YOUNG PEOPLE IN ARAB STATES
CHANGING THE WORLD FOR THE BETTER

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAMMING ON YOUNG PEOPLE

UNFPA, Arab States Regional Office
The UNFPA Strategic Plan Midterm Review (MTR) provided the opportunity for the organization to review its focus. As a result, UNFPA recommitted itself to its goals: universal access to sexual and reproductive health education and services; the promotion of reproductive rights; a reduction in maternal mortality; and an acceleration of progress toward the ICPD Agenda and MDG 5 (A & B). At the same time, we resolved to place underserved populations, especially women and young people, at the center of our work in the region to promote human rights and gender equality. The key findings of the MTR coupled with the organization’s new strategic priorities and the sweeping changes of 2011 that have transformed the region have provided an opportunity for a comprehensive review of UNFPA’s programming for young people.

1. YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ARAB STATES

In 2009, the Arab Human Development Report noted that “as individual citizens, few Arabs feel they have any power to change current conditions in their country through political participation” (UNDP, 2009:73). The recent events of 2011 and 2012 changed this perception. The Arab region is witnessing a tide of popular uprisings in which young people are clearly voicing – in an unprecedented manner - their demands for human rights, freedom, social justice and the chance to have a decent job. Underlying causes of these popular movements are significant development failures including unemployment, poverty and inequality, and a lack of democratic governance, freedom and social dialogue.

The Arab States are at a demographic turning point. Most of the countries in the region are reaching the peak of the “youth bulge”, the largest cohort of young people in their history. The youth population was estimated at 45 million in 1985, ballooning to 71 million in 2010, an increase of 26 million in two decades. It is projected to reach 73 million by 2015 (UNFPA, ICPD/15: Arab States Regional Report, 2010). Demographic transition in the region has profoundly important social, political and economic consequences. For countries with a young population, the immediate challenge is to generate the skills and economic opportunities that bring hope of employment, security and rising living standards. Thus, investment in

Definition of Young People (YP):
- 10 – 24 years.
- Adolescents: 10 to 19 years.
- Youth: 15 to 24 years.

Young people are subdivided into different groups adapted to the Arab States region:

Vulnerable: Refugees, internally displaced persons, YP with disabilities, adolescent girls, young women, early married girls, poor, uneducated, out of school, unemployed. Migrants.

Most-at-Risk: People living with HIV, sex workers, injecting drugs users, MSM.
young people in the region is essential to turn the “youth bulge” into a demographic dividend. While there seems to be an increasing consensus on individuals’ right to freedom of expression, participation and information, no such agreement has been reached on the rights of young people to sexual and reproductive health.

With young people in the Arab States experiencing social, economic, sexual and political exclusion at the same time, they cannot become productive members of society. Questions of gender relations, dating, intimacy, sexuality, youth employment and youth activism are extremely sensitive and ideologically driven in almost all countries in the region, leading to increasing dissatisfaction and a dangerous ideological, intergenerational divide.

1.1.1 Unemployment

Employment remains the central concern of young people in the Arab region. At 25 percent, the average youth unemployment rate in the region is the highest in the world, nearly twice the 14 percent world average (World Bank 2006). Youth unemployment rates in Tunisia and Egypt are 31 percent and 34 percent, respectively. Among the highest known unemployment rates in the world is that of the West Bank and Gaza Strip region, topping more than 40 percent in 2008. Iraq is the only other Arab country with a similarly high unemployment rate, which at 43.5 percent even exceeded that of the West Bank and Gaza in 2006.

Young people constitute 80 percent of the unemployed in Egypt and 40 percent of the unemployed in Lebanon (World Bank, 2010). The gender disparity in access to employment is also highest in the Arab region. Unemployment affects young women at higher rates than young men. Unable to secure economic independence or the social status that comes with employment, young people are forced to delay marriage and must wait to start families and buy homes.

It is recognized that the health behaviour of young people, including their reproductive and sexual behavior, is closely linked to their educational and economic opportunities, and therefore that they would benefit from programmes that emphasized both aspects of development. Early pregnancy, abortion, exposure to STIs, including HIV/AIDS, have enormous social and personal consequences for education and work.

Conversely, the ability of young people to enter the labour force and have economic options is critical in determining not only future opportunities for social and economic mobility, but also exposure to health risks, fertility outcomes and overall well-being. As a result, it is important to develop programmes that integrate reproductive health with livelihood options that aim to improve the ability of young people to earn a living and remain healthy.

Education failures are reflected in the Arab world’s political crisis. Governments across the region have invested heavily in education, and the past decade has witnessed a rapid expansion of primary, secondary and tertiary education. However, the current educational system is producing graduates who lack the skills they need to succeed in employment markets, and the employment market itself is hamstrung by economic mismanagement. As a result, we have a paradox of high levels of education and mass unemployment. At the same time, in many places, school enrolment rates for young girls lag behind those of their male counterparts, with the urban-rural disparity in female literacy particularly visible in North Africa. In the case of conflict countries, security issues result in major challenges regarding access to education, job opportunities and health services. Young people participate significantly in the inflows and outflows of migration in the region. Where information is available on legal population mobility, it appears that young, highly educated people are migrating more frequently than in the past.

“Seeking a job is an arduous journey into the impossible.” (UNFPA FGD, an Arab young man, 2011)
1.1.2 Sexuality And Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young People

Like any other aspect of life, young people’s sexual and reproductive behaviour in Arab States is shaped by economic, social and cultural contexts, including the powerful force of religion and tradition, which set gender roles and define taboos.

Marriage defines adulthood in the region, and sexual and intimate relations occur within and are legitimated by marriage. As young people delay marriage, traditional customs of managing youth sexuality, values and norms are changing and under pressure, but with different consequences for young women and young men. Young people may increasingly engage in risky sexual behaviours. There is ample evidence of marriage substitutes such as “urfi” and “misyar and misyaf” marriages, which are viewed with skepticism and associated with high levels of risk and uncertainty, especially for young women.

Despite the fact that young people, particularly young men, increasingly see sexuality as an important aspect of their life, access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including HIV prevention, remains limited. This puts young people in this region at great risk of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and other SRH-related problems. Attention to young people’s health education in general, and sexual and reproductive health education in particular, is inadequate and nearly absent in some instances in the formal education sector. This is reflected by a low level of knowledge about and low use of contraception, including condoms. Limited research available in the region suggests that a significant proportion of young people are having sex outside of marriage, without the knowledge or means to protect themselves from the potential consequences. Recent surveys of young unmarried women in Jordan and Tunisia suggest that the incidence of pre-marital sex is increasing, the age is decreasing, and young people are ill-informed or misinformed about sexually transmitted infections, contraception methods, and reproductive health (Foster 2002, 2006).

As in the rest of the world, marriage patterns are changing through the Arab States where marriage and family formation are significant milestones for young people in their transition to adulthood. A generation ago, marriage was both early and universal - 63 percent of young men in their mid-to-late 20s were married. Today nearly 50 percent of men between the ages of 25 and 29 are unmarried. Changing marriage patterns reflect economic exclusion and the inability of young men and women to achieve the financial stability to start families; policy shifts such as the increase in the legal age of marriage; social shifts such as the expansion of education; and ideological shifts such as a change in norms regarding early marriage. The psychological and social consequences of this are very serious in a region where social status is critical and adulthood is defined by economic independence (for young men) and marriage (for both sexes).

Conversely, although early marriage is on the decline in the Arab world, the number of young teenagers who are married is still significant, particularly in Yemen, Somalia, Sudan and to some extent in Egypt, as well as among Palestinians living in Gaza. This leads to early childbearing and poses serious risks to the health and welfare of mothers and children.

Young women bear the brunt of the socially determined harmful practice in some Arab countries of female genital cutting/mutilation. The prevalence rate is staggeringly high in Somalia, Sudan and Egypt. Recent data on FGC/M in Egypt show that younger age groups have a lower prevalence, with 56 percent of girls in the age group 10-14 being circumcised compared to 92 percent of young women in the age group 22-29 (Population Council, 2010).

Although a recent joint WHO/World Bank report (2010) notes that there is no evidence of a general population HIV epidemic in the region, the potential for rapid spread of HIV remains high, particularly for young people in the Arab States. While most infections reported originated in at-risk networks of injecting drug users, men who have sex with men and female sex workers,
the most high-risk behavior is associated with men and women infected by their spouses. This clearly indicates the existence of bridging populations and a risk of its further spread into the general population. Deeply rooted stigma and discrimination contribute to the problem. Migration, limited understanding of transmission and the relatively relaxed attitude towards sexual experimentation among male young men mandate efforts to raise awareness about the problem.

1.1.3 Civic Participation and Social Media

The Arab Spring has engendered a new perception of young people’s capacities and aspirations. They want more freedom, jobs, equality and justice. They are demanding to be listened to, respected and actively participate in decision making about their present, as well as their future and the future of their communities and nations. They are demanding a voice in the transition toward real democracy. It is a new environment for young people that takes into account their stronger civic engagement.

The uprisings in a number of countries were a very visible manifestation of the conflict between traditionalism and modernism, with young people arguing that traditional practices are no longer relevant to modern times. They seek to create new practices that reflect the changing conditions of modern society, even as the mainstream population is resistant to change. Global culture has transformed not only economic and social development across the region, but also the culture of young people. This is particularly evident in the transformation from a predominantly collectivist social structure characteristic of Arab society to an individualist structure that has been a feature of Western societies. The impact of globalization is unprecedented. It has affected culture and identity, inclusion and exclusion, and the cohesiveness of family and community systems.

The rapid spread of global communications and particularly social media has been an incredible vehicle for young people to get organized and form a “perfect storm” for revolution in Tunisia and Egypt. The changes happened because the fundamental conditions - economic, social and political - were already in place. Social media, with its capacity for rapid networking, has been a vehicle, a catalyst, a facilitating factor, but not the decisive factor.

The civic participation of Arab youth is a nascent, yet fast-growing phenomenon. Prior to the Arab Spring, researchers measuring Arab youth’s civic engagement had found that young people in the region were generally disengaged politically due to exclusionary channels of participation (Dhillon and Yousef, 2009, and Assaad and Barsoum, 2009). In Egypt, survey data collected in 2009 showed that only 16 percent of eligible Egyptian young people voted in prior elections and that only 3 percent of all young people reported participating in voluntary activities (Barsoum, Ramadan and El-Kogali, 2010).

Despite the enthusiasm associated with the role of young people in the Arab Spring, recent data suggest that the majority of young people are still searching for channels for civic engagement. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) held in different Arab countries during the strategic framework development process confirm this. In the aftermath of the uprisings, and as new regimes consolidate themselves in a number of countries, new forms of civil society and new patterns of civic interaction and engagement are emerging. Young people are at the forefront of this, still wary of traditional political party structures and experimenting with concepts of volunteerism and grassroots activism.

1.2 EMERGENCY AND HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

The Arab region has been witnessing conflicts and wars for the past few decades, amplified by major uprisings in 2011 in several countries. Some of these have resulted in changing regimes and paved the way toward democracy and social justice. An estimated 65 percent of young people in the Arab region live in countries where most of the region’s humanitarian crises occur.
Young people are increasingly vulnerable during humanitarian crises. The ongoing state of emergency and resulting insecurity severely hamper opportunities for young people, with a negative impact on health, including SRH and psychological well-being, education, employment, family formation and civic engagement. A recent UNESCO (2011) report highlights the negative effects of exposure to conflict on educational attainment and literacy. Researchers found that conflict often leaves an unfortunate legacy for the affected generations: smaller shares of the population with formal schooling, fewer average years of education and decreased literacy rates, which persist over time.

Recent data on Iraq provides ample evidence of such negative consequences. Young people in Iraq, Somalia and Sudan have the lowest education achievement rates in the region, highest unemployment and lowest health indicators. Focus group discussion data in Sudan reveal how young people have been negatively affected by the long war between the north and south and more recent conflicts in South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Focus group discussions provided an opportunity to solicit young people’s feedback on issues of youth participation, human rights and gender equity; partnership and networking; and youth civic engagement. A recent UNESCO (2011) report highlights the negative effects of exposure to conflict on educational attainment and literacy. Researchers found that conflict often leaves an unfortunate legacy for the affected generations: smaller shares of the population with formal schooling, fewer average years of education and decreased literacy rates, which persist over time.

1.3 PROCESS OF DEVELOPING STRATEGIC ACTION FRAMEWORK

The UNFPA Arab States Regional Office (ASRO) conducted a bottom-up, multistage, regionwide exercise with the goal of revisiting and adjusting current strategy to more strongly reflect some of the key issues affecting young people that have emerged in the wave of popular uprisings. The exercise consisted of three phases. During the inception phase and in preparation for the regional meeting, all UNFPA-ASRO country offices conducted focus group discussions with young people, followed by “Real Talk” round tables, which were one-day national meetings with UNFPA country office staff, young people and key national stakeholders.

Focus group discussions provided an opportunity to solicit young people’s feedback on issues of youth participation, human rights and gender equity; partnership and networking; and youth civic engagement. The goal of the one-day national meetings was to validate FGD findings, promote dialogue and strengthen youth participation mechanisms. Deliberations from the national meetings as well as the FGDs were the building blocks for the Best Practices in Youth Programming Dissemination and Regional Strategy Development Meeting held in Cairo, 25-28 October 2011.

1.4 WHAT DO ARAB YOUTH WANT?

About 590 young people from 14 countries took part in focus group discussions organized by all UNFPA country offices in the region. The participants came from diverse backgrounds: political and civil activists, the marginalized and most-at-risk including uneducated and unemployed young people, IDPs and special needs individuals, as well as university students and representatives of youth NGOs, Y-PEER and government-supported youth entities such as the Sudanese youth parliament. The selection criteria ensured equal gender and regional representation, and all participants fell into the age bracket 15 – 29.

The participants shared similar aspirations for a better quality of life, better education, better communication and better opportunities. They had similar concerns about government policies, policy makers and practices, the impact of tradition on youth life and participation, and the status of women – these were common issues they believed the Arab world urgently needs to address.

Their perception of the Arab Spring was quite positive. It gave them hope for change and affirmed their role as engaged citizens. It was the first time their voice was heard this loud and clear. It broke down barriers within the system; it broke the fear.
The Arab Spring also reinforced the work of civil society, especially those groups that focus on young people. Young people have rediscovered themselves and the power of networking. The Arab Spring helped redefine their profile in the Arab world. They were surprised themselves to realize that change is possible. The collective demand for basic needs to be met and for a dignified life reinforced an overwhelming unity across the region.

Political and civil participation ranked as the number one concern for the young people. There was unanimous agreement that young people were deprived of the opportunity to participate and make decisions at every level of society, from the family to the education system, employment and government. They feel that their lives, at every stage of development, are controlled by adults who do not expect them to be capable of reasoning, making decisions and delivering results. They feel that preconceived ideas are imposed upon them and that they are being told what to do. They believe that traditions and culture play a major role in restricting their life choices. All of the above creates a sense of exclusion and a major obstacle to their involvement in civil society. It reinforces their feeling of marginalization; even those who were heavily involved in the Egyptian revolution don’t feel as though they are being given a chance to participate in the electoral process. They also highlighted the importance of intergenerational dialogue in achieving their goals and the strong involvement of parents and communities.

Young people think they have a major role to play in strengthening civil society, encouraging youth participation and improving their peers’ lives; they are looking at UNFPA and other players to ensure meaningful participation of youth at all levels. The young people believe that once they are empowered, they will be more capable of addressing their issues at the grassroots and policy levels.

The issue of young people with special needs comes up frequently. While there may have been some improvement in the level of awareness and legal remedies, implementation of effective policies has lagged behind. The way the youth put it could not be more descriptive of the reality they are facing in the Arab world: “There is lack of faith in the ability of people with special needs to participate.”

Accordingly, most development programmes do not include capacity-building projects for people with special needs. In addition, young people feel that the lack of such focus is not only restricted to youth with special needs but also extends to marginalized youth such as those who are out of school or unemployed.

The issue of education comes up almost as frequently as youth participation. FGD participants raised issues that have been festering for years in the Arab world. These fall into four areas: quality of education, access to education, educators’ qualifications, and education and market needs.

Unemployment is one of the main challenges that young people in the Arab world face, regardless of country of origin. Their focus was on the capacities that need further development as much as policy. It is worth noting that both education and employment are key to the future of Arab youth. Neglecting them would lead to negative consequences such as violence, risky behavior and brain drain.

A number of young people in the FGDs also brought up the challenges of sexual and reproductive health. This issue significantly highlighted the role of the family and society in hindering access to information for cultural and social reasons, which could lead to very serious health risks. Other issues came up in discussions including access to information, the quality of sources of information and risky behavior. Young people want free access to information, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education in schools, and services specifically tailored to their needs.
This **Regional Strategic Framework on Young People** provides overall guidance for UNFPA’s programming in the region. The framework brings together key elements of existing programming for young people in the region yet tries to respond to the new emerging regional environment.

While UNFPA does not aim to implement programmes in all these areas, which would go beyond its mandate, it intends to leverage its expertise in population data analysis to inform policy formulation and programming for young people and build partnerships for joint programming that responds to the multisectoral needs of young people. Accordingly, the plan should be read on two levels. On the broader level, it sets out the key priorities for integrated young people programming for which UNFPA will advocate. On a more focused level, it sets out the goals of its own programmes and activities addressing young people in the Arab region.

The Strategic Framework proposes three core programmatic pillars and thematic priorities that together can provide a basis for a holistic programming framework in support of successful responses. These priorities are outlined as follows:

1. Facilitate equitable access to decent **employment and livelihoods** by strengthening young people capacities and life skills.

2. Improve **young people’s SRH** by ensuring access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health information, education and services for all young people in the region.

3. Create an environment conducive for **civic engagement** of young people in order to accelerate social and economic development. Promote a culture of dialogue, tolerance, peace-building and communication skills, leadership and life skills in the context of youth-adult partnerships.

The three thematic priorities are each addressed on four strategic levels: policy advice and advocacy; data and research; information and education; and services. The matrix below is designed to highlight the interrelationships between the various priorities and strategies. It incorporates cross-cutting issues of human rights, gender and humanitarian programming. It is intended to provide programmatic and operational guidance to UNFPA regional and country offices in the Arab States as they respond to the complex needs of young people in the region.

The proposed strategies represent an evolution of the UNFPA Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth; they are responsive to new regional realities as well as adjusted institutional strategic priorities. They also build on UNFPA Adolescents and Youth Programme: Operationalizing the 2012-2013 Strategic Directions.
While the strategic pillars and priorities respond to realities and aspirations identified by the Arab young people themselves, they are also aligned with international frameworks and instruments such as the ICPD Programme of Action, the MDGs as well as the World Programme of Action for Youth (adopted by the General Assembly in 1995 and updated in 2000), the Outcome Document of the High-Level Meeting on Youth (2011) and the 2012 Resolution on Adolescent and Youth of the UN Commission of Population and Development.

**TABLE 1**: Outlines key strategic interventions for three pillars of the strategic framework in relation to advocacy and policy advice; data and research; information and education; and services. The humanitarian context, as well as considerations of gender equality and human rights, is incorporated into the grid.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advocacy &amp; Policy Advice</th>
<th>Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young People</th>
<th>Employability</th>
<th>Civic Participation</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>- Humanitarian: Advocate for the incorporation of roles for young people and consideration of their needs in national / UNCT / UNFPA emergency, contingency and preparedness plans.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Gender and Human Rights: Advocate for a particular focus on young people in national human rights and gender discrimination monitoring mechanisms.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Advocate for stronger linkages and/or integration of SRH concerns into national/sectoral policies, plans, programmes, systems and strategies (UNFPA, governments)</td>
<td>- Utilize data on demographic dividend and youth bulge to advocate for increased focus on employability with special focus on young women and marginalized young people (UNFPA)</td>
<td>- Promote inter-generational dialogue (UNFPA, governments, CSO)</td>
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<td>- Advocate for non-discriminatory SRH-related legislation and laws (UNFPA, CSO)</td>
<td>- Advocate for labor laws that ensure the rights and inclusion of young people with disabilities (partnering with and supporting UNCT, governments, ILO)</td>
<td>- Advocate / support civic participation with special focus on concept of volunteerism (UNFPA, UNESCO, UNDP, governments, CSO)</td>
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<td>- Support advocacy for SRH education at all levels (UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, governments)</td>
<td>- Advocate for community involvement in support of RR – especially with young men (UNFPA)</td>
<td>- Advocate for young people participation in national and local governance, communities, educational institutions (UNFPA with UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, governments)</td>
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<td>Advocacy &amp; Policy Advice</td>
<td>Data &amp; Research</td>
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|--------------------------|-----------------
| **Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young People** | **Employability** | **Civic Participation** |
| - Support national surveys targeting young people (UNFPA) | - Support administrative reforms aimed at improving employment process and business start-ups (partnering with and supporting governments, ILO, World Bank) | - Advocate and facilitate formation of youth NGOs (partnering with and supporting UNDP, governments, CSO) |
| - Utilize online analytics to gather gender-disaggregated information on young people’s values, attitudes and behaviours (UNFPA) | - Advocate for stronger linkages and/or integration of employability concerns into national or sectoral policies / strategies (partnering with and supporting ILO, governments, UNCT) | - Facilitate national partnerships to strengthen civic participation (UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, governments, civil society organizations) |
| **Advocacy & Policy Advice** | **Data & Research** |
| - Humanitarian: Support gender-disaggregated research and assessments of young people’s needs and priorities in humanitarian settings including the capacity of civil society and governments to address them (UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR, WFP, OCHA) | - Support national surveys targeting young people (UNFPA) |
| - Support policies preventing sexual harassment at the workplace (UNFPA, ILO, CSO) | - Utilize online analytics to gather gender-disaggregated information on young people’s values, attitudes and behaviours (UNFPA) |
### Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young People

- Map marginalized populations (UNFPA, UNICEF)
- Conduct research on SRH behaviours and patterns (UNFPA)

### Employability

- Conduct research on gender-disaggregated labor market participation (ILO, UNFPA, UN Women)
- Support labor market trends research (partnering with and supporting ILO, World Bank)
- Research into economic value of young people to facilitate development of high-income youth (partnering with young people and supporting ILO, World Bank)

### Civic Participation

- Conduct research on bridging intergenerational gap (UNFPA, UNICEF)
- Support gender-disaggregated research on current status and forms of civic engagement in the region (UNFPA)
- Support creation of youth-run Youth Observatory (UNFPA)
- Analyze impact of civic engagement of young people and benefits of investing in youth empowerment (UNFPA)
- Assess the role and functions of national Ministries of Youth (partnering with and supporting governments, youth parliamentarian commissions)

### Data & Research

- Humanitarian: Build the capacity of relevant stakeholders to address young people roles and needs in humanitarian situations (UNFPA with UNHCR, WHO, OCHA)

### Information & Education

- Scale up peer education-based initiatives with Y-PEER at its core (UNFPA, CSO)
- Develop capacity of youth networks
- Develop sustainable action plans with emphasis on utilizing new technologies, including mobile, social media and online tools to maximize outreach to young people including in remote areas (UNFPA)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Information &amp; Education</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Facilitate integration of SRH life-skills education into school curricula/extra curricula at all levels with appropriate cultural and gender concerns (UNFPA with UNICEF, UNESCO, governments)</td>
<td>- Support reform of school, university and vocational training curricula (partnering with and supporting UNESCO, UNCT, governments, ILO, UNICEF)</td>
<td>- Integrate civic and citizenship education in school curricula/extra curricula (UNFPA partnering with and supporting UNESCO)</td>
<td>- Build knowledge of civic engagement and youth empowerment (UNFPA with UNESCO)</td>
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<td>- Strengthen young people’s health awareness with particular focus on reproductive rights (UNFPA with UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO)</td>
<td>- Develop comprehensive gender-sensitive training packages that address social and life skills/livelihood skills (UNFPA with ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF)</td>
<td>- Raise community awareness of benefits of youth civic engagement (UNFPA)</td>
<td>- Utilize edutainment strategies, particularly youth role models, approach to increase knowledge of and promote concept of civic engagement (UNFPA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Support community mobilization for healthy lifestyles including YPSRHR (UNFPA with UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO)</td>
<td>- Integrate business training with life skills and livelihood education (UNFPA, ILO)</td>
<td>- Build the capacity of youth-led civil society (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF)</td>
<td>- Build knowledge of civic engagement and youth empowerment (UNFPA with UNESCO)</td>
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<td>- Support development of gender-sensitive life-skills training to include entrepreneurship training, incubation and microcredits (partnering with and supporting ILO, World Bank, UNDP, UNIDO)</td>
<td>- Partner with mass media and utilize social media to raise awareness and build knowledge of civic engagement (UNFPA)</td>
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<td>- Promote development of nontraditional vocational training for young girls (UNFPA with ILO, UNICEF and UN Women)</td>
<td>- Support initiatives aimed at promoting intergenerational dialogue (UNFPA)</td>
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**Humanitarian: Promote peer support and mentoring for young people in humanitarian settings (UNFPA)**

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<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young People</th>
<th>Employability</th>
<th>Civic Participation</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Promote development of minimum package of comprehensive gender-sensitive adolescent and youth health services including in humanitarian settings (UNFPA, governments)</td>
<td>- Promote integrated service package including health, career counseling, KAB services in youth-friendly settings, including in humanitarian situations (UNFPA, ILO, UNICEF, governments)</td>
<td>- Support development and start-up of youth-friendly labor market information systems (partnering with and supporting ILO)</td>
<td>- Create safe spaces for girls, boys and marginalized young people to exercise civic engagement activities including in humanitarian settings (UNFPA, UNESCO, CSO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Support establishment and delivery of comprehensive gender-sensitive adolescent and youth health services (UNFPA, governments)</td>
<td>- Support peer counseling strategies, including in humanitarian settings (UNFPA)</td>
<td>- Promote programmes of volunteerism and civic engagement within youth clubs and centers and ensure participation of girls (UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNV, CSO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Support peer counseling strategies, including in humanitarian settings (UNFPA)</td>
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1. EMPLOYABILITY

GOAL: Facilitate equitable access to decent employment and livelihoods through strengthened young people capacities and life skills.

Employment and livelihood programmes are a prime entry point for a multidimensional, human rights-oriented approach to young people through which UNFPA can promote the health and life-skills programmes that are our core mandate and raise awareness of gender issues.

Strategies
UNFPA’s intervention in this area will ensure the integration of high-quality life-skills training, including its own gender and SRH training curricula, in employability programmes. It will also ensure the inclusion and empowerment of marginalised groups: young women, refugees and IDPs, vulnerable young people such as orphans and victims of violence, and young people with special needs.

Addressing young people employability requires a complex multisectoral response, but a lack of coordination among various players may result in piecemeal initiatives that may be very good in themselves but aren’t comprehensive enough to help an individual achieve economic self-sufficiency. Specific gaps are mainly found in the areas of vocational and technical training; in the relevance of formal education curricula and methods; in labour market information and equitable recruitment practices; and in developing an entrepreneurial culture and fostering business start-ups.

Advocacy and Policy Advice
UNFPA will support efforts with our key partners within UNCT and governments to improve utilization of data on the demographic dividend and youth bulge; advocate for employment with a special focus on young women and marginalized young people; support labor laws that ensure the rights and inclusion of young people with disabilities; support administrative reforms aimed at improving employment and business start-ups; advocate for stronger linkages between employment and national or sectoral policies/strategies; increase efforts to promote nondiscriminatory employment legislation; and advocate for policies preventing sexual harassment at the workplace.
Data and Research
In order to provide necessary strategic information for interventions in the region, UNFPA will partner with ILO, UNDP and governments to conduct research on gender-disaggregated labor market participation and labor market trends. In all three pillars, UNFPA will support research and assessments of young people’s priorities in humanitarian settings, including the capacity of civil society and governments to address them; national surveys targeting young people; and online analytics that gather information on young people’s values, attitudes and behaviours and map marginalized young people.

Information and Education
To bridge the gap between education and employment, special attention must be paid to standardized and accredited training packages aimed at developing social and life skills related to gender, health, violence and substance abuse. In partnership with ILO, UNDP and the World Bank, as well as government entities and civil society organizations, UNFPA will support the reform of school, university and vocational training curricula; facilitate the development of comprehensive gender-sensitive training packages that focus on developing social and life skills and livelihood skills; support the integration of business training with life skills and livelihood education; support the development of gender-sensitive packages that integrate life-skills training with entrepreneurship training, incubation and microcredits; promote the development of nontraditional vocational training for young girls; develop a culture of economic and social entrepreneurship; and strengthen the awareness of young people, particularly young girls, about their rights to employment and in the workplace.

Services
UNFPA will promote the development of gender-sensitive services for health, career counseling and KAB (Know About Business) vocational training in youth-friendly settings including in humanitarian situations, and the development of youth-friendly labor market information systems. In all three pillars, UNFPA will support and promote peer support and mentoring in humanitarian settings.

TABLE 2

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<th>Partnership with ILO 2011-2013</th>
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<td>In response to the current situation in the Arab region and the recognition that youth employment initiatives are not always coordinated with socially oriented youth programmes, the two agencies have developed a joint ILO-UNFPA programming framework for young people. The action plan, “Holistic needs of young people addressed through integrated approaches built on comparative advantages of each agency,” is comprised of eight major activities for the period 2011-2013:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Develop integrated training packages for rollout in eight countries.</td>
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<td>2. Develop and pilot a model for integrated services within community centres.</td>
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<td>3. Adapt ILO’s KAB (Know About Business) training for informal settings and include it in UNFPA’s Y-PEER curriculum.</td>
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<td>4. Give joint technical support to host governments for the appropriate inclusion of employment issues into national youth strategies.</td>
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<td>5. Support improved information gathering about youth, including school-to-work and school-to-marriage transition surveys incorporating SRH issues.</td>
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<td>6. Develop joint policy briefs inclusive of both agencies’ concerns.</td>
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<td>7. Stimulate community work and volunteerism in youth empowerment initiatives that focus on skills training, employment and entrepreneurship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Improve institutional opportunities for civic participation of youth at all levels.</td>
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2. SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Goal: Improve young people’s SRH by ensuring access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health information, education and services for all young people in the region.

Strategies
UNFPA in the Arab States must adjust its approach by focusing on risk reduction, information, education and service provision strategies and also the enhancement of protective factors in young people’s environments. All strategies must be fully integrated and linked with the pillars of employability and civic engagement for a larger impact.

Advocacy and Policy Advice
In all three pillars, UNFPA will advocate for the consideration of young people’s roles and needs in national, UNCT and UNFPA emergency, contingency and preparedness plans with a particular focus on young people’s needs and priorities in national human rights and gender discrimination monitoring mechanisms. In addition, regional and country offices will advocate for stronger integration of SRH concerns into national/sectoral policies, plans, programmes, systems and strategies; nondiscriminatory SRH-related legislation and laws; SRH education at all levels; and community involvement in support of reproductive rights especially with young men.

Data and Research
In all three pillars, UNFPA will support gender-sensitive assessments of young people’s needs and priorities in humanitarian settings including the capacity of civil society and governments to address them. It will support national surveys targeting young people; utilize online analytics that gather information about young people’s values, attitudes and behaviours; and map out marginalized populations. In addition, regional and country offices will support research on SRH behaviours and patterns in Arab youth.
SRH services for young people during emergency situations must be innovative, accessible and culturally appropriate. Young people should be involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of program activities to ensure that they are responsive to the specific needs of young people. Including both boys and girls in educational activities that promote gender equity can reduce gender-based violence and high-risk sexual behavior. Family and community involvement in SRH programming for young people in humanitarian settings is also crucial to ensure their safety and security and to reduce their vulnerability to sexual exploitation, recruitment or abduction by harmful individuals or groups.

Information and Education

In all three pillars and in partnership with UNCHR, OCHA and WHO, UNFPA will engage in building the capacity of relevant stakeholders to address young people roles and needs in humanitarian situations. Building on best practices from Y-PEER interventions, regional and country offices will intensify efforts to scale up peer education strategy with three goals in mind: ensuring access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health information, education and services; facilitating equal access to decent employment and livelihoods; and creating an environment conducive to the civic engagement of young people in order to accelerate social and economic development and promote a culture of dialogue, tolerance and peace-building skills. In addition, we will support efforts to facilitate the integration of SRH life-skills education sensitive to both gender and cultural rights into school curricula at all levels; strengthen young people’s health awareness with a particular focus on reproductive rights; support community mobilization for healthy lifestyles including YPSRHR; and utilize new technologies, including mobile and online tools, to increase outreach.

Services

UNFPA will promote the development and delivery of comprehensive, gender-sensitive adolescent and youth health services, including peer counseling strategies, in humanitarian settings; and, as a cross-cutting strategy, promote peer support and mentoring for young people in humanitarian settings.

Lebanon’s national youth policy was endorsed by the Lebanese Council of Ministers on April 3, 2012. The policy is the culmination of a long, participatory and democratic process that relied on robust research, evidence, best practices and lessons learned in the field. The policy makers adopted a bottom-up, consultative approach and made sure that the needs, priorities, aspirations and recommendations of young people across the country were clearly and adequately reflected in the plan. This bottom-up approach was followed by a sectoral validation process to ensure synergy between identified priorities and government response. The key stakeholders in this long process were youth organizations represented by the Youth Forum for Youth Policy, the UN Youth Task Force in Lebanon and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. In addition, the Office of the Prime Minister was highly supportive in expediting its endorsement. This endorsement is a clear acknowledgement by the government of the role and status of youth in society; it reflects the government’s vision on youth development. On the day it was signed, all the concerned parties celebrated the success, which is by no means the end of the process. Today, we need to develop an action plan and start the legislative work so that the policy is effectively implemented by the government. This is expected to be a long process but all concerned and the youth above all are determined to get there!
3. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

GOAL: Create an environment conducive to civic engagement for young people in order to accelerate social and economic development and promote a culture of dialogue, tolerance, peace-building, communication and life skills in the context of youth-adults partnerships.

The Arab Spring drew attention to the power of young people’s active civic engagement through networking to establish and enjoy a fair and just nation for all citizens. Given its extensive experience in youth participation and empowerment programming with the Y-PEER approach at its core, UNFPA is ideally positioned to build an independent, effective model of youth civic participation. Social media will continue to be a tool for good governance, citizen feedback and accountability. Young people’s participation in policy decisions and implementation is the necessary platform for their civic engagement in both state-sponsored and civil society channels. Broadening these opportunities will have a direct impact on stability and on the development of young people’s own skills. To further this goal, UNFPA should employ the following strategies in order to create an environment conducive to civic participation and the culture of citizenship.

Advocacy and Policy Advice
UNFPA will promote intergenerational dialogue; support civic participation with a special focus on volunteerism; advocate for youth participation in national and local communities and educational institutions; support the formation of youth NGOs; facilitate national partnerships to strengthen civic participation; and advocate for the pro-active role of young people within private sector companies that promote corporate social responsibility. As part of its cross-cutting strategies, it will also advocate for the consideration of young people’s roles and needs in national, UNCT and UNFPA emergency and preparedness plans and for a special focus on young people in national human rights and gender discrimination monitoring mechanisms.
Data and Research

In order to ensure the best available information on civic participation, UNFPA will conduct research on bridging the intergenerational gap; support gender-disaggregated research on the status and development of civic engagement in the region; support the creation of the youth-run Youth Observatory; analyze the impact of civic engagement and the benefits of investing in youth empowerment; and assess the role and functions of national youth structures such as Ministries of Youth, youth parliamentary commissions and national youth councils.

Information and Education

Strategies will include integrating civic education into schools’ formal and extracurricular programs; building knowledge about civic engagement and youth empowerment; raising community awareness about the benefits of youth civic engagement; utilizing edutainment strategies, particularly youth role models approach, to promote civic engagement; building the capacity of youth-led civil society; partnering with mass media and social media to raise awareness about civic engagement; and supporting initiatives aiming at promoting intergenerational dialogue.

Services

UNFPA will support the creation of safe spaces for girls, boys and marginalized young people to participate in civic engagement activities, including in humanitarian settings; it will also promote programmes of volunteerism and civic engagement within youth clubs and centers, ensuring girls’ participation. Fostering new youth networks and coalitions related to civic interests while strengthening those that already exist will provide avenues for participation and engagement.
Building partnerships for integrated programmes is at the heart of a credible approach to young people issues, which is fundamental to this strategic framework. To this end, UNFPA will initiate and pursue coordinated and joint programming initiatives.

To do so, partnerships and synergies must be facilitated among key national figures responsible for youth issues: specifically, ministries of employment, education, health, planning and youth. Ideally, UNFPA would support the formulation of national multisectoral youth strategies through participatory processes and a human rights-based approach. Institutionalising interministerial cooperation on specific issues – for example, between ministries of health and youth to establish youth-friendly health services in youth centres – is an area where the support and advocacy of a UN agency can make a substantial difference, at little cost.

National partners vary by country and activity and change over time. Ministries of labour, education, youth and social affairs are generally our prime partners; ministries of planning and national statistical institutes, both traditional UNFPA partners, also have key roles in producing relevant information.

Other important partners include national employment centres, municipalities and rural communities, the private sector and well-established NGOs, which may be the best partners for training and direct-service provision. Partnerships between government and civil society structures, including the private sector, are an essential component of an efficient support structure for young people – for example, through internships and apprenticeships, which are fertile learning grounds, as well as schools, universities and youth centres, which are ideal places to organise life-skills training and community-building volunteer programmes. Again, partnership building and advocacy by a UN agency can make a visible difference.

The most crucial area of partnership building, however, is likely to be among UN agencies. UNFPA is often the key organization involved in youth issues within a UN country team. This offers excellent opportunities to coordinate activities, build integrated approaches and leverage resources for joint programmes. Appropriate partnerships can be established case by case, in accordance with the situation in each country. The primary partner in the area of employment is ILO, with whom we have many areas in common including our choice of national partners and field presence (See Box 2.) In many countries, FAO, UNESCO, UNIDO, UN WOMEN and UNICEF also have activities in this domain.
In the area of sexual and reproductive health of young people, UNFPA has a range of traditional partners in most countries. However, it is important to emphasize work with low-income young people, school drop-outs and other marginalized young people, frequently neglected by partner NGOs, which tend to work within schools and universities.

In the area of civic participation, the primary UN agencies are generally UNDP, UNESCO and UNICEF. National partners include not only schools and universities, but also NGOs, faith-based organizations and municipalities, which often have youth programmes and may operate shadow youth councils.

1. 2007, Singerman, D, The Economic Imperatives of Marriage: Emerging Practices and Identities among Youth in the Middle East