the last update of the Youth Policy factsheets in 2014, the information has also been updated using what was found in the desk review where possible.

® Public Authority for Youth Strategy-Kuwait 2016/2017-2020/2021
¥Youth defined as 15 to 24 years old
General Authority of Youth and Sports Welfare (UAE)
Tabulated by Gallup (2015)
In most cases, young people make up a large proportion of the population, reaching up to around 37% in the cases of Syria, Jordan, and in Algeria. Other countries such as the UAE and Bahrain have comparatively much lower percentages. Some cases, such as Algeria, Tunisia, Syria and Yemen show a higher percentage of young females than men. This is important to keep in mind when considering policies that might affect youth participation as young women in the Arab world are usually faced with a different set of barriers than young men. The demographics of youth by country highlight the heterogeneity of youth within the same region. This is further elaborated in Table 3 below, which highlights the high level of differences across countries as well as gender in unemployment, education, and literacy. In many cases, such as Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, Mauritania, and Morocco, as examples, women are greatly disadvantaged in comparison to men. Again, this is important to consider when trying to understand barriers to youth participation in the region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Youth Among Youth</th>
<th>Among Youth %Male</th>
<th>Among Youth % Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comoros</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In most cases, young people make up a large proportion of the population, reaching up to around 37% in the cases of Syria, Jordan, and in Algeria. Other countries such as the UAE and Bahrain have comparatively much lower percentages. Some cases, such as Algeria, Tunisia, Syria and Yemen show a higher percentage of young females than men. This is important to keep in mind when considering policies that might affect youth participation as young women in the Arab world are usually faced with a different set of barriers than young men. The demographics of youth by country highlight the heterogeneity of youth within the same region. This is further elaborated in Table 3 below, which highlights the high level of differences across countries as well as gender in unemployment, education, and literacy. In many cases, such as Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, Mauritania, and Morocco, as examples, women are greatly disadvantaged in comparison to men. Again, this is important to consider when trying to understand barriers to youth participation in the region.
Table 3 Youth*unemployment rate, literacy rate and percent education, (both genders) by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Youth unemployment rate¹¹</th>
<th>Youth literacy rate¹²</th>
<th>Youth education level¹³</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%Male</td>
<td>% Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comoros</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹² Youth defined 15 to 24 years old
¹³ UNDP (2016) "Arab Human Development Report" - Mine the Data (Oman, Palestine, and Qatar(2014), UAE(2005), Algeria(2006), Lebanon and Mauritania(2007), Morocco and Tunisia(2011), Jordan(2012), Bahrain(2010), and all the other countries the latest data is from 2013)
¹³ Tabulated by Gallup 2015
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Youth unemployment rate</th>
<th>Youth literacy rate</th>
<th>Youth education level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%Male</td>
<td>% Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3. Youth development indices

Table 4 Youth Development Indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Youth Development Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>0.560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>0.717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comoros</td>
<td>0.462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>0.462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>0.530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>0.494</td>
</tr>
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<td>Jordan</td>
<td>0.586</td>
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<tr>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>0.681</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>0.678</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>0.649</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>0.430</td>
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<td>UAE</td>
<td>0.599</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>0.478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Color codes: Below Average  Around Average  Above Average

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14 The numbers tabulated were retrieved from Commonwealth (2015) “Youth Development Index” and Commonwealth (2016) “Youth Development Index and Report”.

The youth development indices (YDI) of the 20 countries were retrieved from The Commonwealth reports of 2015 and 2016. The Youth Development Index is “a composite index of 18 indicators that collectively measure progress on youth development in 183 countries,” including the five domains of education, political participation, health and well-being, employment and opportunity, and civic participation. While in no way enough to offer a holistic picture, the indices can offer a glimpse of the situation of youth development in the region, and can begin to illustrate the degree of variations between and within each country. Similarly, the Civic Engagement Index in Table 5 below from a Gallup poll on civic engagement in 2014-2015 uses donating money, volunteering time, and helping strangers as indicators for youth civic engagement. Although the use of these three indicators cannot provide a detailed picture of the situation of youth engagement, it too can offer a glimpse of the regional situation.

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15 This index does not take poverty, conflicts and war, gender equality into consideration.

Table 5 Civic Engagement Index and indicators by gender and by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Civic Engagement index</th>
<th>% Youth donated money</th>
<th>% Youth volunteered time</th>
<th>% Youth helped a stranger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Male mean</td>
<td>Female mean</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comoros</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Civic Engagement index</th>
<th>% Youth donated money</th>
<th>% Youth volunteered time</th>
<th>% Youth helped a stranger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Male mean</td>
<td>Female mean</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>22.9</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
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<td>Oman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
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<td>35.2</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>15.4</td>
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<td>41.3</td>
<td>27.9</td>
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<td>16.7</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>58.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Challenges facing Youth in the Arab Region

The youth demographic in the Arab states shares many characteristics with other developing countries from other regions. However, due to the political and social history of the region, many youth in Arab nations face problems particular to their country or region. According to the latest report focusing particularly on the situation of youth in the Arab region published, UNDP Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) was published in 2016, to highlight... with its focus on youth in the Arab World. This report will draw upon some of the findings of the AHDR, due to its regional focus and its relevance due to its recent time of publication.

The Arab Uprisings in 2011 have been an important turning point for youth in the region. Young people formed, and continue to form, an increasing demographic bulge, the growth of which has simultaneously put a strain on the infrastructure of Arab States and led to social, economic, and political exclusion of young people. Youth are rarely represented in policies or other public spaces. The AHDR report attributes the mobilization of young people during the uprisings to a general feeling of alienation among the younger population.

The AHDR report stresses on the heterogeneity of the situation of young people, even within the same region. This is further elaborated in the upcoming sections. There is a great variety in youth opinions in different Arab states; however, there are also salient themes and patterns. For example, many young people are urbanized, and many young people are also unemployed, leading to migration. Many youth are also threatened daily by conflict, forced migration, and wars. Despite small strides, women in the Arab World continue to face disempowerment and disenfranchisement.

The executive summary of the AHDR succinctly lists the problems contributing to the ongoing disempowerment of youth in the region:

2.1. High youth unemployment due to a dearth of job opportunities

The Arab Human Development Report cites “scant suitable job opportunities” as a major challenge for the youth demographic in particular, leading them to become economically disempowered and also leading to a high rate of migration of skilled labor. The reasons for this are a prevalence of nepotism in the region, disadvantaging many youth, and also a lack of suitable job opportunities in both the private and public sector. As of 2014 the percentage of unemployed youth was at nearly 30%, which was double the global average. Young women are especially economically disempowered with an unemployment rate double that of young men (24%).

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18 UNDP (2016) "Arab Human Development Report".
19 UNDP (2016) "Arab Human Development Report".
2.2. A low level of political participation
The AHDR report states that young people in the Arab World are disadvantaged by “weak political participation” and weak civil engagement; in fact, one of the lowest levels in the world. This is due mainly to legal challenges that hinder political participation for young people, and the generally exclusionary political life in Arab countries reflected by the lack of channels to actively engage youth as equal citizens in civic and political processes. Youth voting rates are the lowest in the world, at around 68%, with young people reporting a lack of confidence or trust in democratic processes. The Arab world also has the lowest regional average globally for women’s participation in parliament. Although young people are becoming more interested in participating in politics, especially after the Arab uprisings, the actual participation rates are low and participation is often limited to taking part in demonstrations.

A report by MedNet (Networking for the Inclusion of Young People of the Mediterranean Basin) in 2014 further elaborated on some of the barriers to political participation in Arab Countries, listing them as:

1- Legal barriers, mainly in the form of voting and candidacy ages
2- Lack of trust in political system, parties, and representatives
3- Lack of knowledge on local parliament or government integrated within formal education
4- Other challenges in the daily life of young people in Arab states, such as high unemployment rates, which distract from political participation

2.3. Lack of public health or education services of good quality
Despite improvements in both sectors, Arab States still suffer from “poor-quality health care and education services.” Health care systems have insufficient capacity to tackle youth health needs and when it comes to health care, the main barriers faced by youth, are similar to those faced by others and include: access, culture and society, administrative issues, infrastructure and finances. Additionally, as a result of ongoing conflicts, education coverage is shrinking and the lack of opportunities for university graduates in the labour market is discouraging young people from pursuing higher education.

2.4. Mismanagement of social diversity
One of the social issues that is currently challenging for youth in the region is the issue of identity. Specifically, the AHDR reports that diverse identities fail to be managed socio-politically through legal and institutional structures. The AHDR report of 2009 cites that state security is often valued above the security of citizens, undermining citizenship and further marginalizing minorities.

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23 Ibid
2.5. Ongoing gender inequity
The 2016 AHDR cites “the prevalence of concepts and practices that hinder gender equality”, such as patriarchy and gender discrimination, as a major obstacle to development for Arab youth today, despite efforts by some countries in the region. Young Arab women, then, pay a “double price” in terms of disempowerment. In addition to women being largely underrepresented in government and politics, inequality in legal rights (such as in marriage laws), social inequality and discrimination, and prevailing social ideologies contribute to the disempowerment of women in Arab states. Ongoing conflicts also put women at high risk, increasing incidence of domestic and gender-based violence.

2.6. Ongoing conflict in the region
Perhaps one of the most pertinent challenges faced by youth in the Arab world today is the existence of “prolonged conflicts that undermine the gains of development.” Civilian deaths often exceed those of combatants, and the degraded infrastructure and targeting of healthcare facilities further complicates the scale of injury and destruction due to war. 40% of school-aged children in the region are currently denied education due to conflict, putting a generation of young Arab men and women at risk. As a result of prolonged conflict, displacement and forced migration continuously undermine the safety and futures of Arab youth.

IV. Youth Participation in the Arab Region

1. Defining Youth Participation
1.1 Why engage youth?
Youth are described within the academic literature as well as among UN and other NGO publications to be a source of innovation, creativity, inspiration, and powerful potential within their own communities as well as on a national, regional, and global level. In addition, many youth worldwide today are facing some of the harshest challenges yet, including poverty, unemployment, inequality, marginalization, and conflict.25

Youth engagement has proven consistently to be a significant, and even necessary, foundation for development over different contexts. According to the UNDP Youth Strategy report for 2014-2017, youth empowerment is essential for sustainable development and transformational change.26

In addition to the benefits on the community development level, youth participation also has its foundations in human rights. According to the UN Convention on the

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25 In 2011, around 87% of youth in developing countries were facing such development challenges. Fact Sheet from International Year of Youth 2010-2011, in UNDP (2014) Youth Strategy 2014-2017.
Rights of the Child, young people have the right “to express...views freely in all matters affecting [them], the views...being given due weight in accordance with [their] age and maturity.” 27

Beyond the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN General Comment on Adolescents (GC20) in 2016 also articulated the rights of adolescents building upon the principles of the UNCRC, particularly with the aim of ensuring their representation in youth-related policy and legislation 28. Focusing on youth participation and engagement is therefore rooted in the fundamental human rights of young people around the world.

1.2. Theories of Youth Participation

Stemming from various definitions of 'participation', youth participation has been defined as “a process where young people, as active citizens, take part in, express views on, and have decision-making power about issues that affect them.” 29 DFID (2010) defined it as “the active, informed and voluntary involvement of people in decision-making and the life of their communities (both locally and globally).”

In 1992, UNICEF published Roger Hart’s Ladder of Participation in order to conceptualize the many levels of children’s or young people’s participation. At the present day, the ladder has been adapted and used by countless NGO, agencies, and other actors in order to be able to describe and properly characterize young people’s participation.

Figure 1. Ladder of Participation (freechild.org)

Rung 8: Young people & adults share decision-making
Rung 7: Young people lead & initiate action
Rung 6: Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people
Rung 5: Young people consulted and informed
Rung 4: Young people assigned and informed
Rung 3: Young people tokenized*
Rung 2: Young people are decoration*
Rung 1: Young people are manipulated*

Note: Hart explains that the last three rungs are non-participation


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28 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016, General comment No. 20 on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence, CRC/C/GC/20
In the figure above, the first three rungs or levels are marked as “non-participation” or “non-engagement.” This includes involving youth through “manipulation” (for example, by forcing their attendance or support), “decoration” (when young people’s presence is the extent of their engagement), and “tokenism” (when young people are made to seem like they are engaged when they in fact are not). The FreeChild Project also defines the fourth and fifth rungs as “partial participation,” where the extent of young people’s roles is to be assigned to and informed about specific roles or to also have their opinions consulted about specific projects and programs. The last three rungs of the ladder are considered to embody forms of youth participation, and involve youth in decision-making roles. The roles involve sharing decisions and responsibilities with young people, youth leadership and youth-adult equity or partnership.

The Ladder of Participation has proved to be a useful tool in analyzing the degree of youth participation, and in guiding youth participation policy forward. As such, the principles it represents will be used as a guiding framework in order to make sense of the data on youth participation in the Arab region.

Youth participation is divided into two types: conventional/institutional versus unconventional/experience-oriented. Conventional participation is explained as the direct participation of youth in political parties, elections and so on while unconventional includes protests, petitions, online communities, etc... Often institutions do not consider unconventional participation of youth as ‘genuine’ and undermine it. In line with this categorization, for the sake of this report, youth participation in the Arab region will be divided into two categories: ‘formal’ and ‘informal’. SAHWA - a consortium of fifteen partners, universities and research centers from Europe and Arab countries- within its research themes explores youth political engagement in the Arab region and also categorizes it as ‘formal’ versus ‘informal’ across three different levels: local, national and global.

1.3. Youth Participation in Decision-Making

Following the 2007 World Bank Development Report, DFID developed a ‘three-lens approach’ with regards to youth participation. In this approach, youth participation is characterized by placing (1) youth as beneficiaries, (2) youth as partners, and/or (3) youth as leaders. DFID explain the lens approach as non-mutually exclusive, where youth can be engaged at all three levels—in fact, youth participation in development often necessitates the involvement at the three levels.
The different lenses sum up the different roles youth can hold in the case of youth participation. These roles, appearing in the work of Bhatnager and Williams for the World Bank in 1992, include: 36

1. **Information sharing**, where information is shared with youth to aid action,
2. **Consultation**, where youth are consulted and their feedback is integrated by an organization or by another body,
3. **Initiating action**, and
4. **Decision-making**, where young people either share or take over the decision-making processes on different issues.

This operationalization of participation will allow us to make better sense of reports of youth engagement around the Arab region, and to better identify the level of influence youth hold as stakeholders in the processes in which they participate.

Youth participation in decision-making also sometimes takes the form of “youth-adult partnership.” “Youth-adult partnership” is defined in Zeldin et al. (2012) 37 as involving “multiple youth and multiple adults deliberating and acting together, in a collective fashion over a sustained period of time, through shared work, intended to promote social justice, strengthen an organization and/or affirmatively address a community issue” 38.

The participation of youth in decision-making, centering these youth-adult partnerships, has the potential of taking place in government, community service, academic, and program development settings.

The DFID report also stresses the importance of youth participation going beyond being surveyed, or even beyond consultation. Although consultation allows youth views to be represented, greater rights and responsibilities should be given to youth.

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37 Zeldin et al. (2012). The psychology and practice of youth-adult partnership: Bridging generations for youth development and community change; Zeldin et al. (2008). Youth-adult partnerships in decision making: Disseminating and implementing an innovative idea into established organizations and communities.
38 Zeldin et al. (2012). 338
with the aim of partnership in decision-making (Zeldin et al., 2012) or “co-management” (DFID, 2010).

1.4. Outcomes of Youth Participation in Decision-Making

1.4.1 Benefits to the Youth

Youth participation in partnership with adults in program decision-making is particularly important in the case of programming for youth. Youth programs can take the form of programs that are developed and run by youth for youth, or, as explained by Akiva et al. (2014), “where the operation and governance of the program itself is used as a context for youth learning and development” (p. 1844). A study across four states in the United States by Akiva et al. (2014), in response to the dearth of literature containing empirical studies on youth participation in decision-making, found that such practices showed a strong association between youth participation with motivation to partake in the programs, in addition to “positive correlations between decision-making practices and youth problem-solving efficacy, expression efficacy, and empathy”. The study furthermore showed that these positive correlations were especially apparent among older youth.

Akiva et al. study further examines the literature on the benefits of youth-participation in program decision-making from the developmental, motivation, and skills acquisition perspective:

Developmentally, youth participation provides the autonomy that characterizes the adolescent transition away from dependence, and decision-making activities complement cognitive development. From a motivation perspective, youth input in program decision-making increases the likelihood of youth participation in the programs themselves, especially if the program is seen to be beneficial for those youth’s future success. The authors give the example of programs that would provide the participating youth with skills that would be perceived as helpful for being accepted into college. The authors review other academic studies that show that participation in program development increases the motivation of youth to participate by increasing feelings of belonging, empowerment and new experiences. In addition to all this, young people acquire knowledge and skills that are translatable to other sectors of their lives.

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39 Akiva et al. (2014) Involving Youth in Program Decision-Making: How Common and What Might it Do for Youth?
40 Akiva et al. (2014), 1844.
41 Ibid., 1845.
42 Ibid., 1846.
43 Ibid.
1.4.2 Benefits to Development
The development benefits to engaging youth in decision-making roles are reiterated across the literature but again are succinctly described in DFID’s report on Youth Participation in Development:44

One of the main benefits to development is listed as aid effectiveness. The agency and exercise of citizenship through equal participation allows youth to hold governments as well as donors accountable. In addition, youth participation in development contexts was described by the World Bank, UNFPA and the Commonwealth Secretariat as a critical step towards realizing the Millennium Development Goals.45

1.5. Challenges to Youth Participation
There are many barriers and obstacles in the way of effective and meaningful youth participation that range from issues of basic rights to political and social issues. These challenges are faced by young people around the globe, including the Arab States, which is described in more detail in Section IV.

Some challenges described in the literature include46:
- A lack of accountability mechanisms within civil society
- Conflict-related migration, and post-conflict transitions
- High unemployment rates leading to further migration
- Gender-based violence
- Social exclusion

2. (State of) Youth Participation in the Arab Region

2.1. Youth and Development in Arab Countries: Main actors and stakeholders
In identifying main actors facilitating youth participation in Arab countries, it was found that in many (if not most) countries, young people’s participation is heavily mediated by the presence of NGOs, and also particularly the involvement and support of many UN agencies, who often work collaboratively with local governments on issues of youth participation and policy. In light of the political upheavals and transitions in Arab states, the political participation of youth in specific has been thrown into focus for NGOs. This has led UN agencies to prioritize youth as well as youth political participation on their development agenda.

2.2 Youth Policies and Formal Channels for Participation
The findings of the desk review, and specifically Table 6 “Compilation of Youth Policy Data in Arab Countries”, demonstrate the large variation and discrepancies between youth policies and practices in different countries in the Arab region.

44 DFID (2010) “Youth Participation in Development”
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
Table 6 Compilation of Youth Policy Data in Arab Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Youth Policy</th>
<th>Official Representation</th>
<th>National youth representation or organization</th>
<th>Voting age</th>
<th>Minimum candidacy age</th>
</tr>
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<td>No formal representation</td>
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<td>Bahrain</td>
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<td>National Youth Council</td>
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<td>National Youth Council</td>
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<td>Iraqi Youth Parliament</td>
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<td>Jordan Youth Innovation Forum</td>
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<td>Being Drafted (2014)</td>
<td>General Presidency for Youth Welfare</td>
<td>No formal representation</td>
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<td>Youth Forum for Youth Policy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
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<td>Libyan Youth Forum</td>
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<td>Directorate of Youth Development within the Ministry of</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
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</table>

*For municipal elections

*This table was initially compiled from various factsheets on youth policy found on the Youth Policy think tank website (youthpolicy.org) which, in turn, compiled data from various international NGOs and UN agencies such as the World Bank and the UNDP. Due to the last update of the Youth Policy factsheets in 2014, the information has also been updated using what was found in the desk review where possible. However, it should be noted that due to lack of data in many cases updated information could not be found.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Youth Policy</th>
<th>Official Representation</th>
<th>National youth representation or organization</th>
<th>Voting age</th>
<th>Minimum candidacy age</th>
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<td>Somali Youth Parliament</td>
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<td>Ministry of Youth and Sports</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>Being drafted (vision 2021)</td>
<td>Ministry of Culture, Youth &amp; Community and General Authority of Youth and Sports Welfare</td>
<td>National Youth Council Youth Circles</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>Not valid</td>
<td>Ministry of Youth and Sports and Supreme Council for Youth</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2.2.1. Voting age**

Despite discrepancies, general patterns do emerge. For example, the voting age ranges between 18-21 with the exception of the UAE where it is set at 25. The voting age in the majority of cases includes the youth population as it is defined by each country. However, the minimum age for candidacy ranged between 21-30 and was in most cases much higher than the voting age, and in many cases exclusionary of the
young population. In some cases, the minimum age for candidacy applied only for “Lower House,” where candidacy for “Upper House” seats was completely exclusionary of young people. As discussed in the upcoming section on political participation, voting and election ages only tell part of the story, as youth often face other prohibitive factors that disallow them from participating in elections.

2.2.2. Presence of Youth Councils and Parliaments

The search revealed a high number of Youth Councils and Parliaments, but further searches revealed a difficulty in gleaning their actual function or their reach in terms of decision-making. This difficulty was compounded by the large number of inactive websites.

For example, an Iraqi Youth Parliament currently exists as a democratic body committed to youth development. It follows the structure of the Iraqi National Parliament, and its main aims include increasing evaluating the impact of legislation on youth and political participation among young people. In addition, there is a National Youth Parliament in Sudan. In Morocco, local youth councils act as “a bridge between young people and politics” and provide a space for youth to voice their concerns. Due to the lack of accessible data, it is unclear what the level of meaningful youth participation in decision-making is in these parliaments and councils.

As of 2014, Comoros had no National Youth Policy. A UNICEF report states that UNICEF supported the government of Comoros in setting up a National Youth Parliament in 2014, which was involved in adopting bills on issues such as nutrition and violence in schools, showing impact.

In 2012, the UNDP held leadership training for young people in the Iraqi Youth Parliament. In 2013, the UNDP also involved youth in a Training Needs Assessment as part of the Participatory Governance Project, where young people were engaged in an assessment which later led to a training program for young Iraqi activists as beneficiaries. In 2014, the UNDP, in partnership with the Ministry of Planning, engaged Iraqi youth in the drafting of the Iraq Human Development Report. Young people participated in the drafting and review phases, as well as in setting the recommendations for the report.

2.2.3. Presence of Official Representation (Ministries of Youth)

Almost all countries in the region have ministries dedicated to youth affairs, although in Oman and Syria, this official mandate was spread out across few ministries. In

49 http://euromedyouth.net/IMG/pdf/def_p_1-40_youth_work_morocco.pdf
50 Demo Finland (2014) “Youth Participation in Morocco Advancing Step by Step”
53 Ibid.
54 UNDP (2014), Iraq Human Development Report
many cases, youth ministries work in collaboration with UN agencies on issues of youth policy and development.

In the case of Morocco, the Ministry of Youth itself is one of the main actors in youth policy and development. The Moroccan Ministry of Youth and Sport has over 500 youth centers, provides information to young people through the National Center for Youth Information and Documentation, and holds conferences for young people via its Institute of Youth and Democracy.\textsuperscript{55} The State Bureau specifically concerned with youth works towards enriching civic engagement by partnering with youth organizations and providing a space for young members to design and implement projects, reportedly putting young people in more meaningful participation positions.\textsuperscript{56}

### 2.2.4. Existence of National Youth Policies

The search results indicated that all countries have institutional arrangements for youth but only very few Arab countries had current National Youth Policies (or in some cases, strategies) in place.

In Bahrain, the Bahrain National Youth Policy was drafted in 2005 as a result of shared decision-making with youth. 16,000 young people (15-30) were engaged in consultation in the formulation of Bahrain’s National Youth Policy. Within the framework of DFID’s three lenses and Hart’s participation ladder, youth were beneficiaries, consultants (through focus group discussions), as well as partners on the project as 100 young people were given capacity-building and training in order to then coordinate the “Youth Voice Campaign” where they worked in partnership with ministers and civil servants.

In Morocco, the Ministry of Youth and Sport put forth a National Youth Policy containing strategies to foster higher levels of youth participation.\textsuperscript{57}

Iraq currently has a National Youth Strategy,\textsuperscript{58} the foundation of which was set by the National Youth Survey\textsuperscript{59} conducted in 2009. The survey was a joint effort between the Ministry of Youth and Sports, UNFPA, the Kurdish Ministry of Sports and Youth, among other international organizations and national ministries.

The Youth Forum for Youth Policy in Lebanon was founded in 2007 and worked in partnership with the MOYS (recognized in Decree 80/2007) as an umbrella forum bringing together both youth-centered NGOs and youth wings in existing political parties. It partnered with the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports as well as the United Nations Youth Task Force, among other international organizations. A policy document was authored by the Youth Forum and officially endorsed by the Lebanese

\textsuperscript{55} ICP (2011) "Morocco"
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} ESCWA(2013) السياسة الوطنية للشباب
\textsuperscript{59} UNFPA Iraq (2011) "Analytical Report of the National Youth Survey"
council of Ministers on April 3rd, 2012. The document contained recommendations for including the quality of life of youth and providing the grounds for a higher rate of participation, especially in the political sphere. The document developed over 10 years and used a “bottom-up” approach were youth were involved in generating the document and setting their priorities before it was taken to the ministry level. Although officially endorsed, by 2017 the recommendations in the document are still not implemented.60

For Arab countries in transition or in conflict, the state of youth policy differs from case to case. Due to the upheavals in government, in Egypt, the state of youth civic and political participation has been in a constant state of flux. After the ousting of President Mubarak, policy-makers in Egypt prioritized “youth-sensitive” policies with the aim of including youth in all aspects of social, cultural, economic, and political life.61 Up until the ousting of Islamic president Morsi in 2013, youth participation seemed to increase with the establishment of formal and informal organizations.62 President Al-Sisi’s discourse on Egyptian youth following 2014 also involved the formation of an Egyptian Youth Council—however, youth were reportedly disillusioned by the new president due to the fact that he had previously promised not to run.63

Although a youth policy for Palestine was developed in 2005 with the help of UNICEF, it has not been fully implemented due to the political differences between the West Bank and Gaza over the last decades following the Second Intifada. A new policy, however, is being drafted for the years 2017-2023. A Palestinian Youth Parliament was founded in 2005, but suffered from continuous political splits in the Palestinian government and had little to no role in decision-making. Members of the Youth Parliament also suffered from a lack of capacity and skills.64 Local youth councils have also been unsuccessful, and civil society organizations have not been fruitful in promoting youth participation in decision-making.65

UN agencies have also worked with other regional governments on youth policy. In 2009-2016, UNDP provided support for a National Youth Strategy in Saudi Arabia.66 Djibouti’s youth policy was established in 2007 by the Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Recreation, with the support of UNICEF, for the period of 2008-2017.67

2.3 Formal Channels for Youth Participation
The UNDP factsheet on youth, political participation, and decision-making (2012 encompasses both “formal” and “informal” engagement. Despite the importance of

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60 SAHWA (2016) Policy Paper: Lebanon
62 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 UNDP Saudi Arabia (2015) “Support to Developing the National Youth Strategy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”
both kinds of engagement, the global trend of youth political engagement (which is also the prevalent trend in the Arab world) is that youth are typically excluded from policymaking and legislation, despite the fact that they may be active in political spaces, such as within universities in the contexts of student councils or unions. The UNDP factsheet cites the participation of young people in “formal” and institutional political spaces, such as in the parliament, as significantly lower than the participation of older adult citizens. As such, young people tend to be under-represented which may, in turn, lead to their being disenfranchised.68

In line with this trend, following the Arab Uprisings, a great number of youth in the Arab region who have participated in politics have done so mostly through “political movements” rather than through their active inclusion and engagement with political parties.69 Indeed, despite the surge of funding from the US and Europe for youth programs, youth generally do not participate in formal political engagement.70 This is thought to be due to pervasive disillusionment with political institutions and leadership, which has stopped politically active youth from being organized in formal groupings.71 This is also attributed to the fact that channels for political participation are often difficult to access, and that political leadership is perceived as dominated by older elites who are not seen to be representative of youth and their needs.72

Data found on youth political participation mirrors this trend. Egypt and Morocco are the only two countries that have quotas for youth in their parliaments. In Lebanon, Al-Akhbar Newspaper reported that in 2016 youth made up less than 3% of the current 128-seat parliament.73 In Tunisia, the current parliament has thirteen deputies out of 217 aged between 28 and 35 years old.74 In Algeria, for example, mainstream media reports on the rapid decline of youth participation in politics since 2013. Algerian youth also report very negative views of politicians and the general sentiment is that the political sphere is dominated by older elites.75 Lebanese youth echo this sentiment, citing the sectarian regime and the prevalence of wasta (nepotism) in politics as bringing “despair and discontent”.76 However, informal participation does continue in Lebanon, where young people have participated albeit in non-formal channels, or as SAHWA refers to “latent participation,” such as during municipal elections in 2016 or in the garbage crisis protests of 2015.77 Egyptian youth have been at the forefront of the Arab uprisings and political youth movements. However, following the trend of the rest of the Arab countries, this participation is often limited to demonstrations and informal political participation as opposed to more formal participation in the form of voting, or elections. Less than

68 UNDP (2012) “Youth and Political Participation”
69 UNDP (2012) “Youth and Political Participation”
70 Chatham House (2016) “Young Arab Voices: Moving Youth Policy from Debate into Action”
71 UNDP (2012) Youth and Political Participation
72 Chatham House (2016) Young Arab Voices: Moving Youth Policy from Debate into Action
73 http://al-akhbar.com/node/188614
74 http://majles.marsad.tl/2014/fr/assemblee
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
half of the young people in Egypt voted in the last national elections, and half of those cited being disinterested as a reason for not voting. However, a study in cooperation between the American University of Cairo and Power2Youth (2016) consisting of focus groups and interviews with young people showed youth continued to be marginalized from the civic and political spheres. For example, a major determinant of formal political participation of youth was found to be fundamentally accepting the authoritarian government regime, which is also a major deterrent to other youth opposed to the regime. In addition, youth continue to be actively excluded politically, and regime youth policies favor urban, educated, and middle-to-upper class young people, excluding the rest of the youth population.

Another country in tumultuous transition, the situation of youth participation in Libya is constantly changing. Young people are underrepresented in government, and young voters are a very small percentage. In addition, young people report feeling that “old people have too much political power.”

The situation of youth in Palestine is particular due to the fact that young people face many barriers and challenges in daily life as a result of the ongoing Israeli occupation as well as the general absence of statehood. Youth in Palestine face a daily struggle characterized by being targeted by occupation forces, and are barred from participation in politics and political-decision making due to the “nonrenewal of the political elite.” There is a general distrust and disillusionment in political parties, thus most political engagement takes place in the form of student movements at universities. Other barriers, such as cultural norms prohibiting the participation of women in some areas of Palestine, also play a role.

Despite Yemen’s current state of war, the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council following the uprisings in Yemen in 2011 precipitated the beginning of national dialogue that was more inclusive to youth, as described in a report by Saferworld in 2014. However, youth in Yemen continued to be disenfranchised and remained excluded from actual engagement with both new and traditional political parties, despite the fact that they were interacting with them. The report identified five barriers for youth participation in Yemen’s political party sphere:
1) **The lack of a culture of positive engagement**, due to ‘authoritarian leadership,’ ‘generation conflict,’ and other clashes. Consultation of youth sometimes occurred in some parties, such as the Islah party, often in the form of opinion polling rather than discussion.

2) **Lack of capacity and expertise**, where young people are not offered skill-building or training from political party leadership that would eventually help them become more engaged. A quote from the report underscores this, with one young person saying:

“We the youth are used by the political parties. They don’t build our capacity and they push us to confront each other.”

3) **“Suspension of party mechanisms for discussion and change”** such as elections or conferences where youth can weigh in on party decision-making and leadership.

4) **Geographical barriers to inclusion**, as most party decisions are administered in Sana’a and then imposed upon other geographical areas.

5) **Lack of financial resources and security**, as young people’s financial constraints and security fears were often prohibitive in their participation.

Young people in political parties in Yemen have largely been relegated to a role more rooted in “tokenism” rather than their engagement in shared decision-making, denying them meaningful roles.

Many youth in Yemen have taken matters into their own hands with the aim of influencing their political party’s decision-making. For example, Socialist and Nasserite youth take measures such as holding sit-ins or other forms of protest. However, these measures were described as being less sustainable than youth inclusion in decision-making processes.

Attempts at positive steps continue to be made, despite the environment of disillusionment and demotivation. In 2013, a UNDP report showed that the UNDP supported several programs targeting the increased participation of Qatari youth in political spheres, and stressed the importance of fundamental legal changes in order to reinforce youth political participation.

Youth involvement in democracy is a major concern in Morocco, and this is reflected by the activities of NGOs on the ground dedicated towards enhancing youth political participation. United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), for example, plays a role in promoting the political participation of youth in Morocco, with one of the outcomes of its projects being more young people running in elections in 2016, and one young woman being elected. However, there were still low rates of young people voting in

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90 Ibid.  
91 Ibid.  
92 UNDP (2013) تحسين المشاركة السياسية للشباب على امتداد الدورة الانتخابية (2013)  
those elections, with Moroccan youth reportedly boycotting elections due to a lack of trust in the current political system.

UNDP is another example of an agency that has supported formal youth political participation initiatives in many of the Arab states. One such initiative dedicated to supporting youth empowerment and democratic governance, was carried out in 37 locations in 2011, including in 8 locations in the Arab World. The goal was to “[support] innovative and catalytic projects on youth to inform public policy-making, training youth as effective leaders, extending access to justice, opening space for youth empowerment and democratic governance.” The UNDP’s efforts to support youth political participation spanned government bodies and institutions as well as non-governmental institutions such as universities and NGOs in the case of Palestine and Jordan. According to the project descriptions documented, participation of youth mostly took place in the form of attendance of trainings and workshops with the youth themselves as beneficiaries. Within DFID’s 3-lens framework, young people remained at the level of beneficiaries. In some cases, youth were involved in decision-making; however, keeping them between the fourth and fifth rungs of Hart’s ladder—i.e. being consulted and informed, rather than being partners in decision-making.

Moreover, further searching and follow-up did not reveal any reports or documentation or outcomes of these UNDP supported projects. Although some outputs were described, as in the case of the Lebanese Parliamentary Internship Program which allowed young people to intern in the Lebanese parliament, no details were found on what was actually achieved during this internship, what skills were acquired, to what degree, the perception of the young person about his/her increased capacity, etc.

In addition, ESCWA in collaboration with policymakers and key stakeholders from various Arab countries has developed a national youth policy toolkit. The aim of the toolkit is to inform the planning and implementation of national youth policies through a step by step technical guide. As such, the guide aims to assist policy makers in formulating integrated youth policies while formally involving youth in the process but mainly in a consultative fashion. The toolkit was piloted in Iraq, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen, and was supplemented by youth development indicators in order to facilitate the process of target-setting and monitoring. However, more extensive follow up is required in order to assess the effectiveness of this toolkit in advancing national youth policies and promoting the inclusion of youth in actual decision-making, beyond the consultative role, and fostering their political participation.

95 https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/morocco-s-missing-youth
96 http://themoroccantimes.com/2016/10/20954/why-are-moroccos-youth-boycotting-the-elections
97 UNDP (2012) “Youth and Political Participation”
2.4. Informal Channels for Youth Participation

Much of youth participation in the Arab region takes place through civic, rather than political, engagement. This usually takes place through NGOs or civil society organizations, but can also occur through other channels, such as scout associations.

NGOs form the civic participation landscape for young people in Morocco. For example, the Forum of Moroccan Youth is a platform where youth can become engaged in projects and youth events; for example, by holding meetings for youth to discuss youth participation in decision-making in the political sphere.\(^99\)

In terms of civic engagement in Bahrain, youth are often engaged by civil society organizations. An example is a volunteer-led and youth-led organization “On Side Bahrain” that aims for development and training of young people. Here youth act as leaders and are empowered as beneficiaries, placing them in leadership positions in the participation frameworks used.\(^100\) However, little documentation was found on impact, other than a Facebook page for the organization.

Reports show that some government policies play a role in limiting youth civic participation in Egypt.\(^101\) In Egypt, most of the responsibility of mobilizing youth to participate has been shouldered by civil society organizations,\(^102\) which are often led by and beneficial to young people.\(^103\) However, these organizations often struggle in empowering the rest of Egyptian youth, with international donors pulling funding in recent years and with the shut-down of many NGOs\(^104\). For example, the Organization of Backing Liberal and Social Development (OBLSD) was founded in 2009 with the aims to “boost youth participation in decision-making processes and encourage greater diversity in Egyptian politics.”\(^105\) It’s main project is ‘Strengthening Youth Political Engagement’ (SYPE) training, which is funded by the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) over three years, which draws 1,000 applicants to 50 spaces for a free six-month training program on “theoretical knowledge and soft skills” needed for political engagement. The program is coordinated by youth, and one of its outcomes is reported to be that its young trainees have gone on to occupy political positions in Egypt, including one graduate who went on to head the National Youth Parliament.

However, the OBLSD was heavily dependent on the EED grant and was greatly hindered by the end of funding. Despite this, youth were successfully placed in decision-making roles as well as leadership roles, following the participation frameworks used (Hart’s ladder and DFID’s 3-lens approach). 2.9% of young people in Egypt were also involved in any kind of NGO, charity, worker’s unions, sports clubs,
and scouts all together, leaving civic participation low. However, the Egypt Federation for Scouts and Girl Guides is a major platform for youth civic participation in cases where youth do participate; these and the United Nations Volunteers have been active in Egypt.107

Search results show that youth are active in civic participation in Saudi Arabia, despite obvious limitations to the participation of all youth, such as the exclusion of women from public and civic life. Organizations supporting youth civic engagement are reported to receive general support from the government.108 Volunteering and civic engagement is also reported to increase during the holy seasons of Ramadan and Haj, for example, with organizations such as the Red Crescents and Boy Scouts stepping in to distribute food.109

In Libya, the UNDP in particular has invested in and coordinated projects specifically concerned with supporting civic engagement during transition.110 Part of these projects were voter education activities for young people and cascade activities that reached 48,000 scouts, as well as 150 university students.111 Also part of UNDP’s supporting transition in Libya was supporting 27 youth civil society organizations (with some youth as leadership as well as beneficiaries) with strategies and frameworks for promoting youth participation.112

In Palestine, the SHAREK Youth Forum is one of the most active civil society organizations in promoting youth participation, and was established with help from the UNDP in 1996.113 SHAREK focuses more on capacity-building and training for youth. The Palestinian Youth Empowerment Project is a grassroots campaign led by youth that aims to foster more community engagement across Palestine. A USAID evaluation reported that it reaches “over 20,000 youth participants and affects 50,000 community members.”114 Young people also often engage in civil society through volunteering activities.

In April 2016, a conference was organized in North East Syria by the NGO “Pax” where young Syrian men and women gathered to discuss the current crisis and a debate was organized with representatives of local organizations and local authority representatives.115

Participation is also guided with help from UN agencies in Somalia. The UN is also heavily involved in working towards greater youth participation, with the UN

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107 ICP (2011) “Egypt”
108 ICP (2011) “Saudi Arabia”
109 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 UNDP Results Report (Supporting transition Libya)
113 ICP (2011) “Palestine”
114 Ibid.
Parliamentary Support Project cooperating with the Somali Youth Parliament to help with guidance and capacity-building. A conference with the UN Response in Somalia and youth-led organizations was held in late 2016 to educate young people on the importance of political participation, an engaged youth as both leaders and beneficiaries. The Save Somali Youth Organization also held a workshop on the importance of political participation for young people in 2016. A Public Discussion on young people’s political participation was also held in 2016. Mainstream media reported that the 2016 elections seemed to attract more young voters.

In Sudan, the Innovations for Civic Participation organization (ICP) reported a strong rate of civic participation for youth. This mainly took the form of civil society organizations responding to and providing relief for the areas affected by conflict. This activity is limited by the dependence of these organizations on support from UN agencies and other NGOs, as well as government restrictions, and the general climate of conflict. Civic participation is also taken upon higher education institutions, such as Ahfad University for Women, which advocates for improving conditions for women in Sudan.

The UAE search yielded reports of many youth-based civil society organizations, such as volunteering programs. The IMF collaborated with the American University of Sharjah to run round-table discussions with young people on economic issues, such as unemployment. Civil society organizations specific to each Emirate also exist, and focus mostly on volunteering activities and skill-building of young people.

Many youth organizations also currently exist in Yemen. However, there are low levels of youth participation in terms of planning and implementing projects. Youth organizations focus on awareness raising, encouraging volunteering, and training, such as the Youth Leadership Development Foundation. UN agencies are also involved in youth civic engagement activities, such as the United Nations Volunteers, which has capacity-building programs such as building the technology skills of young people to better enable them to participate. Search results mostly revealed youth programs that focused on training, capacity-building, and volunteering, but pointed to little youth involvement in actual decision-making.

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117 https://unsom.unmissions.org/somali-youth-seek-greater-participation-country%E2%80%99s-political-transformation
118 http://amisom-au.org/2016/12/somali-youths-sensitized-on-the-importance-of-political-participation/
120 http://www.jowhar.com/2016/10/31/the-2016-somali-elections-and-youth-participation/
121 https://www.unicef.org/somalia/reallives_18311.html
122 ICP (2011) “Sudan”
123 ICP (2011) “Sudan”
124 ICP (2011) “United Arab Emirates”
125 ICP (2011) “United Arab Emirates”
126 ICP (2011) “United Arab Emirates”
127 ICP (2011) “Yemen”
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
Engagement also occurs on a regional scale. The Young Arab Voices Project (YAV), led by the British Council and the Anna Lindh Foundation, is one of the larger youth programs currently delivered across the MENA region. The program began in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and Jordan, and has recently expanded to Palestine and Lebanon. The program’s focus is capacity-building for youth debate skills, with the aims of young people carrying those skills forward into their professional and civic lives. The program followed a training-of-trainers cascade approach. The intervention elaborated on training, rather than decision-making or adult-youth partnership. Although youth are put in leadership positions when they become trainers of trainers, in the most case the effort by the YAV was beneficial for youth empowerment and for equipping youth with the skills needed for civic and political engagement. The YAV Project website did not contain any location where reports or documentation could be found on its activities. However, some individual country pages of the British Council has some details on outputs. For Egypt, the YAV project has successfully "supported more than 9,000 Egyptians from across 17 governorates to debate the social and political issues of their choice", and “trained 453 young people in debating skills, and ran 27 debates.”\textsuperscript{130} One participant was quoted as to have gained more confidence as an outcome. However, more data is definitely needed in order to evaluate the success of this project.

In January 2016, youth from Libya and Tunisia engaged in a forum organized by UNFPA Libya and Tunisia and UNESCO Libya in order to set an action plan to address the most urgent issues faced by youth in the two countries. Participants were members of civil society organizations as well as youth activists. The output of the workshops were recommendations for government bodies and civil society on how to proceed on: “[1] building the capacity of youth to carry out their work effectively, [2] establishing relevant institutions to ensure structure and continuity of the work, [3] nurturing a favourable environment through national awareness raising and advocacy campaigns, and [4] developing specific laws and policies where gaps currently exist.”

At the closing, the UNESCO Representative to Libya thanked the participants: “Thank you for sharing your insights and experiences with us over the past few days. The purpose of this forum was to enable you to share the wealth of your knowledge and experiences, guiding us on how best to support your ongoing work for peace. And we are here to listen.”

Although youth were actively involved in proposing and drafting recommendations, their role remained constrained to that of consultants, or sharers of knowledge, as the quote illustrates, rather than decision-makers or implementers, placing them still relatively low on the ladder of participation. In addition, no documentation was found during the search on the outcomes of these recommendations.

\textsuperscript{130} British Council, “Young Arab Voices” http://www.britishcouncil.org.eg/en/programmes/society/young-arab-voices
The findings on civic participation showed a large number of initiatives taking place locally and across the region. These initiatives seem to place youth much more frequently in decision-making roles and leadership roles (i.e. high on the ladder of participation) than initiatives in political participation. However, many of the initiatives did take the form of workshops, trainings, capacity-building, and conferences, which still kept young people in passive roles.

2.6. Summary of Findings
As revealed by the search findings, the Arab world is dotted with initiatives and programs built to encourage youth participation. In some cases, these programs put youth in leadership and decision-making positions; but more often youth are placed in consultative positions or in the position of being beneficiaries. In many if not most cases, participation is either fully or partially facilitated by the NGO sector and UN agencies.

The fact that UN and international agencies play major roles in countries in which they are active leads to the question of whether or not countries lacking a UN presence also lack activities and initiatives encouraging youth participation. It also leads to uncertainty in terms of the sustainability of these projects. This is not only true of UN-backed activities, but other NGO-funded activities. This points to the need for the formulation of more sustainable forms for youth-adult partnerships and youth roles in decision-making.

The general trend of the findings revealed that in most Arab states, youth participation is greatly inhibited. Some factors are common between the countries, such as a general disillusionment with the political system, and distrust in “older” political elites, which leads to decreased political participation.

An interesting and recurring dynamic noticed was that much of the civic participation is focused on capacity-building and awareness-building for enriching political participation. Political participation seems to be the hardest sphere for youth to engage in. Also, there was a considerable number of youth-led civil society organizations. However, the dearth in documentation did not allow for accurately understanding the scope and impact of these organizations.

Civic participation is also limited by the fact that it is in many cases dependent on funding from NGOs: many of the local initiatives meant to promote youth participation are in one way or another supported by international NGOs or UN agencies.

Even less than participation in politics and in civic engagement is participation in formal decision-making. Many of the activities, government-led and NGO-mediated, focused on seminars, capacity building, and workshops. Some were youth-led, and some led to positive outcomes (such as in the case of young people participating in elections in Morocco), but most involved youth as beneficiaries or consultants at best.
The focus of many civic participation initiatives is to foster a higher level of political participation, yet it was unclear from the search if this outcome was measured and documented at all.

For the most of the cases found during the search, project outputs and listings of activities undertaken could be found. However, it is unclear what the outcome of these activities are. This points to a need for more publicly available documentation or better evaluation methods.

The findings of the search have revealed that there is very little on monitoring and evaluation of projects involving young people in decision-making roles. There is a need for more documentation of outcomes, as well as documentation of best practices specific to working with youth in the Arab World, bearing in mind the specificities of the barriers they face in the region. It is also important that outcomes and process documentation are made available as public resources, such as on the internet, rather than kept as internal documents. This would facilitate their access by young people in resource-poor environments who could benefit from the methodologies and lessons learned of other youth-led projects.

V. Perceptions of youth and other stakeholders on the impact of youth participation

In order to elucidate the perceptions of youth and other stakeholders on the impact of youth participation, case studies of target countries were conducted with the objectives of examining the following issues:

- What is the general situation of youth in these countries?
- What is the situation of youth in relation to participation in decision-making?
- What meaning do youth give to the concepts of participation and decision-making?
- What factors that encourage the implementation of effective youth participation in decision-making?
- What are the obstacles limiting the effective participation of young people in decision-making?

The case studies consolidate information from background desk-based research as well as from qualitative participatory research conducted with young people and stakeholders in each country. Findings were analyzed within the framework of the regional analysis’s three main research questions, reiterated below:

1. What is the degree of Tunisian/Jordanian/Kuwaiti youth participation in decision-making processes, particularly youth development policies, and how?
2. To what extent do youth perceive that participation in decision-making processes is likely to improve the quality, responsiveness, impact, and viability of development policies?

3. How can youth participation in Tunisia/Jordan/Kuwait be enhanced, and whose responsibility is it to ensure a larger space and stronger role for youth?

1. Tunisia

1.1. The Degree of Youth Participation in Decision-Making in Tunisia

The findings of the background search and FGDs with youth pointed to generally low levels of political and civic participation, and even lower rates of youth participation in decision-making. In this case, the framework of Hart’s Ladder of Participation and DFID’s three-lens approach, which refer to youth in partnership and leadership positions and youth engaging in decision-making, are used to evaluate the degree of meaningful participation in Tunisia.

In terms of policy, Tunisia still lacks a national youth policy. As evidenced by the background search, young people were involved in the “road map” to the formation of the national youth council, but their participation remained at a consultative level. In this sense, young people have not achieved full participation in policy-making, nor have they assumed partnership or decision-making roles, keeping them in low levels in both DFID’s three-lens model for youth participation in development, as well as on Hart’s ladder of participation.

In practice, there were very few instances of youth taking on leadership roles, although the two success stories gleaned from the interviews and focus groups showed promising initiatives where youth were engaged as partners, decision-makers, and beneficiaries. In general, there is lack of documentation of initiatives, as was found in the background search and as was hinted by one of the stakeholder interviews.

Young people in Tunisia are generally preoccupied with their current economic situation, leading them to choose to focus on school or employment and to eschew any other kind of engagement or participation. A lack of trust in politicians, especially in rural areas, and the widespread disillusionment after the revolution has also discouraged many young people from participating in the political sphere. This distrust often takes the form of a general belief that youth are only used by politicians to gain electoral votes. Stakeholders agree that the lack of policies or structures have led to the alienation of youth from the political sphere. In turn, youth who do participate usually find their contributions marginalized. In addition, the hierarchical structure of political parties is a major obstacle to young people’s participation in decision-making process.
Despite this distrust, some youth in the FGDs revealed that they continue to want to participate in political life. These young people are motivated by different reasons, such as following suit of their families. The distrust in politics has also shifted some young people towards civil society. FGDs revealed that young people found a more accommodating space for their participation in civic participation as opposed to political participation. They found civil society to be more important as it provides them with valuable knowledge and enables them to acquire soft skills and leadership skills in contrast to political participation which reduces them to passive voters only. As many initiatives for youth currently focus on skill-building and training, the FGDs revealed that youth saw civic participation as providing a channel for using the skills and knowledge.

The low level of civic engagement can be attributed to barriers that make it difficult for young people to afford to work as unpaid volunteers. Civic participation was revealed to be more easily accessible for those from higher socioeconomic status than lower. In addition, and from a gender perspective, women in rural areas in particular face difficulties in participating in public spheres, as their participation is often viewed as “taboo.”

1.2. Youth Perceptions of the Role of Participation in Decision-Making in Development

As evidenced by the FGDs, youth are aware of the importance of youth participation in decision-making. They actively express their desire for a chance to participate in decision-making, and express that having their voices heard will be beneficial both to them personally and their place in society.

Specifically, young people expressed their belief in the importance of their participation in civil society, especially in terms of its benefits to the community. The two cases of success stories illustrated the meaningful and effective work that youth are able to produce in decision-making and partnership roles.

Unfortunately, what both the case studies and the regional analysis revealed is that there is still a great dearth in the amount of literature documenting the effects and consequences of youth participation for development. Better documentation of project outcomes is needed in order to identify best practices for youth participation in Tunisia.

1.3. Enhancing Youth Participation: Main Actors and Stakeholders

Young people in the focus groups contended that participation is important for social development, as well as their own personal development. The case study has shown that several spheres influence youth participation, and that the responsibility of enhancing youth participation in Tunisia is multifaceted and does not fall on one actor alone.

The results indicated that the family is an important determinant in youth participation, and can be a positive influence but can also be a very restrictive barrier. This shows in the case of young women, and especially those from rural areas, who often find their participation restricted by cultural notions prohibiting women from...
public spaces. Interventions on the importance of youth participation targeting families could be a first step towards enhancing youth participation. The FGDs also revealed that families, as well as peers and friends, were often encouraging factors in terms of choosing to engage in politics or in civil society. Other societal factors to be considered is the characterization of young people as inept by the cultural discourse, which holds back both the youth and the society from accepting young people in decision-making roles. As such, it is crucial to explore further potential interventions that could address this issue.

Stakeholders agreed that a large amount of responsibility lies on the Tunisian government, with one interviewee noting the importance of taking steps to gain trust. This could be a step towards allowing youth to be more prominent in government institutions and political parties that currently lack youthful attendance.

In order to continue to enhance participation, structural problems must be overcome in order to make documentation of practices available, in order to form a knowledge base of good practices that is accessible by all. In addition, positive youth-adult relationships, such as those in the successful cases, must be fostered by continuing to integrate youth into clear leadership roles, and by supporting young people’s decision-making abilities.

2. Jordan

2.1. The Degree of Youth Participation in Decision-Making in Jordan

The findings of the background search and FGDs with youth pointed to a lack of meaningful participation of youth in decision-making. Meaningful participation in the framework of Hart’s Ladder of Participation and DFID’s three-lens approach, refers to youth in partnership and leadership positions and youth engaging in decision-making, shared or otherwise. Many of the initiatives and policies described in the case study fell short of this definition.

Stakeholder interviews starkly contrasted this notion, and most of the interviews insisted on the availability of channels for youth participation. They pointed to the participatory approach towards drafting the national youth strategy to underscore this claim.

Although it is true that 50,000 young people were involved in the development of the national youth strategy, their participation was only at a consultative level. In this sense, young people have not achieved full participation, partnership, or decision-making roles, keeping them in low levels in both DFID’s three-lens model for youth participation in development, as well as on Hart’s ladder of participation. In addition, the practice of bringing young people along for international visits may relegate them to a more “decorative” position, placing them very low on the ladder of participation as tokens.
In practice, there were very few instances of youth taking on leadership roles. The availability of youth centers was one channel within which youth were described by both the stakeholders and the literature as having the capacity to take on leadership and decision-making roles. However, no mention of these youth centers arose in the focus groups.

The background search on Jordan revealed a large amount of UN and NGO mediated initiatives that engage youth. However, in most of these cases youth participation was constrained to trainings, workshops, and skill-building initiatives. Youth here are beneficiaries, according to the three-lens approach, and are trained and in some cases consulted, which does not constitute full and meaningful participation in terms of Hart's ladder.

The most salient result of the FGDs and the stakeholder interviews was the degree of disagreement between young people and government officials being interviewed with regards to political participation. Official stakeholders reported that the state currently provides accommodating policies as well as a large amount of opportunities for youth participation. On the other hand, young people cited a lack of trust in the political system and a perceived lack of transparency in the government as one of the main barriers to their political participation.

Surprisingly, the FGDs showed that schools also disempowered students and denied them of meaningful decision-making roles, even within their own student parliaments. Students described not being able to take any decisions and rather basing their actions on the decisions and instructions of their teachers and principals. The lack of decision-making power in school parliament once again places young people in the role of tokens rather than partners or actors, very low on the ladder of participation. In the FGD sample, participation in civil society organizations is also mediated through a selection process in schools that is largely exclusionary and based on arbitrary criteria (such as GPA) rather than personal interest or motivation. This, in turn, has excluded young people from participating as well as demotivated them.

It is important to note the role of the location of the FGDs in the findings. The FGDs took place among children who were residents of Irbid, which is located away from the capital, Amman. Young people mentioned that there was a degree of centralization of activities in Amman, and so more research is needed to see how the degree of participation varies across the country.

In addition, the financial situation of young people can be inhibitory to their participation in civil society. There is very little civic engagement in Jordan due to barriers that make it difficult for young people to be financially able to work as volunteers without pay.

Cultural barriers currently exist for youth in Jordan, preventing them from meaningful participation. The view of young people as immature and incapable of decision-making, as well as other religious and traditional views, was described by youth as detrimental. However, Islam itself was also described as valuing the participation of youth within its principles, which has in turn encouraged youth to
participate. Similarly, the family sphere can either play a facilitative role or an inhibitory role for the young participant.

The dynamics of gender and class also came through the FGDs with youth. Especially in terms of gender, different forces were at play. Where one young woman was not allowed to participate in civil society activities because she was barred from sleeping outside the house, two girls from private schools were motivated to participate by their own mother’s founding of organizations. Interestingly, the hijab was described as both protective of a woman’s participation in mixed-gender activities, but also led to her exclusion in sports participation when there were not enough secluded courts.

### 2.2. Youth Perceptions of the Role of Participation in Decision-Making in Development

There was consensus that participation is important from the key stakeholders, and youth themselves perceive its immense importance as evidenced by their responses in the FGDs. Young people expressed on several occasions that they want the chance to participate in decision-making, because they believe it will be beneficial to them and to their place in society to have their voices heard. Unfortunately, young people also displayed incomplete understandings of the notion of participation and sometimes, total indifference. Their lack of knowledge and conceptual understandings of the notion could affect their perception of the importance of participation, thus indicating the need for more education among young people on youth participation and its principles.

Unfortunately, what both the case studies and the regional analysis revealed is that there is a great dearth in the amount of literature documenting the effects and consequences of youth participation for development. Better documentation of project outcomes is needed in order to identify best practices for youth participation in Jordan.

### 2.3. Enhancing Youth Participation: Main Actors and Stakeholders

Young people in the focus groups contended that participation is important for social development, as well as their own personal development. The case study has shown that several spheres influence youth participation, beginning with the family unit. The results indicated that the family is an important determinant in youth participation, where encouraging families were reported to motivate young people to participate. On the other hand, restrictive, traditional, and religious families were also described as having the potential to hinder participation, especially in the case of young women. Interventions targeting families could be a first step, one that is already in place for youth centers.

One of the main stakeholders in youth participation is, of course, the government. Although the research indicated the presence of youth centers, these centers were not brought up by young people in the FGDs, pointing to a possible need for more communication between the government and young people. Interestingly, one of the stakeholders put the responsibility of youth participation on the young person’s own personal qualities, such as their responsibility, determination, and hard work. Although these qualities do play a role, it is important
to consider the discrepancy between stakeholder’s perceptions and youth’s perceptions of opportunities. Young people continue to say that they have little opportunities, and they suffer from a lack of trust in the political system; while at some points in their interviews, government officials deny this. One way to overcome this disparity in perception would be for the government to engage in more open communication on the possibility for youth to participate. Hence, ensuring that youth have widely accessible opportunities for participation. Major obstacles currently facing youth should be addressed through overarching policies. This includes the economic situation of youth, as well as the centralization of services in Amman. Updating school systems might be a good step towards placing schools in more empowering positions for young people.

In order to continue to enhance youth participation, the help of NGOs and UN agencies is not enough without documentation of these practices. More importantly, making this documentation available to the public is crucial for providing civil society and young people themselves with the tools to be able to formulate their own projects and practices.

The triangulation of the search results and the qualitative research has shown that the responsibility of enhancing youth participation in Jordan is multifaceted and does not fall on one actor alone.

3. Kuwait

1. The Degree of Youth Participation in Decision-Making in Kuwait

Similarly to the cases of Tunisia and Jordan, the findings from the background search, interviews with key stakeholders and FGDs with youth reflected a shy meaningful participation of youth in decision-making. Referring back to Hart’s Ladder of Participation and DFID’s three-lens approach, meaningful participation implies engaging youth in actual decision-making processes and granting them partnership and leadership roles. In the case of Kuwait, youth are positioned as beneficiaries or are often engaged in consultative tasks rather than being approached as partners or even leaders.

In contrast to Jordan and Tunisia, as a result of an extensive process, Kuwait is moving forward towards the launching of an official youth national policy in 2018. However, in this process, youth are still perceived as beneficiaries and are solely being asked to provide insights and recommendations. Hence, it is deemed of upmost importance once this policy is released to examine how it will be implemented on the ground and translated into actions that take youth up on Hart’s ladder of Participation and enables them to be actively involved in decision-making. In practice, according to findings from key stakeholders, youth participation in Kuwait is manifested mainly at the political level while civic engagement remains low due to the scarce number of active NGOs in the Kuwaiti arena. Youth themselves often self-organize and launch initiatives targeted towards political matters. An
example is 'Sout al Kuwait'; a web platform aiming to showcase the Kuwaiti constitution for youth to know their rights and under its umbrella, 'Raqeeb 50', an electronic observatory was launched to monitor the performance of parliamentarians. Similar to other countries, youth in Kuwait participated in street protests in order to ask for change in the government.

According to the findings from FGDs, youth are highly motivated by religion, social change and patriotic duty to participate in activities. The activities reported revolved mainly around health awareness, sports, attendance of workshops, charity events. Despite youth’s understanding of participation as engaging in community service as agents of change and voicing their opinions about matters of interest in order to build the future; they were often approached with a tokenistic view from organizations or academic entities rather than being able to be pro-active in leadership tasks and decision-making. When activities were self-organized by youth, participation was higher on Hart’s Ladder since youth are initiating and leading action.

Although religious duty was perceived as a motivator for youth to be civically engaged, main barriers that hinder youth participation included religious and cultural barriers. Some of the youth were resistant to the idea of having mixed-gender activities or felt activities did not correspond to their religious values and often parents feared having their children involved in projects. Also, similarly to what was stated by key stakeholders, the lack of NGOs that address youth needs and actively involve them was a main barrier for participation. Often projects put forward by organizations or governmental initiatives did not align with youth’s interests. This again highlights the need to have youth on board of projects from their inception to their implementation rather than instilling a top-down approach which ends up demotivating them from participation.

In addition, it was noteworthy that a discrepancy emerged between findings of FGDs with youth when tackling matters of transparency and trust in the government. Some of the younger youth found the government to be trustworthy, just and not corrupted as claimed. In contrast, other youth expressed a lack of trust in the government highlighting a widespread of corruption and nepotism. This discrepancy between views among youth was confirmed by key stakeholders who alluded to the idea that younger youth tend to have more trust and express support towards the government in comparison to older youth who challenge the government and exert pressure for change.

Despite the sense of being perceived as recipients rather than actors and the voiced concern towards the integrity of the government, FGDs with youth revealed that Kuwait is perceived as one of the prominent countries in active youth political participation. Youth’s political role is fulfilled especially through elections of university unions, municipal and parliamentarian elections. Youth reflected hope which was not expressed in the other case studies as more youth are being engaged
in the political field; with time more ministerial posts are being taken on by youth and more communication is being initiated with the parliament.

2. Youth Perceptions of the Role of Participation in Decision-Making in Development
As evidenced by the responses of young people in FGDs, civic and political participation are significant for personal and social development. Youth were keen on linking participation with the acquirement of skills that would enable them to build the future of their country. They stressed on the idea that if youth were being actively involved in decision-making this would lead to an increase in their sense of responsibility, self-confidence and patriotism. Hence, in the case of Kuwait, youth all seem to be quite familiar with the notion of participation and its impact on society. As reflected by both the FGDs and interviews, the benefit of youth’s participation transcends the personal development of youth as it leads to a more positive development of the society as a whole.

3. Enhancing Youth Participation: Main Actors and Stakeholders
There is a consensus from focus group discussions and interviews with key stakeholders that the enhancement of youth participation needs the involvement and collaboration of multiple stakeholders.

The main actor according to both young people and key stakeholders is the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs (MoSYA) especially that it is at the forefront of youth matters and is the main entity behind the national youth policy which will be released. The role of the ministry according to findings needs to surpass the organization of sports events and tournaments and workshops. It should entail more active participation of youth at the decision-making level rather than the consultative level. Youth highlighted the need for the ministry to invest in youth centers, organizations and spaces where youth can convene and take on more leadership responsibilities in planning local and national activities.

Another significant issue that arose was the existing disconnect between the ministry and other stakeholders including youth where the approach of the ministry could be restrictive and impede the projects that some organizations or youth want to engage in. Therefore, in order to overcome this disparity, the ministry needs to initiate communication with youth groups and stakeholders. In parallel, key stakeholders agreed that the government should lower the current candidacy age as it will increase youth participation.

Academic entities such as schools and universities were perceived by youth as not promoting civic and political participation as much as they should. Hence, the need to revisit the curriculum of schools which are the first space where youth engage in civic participation. Also, youth participation could be fostered by expanding facilities and funds for these academic entities channeled towards civic engagement.
Moreover, staff in schools or universities can receive capacity building trainings in order to shift their approach towards youth from a tokenistic to a more relational approach.

As mentioned earlier, the limited number of civil societies and NGOs in the Kuwaiti arena hinders youth participation as voiced by young people and stakeholders. Young people expect more from these organizations as they consider them to be impartial and able to create opportunities for youth to be actively engaged; leading to positive change in the country.

In some of the FGDs with young people, families and religious institutions were attributed a role in encouraging youth participation by motivating young people to engage in meaningful activities. Hence, activities with parents and communication with religious leaders can be initiated since youth refer back to them and consider them role models.

As such, these findings indicate that fostering youth participation in Kuwait requires the coordinated efforts of multiple actors. At the moment, the role of civil society remains shy.

When conducting the desk review, the work of very few organizations was retrieved with one of them being the most active and known in Kuwait. Many of the initiatives in Kuwait are being led by youth groups and represent an informal participation. The documentation attributed to these initiatives is either insufficient or non-existing; hence the need to reach out to these groups and think of ways to formalize their participation as they represent a key stakeholder.

In addition, documenting success stories could potentially lead to best practices and tools that other stakeholders can scale up and replicate.

### VII. Youth Participation: In summary

Despite the dearth of documentation on the impact of youth participation in decision making, the review was able to identify a few success stories which demonstrate that youth participation in decision making can bring about positive change. One example is the youth bill on school nutrition and violence in Comoros which was passed by a National Youth Parliament created by the National youth policy that Comoros developed with support from UNICEF.

Overall, youth remain excluded from the political scene and political participation. Analysis of youth participation should be closely linked to the environment and culture of participation in the Arab region, as well as the current global trends. The concept of youth participation in decisions is undermined at the
home level as well as in schools; and youth are increasingly being perceived as a burden rather than an asset.

The social and political culture in the region tends to be geared towards the present rather than the future. While few governments seem to be considering strategies for youth in the future, most have no strategic vision or long-term solutions. Major changes have occurred to societies in the region since 2010. Countries have been directly and indirectly affected by war and displacement. How these conflicts resulted in “hopelessness” and “alienation” that need to be studied. The focus group findings from Tunisia and Jordan reflected such feelings of alienation among Tunisian and Jordanian youth. In Kuwait, the situation seems to be more positive in light of efforts towards a national youth policy and youth feel more content about their political participation through elections and forums. Yet, their participation in decision-making is quite restricted and they are often solely engaged in consultative tasks. Hence, the phenomena of youth cultural and political alienation and the reasons behind it merit further investigation.

Youth remain active mainly through “political movements” and demonstrations; and in some contexts, this participation is conditional on whether or not youth are supportive of the existing political regime (as indicated in one focus group). The findings in one case study revealed youth having “more trust in military and religious institutions” as compared to political figures. This trust in religious entities could be stemming from a perception of “integrity” and “impartiality” while in the military it could be stemming from an admiration of “sacrifice and structure”. These findings could illuminate the relationship between youth, the constitution and the rules of societal progression or regression and warrant further investigation.

Youth participation mostly remains at the bottom 3 levels of “non-participation or non-engagement” on the Hart Participation Ladder. If this participation is to advance to higher rungs, advocacy attempts need to start addressing root causes that hinder youth participation in decision making. Adopting an ecological framework (diagram below) allows understanding of multiple levels of influence on youth participation.
The case study findings did reflect how these different levels impact youth participation. If youth groups are to engage with policy makers (which is one objective for the desk review) then youth must be ready, willing and motivated to engage in relevant and meaningful issues. Youth willingness to engage in social issues is impacted by the presence of opportunities that they perceive meaningful and appealing to act on within their context. This was not the case with several of the youth who participated in the focus groups and who felt disconnected and alienated from their political context.

Discussions with youth revealed that families, for various reasons, are unaccepting for youth to engage in decision-making (negative attitude/ lack of trust). When parents perceive their youth as immature then this can pose a major barrier to real collaboration Watts and Flanagan (2007). The values and attitudes of parents, as well as their educational level, influenced the extent to which parents are willing to provide opportunities for their youth to participate in decision-making at the house level.

Another example within schools is the negative attitude of teachers towards youth participation. This hindered youth engagement in decision-making as it relates to opportunities for civic engagement and other extra-curricular activities. This in turn, deprived them, not only from acquiring needed skills to engage in their
communities, but also from developing a value for volunteerism and community engagement. Schools represent an important element in civic education; whether through the curriculum or the prevailing culture at the school and within the classroom. Schools are able to prepare students to engage in their community. This can take place by offering relevant skills and civic education as well as providing venues for opportunities (unions, councils) Torney-Purta (2002).

All the above is impacted by the existing policies (educational, political, social). Youth participation cannot happen without a supportive environment where opportunities and channels exist to allow them to participate and without a “culture of acceptance” for this participation. The negative perceptions of stakeholders, of youth in general and youth participation in decision making in specific is another barrier. If youth are perceived as immature, lacking credibility, apathetic and a burden they will be marginalized from any decision-making process.

Conclusion

The lack of documentation does not allow concluding evidence to support advocacy for youth participation in decision-making. What can be concluded is that advocacy should target action in gaps at multiple levels that impact this type of youth participation.

This report highlighted the fact that existing challenges to youth participation are complex and multifaceted. The framework discussed above attempts to shed light on this complexity. The implications, however, are that any attempt to address this matter has to be comprehensive; it must address barriers and challenges for youth participation in decision making at the level of youth themselves, their families, schools, communities; in addition to national policies and legal frameworks. Since the variables described above interact across the different levels, interventions for change are more effective if implemented at these multiple levels. One objective for the desk review was to “Strengthen capacity of policy makers to formulate cross-sectoral policies that enhance effective participation of youth in economic, social, and political life”. Adopting the ecological framework can allow policy makers to establish linkages across different spheres of influence that could reflect policies across different sectors.

Funders, whether UN agencies or international organizations are in the position to ensure that documentation is not only an integral requirement for all projects they sponsor, but that funding is contingent on national partners being able and willing to ensure a documentation system is in place. These organizations have the moral responsibility to train and guide national counterparts on how to document and monitor projects that they fund. This not only empowers local partners but enhances ownership and control over projects being implemented. Documentation for monitoring and evaluation will eventually provide the evidence needed to assess impact which can guide future interventions.
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