Systematic Participation of Adolescents and Youth in Programming (MENA)

Nothing About Us Without Us!

Synthesis Report
Gerard de Kort, Consultant, UNICEF, MENARO and the MENA UN:NGO Adolescent and Youth Regional Group
November 2017
NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US!\(^1\)

Synthesis Report\(^2\)

Authors\(^3\): Gerard de Kort, Consultant, UNICEF, MENARO and the MENA UN:NGO Adolescent and Youth Regional Group.

CONTEXT

Young people (10-24 years old) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) represent about one third of the total population. They have the potential to be at the forefront of positive change socially and economically; yet they have historically been excluded from decision-making processes, as well as programs intended to address their needs. The participation of young people in decisions, plans and programs affecting their lives is a fundamental component of respecting and recognizing the rights of young people.

The benefits of engaging young people at all stages of programming are two-fold. From a programming perspective, it ensures that programs are relevant, authentic and truly responsive to their needs and priorities. From a young person’s perspective, their engagement in programming increases their sense of ownership, self-confidence, and develops their skills and knowledge (e.g. communication, leadership, team work, organisation, responsibility).

OBJECTIVE AND METHODS

The purpose of this report is to take stock of the existing networks/advisory groups and other mechanisms/pathways that encourage adolescent and youth participation\(^4\) and, building on these, identify challenges, gaps, and promising practices, develop standards and guidelines, and make recommendations for capacity development and establishing systematic engagement mechanisms of adolescents and youth.

This research employed a combination of qualitative research methods, including desk research, interviews, FGDs, and site visits, as well as a questionnaire resulting in 60 responses. In total, well over one hundred people were contacted and a small number of organisations were visited on-site in Jordan and Lebanon.

\(^{1}\) Slogan that has been used for many years by different organisations, including INPUD, the international Network of People who Use Drugs (https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/nothing-about-us-without-us)

\(^{2}\) For the complete report, please contact UNICEF MENARO, Adolescent Development and Participation & HIV Section.

\(^{3}\) This report has benefited from valuable inputs by many colleagues from the MENA Regional UN:NGO Adolescent and Youth Group, UNICEF, NY and UNICEF MENARO.

\(^{4}\) ‘Participation’, endorsed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, needs to be understood as a shorthand to describe adolescents’ right to involvement in decisions and actions that affect them and to have their views taken into account. It is strengthened by the other civil rights in the CRC, for example, the right of adolescents to form their own associations, but places additional obligations on the State to create the conditions necessary to enable adolescents to express views and have them taken seriously. UNICEF, Conceptual framework for measuring adolescent participation, September 2017.
This mapping exercise was not intended to be an exhaustive inventory of programs. It was building on a good practices assessment, conducted previously, which already reviewed 220 + programs looking at programs that target young people. The aim was to cast the net wide enough to identify exemplary interventions that promoted participation in programming within the MENA context. The project was initiated by the MENA UN Regional Inter Agency Technical Task Team on Young People (UNIATTTYP) in collaboration with the MENA Regional UN: NGO Adolescent and Youth Group, coordinated by UNICEF – MENA, Adolescent Development and Participation and HIV Section. This report is responding to the recommendations identified in the Good Practice Documentation for MENA and the Humanitarian Mapping reports5 and feedback from UN country adolescent and youth groups.

The audience includes everyone with an interest in young people’s participation in programming, be it as a young person who is accessing services, and who wants to have her/his voice heard, or be it as a professional: a program manager, staff member, director, peer-counsellor, policy maker, researcher, or donor.

**YOUNG PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAMMING DEFINED**

Young people’s participation in programming (YPPP) is a process through which young people (aged 10 – 24 years) influence and share control over program initiatives, decisions, and resources which affect them. 1, 6 It is about developing partnerships between young people and adults so young people can take a valued position in our programs and the community, and society as a whole can benefit from their contribution, ideas and energies. 7

Levels (or stages) of YPPP can be categorized as follows:

1. **Information**: Young people only receive information, are not listened to, or listened to superficially
2. **Consultation**: Young people are consulted ad hoc and/or on issues of minor importance only
3. **Influence**: Young people are systematically consulted/involved and taken seriously
4. **Partnership**: Young people and adults have joint control of most essential components of the program
5. **Empowerment**: Young people are in full control and may request adult assistance if necessary

These definitions of levels of YPPP can be used to judge the extent to which programs are successful in utilizing and promoting YPPP. In addition, these levels are useful to monitor and assess the quality of YPP in programs.

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6 Based on World Bank (1994) definition of ‘participation’, and later also used by others, including UNESCAP (2000) and DFID (2010), by replacing ‘stakeholders’ with ‘young people’.

7 Adjusted from the Australian Youth Foundation definition of ‘youth participation’
To assess the level of YPPP, the five different levels of YPP were further defined for eight generic components that most programs typically consist of:

To what extent are young people involved in ...

1. **Conceptualization / Initiation**
   - Analysing needs and setting objectives in the (initial) project document, conduct of the situation analysis, identifying partners?
   1. Adults conceptualize the Program and might inform young people as the target group
   2. Young people are consulted in the early stages but ignored later
   3. Young people are consulted and involved in the execution of the Program, but the objectives are set by adults
   4. Young people are consulted, conceptualize the Program and execute it together with adults
   5. Young people plan and execute the Program and (can) choose to involve adults

2. **Resource mobilization, fundraising:**
   - Development and implementation of Resource Mobilization Strategy; acquisition of financial resources, including resources in kind, donor relationships?
   1. Young people are not informed or consulted
   2. Young people are consulted prior to initiating resource mobilization activities
   3. Ongoing consultation during the resource mobilization process
   4. Meaningful partnership between adults and young people
   5. Young people initiate, take the lead in, and carry through resource mobilization for the Program and/or organisation, possibly aided by adults
3. **Decision-making:**
Determination of the strategic direction, recruitment of key staff, and other important decisions, membership in the governing body, i.e. Board of Directors?

1. Young people are not consulted
2. Young people are consulted but their opinions are not taken into account
3. The views of young people are listened to and acted upon on a regular basis
4. Shared decision-making and action occurs and feedback from young people is sought throughout
5. Young people have power over the allocation of resources and the direction of the Program but can seek the assistance of adults

4. **Employment:**
Taking up essential positions in the workforce?

1. No young employees. Young people occasionally help by doing menial tasks on a voluntary basis
2. Young people are employed in jobs not related to Program objectives, such as administrative activities ranging from bookkeeping and typing
3. Some young people are employed in key positions, such as experts/counsellors in a peer-related Program
4. Both young people and adults are employed, e.g. young people as experts and/or some key staff
5. All key staff are young people, with occasionally adult experts being recruited

5. **Human Resources Development:**
Development and implementation of HRD strategy; identification, recruitment, supervising, supporting, education, and training of personnel and volunteers?

1. HRD is conducted only by adults
2. Young people from the target group are occasionally consulted on HRD-related issues
3. Young people are structurally consulted, i.e. have a seat in hiring committees
4. Young people conduct HRD in partnership with adults
5. Young people conduct all HRD activities and call in adult assistance when desired

6. **Information and communication:**
Conceptualization, development, production, and dissemination of IEC materials (incl. brochures, website, social media, Newsletters, press releases, corporate identity, etc.)?

1. Young people are not involved in IEC activities
2. Young people are consulted on IEC activities
3. Ongoing consultation on important IEC issues occur between young people and adults
4. Partnership between adults and young people in IEC activities
5. Young people initiate, take the lead in IEC, possibly aided by adults
7. **Activities:**
   Design and implementation of (other) activities, related tools, and materials?
   1. Designed and run by adults
   2. Young people are consulted in the design
   3. Young people partly design and run some of the activities
   4. Young people design and run all activities in cooperation with adults
   5. Young people design and run all activities, possibly aided by adults

8. **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E):**
   Design and implementation of M&E strategy and activities; development of documentation and M&E tools, and production and presenting M&E reports?
   1. M&E is undertaken by adults only
   2. Young people are consulted on M&E
   3. Young people are involved in M&E and its outcomes
   4. Young people (co-)design M&E tools and work with adults during execution
   5. Young people initiate, design, execute, interpret, and report on Programs, possibly aided by adult experts

**PARTICIPATION AS A CONTINUUM**

The extent of YPPP, its feasibility, usefulness and desirability, to some extent depends on the area of work, the characteristics of the target group, and the circumstances:

- High levels of participation are easier to reach as the target group grows older: In most programs that target 10 – 12 year olds, level 3 is typically quite difficult to achieve, while programs that target young people aged 22 – 24 may reach level 3 relatively easily.
- Certain components of programming are more easily organized in a participatory manner than others, and for some components (such as resource mobilization, HRD, and employees) it is close to impossible, or illegal, to achieve level 5 with young adolescents.
- When targeting the most marginalized, most at risk or heavily stigmatized young people, participatory mechanisms are likely to be more difficult to implement.

In the process of identifying promising programs, the above considerations were taken into account, giving due weight in accordance with the age and maturity and other characteristics of the target group, as well as other barriers that are perceived as to “come with the territory”.

The ideal level of YPPP may not necessarily be the highest; empowerment. In other words, programs will not necessarily endeavour to score the full five points on each indicator. The target of young people’s participation is often defined as ‘partnership’ or ‘shared decision-making’, which is designated above as level 4. At level 5, the initiative and decision-making power rest with young people, who might subsequently choose to share this control with adults. Particularly when a program targets adolescents, it may not be possible or desired to endeavour to reach this level of YPPP.
This report does not necessarily advocate for trying to reach the highest level of YPPP. In many cases, ‘partnership’ (level 4) would be the most desirable target level. Clearly, this depends on the type of program, the capacities of the people involved, and the broader context.

**INITIAL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Certain components of programming lend themselves better to YPPP than others. The survey results reflect this: Resource mobilization scored the lowest, closely followed by HRD, Decision making, and M&E. Somewhat surprisingly, Employment scored the highest, and also Activities and IEC / Advocacy scored well above average.

**AVERAGE SCORES PER COMPONENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptualization</th>
<th>Resource Mobilization</th>
<th>Decision Making</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>HRD</th>
<th>IEC / Advocacy</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>M &amp; E</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;3.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;3.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With an average standard deviation of 1.0 (ranging from 0.5 – 1.6), most programs scored quite evenly across the eight components. There were, however, some notable exceptions. In other words, several programs involved young people heavily in certain components, while hardly engaging them in others. During the next research phase these phenomena were investigated further, especially if exceptionally high or low scores were recorded on unexpected components.

**GENERAL FINDINGS:**

- Age groups: Most respondents targeted the whole age range (10 – 24).
- Gender: Overall, girls and boys were reached evenly (Girls: 51%, boys: 49%).

**EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES**

Twelve programs in the MENA region were described in some detail to showcase innovative or noteworthy approaches that may be of use to similar programs elsewhere. These programs were identified through a combination of desk research, an on-line questionnaire, subsequent email communication, Skype calls, and site visits and chosen because of their accomplishments in providing meaningful opportunities to young people to shape interventions that are intended for them.

Two of the twelve programmes are described in the Synthesis Report.

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8 In the programs that this was checked, these employees were old enough to be working legally.
9 For the complete report, please contact UNICEF MENARO, Adolescent Development and Participation & HIV Section.
1. AL BIRR ASSOCIATION – GHERAS PROJECT

Contact person: Eng. Mokhtar Al-Atassi, Gheras Project Manager  
Email: m.alatassi@al-birr.org  
Location: Homs, Syria  
Thematic areas: Life skills training, employment, child protection  
Web page: www.Al-birr.org

SUMMARY:
Large program managed by a young Project Manager with all young staff. Establishment of a Youth Committee. Successfully reaching large numbers of young people, including IDPs, in a very challenging environment. Recruitment of staff from beneficiaries.

THE PROJECT
The project targets over 22,000 adolescents: Vocational education 9,000 adolescents, 320 adolescents participate in planning implementing initiatives, 1,000 adolescents participate in sport activities, and 22,320 adolescents participate in life skills sessions. By May 2017, 18,698 adolescents had been reached, with approximately 2,500 being reached on a monthly basis. In addition, the project has trained 35 child protection facilitators, and 25 life skills specialists for case management training, and five fixed multi-service centers and one mobile-team are established. 12,671 vulnerable children and adolescents were reached with case management and referral mechanisms in response to the protection needs of children.

In the Gheras project all the working staff are young people, and in the association as a whole more than half are young people. The Youth Committee was established in 2006 from youth volunteers who wanted to help the association in its community work. It initiates projects with respect to activities that target young people. It is now reviewing the whole organisation in terms of procedures and systems.

“There are not a lot of boys (16 – 17 years old) here in Homs. A lot of them flee to escape military service. And there are a lot of people who don’t want their daughters to participate in programs like ours. Our long presence and good reputation allow us to make good contact with girls and their parents. Over the last 4 years we have managed to reach a lot of people. For us as management, we prefer girls or boys without military obligations, because working with them is more sustainable.”

“Many girls want workshops to be sex-segregated, and that is how they are conducted then. For the younger adolescents mixing them is no problem. And over time, objections from parents seem to be becoming less.”
“Our parents may not be convinced that we can manage these projects, but they let us try, and after time they believe in us. In general, as young people who are living in this crisis situation, we are very experienced, and we are flexible, innovative, and creative.”

From a monthly report: “We implement several activities focused on the importance of fighting child labour, especially in the area of Al Khider, Al Shammas and Hasya. Puppet theatre activity and discussion sessions on child labour were held, which included videos showing the danger of child labour and the importance of committing going to school. Children were encouraged to act their own sketches with various topics showing the reality of children working in the streets, or children work because of the lack of a breadwinner and sell homemade sweets, all of these cases are realistic in the neighbourhood surrounding its children.”

“The interaction was so great that children were able to recognize the risk of child labour and dropout of the schools.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Comments / Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Initiation, Conceptualization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The proposal was put together by the Youth Committee (YC; all below 30) in consultation with potential beneficiaries, and then put to the management for review and approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Resource Mobilization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The YC also negotiated itself with the main donor (UNICEF), consulted by the management where needed. When funding gaps occurred the project was covered by the organisation itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Decision-making</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>The project manager is currently 26 years old, and the project staff is generally young, with exception of some vocational trainers, who require specialized skills. The Board Of Directors consists of very experienced, elder people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Human Resources</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>At the start staff was recruited from the volunteers (after several years of volunteering). As the project grew, increasingly staff is recruited from the target group, as life skills trainers. In general, the working staff within Gheras project is 100%, 70% of them are less than 24 years old, 30% of them are over the age of 24 and under 29 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 HRD</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Through ToT or training abroad. Trainers tend to be young and often from the target group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 IEC &amp; Advocacy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Life skills sessions run by the project staff and Community initiatives conducted by some members of the target group. Vocational training, Child protection and PSS, Office for employment (that aims to link trainees and employers) are run by the project staff in heavy consultation with the target group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 M &amp; E</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>There is a trained group of young staff for M&amp;E and QA, who now conduct all M&amp;E activities related to the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average score</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>With the establishment of the Youth Committee, Al-Birr as an organisation has come a long way in putting in place a structure that facilitates and promotes young people participation in programming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. PALESTINIAN VISION

Contact: Rami Naser Eddin
Email: rami@palvision.ps
Location: Based in Jerusalem, Palestine. Services for youth, particularly in East Jerusalem. It also extends its services to youth across Palestinian cities, villages, and refugee camps.
Areas of work: Civic participation, Culture/Identity, and socio-economic development.
Web page: http://palvision.ps

SUMMARY

Working in a challenging environment. Initiated and still largely implemented by young people. Youth participation (civic) is explicit aim of the organisations. Steering Committees, consisting of young beneficiaries, for M&E and quality assurance.

Palestinian Vision (PalVision, or “Ru’ya”) was created by a group of young Palestinians in 1998. It arose as a response to an urgent need for Palestinian youth to have an outlet through which to express themselves and their desire to build a strong and healthy Palestinian society. The aim was to provide opportunities for young Palestinian leaders to become agents of positive, constructive change within their communities; to give them the space, tools, and training they need for their voices to be heard and taken into account.

VISION

Palestinian youth take collective action toward socioeconomic development.

MISSION

Palestinian Vision aims to empower Palestinian youth through national awareness campaigns, leadership opportunities, and the establishment of national youth networks. The goal is to initiate
youth-led sustainable development, social equity, and economic viability through volunteerism, social activism, entrepreneurship, lobbying and advocacy, both on a local and national level.

STRATEGIC GOALS

- To promote economic entrepreneurship and Corporate Social Responsibility in Jerusalem.
- To achieve sustainable livelihoods in marginalized areas through local socioeconomic empowerment and development.
- To preserve the identity, heritage and ways of life of Palestinian communities.

YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATION IN ACTION

The organisation works with a large number of volunteers: Some come to the office to gain more practical experience in the work field. They help out with community service and get involved in initiatives that are being implemented. Others participate in a particular program in one of the three thematic areas: (1) Economic empowerment/entrepreneurship, (2) Social innovation targeting marginalized populations, and (3) Promoting and preserving the Palestinian identity and heritage.

Youth groups are partners and beneficiaries. PalVision develops a lot of projects in partnership with youth groups, supporting them by increasing their capacity to better address the needs of their community and ensure their sustainability by providing them space and support even financially.

Because of the really harsh economic circumstances, many young men need to work two jobs. Young women tend to be better educated, yet are less represented in the labour market. Related to the above, it appears harder to reach male participants. Female participants tend to be more committed.

Ironically, another challenge with regards to recruiting volunteers is related to the perceived generosity by the international aid community and civil society, who often provided transportation, food, and sleep-overs.
“Ten years ago, participants actually paid for a leadership training course. Now, they are asking for compensation, and are taking everything for granted. This is a big challenge, especially in the context of decreasing funding.”

Level of young people’s participation per program component

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Comments / Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiation, Conceptualization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Youth-led from the start (1998) Most initiators are still active through the BoD and the CEO still is the co-founders (36 yrs now; in the process of identifying younger replacement from the current staff body.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Mobilization</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Many international donors. RM is largely done by the RM Manager (29 yrs). The ideas are developed based on the youth recommendations from the youth summit PalVision organizes annually. Additionally, the development of the new ideas are carried out with extensive discussion with PalVision young staff. The conceptualization of ideas is bottom-up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Board consists largely of young people. Recent elections led to refreshing, yet the co-founders remained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22 FTE, almost all of them under 30 (“young people” are defined as &lt;35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRD</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40% of employees are former volunteers. This is not the result of an HR strategy or policy, yet of course formal volunteers are committed to the organisation’s vision and are familiar with the way it works, so it happens “almost automatically”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC &amp; Advocacy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Given the fact that all staff are young, it could be argued that these components are by definition ‘youth-led’. However, the beneficiaries (many of whom are younger than 20) could be more heavily involved in programming aspects than currently is the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Youth Strategy:

One activity under development is the so called “Youth Strategy” for Jerusalem city. The idea is to provide a large number of young people with tools and resources to identify needs and priorities from the civil society, political parties and the government, and to then have the strategy adopted, and work towards implementation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M &amp; E</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Carried out by a young officer. Beneficiaries are consulted through questionnaires and FGDs. Steering committees, consisting of beneficiaries, are established for longer projects. See Textbox below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Youth-led from the start, and all staff are still ‘young’ be it according to the organisation’s own somewhat generous definition. Participation of the beneficiaries can be improved upon for some components. The organisation’s objectives and activities all promote the idea of young people shaping their own environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHALLENGES, SPECIFIC TO THE MENA REGION AT THE ORGANISATION LEVEL

CAN WE TALK ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE AS HOMOGENOUS GROUP?

Many respondents appeared uncomfortable with talking about young people as though they were a homogenous group, choosing instead to stress their individuality, diversity, and ever-changing levels of energy. In addition, and perhaps even more importantly so, within the proposed age group (10 – 24) there are huge developmental differences, and with that come social, legal, and practical implications, which will be elaborated on in the basic principles and guidelines.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS YPPP A GOOD THING? WHY SHOULD WE PRIORITIZE IT?

Some organisations/programs struggle with the level of YPPP they ‘should’ aspire to (as a whole or on specific components). Practical, legal, and ethical considerations may be behind this, but also fear of change, attitudes towards young people, and resistance to losing power may be part of the picture.

GENDER

Organisations report several challenges with respect to gender. At the organisational level these are usually ‘limited’ to sexual harassment, reluctance to participate in mixed groups, over-protectiveness...
of girls by their parents, and an inability to have gender-balanced participant groups or staff. In addition, several organisations noted a lack of knowledge or skills to develop and implement a ‘gendered approach’.

PARENTS AND CARE-GIVERS

Some organisations note difficulties in deciding to what extent and how parents or care-givers should be involved in efforts to engage young beneficiaries in programming. While in general an open policy is assumed to be the right way to approach this, not all organisations are in agreement on this. Sometimes heavily involving parents is viewed as potentially counterproductive, because the parents may carry with them an exaggerated sense of guilt or shame, or might be overly sensitive or suspicious. In addition, an aim of the program might be to weaken the link with the family, e.g. when the family is perceived as gender-discriminatory, abusive, or violent.

THE ART OF LISTENING...

Several organisations mentioned that they are experiencing challenges with regards to really listening to and connecting with young people. Communication, consulting, counselling, mentoring, guiding, etc. are central to most organisations’ work, yet relatively little time and effort appears to be devoted on assessing and promoting effectiveness thereof.

EVERYTHING IS POLITICAL...

The role that young people have played – or are perceived to have played – in the Arab Spring and related regional developments seems to have led to significant levels of distrust or apprehension towards young people in the region. Those in power – not only politically but also in NGOs – seem to still be overly cautious when it comes to trusting young people to take power of significant matters.

HOW INCLUSIVE CAN YOU BE?

Organisations are usually keenly aware of the need to target marginalized groups and to work in a non-discriminatory manner. Practical considerations, however, often stand in the way of being truly inclusive. These may include lack of financial or human resources in combination with donors not recognizing that being truly inclusive often comes with a price tag. Some organisations mentioned the tendency to base themselves in big cities and as a result do not reach people in more secluded areas. Other constraints include lack of affinity for or capacities to work with certain target groups. Finally, some potential target groups operate in a grey or illegal area (e.g. people who use drugs, individuals with less largely-accepted sexual orientations, sex workers). Pragmatic choices tend to favour targeting the ‘mainstream.’
CULTURAL CHANGE IS DIFFICULT

In particular, well-established and larger organisations may become rather set in their ways and do not necessarily have a culture that embraces participation (of any beneficiaries, regardless their age). In such case, the introduction and establishment of participatory approaches is likely to take a long time and be fraught with difficulties.

WHAT’S THE BIG DEAL? WE DO THAT ALL THE TIME!

There are some examples of programs that incorporate high levels of YPPP right from the start. Typically, these are programs that target people in the older brackets of ‘young people’. In these cases, ‘targeting’ might be an inappropriate term; they tend to start off as ‘self-help groups’ that over time reach out to peers in similar circumstances. In such cases YPP tends to be part and parcel of the organisation, and is completely embedded in its constitution and culture.

OOPS, I’M GETTING OLD!

Youth organisations/programs tend to grow from the bottom up (new arrivals typically belong to the younger segment of the reached group), while the young initiators stay on and take up increasingly important tasks in the organisation. As a result, some such organisations run the risk of ‘growing old with their target group’ in the sense that the ‘not so young people’ don’t make way for ‘fresh blood’, when they have reached ‘full maturity’, at 25 or 30 years of age.

VOLUNTEERS, ANYONE?

Some organisations report challenges with respect to recruitment and retention of volunteers, while others are extremely successful in identifying committed young people who devote significant amounts of time to a program. A long-term commitment (without pay) often comes together with capacity building and/or other forms of in-kind compensation.

DO NO HARM

Participation in programming for adolescents is quite rare. Some Program Managers appeared critically aware of the associated risk of doing harm when trying to engage young people in relation to avoiding creating or exacerbating conflict and insecurity for young people and in relation to management of expectations. Many emphasized the importance of taking into account the special needs of younger adolescents and the most vulnerable groups of young people, including refugees, working children, girls, internally displaced persons and young people with disabilities.

CHALLENGES PER PROGRAM COMPONENT

Conceptualization, initiation, strategic development. Consulting young people in the early phases of a new program (that aims to target young people) is quite common. In most cases, however, setting formal objectives, developing a theory of change, positioning, and other essential parts of proposal writing, is done by the adults that initiate the program. A number of program managers also view young people as sometimes overly enthusiastic, having an underdeveloped sense of boundaries, and
not sufficiently recognizing the risks of their ideas and plans. They, then, feel the urge to ‘tone things down’, impress upon the young people to study the circumstances, plan more cautiously, and to ensure that the funds would benefit the right people in the right manner.

1. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION.
As expected, resource mobilization received the lowest YPP score in the questionnaire. Young beneficiaries are not always aware of even the most basic aspects of resource mobilization or other financial matters. Some program staff and management consider resource mobilization a ‘for adults only’ area. Reasons mentioned for this include donor requirements, complexity of the content, and lack of interest amongst young people.

2. DECISION-MAKING.
Surprisingly, amongst the components, decision making rated only slightly below average. In other words, many programs report that they succeed in providing ample opportunity to young people to meaningfully participate in decision making in their program. Typically, however, these decisions concern issues that can be considered ‘non-essential’. By and large, strategic decisions are made by adults only, for example in Board of Directors in consultation with an adult CEO or program manager.

3. EMPLOYMENT
Somewhat surprisingly, YPP on employment tended to be the highest scoring component. Most youth participatory programs use a gradual approach, which takes the young people through an increasing set of responsibilities. Engagement as facilitators or peer-educators is the most common modality. Recruitment into regular positions is less common and largely reserved for high-performing young adults. Capacity building for young staff in project-related skills is quite common. This typically includes training workshops towards becoming a ‘certified’ facilitator or peer-educator.

In some cases, it is debatable whether the recruitment of a well-educated 23 year old into a program management position should be considered an example of youth participation. If the person hails from the target group and retains a clear affinity with that target group, the answer to that question is likely to be ‘Yes’. If, however, the person has spent the last five years studying abroad and is now managing a literacy project for disadvantaged young girls, a ‘No’ is more probable. In the final analysis, the participation agenda is about working ‘with’ the beneficiaries, rather than working ‘for’ or ‘through’ the beneficiaries.

4. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
Human resource development is one of the lowest scoring components. Program managers tend to view decisions on recruitment and training of staff of such importance (or complexity) that even only consulting young people is considered ‘risky’ or ‘inappropriate’. The most common –and repeatedly mentioned– key requirements for recruitment as a youth volunteer, facilitator or peer educator quoted by program managers are ‘motivation’, ‘commitment’, and ‘time’. Staff training, organisational development, team building, etc. is predominantly developed and conducted by
adults, possibly after consulting the potential participants. Also Train the Trainer-type activities tend to be adult only territory; the trainees may be young people, who in turn train facilitators/educators at the local level.

5. IEC AND ADVOCACY
   This component scored relative high. Program management often perceives this (and rightly so) as a relatively ‘save’ area to ‘allow’ young people to experiment in and eventually to take charge. Some organisations are keenly aware of the importance of the way an organisation or program is perceived (by potential beneficiaries). A “young people-friendly” image is critical in attracting and retaining young people. Often, the more strategic elements of IEC, such as corporate branding, positioning, development of curricula and training materials, and the production (incl. lay-out) of donor reports remain firmly in adults’ hands. Regarding advocacy activities that deal with national policy or legislative change, there is (in some cases quite possibly justified) apprehension amongst many program managers to heavily engage young people: Seeing the ‘big picture’, and being interested in or concerned with it, tends to come with age. There is a ‘real’ risk of having to ‘spoon-feed’ young people arguments in preparation for high level advocacy type gatherings.

6. ACTIVITIES
   Young people tend to be quite heavily involved in the running of activities, either as a volunteer or as a compensated member of the work force (be it not as a staff member). As such, they are important in shaping the activities, and taking practical decisions.

7. M & E AND RESEARCH
   While traditionally M&E is often linked to resource mobilization – and therefore not a usual component that young people are heavily involved in – a growing number of organisations are engaging young beneficiaries in M&E, and (other) types of research. By and large, these experiences are evaluated as extremely rewarding, both for the adults and the adolescents. *Save the Children, UNICEF (PAR). Substantial effort, time, and care goes into safeguarding the best interests of the adolescents, training and skills development, especially to ensure the engagement of most marginalized young people.

GAPS

UNDERSTANDING

Understanding of participatory work is rather limited. There are a lot of misunderstandings, confusion and disagreement of what YPPP actually is. For many people, it appears to be a challenge to view participation as anything other than ‘to take part in’. Additionally, the words ‘engagement’

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10 Adolescent and Youth Engagement can be defined as: “The rights-based inclusion of adolescents and youth in areas that affect their lives and their communities, including dialogue, decisions, mechanisms, processes, events, campaigns, actions and programmes – across all stages, from identification, analysis and design to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.” “Engagement” is closely linked to “Participation” though differs in being a broader articulation of the public-facing aspect of participation. Participation is a fundamental human right as noted in guiding Conventions on children, women and people with disabilities (CRC, CEDAW and CRDP),
and ‘involvement’ seem confusing to some extent. ‘Empowerment’ is less ambivalent, yet carries the disadvantage that it may be perceived as somewhat aggressive and political. ‘Adolescent and Youth-led’ programs as the ultimate aim of ‘young people’s engagement’ would appear to be least contentious and best understood way of phrasing the subject of this paper.

**SYSTEMATIC YPPP IS RARE**

Systematic YPPP, in the sense of organisational has structures that ‘as a matter of course’ facilitate and promote YPP in programming, is rare in the MENA region. Even youth-led organisations or programs seldom safeguard, formalize, or institutionalize their accomplishments in the YPPP area, thus placing them in jeopardy in the sense that they might not be sustained. YPPP is rarely seen as a process that needs to be promoted, assessed, monitored, evaluated, and reported on. UNHABITAT is included as an example outside the region for its accomplishments in supporting, documenting and researching youth-led initiatives.

**DONOR AGENCIES**

Donors generally do not insist on YPPP components in proposals or subsequent reports. In addition, they are oftentimes (yet definitely not always!) seen as too inflexible or set in their ways to allow for approaches that embrace young people participatory elements in programming.

**MONITORING**

There is no entity (network, task force, and working group) that is formally tasked with systemic monitoring of YPPP. Documentation and data analysis in both humanitarian and development programming in MENA revealed that very few programmes systematically collect and report on age-disaggregated data making it difficult to understand the scope of adolescent and youth programming. Within the few programmes that focus on adolescents and youth, very few systematically engage adolescents and youth in situation assessment, program development, implementation and monitoring.11

Currently, the MENA Regional UN:NGO Group on Adolescents and Youth has included support to monitoring of YPPP as a priority action and is taking the lead in this matter.

**GENDER EQUALITY**

Gender equality represents a challenge in the MENA region, where rights to equal participation and opportunities are lacking, especially for young women. Programs must address this gap, employing responding components to address the issue. In turn, this requires a thorough gender analysis of each case in order to establish how each particular aim is best pursued. Equal participation or a preferential treatment of girls and young women are an essential component of more gender-

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sensitive interventions. In addition, it is key to engage boys and young men in discussions of gender equality and in addressing gender stereotypes and gender inequalities.

MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

Marginalization is a process whereby specific groups of people are relegated to the outer edges of society and consequently are unable to develop to their full potential. Regardless of the basis for this marginalization (gender, age, disability, ethnic origin, poverty, religion, among others), it leads to social exclusion. Marginalized people have little control over their lives and the resources available to them. Groups of marginalized youth may include: religious or ethnic minorities, refugees, internally displaced young people, orphan children, young people living with disabilities, young drug users, young people living in poverty, young women and girls, and young people in secluded areas or war zones or geographically isolated areas. In such cases, there are few programs that target young people, let alone that young people have a voice in shaping those services.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND LIVELIHOOD

Understandably, livelihood programs tend to target age groups older than young people. One might expect therefore, that participatory approaches are relatively common in this thematic area. Organisations, however, appear to be struggling with putting in place mechanisms that help young people shape their own programs. Program objectives are typically dominated by numbers of jobs, and employers (or the job market) are seen as key influencers. Young people, then, are typically only consulted on minor practical arrangements, rather than on content matters.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guidelines in the section below were developed with a number of important cross-cutting principles in mind. They are applicable to nearly every component, and are listed here as minimum non-negotiable standards, that any program should (aim to) adhere to. Effective YPPP - in the sense that it leads to young people’s empowerment - is based in a number of principles; if they are followed or put into practice, the young people are likely to have real influence on the programs that are intended for them.  

In the recent publication ‘Adolescent and Youth Engagement Framework’, UNICEF-HQ suggests a comprehensive list of guiding principles for YPP. That list formed the basis of the list below, yet was adjusted and elaborated on based on the findings of this research, including some of the challenges and gaps noted earlier.

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12 Many of the principles below are general programming principles, and thus deemed ‘valid’, regardless the ‘participation agenda’. For example, while inclusiveness and non-discrimination are important principles in any case (to provide equal access to activities), yet they should also be adhered to when consulting or engaging the target group in an effort to become more participatory as a programme.

13 Adolescent and Youth Engagement Strategic Framework, UNICEF HQ, 2017
These ten guiding principles behind YPPP are considered ‘non-negotiable’ if one aims to meaningfully involve young beneficiaries in programming:

1. **COMPREHENSIVE:**
   Young people participate in all aspects and components of the program, including planning, implementation, and evaluation. Their participation is encouraged and tracked, and findings and results are disseminated. Young people are valued for their inputs and recognized as agents for change and progress.

2. **TRANSPARENT, ACCOUNTABLE, AND INFORMATIVE:**
   Young people are provided with full, accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate information about their right to express their views freely, the weight their ideas will be given, and the scope, purpose, and potential impact of this participation. A commitment to follow-up and evaluation is essential. Youth are entitled to be provided with clear feedback on how their participation has influenced any outcomes.

3. **VOLUNTARY AND INFORMED:**
   Young people are never coerced into expressing views and they are informed that they can cease involvement at any stage. Informed consent is adhered to at all times.

4. **INCLUSIVE, RESPECTFUL AND SENSITIVE:**
   Young people’s views are treated with respect and they are provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities. Engagement and participation is inclusive, avoids existing patterns of discrimination, is culturally sensitive to young people from all communities, and encourages opportunities for marginalized adolescents, including both girls and boys, to be involved:

   - **Culturally sensitive:** Sensitivity to, and respect for, culture is ensured.
   - **Gender-sensitive:** Gender-sensitive planning and implementation of YPP in programming occurs. Related operations and program activities are gender sensitive, appropriate, and equitable, with an emphasis on gender awareness, or on gender-transformative approaches.
   - **Sensitive to differences in the expression of human sexuality:** YPP in programming encompasses non-discrimination with regard to human sexualities and sexual identities. An understanding exists of differences between adult and adolescent sexuality.

5. **RELEVANT:**
   Opportunities are available for young people to express their views on issues of real relevance to their lives and to draw on their knowledge, skills and abilities. YPPP efforts in programming respect age and development stages of participants and are presented according to these different needs and abilities. Ample consideration is given to developmental differences, thus reducing the risk of inflicting harm (in particular to children).

6. **YOUNG PEOPLE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS AND WORKING METHODS:**
Adequate time and resources are made available to ensure that young people are adequately prepared and have the confidence and opportunity to contribute their views. The approaches to working with young people reflect their differing levels of support and forms of involvement according to their age and evolving capacities.

7. SUPPORTED BY TRAINING:
Adults are prepared, trained and supported to facilitate young people’s engagement effectively, such as listening skills, how to work jointly with young people, and how best to engage them in accordance with their evolving capacities.

8. SAFE AND SENSITIVE TO RISK:
Adults have a responsibility towards the young people with whom they work and take every precaution to minimize possible risk to young people of violence, exploitation or any other negative consequence of their participation. Working with families and communities can contribute to building understanding of the value of engagement, and minimize risks to which young people may otherwise be exposed.

9. FLEXIBLE:
Staff, management, and donors are flexible:

- Staff have a positive attitude towards change, are not ‘set in their ways’, are ready to ‘go with the flow’, and do not have the urge to prove themselves.
- Management ensures that organisational systems and policies are conducive to even sudden changes in direction or can allow for leeway with respect to enforcement of organisational practices and rules.
- Donors allow for broadly stated expected results, changing budget lines, loosely formulated milestones and timelines, as well as for indicators to be developed later in the project.

10. GRADUAL:
A gradual, or phased, approach is being implemented, with slowly increasing levels of required skills, courage, commitment, and remuneration, and decreasing levels of direction and supervision. This typically includes developed and described stages of engagement (formally or informally), possibly with defined ‘graduation’ moments from the one stage to the next, and capacity building where needed.

PHASED APPROACH
The following guidelines are considered to be particularly relevant in the MENA context. Given the fact that the region comprises of countries, each with their own specificities, they are not equally valid for each country (and they might well be equally important for certain countries outside the MENA Region). They are suggested here as generic guidelines to take into special consideration when developing a Young People’s Participation in Programming strategy in the region.

DIVERSITY

Don’t take generic features concerning young people for granted: In considering the methodology regarding relevant support to and work done with young people in the MENA region, one should acknowledge the diversity; young people must never be seen as a homogenous mass, as needs and aspirations differ considerably. The notion that ‘no-size-fits-all’ should be kept in mind. All programs and societies have to take their own path and balance the pace in keeping with societal and cultural particularities. Allow for flexibility in your programming framework.

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14 Guidelines are based on the mapping and also on the Good Practice documentation reports of the UNIATTYP (2016). All the guidelines in this chapter should be read and understood with clauses such as ‘where possible’, ‘if applicable’, when relevant’, ‘if not already the case’, if appropriate’, etc. For the sake of legibility, these clauses have not been added here. The guidelines should also be viewed and used in conjunction with the Adolescent and Youth Engagement Toolkit, which provides specific tools for adolescent and youth engagement in leading civic, social and economic engagement and systematic participation of adolescents and youth in programming (UN:NGO Adolescent and Youth Group, 2017).
AGE

In terms of defining young people, carefully determine what age group you consider to fall within ‘young people’, taking into account your context, the content area of your program, and the characteristics of your target group. The ‘10-24 years old’ guideline is indeed only a guideline. The principles of YPP are more important: engaging beneficiaries in programming regardless of their age in programs created with them in mind.

GENDER

Conduct a thorough gender analysis. Equal participation or a preferential treatment of girls and young women are an essential component of more gender-sensitive and/or gender-transformative interventions. In addition, it is key to engage boys and young men in gender equality and to address gender stereotypes and gender inequalities.

PARENTS AND CARE-GIVERS

Engage parents and care-givers, especially when targeting adolescents and young girls. Employ an open-door policy for parents. Take a long-term approach, allowing trust to grow. Consider heavily involving community leaders and/or religious leaders to overcome possible resistance. Carefully and repeatedly explain in clear terms what the benefits of taking part in the program would be, and how these will impact the child in the long term.

On the other hand, there may be situations where engaging parents or care-givers is counterproductive, for example where issues of shame or guilt come into play.

RESISTANCE

When making a case for YPPP, expect resistance, distrust, apprehension, and/or indifference. Depoliticize the YPPP agenda, avoid phrasing it as a counter-movement (anti-adult or anti-establishment) or entitlement. Rather, use positive discourse and stress the need for YPPP in order to develop appropriate and effective services that are owned by the beneficiaries themselves.

COMMUNICATION

Assess and promote communication skills on the work-floor and integrate effective meeting and communication principles throughout your organisation and to promote YPPP. Build the capacity of young people in communicating their views, needs, and priorities. Clearly communicate opportunities and expectations. Amplify the achievements, findings, and voices of young people in IEC, advocacy, resource mobilization and training materials. Make use of creative graphic design and

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15 While civic participation may be regarded as inherently ‘political’, as it explicitly embraces and promotes democratic values, participation in programming can be seen a more politically neutral proposition especially when the objectives of the program are non-political.
other forms of arts. Engage young artists to develop innovative, ‘cool’ materials. Tap into the potential of social media to promote and distribute your messages and to engage young people.

EXIT STRATEGY

Encourage natural ‘fade out’ of the young adults through promotion into local or national management or government, or elsewhere. If needed, consider formulating a formal exit or ‘graduation’ strategy that facilitates constant fresh blood and vigour. While there is a need to be flexible with respect to the age range of what is called ‘young’, there also needs to be a sense that at some stage one cannot be considered young anymore, and that this has consequences in terms of one’s involvement with regards to youth participation.

VOLUNTEERISM

Volunteerism can serve as a means to build adolescent and youth capacity and increase employability. Volunteer positions can provide young people with the opportunity to gain leadership skills and network for future jobs. Promote volunteer work as an essential step towards civic participation. Consider the fact that young people are possibly inexperienced with volunteer work. The volunteer approach might be so foreign to some cultures that the results will be limited. Experience with participation and volunteer activity must be built step by step and may not immediately gain the outcomes hoped for. Organisations offering volunteering opportunities should ensure that their scheme or program is accessible to diverse groups, operates ethically with all stakeholders, maintains the public trust, respects basic management standards (clear description of tasks and regular support and feedback) and offers opportunities for learning and growth to volunteers.

PROTECTION, DO NO HARM

At the community level, especially, adolescents may be exposed to dangerous or violent circumstances. These could occur at home, at school, or elsewhere. Ensure that staff is capacitated to identify such risks, and address them. Ensure that participation always adheres to the ‘do no harm’ principle. Non-participation is preferable to harmful participation. Conduct risk assessment with respect to possible harm in connection to participation. In areas where security is an issue of concern, regularly review the situation and think through possible implications. Consider participatory mechanisms based in internet technology, rather than insisting on face-to-face ‘live’ participation.

Manage expectations for all involved. Especially for younger beneficiaries, who take part in a participatory project for the first time, this participation can be a profound experience that should be treated with care. Ensure that young people are aware that an activity in the community does not necessarily mean that the activity will be successful or that the community will change dramatically as a result from it. Exceeding expectations is vastly preferable over causing disappointment. Prior to engaging young people, discuss the preferred maximum level of YPPP amongst staff and management, including what this would mean in practice.
Assess willingness amongst staff and management to relinquish power. Ensure that the young people are well informed regarding possible limitations with respect to the level of ownership and influence they might or might not have.

Position participation in a larger development path, yet don’t oversell the benefits. Don’t spoil beneficiaries or their parents/care-givers. Use incentives, but do so sparingly and deliberately, and clarify reasons behind changes in policy with respect to remunerations and compensation.

In addition, a large number of more generic guidelines at the organisational or programmatic level is offered. These are followed by more detailed guidelines per program component.

A CONDUCIVE ENVIRONMENT

A ‘conducive environment’ is required to identify, develop, meaningfully engage, and retain those young people best suited for participation. YPPP will develop best in an environment where the following stakeholders actively promote it:

- Donor agency (or HQ, when perceived as the body that supplies or ensures the financial resources for the program) are:
  - Facilitative: requests (or requires) evidence of YPPP, i.e. inputs from young people into proposals and reports from organisations that target young beneficiaries. It welcomes and formally values such inputs as early as possible, and allows (or requires) earmarked funds;
  - Flexible: Has a strong affinity with young people and wholeheartedly values their inputs. It commits to YPPP, recognizes its benefits in the long run, states readiness to lose power, and develops a staged action plan. This typically includes earmarking funds, staff training, and eventually constitutional changes.

- Program management (or the management of the organisation) are proactive: Has a strong affinity with young people and wholeheartedly values their inputs. It commits to YPPP, recognizes its benefits in the long run, states readiness to lose power, and develops a staged action plan. This typically includes earmarking funds, staff training, and eventually constitutional changes. Recruit staff with a view to youth-friendliness and affinity with young people.

- Young staff members are active. As the embodiment of YPPP, they drive it in the program or organisation. They constantly look for opportunities to enrich participation, actively listen to young people’s preferences, wishes, concerns, and issues with regards to YPPP, and convey these to management and/or translate them into action.

- Young beneficiaries are:
  - Identified: As early as possible, based on pre-determined requirements and/or qualifications
  - Recruited: Formally engaged, through agreements with clear responsibilities and benefits
  - Developed: Through structured, ongoing, capacity building and guidance
  - Retained: Through increasing responsibilities, incentives, and remunerations
**CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR YPP IN PROGRAMMING**

**Donor agency**

- **Facilitative**: Requests (or requires) evidence of YPPP, i.e. inputs from young people into proposals and reports from organisations that target young beneficiaries. It welcomes and formally values such inputs as early as possible, and allows (or requires) earmarked funds.
- **Flexible**: in terms of expected results, budget lines, timelines, reporting formats, indicators, etc.

**Management**

- **Pro-active**: Has a strong affinity with young people and wholeheartedly values their inputs. It commits to YPPP, recognizes its benefits in the long run, states readiness to lose power, and develops a staged action plan. This typically includes earmarking funds, staff training, and eventually constitutional changes. Recruit staff with a view to youth-friendliness and affinity with young people.

**Young staff members**

- **Active**: Form the embodiment of YPPP, they drive it in the program/organisation. They constantly look for opportunities, actively listen to young people’s preferences, wishes, concerns, and issues with regards to YPPP, convey these to management and/or translate them into action.

**Young beneficiaries**

- **Identified**: As early as possible, based on pre-determined requirements and/or qualifications
- **Recruited**: Formally engaged, through agreements with clear responsibilities and benefits
- **Developed**: Through structured, ongoing, capacity building and guidance
- **Retained**: Through increasing responsibilities, incentives, and remunerations

Young beneficiaries are encouraged to thrive, to develop into enthusiastic participants that gradually take control of the programming.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The final recommendations incorporate feedback from young people, the UNIATTYP, UN:NGO Adolescent and Youth Group and Promising Practice implementers.

PROGRAM/ORGANIZATION LEVEL

The recommendations below are viewed as not specific for the MENA region; they are generic and act at the organisation or program level:

- Assess institutional buy-in.
- Conduct analysis of your (proposed) target group with a focus on desirability, feasibility, and extent of YPPP, as a whole and per program component.
- Identify, understand, appreciate, and address systemic barriers to YPP in programming.
- Consciously build ownership of all program components amongst the beneficiaries.
- In terms of age of the target group, different considerations may come into play:
  - Involvement of parents/caregivers may be advisable, particularly when targeting young adolescents. In the initial stages of YPP approaches, approval or collaboration from parents may well be useful, or even required. In some cases, however, involvement of parents may be counterproductive.
  - Gradually, as parents/caregivers phase out as entry point (or reference point), peers move in as more significant influencers.
  - As the young people enter the workforce, and/or become parents themselves, YPPP develops into ‘community participation’.
- Document, assess, and adjust YPP elements in the program.
- Earmark (through a budget line) a fixed amount or percentage of annual funds to YPPP. Identify at least one young person in the program/organisation as the ‘to go to person’ regarding YPPP, with dedicated time, capacity building where needed, and expected outputs.
- Consider that peer-approaches are effective ways to engage and empower young people.
- Conduct staff training, where needed.
- Realize that ICT is an area where young people often have an advantage over adults.
- Formalize YPP into programming and/or in the organisation as a whole.

NATIONAL LEVEL

The national level recommendations are taken from the OECD publication: *Youth in the MENA Region: How to Bring Them In*.\(^\text{16}\) It provides an update with respect to young people’s engagement in public affairs, and showcases examples of national governments to learn from.

\(^{16}\) OECD (2016), *Youth in the MENA Region: How to Bring Them In*, OECD Publishing, Paris. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264265721-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264265721-en). For sale only. The text and figures for the recommendations at the national level is largely taken from this publication.
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Young people rightfully expect that governments will create conditions where all segments of society – poor and rich, male and female, urban and rural – can voice their ideas and demands. Youth associations, civil society and youth activists must be given real opportunities to engage in formal political processes with the power to shape policy outcomes and hold government officials accountable for their promises. Public consultation processes should be designed in such a way that they make it easy for young people to participate, including using both online and offline mechanisms.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The need for a new public governance model is nowhere as obvious as in the failure of current arrangements to create economic opportunities for the young generation. The figure below proposes a set of ten questions to summarize what MENA youth should be able to expect from their governments. It points to the critical role public governance arrangements play for young people to engage, be empowered and benefit from policies and services that are tailored to their demands.

APPLYING A YOUNG PEOPLE’S LENS TO GOVERNANCE PRIORITIES: 10 KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

1. Are government institutions sufficiently open and transparent to enable young people to hold government accountable?
2. Do adolescents and youth enjoy opportunities to systematically engage and participate in decision-making and public consultation processes?
3. Do government make effective use of digital technologies and non-traditional channels to promote adolescent and youth engagement?
4. Do legal frameworks and policies take into account the specific needs of vulnerable adolescents and youth? young women, minorities and the disabled?
5. Are governance arrangements creating the conditions for economic progress that is both inclusive and sustainable?
6. Are public services sufficiently tailored, responsive, and accountable to the specific needs of young men and women?
7. Do education, health, and other public services equip and support adolescents and youth in making successful transitions to adulthood?
8. Do governance frameworks translate economic progress into economic opportunities and quality employment for youth?
9. Are local governance frameworks allowing young people to participate in the identification of needs and promoting communities where young people can enjoy good quality of life?
10. Are said frameworks for integrity and the rule of law in place to avoid misuse of public resources intended to serve youth purposes?

17 Ibid.
The report proposes a ‘Whole of Government’ approach with strong leadership to break up silo-based approaches and roll out adolescent and youth policies and deliver adolescent and youth services in a coherent manner across administrative boundaries. Based on a vision for adolescents and youth over a multi-year horizon, a national youth policy can improve coherence, stress areas where specific horizontal and vertical co-ordination mechanisms are required and assign clear mandates to key internal and external players that could be called upon to partner in setting and implementing the policy and its associated programming over time. By integrating young people in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of a holistic young people’s strategy, governments can ensure that related programs and services are indeed responsive to their demands.

REGIONAL LEVEL

The main recommendation at the regional level from this report is to establish a regional mechanisms building on existing national and partner systems to support adolescent and youth systematic participation in shaping, implementing, monitoring and advocating for adolescent and youth programs: A regional youth-led task force / focal point / working group to further the YPPP agenda in the MENA region. In other words, this would be an inter-sectoral planning group that works on collaborative measures in young people participation in programming across sectors.

The following suggestions are offered:

- UNICEF-MENA, possibly in partnership with the UN:NGO Adolescent and Youth Group, takes the lead.

18 Ibid, page 33 onwards
Participants consist of young representatives from Youth Networks, NGOs, UN agencies, INGOs, and other partners and who subscribe to the YPPP agenda. Ideally, member organisations should have adolescent and youth participation in programming, represent most marginalized young people at country level, if feasible have a regional function, or work in several countries in the region.

Largely Internet-based – eg. 5 virtual meetings a year– plus one annual two-day face-to-face gathering

Possible tasks are drawn up below. Initially, the current UN;NGO Group on Youth could take up these tasks, but over time the establishment of a separate, dedicated group of young people is recommended.

The group could be tasked with the following:

1. Define, formalize, and promote understanding of YPPP
2. Process, Research, and Document:
   a. Challenges and lessons learned; and
   b. Establish a YPPP ‘observatory’ (website) for centralized and accessible mapping, compilation and presentation of core information
3. Conduct and/or facilitate technical assistance, quality assurance, organisational development:
   a. Establish a pool of experts, trainers, facilitators who could be engaged when there is a need for assistance in the field of YPPP;
   b. Facilitate the development of materials and training methods that may be used in technical assistance, quality assurance, and organisational development; and
   c. (Co-) organize workshops, seminars, trainings, conferences, exchange visits, etc.
4. Sustain:
   a. Develop and implement a Resource Mobilization Strategy;
   b. Develop and implement an Advocacy Strategy; and
   c. Develop and implement a Documentation and M&E Plan.
https://esay2017site.wordpress.com/
www.facebook.com/groups/537194983292172