



Faculty of Health Sciences
Center for Public Health Practice

MAPPING OF YOUTH POLICIES IN THE ARAB REGION



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Twenty-five years ago, the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) put people's rights at the heart of development and emphasized that empowering people by adequate legislative infrastructure is key to ensuring the well-being of individuals, families, nations and the world at large.

UNFPA ASRO collaborated with the Center for Public Health Practice (CPHP) at the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) at the American University of Beirut (AUB), to conduct a Mapping of youth Policies in the Arab Region and their alignment with the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and SDGs agendas.

Mapping for the ICPD related legal infrastructure in the Arab region is an important step in order to understand current context of youth issues in the Arab region, to point out the progress made in creating an enabling environment to achieve the unfinished business of ICPD plan of action in the region and to provide ways forward to better integrate youth issues within national strategic frameworks.

PROJECT CONTEXT

Approach and Methodology

The study consisted of mapping the existing laws, policies and strategies, governing the youth domains and assess their alignment with the ICPD, the SDG agendas and international human rights standards across the Arab States region. The following countries were included as part of this study: Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.

The regional mapping was guided by a Desk Review Framework which included the following five themes Participation and Civic Engagement, Health and Well-being, Education & Life Skills, Employment and Entrepreneurship and Peace and Resilience building.

A data collection tool comprising 8 different sections relating mainly to: Legislation, Policies and Strategies, Key Youth Organizations per Country, Gaps, Challenges and Obstacles, Existing Opportunities, and Recommendations was developed by the research team as an excel document in an English version.

Youth in the Arab Region

While there are no universally accepted definitions of adolescence and youth, the United Nations understands adolescents to include persons aged 10-19 years and youth as those between 15-24 years for statistical purposes without prejudice to other definitions by Member States¹. For the purposes of this study, the UNFPA definition will be adopted where adolescents and youth are referred to as young people, encompassing the ages of 10-24 years².

Youth Development in the Arab Region by Theme

a. Participation and Civic Engagement

To move towards inclusive societies, achieve equitable sustainable growth, and capitalize on the demographic dividends, the decision making process must represent the choices and aspirations of young people especially in matters that affect their lives and their future³.

Several factors are still preventing Arab youth from participating in formal political processes. These include unemployment and inequality of opportunities, poverty, shrinking civic space, corruption and lack of trust of young people in their governments, cultural and social prejudices especially against young women and people with disabilities, political instability and displacement⁴. This may explain why despite the increase in public activism of Arab youth following the 2011 uprisings, including that of females, youth in the Arab region have the world's lowest level of civic engagement⁵.

The majority of responding countries reported that their legal framework protects the rights of youth, they have youth specific services, and social protection systems. However, few have indicated that they had specific laws related to youth representation, with only one country reporting on measures to eliminate gender disparities in this domain. The majority has developed national policies or strategies related to youth participation and civic engagement.

In most Arab countries the voting age is 18 years old, except in Lebanon and Oman where a citizen is required to be 21 years old to have the right to vote and thus, practice her/his political rights.

Young people with disabilities remain excluded from social, economic, and political participation. As a consequence, access to health services, school attendance, educational attainment, and employment rate of persons with disabilities are much lower than that of people without disability in Arab countries⁶. The outbreak of Covid 19 compounded the vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities and disrupted their support systems⁷.

Likewise, although many Arab countries have adopted laws establishing equal rights for women, women remain largely underrepresented at all levels of governance in the Arab region⁸. Discriminatory provisions remain in place, particularly with regards to family law and nationality.

¹ Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly, A/36/215, 1981

² UNFPA FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION ON ADOLESCENTS & YOUTH. Retrieved from https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/framework_youth.pdf

³ UNFPA, (2019). Rights and choices for all adolescents and youth: a UNFPA global strategy. <https://www.unfpa.org/youthstrategy>

⁴ UNFPA, (2019). Rights and choices for all adolescents and youth: a UNFPA global strategy. <https://www.unfpa.org/youthstrategy>

⁵ UNICEF, (2019). MENA GENERATION 2030 Investing in children and youth today to secure a prosperous region tomorrow. Retrieved from: <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/MENA-Gen2030-April2019.pdf>

⁶ ESCWA (2018). DISABILITY IN THE ARAB REGION. Beirut. Retrieved from:

<https://www.unescwa.org/publications/disability-arab-region-2018>

⁷ United Nations.(2020).Social protection responses to the COVID-19 crisis in the MENA/Arab States region.

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_756764.pdf

⁸ UN Women (2018).Women's Economic Empowerment.<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment>

b. Health and Wellbeing

There are considerable disparities between countries of the region with regards to access to services and quality of health care. The region continues to witness humanitarian crises, the effects of which have become catastrophic.

The series of measures adopted by the Arab States in response to COVID 19 pandemic, including lockdowns, curfews, and other restrictions on movement have resulted in the disruption of basic services for the most vulnerable populations⁹. Accessibility to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender-based violence (GBV) services have been highly affected.

In times of crisis the risk of child marriage is increased. The number of young teenagers who are married is still noteworthy, especially in Yemen, Somalia, Sudan and to some extent in Egypt, among Palestinians living in Gaza and among Syrian refugees. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is also still practiced in some Arab countries.

In several countries the legal framework guarantees the access of youth to health services. However, only few countries have laws on prevention of risky behaviors and harmful practices. Despite efforts related to sexual and reproductive health, there is still an evident gap in relation to reproductive rights and individual choice.

The absence of liberalization of the law on abortion in the Arab States (except for Tunisia), combined with scant research on the effects of criminalization, suggests that abortion is not recognized as a public health issue of

concern. Women who decide to terminate their unintended pregnancy largely seek clandestine abortions that are potentially unsafe¹⁰. Their life might be in danger because of their lack of access to modern contraception, emergency obstetric care (EmOC), and post abortion care¹¹.

c. Education & Life Skills

In spite of increasing enrollment and augmented investment, education is not attaining its potential in the Arab region. There are still challenges related to weak quality, outdated teaching and learning methods, and inequitable access and infrastructure¹². Armed conflicts in the region have had a devastating impact on educational services and school attendance.

The COVID 19 crisis is exacerbating the situation of inequality in terms of accessibility to online education. All schools in the Arab States are closed or engage in hybrid learning which has caused the disruption of education and training. School closures increase learning inequalities and affect vulnerable youth disproportionately.¹³

The majority of the countries has a legal framework that guarantees access to inclusive and equitable quality educational services. However, few possess laws on inclusive education and enabling environment for students with disabilities. Among the 15 countries, only 2 countries reported having measures to eliminate gender disparities in education, only one country indicated having laws addressing Comprehensive Sexuality Education and laws related to Gender sensitive school curricula. Among the 15 countries, only one country reported the presence of laws on

⁹ <https://www.unfpa.org/data/emergencies/yemen-humanitarian-emergency>

¹⁰ UNFPA (2018). Addressing unintended pregnancies in the Arab region.

¹¹ UNFPA (2018). Addressing unintended pregnancies in the Arab region.

¹² ESCWA, (2020). Arab Sustainable Development Report 2020. <https://asdr.unescwa.org/#\34>

¹³ <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/globalcoalition>

Education in formal and informal/non-formal settings and one country indicated having laws on Anti-bullying measures. As for youth policies/strategies related to education many countries have developed national policies or strategies related to education and life skills.

Although many women and girls have increased access to education, literacy and university enrollment, many barriers to true gender equality in education exist. The Sustainable Development Agenda embraced “Leaving no one behind” motto as a guiding principle for the development policies and initiatives¹⁴. Access to quality education for refugees, displaced youth, youth with disabilities need to be addressed urgently.

There is a need to design and implement community and school based comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programmes that promote human rights and gender equality in the Arab region.

For CSE to be effective it needs to be age- and culturally appropriate (including the terminology used) and based on UNFPA guidance documents¹⁵.

Policies and structured pedagogy programmes based on the Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) framework need to be developed in order to improve the learning process and learning outcomes. These programmes need to incorporate SRHR and anti-bullying programmes. Training on CSE, anti-bullying and how to detect bullying, life-skills education, emotional intelligence, etc. of the teachers and administrators is deemed necessary.

d. Employment and Entrepreneurship

A decades-long trend of high unemployment and limited job opportunities for youth in the Arab region has deteriorated further in 2020 especially after the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁶. The most adversely affected are women and youth in countries experiencing conflict or political instability, population displacements and migration¹⁷. The Arab region has the world’s lowest rate of female labor force participation¹⁸.

The legal framework of the majority of responding countries covers youth employment, with only few indicating that national laws provide support for persons with disabilities to enter the labor market. Further, 10 countries have policies or strategies to promote youth employment and access to decent work. Meanwhile, few countries reported having policies or strategies tackling barriers preventing young women from entering the labor market, and 3 countries indicated they had national strategies or programs to support entrepreneurship among youth.

All 15 countries under study ban discrimination on the basis of gender and guarantee equal pay in their labor codes. With regards to sexual harassment, in 7 countries the penal code criminalizes sexual harassment, while in 6 countries penal code does not explicitly protect against sexual harassment however, it covers some types of sexual harassment. Paid maternity leave is guaranteed by the labor law in all countries under study, however, compliance with ILO 14-weeks standard varies greatly.

¹⁴ https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Inob_booklet_en_3-12-2020_1.pdf

¹⁵ https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/situational_analysis_final_for_web.pdf

¹⁶ ESCWA, (2020). IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ARAB REGION. Retrieved from <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/uploads/impact-covid-19-young-people-arab-region-english.pdf>

¹⁷ ILO, (2018). “Employment Promotion in the Arab States”.

https://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/employment-policy/WCMS_714596/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁸ <https://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/equality-discrimination/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20Arab%20region%20has%20the,average%20of%2048%20per%20cent.&text=Female%20unemployment%20in%20the%20Arab,higher%20than%20the%20world%20average.>

Youth unemployment in the Arab region is mainly impeded by structural issues including the dominant economic model. Plans to recover from Covid19 pandemic could be used as an opportunity to adopt a new model that promotes inclusive growth. Some specific measures could be adopted for better employment outcomes for young people. These include, integrating evidence into the design of youth employment programmes and policies, and improving coordination among key actors¹⁹. Planning and monitoring youth job creation within national policies, and matching skill sets with labor market demands. Further, to promote women's economic participation it is urgent to reform laws that discriminate against them including personal status laws, and to address gaps in labor laws. It is also important to launch targeted training programmes to enhance the skills of young women, and provide incentives for them to pursue education in fields where job growth is anticipated.

e. Peace and Resilience building

Young Arabs have been physically and mentally affected by years of violence and insecurity. For conflict prevention purposes, young women and men should be empowered to lead peace building initiatives in their communities, including in dialogue and reconciliation efforts.

UNFPA led the efforts together with regional entities to develop a regional strategic framework on Youth Peace and Security in Arab states²⁰.

All countries under study have anti-human trafficking legislations, however, not all have adopted preventive and protective measures are included in anti-trafficking laws. Few countries reported having laws for prevention and protection from violence including sexual exploitation.

Young people are resilient in their pursuit for sustainable development and peace. For social stability, especially in countries witnessing political and security unrest, there is a great need to ensure the meaningful political inclusion of young people in governance structures and formal peace building processes, and to promote a positive narrative around young people to change misconceptions that undermine their agency. It is also essential to recognize their contributions to social cohesion and conflict mitigation in their communities.

¹⁹ Kabbani, Nader (2019). Youth employment in the Middle East and North Africa: Revisiting and reframing the challenge. Brookings Doha Center. Accessed from: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/youth-employment-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-revisiting-and-reframing-the-challenge>

CONCLUSION

The principles of inclusiveness and shared prosperity are the basis of the 2030 Agenda. Young people in the Arab region continue to face the challenges of inequality and exclusion, and are among the first to suffer the consequences of wars, conflicts and displacement. Further, the most severely excluded and marginalized groups include, displaced young people, young people with disabilities, young women especially in rural areas, young people without citizenship, NEET, and LGBTQI youth. For young people, the interdependence between peace, human rights, equality, justice and development is clear.

Arab countries can use the SDGs as a framework to recover from the impact of the pandemic crisis and address structural impediments that impact the wellbeing of young people. Moreover, promoting the inclusion and meaningful participation of young women and men requires political will and commitment to human rights, legal reforms, as well as the revision of national youth policies and strategies. These measures are necessary for ensuring, gender equality, sexual and reproduction health rights, mental wellbeing, and innovative approaches for youth reintegration into the education system and the labor market.



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASRO	Arab States Regional Office
AUB	American University of Beirut
CAT	Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CCPR	Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CMW	Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
COs	Country Offices
CPHP	Center for Public Health Practice
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FHS	Faculty of Health Sciences
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRs	Human Rights
ICs	International Conventions
ICPD	International Conference of Population and Development
LSCE	Life Skills and Citizenship Education
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer+
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Health Law: “For all aspects of health, there are binding rules that govern the rights and responsibilities of governments, health workers, companies, civil society and a country’s population. Together these rules make up the legal framework, or legal architecture for health. They take many forms including: statutory laws, regulatory and administrative laws, contracts, case law, and customary laws. Who is involved in making these rules, and the form they take, differs from country to country”.¹

Health Policy/Strategy: A national health Policy/Strategy is a document that outlines a country’s vision, priorities, budgetary decisions, and course of action for improving and maintaining the health of its people and/or «decisions, plans, and actions that are undertaken to achieve specific health care goals within a society. An explicit health policy can achieve several things: it defines a vision for the future which in turn helps to establish targets and points of reference for the short and medium term”.²

Youth Participation: “Youth participation is a process of involving young people in the institutions and decisions that affect their lives. It includes initiatives that emphasize educational reform, juvenile justice, environmental quality, and other issues; that involve populations distinguished by class, race, gender, and other characteristics; and that operate in rural areas, small towns, suburbs, and neighborhoods of large cities in developing areas and industrial nations worldwide”.³

Youth Political Participation: “Political participation is any activity that shapes, affects, or involves the political sphere. Recent understanding is that political participation cannot be narrowed to the conventional forms of participation in elections or referendums, or being members of political parties. Unconventional forms like signing petitions, organizing demonstrations or strikes have, for some time, been considered legal forms of political participation, as are supporting boycotts or express political opinions via badges, T-shirts, stickers or letters to media and online postings. Besides these legal forms of political participation some activities carried out with the intention of influencing society and/or the political sphere are considered illegal. These could involve actions such as vandalism or acts of terrorism, as well as civil disobedience or resistance”.⁴

Youth Civic Engagement: “Civic engagement involves working to make a difference in the civic life of one’s community and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. Civic engagement includes both paid and unpaid forms of political activism, environmentalism, and community and national service. The goal of civic engagement is to address public concerns and promote the quality of the community. More and more young people are discovering that their voices matter to their communities and that they can make their communities better places to live if they become active citizens. Volunteering is one form of civic engagement.”⁵

¹ WHO (2019). Health Systems Governance. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/topics/health_policy/en/

² WHO (2019). Health Systems Governance. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/topics/health_policy/en/

³ Checkoway B. & Gutierrez, L. (2006). Youth Participation and Community Change. *Journal of Community Practice*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233020765_Youth_Participation_and_Community_Change

⁴ Council of Europe and European Union. (2020). Glossary on Youth. Retrieved from <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/glossary>

⁵ Erlich, T. (2009). Civic Responsibility and Higher Education, American Council on Education/Oryx Press. Retrieved from <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/civic-engagement-and-volunteering>

Youth Volunteerism: Defined by the United Nations as “an activity undertaken out of free will, for the general public good, and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor.”⁶

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE): “Comprehensive sexuality education is a rights-based and gender-focused approach to sexuality education, whether in school or out of school. It is taught over several years, providing age-appropriate information consistent with the evolving capacities of young people. Comprehensive sexuality education includes scientifically accurate information about human development, anatomy and reproductive health, as well as information about contraception, childbirth and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. But it also goes beyond information, helping young people to explore and nurture positive values regarding their sexual and reproductive health. This education includes discussions about family life, relationships, culture and gender roles, and also addresses human rights, gender equality, and threats such as discrimination and sexual abuse”.⁷

Life skills: “There are many different understandings of life skills but no definition is universally accepted. Defined in a general way, Life skills mix knowledge, behaviour, attitudes and values and designate the possession of some skill and know-how to do something or reach an aim. They include competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, ability to organize,

social and communication skills, adaptability, problem-solving and the ability to cooperate on a democratic basis”.⁸

Formal Education: “Formal education and training is defined as education provided by the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that normally constitutes a continuous ‘ladder’ of full-time education for children and young people, generally beginning at the age of 5 to 7 and continuing to up to 20 or 25 years old. In some countries, the upper parts of this ‘ladder’ are organized programmes of joint part-time employment and part-time participation in the regular school and university system.”⁹

Non-Formal Education: “Non-formal education and training is defined as any organized and sustained learning activities that do not correspond exactly to the above definition of formal education. Non-formal education may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions and cater to people of all ages. Depending on national contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, life-skills, work-skills, and general culture.”¹⁰

⁶ United Nations Volunteer (UNV) (2014). UNV Strategic Framework. Retrieved from <https://un.info.np/Net/NeoDocs/View/3109>

⁷ UNFPA (2020). Comprehensive Sexuality Education. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/comprehensive-sexuality-education>

⁸ UNFPA (2017). Boys on the move. A trainer’s handbook for implementation of a Life Skills Programme for Unaccompanied Male Adolescents. Retrieved from <https://eeeca.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Boys%20on%20the%20move%20English%20-%20Facilitator%20book.pdf>

⁹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UNESCO-UIS). (2020). SDG Goal 4. Retrieved from <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-04-03-01.pdf>

¹⁰ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UNESCO-UIS). (2020). SDG Goal 4. Retrieved from <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-04-03-01.pdf>

I. Background Information

Twenty-five years ago, the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) put people's rights at the heart of development and emphasized that empowering people by adequate legislative infrastructure is key to ensuring the well-being of individuals, families, nations and the world at large. ICPD has specified the responsibilities of the parties charged with implementation, such as government, ministries, parliaments and service providers. It called to ensure there are adequate budgetary allocations to the maximum extent of available resources for the full implementation of laws and policies furthering the progressive achievement of the right to sexual and reproductive health and other population dynamics dimensions.

Mapping for the ICPD related legal infrastructure in the Arab region is an important step in order to understand current context of youth issues in the Arab region, to point out the progress made in creating an enabling environment to achieve the unfinished business of ICPD plan of action in the region and to provide ways forward to better integrate youth issues within national strategic frameworks.

Within this context, UNFPA ASRO collaborated with the American University of Beirut, Faculty of Health Sciences, Center for Public Health Practice to conduct a Mapping of youth Policies in the Arab Region and their alignment with the ICPD and SDGs agenda. It viewed the policies and programmes from SDG lens which set the scene for the implementation of ICPD as an enabler for full achievements of SDGs.

This mapping aims at providing policymakers, civil society and development practitioners in

all countries in the region with a knowledge tool to advance the implementation of the Programme of Action, and to ensure that the needs of youth issues are equitably addressed in this process. It will be in line with the Arab region commitments at the Nairobi summit on ICPD25 and its top commitment categories, namely:

1. Zero GBV and discrimination,
2. Accelerate implementation of ICPD and 2030 Agenda,
3. Access to SRH services for adolescents and youth, and
4. Investing in education, employment and health of young people

II. Project Context

1. Objectives

The overall objective of this exercise was to support stakeholders working with national and regional partners in meeting the ICPD and SDGs' commitments to youth development, health and wellbeing particularly through policy related interventions.

More specifically, the objectives of this review were to:

- Identify gaps in existing youth policies and strategies in the Arab region.
- Inform programmes in Arab countries for more substantive work in the areas of youth development and wellbeing.
- Strengthen UNFPA's strategic position as an advocate for youth rights and a partner of youth development and wellbeing.

2. Expected Output

The expected output of this project is a mapping of existing laws, strategies, and policies governing the selected youth domains in consultation with UNFPA ASRO in compliance with the ICPD, the SDG agendas and international human rights standards, across the Arab States region, in a report format. The recommendations highlighted in this regional report will help improve the current legal framework and will inform future interventions and programs to improve the status of the youth in the Arab region.

3. Approach and Methodology

a. Formation of a Multidisciplinary Team

Taking into consideration the diversity of the research areas covered in this review, CPHP has formed a multidisciplinary team of technical experts and researchers to develop the tool, conduct the desk review, synthesize the literature, analyze the collected data, and develop the regional report along with specific recommendations that are in line with the Arab region commitments at the Nairobi summit on ICPD25.

b. Literature and Desk Reviews

The study consisted of mapping the existing laws, strategies, and policies governing the youth domains that were selected in consultation with UNFPA ASRO and assess their linkages to the ICPD, the SDG agendas and international human rights standards across the Arab States region. It was mainly based on conducting a desk review of relevance to

each of the targeted 15 countries. The following countries were included as part of this study:

- Algeria
- Djibouti
- Egypt
- Iraq
- Jordan
- Lebanon
- Libya
- Morocco
- Oman
- Palestine
- Somalia
- Sudan
- Syria
- Tunisia
- Yemen

The regional mapping was guided by a **Desk Review Framework** which included the following five themes and their corresponding sub-themes that are critical to youth development:

i. Participation and Civic Engagement

- a. Rights and Youth Services and social protection systems, including laws regulating orphanages. Consider different groups of youth including the most vulnerable such as Youth with Disability, Youth in Conflict with Law, Youth without citizenship, youth without identification documents, Refugee youth\youth migrants, Out Of Schools\Never Educated Never Employed (NEET), etc.
- b. Civic Participation, including measures to eliminate gender disparities in civic participation.

- c. Public\Political Participation and Representation including Engagement in Civil Society\NGOs and measures to eliminate gender disparities in Public\Political Participation and Representation.

2. Health and Well-being

- a. Access to health services with a focus on Adolescent Health\Youth Friendly Services and SRHR inclusive of adolescents with disabilities and key populations.
- b. Rehabilitation services for youth with disabilities.
- c. Prevention of risky behaviors and harmful practices (including HIV\AIDS and other STIs, Drug Abuse, Smoking, Road Traffic Accident, Digital Addiction).
- d. Mental Health (i.e. depression and suicide).
- e. Child marriage\unwanted pregnancies\Gender Based Violence (GBV).

3. Education & Life Skills

- a. Access to inclusive and equitable quality educational services (primary and secondary).
- b. Laws on inclusive education and enabling environment for students with disabilities.
- c. Comprehensive sexuality education.
- d. Gender sensitive school curricula.
- e. Measures to eliminate gender disparities in education.
- f. Anti-bullying measures.
- g. Life Skills Education in formal and informal\non-formal settings.

4. Employment and Entrepreneurship

- a. Prevention and Protection from violence, including sexual exploitation and human trafficking.
- b. Promotion of safe inclusive accessible public spaces, including for women and persons with disabilities.
- c. Humanitarian action and conflict resolution, ensuring young women and men have a role in peace-building and state-building efforts in post conflict societies.
- d. Peace-building skills and education.
- e. Empowering youth, raising their voices and integrating them in peace- and decision-making processes (as per UNSCR 2250).

The desk review was coupled with the collection of statistical data and indicators to reflect upon the Youth situation in the Arab region. These indicators allowed the collection of data related to the below:

- Population
- Youth Literacy rate
- Enrolment in education
- Prevalence of FGM among girls
- Child marriage
- Adolescent birth rate
- Youth Unemployment
- Voting Age
- Minimum Candidacy Age
- Youth Definition (Age range)

c. Data Collection Tool Development

A data collection tool comprising 8 different sections relating mainly to: Legislation, Policies and Strategies, Key Youth Organizations per Country, Gaps, Challenges and Obstacles, Existing Opportunities, and Recommendations was developed by the research team as an

excel document in an English version. The Mapping Tool was expected to provide a better understanding of the current situation across the region, and fill gaps in the literature in order to develop the regional review report. The tool was shared with UNFPA ASRO (Youth unit) for review and comments.

d. Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection tool was shared with the 15 UNFPA Country Offices under the supervision of, and in coordination with UNFPA ASRO. UNFPA COs were responsible to complete the tool while tapping on relevant resources and key informant persons including, but not limited to:

- Judicial persons/officials.
- Line Ministries personnel such as Ministries of Youth, Social Affairs, etc.
- Representatives from local and regional key actors of relevance to Youth.
- Concerned others.

e. Description of analysis approach

The overall data collected from the 15 countries under review was cleaned, analyzed, and interpreted in its broader context.

III. Current Context in the Arab Region

The Arab region includes the 22 Member States of the League of Arab States, with a total population of around 373 million. The region is home to more than a 100 million young women and men under age 30 years (27% of Total population). With fragile economies, vulnerable financial institutions and persistent political instability and security issues, the region faces serious developmental challenges. Several Arab states have suffered, or continue to suffer, from occupation, armed conflict, civil war, terrorism, forced displacement, political instability, economic crises, or severe environmental challenges. It is known that the region's ability to harness the full potential of this large young population is hindered by multiple development and disparity challenges. High rates of poverty and unemployment, uneven access to healthcare and low educational quality are among those challenges. In addition to the developmental disparities between urban and rural areas, limited political participation and persistent cultural obstacles leading to gender inequality. Since 2011, many countries in the Arab region have been facing complex changes in their political, social and economic environments. Countries in complex emergency situations such as Djibouti, Iraq, Libya, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen are undergoing serious conflict and crisis. The conflicts in these countries have left a significant amount of the population in vital need of humanitarian assistance and have also exhausted the major governmental resources, which in turn have impeded the economies and infrastructures of these states¹¹.

¹¹ Choukeir, (2013). Social Inclusion, Democracy and Youth in the Arab Region. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Beirut/images/SHS/Social_Inclusion_Democracy_Youth_Background_Paper.pdf

In this rapidly changing environment, youth in the Arab region are experiencing major challenges including high unemployment rates, socioeconomic inequalities, corruption, forced displacement and emigration, increasing poverty and deprivation and continuous violation of Human rights ^{12,13}.

This situation has led to many uprisings in some of the countries in the Arab region, which were mostly led by youth and called for dignity, equity, social justice, greater participation in political and socioeconomic decision-making and major changes in the political systems and regimes which have not succeeded in improving the socio-economic conditions for marginalized social groups, including youth ^{14,15}.

While youth in the Arab region had been struggling with structural weaknesses and socio-economic challenges for many decades, the COVID-19 pandemic played a major role in further exposing these vulnerabilities and in exacerbating their consequences through its repercussions.

This is evident through the increased youth unemployment rate, which reached an average of 23% in the year 2020 as compared to an average of 19.5% in the year 2019. The unemployment rate among young Arab women reached 42.1%, more than twice that of young men. ¹⁶ Arab youth unemployment is considered the highest worldwide, putting millions at risk of severe poverty, especially among youth living in rural areas and those with disabilities. This is further aggravated by two factors. The first is the fact that 81.5% of young Arabs are working

in the informal sector, with limited or no access to social and health insurance and appropriate employment protection laws and regulations ¹⁷. The second is noted through a total of over 25 million Arab youth who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), which might risk their ability to join the post-COVID job markets. ¹⁸ The prolonged confinement due to government lockdowns and curfews have resulted in a negative impact on education in Arab countries as well, especially among poor and vulnerable children, who are forced to drop out of schools, and thus risk child labor, child marriage, domestic violence and poverty. It is worth noting that higher dropouts are noted among girls (19.1% for females compared with 15.9% for males) ¹⁹.

Therefore, the ICPD review stated that “Young people are a priority age group throughout the Arab region, made all the more salient by the youth bulge that marks the region’s demographic profile. This unprecedentedly large group of young people is facing historic challenges of political instability, threats of violence and extremism, high unemployment and rapid social change. The Cairo Declaration stresses the need to tap into the potential of young people as a powerful demographic dividend, to increase their opportunities and choices to fulfil their potential and to empower them as active participants in the development of their communities and society at large. The recommendations therefore aim at ensuring the rights and participation of young people and enhancing their human capital to ensure that they have the capabilities to spur social and economic innovation”²⁰.

¹² Arab Development Portal (ADP), (2019). Youth in the arab region 2019. Retrieved from https://arabdevelopmentportal.com/sites/default/files/publication/booklet_final_upload.pdf

¹³ ESCWA, (2012). Promoting Participatory Democracy in the ESCWA Region. Beirut: ESCWA, 2012

¹⁴ Arab Development Portal (ADP), (2019). Youth in the Arab region 2019. Retrieved from https://arabdevelopmentportal.com/sites/default/files/publication/booklet_final_upload.pdf

¹⁵ Choukeir, (2013). Social Inclusion, Democracy and Youth in the Arab Region. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Beirut/images/SHS/Social_Inclusion_Democracy_Youth_Background_Paper.pdf

¹⁶ ESCWA, (2020). IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ARAB REGION. Retrieved from <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/uploads/impact-covid-19-young-people-arab-region-english.pdf>

¹⁷ ESCWA, (2020). IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ARAB REGION. Retrieved from <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/uploads/impact-covid-19-young-people-arab-region-english.pdf>

¹⁸ ESCWA, (2020). IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ARAB REGION. Retrieved from <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/uploads/impact-covid-19-young-people-arab-region-english.pdf>

¹⁹ ESCWA, (2020). IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ARAB REGION. Retrieved from <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/uploads/impact-covid-19-young-people-arab-region-english.pdf>

²⁰ Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development Reviewing the Implementation of the 2013 Cairo Declaration Regional Report 2018

IV. Youth in the Arab Region

1. Overview of Youth in the Arab Region

Definition of Youth

While there are no universally accepted definitions of adolescence and youth, the United Nations understands adolescents to include persons aged 10-19 years and youth as those between 15-24 years for statistical purposes without prejudice to other definitions by Member States²¹. For the purposes of this study, the UNFPA definition will be adopted

where adolescents and youth are referred to as young people, encompassing the ages of 10-24 years²².

As illustrated by Table 1, the official definition of “youth” varies from country to country in the Arab region.

/ Table 1: Youth Definition by Country /

Country	Youth Definition ²³
Algeria	15-29
Djibouti	15-24
Egypt	18-30
Iraq	15-29
Jordan	12- 30
Lebanon	16-29
Libya	No Data
Morocco	15-29
Oman	No Data
Palestine	15-29/ 18-29
Somalia	15-40 as per the national youth policy
Sudan	15-24
Syria	15-25
Tunisia	15-29
Yemen	15-24

2. Youth Population in the Arab Region

Youth aged between 10 and 24 years old accounts for approximately 28% of the total population of the 15 countries included in

this study (among a total population of 372.8 million, 103.995 million are youth)²⁴.

²¹ Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly, A/36/215, 1981

²² UNFPA FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION ON ADOLESCENTS & YOUTH. Retrieved from https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/framework_youth.pdf

²³ Country Factsheets, (2014). Retrieved from <https://www.youthpolicy.org>

²⁴ UNFPA, (2020). UNFPA Data Dashboard. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/data>

Table 2 below provides the total population in million and the percentage of total youth population by country.

/ Table 2: Total Population & Total Percentage of Youth Population by Country /

Country	Population, total (in million) ²⁵		Population ages 10-24 (% of total population) ²⁶	
	Value	Year	Value	Year
Algeria	42.7	2019	22	2019
Djibouti	1	2019	30	2019
Egypt	101.2	2019	26	2019
Iraq	31.7	2019	31	2019
Jordan	10.5	2019	30.5	2019
Lebanon	6.1	2019	25.3	2019
Libya	6.6	2019	25	2019
Morocco	36.6	2019	24	2019
Oman	5.0	2019	19	2019
Palestine	4.9	2019	32	2019
Somalia	15.6	2019	33	2019
Sudan	42.5	2019	33	2019
Syria	18.5	2019	35	2019
Tunisia	11.8	2019	21	2019
Yemen	29.6	2019	33	2019

3. Youth Development in the Arab Region by Theme

a. Participation and Civic Engagement

To move towards inclusive societies, achieve equitable sustainable growth, and capitalize on the demographic dividends, the decision making process must represent the choices and aspirations of young people especially in matters that affect their lives and their future²⁷. Agenda 2030 commits to providing a nurturing environment for the full realization of youth rights and capabilities, especially those in vulnerable situations. Youth are

considered across all goals and targets of the SDGs²⁸. Similarly, ICPD commitments recognize young people not only as one of the more vulnerable groups, but also as «the largest catalysts for change» in their societies. ICPD agenda also emphasizes that needs of all young people should be addressed in a holistic integrated manner, including gender equality and women's empowerment.

²⁵ Population, total (in million): Estimated size of national populations at mid-year. UNFPA. (2020). UNFPA Data Dashboard. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/data>

²⁶ Population ages 10-24 (% of total population): Proportion of the population between age 10 and age 24 UNFPA. (2020). UNFPA Data Dashboard. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/data>

²⁷ UNFPA, (2019). Rights and choices for all adolescents and youth: a UNFPA global strategy. <https://www.unfpa.org/youthstrategy>

²⁸ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2019/02/chapter1-wyr-2030agenda.pdf>

Several factors are still actively preventing Arab youth from participating in formal political processes. These include, unemployment and inequality of opportunities, poverty, shrinking civic space, corruption and lack of trust of young people in their governments, cultural and social prejudices especially against young women and people with disabilities, political instability and displacement²⁹. This may explain why despite the increase in public activism of Arab youth following the 2011 uprisings, including that of females, youth in the Arab region have the world's lowest level of civic engagement³⁰.

However, the findings of public opinion surveys conducted in 11 Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen) between 2018–2019, highlight a different form of political engagement³¹. The surveys confirm that although participation of youth in formal politics is low in many contexts, Arab youth are more likely to engage in informal (non-electoral) politics through activism, taking issues to the street, and participation in online forums. Further, youth differ from their older counterparts in terms of greater dissatisfaction with the existing system, with low confidence in freedom of speech and the right to demonstrate peacefully. Also, across most of the countries surveyed, youth are less satisfied with the education system, and “the vast majority believe that obtaining employment requires having strong connections”. On gender equality, most youth are supportive of equal rights for

women including fair political representation, and the right to become president or head of government. Yet, most think men are better political leaders, and only a few support equal roles for women in society.

Legal and Regulatory Frameworks Addressing Youth Participation and Civic Engagement

In most Arab countries the voting age is 18 years old, except in Lebanon and Oman where a citizen is required to be 21 years old to have the right to vote and thus, practice her/his political rights. As table 3 below shows, the minimum candidacy age ranges between 21 years old in Libya and Sudan, and 30 years old in Iraq, Jordan and Oman. In the majority of countries under study, 9 out of 15 countries, youth below the age of 25 years cannot run for parliamentary seats and as such are directly excluded from participating in formal national decision-making processes. Jordan has the highest candidacy age of 31 years old, followed by Iraq and Oman (30 years).

²⁹ UNFPA, (2019). Rights and choices for all adolescents and youth: a UNFPA global strategy. <https://www.unfpa.org/youthstrategy>

³⁰ UNICEF, (2019). MENA GENERATION 2030 Investing in children and youth today to secure a prosperous region tomorrow. Retrieved from: <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/MENA-Gen2030-April2019.pdf>

³¹ Arab barometer, (2019). Civic Engagement in the Middle East and North Africa.

https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV_Youth_Report_Public-Opinion_Middle-East-North-Africa_2019-1.pdf

/ Table 3: Voting Age & Minimum Candidacy Age by Country /

Country	Voting Age ³²		Minimum Candidacy Age ³³	
	Value	Year	Value	Year
Algeria	18	2014	28	2014
Djibouti	18	2014	23	2014
Egypt	18	2014	25	2014
Iraq	18	2014	30	2014
Jordan	17+ 3 months	2014	31	2014
Lebanon	21	2014	25	2014
Libya	18	2014	21	2014
Morocco	18	2014	23	2014
Oman	21	2014	30	2014
Palestine	18	2014	28	2014
Somalia	No Data	2014	25	2014
Sudan	18	2014	21	2014
Syria	18	2014	25	2014
Tunisia	18	2014	23	2014
Yemen	18	2014	25	2014

As shown in table 4, the majority of responding countries reported that their legal framework protects the rights of youth, they have youth specific services, and social protection systems. However, only 5 responding countries indicated that they had specific laws related to youth

representation, with only one reporting on measures to eliminate gender disparities in this domain. Meanwhile, 10 responding countries have developed national policies or strategies related to youth participation and civic engagement.

³² Youth policy Factsheets. Retrieved from <https://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/>

³³ Youth policy Factsheets. Retrieved from <https://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/>

/ Table 4: National Laws Addressing Youth Participation and Civic Engagement /

Country	National Laws
Algeria	Constitutional commitment to youth
Djibouti	None
Egypt	Youth rights, youth services, and social protection system Civic Participation Public\Political Participation and representation
Iraq	None
Jordan	Youth rights, youth services, and social protection system
Lebanon	Youth rights, youth services, and social protection system Establishment of the National Human Rights Institute Establishment of the anti-corruption commission
Libya	No details provided
Morocco	Youth rights, youth services, and social protection system Civic Participation Public\Political participation and representation
Oman	Youth rights, youth services, and social protection systems
Palestine	Youth rights and youth services, and social protection systems
Somalia	None
Sudan	None
Syria	Youth rights, youth services and social protection system Civic Participation Public\Political participation and representation
Tunisia	Youth rights, youth services, and social protection system Civic Participation Public\Political participation and representation including measures to eliminate gender disparities
Yemen	Youth rights, youth services, and social protection system Civic Participation Public\Political participation and representation

Volunteerism

UNFPA ASRO, United Nations Volunteers and the League of Arab States are developing a regional strategy on volunteerism with 3 main objectives: to establish a legal and institutional framework for volunteerism in Arab countries, develop the Arab charter for good practices on volunteerism; and raise awareness on the benefits of volunteerism to maximize its contribution to global, regional and national priorities.

Available data from 2018 indicate that 7 countries under review (Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia, Sudan, Egypt, State of Palestine, and Iraq) have laws or policies addressing volunteerism³⁴. Some countries regulate volunteer work either through specific laws or through other legislations including laws on civil society organizations. While other countries developed national policies that explicitly emphasize the role of volunteerism in youth development, employability and sustainable development, or integrated volunteerism into other policy areas.

³⁴ ESCWA (2019). A PLAN OF ACTION SYNTHESIS REPORT ON INTEGRATING VOLUNTEERING INTO THE 2030 AGENDA. Retrieved from https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/ESCWA_final_www.pdf

Reported Gaps in Laws and Policies

Significant gaps hinder youth participation and civic engagement at various levels in countries under study (Table 21 in the Annex); they were identified as follows:

Legal

- Gaps in the legal framework of some countries deny the rights of particular categories of young people and legally marginalizes them. Such marginalized social groups are; youth without citizenship, women, young women in rural areas, youth with disabilities, youth in conflict with law, NEET, LGBTQI youth and refugees.
- Lack of laws that provide social protection for the most vulnerable.
- Several responding countries reported lack of legal framework or weak legislations as obstacles to youth political and social participation, in addition to restricted political liberties.
- In Yemen, legal contradictions in the definition of youth between the Constitution and laws are acting as barriers to their presence in decision making positions.
- Voting age in countries where it is set above 18, and candidacy age which excludes young people below the age of 25 are perceived as obstacles to young people's participation in decision making processes.
- Political parties law poses challenges for youth political engagement.

Policy

- Some countries reported the absence of youth policy related to civic engagement as a gap. Also, absence of a national gender policy and national disability policy were identified as an obstacle facing youth participation.
- Implementation delays or delay in the approval of the action plan of the national youth policy

Strategy

- Several countries identified weaknesses in implementation, coordination and follow up on their youth strategies, or absence of an operational plan.
- No institutionalized strategy addressing youth civic participation.
- Absence of a national strategy on volunteerism.
- Lack of mechanisms for youth consultation and engagement.
- Lack of data on youth participation and engagement.

Programs

- Poor coordination and collaboration among NGOs and among relevant stakeholders was reported by some countries, also difficulties in integrating youth programs within other sectoral national plans.

Reported Challenges & Obstacles facing Youth Participation

Responding countries identified numerous challenges to youth participation (table 26):

Political

- Absence of political will to engage youth in decision making, and limited knowledge about youth participation.
- Harassment and detention of youth activists.
- Political discrimination against women.
- Political instability slows the implementation of national strategies and programs.
- Young people's lack of trust in the government, the parliament, and political parties.
- Intergenerational conflict at the level of political parties.
- Clan based selection of political positions limits prospects for youth.

Economic

- High unemployment rate among youth and limited economic opportunities are demotivating them and limiting their participation in public life including engagement in volunteer work in many countries; this situation increased migration of youth in some countries.
- Lack of financial resources to engage youth in decision making processes was reported by some countries.

Sociocultural

- Sociocultural obstacles perpetuate the social and political exclusion of youth in several countries, where youth are viewed as a threat, or irresponsible, and gender based biases act as barriers against the participation of girls and women.
- Challenges among youth themselves, in relation to sectarian divisions, and lack of political literacy.

Humanitarian

- Lack of adequate policies and strategies that address young people in humanitarian settings.
- Exclusion of refugees from youth participation platforms.

Security

- Occupation, or conflict and political instability were identified as challenges restricting the participation opportunities of youth in Palestine, Somalia, Iraq, Sudan, and Tunisia.

Human resource

- Lack of capacity and inadequate skills among public sector employees is a challenge in service delivery in some countries.

Perceived Opportunities for Youth Participation and Civic Engagement

Some opportunities and improvements that are conducive to progress in youth political and civic participation were reported as follows:

- Governments' efforts in mainstreaming youth in national strategies and policies due to commitments to SDGs, ICDP and efforts by UNFPA or other UN agencies are seen as an opportunity by all responding countries, with relevant ministries being sensitized and actively involved in the implementation of the commitments.
- Increased interest of national and international organizations in targeting youth in their programmes.
- Young people's awareness and readiness to work on achieving the SDGs.
- Amendments of laws that will allow for greater participation of youth in decision-making processes is underway or awaits approval in some countries.
- In Lebanon, the volunteering programme being implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which creates a network of youth volunteers and develops their capacities to support the country whenever needed.
- Jordan's National Youth Empowerment Strategy 2018 - 2025 provides the umbrella for youth work in Jordan. Also, Jordan is one of the 10 accelerating countries for the UN Youth Strategy, which represents an opportunity for UNCT youth work for more advocacy and alliances. Further, the enacted Law No. (20) for the Year 2017 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act is an opportunity for enhancing participation young people with disability. In addition, there are school parliaments which expose the students to democratic processes.

- Political will to create a more inclusive and participatory democracy is seen as an opportunity for youth participation in Tunisia, Sudan and Egypt. Sudan's transitional government provides great opportunities for youth to be part of policy-making and leadership through having many youth representatives in decision-making places. While in Egypt, the government is putting youth at the top of its agenda and has a presidential leadership program that capacitates young people to be future leaders.

Entry Points for Reinforcing Young People's Participation

Several factors determine opportunities that are available to young people, they affect their ability to participate in political and social life, as well as the choices they make concerning their own lives and their futures as adults. Participation is a fundamental human right guaranteed in the guiding conventions on the Rights of the Child, on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

When young people are denied agency and fail to realize their full potential, their future capabilities as adults are weakened. This results in a considerable loss in the momentum of national development, especially in low and middle income Arab countries with large young population³⁵. Moreover, "the absence of adequate structures to engage youth in civic and political processes as equal citizens" aggravates their sense of injustice, frustration, and lack of trust in the political system³⁶.

As responding countries have indicated, young people with disabilities remain excluded from social, economic, and political participation. Reports confirm that in the Arab region multiple types of structural inequalities shape the lives of persons with disabilities³⁷.

³⁵ UNDP, (2016). Arab Human Development Report. Retrieved from <http://www.arab-hdr.org/reports/2016/english/AHDR2016En.pdf>

³⁶ ESCWA, (2018). Reaping the Rewards of Demographic Transitions: Investing in Arab Youth. Retrieved from <https://www.unescwa.org/file/62384/download?token=wluAgu9t>

³⁷ ESCWA, (2018). DISABILITY IN THE ARAB REGION. Beirut. Retrieved from: <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/disability-arab-region-2018>

Disability intersects with other dimensions of vulnerability including, poverty, gender, being a displaced child, and location (urban or rural). As a consequence, access to health services, school attendance, educational attainment, and employment rate of persons with disabilities are much lower than that of people without disability in Arab countries³⁸. Also, “lack of access to transport, buildings and other facilities further constrains their chances” of participating in public life and in being employed³⁹. Being female, child and having a disability add to the disadvantages, with higher levels of discrimination, violence and social exclusion. The outbreak of COVID-19 compounded the vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities and disrupted their support systems⁴⁰.

The ICPD recognizes persons with disabilities as a significant minority group in society, and calls on states to address the sexual and reproductive health needs of persons with disabilities, and for actions to achieve the goals of their full participation and equality. Similarly, both the SDGs (especially Goal 8) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognize that socioeconomic inclusion of persons with disabilities is integral for eradicating poverty, achieving equality and ensuring sustainable development for all. Also, article 6 in the convention recognizes that women and girls with disabilities are subjected to multiple forms of discrimination and establishes that member states should take all appropriate measures to ensure their full development, advancement and empowerment.

Likewise, although many Arab countries have adopted laws establishing equal rights for women, women remain largely

underrepresented at all levels of governance in the Arab region⁴¹. Discriminatory provisions remain in place, particularly with regards to family law and nationality law. Responding countries aptly described how various social, cultural and legal barriers continue to restrict the ability of young women to participate in public life limiting their opportunities for meaningful participation in decision-making processes. All these factors have also played out against the participation of women in the formal labor market. As a result, many are faced with poor working conditions with low wages often combined with no social security coverage. Further, the coronavirus outbreak exacerbated existing inequalities for women and girls in, access to health services, including sexual and reproductive services, domestic and care work, livelihood, security and social protection⁴². Moreover, it led to an increase in violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence.⁴³

Article 7 in CEDAW calls on states to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country. Further, the ICDP PoA which Arab states have reiterated their commitment to at the Nairobi summit acknowledges that “the goal of the empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status” is crucial as an end in itself, as well as key to the achievement of sustainable development. Also, women’s full political and economic participation is critical for achieving SDG 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment, and crucial for delivering on all SDGs.

Tunisia’s 2018 municipal election results offer a promising example of how legislative reforms

³⁸ ESCWA (2018). DISABILITY IN THE ARAB REGION. Beirut. Retrieved from: <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/disability-arab-region-2018>

³⁹ Arab Sustainable Development Report 2020. Retrieved from: <https://asdr.unescwa.org/sdgs/pdf/en/ASDR2020-SDGs/ASDR2020-SDG8.pdf>

⁴⁰ United Nations.(2020). Social protection responses to the COVID-19 crisis in the MENA/Arab States region. Retrieved from: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_756764.pdf

⁴¹ UN Women (2018). Women’s Economic Empowerment. Retrieved from: <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment>

⁴² UNESCWA, (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality in the Arab Region. Retrieved from: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/20-00131_gpid_pb_eng_apr5.pdf

⁴³ UNESCWA, (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality in the Arab Region. Retrieved from: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/20-00131_gpid_pb_eng_apr5.pdf

as well as a keen political will can ensure the participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in decision making. See box 1 below.

BOX 1

Tunisia, participation of women and youth in the municipal elections of 2018

Due to progressive gender parity requirements and youth and persons with disabilities quotas, large numbers of women⁴⁴, youth and persons with disabilities were elected in May 2018. Tunisian women won 46.6% of the country's municipal council seats, youth won 37.16 % of the seats, while persons with disabilities secured 144 seats⁴⁵.

Two main factors led to the high level of women's political participation, "the 2014 Tunisian Constitution, which guarantees equal representation for women and men in elected institutions based on the principle of parity, as well as the local elections law, requiring both vertical and horizontal gender parity"⁴⁶. Similarly, the rise in youth participation as candidates can be attributed to the youth quota, parties were required to have at least 3 young people in each list and a person with disabilities among the first 10 candidates of each electoral list⁴⁷.

b. Health and Wellbeing

There are considerable disparities between countries of the region with regards to access to services and quality of health care. The health of young people in the Arab States is affected by social, environmental, economic and political factors, as well as by the availability of services. The Region continues to witness humanitarian crises, the effects of which have become catastrophic. Some of these are protracted, as in Yemen, Syria, and Libya, while others have become forgotten, as in Somalia and the Palestinian territories⁴⁸.

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains the world's largest humanitarian emergency⁴⁹. The crisis left millions of people food insecure. One in 5 people in Yemen suffer from mental health

disorders according to a 2017 study⁵⁰. Moreover conflict has caused the loss and maldistribution of health-care personnel⁵¹. Fifty percent of health-care facilities in Yemen have closed down⁵². Youth with disabilities are among the most at risk in times of emergency. In Syria, with its ongoing conflict of more than a decade, one-in-four aged 12 and above has a disability and 15 percent of youth aged 12-19 years have a disability⁵³. They experience increased threats of violence and limited access to essential income generating activities and medical assistance⁵⁴.

The series of measures adopted by the Arab States in response to COVID 19 pandemic, including lockdowns, curfews, and other restrictions on movement have resulted in the disruption of basic services for the most

⁴⁴ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, (2019). Tunisia's Political System: From Stagnation to Competition. Retrieved from https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Yerkes_Yahmed_Tunisia_Stalemate_final.pdf

⁴⁵ Arab Reform Initiative, (2018). Tunisia's Local Elections: Entrenching Democratic Practices. Retrieved from <https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/tunisias-local-elections-entrenching-democratic-practices/>

⁴⁶ https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Yerkes_Yahmed_Tunisia_Stalemate_final.pdf

⁴⁷ Arab Reform Initiative, (2018). Tunisia's Local Elections: Entrenching Democratic Practices Retrieved from: <https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/tunisias-local-elections-entrenching-democratic-practices/>

⁴⁸ <https://arabstates.unfpa.org/en/publications>

⁴⁹ <https://www.unfpa.org/data/emergencies/yemen-humanitarian-emergency>

⁵⁰ <https://www.unfpa.org/news/after-years-conflict-yemen-remains-worlds-worst-humanitarian-crisis-unfpa-2021>

⁵¹ ESCWA (2020). Arab Sustainable Development Report.

⁵² <https://www.unfpa.org/news/after-years-conflict-yemen-remains-worlds-worst-humanitarian-crisis-unfpa-2021>

⁵³ https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/Disability_Prevalence-and-Impact_FINAL-2.pdf

⁵⁴ https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/Disability_Prevalence-and-Impact_FINAL-2.pdf

vulnerable populations⁵⁵. Accessibility to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender-based violence (GBV) services have been highly affected. There has been a decrease in the provision of services for survivors of domestic violence and, in some countries, the numbers of calls to hotlines have largely increased⁵⁶.

In times of crisis the risk of child marriage is increased. Many factors interact to place a child at risk of marriage, including poverty, insecurity, the perception that marriage will provide 'protection', lack of gender equality and of women's empowerment, situations of emergencies and crisis⁵⁷. The number of young teenagers who are married is still noteworthy, especially in Yemen, Somalia, Sudan and to some extent in Egypt, among Palestinians living in Gaza and among Syrian refugees. Gender inequality is a root cause of child marriage in all contexts, including in humanitarian settings⁵⁸. Due to conflict and forced displacement, "many women and adolescent girls are without the traditional protection of family and community and are often victims of sexual violence, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections"⁵⁹.

The incidence of child marriage (Table 5) was the lowest (2% and 3% respectively) in Tunisia and Algeria in 2017, yet this percentage was much higher in other countries of the region reaching 32%, 34% and 35% in Yemen, Sudan and Somalia respectively.

The number of births per 1,000 adolescent girls aged 15-19 (Table 5) was the lowest (7% and 12% respectively) in Tunisia and Libya in the period 2004-2017, yet this percentage was much higher in other countries of the region reaching 64%, 82% and 87% in Somalia, Iraq and Sudan respectively.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is still practiced in some Arab countries (Table 5). The rates of girls aged 15 to 19 years who been subjected to the practice in the 2004-2017 period are as high as 99% in Somalia, 90% in Djibouti, 82% in Sudan and 70% in Egypt. In all three countries FGM is legally banned.

In 2008, UNFPA and UNICEF established the Joint Programme to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation, to accelerate abandonment of FGM and to provide care for its consequences. The Joint Programme supported the passing of legislation banning FGM in several countries. It works at the community, national, regional and global levels to raise awareness of the harms caused by FGM and to empower communities, women and girls to make the decision to abandon it⁶⁰. Its comprehensive approach includes culturally sensitive interventions with a focus on the human rights of women and girls⁶¹.

⁵⁵ <https://www.unfpa.org/data/emergencies/yemen-humanitarian-emergency>

⁵⁶ <https://www.unescwa.org/news/open-letter-regional-directors-undp-unwomen-unfpa-and-escwa-arab-states-region-governments>

⁵⁷ UNFPA (2017). UNFPA in the Arab region: working on gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and sexual reproductive health and rights.

⁵⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/mena/sites/unicef.org.mena/files/2018-08/CM%20in%20humanitarian%20settings%20MENA.pdf>

⁵⁹ UNFPA, (2018). Regional Strategic Framework on Youth, Peace and Security in the Arab States 2018 - 2021

⁶⁰ <https://arabstates.unfpa.org/en/node/22514>

⁶¹ <https://arabstates.unfpa.org/en/node/22514>

/ Table 5: FGM percentage, Child marriage percentage & Adolescent birth rate by Country /

Country	FGM prevalence among girls, aged 15–19 (%) ⁶²		Child marriage by age 18 (%) ⁶³		Adolescent birth rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19) ⁶⁴	
	Value	Year	Value	Year	Value	Year
Algeria	No Data	2004 - 2017	3	2017	12	2006 - 2017
Djibouti	90	2004 - 2017	5	2017	21	2006 - 2017
Egypt	70	2004 - 2017	17	2017	56	2006 - 2017
Iraq	5	2004 - 2017	24	2017	82	2006 - 2017
Jordan	No Data	2004 - 2017e	8	2017	26	2006 - 2017
Lebanon	No Data	2004 - 2017	6	2017	No Data	No Data
Libya	No Data	2004 - 2017	6	2017	11	2006 - 2017
Morocco	No Data	2004 - 2017	6	2017	32	2006 - 2017
Oman	No Data	2004 - 2017	6	2017	14	2006 - 2017
Palestine	No Data	2004 - 2017	15	2017	48	2006 - 2017
Somalia	99	2004 - 2017	35	2020	64	2006 - 2017
Sudan	82	2004 - 2017	34	2017	87	2006 - 2017
Syria	No Data	2004 - 2017	13	2017	54	2006 - 2017
Tunisia	No Data	2004 - 2017	2	2017	7	2006 - 2017
Yemen	16	2004 - 2017	32	2017	67	2006 - 2017

Legal and Regulatory Frameworks Addressing Health and Well-Being

Most countries under review have a legal framework addressing Youth Health and Wellbeing issues. All responding countries have strategies and policies relevant to Youth Health and Wellbeing.

The legal framework in 6 responding countries out of 15 guarantees access to health services.

Five countries have laws on prevention of risky behaviors and harmful practices. Among the 15 countries, only 4 countries reported having laws restricting child marriage. Moreover, only 3 countries reported the presence of laws on services for youth with special needs, one country had laws related to services for youth with disabilities. Only one country reported having a law related to unwanted pregnancies.

⁶² FGM prevalence among girls, aged 15–19 (%): Proportion of girls aged 15 to 19 years who have undergone female genital mutilation. UNFPA (2020). UNFPA Data Dashboard. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/data>

⁶³ Child marriage by age 18 (%): Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 18. UNFPA (2020). UNFPA Data Dashboard. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/data>

⁶⁴ Adolescent birth rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19): Number of births per 1,000 adolescent girls aged 15–19. UNFPA (2020). UNFPA Data Dashboard. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/data>

/ Table 6: National Laws Addressing Health and Well-Being /

Country	National Laws
Algeria	Access to health services
Djibouti	Prevention of risky behaviors and harmful practices
Egypt	Child marriage
Iraq	Services for youth with special needs
Jordan	Access to health services Prevention of risky behaviors and harmful practices
Lebanon	Child Marriage
Libya	None
Morocco	Access to health services Services for youth with special needs
Oman	Prevention of risky behaviors and harmful practices Child marriage
Palestine	Access to health services Services for youth with special needs
Somalia	None
Sudan	None
Syria	Prevention of risky behaviors and harmful practices Child marriage
Tunisia	Access to health services Prevention of risky behaviors and harmful practices Child marriage\unwanted pregnancies\GBV
Yemen	Access to health services Rehabilitation services for youth with disabilities



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Most of the countries (with the exception of Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen) have set the minimum age for marriage at 18 for women with some allowing exceptions in limited circumstances; for example, in Jordan the age of marriage is 18 for women and men but the judge can give an exception between the age of 16-18. In Lebanon, there is no law

prohibiting early marriage, the minimum age of marriage varies among different religious courts. Although most religious communities set the minimum age at 18 for boys, all religious communities allow girls under the age of 18 to get married. Table 7 presents the legal minimum marriage age by country:

/ Table 7: Legal minimum marriage age by country by Country /

Country	Minimum Age of Marriage ⁶⁵		
	Data	Data	Year
Algeria	F: 19	M: 19	2014
Djibouti	F: 18	M: 18	2014
Egypt	F: 18	M: 18	2014
Iraq	F: 18	M: 18	2014
Jordan	F: 18	M: 18	2014
Lebanon	F: 12.5 (not for all religious communities)	M: 16	2014
Libya	F: 18	M: 18	2014
Morocco	F: 18	M: 18	2014
Oman	F: 18	M: 18	2014
Palestine	F: 14.5	M: 15.5	2014
Somalia	F: 18	M: 18	2014
Sudan	F: 18	M: 18	2020
Syria	F: 18	M: 18	2014
Tunisia	F: 18	M: 18	2014
Yemen	F: 15	M: 15.5	2014

Reported Gaps in Laws, Policies, Strategies & Programs

The following are the gaps that deter efforts to promote the development of the health well-being of young people in the responding countries (Table 22):

Legal

- Lack of specific laws on youth health and well-being, on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and laws related to youth mental health.
- Some countries mentioned the absence of laws that restrict child marriage.
- The absence of a law that would protect youth from violence.

⁶⁵ The data in the table was compiled from youth policy country factsheets (ww.youthpolicy.org). The information was updated from the desk review, where possible, since the last update of the Youth Policy factsheets was in 2014. It is worth noting that in most cases, many information could not be found due to the lack of reported data among countries.

- No law focusing on youth with disabilities.
- Abortion is prohibited in case of rape.
- In some countries, parents' consent is required in order to have access to SRH services. In Somalia parental or husband consent is required.
- Presence of discriminatory laws against SRHR of vulnerable groups; such as the criminalization of homosexuality in Tunisia.
- Exclusion of young people from decision making processes regarding youth issues.

Policy

- Some countries reported the absence of a national integrated youth policy which addresses youth development and well-being and
- Lack of implementation decrees.
- Need for a policy that focuses on the deinstitutionalization of Persons with Disabilities.

Strategy

- Lack of a comprehensive strategy that addresses youth needs in general and the needs of vulnerable groups in particular such as youth with disabilities.
- Low use of family planning tools among youth.
- Lack of awareness of HIV/AIDS and the stigmatization of people living with HIV.
- Protective detention in case of "honor" crimes in some countries.

Programs

- The difficulty of having access to SRH services.
- Lack of youth specific health programs and services especially governmental services.
- Shortage of programs focusing on child marriage & counselling for women's health.
- Programs need to be more demand driven and there is a shortage of youth-friendly health services.
- No awareness of the presence of the SRH services by young people.
- Lack of information and services that help youth understand their own reproductive and sexual health.
- Lack of services that protect them from early childbearing and unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, female genital mutilation, as well as other practices.
- Lack of SRHR services for the youth.
- Lack of programs focusing on youth with disabilities and their access to SRHR services that provide rehabilitation services.
- Lack of financial support & sustainability of programs.
- Lack of well-defined organization of services targeting youth needs. Moreover, the information systems of health programs provide little guidance on the quality of services or their impact.

Reported Challenges & Obstacles facing Youth Health and Well-Being

Responding countries reported the following challenges and obstacles (Table 27):

Political

- Several countries reported the absence of a national strategy addressing youth health needs.
- Youth health issues are not a priority and there is a need to prioritize health in the development agenda.
- National Reproductive Health Strategy doesn't recognize youth as a distinct group with specific health needs.
- Lack of political stability and change that slows the process of the implementation of national strategies and programs.
- Laws exist but lack enforcement.
- There is a need to improve SRH policies, to include customized, specific and comprehensive policies, taking into consideration vulnerable groups.
- There is a need to enhance crosscutting multisector and multidisciplinary coordination work including the education sector, health sectors and others for a holistic approach.
- Lack of tailored services and programs for adolescents with disabilities and key populations.

Socio-cultural

- SRHR topics are still critical issues that are not being addressed.
- Presence of Social norms on young people sexuality (especially unmarried girls).
- Limited HIV knowledge among youth, especially females and high Stigma associated with
- The neglect of mental health.
- Gender disparities threatening health prospects of female youth.
- Lack of awareness on needs of adolescents SRHR; specifically with vulnerable groups Youth access to the health system, only with consent of parents.
- The dependence on traditional healing instead of modern medicine.

Economic

- Youth SRHR agenda is not considered a priority for programing and funding. There are no resources by MOH for youth friendly services.
- The health care cost is unaffordable to a large range of population including youth.
- Absence of a national health coverage plan for the youth.
- Limited resources for Youth health. Free services are not generalized.
- Funds from donors are not directly received by departments and programs in ministry, leading to bureaucratic delay, shortages in funding for important programs. lack of governmental financial commitments.

Human resources

- Shortage in qualified and trained personnel who can offer youth friendly health services.
- Absence of mental health specialists at universities and school, except for those universities that are affiliated to a medical hospital.

Perceived Opportunities for Youth Health and Well-Being

The following opportunities were mentioned concerning Health and Well-Being:

- International conventions and treaties ratified by Arab states that promote human rights and SRHR of young people and vulnerable groups are considered a major opportunity.
- Jordan considered the current work with the Ministry of Education to integrate SRHR awareness in schools as an opportunity that was not attained for 15 years, in Jordan and Palestine Government, NGO and youth participated and agreed on youth specific and related ICPD commitments which include CSE, establishment of an adolescent health unit at Ministry of Health and the establishment of a youth advisory panel.
- UNFPA Palestine has partnered with NGO partners to strategically support the Palestine adolescent health coalition of 22 relevant members among national and international organizations including the YPEER network. Currently, a strategic framework on adolescents and youth SRHR is being developed to be adopted by the Ministry of Health.
- In terms of access to comprehensive health services, Lebanon is in its last year of the Mental Health Strategy which could be a window to support youth in coping with the deteriorating conditions of the country, and had recently launched its the Women and child strategy which was launched recently. Libya Existence of an approved and costed Reproductive, Maternal Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health strategy (RMNCAH) for 2019 - 2023. The strategy has specific interventions for youth and adolescent health including mental health.
- In Sudan, the transitional government calls for expanding the scope of economic, social, cultural and political support to women and girls, with special emphasis on marginalized adolescents, elderly women, poor or vulnerable women, rural women, and women with disabilities to address social norms and stereotypes.
- The COVID-19 pandemic could play a significant role in improving the skill based education and enhancing the outreach as many online platforms were created targeting young people. In Palestine, Youth is one of the identified and targeted vulnerable population groups in the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework Humanitarian Needs Overview and the recent UNCT COVID-19 response plan. The current UN@75 campaign is being led by youth groups and youth NGOs representing youth's voices to the UN is an opportunity for more youth engagement within the UN.

Entry Points for Improving Access to Health and Wellbeing

The ICPD - Programme of Action recognizes that individual human rights and dignity, including the equal rights of youth and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, are a necessary precondition for sustainable development. Despite efforts related to sexual and reproductive health, there is still an evident gap in relation to reproductive rights and individual choice. Significant legal and policy efforts need to be made in order to address the needs of vulnerable groups and refugee populations.

Child marriage is still threatening the wellbeing of refugee and displaced girls. Marriage before the age of 18 is a fundamental violation of human rights. The issue of child marriage is addressed in a number of international conventions and agreements. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women covers the right to protection from child marriage in article 16. The Convention on the Rights of the Child covers child marriage by linking it to other rights – such as the right to freedom of expression, the right to protection from all forms of abuse, and the right to be protected from harmful traditional practices. Child marriage is also frequently addressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child⁶⁶.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution to ban female genital mutilation (FGM) in December 2012. Many of the women and girls have undergone FGM at the hand of a health care provider, i.e. a doctor, nurse, or midwife, as the increasing medicalization of FGM is a worrying trend in the Arab states region and is particularly common in Egypt and Sudan⁶⁷.

Arab States ratified a number of international instruments dealing with health and human rights, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Arab States ban of abortion (except Tunisia) violates women's reproductive rights.

The absence of liberalization of the law on abortion in the Arab States (except for Tunisia), combined with scant research on the effects of criminalization, suggests that abortion is not recognized as a public health issue of concern. In 1998, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar in Egypt issued a fatwa allowing for access to abortion for unmarried women who had been raped. In 2004, he approved a draft bill that would allow abortion in the case of rape, but the bill was not passed⁶⁸. In Algeria, the Islamic Supreme Council issued a fatwa in 1998, allowing for access to abortion in cases of rape⁶⁹. Unfortunately, these fatawa did not lead to changes in the laws. In Morocco, in 2015, King Mohamed VI asked the government to amend abortion laws. In 2016, the government liberalized abortion law and allowed it in cases of rape, incest, birth defects, in case the mother suffers from a mental disorder and when the mother's life is in danger⁷⁰.

In the Arab region, two in five pregnancies are still unintended and one-half of unintended pregnancies end in abortion⁷¹. Women who decide to terminate their unintended pregnancy largely seek clandestine abortions that are potentially unsafe⁷². In the Arab region, 10% of maternal deaths are due to unsafe abortion⁷³. Women and children in crisis and humanitarian situation are at higher risk of unintended pregnancies and sexual violence. They sometimes face life-threatening reproductive health-related situations, largely because of their lack of access to modern contraception, emergency obstetric care (EmOC), and post abortion care⁷⁴.

⁶⁶ <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>

⁶⁷ <https://arabstates.unfpa.org/en/node/22514>

⁶⁸ Hessini, Leila, May 2007, Abortion and Islam: Policies and Practice in the Middle East and North Africa, *Reproductive Health Matters*, 15 (29), 75-84.

⁶⁹ Hessini, Leila, May 2007, Abortion and Islam: Policies and Practice in the Middle East and North Africa, *Reproductive Health Matters*, 15 (29), 75-84.

⁷⁰ Morocco World News, June 10, 2016, Morocco Liberalizes Abortion Laws, Amends Penal Code, Egypt DHS report, 2014, Table 5.7.

⁷¹ UNFPA (2018). Addressing unintended pregnancies in the Arab region.

⁷² UNFPA (2018). Addressing unintended pregnancies in the Arab region.

⁷³ UNFPA (2018). Addressing unintended pregnancies in the Arab region.

⁷⁴ UNFPA (2018). Addressing unintended pregnancies in the Arab region.

BOX 2**Telecounseling for women and girls in Yemen**

In Yemen, UNFPA and the GBV subcluster (a forum for coordination and collaboration with stakeholders working to prevent and respond to GBV in humanitarian settings) adopted the use of hotlines and toll-free numbers as an alternative to in-person services previously provided. UNFPA Yemen developed standard operating procedures on telecounseling and the concept of telecounseling is now being mainstreamed among all GBV services.

The services provided include psychological counseling, psychosocial support services, GBV case management and referral, legal aid consulting, coronavirus awareness, and protection services related to women in prisons. This is amplified by awareness raising through social and mainstream media.

As a result, 18 telephone hotlines are in operation throughout the country to provide telecounseling on a range of protection services for women and girls. In total, more than 368,000 women were reached with GBV information and services from March to June 2020⁷⁵.

c. Education & Life Skills

In spite of increasing enrollment and augmented investment, education is not attaining its potential in the Arab region. There are still challenges related to weak quality, outdated teaching and learning methods, and inequitable access and infrastructure⁷⁶.

Armed conflicts in the region have had a devastating impact on basic services and school attendance. In Yemen, in 2018, the total number of out-of-school children has reached 2 million since the beginning of conflict⁷⁷. In Syria, more than two million children are out of school and 1.3 million children are at risk of dropping out⁷⁸. Table 8 presents the out-of-school rates by level of education by country:

⁷⁵ https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/covid-19_best_practices_-_english_-_141020-2.pdf

⁷⁶ ESCWA, (2020). Arab Sustainable Development Report 2020. <https://asdr.unescwa.org/#\34>

⁷⁷ UNICEF, (2018). In Yemen, children's education devastated after three years of escalating conflict Nearly 2 million children now out of school. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/yemen-children-education-devastated-three-years-conflict>

⁷⁸ UNICEF, (2019). Fast Facts Syria Crisis. <https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/5426/file/SYR-FactSheet-August2019.pdf>

/ Table 8: Out-of-school rates by level of education (males & Females), by Country /

Country	Out-of-school rate for adolescents and youth of lower and upper secondary school age (%) ⁷⁹				Primary school dropout rates (% of primary school cohort) ⁸⁰	
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Year	Both Sexes	Year
Algeria	-	-	-	2019	7.2	2003-2012
Djibouti	-	-	-	2019	-	2003-2012
Egypt	13	13	13	2019	1.1	2003-2012
Iraq	-	7.2	9.6	2019	-	2003-2012
Jordan	35	35	34	2019	2.2	2003-2012
Lebanon	-	-	-	2019	15.6	2003-2012
Libya	-	-	-	2019	6.4	2003-2012
Morocco	19	16	21	2019	8.4	2003-2012
Oman	4	2	8	2018	1.3	2003-2012
Palestine	11	14	7	2019	0.7	2003-2012
Somalia	-	-	-	2019	-	2003-2012
Sudan	-	-	-	2019	9.1	2003-2012
Syria	-	-	-	2019	6.8	2003-2012
Tunisia	-	-	-	2019	5.9	2003-2012
Yemen	42	34	51	2016	-	2003-2012



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⁷⁹ Adolescents and Youth out of school are the percentage of lower and upper secondary school Adolescents and Youth who are not enrolled in secondary school. Retrieved from <http://data.uis.unesco.org/#>

⁸⁰ Adapted from Arab Human Development Report 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.arab-hdr.org/reports/2016/english/AHDR2016En.pdf>.

Where data is reported, all Arab countries have a high rate of youth literacy, among both males and females, which is above 70% and reaching almost 100% in Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman and Palestine in the year 2018; as shown in Table 9 below.

/ Table 9: Youth Literacy rate and Enrolment in secondary education (males & Females), by Country /

Country	Youth Literacy rate, population 15-24 years (%) ⁸¹				Gross enrollment ratio, secondary (%) ⁸²			
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Year	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Year
Algeria	97	98	97	2018	-	-	-	-
Djibouti	-	-	-	-	55	54	56	2020
Egypt	88	89	87	2017	89	90	89	2019
Iraq	93	95	92	2017	33	-	-	-
Jordan	99	99	99	2018	65	64	66	2019
Lebanon	99.7	99.66	99.84	2018	71.4	65.9	77.1	2018-2019
Libya	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Morocco	98	98	97	2018	81	84	78	2019
Oman	99	98	99	2018	107.09	111.94	102.4	2019
Palestine	99	99	99	2018	91	87	95	2019
Somalia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sudan	73	73	73	2018	47	46	47	2017
Syria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tunisia	96	97	96	2014	93	87	99	2016
Yemen	-	-	-	-	52	60	43	2016

As is in other parts of the world, the COVID-19 crisis is exacerbating the situation of inequality in terms of accessibility to online education. All schools in the Arab States are closed or engage in hybrid learning which has caused the disruption of education and training. School closures increase learning inequalities and hurt vulnerable youth disproportionately.⁸³ Most

Ministries of Education have made curriculum available online or are broadcasting through TV or radio. In many countries, priority is given to accessing materials for exam classes⁸⁴. The longer the time children are not having classes, the increased the risk that they lose their motivation for learning, and may not go back, when schools re-open.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Youth Literacy rate, population 15-24 years: Percentage of people aged 15 to 24 years who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement on their everyday life. Generally, 'literacy' also encompasses 'numeracy', the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations. UNESCO. (2019). <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

⁸² Gross enrollment ratio, secondary (%): Gross enrollment ratio is the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. Secondary education completes the provision of basic education that began at the primary level, and aims at laying the foundations for lifelong learning and human development, by offering more subject- or skill-oriented instruction using more specialized teachers.. UNESCO. (2019). <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

⁸³ <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/globalcoalition>

⁸⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/mena/education/covid-19-response-education>

⁸⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/mena/education/covid-19-response-education>

Legal and Regulatory Frameworks Addressing Youth Education and Life Skills

According to table 10 below, the legal framework in most responding countries (9 out of 15) guarantees access to inclusive and equitable quality educational services. However, only 4 countries possess laws on inclusive education and enabling environment for students with disabilities. Among the 15 countries, only 2 countries reported having measures to eliminate gender disparities in

education, only one country indicated having laws addressing Comprehensive Sexuality Education and laws related to Gender sensitive school curricula. Among the 15 countries, only one country reported the presence of laws on Education in formal and informal/non-formal settings and one country indicated having laws on Anti-bullying measures.

As for youth policies/strategies related to education (Table 18) 10 countries out of 15 have developed national policies or strategies related to education and life skills.

/ Table 10: National Laws Addressing Education and Life Skills /

Country	National Laws
Algeria	Access to inclusive and equitable quality educational services
Djibouti	None
Egypt	Access to inclusive and equitable quality educational services Laws on inclusive education and enabling environment for students with disabilities
Iraq	None
Jordan	Access to inclusive and equitable quality educational services
Lebanon	Laws on inclusive education and enabling environment for students with disabilities Anti-bullying measures
Libya	None
Morocco	Access to inclusive and equitable quality educational services
Oman	Access to inclusive and equitable quality educational services Measures to eliminate gender disparities in education
Palestine	Access to inclusive and equitable quality educational services Laws on inclusive education and enabling environment for students with disabilities
Somalia	None
Sudan	No details provided
Syria	Access to inclusive and equitable quality educational services Access to inclusive and equitable quality educational services
Tunisia	Laws on inclusive education and enabling environment for students with disabilities Comprehensive sexuality education Gender sensitive school curricula Measures to eliminate gender disparities in education
Yemen	Access to inclusive and equitable quality educational services Life Skills Education in formal and informal\ non-formal settings

In 2015, the Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) Initiative, started with the aim of supporting the countries of the region to improve learning and to better invest such learning in individual, social and economic development. It is based on a set of twelve core life skills: ‘Learning to Know’ (Cognitive Dimension), ‘Learning to Do’ (Instrumental Dimension), ‘Learning to Be’ (Individual Dimension), and ‘Learning to Live Together’ (Social Dimension). These twelve core life skills are acquired and sustained through all forms of learning in a systems approach that recognizes multiple pathways of learning, formal, non-formal and informal⁸⁶.

Reported Gaps in Laws and Policies

The following are the gaps that hinder efforts the development of education and life skills of young people in the responding countries (Table 23):

Legal

- Several countries reported the lack of laws relevant to comprehensive sexual education and gender sensitive school curricula.
- The lack of implementation of law on eliminating violence against women.
- Life skills education is not part of formal education and is being implemented in the informal settings by selected ministries (ad hoc projects).
- Absence of anti-bullying law.

Strategy

- Lack of a strategy that ensures affordable education in schools, universities and tertiary institutions.
- Lack of life skills strategy and a comprehensive strategy that addresses youth with disabilities.
- The Life Skills Education strategy is not fully implemented.
- More development is recommended in several areas, such as the national curriculum, an inclusive education team, and enhancement of teachers’ capacity in delivering learning to all students. Moreover, the monitoring and evaluation component needs to be upgraded in order to be in line with the international standards.

Policy

- Several countries reported the absence of a national integrated youth policy that would focus on resource allocation, curriculum, teaching practices, assessment, and infrastructure.
- Responding countries highlighted the fact that current policies and methodologies are outdated; they do not respond to the market needs with limited focus on life-skills, gender equality, SRHR, innovation and technology.
- Palestine indicated that the implementation of the “education for all” policy faces many political and economic struggles.

⁸⁶ UNICEF, (2017). Reimagining life skills and citizenship education in the Middle East and North Africa; Conceptual and programmatic framework.

Program

- Three countries reported the lack of programs addressing the development of life skills.
- Lack of specific CSE programs.
- There is insufficient comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) inside schools and universities.
- Lack of innovative approach to enhance the quality of education in public schools.

Reported Challenges & Obstacles facing Youth Education and Life Skills

Responding countries reported the following challenges and obstacles (Table 28):

Political

- Political instability has an impact on educational environment for young people.
- Lack of schools in rural areas.

Socio-cultural

- The pedagogy adopted in schools does not emphasize critical thinking.
- Lack of specialized teaching for persons with special needs and persons with disabilities in some of the schools.
- Some countries reported that Comprehensive Sexuality Education is not culturally accepted, with the opposition of religious leaders to CSE in school settings.
- Societal stigma associated with vocational training.

Economic

- Low quality of education in schools, thus the need for private tutoring.
- Lack of financial resources for the education sector.
- Absence of budget for students with disabilities.
- Increase in school drop-outs due to economic factors, especially among young men.
- High educational fees.

Human resources

- Responding countries reported the need for capacity development for all human resources (teachers and administrations) in the academic sector, in addition to enhancing their communication skills.
- Lack of teachers' capacity in CSE, anti-bullying and how to detect bullying, life-skills education, emotional intelligence, etc.
- Lack of knowledge of the human resources at school and in universities on the existing technologies, thus facing many difficulties in coping with the current educational arrangements and systems in time of COVID-19.

Humanitarian

- Limited access to good quality education by refugees.

Security

- Lack of support system for cyber bullying and cyber blackmailing. In Sudan the security situation prevents interested young women and men from accessing schools.

Perceived Opportunities for Youth Education and Life Skills

The following opportunities were mentioned concerning Youth Education and Life Skills:

- The diverse stakeholders and alliances for Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AYSRHR) agenda including Academic, government, semi-government, civil society, and youth groups who advocate for AYSRHR. The current work with the Ministry of Education to integrate SRHR awareness in schools is an opportunity to enhance the AYSRHR agenda.
- Lebanon perceives educational opportunities in UNESCO Leadership Training programme for Arab Youth on Education for Sustainable Development.
- Oman reported that all key ministries, including the Ministry of Education, have specific programs on SDGs.
- In Jordan, the 10-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education launched by Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (HCD).

Elements for consideration for addressing Youth Education and Life Skills

The ICPD recognized education as fundamental to enabling people to claim their rights and make choices for their lives. Despite progress in access to primary education, gross enrolment in secondary education remains low for several responding countries. School

data about dropout rates is limited or possibly underreported.

Although many women and girls have increased access to education, literacy and university enrollment, many barriers to true gender equality in education exist. Moreover, the geopolitical context is undermining the progress to date. The Sustainable Development Agenda embraced “Leaving no one behind” motto as a guiding principle for the development policies and initiatives⁸⁷. Access to quality education for refugees, displaced youth, youth with disabilities need to be addressed urgently.

There is a need to design and implement community and school based comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programmes that promote human rights and gender equality in the Arab region. The right of access to accurate sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and information including CSE is grounded in fundamental human rights, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the International Conference for Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and Nairobi Summit.

For CSE to be effective it needs to be age- and culturally appropriate (including the terminology used) and based on UNFPA guidance documents⁸⁸. Research on gender-based violence prevention finds significant positive effects by engaging men and boys, including through school-based programmes that promote understanding of gender roles and gender stratification. Children in school-based interventions who received such

⁸⁷ https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Inob_booklet_en_3-12-2020_1.pdf

⁸⁸ https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/situational_analysis_final_for_web.pdf

programmes were four times more likely to report gender-equitable attitudes and more than twice as likely to oppose violence⁸⁹.

Policies and structured pedagogy programmes based on the Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) framework need to be developed in order to improve the learning

process and learning outcomes. These programmes need to incorporate SRHR and anti-bullying programmes. Training on CSE, anti-bullying and how to detect bullying, life-skills education, emotional intelligence, etc. of the teachers and administrators is deemed necessary.

BOX 3

Youth-to-youth connection in the State of Palestine: let's talk about sexual health!

Youth volunteers connect with marginalized groups and engage at-risk young people more directly and effectively. UN Youth Volunteer Nour Hamayel is 26-years-old and has just completed a two-year assignment with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in her home country, the State of Palestine. Nour's primarily role was Y-PEER coordinator – facilitating conversations and activities in the State of Palestine on sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention on behalf of the UNFPA-funded Youth Peer Education Network. Together with her colleagues, last year Nour reached 5,000 young people in schools and universities, 65 per cent of whom were from vulnerable communities: adolescent girls from refugee camps and Bedouin communities in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.⁹⁰

d. Employment and Entrepreneurship

A decade's long trend of high unemployment and limited job opportunities for youth in the Arab region has deteriorated further in 2020 especially after the COVID-19 pandemic⁹¹. According to the ILO, in the Arab region in general, even in countries with steady economic growth, employment and labor market conditions are a persistent challenge⁹².

The most adversely affected are women and youth in countries experiencing conflict or political instability, population displacements and migration⁹³. As the Arab Sustainable Development 2020 report notes, high youth unemployment “has exacerbated income inequality, and stunted social mobility, and led to social discontent”⁹⁴. As a result, many Arab youth continue to join the informal sector or opt for migration, regularly or irregularly.

⁸⁹ UNFPA (2018). Fulfilling the ICPD promise: progress, gaps and working at scale.

⁹⁰ <https://www.unv.org/our-stories/youth-youth-connection-state-palestine-lets-talk-about-sexual-health>

⁹¹ ESCWA, (2020). IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ARAB REGION. Retrieved from <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/uploads/impact-covid-19-young-people-arab-region-english.pdf>

⁹² ILO, (2018). “Employment Promotion in the Arab States”.

https://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/employment-policy/WCMS_714596/lang--en/index.htm

⁹³ ILO, (2018). “Employment Promotion in the Arab States”.

https://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/employment-policy/WCMS_714596/lang--en/index.htm

⁹⁴ ESCWA, (2020). “Arab Sustainable Development Report 2020”. ESCWA: Beirut

Youth unemployment rate is used as a measure of unutilized labor supply. It refers to the share of the labor force ages 15-24 without work, but available for and seeking employment. In 2020, unemployment among Arab youth stands at 23% while the world average is 13.7%⁹⁵. Moreover, for young women the average rate of unemployment is as high as 42.1% compared to 19.8% among males⁹⁶. The Arab region has the world's lowest rate of female labor force participation⁹⁷. Many young people who enter the labor market become underemployed, in vulnerable jobs or living in poverty. About 62%

of active women work in the informal sector in the Arab region, and young women are twice as likely as young men to face precarious employment situations⁹⁸.

The highest rates of unemployment (Table 6) are in countries witnessing conflicts or occupation, Libya (51%) followed by Palestine (43%). Only in 3 countries, Djibouti, Morocco, and Somalia the unemployment rate among youth females and males is almost the same, the gender gap is highest in Iraq with 39% followed by Libya at 28% and 26% in Jordan.

/ Table 11: Youth Unemployment Rate by gender (%) /

Country	Unemployment, youth total (% of total labour force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate) ⁹⁹	Unemployment, youth female (% of female labour force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate) ¹⁰⁰	Unemployment, youth male (% of male labour force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate) ¹⁰¹	Year
Algeria	30	48	26	2020
Djibouti	21	21	21	2020
Egypt	30	42	25	2020
Iraq	25	61	22	2020
Jordan	35	56	30	2020
Lebanon	18	21	16	2019
Libya	51	71	43	2020
Morocco	22	23	21	2020
Oman	14	38	9	2020
Palestine	42	67	36	2020
Somalia	17	17	17	2020
Sudan	31	40	27	2020
Syria	21	48	17	2020
Tunisia	37	39	36	2020
Yemen	24	34	23	2020

⁹⁵ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_737672.pdf

⁹⁶ International Labour Organization, (2020). Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Arab States https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_737672.pdf

⁹⁷ <https://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/equality-discrimination/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20Arab%20region%20has%20the,average%20of%2048%20per%20cent.&text=Female%20unemployment%20in%20the%20Arab,higher%20than%20the%20world%20average.>

⁹⁸ https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/20-00131_gp_id_pb_eng_apr5.pdf

⁹⁹ International Labour Organization (ILO), (2020). ILOSTAT database [database]. Available from <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>.

¹⁰⁰ International Labour Organization (ILO), (2020). ILOSTAT database [database]. Available from <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>.

¹⁰¹ International Labour Organization (ILO), (2020). ILOSTAT database [database]. Available from <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>.

In addition to the youth unemployment rate, the NEET rate or the percentage of 15–24-year-olds who are Not in Education, Employment or Training provides a clear idea about the status of youth engagement in the labor market. NEET youth neither contribute to the economies of their countries nor are prepared to enter the labor force. NEET rate is reported in only 7 of the 15 countries under

study (Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen) and in different years, as shown in Table 7 below. Overall, the ILO estimated the rate in the Arab region to have reached 34.3% in 2020, compared to a global average of 22.3%. Expectedly, the gender gap is at a very high rate, with 1 in 2 young women estimated to have NEET status, compared to almost one in five young men.¹⁰²

/ Table 12: NEET rate (%) /

Country	NEET rate (%) ¹⁰³	
	Value	Year
Algeria	20.9	2017
Djibouti	No Data	No Data
Egypt	27.1	2018
Iraq	40.6	2012
Jordan	No Data	No Data
Lebanon	22	2018-2019
Libya	No Data	No Data
Morocco	No Data	No Data
Oman	No Data	No Data
Palestine	No Data	No Data
Somalia	No Data	No Data
Sudan	32.8	2011
Syria	No Data	No Data
Tunisia	25.2	2010
Yemen	44.8	2014

Legal and Regulatory Frameworks on Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship

As shown in table 12, the legal framework of the majority of responding countries (10 countries) covers youth employment, with only 6 indicating that national laws provide support for persons with disabilities to enter the labor

market. Further, 10 countries have policies or strategies to promote youth employment and access to decent work (see table 15 in Annex). Meanwhile, only 4 countries reported having policies or strategies tackling barriers preventing young women from entering the labor market, and 3 countries indicated they had national strategies or programs to support entrepreneurship among youth.

¹⁰² International Labour Organization (ILO), (2020). Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Arab States https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_737672.pdf

¹⁰³ NEET rate (%): Percentage of 15–24-year-olds who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). ILO, (2018). Retrieved from <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/youth/>

/ Table 13: National Laws Addressing Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship /

Country	National Laws
Algeria	Constitutional right to employment for all citizens Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender
Djibouti	Employment and Entrepreneurship Support for persons with disabilities to enter labor market Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender
Egypt	Labor law Youth employment policies and access to decent work Policies tackling barriers preventing young women from entering the labor market Support for persons with disabilities to enter labor market Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender
Iraq	Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender
Jordan	Youth employment policies and access to decent work Policies tackling barriers preventing young women from entering the labor market Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender
Lebanon	Labor Law Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender
Libya	Labor Law Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender
Morocco	Constitutional right to employment for all citizens Labor law Youth Employment policies and access to decent work Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender
Oman	Labor Law Youth employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender Policies tackling barriers preventing young women from entering the labor market Support for persons with disabilities to enter labor market Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender
Palestine	Labor law
Somalia	Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender
Sudan	Employment policies and access to decent work Support for persons with disabilities to enter labor market Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender
Syria	Labor law Youth employment policies and access to decent work Support for persons with disabilities to enter labor market Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender
Tunisia	Constitutional right to employment for all citizens Employment and Entrepreneurship Support for persons with disabilities to enter labor market Policies tackling barriers preventing young women from entering the labor market Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender
Yemen	Youth employment policies and access to decent work Employment laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender

All 15 countries under study ban discrimination on the basis of gender and guarantee equal pay in their labor codes. Yet, all 15 countries have imposed legal restrictions on women's employment in jobs that are deemed "arduous" or "of risky nature" with most specifying mining. Further, with the exception of few countries, women are prohibited from undertaking night work unless the ministry of labor grants exceptions. Three countries also mention jobs that are unfamiliar to women's nature, or their capabilities as women, or above their strength without specifying particular jobs. With regards to sexual harassment, in 7 countries the penal code criminalizes sexual harassment, while in 6 countries penal code does not explicitly protect against sexual harassment however, it covers some types of sexual harassment. Only in Iraq and Libya the labor law and penal code protect against sexual harassment.

Paid maternity leave is guaranteed by the labor law in all countries under study, however, compliance with ILO 14 weeks standard varies greatly. The duration of paid maternity leave in 7 countries is less than 14 weeks with Oman having the lowest duration of 50 days followed by Sudan (56 days). On the other hand, 8 countries meet and some exceed the ILO standard duration, with Djibouti having the highest paid maternity duration (26 weeks) half of which is paid by the government, followed by Somalia (16 weeks).

The minimum age for work varies between 14 in Yemen, 15 years of age (Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Palestine, Somalia and Iraq), and 16 years old in (Libya, Algeria, Djibouti, Lebanon, Jordan, and Tunisia). Additionally, labor laws list the types of hazardous activities prohibited for children under the age of 18 in five countries, while in 4 countries it is set at 15 years of age.

Reported Gaps in Laws and Policies

Gaps impeding youth employment and entrepreneurship, see table 24, were identified on the following levels:

Legal

- Absence of a legal framework to support youth employment including youth capacity development was reported by several countries.
- Absence of adequate laws to guarantee equal opportunities for women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups.
- Insufficient legal support to ensure that the social system is adequate to support a decent life.

Policy

- Several countries identified lack of youth employment policies. Also, some countries pointed out the lack of information on the available employment opportunities and on the performance of youth in the labor market is hindering the adoption of effective employment mechanisms.
- Lack of access of employees to their employment rights as constituted in the national labor law.

Strategy

Some responding countries identified problems with their youth employment strategies/action plans:

- Lack of a multisectoral strategy necessary for meeting market demands and livelihood needs of youth.
- Lack of follow up and evaluation measures.
- Youth strategy and youth employment action plan are outdated, not suitable for current developments.

Programmes

- Several countries that have youth capacity building programmes and technical and vocational training identified problems with regards to, reach among youth national wide with NEET being left behind, poor coordination between programmes, and lack of alignment with job market demands.
- Absence of youth specific capacity building programmes was also reported by some countries.

Reported Challenges & Obstacles facing Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship

The following factors were identified as challenges by responding countries (for country specific answers see table 29):

Political

- Political interference in the employment process of youth in the public sector and favoring of party supporters was reported by some countries. Fragility of Palestinian economy due to Israeli occupation limits employment opportunities for young people.

Sociocultural

- Despite existence of laws that protect the rights for persons with disability, some countries reported discrimination and stigma around persons with disabilities and against women in the work place, especially in the private sector. Also, negative perception of vocational training in society.

Economic

- Limited access of youth to quality employment were reported by several countries with 4 of them experiencing unstable security situation compounded by an economic crisis. Additionally, Palestinian youth face additional restrictions on their mobility by Israeli occupation, and control over movement of goods is hampering economic growth.

Security

- Unstable security situation is limiting employment investments, thus less job opportunities for young people.

Human resource

- Responding countries reported mismatch of skills, and need for subsidized training programs targeting young women to enter non-traditional sectors.

Perceived opportunities by Responding Countries for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship

Several countries reported that policies are being aligned with the SDGs and ICPD with Key ministries being engaged and launching youth specific programs.

Opportunities that are specific to particular countries:

- Lebanon perceived the launching of the Labour Force and Household living conditions survey results by the Central Administration of Statistics as an opportunity for proper planning and implementation of specific projects to ensure

- youth employment. This development can address the issue of youth migration. In addition to an employment labor market diagnosis which is currently taking place to better inform policy recommendations.
- Palestine reported partnership between the private sector and the UN on youth related issues.

Entry points for better employment outcomes for young people

Youth unemployment in the Arab region is mainly impeded by structural issues including the dominant economic model. Plans to recover from Covid-19 pandemic could be used as an opportunity to adopt a new model that promotes inclusive growth. Public investments should be directed towards sectors that “add significant value to the economy, the green and innovative economy, and inclusive human capital and infrastructure that contribute to greater productivity”¹⁰⁴. Also, it is essential to support small and medium enterprises, women and the self-employed,” the majority of whom are young people”^{105 106}. This can be through small-scale grants or interest free loans. Finally, it is timely to provide adequate social protection coverage to protect all vulnerable groups. Persons with disabilities, women, young people in the informal sector, and migrant workers are at risk of extreme poverty and increased vulnerability¹⁰⁷.

Some specific measures could be adopted for better employment outcomes for young people.

These include, integrating evidence into the design of youth employment programmes and policies, and improving coordination among key actors¹⁰⁸. Planning and monitoring youth job creation within national policies, and matching skill sets with labor market demands. Further, to promote women’s economic participation it is urgent to reform laws that discriminate against them including personal status laws, and address gaps in labor laws. Also, address practices and administrative hurdles preventing their “access to land, economic resources and financial services”. Launch targeted training programmes to enhance skills of young women, and provide incentives to pursue education in fields where job growth is anticipated¹⁰⁹.

Conflict and political instability have not only undermined the employment prospects of young people, they have also exacerbated pre-existing levels of child labor among both refugee and host populations. A recent study by the ILO notes that refugee and displaced children work for longer hours and lower pay than local children¹¹⁰. They are engaged in a number of sectors of activities with a notable rise in street work, forced labor, commercial sexual exploitation and early marriage¹¹¹. Hidden forms of child labor such as unpaid household services and domestic work mainly affect young girls where they face risks of seclusion, lack of school attendance, and violations of their rights as children¹¹². Factors that promote early workforce entry of displaced and refugee children are difficulty in accessing basic services, families’ extreme poverty or unemployment among adults in the family¹¹³.

¹⁰⁴ United Nations, (2020).Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on the Arab Region An Opportunity to Build Back Better.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations (2020).Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on the Arab Region An Opportunity to Build Back Better. www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_arab_states_english_version_july_2020.pdf

¹⁰⁶ International Labour Organization, (2020). SOCIAL PROTECTION RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_756764.pdf

¹⁰⁷ International Labour Organization, (2020). SOCIAL PROTECTION RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS.

¹⁰⁸ Kabbani, Nader (2019).Youth employment in the Middle East and North Africa: Revisiting and reframing the challenge. Brookings Doha Center. Accessed from: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/youth-employment-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-revisiting-and-reframing-the-challenge>

¹⁰⁹ Unemployment of Young Women in the Arab Region: Causes and Interventions. Accessed from: <https://www.unescwa.org/file/78546/download?token=X6hsJ5Qe>

¹¹⁰ League of Arab States, International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2019). Child Labour in the Arab Region: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

¹¹¹ League of Arab States, International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2019). Child Labour in the Arab Region: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

¹¹² League of Arab States, International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (2019). Child Labour in the Arab Region: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis.

¹¹³ UNHCR (2014).PROTECTION OF REFUGEE CHILDREN IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

The ILO urges governments to strengthen linkages in their legislations between the child protection and social protection system as a way to prevent child labor, which will benefit both refugees as well as host communities. In addition to the enforcement of compulsory education laws on all children, improving labor inspection capacity, and increasing research and data collection on child labor.

All Arab states have ratified the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention which requires immediate action to eliminate the worst forms of child labor defined as: all forms of slavery, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and any work that by its nature is harmful to the health, safety, or morals of children. This applies to all children indiscriminately. Similarly, ICPD principle 12 “Countries should guarantee to all migrants all basic human rights as included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. SDG 8 target 8.7, calls on governments to “take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor including recruitment and use of child soldiers...”

e. Peace and Resilience building

As demonstrated throughout the report, countries experiencing protracted conflicts and political unrest are the most challenged in meeting their SDG and ICDP commitments, with tragic consequences on the lives of their

populations especially the young and the most vulnerable. Young Arabs have been physically and mentally affected by years of violence and insecurity, almost 37% of MENA’s youth (15-24 years) live in fragile and conflict-affected states¹¹⁴ with neighboring countries receiving sustained inflows of refugees¹¹⁵, especially in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Libya, Sudan, Djibouti, Jordan and Lebanon. SDG 16 recognizes the links between peace, justice, sustainable development and “effective, accountable and inclusive institutions”¹¹⁶, as fair and representative structures of governance are preconditions for peace. As such, and for conflict prevention purposes, young women and men should be empowered to lead peace building initiatives in their communities, including in dialogue and reconciliation efforts.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 adopted in 2015, is “the first resolution entirely dedicated to recognizing the importance of engaging young women and men in shaping and sustaining peace”¹¹⁷, member states are “to include young people in their institutions and mechanisms to prevent violent conflict and to support the work already being performed by youth in peace and security”. The resolution identifies five main pillars for action: a) Youth Participation; b) Youth Protection; c) Preventive Social Empowerment; d) Youth Re-integration & Disengagement; e) Partnership.

¹¹⁴ UNICEF, (2019). MENA GENERATION 2030 Investing in children and youth today to secure a prosperous region tomorrow. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/mena-generation-2030>

¹¹⁵ UNFPA, (2018). Mapping of Population Policies in the Arab Region and Their Alignment with Existing Strategies in Relation to the ICPD: 2018.

¹¹⁶ ESCWA, (2020). Arab Sustainable Development Report 2020. <https://asdr.unescwa.org/sdgs/pdf/en/ASDR2020-SDGs/ASDR2020-SDG16.pdf>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.unfpa.org/youth-peace-security>

Further, the Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security, provides a roadmap for strengthening policy framework by building on the positive potential of young women and men to prevent and counter violence and build sustainable peace¹¹⁸.

UNFPA led the efforts together with regional entities to develop a regional strategic framework on Youth Peace and Security in Arab states¹¹⁹.

Legal and Regulatory Frameworks Addressing Peace and Resilience building

All 15 countries under study have anti-human trafficking legislations, however, in only 9 out of which preventive and protective measures are included in anti-trafficking laws.

Seven responding countries reported having laws for prevention and protection from violence including sexual exploitation. On the other hand, only 3 responding countries indicated that they have laws to promote safe inclusive accessible public spaces. Also, only 3 responding countries indicated that their legal framework includes conflict resolution, ensuring young women and men have a role in peace-building, with youth in Algeria playing a role in constitution-draft revision. None of the responding countries reported on peace building skills and education.



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¹¹⁸ United Nation.Global Forum on on Youth Peace and Security .Amman Youth Declaration on Youth Peace and Security. Adopted in Amman, Jordan on 22 August 2015

¹¹⁹ UNFPA.Regional Strategic Framework on Youth, Peace and Security in the Arab States 2018 – 2021

/ Table 14: National Laws addressing Peace and Resilience building /

Country	National Laws
Algeria	Youth role in constitution-draft revision Anti-human trafficking law
Djibouti	Prevention and Protection from violence, including sexual exploitation Anti-human trafficking law
Egypt	Prevention and Protection from violence, including sexual exploitation Anti-human trafficking law
Iraq	Prevention and Protection from violence, including sexual exploitation Anti-human trafficking law
Jordan	Anti-human trafficking law
Lebanon	Promotion of safe inclusive accessible public spaces Anti-human trafficking law
Libya	Anti-human trafficking law
Morocco	Prevention and Protection from violence, including sexual exploitation Anti-human trafficking law Humanitarian action and conflict resolution
Oman	Prevention and Protection from violence, including sexual exploitation Promotion of safe inclusive accessible public spaces
Palestine	Anti-human trafficking law
Somalia	Anti-human trafficking law
Sudan	Prevention and Protection from violence, including sexual exploitation Anti-human trafficking law Humanitarian action and conflict resolution
Syria	Prevention and Protection from violence, including sexual exploitation Anti-human trafficking law
Tunisia	Prevention and Protection from violence, including sexual exploitation Anti-human trafficking law Promotion of safe inclusive accessible public spaces
Yemen	Anti-human trafficking law

As for national policies and strategies related to peace and resilience building, 8 countries reported having policies, strategies or action plans that address related issues. The answers provided covered the following; multifaceted strategy in the fight against terrorism, national strategies to combat violence against women, national action plans for Women, Peace and

Security, peace building strategy, Preventing Violence and Extremism Strategy, Children involved in armed conflict policy, national strategy for Support and Empowerment of Women, national youth strategies, National Framework for Family Protection, and National Action Plan for 1325.

Reported Gaps in Laws and Policies

Responding countries identified the following gaps regarding peace and resilience building (table 25):

Legal

- Absence of laws concerned with youth participation in peace building and resilience. The existence of discriminatory laws and legal barriers to youth participation in peace building.
- Limited implementation of law on human trafficking, insufficient implementation of the legal framework addressing sexual abuse, and exploitation of children.
- Lack of implementation decrees for GBV.
- Lack of protection mechanisms for migrants, and weak protection system for persons with disabilities.
- Absence of a civil status law that would guarantee equal rights for all citizens, regardless of gender or religion. Also, the existing electoral law entrenches sectarianism, and Ta'ef agreement (Lebanon).

Policy

- Palestine and Yemen indicated that there are no policies in place related to peace and resilience.
- Limited role for women in peace building processes and decision making.
- Some responding countries also reported lack of governmental operationalization of resolutions on YPS (2250, 2419 and 2535), and absence of a national integrated youth policy that addresses youth development and well-being.

- Absence of inclusive policies that target leaving no one behind, including accessibility issues for persons with disabilities and safe spaces for women.
- Lack of coordination of efforts under a national umbrella within a strategic framework to monitor progress.

Strategy

- Some countries identified absence of a youth, peace, and security strategy as a challenge.
- Some countries reported that their national GBV strategies had problems in relation to prevention and response, weak multi sectorial coordination and limited engagement of all key stakeholders to revise the strategy. Additionally, the strategy does not individualize specific interventions adapted to young victims of violence, and does not include support for parents of victims.

Programmes

- Absence of programmes addressing UNSCR 2250 in some countries.
- Lack of multi sectorial coordination and national protocol for the GBV programme. Also, additional programmatic challenges due to ineffectiveness of interventions fighting sexual inequalities, mapping sensitive areas or managing juvenile delinquents.
- Limited availability, access and quality of services for victims of violence.

Reported Challenges & Obstacles facing Peace and Resilience building

As shown in table 30, Youth participation in peace and resilience building is impeded by the following factors:

Political

- Crack down on freedom of expression, harassment and detainment of activists especially in relation to social media activism and young peace builders and human rights defenders.
- Absence of political will to include youth was reported.
- Women are still under represented and there is a limited role for them in peace building and decision making processes.
- Lack of funding for youth led peace building initiatives, focus of funding was on Prevention of violent extremism / countering violent extremism rather than youth participation in the YPS agenda. political exclusion of young people with mistrust between young people and the government/decision-makers.
- Internal political divisions and the lack of progress on the reform agenda. Palestine specified that basic law is not being implemented due to the complex political situation and monopoly of militant political parties on decision making.

Sociocultural

- Age based discrimination and negative perception of young people as a burden and trouble-makers, as well as taboos and gender specific social discrimination, were reported by several countries to be contributing to the social and political isolation of young women and men.

- Both Somalia and Palestine reported that youth were increasingly being radicalized.
- Young people with disabilities are especially excluded from decision making, and young females with disabilities face double vulnerabilities.

Economic

- Poverty, high unemployment, and limited livelihood opportunities for young people increase tension and make them likely to join political parties.

Human resources

- Responding countries reported lack of allocated human resource and budgets to operationalize the UNSCR 2250, and shortage of experts in Youth Peace and Security field and weak capacities of youth in this domain.
- Migration and brain drain of youth due to economic hardship

Security

- In Yemen, youth participating in peace building face security risks particularly in areas where this topic is too sensitive, and in Sudan wars and tribal conflicts continue to draining young people. While Israeli occupation of Palestine and the resulting geographic isolation of areas threaten social cohesion and hinder the ability of youth to engage.

Perceived Opportunities for youth in Peace and Resilience building

Few countries provided answers that are specific to peace and resilience building.

- The ratification of UNSC resolutions on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) and established frameworks and youth coordination structures in response are seen as an opportunity by 4 countries.
- Lebanon mentioned the ratification of the Women, Peace and Security resolution and the opportunity it represents in ensuring a great role for female youth in Lebanon's Youth National Policy and its action plan.
- Libya identified the peace building fund project for Sirt (jointly implemented by UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP) and a policy brief on contribution of young women and girls to peace building being developed by UNWOMEN and UNFPA.
- Palestine sees an opportunity in the identification of youth as one of the targeted vulnerable population groups in the UNDAF, and Humanitarian Needs Overview, the recent UNCT Covid19 response plan.
- Jordan has included the peace and security component in its National Youth Strategy, and created under the umbrella of the Ministry of Youth, the "Jordan Youth, Peace and Security 2250 National Coalition" consisting of organizations and youth members.
- Iraq is in the process of formulation of National Coalition on Youth Peace and Security 2250. This will lead into formulation of action-plan on UNSC Resolution Youth, Peace and Security 2250.

Entry Points for improving youth participation in peace building

Youth constitute a heterogeneous group with diverse identities. Gender intersects with ethnicity, religion, class, context and other factors, all of which impact the way young women and men experience violent conflicts and "their approach to influence and participate in peace processes"¹²⁰. Young people are resilient in their pursuit for sustainable development and peace. For social stability, especially in countries witnessing political and security unrest, there is a great need to ensure the meaningful political inclusion of young people in governance structures and formal peace building processes, and to promote a positive narrative around young people to change misconceptions that undermine their agency. It is also essential to recognize their contributions to social cohesion and conflict mitigation in their communities.

In a UNFPA progress study on Youth, Peace and Security, young people articulated their own vision for peace explaining that to them "sustaining peace requires addressing the underlying causes of corruption, inequality and injustice that underpin violent conflict"¹²¹. Also, for young people the notions of peace and security are personal, they are associated with well-being, happiness and hope, as well as feelings of belonging, dignity and safety. Further, peace is also "fundamentally gendered", especially for young women the concepts of peace and security are tightly connected to gender equality.

Young people in conflict-affected or fragile settings play active roles in maintaining the wellbeing of their communities and providing humanitarian support where needed. They create alternative avenues, form networks and adopt innovative approaches to prevent

¹²⁰ <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Global-Policy-Paper-Youth-Participation-in-Peace-Processes.pdf>

¹²¹ UNFPA, (2018).The Missing Peace Independent Progress Study On Youth, Peace And Security <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-10/youth-web-english.pdf>

violence, manage the impact of conflict, and sustain peace¹²². As such, for more effective and sustainable peace building processes, it is of priority to engage young women and men as equal partners while preserving their leadership throughout the process¹²³.

BOX 4

Yemeni Youth Working Towards Peace¹²⁴

Since the beginning of the conflict in Yemen, young activists have engaged in humanitarian efforts to fill the vacuum in services left by the government. Through their networks they were able to access communities faster than larger organizations. Later, they started to adopt more sustainable approaches, “linking humanitarian responses with development and conflict mediation”. They used artistic tools (music, painting, social media, and photography) to address rising levels of hostility and community divisions. Further, “despite stigma around mental health issues, young Yemenis recognized mental health as a priority” and attempted to provide psychological support in their work, including counselling sessions and reintegration activities for child soldiers¹²⁵.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

The principles of inclusiveness and shared prosperity are the basis of the 2030 Agenda. Young people in the Arab region continue to face the challenges of inequality and exclusion, and are among the first to suffer the consequences of wars, conflicts and displacement. Further, the most severely excluded and marginalized groups include, displaced young people, young people with disabilities, young women especially in rural areas, young people without citizenship, NEET, and LGBTQI youth. For young people, the interdependence between peace, human rights, equality, justice and development is clear.

Arab countries can use the SDGs as a framework to recover from the impact of the pandemic crisis and address structural impediments that impact the wellbeing of young people. Moreover, promoting the inclusion and meaningful participation of young women and men requires political will and commitment to human rights, legal reforms, as well as the revision of national youth policies and strategies. These measures are necessary for ensuring, gender equality, sexual and reproduction health rights, mental wellbeing, and innovative approaches for youth reintegration into the education system and the labor market.

¹²² <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Global-Policy-Paper-Youth-Participation-in-Peace-Processes.pdf>

¹²³ UNFPA, (2018). The Missing Peace Independent Progress Study On Youth, Peace And Security <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-10/youth-web-english.pdf>

¹²⁴ Saferworld, (2019). Youth contributions to peacebuilding in Yemen: “The situation needs us to be active”.

¹²⁵ Saferworld, (2019). Youth contributions to peacebuilding in Yemen: “The situation needs us to be active”.

a. Youth participation and Civic Engagement

Legal

- Revise discriminatory laws to ensure gender equality, and respect gender parity in local and national bodies.
- Review laws that govern political parties and CSOs to give young people the opportunity to take the lead.
- Lower the voting age to 18 in countries, and candidacy age to 21.
- Enacting laws for persons with disabilities and guarantee their rights in political participation.
- Protect freedom of speech of all citizens.
- Enhance accountability mechanisms of governments.
- Strengthen legislation through organic laws on the participation of young people.
- Removing all legal and administrative barriers that marginalize the role of young people in public life.
- Advocacy for better legislation for youth volunteering.

Policy and Strategy

- Increase the budget and transparency of MoY youth programmes.
- Accelerate the elaboration and implementation of an integrated youth policy.

- Create spaces where young people can engage with decision makers to express their priorities and demands to align decisions with their needs, and build trust between the government and young people.
- Established platforms for constructive dialogue between young people, public institutions, civil society, political organizations and the private sector.
- Utilize new technologies, including mobile, social media and online tools to maximize outreach to young people, including in remote areas.
- Launch awareness campaigns (Media and Digital) on the positive role of young people as leaders and agents of change.
- Address the problems of internal migration from rural to urban areas.
- Utilization of demographic data for increased focus on empowerment of adolescents and youth, with special attention to young women and marginalized populations.
- Develop rehabilitative mechanisms to help young ex-detainees reintegrate into society, to find decent work and housing, to recover psychologically, and to prevent re-offense and re-imprisonment.
- Support citizen journalism and activism led by youth through social accountability interventions.
- Involve young people in defending human rights, including documenting and monitoring violations, and launching of community-based advocacy in partnership with civil society and youth-led organizations.

- Create more synergy and coordination between government bodies in the implementation of strategies and programs targeting young people.
- Establish national monitoring and evaluation systems that periodically assess all social protection programmes regarding inclusion and positive impact on the situation of persons with disabilities.
- Support the staff capacity of the youth ministry and institutional strength in youth related issues.
- Operationalize the strategies and programs adopted, but still not implemented.
- Planning for joint socio-cultural activities to allow youth from different geographical locations and affiliations to meet and share experience and knowledge.

Programmes

- Increase youth focused initiatives that go beyond sports, to include cultural and educational activities and art.
- Develop tools on culturally-sensitive approaches and engagement of civil society organizations in support of social norm change and advancement of human rights.
- Support data generation on adolescents and youth issues, and undertake periodical research on youth emerging issues.
- Develop programs accessible to all young people to ensure capacity building on a broader level, by engaging with youth from different social, economic, educational backgrounds, as well as those with disabilities (not just physical) and of all genders.

- Particular to Palestine, encourage cultural interventions to promote Palestinian culture, art, music, and identity led by young people for young people, and social security net to build the resilience of the Palestinian youth to better deal with and transform from shocks.

b. Health and wellbeing

Legal

- Achieve youth universal health coverage including sexual and reproductive health.

Policy and strategy

- Prioritize health needs of adolescents and youth in the development agenda.
- Recognize young people as a distinct group with specific health needs.
- Ensure access of adolescents and youth to primary health care services.
- Develop customized SRH policies for vulnerable groups.
- Develop specific tailored SRHR programs within the MOH for adolescent girls, adolescents with disabilities and key populations to ensure covering their specific health needs MOH.
- Enhance crosscutting multisectoral coordination work including the education and health sectors.
- Enhance advocacy efforts on risky behaviors and harmful practices among youth.
- Increase the skilled personnel working on adolescents & youth.

- Provide more public resources to support the health system.

Programmes

- Create peer-to-peer network among adolescents and youth in schools and universities addressing health issues.
- Support youth-led community initiatives on all aspects of youth well-being.
- Organize youth sports tournaments, art activities to foster dialogue, including on gender, and offer young people alternatives to negative coping strategies.
- Organize awareness of the general public (to encourage parents to understand and come forward ensuring their children the health care they need) and decision makers.
- Organize awareness campaign on human rights, SRHR and women rights.
- Particular to Sudan, encourage reliance on modern quality medicine (people rely on traditional healing instead of modern medicines).

c. Education and Life skills

Legal

- Issue anti bullying legal measures.

Policy and strategy

- Improve the educational level of public schools in order to remove the quality gap between the public and private education sectors.

- Embed new and innovative learning methods and critical thinking in the educational curricula.

- Review and update school curricula in order to include CSE, anti-bullying, life-skills education, protection issues, communication skills.

- Allocate specific funding to address the needs of students with disabilities, and other marginalized population groups.

- Develop the skills of teachers and administrators on the following topics: CSE, anti-bullying and how to detect bullying, life-skills education, protection issues, communication skills.

- Provide a support system for combating cyber bullying and cyber blackmailing.

- Ensure the presence of school counsellors in each school to work with students who require mental healthcare.

Programmes

- Use a culturally appropriate terminology for Comprehensive Sexuality Education such as Reproductive Health, Human Biology, Puberty, etc.

- Enhance the security situation in order to permit young women and men to access schools in conflict affected countries.

- Encourage students to do internships during their education to help them build their soft skills.

d. Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship

Legal

- Revise labor laws to ensure there are adequate mechanisms for protection of labor rights of all employees.
- Ensure the enactment of laws that guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities in employment.
- Address persisting gender pay gap.
- Legal measures to support working parents through childcare and flexible work arrangements.
- Inclusive social protection system.

Policy and strategy

- Provide necessary support system for persons with disabilities to access employment and raise awareness in society and among employers.
- Develop effective policy for youth employment and labor market strategy based on labor market information, and evaluation of existing youth employment mechanisms.
- Diversify the economy in partnership with the private sector to create more opportunities.
- Enhancing and diversify the capacities of young women and men including IT skills to match labor market demands.
- Increase access to finance and subsidized loans to promote entrepreneurship and expand start-up culture among young people

- Provide support to SMEs and invest in potential high-value added industries to create more jobs for young people.
- Establish mechanisms to ensure that the employment process is merit based with clear and specific criteria for recruitment.
- Encourage policymakers to include new and innovative learning methods, critical thinking, and career counselling into school curricula to foster school to labor market transition.
- Link vocational education and training to higher education and raise awareness on its value in the labor market.
- Consulting youth on labor market reforms.

Programmes

- Expand existing training programs to reach all youth especially the most vulnerable and NEET.
- Offer apprenticeships customized to young people who are less educated and NEET through gender-sensitive approaches
- Offer subsidized or free training programs for young women to enter non-traditional sectors and end vertical division of labor
- Provide job counseling services in universities through public/private/NGO partnerships

e. Peace and Resilience Building

Legal

- Protection of young peace builders and activists.

Policy and Strategy

- Improve prevention strategies to deal with lack of security inside camps for internally displaced people and refugees.
- Support youth peacebuilding initiatives, especially ones that promote gender-equitable and non-violent masculine roles.
- Ensure a gender sensitive and responsive environment to enhance the participation of young women in peace building.
- Advocate for safe public spaces for women.
- Multisectoral coordination platform for GBV prevention and response.
- Improve access to emergency health services.
- Engage youth in formal structures and mechanisms in humanitarian action including preparedness and implementation, and support youth innovation and entrepreneurship in tackling humanitarian issues.
- Engage and empower young people in defending human rights, including documenting and monitoring violations.
- Create field structure to support in the planning, intervention, data collection and two way feedbacks with communities.
- Create social safety nets to help build the resilience of youth to better deal with and recover from shocks.

- Advocate for the government to develop policies in line with UNSC Resolution 2250.
- Establish coalition of youth led-organizations, human rights, media, to protect and advocate for the implementation of UNSCR2250.
- Particular to Palestine:
 - Adopt measures against rising radicalization and violence in society, particularly among excluded, vulnerable, and marginalized youth.
 - Foster social cohesion by increasing links between young people across Palestine, and dialogue between young people from different political parties.

Programmes

- Develop programmes that address the needs of adolescent and youth in humanitarian situations.
- Provide young women and men with training opportunities to play an active part in peace building.
- Support specialized experts and centers in the field of YPS.
- Enhance the capacity of youth-led organizations to be able to receive monetary and non-monetary resources.

VI. Overview of International Commitments by Countries in the Arab Region

The above mentioned realities faced by countries in the Arab Region are posing an unprecedented challenge for governments to meet some of the international commitments, specifically the ICPD & Nairobi Summit commitments and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. This section will provide a brief overview of the current condition of countries in the Arab region in relation to the above.

a. International Conventions (ICs) addressing youth issues

Human rights of populations in general and of particular population groups in specific, including youth, are ensured through International regulatory mechanisms such as International Conventions. Adequate monitoring of such instruments is considered substantial to highlight and identify specific gaps that need to be addressed in each country. Below is a table summarizing the countries ratification of international conventions addressing youth issues, based on information retrieved from the desk review.



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/ Table 15: Countries Ratification of International Conventions /

International Conventions (ICs)	Relevance to Youth issues	Ratifying Countries	Ratifying countries with Reservations or Declarations
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (1969)	Recognizes the right to marriage and choice of spouse	All	Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen
Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) (1976)	Recognizes the political rights of women	All but Oman	Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) (1976)	Recognizes the right to control one's own body	All but Oman	Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1981)	Among other issues, establishes a framework against sexual violence	All but Somalia, Sudan	Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria & Yemen
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1990)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantees the rights of all children without discrimination in any form • Recognizes the girl child 	All	Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Syria and Tunisia
Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW) (2003)	Recognizes human rights of migrant workers including their right to health	All but Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Djibouti, Oman, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, Tunisia	Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Syria
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2008)	Recognizes that women and girls with disabilities are often at greater risk, both within and outside the home, of violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment, and exploitation	All but Lebanon	Egypt, Libya and Syria
Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) (1987)	Requires states to take effective measures to prevent torture in any territory, such as sexual violence and abuse	All but Oman, Sudan	Algeria, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia

b. SDGs Commitments

In what relates to the SDGs, very few countries have achieved some of the SDGs commitments for varying reasons, such as the current extended conflicts in some countries that have weakened the gains of development, thus leading to a poor performance on most SDGs, especially on those related to health and well-being, as well as Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Data also shows that major efforts are still needed in most of the countries to address labor rights, economic growth and freedom of speech¹²⁶.

c. ICPD & Nairobi Summit Commitments

A remarkable yet varied and inconsistent progress is noted among Arab countries in achieving ICPD commitments and delivering upon the 2013 Cairo Declaration. Improvements were found to enhance sexual and reproductive health conditions, gender parity in education and access to safe water and sanitation while extreme poverty rates diminished. However, major challenges remained affecting primarily youth and women. These challenges were characterized by poor educational quality, high unemployment rates, weak youth participation and absence of youth-friendly services, limited women participation in the economic and political arenas, gender inequalities and increased cases of gender-based violence¹²⁷.

Nairobi summit in 2019 provided a platform for Arab countries to readdress their ICPD commitments which were made by national governments, civil society organizations and a regional parliamentary network. Youth-related

commitments were made primarily by Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan and Tunisia^{128, 129}.

These ICPD25 commitments by the Arab countries in Nairobi summit were characterized by the below¹³⁰:

- No commitments to specify budgetary and financial support to upstream work on youth in the region.
- Main focus was on increasing access to SRH services for adolescents and youth and to improve comprehensive sexuality education.
- Limited focus on enhancing participation of young people and increasing availability of data on youth.
- Limited focus related to the Youth, Peace and Security agenda except Iraq, where government is more interested to implement YPS UNSCR2250.

¹²⁶ Sachs et al., (2020). The Sustainable Development Goals and Covid-19. Sustainable Development Report 2020. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹²⁷ UNFPA, (2018). Reviewing the Implementation of the 2013 Cairo Declaration: Regional Report 2018. Retrieved from https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ICPD%20Regional%20English%20report%20final%20for%20web.July2019_0.pdf

¹²⁸ UNFPA ASRO, (2020). Analysis of the Arab region commitments at the Nairobi summit on ICPD25. (PowerPoint Presentation, Not Published)

¹²⁹ UNFPA, (2020). Accelerating the Promise: REPORT ON THE NAIROBI SUMMIT ON ICPD25. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/nairobi-summit-icpd25-report#:~:text=This%20report%20captures%20the%20unique,reproductive%20health%20and%20rights%20worldwide>.

¹³⁰ UNFPA ASRO, (2020). Analysis of the Arab region commitments at the Nairobi summit on ICPD25. (PowerPoint Presentation, Not Published)



Annex 1: Tables

The section below provides an overview of the reported answers related to the following components: (1) Regulatory Frameworks including Legislations, Policies and Strategies; (2) Gaps; (3) Challenges and Obstacles; (4) Existing Opportunities; and (5) Organizations Addressing Youth issues by responding countries.

a. Regulatory Frameworks Relevance to Key Youth themes by country

Tables 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 below list the Existing National Policies/Strategies relevant to each theme and the reported obstacles to adoption/implementation of each policy/strategy.

/ Table 16: Reported National Policies/Strategies related to Participation and Civic Engagement in each country /

Existing National Policies/Strategies	Participation and Civic Engagement			
	Title of the Policy/ Strategy	Type of responsible body for Policy/ Strategy Development	Policy/Strategy Adoption/ Implementation	Specific obstacles to Adoption/ Implementation
Algeria	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Djibouti	Policy of youth	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Egypt	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Iraq	National Youth Strategy 2016-2026	Public Organization	Yes	Not implemented as planned
	National Vision Iraq 2030	Public Organization	Yes	under implementation
	National Development Plan 2018-2022	Public Organization	Yes	under implementation
Jordan	Youth National Strategy (2018-2025)	Public Organization	Yes	The executive plan did not adopt a clear plan for follow-up and evaluation
	The bylaws of forming political parties	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National Inclusive Education Strategy	Public Organization	Yes	The council is currently working on a clear plan. The committees for drafting the plan are not assigned yet
	National Women Empowerment Strategy	Public Organization	Don't know	under work and progress
Lebanon	Policy of rights of social inclusion of young persons with disabilities	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	Preventing Violence and Extremism Strategy	N/A	Yes	N/A
	Children involved in armed conflict policy	N/A	Yes	N/A
	National Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (2019-2029)	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Morocco	Governmental program 2016-2021	Public Organization	No	Program under revision
	Integrated Youth policy- Ministry of culture, youth and sports	Public Organization	Yes	Adopted at the ministerial level, preparation of action plan
Oman	Five Year Strategy of the Ministry of Social Development	Public Organization	N/A	N/A
Palestine	National Youth Strategy (2017-2022)	Public Organization	Yes	The challenge is the operationalization of this strategy, low capacities and outreach, and lack of funding mechanisms
	Youth are our future			
Somalia	Somali National Youth Policy	Public Organization	N/A	N/A
Sudan	National Youth Policy (currently being developed)	Public Organization	No	N/A
Syria	National Disability Plan	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National Multi-sectoral Framework for Youth and Adolescents	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National Strategy for Support and Empowerment of Women 2018	Public Organization	N/A	N/A
Tunisia	National Strategy on the Socio-economic Integration of People with Disabilities	Public Organization	No	Delay in implementation because of the COVID-19 crisis
	National Strategy on Citizenship and Human Rights Education	Public Organization	No	Partial implementation Needs to be revised as the strategy was elaborated in 2012
Yemen	Not clear (1-Outcomes of NDC 2- Yemeni law 3- NCYS)	Public Organization	No	N/A

Country

/ Table 17: Reported **National Policies/Strategies** related to **Health and Well-being** in each country /

Existing National Policies/Strategies	Health and Well-being			
	Title of the Policy/ Strategy	Type of responsible body for Policy/ Strategy Development	Policy/Strategy Adoption/ Implementation	Specific obstacles to Adoption/ Implementation
Algeria	Health Law 2018 (as reported)	Public Organization	N/A	N/A
Djibouti	Sexual and reproductive health and youth strategy	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Egypt	Egypt's vision 2030	N/A	N/A	N/A
	National Strategy on women	N/A	N/A	N/A
Iraq	National Youth Strategy 2016-2026	Public Organization	Yes	Policy was adopted but not implemented
	National Health Strategy, Iraq	Public Organization	Yes	Not fully implemented
	National family Planning strategy	Public Organization	Yes	Just adopted, Not implemented yet
Jordan	Youth National Strategy (2019-2025)	Public Organization	Yes	The executive plan did not adopt a clear plan for follow-up and evaluation
	National Plan to Reduce Child Marriage (2020-2024)	Public Organization	Yes	No allocated resources for the implementation
	National Reproductive Health Strategy	Public Organization	No	The strategy is under formulation
	National Standards for Youth Friendly Services	Public Organization	Yes	No allocated national resources for implementing the standards
Lebanon	National Mental Health and Substance Use Strategy (2015-2020)	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National Child Marriage Strategy	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National Family Planning Strategy	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National Women Strategy	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Morocco	Sectoral strategy 2012-2016 – Ministry of Health	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National reproductive health strategy 2011-2020 – Ministry of Health	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Oman	9th Five Year Plan (2016-2020) of the Ministry of Health	Public Organization	N/A	N/A
Palestine	The National Health Strategy	Public Organization	Yes	Lack of funds
	Strategic Framework for adolescent and youth SRHR in Palestine	UNFPA and NGO Juzoor	Yes	Lack of funds
	Strategy for addressing Child / Early Marriage in the West Bank and Gaza (Special focus on girls)	UNFPA	Yes	Lack of funds
	The National Health Strategy	WHO	Yes	Lack of funds
Somalia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sudan	Banning of Early Marriage in Sudan	Public Organization	No	Opponents to the strategy
Syria	Adolescent Health Promotion Strategy 2016-2020	N/A	Yes	N/A
Tunisia	National Multi-sectorial Adolescent and Youth Health Promotion Strategy	Public Organization	No	The strategy is still under adoption. Challenges are the political instability due to the change of ministers (3 ministers in 6 months and the COVID-19 epidemic context)
	National Program to fight against STI's and HIV/AIDS	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National Strategy on Prevention and control of non-communicable diseases	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National GBV strategy	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Yemen	Not clear (1-Outcomes of NDC 2- Yemeni low 3- NCYS)	Public Organization	No	N/A

/ Table 18: Reported **National Policies/Strategies** related to **Education and Life Skills** in each country /

Existing National Policies/Strategies	Education & Life Skills			
	Title of the Policy/ Strategy	Type of responsible body for Policy/ Strategy Development	Policy/Strategy Adoption/ Implementation	Specific obstacles to Adoption/ Implementation
Algeria	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Djibouti	Education Action Plan 2017-2020	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Strategy 2020-2024 of superior education and research	N/A	N/A	N/A
Egypt	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Iraq	None	N/A	N/A	N/A
Jordan	Youth National Strategy (2018-2025)	Public Organization	Yes	The executive plan did not adopt a clear plan for follow-up and evaluation
	National Education Strategy 2018 - 2022	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National Inclusive Education Strategy	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Lebanon	Child Protection Policy in Schools	Ministry of Education and Higher Education and UNICEF	Don't know	N/A
	National Youth policy	Public Organization	Yes	National Youth policy was adopted, and its action plan was developed
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Morocco	Strategic vision of education reform 2015-2030	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	Ministry of Education Strategic Action Plan 2017-2021	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Oman	The National Strategy for Education 2040, in addition to the 5 Year Strategy of MOE	Other (not specified)	Yes	N/A
Palestine	EDUCATION SECTOR STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2022	Public Organization	No	SRH is included however it is thinly spread over subjects and grades. Teachers and counselors do not have the capacities to convey such info to students and parents
Somalia	Somali National Youth Policy	Public Organization	N/A	N/A
Sudan	Free Education for All	Public Organization	Don't know	N/A
Syria	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tunisia	National Strategy of education	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National strategy on inclusive education for children with disabilities	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	Life skills education Program	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Yemen	Not clear (1-Outcomes of NDC 2- Yemeni low 3- NCYS)	Public Organization	No	N/A

/ Table 19: Reported **National Policies/Strategies** related to **Employment and Entrepreneurship** in each country /

Existing National Policies/Strategies	Employment and Entrepreneurship			
	Title of the Policy/ Strategy	Type of responsible body for Policy/ Strategy Development	Policy/Strategy Adoption/ Implementation	Specific obstacles to Adoption/ Implementation
Algeria	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Djibouti	Vision Djibouti 2035	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National strategy for social protection (2018 - 2022)	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Egypt	National Strategy for Empowerment of Women -2017	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Iraq	None	N/A	N/A	N/A
Jordan	Youth National Strategy (2018-2025)	Public Organization	Yes	The executive plan did not adopt a clear plan for follow-up and evaluation
	Vision of Jordan 2025	N/A	N/A	N/A
	National Employment Strategy 2011-2020	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Labor 2017-2021	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Poverty Reduction Strategy 2013-2017	N/A	N/A	N/A
	National Strategy for Human Resources Development 2016-2025	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Lebanon	Youth National Policy	Public Organization	Yes	The NAP has not yet been approved and endorsed
	TVET Strategy	Public Organization	Yes	
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Government plan «Ikram 2»	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Morocco	THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR EMPLOYMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO 2015-2026 - Ministry of Employment	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	Self-employment program - Ministry of employment	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Oman	5 Year Plan of the Ministry of Manpower	Public Organization	N/A	N/A
Palestine	The Palestinian Decent Work Programme 2018–2022	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Somalia	Somali National Youth Policy	Public Organization	N/A	N/A
Sudan	Sudan National Employment Strategy	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Syria	The National Disability Plan 2009	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Tunisia	National entrepreneurship strategy	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Yemen	Not clear (1-Outcomes of NDC 2- Yemeni low 3- NCYS)	Public Organization	No	N/A

/ Table 20: Reported **National Policies/Strategies** related to **Peace and Resilience building** in each country /

Existing National Policies/Strategies	Peace and Resilience building			
	Title of the Policy/ Strategy	Type of responsible body for Policy/ Strategy Development	Policy/Strategy Adoption/ Implementation	Specific obstacles to Adoption/ Implementation
Algeria	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Djibouti	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Egypt	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Iraq	None	N/A	N/A	N/A
Jordan	Youth National Strategy (2019-2025)	Public Organization	Yes	The executive plan did not adopt a clear plan for follow-up and evaluation
	National PVE Strategy	Public Organization	Don't know	The strategy is not officially adopted yet. There was low young engagement in the formulation process
	National Framework for family protection	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	Jordan National Action Plan 1325	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Lebanon	National Women Strategy (2011-2021)	Public Organization	Yes	Action Plan is under development
	National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security	Public Organization	Yes	National Action plan was adopted, yet it was not yet implemented
	National Youth Policy	Public Organization	Yes	National Youth policy was adopted, and its action plan was developed, but not yet implemented
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Morocco	The integrated strategy for preventing and combating violence in school children	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National strategy to combat violence against women - Ministry of solidarity and social development of equality and the family	Public Organization	No	N/A
	Multifaceted strategy in the fight against terrorism	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Oman	None	N/A	N/A	N/A
Palestine	Joint UN Framework on Youth (2018-2020)	N/A	Yes	Lack of funds
	Somali National Youth Policy	Public Organization	N/A	N/A
Sudan	Peace Building Strategy	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Syria	National Strategy for Support and Empowerment of Women 2018	Public Organization	N/A	N/A
	National Plan for Gender Equality	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tunisia	National GBV strategy	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
	National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security	Public Organization	Yes	N/A
Yemen	Not clear (1-Outcomes of NDC 2- Yemeni low 3- NCYS)	Public Organization	No	N/A

Country

b. Main Gaps Prevailing at the Level of the Key Youth themes in the Arab Region

Tables 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 below list the reported gaps relevant to each theme.

/ Table 21: Reported gaps related to **Participation and Civic Engagement** in each country /

Nature of Gaps	Participation and Civic Engagement			
	Legal	Strategy	Policy	Programs
Algeria	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Djibouti	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Egypt	N/A	N/A	Marginalization of some youth subpopulations i.e. young women in rural areas	N/A
Iraq	No related laws	N/A	No related policies	N/A
Jordan	Poor collaboration among national stakeholders and election age at 30 years old	N/A	Exclusion of refugees	Lack of Youth involvement
Lebanon	Youth without citizenship: (i) Exclusion from the 1932 national census; (ii) legislative (gaps in the legal framework which deny nationality to some), and (iii) administrative (inability to provide proof of right to citizenship).	N/A	National Youth Policy and its action plan that is not yet implemented	N/A
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Morocco	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oman	Legal marginalization of youth with disability, in conflict with law, NEET, etc. No laws related to gender disparities in civic participation Lack of presence of NGOs	No related youth strategy	No related youth policy	No related programs
Palestine	No related youth law	Lack of operational plan of relevant youth strategy Negative impact of political situation on youth participation	No related policy	Lack of operational plan of the national strategy Challenges facing integration of youth programs within other sectorial national plans Lack of structure of programs targeting vulnerable youth groups exist but not structured Poor collaboration among NGOs in relevant programs
Somalia	No laws related to youth civic engagement	Youth Civic participation strategy	N/A	N/A
Sudan	No clear laws that are enforced regarding youth civic engagement	N/A	N/A	Few programs supporting youth engagement in political and public domains
Syria	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tunisia	No laws related to youth participation (except election law)	Poor implementation of developed youth strategies	Absence of a national integrated youth policy	Poor coordination among relevant actors in implementing initiatives
Yemen	Contradictory definition of youth age legally which affect their eligibility to take decision-making positions	Outdated strategy	N/A	Programs limited to initiatives by UN and the INGOs, mainly about peace building

/ Table 22: Reported gaps related related to **Health and Well-being** in each country /

Nature of Gaps	Health and Well-being			
	Legal	Strategy	Policy	Programs
Algeria	N/A	N/A	No implementation decrees in place	Lack of Specific programs targeting youth needs (Art. 84/85)
Djibouti	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Egypt	N/A	Low use of family planning tools among youth Low Knowledge of HIV/AIDS High stigma against people living with HIV	N/A N/A Deinstitutionalization of Persons with Disabilities	N/A
Iraq	N/A	No adolescent and youth health strategy however National Health Strategy of Iraq has a focus on adolescent health through school health programme	N/A N/A No policy in place No Policy in place N/A	N/A
Jordan	Legalization of early marriage & prohibition of abortion in case of rape	Protective detention in case of honor crimes	N/A	Lack of sexuality education & youth-friendly health services
Lebanon	Impact of public health issues on the mental and physical health of youth have not been widely addressed	N/A	N/A	N/A
Libya	N/A	N/A	Absence of a national	N/A
Morocco	N/A	N/A	integrated youth policy	N/A
Oman	Lack of access to health and SRH services; as Parents' consent is required No law focusing on youth with disabilities No law on mental health	No specific strategy for adolescents with disabilities and key populations. No strategy for mental health; only included in the 9th Five Year Strategy of MOH No strategy for unwanted pregnancies/ GBV	which addresses youth development and well-being. N/A	No national program focusing on youth with disabilities and their access to SRHR services and rehabilitation services Limited Governmental services and programs and need to be more demand driven
Palestine	No specific law on youth health and well-being. No adoption of the Family protection bill which protects youth from violence and early marriage	National health strategy does not include specific services related youth Young people health including physical and mental is mainstreamed among health departments and units		Lack of financial support & Sustainability of programs Lack of M&E tools engaging young people Limited programs focusing on early marriage & counselling for women's health Lack of tailored programs for youth with disabilities
Somalia	Lack of awareness on available SRH services Exclusion of young people in decision making regarding youth issues Lack of access to commodities	N/A		N/A
Sudan	lack of awareness on Youth and Adolescents SRH services	No National Policy/Strategy to legalize access of youth to SRHR services		No programs on youth & adolescents SRHR
Syria	N/A	N/A		N/A
Tunisia	No specific law on youth SRHR Presence of discriminatory laws against SRHR of vulnerable groups; such as article 230 of the criminal code on the criminalization of homosexuality in Tunisia	National GBV strategy does not include interventions for young girls and women with disabilities No proper monitoring and cost assessment of Mental health & Weak preventive component Low participation of the first line workers Inability of structures to meet the needs of medico-psychosocial care Absence of a strategy targeting the capacity building of families and involvement of the community in the promotion of mental health		Limited evaluations, and coordination of programs Operationalization and sustainability difficulties Financial and organizational constraints for implementation of Health education programs. Poor evaluation of the impact of programs Weak support measures and lack of well-defined organization of services. Lack of mechanisms for participation of youth in decision making Information systems of health programs provide little guidance on the quality of services or their impact
Yemen	No adequate laws for youth health and well-being. No laws to restrict early marriage	Outdated health strategy which doesn't include youth health		Youth-specific health programs are not common. Youth are often mainstreamed through other health programs

Country

/ Table 23: Reported Reported gaps related to **Education & Life Skills** in each country /

Nature of Gaps	Education & Life Skills			
	Legal	Strategy	Policy	Programs
Algeria	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Djibouti	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Egypt	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Iraq	Life skills education is not used for promotion of SRH education; but rather focuses on civic engagement CSE and SRH education is considered a taboo Life skills education is not part of formal education rather life skills civic education is being implemented in the informal settings by selected ministries (ad hoc projects)	N/A	Lack of policies	N/A
Jordan	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lebanon	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Morocco	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oman	Lack of CSE Lack of law for gender sensitive school curricula Lack of specific anti-bullying law	Lack of comprehensive strategy that addresses youth with disabilities No specific strategy for gender sensitive school curricula No specific life skills strategy While MOE 5 year strategy doesn't specifically address gender disparities, it is aimed at all students, irrelevant of gender, and therefore inclusive	Lack of policies for CSE	Limited number of programs addressing Sexuality education Lack of specific CSE programs Limited national coverage for some programs
Palestine	No specific laws on inclusive education, CSE, gender, anti-bullying and life skills	More development is recommended in several areas, such as the national curriculum, an inclusive education team, and enhancement of teachers' capacity in delivering learning to all students Limited Monitoring and evaluation aspect in line with the international standards Quality of the content of SRH and gender curricula and capacities' of the education providers are of concern	Need for Policies to change resource allocation, teaching practices, curriculum, assessment, infrastructure... Implementation of the "education for all" policy faces many political and economic struggles	UNFPA has supported the update of the teacher/counselor manual on adolescent health which includes SRHR, gender, life skills and protection from GBV
Somalia	High costs of Education making it out of reach for the majority of the population Learning environments are not conducive FGM bill in draft stages	Roll out affordable education in schools, universities and tertiary institution	N/A	N/A
Sudan	N/A	N/A	N/A	Lack of Programs to strengthen quality of youth education and life skills and enhance their employability
Syria	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tunisia	Lack of implementation of law 58 on eliminating violence against women which includes the integration of CSE	Life Skills education strategy not fully implemented	Absence of a national integrated youth policy	The initiatives undertaken in terms of the development of life skills are not sufficiently disseminated
Yemen	N/A	N/A	N/A	Limitations in the Life skills formal programs implemented by stakeholders

/ Table 24: Reported gaps related to **Employment and Entrepreneurship** in each country /

Nature of Gaps	Employment and Entrepreneurship			
	Legal	Strategy	Policy	Programs
Algeria	N/A	N/A	N/A	No evaluation of youth employment mechanisms and no information on their performance in the public domain
Djibouti				
Egypt				
Iraq	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Jordan	N/A	N/A	Lack of Youth employment policies	No implementation of national programs. Entrepreneurship programmes are UN or NGO led
Lebanon	Legislations disempowering youth and women	Training not aligned with job market demands	N/A	N/A
Libya	High unemployment rate among youth Youth engagement in the labor market Youth entering the job market with skills that do not meet the demanded criteria of companies	N/A	N/A	N/A
Morocco	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oman	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Palestine	Omanization law doesn't cover youth capacity development. Omani law prohibits gender based discrimination. However, it specifies jobs that are unsuitable for women Legal support provided through Ministry of Social Development but is not sufficient to ensure that the social system is adequate to support a decent life	Omanization law in place but no multi sectoral strategy in place The 5 year strategy of the Ministry of Labour and the skill development programs needs to be increased to meet the demand	No policy	Lack of centralized programs (programs done by recruiting big companies) MOSD programs in place but services need to be increased to meet the rising living expenses
Somalia	No specific law for youth and employment	N/A	No specific policy targeting youth	ILO doesn't have youth specific programs TVET is focused on in schools and outside but not structured and poorly coordinated
Sudan	Lack of implementation Somali Labor law 1984	N/A	No youth employment policy in place	N/A
Syria	N/A	N/A	N/A	Need for more programs on equitable employment opportunities & on public awareness raising on hazardous types of work
Tunisia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	N/A	N/A	Absence of a national integrated youth policy that address youth development and well-being	Ineffective Mechanisms for building economic capacities of youth Programs of the National Agency for Employment and Independent Work are more accessible to unemployed graduates in urban areas & do not solve the problem of NEETs Low rate of beneficiaries of these programs decreasing their credibility among youth
Yemen	No legal articles to support youth's income generating projects. No governmental exemptions for youth's income No current strategy for youth and adolescent	Outdated strategy, and outdated youth employment action plan	N/A	Limited reach of youth for Employment programs by the UN and INGOs

/ Table 25: Reported gaps related to **Peace and Resilience building** in each country /

Nature of Gaps	Peace and Resilience building			
	Legal	Strategy	Policy	Programs
Algeria	Presence of Legal framework on GBV but lack of implementation decrees	Outdated GBV prevention and response (2007) Limited engagement of all key stakeholders to revise the strategy	N/A	Implemented of GBV program by institutional & CSOs; but there is lack of multi sectorial coordination and national protocol
Djibouti	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Egypt	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Iraq	N/A	N/A	New emerging area, no policies and national programs initiated	A coalition o youth peace and security is being establish that would guide the process of development of an action plan on YPS 225o
Jordan	Discriminatory laws against women	N/A	N/A	No direct work addressing UNSCR 225o
Lebanon	The Electoral law The Ta'ef agreement Absence of the civil status law	N/A	Absence of inclusive policies and protection measures	N/A
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Morocco	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oman	N/A	No specific strategy; but laws in place & international agreements ratified & implemented Need for more safe spaces for women Need for ensuring that infrastructure addresses needs of persons with disabilities	N/A	CEDAW agreement ratified, committee established and programs being sensitized for gender lens Need for more safe spaces for women Need for ensuring that infrastructure addresses needs of persons with disabilities
Palestine	No law	Mentioned in the national youth strategy but lacks operationalization	No policy	Lack of coordination of efforts among program implementers Need to coordinate the efforts under a national umbrella within a strategic framework to monitor progress Lack of political involvement from the government
Somalia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sudan	N/A	N/A	N/A	Public programs for young people to play substantive roles in peace building & conflict mitigation
Syria	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tunisia	Limited implementation of law on human trafficking Lack of Protection mechanisms for migrants Sexual Exploitation Insufficient implementation of the legal framework addressing sexual abuse, exploitation of children and alcohol abuse	Absence of a youth, peace and security strategy 3 Lack of governmental operationalization of resolutions on YPS (225o, 2419 and 2535), Strategy to combat violence does not individualize specific interventions adapted to young victims of violence, does not cover the support of parents' victims Weak multi sectorial coordination of the strategy on combating violence	Absence of a national integrated youth policy that address youth development and well-being	Ineffective Interventions on fighting sexual inequalities, mapping sensitive areas or managing juvenile delinquents Insufficient services for supporting victims of violence. Limited availability, access and quality of services for victims
Yemen	No laws concerned with youth's participation in peace building and resilience	No strategies concerned with youth's participation in peace building and resilience	No policies concerned with youth's participation in peace building and resilience	N/A

c. Main Challenges and Obstacles Prevailing at the Level of the Key Youth themes in the Arab Region

Tables 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30 below list the reported Challenges & Obstacles relevant to each theme.

/ Table 26: Reported Challenges & Obstacles related to **Participation and Civic Engagement** in each country /

Type of Challenge	Participation and Civic Engagement		
	Political	Socio-Cultural	Economic
Algeria	No youth strategy - Inclusion of youth in dialogue pertaining to youth ' needs	N/A	N/A
Djibouti	N/A	N/A	N/A
Egypt	Knowledge about rights of participation programs engage youth	N/A	N/A
Iraq	No political will and understanding on youth participation	Limited opportunities available	No opportunities
Jordan	National youth policy lacks a follow-up and evaluation plan No institutionalized strategy addressing youth civic participation No national strategies on volunteerism The challenges for political parties law, poses challenges for youth political engagement, and formulation of parties	Low Political literacy among youth Jordanian youth have little trust in parliament and political parties Moreover, youth civic engagement is limited. While youth recognise the importance of political participation, only a very small percentage are members of formal civic groups: 2.7% of a charitable society and 2.3% of a youth, cultural or sports organisation. Lacking time, consultation and engagement mechanisms, as well as insufficient preparation through school are the main obstacles to participation	Lack of funds for youth political initiatives especially that many local NGOs avoid funding such initiatives Lack of investment strategy to encourage investment in the programmatic and infrastructure of the Ministry of Youth Preference should be given to ideas concerned with establishing social, economic, cultural services for young people
Lebanon	Political and religious divisions among politically affiliated youth & the civil society Ages of voting and running for elections	Most socio-cultural events are either politically affiliated or funded, or target specific groups	Youth migration due to the deteriorating economic situation, thus not allowing for their political and civil life participation
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A
Morocco	Weak legislation (organic laws) on the participation of young people A law governing political parties and CSOs dates from 1958 Delay in the implementation of the integrated youth policy « » i. strengthen legislation through organic laws on the participation of young people Review the law that governs political parties and CSOs Implement the integrated youth policy «	Lack of confidence of young people towards public authorities Intergenerational conflict at the level of political parties Very negative stereotypes on CSOs	A very high unemployment rate Lack of opportunity for youth development
Oman	Lack of laws that provide social protection for most vulnerable, other than orphanages Lengthy process for registering a youth association Political participation is limited and censored	Activities focus mostly on sports, no cultural and intellectual activities	No adequate income generating opportunities for youth who do not attend college
Palestine	Lack of Citizen's representation within governmental institutions Less than 1% of youth are in decision making position	Socio-political disengagement of youth Identity Problem and fragmentation of youth in separate location with no access to each other. Forced and early marriage limiting adolescent girls from actualizing their potentials and participation in labor force and public life	High rates of unemployment among youth limiting their motivation to participate in public life and volunteerism Poor public services for youth, especially among vulnerable groups. transform from shocks
Somalia	Lack of will No proper laws that regulate services for youth No universal suffrage in Somalia Clan based selection of political position hurts youth prospects Instability	N/A	Lack of resources to enhance youth civic engagement limited income generating activities for youth
Sudan	Political parties and political groups Equitable opportunities for all	Community perception on youth people as non-responsible persons	Lack of resources
Syria			
Tunisia	Political instability and change that slows the implementation of national strategies and programs Absence of a legal framework on youth participation Absence of a national youth policy	Young people are often seen as «risks» or «threats» (Violence, Violent extremism, criminality..) Young people often seen as a population group whose voice is irrelevant to development and peace and security issues	Costs related to the inclusion of young people in decision making processes at national and local level
Yemen	N/A	N/A	N/A

Participation and Civic Engagement

Human Resources	Humanitarian	Security	Other
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Youth bulge but government has no plans in place	Current humanitarian crisis	Security threats for Iraqi youth Violent protests organized by youth for their basic rights	N/A
Need to strengthen the staff capacity of the MoY Creating new occupations in the youth sector, such as the profession of "youth worker"	Elimination of refugees in many platforms for active engagement	Limited freedom of expression Human rights activist are not protected enough	N/A
N/A	N/A	The detainment of youth activists	Social and political discrimination, especially between men and women
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack of broad range of skills as well as qualitative training and capacity building opportunities among national workers	N/A	Criticizing the government, a government entity or staff is illegal	
Limited policies, structures, and services for engaged youth participation in governance activities	Young people's needs and priorities get neglected in times of crisis Lack of formal participation of youth in humanitarian action	Protection of youth from occupation, military groups, and government crackdown of youth activism and freedom of speech.	Lack of data around youth participation and engagement
Lack of employment opportunities for youth	N/A	N/A	N/A
Weak capacities	Conflict and instability	Movement restrictions particularly for young women	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	Challenges should be taken from the perspective of youth and experts under each of the 5 themes included in this study
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

/ Table 27: Reported Challenges & Obstacles related to **Health and Well-being** in each country /

Type of Challenge	Health and Well-being		
	Political	Socio-Cultural	Economic
Algeria	No implementation texts to Health law 2018	N/A	N/A
Djibouti	N/A	N/A	N/A
Egypt	N/A	Limited HIV knowledge among youth, especially females and high Stigma associated with it	N/A
Iraq	Adolescent health is not a priority though it is part of National Health Policy	Access to youth friendly health services No programs on HIV prevention and awareness Neglect of mental health	N/A
Jordan	The National Reproductive Health Strategy recognizes youth as key actors in the development process, however, it doesn't recognize them as a distinct group with specific health needs There are no specific youth targeted health policies - and they are not a distinct group targeted in health related policies	SRHR topics still a taboo topic Limited knowledge about SRHR among adolescents and youth Inadequate health provision and poor access to health facilities to vulnerable groups Gender disparities threatening health prospects of female youth Healthy lifestyles need to be fostered	Youth SRHR agenda not considered a priority for programing and funding No allocated resources by MOH for youth friendly services
Lebanon	N/A	Lack of comprehensive awareness on the health related issues of youth	Expensive costs of health services and medications
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A
Morocco	Lack of a national youth health policy or strategy	Many taboos in relation to the health of young people, especially SRH Cultural barriers to accessing health services Strengthen awareness and mobilization of community leaders	Lack of a health coverage system for young people Set up a national health coverage system for young people and facilitate access for young people to health services in youth structures (universities, youth health spaces, youth centers, etc.)
Oman	Lack of tailored services and programs for adolescents with disabilities and key populations Missed opportunity to generate awareness and ensure prevention of HIV/ AIDS and other STIs and drug abuse	Lack of awareness on needs of adolescents SRHR; specifically with vulnerable groups Youth access to the health system, only with consent of parents	Funds not directly received by departments and programs in ministry, leading to bureaucratic delay, shortages in funding for important programs Sub-accounts for departments within the ministry's account (better planning, implementation and monitoring; better accountability of the respective departments)
Palestine	Lack of laws, policies, & services respond to the needs of health needs of youth	Ensure the presence of school counsellors in each school to work with students who require mental healthcare	N/A
Somalia	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sudan	Health issues are not a priority	Depending on traditional healing instead of modern medicines	Lack of governmental financial commitments
Syria			
Tunisia	Political instability and change that slows the process of the implementation of national strategies and programs Laws exist but lack enforcement Conservatism of some political parties and parliamentarians	Social norms on young people sexuality (especially unmarried girls) Values transition that may hinder the promotion of SRHR Stigma and discrimination	Limited resources Youth health Free services are not generalized
Yemen	N/A	N/A	N/A

Country

Participation and Civic Engagement

Human Resources	Humanitarian	Security	Other
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	GBV programs are not mainstreamed & integrated in the health sector	Law and order is a constant threat	N/A
Limited Youth friendly health services Lack of health workers capacity to provides youth friendly health services	Limited access to services by refugees	N/A	Lack of knowledge on SRHR Limited and inadequate family planning services for youth
Absence of mental health specialists at universities and school	Limited access to health services by Migrant and refugee youth	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack of qualification of the human resources assigned to the youth health reception structures in terms of communication and youth psychology Lack of experience of health personnel assigned to health structures dedicated to young people in terms of socio-cultural animation and community dynamics Strengthen the training of health personnel in terms of socio-cultural animation, adolescent psychology and behavior change approaches Recruit young doctors and nurses for youth reception structures	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack of trained HR for adolescent's health Lack of qualification of the human resources assigned to the youth health reception structures in terms of communication and youth psychology Lack of experience of health personnel assigned to health structures dedicated to young people in terms of socio-cultural animation and community dynamics Strengthen the training of health personnel in terms of socio-cultural animation, adolescent psychology and behavior change approaches Recruit young doctors and nurses for youth reception	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	Psychological trauma for youth (Israeli occupation & patriarchal society) Unhealthy and high-risk coping mechanisms	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	High needs during humanitarian situations	Experts do not work in fragile settings	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	Challenges should be taken from the perspective of youth and experts under each of the 5 themes included in this study
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

/ Table 28: Reported Challenges & Obstacles related to **Education & Life Skills** in each country /

Type of Challenge	Education & Life Skills		
	Political	Socio-Cultural	Economic
Algeria	N/A	N/A	N/A
Djibouti	N/A	N/A	N/A
Egypt	N/A	Pedagogy doesn't emphasize critical thinking Problems in vocational secondary education State of physical facilities is an issue	Low quality of education in schools, thus the need for private tutoring
Iraq	Political will is an issue	Limited acceptance of CSE & gender sensitive curricula Lack of an enabling environment for students with disabilities	N/A
Jordan	Jordan adopted inclusive education strategy however the action plan is not in place mismatch of skills taught and skills required by the employers leading to high unemployment, and the fewer jobs that have been created for Jordanians are of low skills	Although the accessibility and the engagement rate of schools are high in Jordan, the quality of education faces challenges with lack of critical thinking and skills based education. Limited acceptance to CSE in formal education TVET graduates show positive labour market outcomes, but the room for improvement is still large Child Marriage is 12% among Jordanians and 48% among Syrian refugees which hinders girls continuing their education Girls are more likely to be kept at home due to protection concerns and household responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings or ailing parents	Children from poor socio-economic backgrounds, children involved in child labour and children with disabilities are at a higher risk of being out of school. Children with multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities are at greater risk of either dropping out or being out of education altogether
Lebanon	Political situation is unstable leading to unstable environment	Lack of specialized teaching for persons with special needs and persons with disabilities	Deteriorating financial situation Rise in poverty & decrease in employment opportunities High educational fees, especially among the private sector, entrepreneurial skill as well as acquisition of digital skills
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A
Morocco	Les curricula ne répondent pas aux besoins du marché de l'emploi Les curricula ne sont pas adaptées aux besoins de la generation Y et Z Revoir les curricula avec une approche participative en impliquant les professionnels du marché de l'emploi Revoir les approches d'enseignement passer du formel au non-formal learning	N/A	N/A
Oman	Lack of innovative approach to enhance the quality of education in the public sector	Comprehensive Sexuality Education is not culturally accepted	No specific budget for students with disabilities, gender sensitive topics or other marginalized population groups
Palestine	Outdated Education policies and methodologies which don't respond to the market needs with less focus on life-skills, gender equality, SRHR, innovation and technology Insufficient comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) inside schools and universities	Societal stigma associated with vocational training	Lack of financial resources to meet the needed investment in the education sector
Somalia	Employment policy in place Weak education system/poor quality education Privatized education	N/A	N/A
Sudan	Focus on Academic education in comparison to life skills	Community opinion	High cost of education and life skills education
Syria			
Tunisia	Conservatism of some political parties and parliamentarians that makes the integration of CSE in schools more complex	Conservatism and opposition of religious leaders to CSE in schools settings	N/A
Yemen	N/A	N/A	N/A



Participation and Civic Engagement			
Human Resources	Humanitarian	Security	Other
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	Not enough schools in remote villages which limits children access to education Build more schools and train teachers and reform education
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Weak capacity of teachers and social workers at schools outdated teaching methodologies; lack of teachers' training and limited use of technology. The quality of education is identified as an issue and the mismatch between the curricula and the needs of the labour market	Limited access to good quality education by refugees	N/A	N/A
Outdated or unavailability of resources at public schools and the Lebanese University, thus facing many difficulties in coping with the current online teaching in time of COVID-19	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack of teachers' capacity in CSE, anti-bullying and how to detect bullying, life-skills education, etc.	N/A	Lack of support system for cyber bullying and cyber blackmailing.	N/A
N/A		N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	Prevent interested young women and men from accessing schools	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	Challenges should be taken from the perspective of youth and experts under each of the 5 themes included in this study
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

/ Table 29: Reported Challenges & Obstacles related to **Employment and Entrepreneurships** in each country /

Type of Challenge	Employment and Entrepreneurship		
	Political	Socio-Cultural	Economic
Algeria	Effectiveness of youth's employment mechanisms External evaluation of youth employment mechanisms in place	Extended informal economic sector among youth	Effective policy for youth employment & labor market strategy Implementation of the Demographic Dividend road-map
Djibouti	N/A	N/A	N/A
Egypt	N/A	N/A	PWDs remain to be unable to access decent jobs despite the new law
Iraq	N/A	N/A	Iraq has developed the national strategy for employment 2010 - 2014, the national development plan 2013 - 2017, the national vision 2030 & national youth vision 2013 - 2020 that addressed the rights of young for employment
Jordan	No youth focused policies and strategies for youth employment	TVET education still perceived negatively	Limited access to quality employment among youth High unemployment rates. Very restricted accessible opportunities for PWD
Lebanon	Political interference in the employment process in the public sector Lack of access of employees to their employment rights as constituted in the national Labor law	Misconceptions around VET among the community	Low wages in the private & public sectors due to the economic crisis Limited employment opportunities for youth entering the labor market
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A
Morocco	N/A	N/A	Lack of opportunity to get a first job Employers' requirement for years of significant experience Non-adequacy of salaries with the level of education and qualification Strengthen inspections and control of employers Set up a unified social security system for the public and the private sector expand vocational training for vulnerable populations (NEET)
Oman	Lack of participation of PwD. Ad hoc decision making. Existing programs aren't sufficient on a national level	Many families won't allow their children with disabilities to enter the job market	N/A
Palestine	Lack of laws and strategies related to employment & economic empowerment of youth. Fragile Palestinian economy and controlled by Israel No policies and laws to guarantee equal opportunities for women, PWD, and other marginalized groups	Stigma around people with disabilities	Economic crisis
Somalia	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sudan	Empowerment of supporters of certain parties or political groups	N/A	N/A
Syria			
Tunisia	N/A	N/A	N/A
Yemen	N/A	N/A	N/A

Country



Participation and Civic Engagement			
Human Resources	Humanitarian	Security	Other
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	Restrictions for livelihoods opportunities among youth	N/A	Low Female labor participation in private sector
Absence of PWD in many private & public institutions	N/A	Unstable security situation in the country which limits employment investments	Lack of information on the available employment opportunities and the needed skills required
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack of economic opportunities and jobs for youth	Movement restriction on goods and people	N/A	
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mismatching capacities	Deprive young people from accessing capacities	Preventing school aged children from going to classes	N/A
			Challenges should be taken from the perspective of youth and experts under each of the 5 themes included in this study
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	Poverty and unemployment

/ Table 30: Reported Challenges & Obstacles related to **Peace and Resilience building** in each country /

Type of Challenge	Peace and Resilience building		
	Political	Socio-Cultural	Economic
Algeria	N/A	GBV considered a taboo in male dominant society Policy and programs not clearly targeting LNOB	N/A
Djibouti	N/A	N/A	N/A
Egypt	N/A	Accessibility of public transportation spaces by PWDs	N/A
Iraq	Iraqi Constitution 2005 addressed under the articles (36, 37, 48) the right of youth to express their opinions & participate in demonstrations; women's rights to participate and be represented in the elections (article 48); and the right of individuals to engage in their communities and participate politically (article 6)	Article NO 34 confirmed the right to access to education	No specific law against GBV, but in KRI the anti-domestic violence law endorsed since 2011
Jordan	Youth exclusion from the political sphere until age of 30 for parliamentary elections Mistrust between young people and the government/decision-makers Women are still under represented	Limited role for women in peace building processes & decision making Young people are seen as a burden and trouble-makers in society. Young people with disabilities are especially excluded from decision making, and as young females with disabilities for example, this lead to double vulnerabilities	Misunderstanding that solving the economic challenges will solve everything else Focus of funding on PVE/CVE and not UNSCR 2250 per se and youth participation in the YPS agenda
Lebanon	Discrimination before the law, which plays a negative role in the process of social integration	Cultural value system is tainted with several protrusions that have contributed to aggravating social discriminations in all its forms and social inclusion	Unemployment among youth which is creating tension, and makes youth more vulnerable and joining political parties
Libya	N/A	N/A	N/A
Morocco	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oman	Weak protection system for PwDs	Lack of public spaces for women, specifically in rural areas	N/A
Palestine	Occupation, internal political divide, and the fact that the Fateh-led Palestinian Authority continued to operate without an electoral mandate, and Gaza being ruled by a defacto Government led by Hamas Basic law is not realized on the ground because of the entire complex political situation and monopoly of militant political parties on decision making	Lack of unified vision across Palestinians for the future of the Palestinian state	Poverty High rate of unemployment
Somalia	Sexual offence bill has not yet been enacted Cultural barriers to women political participation Lack of national gender policy	Exclusion from mainstream of society Discrimination No national disability policy	Lack of employment opportunities Political and policy exclusion Legal barriers
Sudan	Conflicting ideas without looking to the bigger picture Reduce wars and conflicts	Tribal conflicts and disputes Reduce wars and conflicts	Conflict over resources
Syria			
Tunisia	N/A	N/A	N/A
Yemen	Lack of political commitment	N/A	Security risks faced by youth participating in this field particularly in some areas where this topic is too sensitive

Country



Participation and Civic Engagement			
Human Resources	Humanitarian	Security	Other
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lack of knowledge on the UNSCR 2250 No designated HR in the government to address UNSCR 2250 in a structured manner Lack of YPS experts and advisors		Human rights violations against young peace builders and human rights defenders	N/A
The brain drain of youth due to the economic situation	The political deadlock and the lack of progress on the reform agenda	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	Youth are most affected in humanitarian settings	Crackdown on freedom of expression, especially over social media activism by young people, leads to arrests and unreasonable detainment youth by security forces	N/A
Exclusion and radicalization Discrimination based on age Lack of funding for youth led peace building initiatives	N/A	N/A	N/A
Draining young people from development to war Reduce wars and conflicts	N/A	N/A	N/A
			Challenges should be taken from the perspective of youth and experts under each of the 5 themes included in this study
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Weak capacities of youth in this field, Shortage of experts in this field of YPS	N/A	N/A	N/A

d. Key Youth Organizations addressing Youth issues in the Arab Region

The below table represents the total number of reported organizations in each country which are working on youth issues, per thematic area.

/ Table 3: Total number of reported Organizations working on youth issues, by country and per thematic area /

Country	Number of Reported Organizations working on Youth	Participation & Civic Engagement	Health & Well being	Education & Life Skills	Employment & Entrepreneurship	Peace & Resilience building
Algeria	3	3	0	3	0	3
Djibouti	31	25	29	30	3	3
Egypt	8	0	1	8	6	0
Iraq	9	2	2	3	1	1
Jordan	32	30	17	26	16	26
Lebanon	20	17	7	10	13	12
Libya	9	8	5	7	5	5
Morocco	4	2	2	1	2	1
Oman	5	3	5	5	1	3
Palestine	116	36	43	52	38	16
Somalia	4	3	2	3	3	2
Sudan	8	8	6	8	4	4
Syria	6	6	4	5	1	2
Tunisia	40	28	17	18	8	13
Yemen	14	13	9	11	3	8

e. Existing Opportunities

The below table compiles the perceived existing opportunities reported by each country.

/ Table 32: Reported Existing Opportunities per country /

Perceived Existing Opportunities	
Algeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic dividend. • Health law 2018. • Youth engagement for political change. • Algeria ICPD commitments. • Revision of the country's constitution.
Djibouti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egypt's 2030 agenda is a very good opportunity to align youth policies with SDGs. • Egypt national strategy for Empowerment of women is an excellent opportunity to work on its action plans to align with SDG 3 and 5. • Egypt is now embarking on developing a national youth strategy with support from UNFPA Egypt CO. • GoE is putting youth at the top of its agenda and has a presidential leadership program that capacitates young people to be future leaders.
Iraq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting data generation on adolescents and youth issues. • Draft National Youth Vision 2030 recently developed. UNFPA will provide technical support to review this, develop costed action plans and align it with SDGs and ICPD. • Review of KRI Youth Strategy- UNFPA will review it and align this with SDGs and ICPD and provide technical support for development of costed implementation plan. • Establish National Coalition on UNSG Youth, Peace and Security- 2250.
Jordan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jordan's National Youth Empowerment Strategy 2018 - 2025 provides the umbrella for youth work in Jordan. • Jordan is one of the 10 accelerating countries for the UN Youth Strategy, which resembles an opportunity for UNCT youth work for more advocacy and alliances. • The diverse stakeholders and alliances for AYSRHR agenda including Academic, government, semi-government, civil society, and youth groups who advocate for AYSRHR. The current work with the Ministry of Education to integrate SRHR awareness in schools is an opportunity to enhance the AYSRHR agenda. • Strong youth networks, youth groups, youth led organizations in Jordan including formal and informal groups. • The existing youth coordination structures and frameworks including YPS National Coalition, the Global Compact for young people in humanitarian Action, the youth coordination for Jordan response plan, the youth elements with the UNSDF. Also the work toward youth mainstreaming in national strategies and policies by different UN agencies. • The covid-19 pandemic could play a significant role in improving the skill based education and enhancing the outreach as many online platforms were created targeting young people. • With a large youth population, Jordan can realize a demographic dividend, provided the right policies are in place and investments in human capital, particularly among young people, and are substantial and strategic.

Country	
Lebanon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of Education, there is “UNESCO Leadership Training programme for Arab Youth on ESD and Green TVET”. The programme runs through September-December 2020, seeks to empower 60 young Arab men and women through an online initiative which offers an innovative and empowering opportunity to learn as well as contribute ideas and create solutions on ESD and Green TVET, especially for the Arab region. The programme offers leadership skills to youth of the Arab region supporting them to be the change agents that advocate for sustainable development of their communities. The program runs from September - December 2020.» • In terms of the role of youth in peace, security and resilience, the opportunities revolves around: Lebanon’s ratification to the Women, peace and Security resolution as well could play a great role in shaping the role of female youth Lebanon’s Youth National Policy and its action plan, which was developed by a participatory approach, yet it now needs revisiting, so that it can account for the economic situation in the country and the COVID-19 pandemic, and the role that youth can play in such circumstances. • In terms of political participation and civic engagement, voting age draft law needs to be advocated and lobbied for to give youth the chance to take part in this right (governed by the human right convention and the convention on the rights of children), in addition to taking advantage of the new law which allows diaspora to vote during the Lebanese elections. • In terms of access to comprehensive health services, Lebanon has recently launched its Maternal Health Strategy which could be a window to support youth in coping with the deteriorating conditions of the country. • In terms of employment, Lebanon has been lacking employment related data for a while. However, now the Central Administration of Statistics has launched its Labor Force and Household living conditions survey results, proper planning and implementation of specific projects to ensure youth employment could be a great start; thus decreasing the rate of youth migration. • The Qudwa Programme and the Volunteering programme that is implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which creates a network of volunteering youth who are ready to support their country whenever needed, and whose capacities are being developed through various training programmes provided by the ministry. • The existing Policies and Strategies that set the roads yet still need Cabinet approval to address various youth related issues under the various sectors. • The increase interest of organization in youth and youth related issues and the funding mechanisms that always ensure that programmes targeting youth.
Libya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of a Youth working group co-led by UNFPA and UNICEF. • Existence of an approved and costed Reproductive, Maternal Newborn, Child and Adolescent health strategy (RMNCAH) for 2019 - 2023. The strategy has specific interventions for youth and adolescent health including mental health. • Expressed interest from Libya into conducting a youth survey. • A policy brief on contribution of young women and girls to peace building in Libya is being jointly developed by UNWOMEN and UNFPA. • The Peace building fund project for Sirt (jointly implemented by UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP).
Morocco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of an integrated youth policy in 2019 where all the international commitments have been taken into consideration in the formulation of the policy’s action plan. • The Civil society is very involved and mobilized in advocacy and the promotion of the country’s commitments. • Good collaboration between the government and the United Nations system in Morocco, which allows for close monitoring and support for the government in terms of public policies for young people.

Oman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly established Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth is headed by a young minister (who will better relate to youth issues) who also as the son of the Sultan might have the influence to make adequate changes. The youth mandate has been elevated by taking it from the abolished National Youth Committee to the ministry. On a ministerial level decision can be approved quicker and implemented on national level. • There are many governments led SDG programs that can be tapped on and the awareness about the countries commitment and the importance of achieving the SDGs has increased. Young people's awareness, interest and readiness to work on achieving the SDGs is increasing by the day. • Key ministries such as the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and (probably) Ministry of Culture, Sports & Youth have specific programs on SDGs.
Palestine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palestine Government, NGO and youth participated and agreed on youth specific and related ICPD commitments which includes CSE, establishment of an adolescent health unit at Ministry of Health and the establishment of a youth advisory panel. • Youth is one of the identified and targeted vulnerable population groups in the UNDAF, Humanitarian Needs Overview and the recent UNCT Covid19 response plan. The current UN@75 campaign is being led by youth groups and youth NGOs representing youth's voices to the UN is an opportunity for more youth engagement within the UN. • The Prime Minister has announced 2020 as the year of youth where he recently endorsed and announced for a new national youth voluntarism programme which will be implemented jointly with UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, UNV, and the Prime Minister Office. • UNFPA chairs the UN Thematic Group on Young People where a joint UN framework on youth development has been developed (2018-2020) and extended to 2022. This will enable the UN to work jointly with and for young people in Palestine. • MAPS SDGs mission report stated that youth is a key partner and beneficiary to work towards the realization and acceleration of the SDGs in Palestine by 2030. • UNFPA Palestine has partnered with NGO partners to strategically support the Palestine adolescent health coalition of 22 relevant members among national and international organizations including the YPEER network. Currently, a strategic framework on adolescents and youth SRHR is being developed to be adopted by Ministry of Health. • The private sector has started to interact more with the UN on youth issues and different campaigns including the recent global youth challenge within Generation Unlimited initiative by UNICEF where UNFPA jointly with UN agencies is fostering partnerships with the private sector. • Currently, there is a revision on the national youth strategy which is aligned with the SDGs and ICPD agenda where the UNFPA and other relevant UN agencies can support its operationalization and integration into other national development plans and a creation of a national youth policy.
Somalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somali National Development Plan. • Somali Youth Policy.
Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Transitional Government of Sudan provides great opportunities for the youth to be part of policy-making and leadership through having many youth representatives in decision making places. • On-going process of developing National Youth Policy by Ministry of Youth & Sport with generous support from UNFPA and UNESCO.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Coalition for SDGs and Youth Parliament currently being developed by the government (Ministry of Youth & Sports). • Upcoming Population & Housing Census and Comprehensive Agricultural Census. • Transitional Government calls for expanding the scope of economic, social, cultural and political support to women and girls, with special emphasis on marginalized adolescents, elderly women, poor or vulnerable women, rural women, and women with disabilities to address social norms and stereotypes.
Country Syria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high percentage of youth in the community. • The work of the Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs as a link between the government and the civil society. • Syria's commitment to achieving the Nairobi Population Summit agenda. • Issuing the amended Associations Law. • International financial and technical support.
Tunisia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political will to create a more inclusive and participatory democracy which is an opportunity to youth participation and to LNOB. • Conventions and treaties ratified by Tunisia that promotes human rights and SRHR of young people and vulnerable groups. • Relevant ministries are sensitized to and actively involved in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 agenda and the ICPD PoA.
Yemen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The international community interest in youth's investment. • The UNSC resolutions 2250, 2535. • The high percentage of adolescent and youth whose energies can be positively invested. • Strong civil society working on youth and adolescent. • Expected transitional period in which better opportunities can be created for youth. • Youth access to decision-makers particularly at the local levels.



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