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YOUTH – AN UNDERVALUED ASSET

TOWARDS A NEW AGENDA IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

*PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND
WAY FORWARD*



THE WORLD BANK

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA REGION
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT (MNSHD)
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT (MNSSD)

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AND NORTH AFRICA**

Progress, Challenges and Way Forward

September 2007

*The World Bank
Washington, D.C.*

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------|--|
| DHS | Demographic and Health Surveys |
| EAP | East Asia and Pacific Region |
| ECA | Eastern and Central Europe Region |
| ETF | Education Training Foundation |
| FGM/C | Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting |
| GCC | Gulf Cooperation Council |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GTZ | German Agency for Technical Cooperation |
| HIV/AIDS | Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| INDH | National Initiative for Human Development (Morocco) |
| LAC | Latin America and Caribbean Region |
| MENA | Middle East and North Africa |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| OSCY | Out of School Children and Youth |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| PISA | Program for International Student Assessment |
| SAR | South Asia Region |
| SSA | Sub-Saharan Africa Region |
| STI | Sexually Transmitted Infections |
| SWTS | School to Work Transition Surveys |
| TIMSS | Third International Math and Science Survey |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| USD | United States dollars |
| WBG | West Bank and Gaza |
| WDR | World Development Report |

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | I |
| 1. THE RATIONALE FOR YOUTH-ORIENTED POLICIES | 0 |
| 1.1. BACKGROUND, REPORT OBJECTIVES, AND AUDIENCES | 0 |
| 1.2. INVESTING IN YOUTH | 3 |
| 1.3. POLICY IMPLICATIONS: THE NEED FOR CROSS-SECTORAL AND INCLUSIVE YOUTH POLICIES | 8 |
| 1.4. REPORT STRUCTURE..... | 10 |
| 2. LEARNING..... | 12 |
| 2.1. ACCESS TO EDUCATION: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES | 12 |
| 2.2. QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION..... | 18 |
| 3. WORKING..... | 22 |
| 3.1. ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES | 22 |
| 3.2. QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES | 29 |
| 4. MIGRATING | 35 |
| 4.1. MIGRATION PATTERNS IN MENA | 35 |
| 4.2. EFFECTS OF MIGRATION | 37 |
| 5. STAYING HEALTHY AND FORMING FAMILIES..... | 45 |
| 6. PROMISING CROSS SECTORAL AND INCLUSIVE YOUTH POLICIES..... | 55 |
| 6.1. PROMISING CROSS SECTORAL YOUTH POLICIES..... | 55 |
| 6.2. PROMISING INCLUSIVE YOUTH POLICIES | 59 |
| 6.3. PROMISING POLICIES THAT ARE BOTH INCLUSIVE AND CROSS SECTORAL | 61 |
| 7. FILLING KNOWLEDGE GAPS AND SUPPORTING THE YOUTH AGENDA..... | 63 |
| 7.1. EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE ON YOUTH ISSUES AND POLICIES | 63 |
| 7.2. POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE WORLD BANK..... | 65 |
| REFERENCES | 68 |
| ANNEX 1: COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS..... | 74 |
| ANNEX 2: REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WITH A YOUTH FOCUS | 79 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

1. *Youth are becoming an increasing priority for countries in the Middle East and North Africa.* Youth are an asset that if properly nurtured can stimulate the economic and social development of the region. Countries are searching for effective policies to capitalize on this youth asset and an increasing number of governmental and non-governmental institutions in the region are involved in youth related-work.

2. *This report represents an initial attempt to assess the case for making investment in youth a systematic development priority for the region.* It summarizes what is known about the challenges facing youth and the opportunities successful youth embody, and begins to consider the contours of promising cross-sectoral, youth-centered, and inclusive policies for the region and the potential role for the World Bank. It is a first step in the process of setting out the issues to encourage dialogue and discussion among policy makers leading to decisions and eventually actions.

3. *The report has two intended audiences.* The first are policy makers in the region, particularly those in Governments that are responsible for economic and social policy including Ministries of Finance, Planning and Economy and line ministries responsible for delivery of social services to youth such as the Health, Education, Social Affairs and Youth ministries. Second, donors and development organizations such as the World Bank can use the report as an input into thinking about how youth issues may fit into projects and to help formulate priorities toward youth in the future.

RATIONALE FOR YOUTH-ORIENTED POLICIES

4. *Why should governments and societies invest in youth in MENA? And why should they invest in a cross-sectoral and youth-inclusive way, beyond the already significant commitments to health, education and other social sectors? The specific answers are likely to differ among countries given the variation in income and development that exists across the region, but there are two broad motivations for investing in youth.* The current youth demographic bulge in the region suggests there is now an opportunity for growth that should be seized.

5. **Demographic Bulge.** Young people constitute well over half the population of the region, with growth rates that are second only to Sub-Saharan Africa. The youth bulge creates a demographic window of opportunity in which economies can benefit from a majority of individuals entering their productive peak, while the share of the population that is very young and the elderly still remains fairly small. The relative rise in the labor supply creates possibilities for enhanced growth through a rise in output per capita coupled with higher savings and investment from workers. Similarly, the large working age population holds out the potential for increased consumption or income taxes that can

in turn be used to finance productive investments such as additional education, health, or social protection. Some countries have successfully taken advantage of young populations, particularly in East Asia where between 25 and 40 percent of the rapid growth that took place between 1965 and 1990 in Japan, Hong Kong (China), the Republic of Korea, and Singapore has been attributed to the higher growth of the working age population. For all MENA countries, the window of opportunity will remain open for at least the next 10 years, and for countries like Yemen, Iraq and West Bank and Gaza the window will remain open beyond 2050. The potential exists to reap tremendous benefits from ensuring that youth have the health, skills and social capital to productively contribute to growth.

6. **Youth Transitions.** Youth require specific policy attention not only because they are currently so numerous but also because they must navigate far more of life's crucial transitions in a short time frame than any other age group. Following the thematic approach taken in the *World Development Report 2007 Development and the Next Generation*, four main transitions are identified for MENA youth:

- **Learning.** Over the past 40 years, MENA countries have committed more resources to education than other developing countries at similar levels of per capita income. The region has also made remarkable progress improving access to education at all levels and closing the gender gap. However, average level of education youth receive is still lower in MENA than in other regions. Literacy rates still remain fairly low in some countries, particularly among women, drop out rates remain high and there are still high numbers of out-of-school youth throughout the region. Education levels also continue to remain dramatically different for poor and non-poor youth across the MENA. Finally, the quality and relevance of the region's education systems vis-à-vis the demands of the labor market appear weak. This mismatch often results in unemployment or low quality employment among youth.
- **Working.** Unemployment among youth in the region is the highest in the world, averaging more than 25 percent with many relatively well-educated first-time job seekers among them. Growth rates in MENA countries have improved in the early 2000s, but still lag behind those of comparator countries. Countries in the region have not been able to create jobs quickly enough to absorb the large youth cohorts entering the workforce. Greater female participation in the labor force has contributed to the problem, although this has the potential to be a tremendous asset over the long term. MENA countries have large and generous public sectors that both drain public resources and contribute to rigidity in the labor markets. Significant numbers of unemployed youth, particularly among women and the well educated, queue for public sector work and do not search for private sector options that may be available. The informal sector is a growing source of jobs for youth, but more needs to be understood about its importance and long-term potential. Nearly half of those employed in non-agriculture activities are in the informal sector in the Magreb countries. About 40 percent of 15-19 year olds are employed in the informal sector in Syria.

- ***Migrating.*** Migration within and without the region is significant, with youth as its primary actors. More than a third of the flow of all migrants from developing countries is comprised of youth between 15 and 24 years old. In 2000, there were more than 9 million migrants from MENA residing in OECD countries and another 3.5 million in GCC countries. Remittances have become a significant source of income and the principal source of foreign exchange, estimated at US\$13 billion in MENA countries in 2005. However, it appears from several estimates that among middle income countries “brain drain” is more pronounced in the MENA region. Fortunately, many young migrants return to their home countries and earn higher incomes and may contribute human capital and other investments. Evidence from Egypt suggests that return migrants earn wage premiums over non-migrants with similar profiles, for example. Whether migration is on net positive or negative for individuals and home countries depends on many factors and is likely to differ across countries in the region. It is clear though that youth migration is an important economic and social phenomenon in MENA worthy of further country-specific research.
- ***Staying Healthy and Forming Families.*** MENA countries have achieved significant improvements in terms of health outcomes during the last three decades, however an array of health-related issues still affect the youth of the region. Early marriage and early childbearing with the associated health risks still remain significant, especially within certain population groups. Low birth weight prevalence rates of more than 10 percent are observed in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, for example. Djibouti, Yemen and Morocco still have high maternal mortality rates in the region. Phenomena such as qat chewing, tobacco use and drug use are a concern for some youth, HIV/AIDS is emerging as a growing threat, while exercise and nutritional issues are a factor contributing to high rates of diabetes. Gender-specific health issues such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGC) of young girls remains a major issue in some countries. Improving access to related health care services, particularly for the most vulnerable, and making them youth ‘friendly’ could go a long way to improving their health outcomes.

7. **Costs of Inaction.** If investments are not made in youth, there is risk that the youth bulge may manifest itself as a drain on growth and society, rather than a dividend. Understanding and addressing the factors that impede the successful transition of youth across domains is critical. The expenditures by governments over the first four years of primary school in MENA are about US \$1,300 per student. This represents significant sunk investment costs to the state for students that fail to complete primary education, even without considering the longer term implications associated with illiteracy and other negative consequences related to lack of education. The costs of early school attrition indeed have long-lasting effects on incomes and productivity. The report illustrates that the aggregate lifetime cost to premature secondary school leavers in MENA amounts to between 3 and 4.3 percent of GDP on average with costs to countries such as Morocco, Yemen and Djibouti approaching 10 percent of GDP. Unemployment also represents a

significant drag on MENA economies. A model developed for Morocco finds that a 10 percent reduction in the youth unemployment rate increases the value of total human capital by nearly 2 percent, which would increase GDP growth in Morocco by up to 2 percentage points.

8. *The costs of failed health transitions are also important.* There is little data on which to base these estimates in the MENA region, but in one primary area of health concern, HIV/AIDS, the projected costs are particularly high. Right now, the estimated prevalence rates of STIs and HIV/AIDS are relatively low in the MENA region, compared with other regions. However, low prevalence does not mean a low risk of an epidemic. Indeed, the total number of AIDS deaths has increased almost six-fold since the early 1990s, and half of new HIV infections are among young people ages 15 to 24, the period when sexual activity usually begins. A conservative estimate projects losses resulting from HIV/AIDS over the next 25 years at about 35 percent of current GDP if the disease evolves according to its current path. High costs also result from events such as complications of child birth, aside from the personal tragedies experienced by mothers and children.

THE NEED FOR CROSS-SECTORAL AND INCLUSIVE YOUTH POLICY

9. *Stand-alone sectoral perspectives on youth are insufficient.* As youth outcomes are interrelated and have cumulative effects, the responses should be interrelated and coordinated. At the government level, policies and programs are often fragmented and implemented within the mandate of individual sectoral ministries. A Ministry of Health typically does not interact with the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, least of all with the Ministry of Youth. Much of the research investigating the successful features of youth interventions stresses the importance of coordinating different elements of the service and support systems so that needs of youth can be addressed in a holistic fashion. It is only recently that efforts are being made by MENA Governments to coordinate the development and implementation of the youth agenda through the creation of national youth policies.

10. *At the regional level an increasing number of initiatives are being organized with a focus on youth inclusion and participation.* Governments and NGOs across the MENA region are increasingly moving towards policies and initiatives that are more inclusive of youth by encouraging the expression of youth voice in the process of policy formulations and/or project implementation. Several national initiatives are being launched which reflect the move toward youth-inclusive policies, including: (i) Yemen's recently approved National Children and Youth Strategy; (ii) Bahrain's National Youth Policy; (iii) Morocco's youth inclusion and participation in the INDH initiative and (iv) Jordan's partnership with UNICEF to implement an "Adolescent Participation and Partnership Project" and the World Bank-support Government-NGO partnership to mainstream at-risk and disadvantaged children and youth. Yet these are nascent activities in only a few countries and time and later assessments are needed to determine how successful these approaches will prove to be.

FILLING KNOWLEDGE GAPS AND SUPPORTING THE YOUTH AGENDA

11. *Much remains to be done to operationalize an inclusive youth approach.* In the longer term, the goal should be to rigorously assess which initiatives are in fact effective, depending on the context, and to derive policy advice accordingly. In the more immediate term, there is a need to expand the knowledge base on youth issues and policies and to support the youth agenda with donor support through fostering discussions with governments and practitioners, provision of technical assistance and knowledge dissemination and financial support.

12. **Expanding Knowledge on Youth Issues and Policies.** Most of what is known about the impact of the transitions or the effectiveness of youth programs comes from research carried out in other regions. Whether the conclusions reached from some of this research apply to the MENA region is unknown. There is therefore a large set of unanswered questions and knowledge gaps: (i) *Data on Youth*. There is a general lack of data on youth in the region; (ii) *Core Transitions*. There are a variety of questions about the core transitions that need further research, including the relationship between youth and the informal sector, the school-to-work transition and migration, among others. (iii) *Social Inclusion and Empowerment*. More systematic study of these concepts is needed with a view toward identifying operational implications; and (iv) *Program Effectiveness*. There needs to be a greater emphasis on monitoring and evaluating program outcomes and impacts.

13. **Potential World Bank Role.** By virtue of its multi-sectoral perspective and integrative capacity the World Bank has a potentially crucial role to play in advancing a holistic youth agenda in the Middle East and North Africa region. The Bank already engages directly in the major domains that affect youth transitions, including education, health, social protection and takes a cross-sectoral perspective with respect to employment, migration, social development and gender, all of which impact youth. The Bank can help focus and support the youth agenda through its three main functional areas:

- ***Consultation, Capacity Building and Coordination.*** No one ministry or agency has the responsibility of ensuring that the range of policies effectively considers youth. The Bank can help translate awareness, support capacity building, and facilitate the necessary coordination through its ongoing dialogue with country policy makers, including: (i) Regional policy conferences; (ii) Technical assistance; (iii) Incorporating youth outcomes into the CAS; and (iv) Capacity building for practitioners in line ministries, local authorities and NGOs.
- ***Knowledge Production, Management and Dissemination.*** Through its involvement in every country in the region, its global experience, and its ability to synthesize and distill practical lessons from research, the Bank can help fill some of the knowledge gaps identified, serve as a center of readily accessible information on knowledge and policy and facilitate informed dialogue on the

range of youth issues: (i) Applied research on impacts of youth transitions; and (ii) Synthesis of policy lessons.

- ***Grants and Lending.*** The Bank can encourage innovative projects and approaches to address youth issues through grants and projects. There is no consensus on what constitutes good policy or successful programs for youth. Policy makers are still searching for good ideas and the potential exists for more systematic grants and lending for youth: (i) Public awareness and information; (ii) Private-sector led initiatives; and (iii) Monitoring and evaluation.

1. THE RATIONALE FOR YOUTH-ORIENTED POLICIES

Too often, government officials design programs for children as if they lived their lives in silos, as if each stage of a child's life were independent of the other, unconnected to what came before or what lies ahead. It's time for policymakers now to look beyond the silos, to begin recognizing that consistent, cost-effective investment in children and youth can pay for itself. Providing young people with the resources they need to compete in today's global economy is not just a moral imperative. It is an economic necessity, too.

-- James J. Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics¹

1.1. BACKGROUND, REPORT OBJECTIVES, AND AUDIENCES

1.1 *Youth are becoming an increasing priority for countries in the Middle East and North Africa.* Children and youth constitute well over half the population of the region, with growth rates that until recently were the highest in the world, second now only to Sub-Saharan Africa. Unemployment among youth in the region is the highest in the world, averaging more than 25 percent with many relatively well-educated first-time job seekers among them. School dropouts remain an important issue in many countries and there is general concern over the quality and relevance of education, while health risks affecting youth remain a worry, including diabetes, women's nutrition, and HIV/AIDS. Migration within and without the region is significant, with youth as its primary actors. By 2020, it is estimated that more than 70 percent of the region's youth will live in cities. Finally, concentrations of youth and concerns (both founded and unfounded) about violence, dysfunctional behaviors and extremism are on the rise.

1.2 *The policy interest in youth is sometimes motivated by concerns over anti-social youth behaviors.* Indeed, issues such as youth violence, actual and perceived, and radicalism, which are not necessarily highly prevalent in the region but are often disproportionately reported in the media (based upon a few country contexts, most notably Iraq and the West Bank and Gaza), have the potential to create a reputational risk for the region as a whole and, possibly, a social and economic risk as well.² If youth are

¹ Heckman (2007).

² An internet search for the key words of 'youth', 'violence' and 'Middle East' yielded over 1.9 million hits. Media articles are numerous among them. Irrespective of the veracity of the content of the individual articles, globally they serve to create an unfavorable *perception* of the region and its youth.

not productively absorbed into economies, there will be increased unemployment, lower productivity and growth, and *perhaps* greater risks of conflict and violence (see Box 1).

Box 1:
Does a Large Youth Population Cause Conflict?

The surface evidence on the association between large youth cohorts and violence and conflict is striking. Countries in which young adults (aged 15-29) made up at least 40 percent or more of the adult population were more than twice as likely to experience an outbreak of civil conflict in the 1990s as those below this benchmark (Cincotta et. al.). Almost all of the countries with a young adult proportion of 50 percent or more are in either Sub Saharan Africa or the Middle East and North Africa. A decline in the birth rate of 5 births per 1000 would correspond to a decline of over 5 percent in the probability of civil conflict.

However, a large youth cohort does not necessarily lead to conflict. Cincotta and colleagues identify five stress factors that make states more vulnerable to instability and civil conflict:

- A large youth population;
- Political volatility;
- Rapid urban population growth;
- Competition for cropland and fresh water; and
- Proliferation of HIV/AIDS.

A youth bulge is only one factor. Researchers have suggested that it is the presence of more than one factor at the same time that may create the conditions for conflict. This view is supported by Henrick Urdal, who finds that the risk of conflict is heightened by the combination of a large youth cohort, poor economic growth and limited opportunities for migration.

The studies serve to highlight several key elements regarding youth:

1. *Youth issues are cross-sectoral.* The studies demonstrate how unemployment, migration, citizenship and governance are all inter-dependent with respect to conflicts involving youth;
2. *Youth are not inherently a threat to be contained,* particularly in the presence of opportunities consistent with their expectations and energies; and
3. *Youth are a potential asset,* as demonstrated by their preference for economic opportunities over violence, here represented by the mitigating effects of migration on conflict.

Sources: Cincotta, Engelman and Anastasion (2003); Urdal (2004).

1.3 *However, youth should not be seen as a problem to be stopped. They are in fact an asset that if properly nurtured can stimulate the economic and social development of the region.* MENA economies have had an impressive record of development, especially recently. The region is enjoying its highest growth rate in per capita GDP in more than a decade, growing at more than 4 percent in 2006. Overall unemployment has been reduced, and with it youth unemployment is also falling in some countries, as a result of

both growth and a declining demographic share of youth in the labor force.³ There have been steady improvements in education and health indicators over the last 20 years in most countries, closing the gap with other developing regions. Good things are happening, but much more can take place to assist the youth to become fully productive participants and economic engines of their societies.

1.4 *Countries in the region are searching for effective policies to capitalize on this youth asset.* Some are already developing national multi-sectoral strategies focused on youth, including Yemen, Iran and Bahrain. Others have adopted youth as a priority for development projects, such as Jordan and Morocco. Still others are considering strategies, specific initiatives, or both, as in Egypt and West Bank and Gaza. Some of these initiatives are ad-hoc responses to perceived conditions. There are serious questions about whether to make investment in youth a systematic priority, how far to go in terms of altering existing policies and programs, and what specific interventions should be undertaken.

Box 2
Defining “Youth” in the Middle East and North African Context

Youth has broadly been defined as the transitional phase from childhood to adulthood, when individuals go through a process of physical, social, economic and other changes to move from gradually reduced dependence on others to complete independence (WDR 2007, Fussell 2006). But this transitional phase differs from country to country and depends to some extent on the policy area under consideration. The definition can be affected by such factors as the average age at which youth complete education and training, the legal age at which they can engage in work, marriage, voting, consent to medical services, or serve in the military.

The World Development Report 2007 generally focused on the age range 12-24 to define youth, occasionally using different ranges depending on the topic and data availability. By contrast, the United Nations World Program of Action for Youth defines youth from 15-24 years. The World Health Organization and UNICEF typically use the 10-19 age range. There is no strong evidence that suggests one definition is better than another for the MENA region. Anecdotally, however, it would appear that many of the youth transitions in the region, particularly in middle income settings, happen at slightly later ages than may be true in other regions. In this report, we adopt the UN approach of defining youth between 15-24 years of age for most purposes. This definition is not adhered to strictly, however, and other ages will be referenced depending on the topic and the available data.

Source: World Bank (2006).

1.5 *This report represents an initial attempt to assess the case for making investment in youth a systematic development priority for the region.* It summarizes what is known about the challenges facing youth and the opportunities successful youth embody, and begins to consider the contours of promising cross-sectoral, youth-centered, and inclusive policies for the region and the potential role for the World Bank. Throughout, knowledge

³ Country experiences vary, however. Youth unemployment as a share of total unemployment has increased in Iran and Algeria, and declined only marginally in Jordan. World Bank (2007a).

gaps and areas for further research will be highlighted. The analysis relies on readily available information, including existing studies of the region, reports from the World Bank, UN, International Labour Organization and others, complemented by the qualitative information collected through the World Bank's regional *Voices of the Youth* initiative and associated consultations. The report is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to provide concrete policy guidelines at this stage. It is a first step in the process of setting out the issues to encourage dialogue and discussion among policy makers leading to decisions and eventually actions.

1.6 The report has two intended audiences. The first are policy makers in the region, particularly those in Governments that are responsible for economic and social policy including Ministries of Finance, Planning and Economy and line ministries responsible for delivery of social services to youth such as the Health, Education, Social Affairs and Youth ministries. Second, donors and development organizations such as the World Bank can use the report as an input into thinking about how youth issues may fit into projects and to help formulate priorities toward youth in the future.

1.2. INVESTING IN YOUTH

1.7 *Ultimately, the issue centers on two related questions: (i) Why should governments and societies invest in youth in MENA?; and (ii) why should they invest in a cross-sectoral and youth-inclusive way, beyond the already significant commitments to health, education and other social sectors?* The specific answers are likely to differ among countries given the variation in income and development that exists across the region, but there are two broad motivations for investing in youth, one transitory and one more permanent. The current youth demographic bulge in the region suggests there is now an opportunity for growth that should be seized. While the demographics of the region will change over time and the advantages of a young population will disappear, there is a second unchanging feature of the youth population that points to the need for action, which is the effect on society of the series of life transitions facing all youth. The case for systematic government action then rests on efficiency considerations and potential market failures in which the socially optimal level of investment in youth is not taking place.

1.8 **The Demographic Bulge.** *For the MENA region, youth are the majority of the people, not a minority special interest.* With about two thirds of the region's population below the age of 24, MENA is facing an unprecedented 'youth bulge'. The large youth population is the result of high fertility rates between 1970 and 2000, and while growth rates are slowing down, the region will continue to have one of the world's youngest populations in the next decade (See Figure 1).⁴

⁴ Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and West Bank and Gaza will continue to experience growing youth populations well into the next decade. See also Yousef (2003).

**Figure 1:
MENA Has Among the Largest Youth Populations in the World**

Figure 1.a

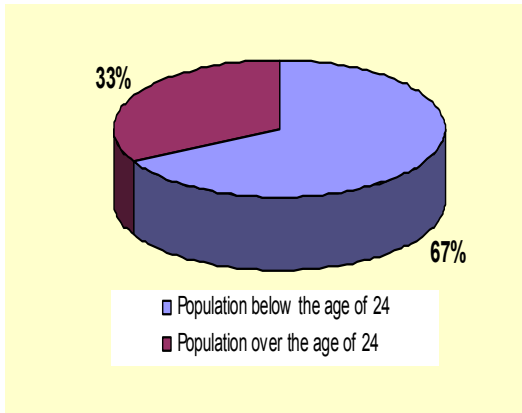
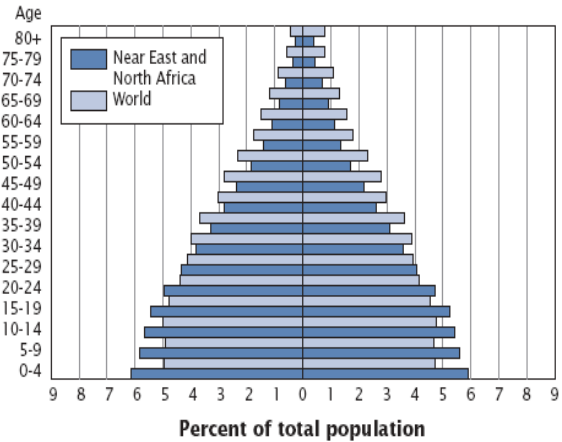


Figure 1.b



Sources: 1.a: World Bank (2005c); 1.b World Bank (2007i).

1.9 *The current youth bulge creates a demographic window of opportunity in which economies can benefit from a majority of individuals entering their productive peak, while the share of the population that is very young and the elderly still remains fairly small. The relative rise in the labor supply creates possibilities for enhanced growth through a rise in output per capita coupled with higher savings and investment from workers. Similarly, the large working age population holds out the potential for increased consumption or income taxes that can in turn be used to finance productive investments such as additional education, health, or social protection. As the population ages, this productivity window begins to close as dependency ratios rise, reducing income growth and taxes but increasing pressure to spend on the elderly.*

1.10 *For all MENA countries, the window of opportunity will remain open for at least the next 10 years, and for countries like Yemen, Iraq and West Bank and Gaza the window will remain open beyond 2050.⁵ The potential exists to reap tremendous benefits from ensuring that youth have the health, skills and social capital to productively contribute to growth.*

1.11 *If investments are not made in youth, however, there is risk that the youth bulge may manifest itself as a drain on growth and society, rather than a dividend. Some countries have successfully taken advantage of young populations, particularly in East Asia where between 25 and 40 percent of the rapid growth that took place between 1965 and 1990 in Japan, Hong Kong (China), the Republic of Korea, and Singapore has been attributed to the higher growth of the working age population.⁶ Other countries have been much less successful in this regard. Countries in LAC, for example, appear not to have capitalized during the peak of their youth bulges.*

⁵ World Bank (2006) and United Nations (2005).

⁶ World Bank (2006).

1.12 The Consequences of Youth Transitions. *Youth require specific policy attention not only because they are currently so numerous but also because they must navigate far more of life's crucial transitions in a short time frame than any other age group.* This is a circumstance of youth that will not remove itself from public consideration through changing demographics. Youth, whether in a large or small cohort, will always experience these transitions at about the same time in life. Between the ages of 15 and 24 youth undergo critical transitions including going from school to work, forming families, taking responsibility for their own health, and becoming full citizens in their countries. Failure to navigate these transitions in a productive and timely manner has potentially dire repercussions for both individuals and their society.

1.13 *There are many possible frameworks for considering the effects of these youth transitions. Most center on the concept of risk and reducing or responding appropriately to different risk factors.* According to the ecological model taken from the public health and youth development literatures, youth are shaped by the interactions between their own personal characteristics and their environment, which includes family, community, and society at-large, through institutions, history, and social norms. The impact on the current and future well-being of the individual is the result of exposure to various risk and protective factors.⁷ Protective factors may include individual social and cognitive skills, personal empowerment, the presence of a caring parent, smaller family size, family connectedness, household resources, neighborhood and community engagement of the individual and family, appropriate public social institutions, and positive gender roles. Risk factors may include an aggressive temperament, the presence of a disability, low parental resources, living in high crime or violence-prone neighborhoods, and being exposed to damaging social norms or economic instability.

1.14 A closely related construct involves the human capital and life cycle models commonly used in the economic literature. Here, the framework does not examine the factors that affect the development of the person, but instead focuses on the accumulation of human capital and physical assets over the lifetime that can be affected by exposure to various risks and shocks. An extension of this approach is the social risk management framework, which emphasizes sources of risk affecting individuals and households at the macro, meso and micro levels, and risk response strategies including prevention, mitigation and coping that can be provided by households and families, the private sector, and government. For our purposes, we are considering the economic case to be made for youth policy intervention, and it is therefore useful to reference a modified life cycle approach that incorporates some of the protective and risk factors identified above.

1.15 *The value of these conceptual frameworks is to stress that decisions, choices, and the interaction of the environment and outside influences during youth affect them for the rest of their lives.* The developmental process may be thought of as a series of choices or events, where each of the earlier events affects later choices and outcomes. Youth may be more susceptible to particular risks compressed into a short time frame, which largely determine the kind of adults they will become. For example, an adolescent who drops

⁷ Bronfenbrenner (1989) and Blum (1998).

out of school will have a harder time finding a well-paying job in the future, which will affect the entire future earnings path of that individual. Similarly, early marriage will affect the subsequent life choices regarding the time and money available for further education and may negatively affect human capital development and productivity. There can also be positive factors or “shocks” that can lead to a higher permanent growth path. Increasing inclusion and participation of youth in communities and decision processes can lead to higher engagement and stronger attachments to communities and the labor force. Providing youth with better information regarding the choices available to them can translate into better decisions and help them become more productive individuals.

1.16 Costs of Inaction. *Understanding and addressing the factors and shocks that impede the successful transition of youth across domains is critical, as failure to do so is extremely costly to individuals and society.* The expenditures by governments over the first four years of primary school in MENA are about US \$1,300 per student. This represents significant sunk investment costs to the state for students that fail to complete primary education, even without considering the longer term implications associated with illiteracy and other negative consequences related to lack of education (e.g., lack of health awareness, limited employment opportunities, etc.). The costs of early school attrition indeed have long-lasting effects on incomes and productivity. Many studies have been conducted in other regions estimating the cost of lost income and productivity. For example, it has been estimated that for the LAC region the costs of early attrition from secondary school in terms of the present value of forgone earnings amount to between 4 and 20 percent of current GDP annually, depending on the country and assumptions regarding the rate of return to education.⁸ This represents the cost to society in terms of lost productivity. For the same LAC countries, the annual cost of youth unemployment varies between a quarter and three quarters of a percent of GDP annually.

1.17 Similar cost estimates of the costs of school-to-work transition are difficult to come by in MENA. However, costs can be expected to be significant. Figure 3 displays estimates of the costs of lifetime income forgone for youth that leave secondary school prematurely for a selection of countries in the region, expressed as a share of current GDP. Using conservative assumptions regarding future annual incomes, it is estimated that the aggregate lifetime cost to premature secondary school leavers in MENA amounts to between 3 and 4.3 percent of GDP on average.⁹ This represents the present value of forgone future earnings they could have expected had they graduated. The cost to some countries such as Morocco, Yemen and Djibouti is quite high, approaching 10 percent of GDP, given the much lower rates of secondary school enrollments. The overall averages are comparable to, but below Latin American estimates since enrollment rates are generally higher in MENA. Unemployment also represents a significant drag on MENA economies. A model developed for Morocco finds that youth unemployment results in significant underutilization of human capital.¹⁰ According to the simulation, a 10 percent reduction in the youth unemployment rate increases the value of total human capital by

⁸ Cunningham and Garcia-Verdu (2007).

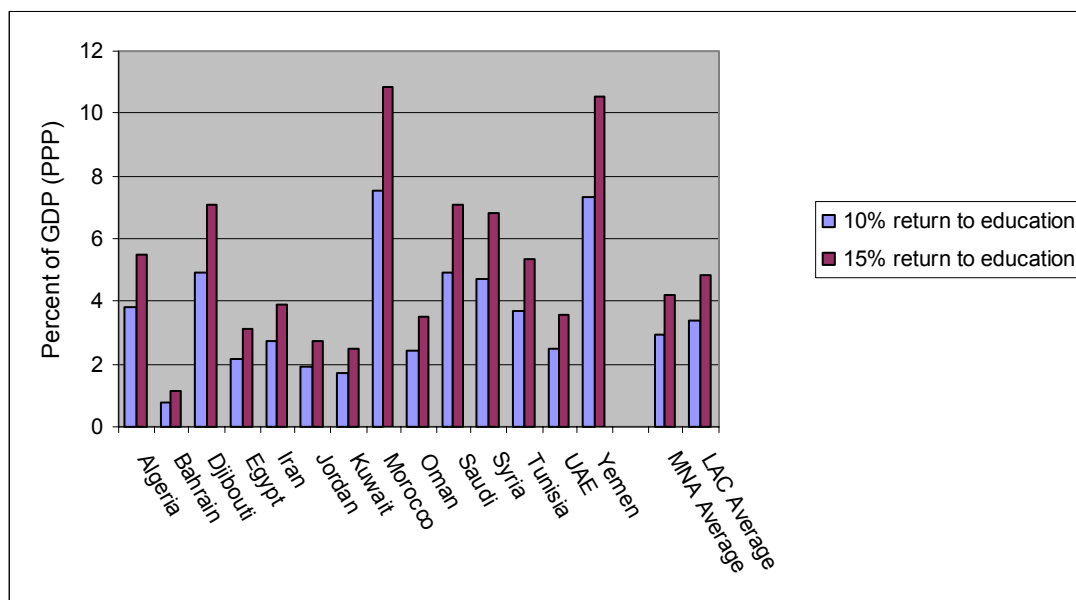
⁹ The estimates follow the same approach taken in Cunningham and Garcia-Verdu (2007).

¹⁰ Based on the model of human capital accumulation developed in Bodor, Robalino and Rutkowski (2007).

nearly 2 percent, which would increase GDP growth in Morocco by up to 2 percentage points.

1.18 *The costs of failed health transitions are also important.* There is little data on which to base these estimates in the MENA region, but in one primary area of health concern, HIV/AIDS, the projected costs are particularly high. Right now, the estimated prevalence rates of STIs and HIV/AIDS are relatively low in the MENA region, compared with other regions. However, low prevalence does not mean a low risk of an epidemic. Indeed, the total number of AIDS deaths has increased almost six-fold since the early 1990s, and half of new HIV infections are among young people ages 15 to 24, the period when sexual activity usually begins.¹¹ A conservative estimate projects losses resulting from HIV/AIDS over the next 25 years at about 35 percent of current GDP.¹² High costs also result from events such as complications of child birth, aside from the personal tragedies experienced by mothers and children.

Figure 2: Estimates of the Cost of Foregone Income for Secondary School Leavers in Selected Middle East and North Africa Countries (as a Percentage of 2003 GDP, PPP adjusted)



Source: World Bank staff calculations using data from World Development Indicators 2007 and the U.S. Census Bureau’s International Data Base (IDB).

1.19 The costs outlined above are suggestive, and additional work is needed to develop more comprehensive assessments of the true costs of failed youth transitions in MENA. However, the limited figures for the region and those of other regions suggest the costs to society are enormous. These potentially high costs lead to the case for policy action.

1.20 **Case for Government Intervention.** *For MENA countries there appears to be a case for intervention primarily on efficiency grounds relating to failures in the “market”*

¹¹ De Jong et al. (2007).

¹² Jenkins and Robalino (2003).

for investment in youth. A fundamental precept of public policy is that government should intervene only in special circumstances surrounding either the equity or efficiency of markets or desired actions. There are strong negative externalities associated with poor youth transitions that justify intervention – or put more positively, there are gains from investment in youth that benefit society more in aggregate than the individual. For example, the cost to the individual of leaving school early will differ from the opportunity cost to society just on the basis of the forgone taxes and alternative investments resulting from tax revenues. The social cost would exceed the individual cost.

1.21 *Further, youth outcomes may be suboptimal from a social standpoint because of the incomplete information available to many youth.* Youth frequently are not aware of the possible employment opportunities available to them, or have unrealistic expectations of what positions and incomes they can command (possibly resulting in inefficiently high reservation wages, as may be the case among certain youth in GCC countries). Youth may not understand the repercussions of early marriage¹³ or the possible consequences of drug use. Collectively, this lack of information can produce undesirable outcomes, as suggested by an example from outside the region: a survey of boys in the Dominican Republic found that they severely underestimated the economic returns to completing secondary school;¹⁴ those boys who were given the true returns were significantly more likely to be attending school the following year than those who did not receive the information.

1.3. POLICY IMPLICATIONS: THE NEED FOR CROSS-SECTORAL AND INCLUSIVE YOUTH POLICIES

1.22 *What are the implications of the foregoing discussion for policy? One implication is that a purely sectoral perspective on investing in youth is insufficient.* As Professor Heckman suggests in the quotation opening this chapter, developing consistent, cross-cutting youth policies that go beyond the traditional sector “silos” can turn the youth cohort into an engine of growth capable of propelling the region to greater prosperity.

1.23 *As youth outcomes are interrelated and have cumulative effects, the responses should be interrelated and coordinated.* Almost universally, and certainly within MENA countries, policies and programs that affect youth function independently of one another. A Ministry of Health typically does not interact with the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, least of all with the Ministry of Youth. Much of the research investigating the successful features of youth interventions stresses the importance of coordinating different elements of the service and support systems so that needs of youth can be addressed in an integrated fashion.¹⁵ This holistic approach is particularly important for at-risk and vulnerable adolescents. For example, even if the

¹³ While the rising age of marriage has benefited women greatly by reducing the health risks associated with early childbearing, there are still population groups where early marriage and childbearing remain common.

¹⁴ World Bank (2006). See also Jensen (2006).

¹⁵ Melaville and Blank (1991). See also Pittman and Cahill (1992).

primary focus of a program is on skills development for out-of-school youth, it is still necessary to address the needs of the youth to continue to earn money while studying and help the individuals deal with other risk factors, or these issues may prevent him/her from completing the program and gaining employment.¹⁶

1.24 *There is also a need for a more youth-centered, inclusive approach to youth policy.* There are significant benefits to investing in youth inclusion and participation and the youth of the region can be agents for positive economic, political and social change. To achieve this objective the youth ought to be included and invited to participate in the articulation of their concerns, aspirations and envisaged solutions. A new youth agenda for the region is therefore proposed based upon the guiding principles of inclusion and participation. In consultations with youth, this is what they demand.¹⁷

1.25 *Youth exclusion is shaped by the contexts in which youth grow up as well as the systems in which they operate.* Social exclusion can be conceptualized as a failure of one or more of the following: the demographic and legal systems which promote civic integration, the labor market which promotes economic integration, the welfare system promoting social integration and the family and community system which promotes interpersonal integration.¹⁸

1.26 *The pervasive effects of social norms and processes can also exacerbate the exclusion of youth.* Women and youth are both over-represented among the unemployed. Young women are doubly disadvantaged. Gender norms are of course changing, but pervasive forces can adversely affect women's ability to obtain quality employment. In Egypt for example, despite an increase in women's education, socio-cultural norms dictate that women still tend to stay close to home when searching for employment and refrain from driving, thus limiting their job mobility and options to paid employment outside government. Young males on the other hand increased their commuting distance significantly between 1988 and 1998.¹⁹ Seemingly small issues such as the proximity to work locations have been found to have an effect on ability to obtain employment.²⁰

1.27 *Youth can also be overtly excluded through legal, regulatory, social connections and other means.* In the West Bank and Gaza, for example, the Labor Law prohibits 15-18 year olds from certain types of employment.²¹ In other cases family and social connections are essential to securing employment and without them youth are denied access. But once employment is secured it may, as documented in the case of Syria, buy the youth, 'a measure of inclusion.'²² The playing field is not equal for young men and women and in many situations where a young woman might have been previously employed she may exit the labor force after marriage, sometimes voluntarily, at other times not.

¹⁶ Burt (1998).

¹⁷ World Bank (2007e).

¹⁸ Hammer (2003).

¹⁹ World Bank (2006).

²⁰ Kabbani and Kamel (2007).

²¹ World Bank (2007f).

²² Kabbani and Kamel (2007).

1.28 *Youth tend to associate their economic exclusion with negative social outcomes.* A recent study conducted in Morocco noted that youth “suggest that unemployment leads to problems of crime, including drugs and prostitution, by eroding morale and compounding poverty. Young men in the urban community of Oufra N’talat lament the psychosocial factors leading to crime: ‘The lack of work and the emptiness in their lives cause young people to take drugs and do bad things.’”²³ Exclusion has the potential to manifest itself in even more extreme modes of behavior. In the period following the first *Intifada*, “the lack of opportunities for participation on the part of the Palestinian youth in political activities resulted in their feeling[s] of marginalization and unworthiness, forcing many to turn to fundamentalism.”²⁴

1.29 *A youth inclusion approach makes sound social, economic and political sense.* There is evidence to suggest that opportunities to be recognized and heard as citizens and included in state and civil/community initiatives are necessary for private investment and growth as well as good governance. A World Bank review of social development activities covering over 30 years of World Bank operations found that it pays to integrate inclusive social development in operational designs and implementation. Further, the notion of “client power” as elaborated in the World Development Report 2004 Making Services Work for Poor People, argues that providers are more responsive to beneficiaries if they are included and participate in decisions.

1.30 *The goal should be to mainstream a youth-centered, inclusive approach and view existing policies and programs through a youth “lens.”* This does not imply that current programs need to drastically alter direction. Employment, education, health and social protection still have the same goals. But these policies should be consciously coordinated, with strategies that more effectively manage investments in youth.

1.4. REPORT STRUCTURE

1.31 *The structure of the report follows that of the World Development Report 2007 in that it addresses major youth transitions.* However, while the 2007 WDR addresses five youth transitions, four principle transitions are examined here: learning, working, migrating, and staying healthy and forming families. Migration is added explicitly as a transition given its importance in the region. Exercising citizenship is not included as a separate *transition* given that the need for youth participation and inclusion, which encompasses and goes beyond citizenship, appears as a main theme throughout the report and as a key principle for policy action. While the report follows the transitions or developmental domains for clarity of organization, the connections across transitions are also highlighted throughout, consistent with the need to address youth issues, challenges, and potentials in a cross-sectoral manner.

1.32 *The framework of the three youth lenses, or strategic areas for reform, suggested in the 2007 WDR are loosely applied in the report: (a) broadening the opportunities for*

²³ World Bank (2007c).

²⁴ UNICEF (2004).

developing human capital; (b) developing young people's *capacity* to choose among the opportunities available to them; and (c) providing an effective system of *second chances* to those youth unable to sufficiently develop their capacity or take advantage of potential opportunities. While the focus of much of the analysis is on the supply side, that is, on increasing and broadening the access and quality of opportunities available to youth, examples are also included of why it is particularly important to develop youth capabilities (i.e., strengthening their demand). Youth are not only passive beneficiaries of services such as education and health. As they move from childhood to adulthood, they increasingly become decision making agents faced with a wide array of options which may vary widely in quality and relevance. In the absence of *information*, *guidance*, and *financial means*, the range of perceived or real positive and relevant options may narrow, and youth may be more likely to engage in the only options that seem available to them, namely low quality alternatives and/or risky behaviors. Therefore, allowing young people to choose (and to choose well) among opportunities across domains requires providing them with the types of capabilities most relevant during adolescence and early adulthood in the specific context(s) they evolve in. In the absence of both opportunities and capabilities, youth's contribution to their own development, to the development of their families, and to the economic growth and social development of their region will be far from optimal.

1.33 *Finally, certain groups of youth seem to consistently fall through the cracks even in the context of improved opportunities and enhanced capabilities.* Despite significant *progress* in many areas, female youth and rural youth often appear to remain at a particular disadvantage throughout the MENA region. To the extent that there is information available, the specific issues of gender and urban vs. rural location are addressed throughout the report. In addition, some youth are at an inherent disadvantage by virtue of their disability status, ethnicity, or environment (e.g., poverty, conflict, etc.). As a result, they do not benefit from the opportunities available to most youth and/or are not able to develop their capabilities. For all these youth, doing nothing is simply not an option. Not only would it represent a failure of the social contract; it would also be economically unsound, as previously documented. Several boxes throughout the text document the specific conditions and needs of particular youth groups (e.g., youth with disabilities, poor youth, street youth, youth in conflict, etc.), highlight the intertwined effects of exclusion across domains (e.g., from learning to working) and build the case for second chance programs to act as safety nets and help these youth regain access to quality opportunities across domains.

1.34 Six chapters follow this introduction. The next four chapters take stock of what is known about the challenges facing youth, divided into chapters on Learning (Chapter 2), Working (Chapter 3), Migrating (Chapter 4) and Staying healthy and forming families (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 discusses several policies and initiatives in the region that, although for the most part not evaluated at this stage, appear promising insofar as they are either cross-sectoral or inclusive of youth. Finally, Chapter 7 considers the ways forward and examines the potential role for donors and the World Bank in supporting the youth agenda in the region.

2. LEARNING

'I work to provide my family's basic needs. This is the reason...I stopped my university education'

(Young man, rural Ibb Governorate, Yemen) Voices of the Youth

'The experience I am about to reveal is related to my exclusion from secondary school and the lack of access to secondary school for the blind.'

(Amina, 17 year old female, Sanaa, Yemen) Voices of the Youth

2.1. ACCESS TO EDUCATION: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

2.1 *Over the past 40 years, the MENA region has committed more resources to education than other developing countries at similar levels of per capita income. As a result, the region was able to improve access to education at all levels, at rates not previously seen in other parts of the world. Between 1965 and 2003, MENA countries spent an average 5 percent of their GDP on education, compared to around 3 percent in East Asian and Latin American countries.²⁵ With some exceptions (e.g., Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen), MENA countries are educating most children, both boys and girls, at the primary level.*

2.2 *Similar progress has been made with respect to the proportion of the age cohort attending secondary school and university. In the last decade, gross enrollment in secondary education has increased rapidly, reaching more than 80 percent in all countries, except in Morocco and Syria.²⁶ Similarly, in some countries, especially Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia, the level of young people entering the post secondary education system has increased at an extremely fast pace. Enrollment in post secondary school increased by 55 percent in Jordan between 1999 and 2003. In Lebanon, the gross enrollment rate in higher education (which has traditionally been high) was 50 percent in 2004.²⁷ As a result of the emphasis on school enrollment, the average years of schooling for the working-age population in the region have doubled in the last 20 years.²⁸ Given the fast youth population growth rates previously described, this increase in access to education has been a major achievement (See Figure 3 and Figure 4).*

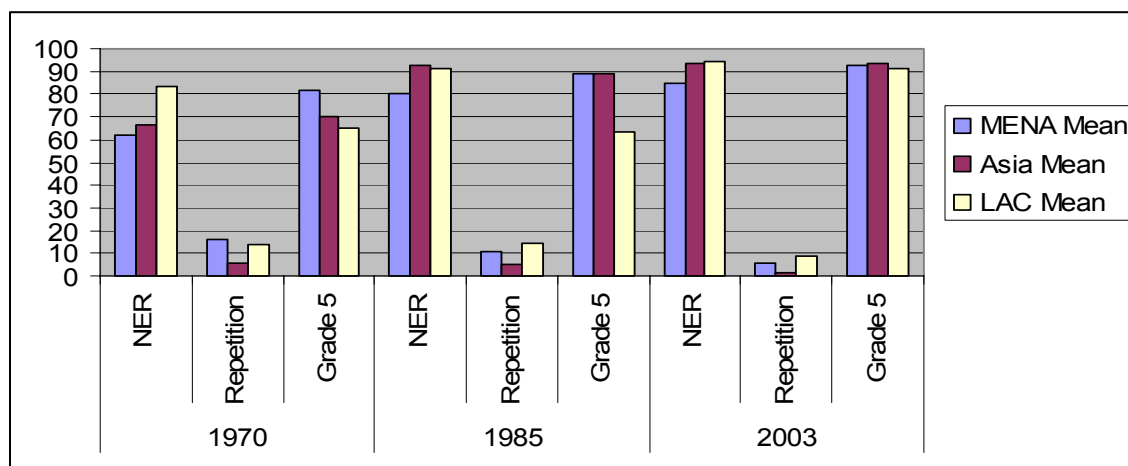
²⁵ World Bank (2007i).

²⁶ ETF (2006).

²⁷ UNESCO (2006).

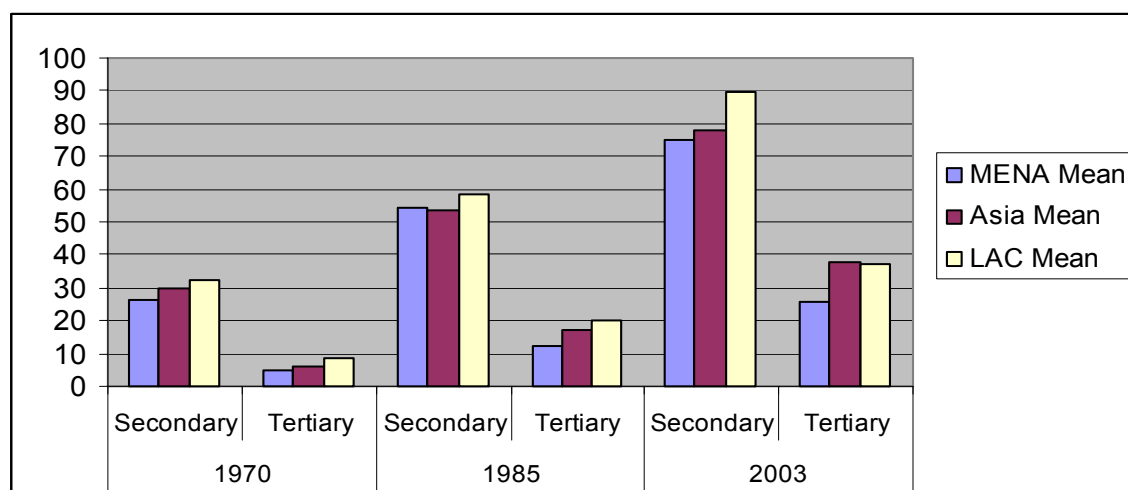
²⁸ Barro and Lee (2000).

Figure 3: Mean Net Enrollment Rate (NER), Repetition Rate and Pupils Reaching Grade 5 by Region



Data Source: World Bank (2007i)

Figure 4: Mean Gross Enrollment Rate for Secondary and Tertiary School by Region

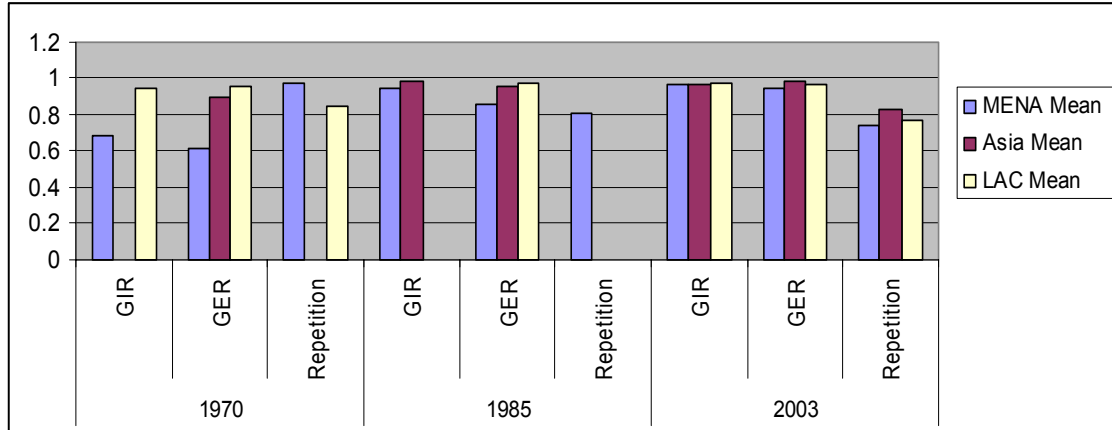


Data Source: World Bank (2007i)

2.3 *The MENA region has also made remarkable progress with respect to closing the gender gap in education.* As shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6, the gender parity for basic education is almost complete and the parity indices for secondary and higher education are not significantly different from the corresponding indices for Latin America and East Asia. Yet, progress has not been even across all countries. While almost all countries have attained gender parity at the level of primary education (0.92 in Morocco, 0.94 in Algeria, 0.96 in Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia, 0.98 percent in Jordan),²⁹ significant gender gaps in secondary education remain in countries such as Djibouti, Iraq, Morocco, and Yemen. Gender parity rates are generally better for higher education, except in Djibouti, Iraq, and Yemen, where the proportion of male students still surpass females.

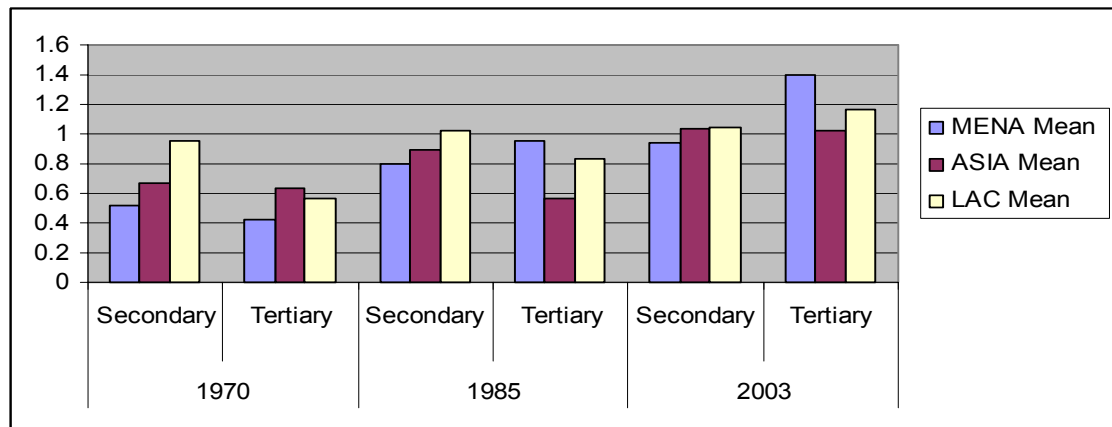
²⁹ UNESCO (2006).

Figure 5: Mean Gender Parity Index of Gross Intake Rate to Grade 1, Gross Enrollment Rate and Repetition Rate in Primary Education by Region (Female as a Proportion of Male)



Source: World Bank (2007i)

Figure 6: Mean Gender Parity Index of Gross Enrollment Rate in Secondary and Tertiary Education by Region (Female as a Proportion of Male)



Source: World Bank (2007i)

2.4 *Despite the advances in access to education, the average level of education youth receive is still lower in MENA than in other developing countries.* In 2003, the average gross enrollment rate in secondary school was only 75 percent in MENA, compared to 78 and 90 percent in East Asia and Latin America, respectively. Similarly, the average gross enrollment rate in higher education was only 26 percent in MENA in 2003, which is about two thirds of the average for the two other regions.³⁰ By 2000, the region only averaged 5.7 years of school attainment, compared to 7.3 and 7.2 for East Asia and Latin America, respectively.

³⁰ World Bank (2007i).

Box 3: Youth at Risk, Opportunities, and Second Chances

Youth with Mental and Physical disabilities

It has been reported that disability rates are high in the MENA region (perhaps twice the size as of other developing regions), even though reliable estimates are hard to find. The reasons for such high rates are due to factors such as poor early health care in areas with high levels of urban or rural poverty, conflict and violence, traffic accidents, malnutrition, prenatal hazard, lack of early detection and so forth. In MENA, a strong tendency towards social and community responsibility and charity for the needy and homeless, partly based on local cultural and Islamic traditions, has been said to play a mitigating role.³¹ Yet, youth with disabilities often remain excluded from access to quality learning and working opportunities, with all the implications that such exclusion may have on opportunities in other domains, such as forming families or migrating.

Minority Youth

Nearly all countries in MENA – as in the world more generally – have ethno-linguistic minorities, some of which are historical (going back millennia, as in Morocco's Berbers) while others are due to contemporary patterns of immigrant labor (as in the Pakistani's in Abu Dhabi). Historically, such language and ethnic minorities have had less access to schooling and other government services than the more 'mainstream' groups in the country. In Morocco, for example, there has been a strong political suppression of the Berber language in favor of Arabic; in the last few years this has begun to change, and Berber is now taught in a growing number of primary schools as well as in adult literacy programs. However, data on school achievement, employment, or health by ethno-linguistic background are very difficult to find, and minority youth often remain at the margins of society.³²

2.5 *Literacy rates have improved rapidly in recent decades, although they still remain fairly low in some countries, particularly among women.* The region as a whole has an average adult literacy rate of about 80 percent. In 2004, these rates ranged from 66 percent in Morocco to 95 percent in Jordan for men and from 40 percent in Morocco to 85 percent in Jordan for women.³³ In 1985, only 48 percent of Moroccan youth aged 15-24 were literate whereas in 2004 slightly over 70 percent could read.³⁴ Yet, the problem of high female illiteracy remains high in Morocco and Yemen as well as in Algeria and Egypt. This problem is gradually being reduced thanks to girls' increasing access to basic education, but a significant proportion of female youth remain illiterate nowadays, particularly in rural areas.

2.6 *Many youth still experience barriers to continuing their education.* In most MENA countries (with the exception of Algeria and Iran at the primary level) the non-poor students who live in urban areas tend to have higher access to education at both the primary and secondary levels than the poor and those who live in rural areas (See Figure 7). Barriers can be experienced both on the supply and demand sides. On the supply side, factors include: lack of school infrastructure, poorly trained teachers, teacher absenteeism and teacher shortages, inadequate curricula which result in poor interest among students, and poor school climate. On the demand side, lack of family resources, need to work, social expectations for girls, and early pregnancies are all possible factors. In the MENA

³¹ World Bank (2007i).

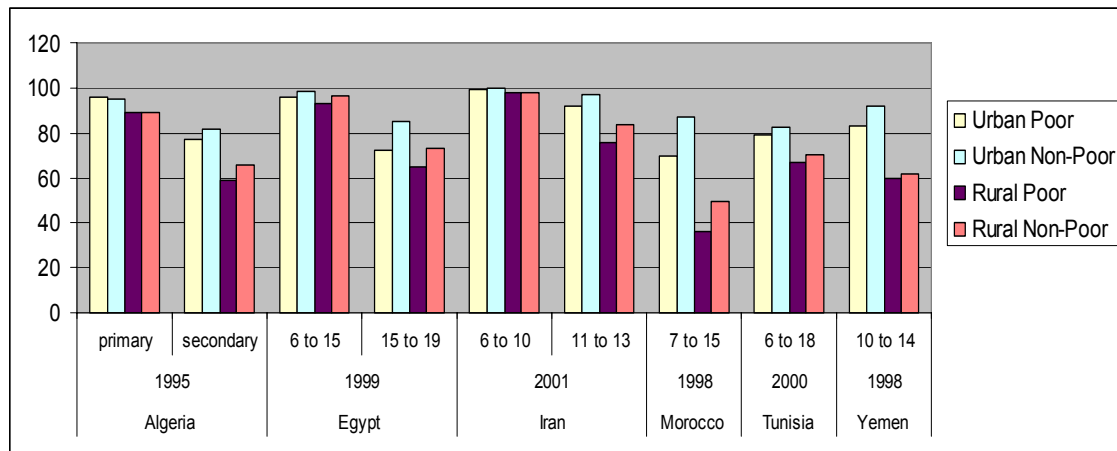
³² World Bank (2007i).

³³ UNESCO (2006).

³⁴ UN Millennium Development Goal Indicators and UN Common Database (UNESCO): <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Seriesdetail.aspx?srid=656&crd=504>.

region, countries that stick with the policy that all education is a right and will be provided free to all, particularly at the university level, are implicitly making a decision to distribute their resources in favor of the economic and social elites and to invest less in the human capital of children and youth at the lower end of the socio-economic ladder. Indeed, poor rural youth are most likely to be confronted with the issue of opportunity cost when weighting the pros and cons of pursuing their education.

Figure 7: Enrollment Rates for Poor and Non-Poor (percent)



Source: World Bank (2007i).

2.7 *These barriers result in high drop out rates and large numbers of out-of-school youth throughout the region.* Dropout rates are still significant in some countries, in particular in Morocco where it is as high as 11.3 percent in Grade 6.³⁵ A total of about 5 million children aged 6 to 10, and 4 million youth aged 11 to 15, were out of school in 1995, either because they never attended school or because they have not completed primary school and/or compulsory secondary school. By 2007, 9 million youth between the ages of 18 and 27 in Morocco have not completed basic education. By 2015, the number of out-of-school children and youth (OSCY) aged 6 to 15 is projected to increase to 12 million.³⁶ OSCY are most often children and youth who are poor, female, live in rural areas, speak non-majority languages, have a disability or serious health and sanitation problems, or are caught in conflict zones of violence.

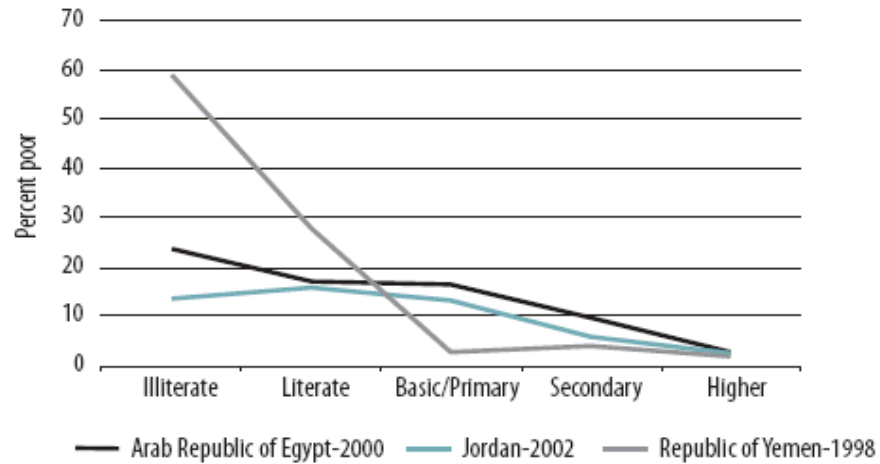
2.8 *Finally, despite gains in educational attainment amongst the poor, education levels remain dramatically different for poor and non-poor youth across the MENA region.* In Egypt, for example, primary and secondary completion rates among poor students rose by two percentage points between 1995/1996 and 1999/2000. However, only 23 percent of the poor have completed basic education and only 12 percent have completed secondary education. These rates are far lower than the aggregated national averages which are above 90 and 80 percent, respectively. Likewise while over 70 percent of all Egyptians can read, only 52 percent of poor Egyptians in rural Upper Egypt are literate. Similar gaps can be found in Jordan where literacy rates among the poor,

³⁵ World Bank (2007j).

³⁶ World Bank (2007i).

despite increasing from 78 to 87 percent between 1997 and 2006, still lag behind the national average literacy rate of 91.1 percent.³⁷ As Figure 8 below indicates, poverty and level of education are strongly and consistently correlated. This means that programs targeting the secondary and higher education levels will reach few if any of MENA's poor children.

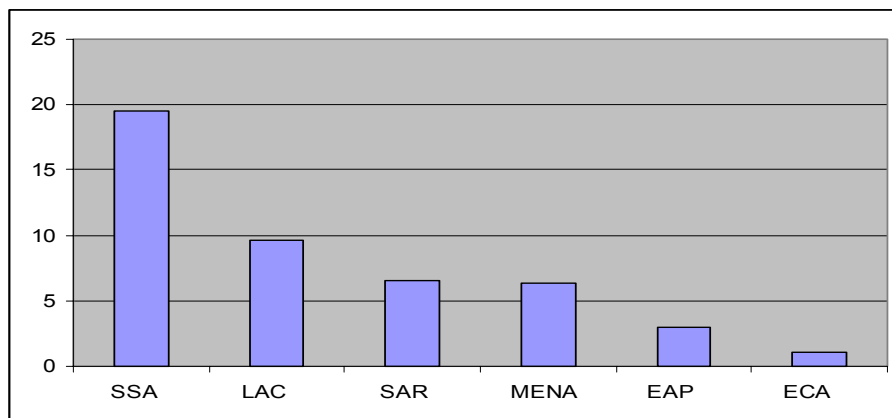
Figure 8: Poverty and Education Attainment in Selected Countries



Source: Iqbal (2006).

2.9 In a cross regional comparison, educational inequality in MENA is moderate, higher than in ECA and EAP but lower than in SSA and LAC. Figure 9 compares grade 9 completion rates for children from the richest third and poorest third of the population.

Figure 9: Grade 9 Completion Rates: Ratio of Richest to Poorest Thirds of Population



Source: Filmer and Pritchett (1999)

³⁷ World Bank Edstats: <http://sima.worldbank.org/edstats/>

Box 4: Capabilities Access to Finance in Relation to Learning

For youth to access education, options include credit schemes that target the poor, targeted school vouchers, individual learning accounts, and Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs). In some cases, funds can even be sent directly to youth so that they own the decision to further their education.

CCT programs have demonstrated their effectiveness and positive impact on the well-being and social indicators of the beneficiaries in a number of countries. More specifically, recent evaluations of the impact of CCT programs on education estimated that the effect of the Mexican program entitled *OPORTUNIDADES* (Opportunities), formerly known as *Progresá*, was 3.5 percentage points for enrollment, and at around 14 to 15 percentage points for girls who have completed primary school.³⁸ Similar programs have helped to increase enrollment rates by 10 percent among children between the ages of 6 and 17 in Ecuador, and 18 percent in Nicaragua for children in the first four years of primary school.³⁹

Few evaluations of the CCT programs have been conducted outside Latin America. However, in the MENA region, important initiatives are being piloted or implemented in Yemen, the West Bank and Gaza, Lebanon, and Egypt.

2.2. QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION

2.10 *Youth scores on international tests indicate that MENA countries do relatively well.* Quality of education is a concept that remains elusive and difficult to evaluate. Yet, it can be estimated by different types of indicators used as proxy, such as scores on international tests. After controlling for GDP per capita and gross secondary enrollment rates, scores of 8th graders on TIMSS (Third International Math and Science Survey) and of 15 year-old students on PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) suggest that education systems in the MENA region are functioning relatively well compared to other countries in Latin America and East Asia (See Figure 10).

2.11 *Yet, these overall positive scores at the regional level mask disparities among youth across countries.* While youth in Jordan, Iran, and Lebanon perform well on these tests, youth in countries such as Morocco and Tunisia lag behind. In Morocco, for instance, while more than 80 percent of children stay in school until the last grade of primary school, fewer than 20 percent have minimum mastery of the material.⁴⁰ In addition, the three Gulf States for which data are available (i.e., Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia) are characterized by very high GDP per capita but low scores on international tests, thus demonstrating that youth in richer MENA countries are not necessarily at an advantage when it comes to quality of education.

2.12 *In addition, the relevance of the region's education systems vis-à-vis the demands of the labor market appear weak, thus resulting in issues of unemployment and/or low quality employment.* The global wave of economic and technological change is demanding more from workers than basic skills. Yet, many educational systems in

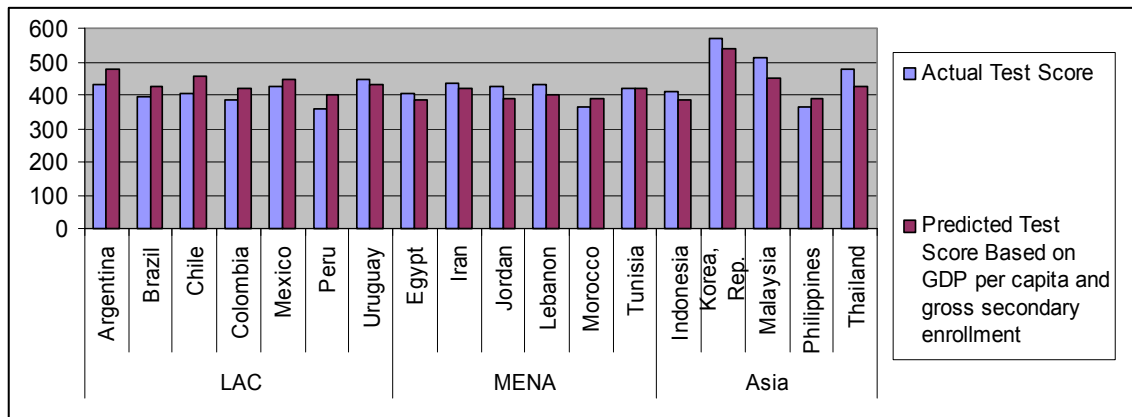
³⁸ Behrman, Sengupta, and Todd (2005).

³⁹ Schady and Araujo (2006) and Malucio and Flores (2005).

⁴⁰ World Bank (2006).

MENA are inadequate because they still encourage rote learning of facts instead of thinking and behavioral skills – skills that have become increasingly necessary in the knowledge economy. Such lack of relevance implies a decreased ability for young people to participate in their economy commensurate with their capabilities. In addition, limited training opportunities result in decreased occupational mobility and less ability to adapt to changing demands in the labor market.

Figure 10: Actual and Predicted Mean Test Scores Based on GDP Per Capita and Secondary School Enrollment



Source: World Bank (2007i).

2.13 In Syria, for instance, over 90 percent of youth interviewed in the context of School to Work Transition Surveys (SWTS)⁴¹ indicated that they did not receive training related to their employment. When asked about the difficulties they face in searching for a job, lack of educational qualifications and unsuitable education appear to be the most significant obstacles, jointly accounting for 43 percent of total responses.

2.14 In Egypt, it is estimated that each year about 600,000 youth leave school chasing 200,000 available jobs.⁴² Yet, employers still complain that they cannot hire adequately trained youth. Indeed, thirty percent of firms in the most recent investment climate assessment (ICA) identified skills and education of available workers as a major or very severe constraint to their operations and growth.⁴³

2.15 *Young people partly base schooling decisions on expected economic returns. Because of information failures, households may undervalue the potential returns from schooling (or from certain education tracks compared to others). These information failures are greatest in household with poorly educated parents. Providing young people with information on labor market opportunities and payoffs to different levels and types*

⁴¹ SWTS were developed by the International Labor Organization (ILO) and administered by the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics (SCBS) to 2,000 youth aged 15-24, indicates that over 75 percent of unemployed youth had been searching for work for over a year.

⁴² GTZ (2006).

⁴³ World Bank (2005d).

of schooling can allow them to make more educated guesses about their future returns, which in turn will make their decision more efficient. Accordingly, vocational guidance services should be made available to all students and trainees before and after they exit the education system.

2.16 *As of now, upper secondary education and higher education are still heavily oriented towards academic university degrees, with programs oriented towards the labor market playing a marginal role.* In Djibouti, Egypt, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the Arab Emirates and WBG, more than 70 percent of students in higher education are in humanities and social sciences.⁴⁴ This pattern of enrollment would be suited to the policy of absorbing most university graduates in civil services jobs in the public sector, but appears ill suited for national development strategies that draw increasingly on private initiatives and on the expansion of the manufacturing and service sectors.

2.17 *In parallel, TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) has often been relegated to secondary status (although this is changing) with weak linkages with the private sector and without adequate labor market information systems to ensure that students are provided with skills in demand.* For young Syrian men, unemployment rates are highest among vocational secondary and intermediate institute completers, pointing to a lack of schooling or good job opportunities for this group.⁴⁵ The German “dual system” (e.g., alternate training, apprenticeship, etc.) is promising, but success has been limited in MENA because of the inability to create jobs for apprentices and sustainable employment thereafter. As experience in Chile indicates, effective feedback from the labor market and regular consultations with employers and alumni are indispensable for adjusting curricula to meet changing needs.⁴⁶ The Mubarak-Kohl initiative in Egypt, launched to introduce the dual system in 1995, illustrates the challenges to starting such initiatives, i.e., resistance in the public education system and the absence of private sector umbrella organizations to manage joint training courses.

Box 5

TVET: Opportunity or Second Chance?

Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) systems in MENA countries are faced with a number of challenges, including:⁴⁷

- The frequent absence of an overall vision for the entire education system, a lack of consensus on the exact role of TVET in the system, and unclear differentiation between the social and economic goals assigned to the TVET system
- The insufficient human and financial resources allocated to the TVET system and the resulting quality problems
- Outdated occupational profiles, curricula, teaching methods, textbooks and equipment, an imbalance between theory and practice, and a lack of relevant practical work experience among teachers and instructors

⁴⁴ World Bank (2007i).

⁴⁵ Kabbani and Kamel (2007).

⁴⁶ World Bank (2006).

⁴⁷ ETF (2006).

- The fragmentation and insufficient coordination existing among TVET providers in addressing accessibility, transferability and accreditation issues
- Great internal and external rigidity due to centralized bureaucracies and the inability of trainers to design courses relevant to the needs of the modern labor market
- The internal focus of the entire education system on higher education, combined with the low status and low relevance of TVET, which results in overproduction of higher education graduates
- The lack of involvement of the private sector in the governance, funding and delivery of TVET
- The lack of established horizontal and vertical pathways between different qualification systems, the lack of incentives, and the absence of a spirit of competition
- The lack of consideration of gender-sensitive issues and the dominance of traditional gender roles in the TVET system.

Area(s) for further research:

1. Understanding youth participation in TVET and connections to the labor market;
2. Barriers to educational attainment for out-of-school youth and reasons for dropping out;
3. Youth understanding of returns to education, and gaps between expectations and likely outcomes.

3. WORKING

'My problem is related to my lack of employment as a female and the low educational level which is common in my area.'

(Amal, 18 year old female, rural Amran Governorate, Yemen). Voices of the Youth

'Most of my colleagues graduated from the university, and waited for governmental jobs. They waited a long time without work...'

(Shimaa. Female, Cairo, Egypt) Voices of the Youth

3.1 As the above quotes indicate, youth employment opportunities are closely linked to previous and ongoing learning opportunities. School-to-work transitions are therefore an example, among others detailed further, of the need to address youth issues in a multi-sectoral ways.

3.2 *Recent trends in economic growth and development condition both the access and quality of employment opportunities available to youth.* While variation exists among countries, as a whole the region has experienced relatively low rates of economic growth over the last two decades. While the MENA economies grew rapidly in the 60's, 70's and early 80's, in many cases due largely to the high prices of hydrocarbons, growth stagnated in the 80's and 90's. While growth rates have increased again since 2000, they still lag behind those of comparator countries. Given these slow growth rates, MENA countries have not been able to create jobs as quickly as the large youth cohort has entered the workforce. Additionally, MENA countries have large public sectors that both drain public resources and contribute to rigidity in the labor markets. The combination of weak labor demand and high labor rigidity create two phenomena: 1) a large number of unemployed youth, particularly among the wealthier and well educated who can afford to queue for public sector work for long periods of time and 2) a tendency among poorer youth to settle for lower-quality jobs out of necessity to earn at least minimal income.⁴⁸

3.1. ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

3.3 *Despite significant improvements in educational attainment, youth unemployment rates in MENA are among the highest in the world, at around 25 percent (compared to 14.4 percent worldwide).*⁴⁹ If adults were equally excluded from employment opportunities, there would be little interest in focusing specifically on youth. However, the gap between unemployment rates among youth and the older cohort is particularly high in MENA. In Egypt, for example, the unemployment rate for young people aged 15-24 years is 35 percent while that for older age cohorts is below 5 percent (see Figure 11).⁵⁰ In Tunisia, the employment rate for 20 to 24-year-old is more than 3 times higher

⁴⁸ Iqbal (2006).

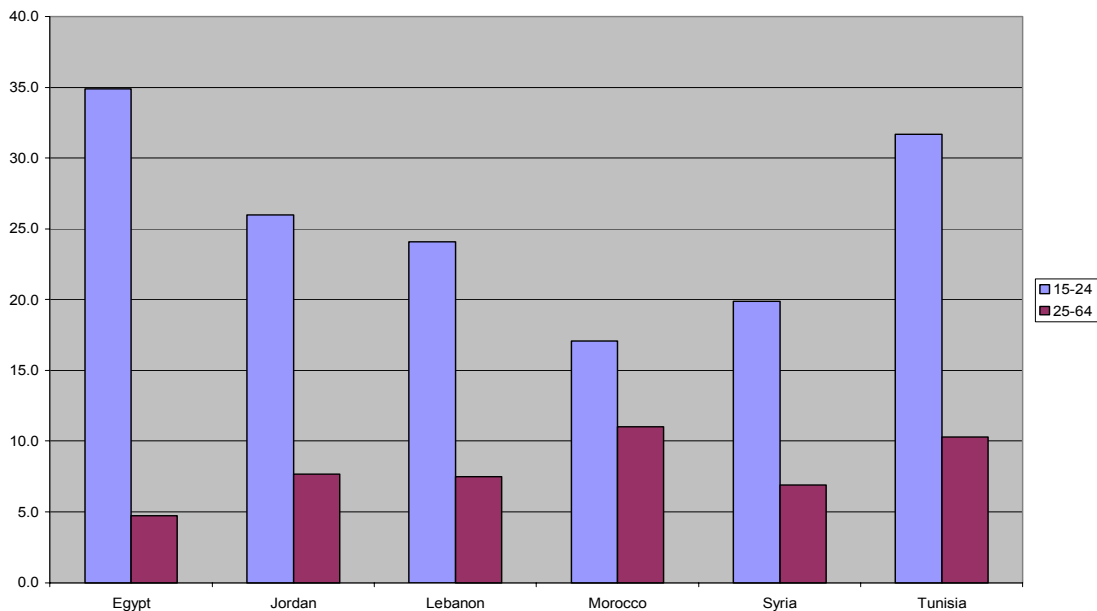
⁴⁹ World Bank (2006).

⁵⁰ ETF (2006).

than for those over 40.⁵¹ In Syria, unemployment rates among youth are more than six times higher than among adults.⁵²

3.4 *In addition, MENA youth spend lengthy periods in temporary or intermittent work and spells of joblessness before permanently entering stable employment.* In Egypt, youth aged 20-24 report having looked for work an average of 34 months, irrespective of their educational background. In Syria, results from the 2005 SWTS indicate that over 75 percent of unemployed youth had been searching for work for over a year.

Figure 11: Youth and Adult Unemployment Rates in Selected MENA Countries¹



1. Data for 2003, except Jordan, for which data refer to 2004.
Source: ETF (2006).

3.5 *Yet even high rates of youth unemployment do not fully capture the problem of idleness and inadequate youth employment.* Unemployment rates speak to the percentage of youth who have no jobs among those actively looking for employment. However, youth who are unemployed but not actively seeking employment are considered inactive rather than unemployed. As Table 1 below demonstrates, in addition to high youth unemployment rates MENA also has some of the world's highest youth inactivity rates. While more than half of the inactive youth in MENA are females, female inactivity rates in MENA are on par with many other regions (and lower than in South Asia) whereas overall inactivity rates are several percentage points higher than anywhere else.

3.6 *While inactivity rates for MENA youth are generally high, some intra-regional variation exists.* Figure 12 presents a comparison of 4 MENA countries with other nations that recently took part in the ILO's School to Work Transition Surveys (SWTS).

⁵¹ World Bank (2006).

⁵² Kabbani and Kamel (2007).

While Egypt, Syria and Iran have some of the highest inactivity rates among the countries surveyed, Jordan's is far lower, possibly in association with their high rates of school enrollment.

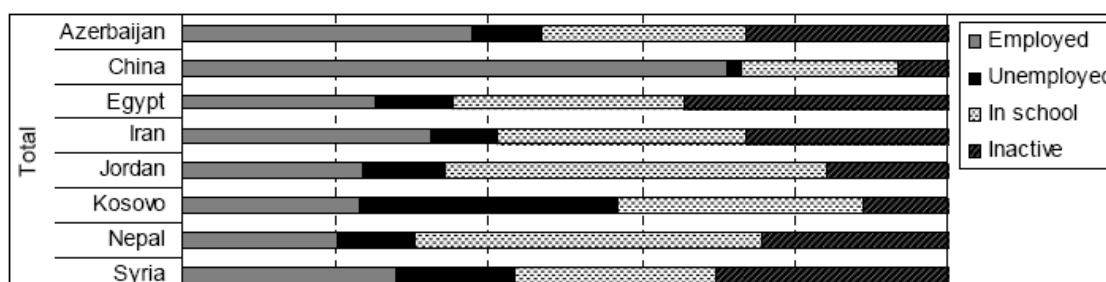
Table 1: Youth Inactivity Rates (1995-2005) and Female Share of Youth Inactivity (2005)

| | Inactive youth ('000s) | | Female share of inactive youth - 2005 (%) | Youth inactivity rate (%) | | |
|---|------------------------|---------|---|---------------------------|------|--------------------|
| | 1995 | 2005 | | 1995 | 2005 | % change 1995-2005 |
| World | 421'040 | 524'756 | 58.2 | 41.1 | 45.3 | 10.1 |
| Developed Economies and European Union | 58'694 | 59'902 | 51.2 | 46.4 | 48.2 | 3.7 |
| Central and Eastern Europe (non-EU) and CIS | 34'022 | 41'279 | 55.1 | 52.8 | 58.2 | 10.2 |
| East Asia | 58'227 | 74'978 | 46.2 | 24.8 | 32.7 | 31.5 |
| South East Asia and the Pacific | 40'845 | 47'419 | 58.4 | 41.9 | 43.5 | 4.0 |
| South Asia | 115'540 | 152'544 | 65.0 | 49.4 | 52.8 | 6.8 |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 41'565 | 48'319 | 60.1 | 43.6 | 45.8 | 5.0 |
| Middle East and North Africa | 37'566 | 49'741 | 61.1 | 60.0 | 60.0 | 0.1 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 34'582 | 50'573 | 61.6 | 31.8 | 34.5 | 8.3 |

Source: International Labour Organization (2006).

3.7 *Given the age pyramid and the level of economic activity in MENA countries, 54 million jobs need to be created between now and 2020 in order to keep the employment situation stable.* International estimates indicate that a 10 percent increase in the youth share of the world population increased youth unemployment by an estimated 6 percent between 1980 and 2000⁵³. This bulge therefore leads to increasing challenges in absorbing youth in jobs. In MENA, recent evidence indicates that overall unemployment has been reduced in the past few years, and with it youth unemployment is also falling in some countries, as a result of both growth and a declining demographic share of youth in the labor force.⁵⁴ Depending on the actual labor force participation rates of youth, the figure of 54 million jobs just quoted may be either an over- or under-estimate. Youth unemployment, however, is likely to remain a key problem in the region over the short and medium term.

Figure 12: Distribution of Youth by Current Activity Status, Selected Countries (2004)



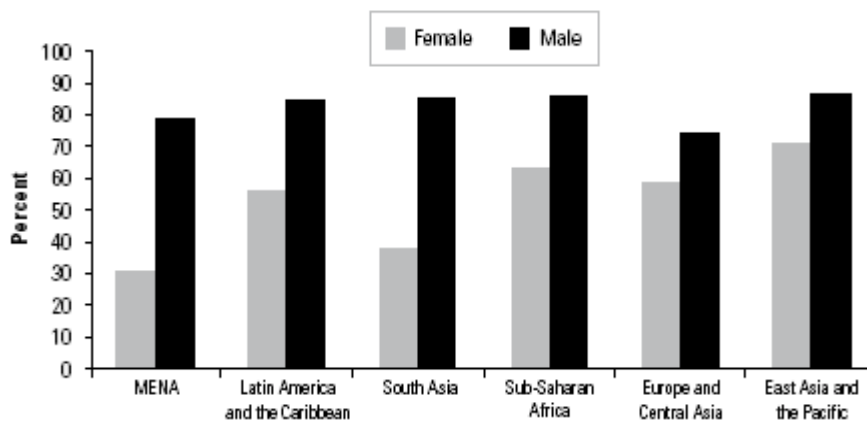
Source: International Labour Organization (2006).

⁵³ World Bank (2006).

⁵⁴ Country experiences vary, however. Youth unemployment as a share of total unemployment has increased in Iran and Algeria, and declined only marginally in Jordan. World Bank (2007a).

3.8 *In MENA countries, this trend is accentuated by the underlying increase in female participation rates, which may limit the positive impact of slower population growth on unemployment rates as larger shares of young females in these cohorts look for employment in the labor market.* Overall, women's share of the total labor force increased from 26 percent in 2000 to 28 percent in 2005.⁵⁵ Yet, as Figure 13 indicates, MENA continues to lag behind other regions both in terms of overall female participation in the labor force and in terms of female versus male participation. There are also great intraregional disparities, with the female share of the total labor force increasing by at least 3 percent between 2000 and 2005 in countries such as Algeria, Iran, Libya, Oman, Kuwait, and Tunisia, for instance, while it decreased by 1 percent in Morocco and Djibouti (see Figure 14).

Figure 13: Male and Female Labor Force Participation, World Regions, 2005



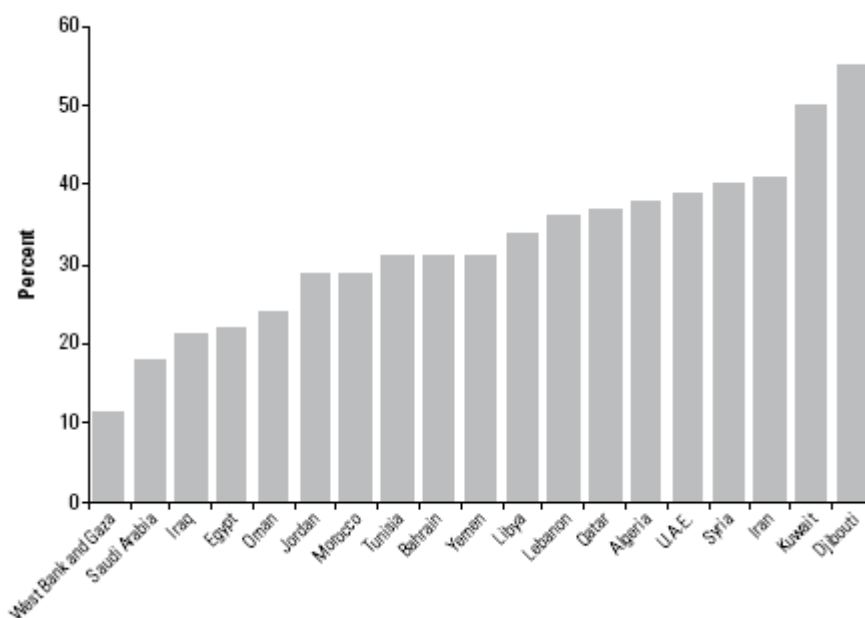
Source: World Bank (2007d).

3.9 *Across the region, the participation of women in the labor market remains low and will most likely increase further.* While this trend is undeniably positive with regard to equal opportunities across gender, it may put additional pressure on an already limited supply of jobs. Overall, it is estimated that 11 million jobs should be created in Egypt, 4 million each in Syria and Morocco, and 3 million in Algeria to keep the employment situation as it is.⁵⁶ In Algeria and Jordan, economic growth rates would have to be, respectively, 4 and 3 percentage points higher than they were at the beginning of the 2000s.

⁵⁵ World Bank (2007e).

⁵⁶ World Bank (2007i).

Figure 14: Female Labor Force Participation in Country Groups within MENA, 2005 (% of Female Population Aged 15-64)



Note: The data from Gulf countries such as Bahrain and Kuwait include both nationals and non-nationals. The data for Iraq are from 2004.
Source: World Bank (2007d).

3.10 *In several MENA countries, youth unemployment rates are particularly high among the educated.* Figure 15 shows unemployment rates by education level for selected countries. In Tunisia, for instance, 40 percent of youth with higher education are unemployed compared to 25 percent of youth with primary education, and it takes about 10 years for the unemployment rate of Tunisians with post-secondary education to drop below that of the less educated.⁵⁷ In Egypt and Morocco, while those with a secondary education or higher make up only 42 and 16 percent, respectively, of the labor force, they account for 80 and 30 percent, respectively, of the unemployed. In Algeria, while only about 20 percent of the labor force has completed more than secondary education, they account for almost twice that proportion of the unemployed.⁵⁸ In countries like Tunisia and Jordan, where the labor market is more competitive, people with higher educational attainment may compete with less educated candidates for the same jobs. This has generated a situation in Tunisia and Jordan in which young people with basic or intermediate education find it difficult to obtain entry into the labor market.

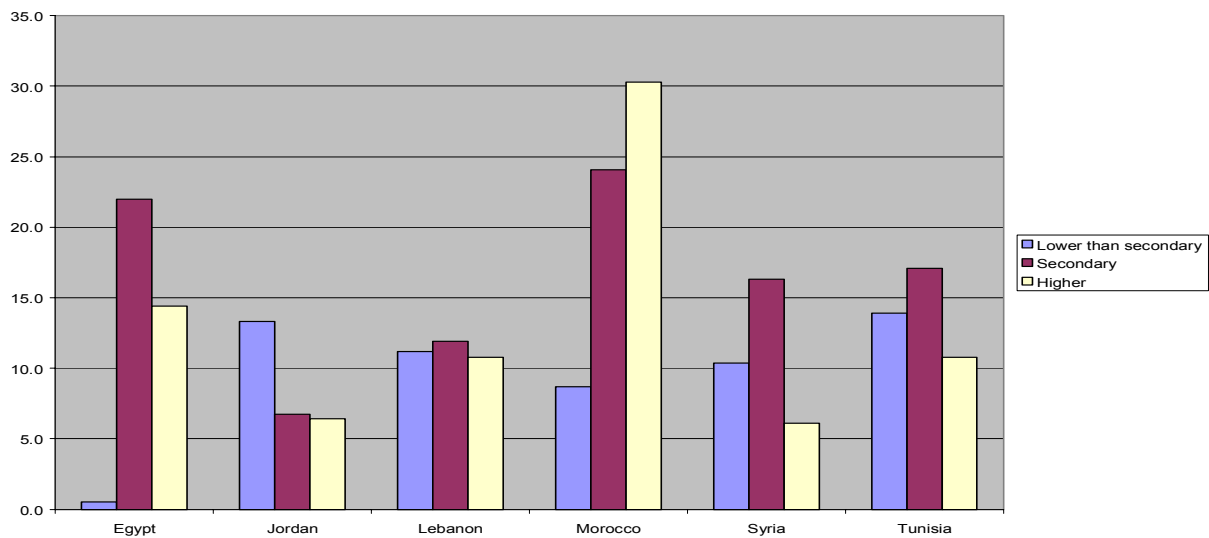
3.11 *Educated young people (particularly women) typically prefer to wait for jobs in the public sector, which tend to offer better wages and more generous non-wage benefits.* In 2003, over 80 percent of unemployed 15-29 year-old youth in Syria (and 90 percent of young women) were interested in a public sector job (compared to 34 percent who were interested in a private sector job and only 14 percent who were interested in self-

⁵⁷ World Bank (2006).

⁵⁸ World Bank (2007i).

employment or owning a business).⁵⁹ In addition, wages tend to be more equal between genders in the public sector. In 1999, Egyptian women were paid on average 76 percent of what men were paid in the private sector, while they made 86 percent of men's wages in the public sector.⁶⁰ Generally speaking, young women in MENA are particularly attracted to public sector jobs because wages can be higher than in the private sector and benefits are more generous, including maternity leave benefits. Most young men also prefer jobs in the public sector, but mostly for job security and benefits-related reasons since wages for them tend to be on a par with the formal private sector.

Figure 15: Unemployment Rates by Educational Level in Selected MENA Countries



Note: Data for 2003, except Jordan, for which data refer to 2004.

Source: ETF (2006).

3.12 *Yet, most countries in the MENA region are in the process of reducing public sector employment.* Tunisia, for instance, has managed to radically reduce employment in the public sector from around 19 percent in 1999 to just under 13 percent in 2003. In Morocco, public sector employment was less than 10 percent of total employment by 2003. This trend, combined with growing numbers of well-educated young people, has both increased the waiting times for formal jobs and generated high youth unemployment rates.

3.13 *The combination of low female labor participation and high unemployment among educated young women points to the fact that governments in the MENA region are foregoing much of the potential return on their investment in education.* Indeed, studies indicate that if female labor participation had reached predicted levels given existing levels of female education, fertility, and age structure, the per capita GDP growth during the 1990s would have been 2.6 percent per year instead of 1.9 percent. Moreover, it is estimated that women's participation in the labor force can significantly (i.e., by 25

⁵⁹ Kabbani and Huitfeldt (2006).

⁶⁰ World Bank (2003a).

percent) improve the level of household income and bring families out of poverty.⁶¹ As Figure 16 demonstrates, investments in female education have been more fully realized in the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) Region compared to MENA in terms of labor force participation.

Box 6:
Opportunities for Female Employment in Saudi Arabia:
Progress and Challenges

In Saudi Arabia, the sexes remain strictly separated in schools, universities and the workplace. While there have been increasing calls for change in recent years, progress is slow. Recently announced figures from an employment study by the General Statistics Department (GSD) show the disparity in numbers of men and women in the workforce: There are a total of 8 million workers in the kingdom - just over half are imported laborers. Of the 3.2 million employed Saudis, only 670,388 are women.

At current birth rates, the Saudi population is set to double by 2050. At present, 75 percent of the population is under 30 years of age with more than one in three Saudis under the age of 14. In light of this, the government is making a concerted effort to create employment opportunities and address employers' demands for more educated and qualified school and university graduates. This policy, which includes a systemic reduction in the numbers of expatriate laborers, is termed '*Saudiization*'.

In recognition of the strain the economy will face as a result of this demographic shift, the government has begun to encourage greater female participation in the workplace. As part of the *Saudiization* drive, the government's five-year economic plan (2005-2009) has set a goal of increasing the number of women who are employed.

Many women say they do in fact want to work but find it difficult. Approximately 58 percent of the kingdom's university graduates are women. Increasingly, they are saying they do not want to be limited to jobs in teaching and medicine, fields traditionally open to them. However, working outside the home remains relatively uncommon and, in practical terms, there are problems as women have to rely on a male relative to drive them to work, or employ a driver. Additionally, women are often paid far less than men and are easier to dismiss, according to a Riyadh-based employment agent.

Expanding women's career opportunities is also attractive to employers. In a situation where there is a lack of adequately trained Saudis for virtually every job available, broadening the human resource pool to include women increases their chances of finding someone suitable. However, companies that employ women are expected to provide separate office space and facilities for them in order to prevent interaction between male and female employees. This is an additional cost and does not always fit in with the company's commercial needs.

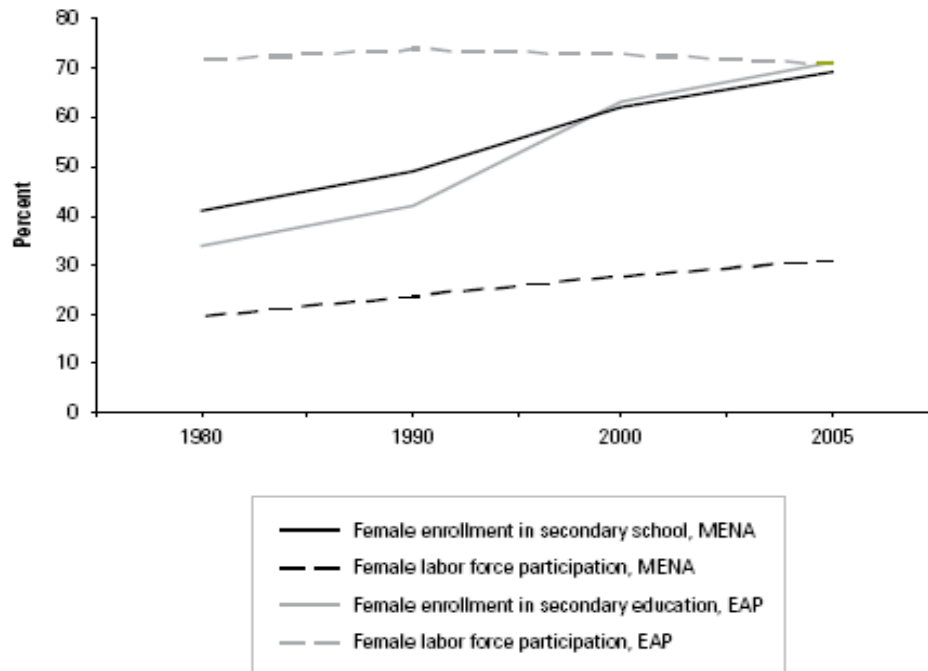
Source: Oxford Business Group (2007).

3.14 *From the youth point of view, however, it is important to note that high unemployment does not necessarily signify the lack of opportunities, at least for male educated youth. Indeed, high youth unemployment rates, particularly among the educated, may also result from the availability of strong family support structures which*

⁶¹ World Bank (2007d).

allow young people to take more time to find employment opportunities that offer a good fit for their skills and a good opportunity for advancement.⁶² This phenomenon highlights the wide disparities that exist in terms of quality of employment, with some youth being particularly prone to low-quality working opportunities.

Figure 16: Female Education and Labor Force Participation in MENA and EAP, 1980-2005.



Note: 1980 MENA and EAP secondary enrollment data are for 1985. In EAP, secondary enrollment data are for 2001 rather than 2000; 2005 MENA and EAP secondary enrollment data are for 2004. Source: World Bank (2007d).

3.2. QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

3.15 *Most workers with little or no education cannot afford to remain unemployed and have no other choice but to accept low-paying or low-quality jobs in the informal or private sectors.* In Egypt, for example, although the public sector employment model is still in place to some extent, more young people choose (or are forced to accept) jobs in the informal sector, as an option to being openly unemployed while waiting for scarce public sector jobs or formal private sector jobs.

⁶² O'Higgins (2003).

Box 7: Youth at Risk, Opportunities, and Second Chances

Youth in Poverty

Poor youth are most vulnerable because they have greater exposure to various risks and fewer assets and capacities to avert the impact of the risks.⁶³ Premature mortality, disease, disability, and poor cognitive and social development are more prevalent among poor children and youth. Furthermore, some youth – due to a particularly unfavorable conjunction of risk factors at the household level (abuse, parental loss, migration), community level (lack of informal social safety nets, ethnic exclusion, violence), and the macro level (conflict) are at both immediate and long-term risk of adverse outcomes.⁶⁴

Support to poor families with youth in the form of transfers and provision of public services is especially critical to break inter-generational poverty. The rationale for public investment in household behavior with regard to youth rests on the externalities that society gains from healthy, well nourished and educated youth who can fully contribute to their society and economy.

Street youth and Delinquent Youth

Street youth are almost always school dropouts, and a significant majority of them cannot read or write. In Yemen, up to 70 percent of street youth are illiterate. This high level of illiteracy has serious implications in terms of opportunities for livelihoods (i.e., street youth tend to be stuck in the lowest levels of labor, such as street vending or, even worse, prostitution). Some of the main reasons for dropping out of school amongst children and youth working in the street include the inability of the family to meet their educational expenses (37 percent), the family's dependence on their child's labor (27 percent) and their reluctance to sending daughters to school (12.5 percent).⁶⁵

Part of the street culture operates in urban gangs, and street youth often end up in conflict with the law and as juvenile delinquents. Indeed, street youth tend to suffer contempt from society, frequent violation of their rights, and general social exclusion. In addition, their lives are rarely free from the fear of violence and danger. To cope with this fear and exclusion, and because street youth often lack a sense of belonging to positive groups such as family or community, joining gangs can become a perverse form of social capital in which the gang is both the outcome of the breakdown of a previous social order and serves as a certain order, and a means to identity development.⁶⁶

In most MENA countries, there appears to be no standardized system of classifying offences committed by juveniles. All offences ranging from minor misdemeanors to serious crime are seen as "delinquency," which has serious implications for the treatment that youth receive. There seem to be no non-judicial bodies to deal with minor offences (e.g. child welfare board or youth commission), and the trial process includes several levels of uncoordinated decision making. Convicted juveniles are most often deprived of liberty and incarcerated in overcrowded adult prisons. Limited information is available about the conditions of detention - including the personal security, health and nutrition, and preparation for release of detained juveniles. Few measures for prevention and reintegration of juvenile offenders exist.

In Jordan, crimes involving juveniles in Jordan made up an average of 11 percent of all crimes between 1999 and 2001. Of the 29,000 children and youth arrested during 1999–2001, 7 percent were under 12, 17 percent between 12 and 14, and 76 percent were 15–18. Of these, 11,500 were released, and 17,500 remanded to the Juvenile Division. Increasing numbers of youth on the streets, particularly

⁶³ Assets should be considered in broad terms, as a wide range of tangible (e.g. land, labor, human and physical capital, savings) and intangible (social capital, network, proximity to markets, health and education facilities, empowerment) stores of value.

⁶⁴ World Bank (2005a)

⁶⁵ World Bank (2003c).

⁶⁶ World Bank (2003d).

in urban centers such as Amman, Zarqa and Irbid, have become a concern for institutions and professionals working in the youth protection sector. Begging is considered an offence, and accordingly youth who are picked up for this crime risk court proceedings, or placement in detention or orphanages.⁶⁷

Finally, most street youth also face serious health problems ranging from malnutrition, prevalence of STIs (including HIV/AIDS), teenage pregnancy and inadequate access to health services. In addition, street children tend to be overly exposed to the risk of sexual exploitation and alcohol and drug abuse.

3.16 *Jobs in the private sector often lack important benefits, which tends to place young people in a state of vulnerability.* In Egypt, private employers often hire workers without a contract. It has been estimated that up to half of workers have no formal labor contract and even fewer are covered by social security and many firms oblige new employees to sign an undated letter of resignation before starting their job.⁶⁸ In Lebanon, only 47 percent of workers are covered by health insurance, and only 14 percent of self-employed workers receive health, family, and retirement benefits. Finally, although unemployment insurance has been activated in Egypt (as in Algeria and Iran), its benefits to unemployed Egyptians are limited due to stringent eligibility criteria.⁶⁹

3.17 *The size of the informal sector in MENA is uncertain but large, and it has become a growing source of job supply for youth.* A recent estimate of the proportion of informal employment in the non-agricultural sector in North African countries is around 48 percent. Egypt and Tunisia have the highest rates of informal employment, at 55 percent and 50 percent, respectively.⁷⁰ In Syria, employment in the informal sector is estimated at 38 percent among 15-19 year-olds.⁷¹ Furthermore, self-employment in the non-agricultural sector accounts for at least 50 percent of informal employment in Egypt and 81 percent in Morocco.

3.18 The probability of being informally employed increased by around 5 percentage points between 1990 and 1998 in Egypt. For example, the probability of being employed with no contract increased from 39 percent in 1990 to 44 percent in 1998. This probability was greater for specific groups, particularly women and young people. The proportion of informally employed new entrants to the labor market increased from 20 percent in 1969 to 69 percent in 1998, and the predicted probability for a female new entrant taking a job without a contract increased by 12 percentage points from 1990 to 1998.⁷² In Egypt, 69 percent of new entrants to the labor market only managed to secure informal jobs in the late 1990s, while in Jordan, more than 70 percent of workers in services and sales (typically enterprises with less than five employees) are employed on an informal basis.

⁶⁷ World Bank (2003d).

⁶⁸ De Gobbi and Nesporova (2005).

⁶⁹ ETF (2006).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Kabbani and Kamel (2007).

⁷² ETF (2006).

3.19 *The informal sector is quite heterogeneous, but employment status is usually invisible, unregulated, and unprotected by existing legal or regulatory frameworks.* On one hand, the informal sector involves productive small-scale activities with potential for growth and technical upgrading, and at the other extreme, dead-end survival activities, which absorb workers with no particular skills. Despite their diversity, what all informal activities seem to have in common is their precariousness, along with usually poor working conditions. The growing informal sector may be one of the main causes of social exclusion among young people and women in the MENA region.⁷³ This may be particularly true among uneducated workers, who tend to be the majority in the informal sector. In Egypt, workers in the informal sector averaged less than intermediate-level education. In Morocco, 46 percent have never been to school and 70.3 percent have no qualifications. In Tunisia, only 12 percent have secondary education and 1 percent have higher education (and presumably people with higher education are employers rather than employees in the informal sector).⁷⁴

Box 8: Youth at Risk, Opportunities, and Second Chances

Inappropriate Forms of Child and Youth Labor

The following activities are deemed detrimental to the health and overall development of children and youth and are therefore considered inappropriate by international standards:

- Any type of work below the age of twelve;
- Any type of non-hazardous work that requires more than 14 hours of work per week for children ages 12-14 and more than 43 hours of work per week for youth ages 15-17;
- Any form of hazardous work for any child/youth below the age of 18;
- Any unconditional worst form of labor for all children and youth (e.g., all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, including use of children/youth in armed conflicts, prostitution, illicit activities, etc.).

3.20 *In addition, youth who started working at an early age are most likely to be stuck in low quality employment by the time they reach adolescence and early adulthood.* While MENA children are not as likely to be working as children in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the incidence of child labor is nonetheless an issue in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen. It is estimated that about 15 percent of children under 14 are working, most often in the informal sector. In Yemen between 12 percent and 16 percent of children aged 6–14 years are working and not attending school while another 4 to 7 percent combine work and school. In Egypt between 3 and 5 percent of children are working full-time and another 5–10 percent combines schooling and work. In Jordan, an estimated 11 percent of 10-18 year olds are employed. Child labor is common for both boys and girls of all ages, starting as young as 6 years, and appears to be both a rural and urban phenomenon.⁷⁵

⁷³ Martin (2006).

⁷⁴ World Bank (2007i).

⁷⁵ World Bank (2007i).

Box 9: Capabilities

Access to Information and Finance in relation to Working

Lack of access to information and job-seeking skills tends to reduce the effectiveness of job search and prolongs joblessness among youth. In turn, closing the gap in information is likely to shorten the long queues of men and women waiting for public sector jobs.

In Syria, more than 90 percent of youth surveyed in the SWTS answered that they rely on help from family, relatives, and friends to find jobs.⁷⁶ The results highlight the limited use of more formal institutions and methods of job search, such as public employment offices or media. Few private companies list vacancies with the employment office (although they are required by law to do so) because of the widespread belief that the offices propose job candidates for vacant positions based on connections rather than qualifications or place in line.

In Morocco, youth interviewed in the context of the “Moving out of Poverty” report perceive that widespread corruption inhibits those who lack economic resources and social/political connections – already the most marginalized – from accessing basic services. “Jobs are not granted according to expertise and merit but rather through corruption.” “One is recruited for work opportunities through corruption, mediation, favoritism, and closeness.”⁷⁷

For those youth who have an interest and skills in entrepreneurship, financial schemes that promote self employment opportunities can be explored, but they are likely to be most effective only when they are comprehensive and remedy information failures. Indeed, young entrepreneurs often face many barriers at once in addition to financing, e.g., lack of access to formal networks, clients, suppliers, and skilled workers

Young entrepreneurs in the informal sector are particularly deprived from access to finance. Indeed, many informal activities are operating at far from their full potential because of market failures that prevent them from obtaining access to credit, skilled labor, better technologies, and larger domestic and export markets. In Tunisia, for instance, investment in the informal sector appears modest (around US\$ 150 per worker in 1997) compared to Tunisian per capita gross investment (approximately US\$ 2,000 per worker). This investment was mostly self-financed, which confirms that they have very limited access to banks and to other formal financial institutions.

In Syria, limited access to financing from banks continues to hinder youth from entrepreneurship, and in turns narrows the choices available to them for employment.

In Morocco, recent studies⁷⁸ have noted limited and unequal access by women to finance, markets, networks and training. Half of Morocco’s women-owned enterprises are self financed; only one third of financing is from external sources. Most women entrepreneurs use funds from partnerships of family members who are willing to contribute some equity. They also do not have sufficient information about the different financing schemes offered via banks by donor programs or other forms of institutional financing. Businesswomen also noted a gap in their knowledge about financial management, analysis, and planning and do not have equal opportunity as men to be part of business networks where information is shared. Finally, female entrepreneurs also have limited access to markets; only 21 percent of women-owned enterprises export their products and services; most have national (44 percent) and local (31 percent) customer bases.

⁷⁶ Kabbani and Kamel (2007).

⁷⁷ World Bank (2007d).

⁷⁸ World Bank (2007h).

3.21 *Large cohorts of unemployed or underemployed youth present both a loss in terms of foregone economic growth and a risk to social stability.* Unemployed or underemployed youth may be more likely to enter activities that are damaging to themselves and/or society. For instance, youth difficulties in the labor market have been correlated with higher crime rates in France and an increase likelihood of incarceration in the US. In Sri Lanka, high youth unemployment was connected with the large-scale unrest of Sinhalese youth from the rural south during the 1987-91 time period.⁷⁹ In MENA, violence in specific contexts such as the West Bank and Gaza and Iraq, or even the perception of violence as portrayed by the media can be of particular concern both in terms of its direct impact on social stability and security and because of its indirect effect on the country or regional image and the resulting impact on investment and key industries such as tourism.

Area(s) for further research:

1. Relationship of youth to the informal labor market: percent of youth working in the informal economy, types of jobs and activities performed, opportunities for professional growth.
2. Extent and causes of high reservation wages among youth.
3. Linkages between gender and employment patterns.
4. Activities and time usage of non-employed youth (after school activities, time spent by out-of-school youth).

⁷⁹ World Bank (2006).

4. MIGRATING

'The girls in the village must do everything because all the young men have emigrated.'
(Young woman) *Moving out of Poverty in Morocco*

4.1 *International migration is an important youth phenomenon.* More than a third of the flow of all migrants from developing countries is comprised of youth between 15 and 24 years old. If those up to age 29 are included, the figure is closer to one half of the flow, and a third of the stock of developing country migrants worldwide. There were more than 9 million migrants from MENA residing in OECD countries in 2000. This represents less than 10 percent of all migrants to those countries, but is still a significant share of the labor force for some MENA countries, such as Egypt. Many migrants from MENA go to other countries in the region, and it has been estimated that there were about 3.5 million MENA migrants in GCC countries.

4.2 This chapter does not attempt to take a position as to whether migration is a net good for youth and their societies or bad for them, as this remains an open question and is likely to have different answers for different countries, groups of youth, and types of occupations and experiences in destination countries. We briefly summarize what is known to date about patterns of international migration in the MENA region and identify some of the potential economic and social effects pertaining to youth together with key areas for future research.⁸⁰

4.1. MIGRATION PATTERNS IN MENA

4.3 *Many MENA migrants are likely to be youth, and are likely to eventually return to their home countries.* As noted above, a significant share of migrants from developing countries are youth. Migration is stimulated by pull factors (i.e., higher wages, presence of friends or family) and push factors (i.e., high unemployment rates at home, and/or the difficulty of finding a job that fits the training the graduate received, and social conditions). Youth are more likely to emigrate because the costs to them of leaving their home countries are often perceived to be less than the economic and social gains. Research indicates that a high percentage of migrants from developing countries return within a few years, however.⁸¹ Specific evidence on the age distribution of migrants is scarce for MENA countries, but is likely to mirror the international evidence. A non-representative study conducted in 8 governorates in Egypt found that nearly 90 percent of youth who wanted to emigrate to Europe intended to come back to Egypt, for example.⁸²

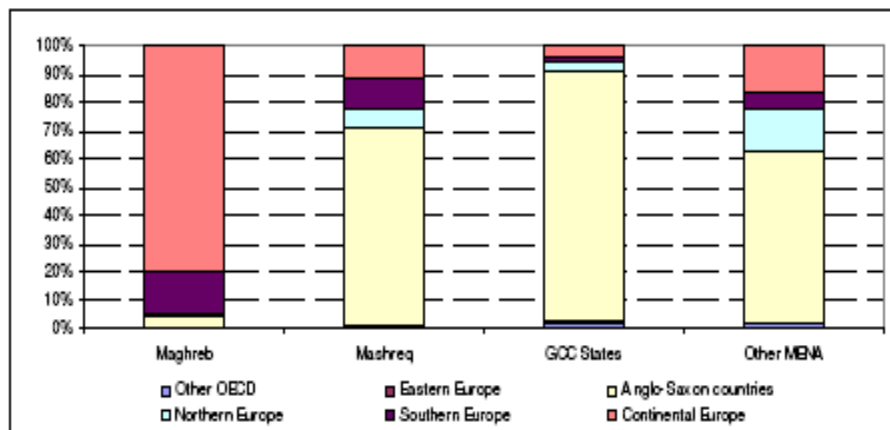
⁸⁰ The discussion in this chapter focuses exclusively on international migration, and does not address intra-country migration such as rural to urban transitions.

⁸¹ World Bank (2006).

⁸² Zohry (2007).

4.4 *MENA countries that have traditionally exported labor represent a diverse group and have experienced changes in their migration trends.*⁸³ Egypt has been the largest exporter, exporting about 10 percent of its labor force, principally to other MENA countries. Moroccans, on the other hand, comprise the largest migrant nationality among North Africans in Europe and in France in particular. In addition, migration from the Mashreq countries to Europe has increased as a result of the fall of the demand for labor in the Gulf. Thirty percent of all Egyptian migrants (800,000 individuals) now reside in OECD countries, for example.⁸⁴ Figure 17 shows the distribution of migrants from the MENA region by sub-groups of destination countries. The figure illustrates that emigration from Maghreb countries is concentrated in continental Europe (France in particular) while emigration from other MENA countries is more directed to Anglo-Saxon countries such as the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia.

Figure 17: Distribution of MENA Migrants and Destination Countries (2000)



Source: Gubert and Nordman (2006).

4.5 *MENA countries that have traditionally imported regional labor are relying more extensively on Asian workers (for unskilled jobs) and/or on nationals (for skilled jobs).*⁸⁵ In 2000, the MENA region hosted around 18 million migrants, 6 percent of the region's total population. In the GCC countries, 8 million out of the 13 million workers were expatriates in 2002 but the proportion of Arabs among expatriates declined from 72 percent in 1975 to 30 percent in 2002, in favor of Asian expatriates (who tend to occupy lower jobs while Arabs maintain the more high skilled jobs).⁸⁶ More recently, the high unemployment rates among the nationals of the GCC countries prompted a shift in policy in favor of nationals. In Jordan, competition from unskilled immigrant workers has contributed to higher unemployment among less well-educated and unskilled national workers,⁸⁷ a situation that may lead to shifts in migration policies.

⁸³ Labor exporting countries include Maghreb countries (to continental Europe), Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon and Jordan (former two to Arab countries and latter two to continental Europe and Anglo-Saxon countries).

⁸⁴ CAPMAS (2000).

⁸⁵ Labor importing countries include primarily the GCC, Jordan and Lebanon.

⁸⁶ World Bank (2007i).

⁸⁷ ETF (2006).

4.6 *Migration also occurs from the African continent.* Indeed, Sub-Saharan Africans are increasingly migrating to North African countries, with some using the region as a point of transit to Europe and some remaining in North Africa.⁸⁸ Depending on the estimate, between 65,000 and 120,000 sub-Saharan Africans enter the Maghreb (Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya) yearly, of which 70 to 80 percent are believed to migrate through Libya and 20 to 30 percent through Algeria and Morocco. At least 100,000 sub-Saharan migrants now live in Algeria, 1 to 1.5 million in Libya, and anywhere between 2.2 and 4 million mainly Sudanese in Egypt. Tunisia and Morocco house smaller but growing sub-Saharan immigrant communities of several tens of thousands. A portion of them try to cross the Mediterranean each year. Sub-Saharan African migrants are often relatively well educated and from moderate socio-economic backgrounds. They move because of a general lack of opportunities, fear of persecution and violence, or a combination of both. This migration, while not of enormous proportions, has strained migration policies in North African countries which refuse to see themselves as destinations and those of the European Union whose collaboration with North African countries was based on the assumption that these were the main sending countries and not transit points for other migrants from other source countries.

4.2. Effects of Migration

4.7 *Migration involves a complex set of phenomenon, and the social and economic effects for a given individual or society cannot easily be predicted.* Whether for the individual migration is in fact a positive alternative to remaining in the home country depends on the context in which migration takes place. On the positive side, migration may reduce tensions in the labor market at the national level, decrease unemployment, increase incomes in the home country from remittances that contribute to the balance of foreign finance and possibly to investments in human capital, and provide return migrants with skills and capital for investment. On the negative side, migration may result in “brain drain” and reduced productivity at the national level, it often removes youth from the social environment of family and friends, and it can put youth at a greater risk of exploitation and/or abuse and lead to increased exposure to health problems. In addition, migration opportunities are not always equally distributed, with many well-educated having more opportunities and young women being forced to stay home while young men are more likely to leave. Much more research is needed to understand the quantitative and qualitative importance of each of these countervailing effects. There is some evidence available for the MENA region pertaining to two consequences of migration: the effect of remittances and brain drain.

4.8 *Remittances have become a significant source of income and the principal source of foreign exchange.* Remittances sent back to all developing countries amounted to \$167 billion in 2005.⁸⁹ In MENA countries, workers’ remittances are estimated at US\$13 billion.⁹⁰ This figure only refers to official transfers and may therefore be underestimated

⁸⁸ Heins de Haas (2006).

⁸⁹ World Bank (2006).

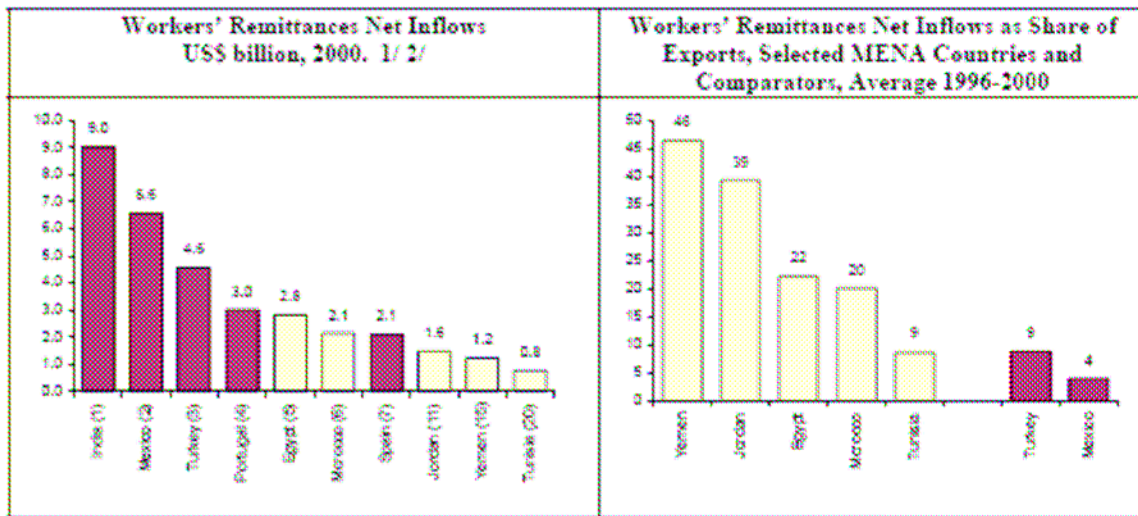
⁹⁰ World Bank (2005b)

since it is believed that around half of all remittances go through unofficial channels. In 2003, remittances represented 22 percent of Jordan's GDP, and 14 percent of Lebanon's GDP.⁹¹ Remittances were also estimated at 4 percent of Egypt's GDP and 11 percent of Morocco's GDP in 2001.⁹²

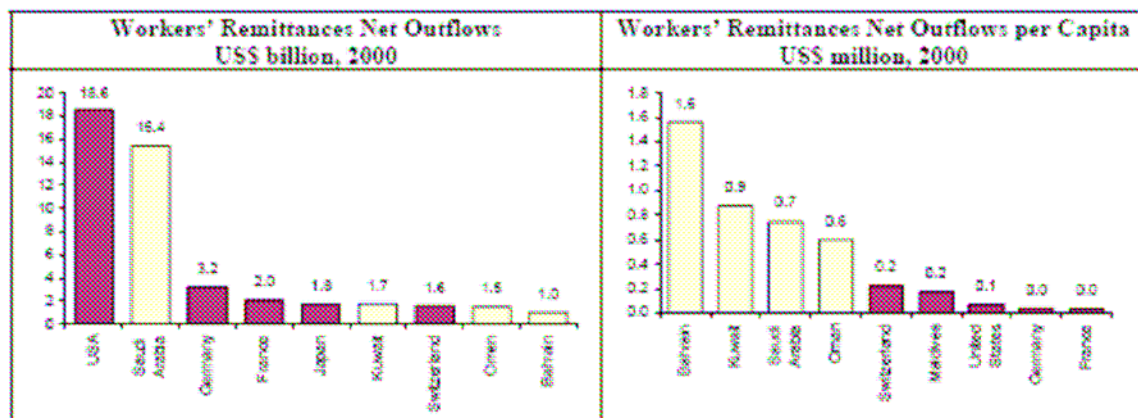
4.9 However, as Figure 18 indicates, it is important to note that the inflows and outflows of remittance vary widely across the region. Indeed, while countries such as Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Yemen, and Tunisia appear to be net beneficiaries, some of the gulf countries (e.g., Saudi Arabian, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain) experience high outflows of remittances.

Figure 18: Workers Remittances

Net Inflows



Net Outflows



Source: Johansson de Silva and Silva-Jauregui (2004).

⁹¹ Maimbo, and Ratha, (2005).

⁹² World Bank (2007i).

4.10 *Although there has been a lot of debate on the uses of remittances and their impact, there is evidence to suggest that remittances globally have been used in investment and micro-enterprises in the home countries and enhancing consumption as well.* In addition, overseas experience seems to provide an opportunity for human capital enhancement especially for the educated. Thus the overall benefit from (legal) migration seems to outweigh the output loss and the cost of migrants' education (a particular concern where education is mostly publicly financed). Remittances can also help relatives who stayed home take advantage of secondary education opportunities (by reducing opportunity costs) and have been shown to lower the probability of children dropping out of school.⁹³ Therefore, policies that promote geographic mobility (within the country and abroad) may have a positive effect on education opportunities. Remittances are especially likely to be higher when migrants are young but married, with family behind at home.

4.11 *Migration may also produce negative effects on the sending countries in terms of loss of human capital or "brain drain."* It is difficult to assess how significant these effects may be. However, there are figures available on the education levels of typical migrants which are suggestive of the extent of brain drain. A study by Gubert and Nordman (2006) compiled estimates of the percentage of highly educated MENA-born individuals with tertiary education who lived in an OECD country in 2000. Figure 19 suggests that emigration of highly educated workers particularly affects the Maghreb countries, Lebanon and Iran. By contrast, the brain drain effect is small in the Gulf countries and moderate in the Mashreq. On average, among middle income countries it appears the brain drain reflected in the expatriation rate of highly educated individuals is more pronounced in the MENA region (10.5 percent) than in Latin America (7.5 percent), East Asia and Pacific (6.1 percent) or Eastern Europe and Central Asia (3.9 percent).⁹⁴

4.12 *But MENA migration is not limited to the well-educated.* The share of highly educated migrants varies by destination country and partly reflects differences in migration policies. For most countries in Europe, for example, the share of highly educated migrants is small relative to the stock of MENA migrants in those countries, on the order of 10 to 20 percent.⁹⁵ More than two thirds of Moroccans in Europe have low education, for example, while migrants who go to the USA, Canada, and Australia tend to have higher education levels on average. In addition, the pattern of migration for the educated may be changing, at least for some countries. More than half of Egyptian migrants in Italy and France have completed at least a high school education. But the level of education of Egyptian migrants has fallen in the 2000s. This has been termed "migration of the poor" and the "Egyptian youth exodus."⁹⁶

⁹³ World Bank (2006).

⁹⁴ Gubert and Nordman (2006).

⁹⁵ Gubert and Nordman (2006).

⁹⁶ Zohry (2007).

Box 10: Youth at Risk, Opportunities, and Second Chances

Forced Migration: Youth in Conflict, post-conflict, and refugee situations

In many cases across the region, migration happens for political reasons rather than (or in addition to) economic reasons.

Widespread conflict usually results in untold numbers of casualties, people with disabilities, dislocated families and orphans, destabilization and disruption of the provision of health and education services. Such conditions often lead to a breakdown in social networks and solidarity, thus undermining some of the main mechanisms protective of young people's health and development, including their sexual and reproductive health. Moreover, the mobility associated with conflict is itself a risk factor for the transmission of sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS. Sexual violence often increases in contexts of armed conflict. In Iraq, Human Rights Watch has documented a sharp rise in the incidence of sexual violence against women and young girls in Baghdad after the fall of the Ba'athist regime, for which the legal system, health services and other services remain singularly unprepared. To date, there has been little international assistance to address these concerns.⁹⁷

The effects of conflict or civil unrest on young people may be more subtle and difficult to discern. A study in The Occupied Palestinian Territories, for example, found that there was a rise in adolescent fertility at the time of the first *intifada* (or uprising against Israeli occupation) from 1987 - 1990, a trend associated with a declining age at marriage for girls during that period. While further qualitative research is needed to investigate the reasons for this trend, the uncertainty and anxiety produced by political conflict may be one factor motivating parents to have their children married early. Palestinian interviewees for this report repeatedly state that the threat of violence, disruption to education and health services, inability to move from place to place and other consequences of the ongoing conflict are some of the main impediments to developing programs to serve youth.⁹⁸

*With on-going civil conflicts in Lebanon, West Bank/Gaza, and Iraq, it is estimated that there are up to 6.5 million refugees or displaced persons in MENA.*⁹⁹ The vulnerabilities of displaced and refugee youth (such as Palestinians in Jordan) are both social and economic. The challenges they face include lack of access and/or persistence in schooling, high unemployment, limited supplies of clean water, inadequate drainage/sanitary systems, and high rates of non-communicable diseases (such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer), and direct health risks that result from being in the proximity of war zones. Birth rates tend to be high, and intervals between births are short, thus affecting women's health.

Young refugee women are more vulnerable than their male counterparts, and have particular health and safety needs. Humanitarian relief and assistance programs have begun to address the needs of these women, who are at risk for unsafe delivery, lack of prenatal care, exposure to STIs including HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, and the physical and mental trauma of sexual assaults. Although these reproductive health problems sometimes threaten the lives of women and often damage their physical and mental health, for many years relief agencies concentrated only on immediate basic needs such as water, food, shelter, security, and general PHC services.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ World Bank. (2005c).

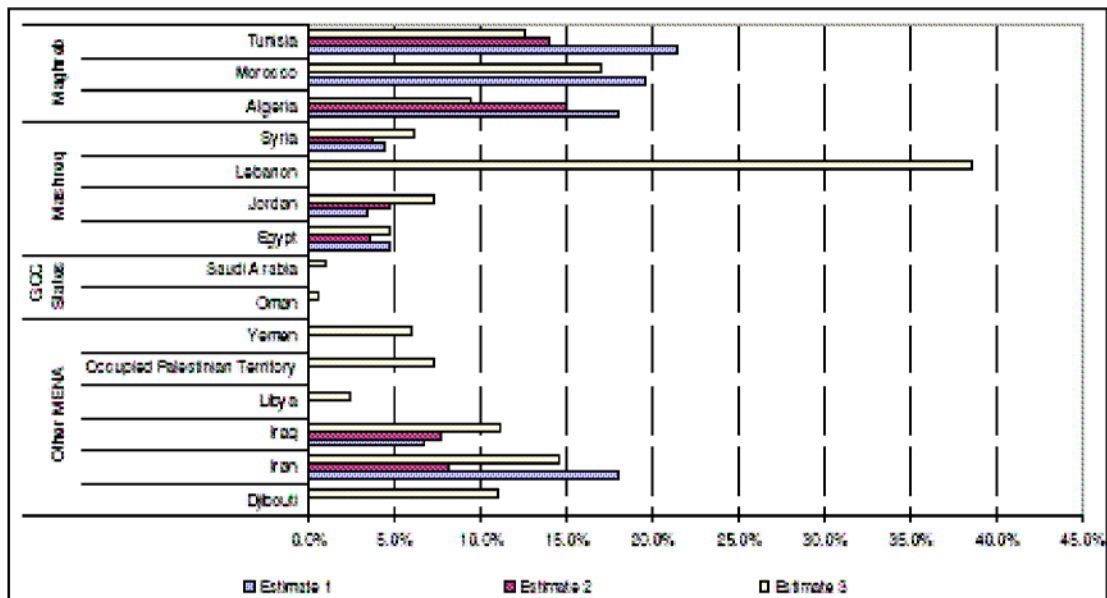
⁹⁸ World Bank (2003d).

⁹⁹ World Bank (2007i).

¹⁰⁰ Aoyama. (2001).

4.13 *The value of returned migrants to MENA countries is also potentially high.* Emerging evidence suggests that temporary migration is beneficial not just to their societies but to migrants themselves. Temporary migrants tend to earn a large wage premium upon their return. Migrants returning to Egypt, for example, earn an estimated 38 percent more than non-migrants with similar profiles.¹⁰¹ These findings suggest a greater emphasis on policies supporting temporary migration. Such policies could have very beneficial effects on migrants' earnings, limit the effects of brain drain and stimulate growth and investment in home countries using the human capital of returnees.

Figure 19: Highly Educated Expatriation Rate by MENA Country (2000)



Note: Estimate 1 is the highly educated expatriation rate according to Cohen and Soto database (population 15+) and estimate 2 is the highly educated expatriation rate according to Barro and Lee database (population 15+). Both estimates come from Dumont and Lemaître (2004). Estimate 3 comes from Docquier and Marfouk (2005) (population 25+).
Source: Gubert and Nordman (2006).

4.14 *Migration from MENA to other countries such as those in Europe has the potential to generate tremendous opportunities for sending and receiving regions.* With the prevailing pay as you go social security system in Europe, a rapidly ageing population threatens to weigh heavily on future workers, who will need to provide for retirees with increasing life expectancies. According to ILO, the number of potential workers between the ages of 20 and 65 is increasing on a net basis by 1 million in the EU-15 member states between 2000 and 2010, while people age 65 and above will increase by 3.6 million over the same period.¹⁰² Therefore, short of a drastic change in fertility rates in Europe, migration provides the only means of reinforcing the shrinking workforce. Demographic projections by the UN suggest that to keep the ratio of old population to

¹⁰¹ See Jackline Wahba chapter 8, “Returns to Overseas Work Experience: The Case of Egypt” in Ozden and Schiff (2007).

¹⁰² Johansson de Silva and Silva-Jauregui (2004).

working population constant (i.e. to ensure that each retiree can rely on the same amount of workers), the region would need as many as 10 million additional immigrants per year.¹⁰³ In parallel, the labor force in MENA and Turkey is projected to rise by 82 million between 2005 and 2025 and labor markets in Europe represent an attractive alternative for MENA youth compared to spells of unemployment (or underemployment) at home.

4.15 *However, receiving countries face a range of issues making free mobility of labor difficult to achieve politically.* European countries struggle with unemployment at home, skills mismatches of potential migrants, and with cultural and social integration. Young migrants from the Maghreb countries, in particular, are increasingly facing greater restrictions on legal entry, partly because of the negative image they often carry in terms of their capacity to integrate and contribute, both socially and culturally, to receiving countries. The EU enlargement is another factor, as some of the new member countries enjoy abundant skilled workers who are also willing to accept relatively low wages.

4.16 *The prospects of legal migration as a vehicle for supplementing domestic labor markets in the MENA region are not encouraging. Yet, the tightening of border controls in the European Union has not yet resulted in less overall migration.* As long as push and pull factors remain strong, youth will attempt to migrate. This is particularly true for young men. Indeed, according to a qualitative survey of the perception of Moroccan youth towards migration, young men feel considerable pressure from the older generation to emigrate.¹⁰⁴ They are also aware of the dangers of illegal immigration but blame unemployment as the main reason why youth “throw themselves into the sea in order to emigrate.” Despite its dangers, Moroccan youth see migration as a realistic opportunity for economic mobility, and young men in particular consider emigration their primary goal, partly because it remains one of the few livelihood strategies that they have a concrete understanding of how to pursue: “In the presence of poverty, liberty is absent. In many cases, you cannot take action if you are poor.”¹⁰⁵

4.17 *Young women, on the other hand, are often denied opportunities to migrate because of cultural norms and traditions.* Indeed, while young men are often pressured to leave, young women are forced to remain at home. Female informants in Morocco point to the deterioration of families and to the increased burden placed on them as a result of this gender-biased dynamic: “the girls in the village must do everything because all the young men have emigrated.”¹⁰⁶ In addition to these constraining cultural norms and gender-biased expectations, several MENA countries inhibit women’s emigration through legal barriers. For instance, unmarried Egyptian and Kuwaiti women under 21 require their father’s permission while restrictions apply to both married and unmarried women in Jordan, Iran, Libya, Qatar (until age 30), Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Diwan, Nabli, Coulibaly, and de Silva (2002).

¹⁰⁴ World Bank (2007c).

¹⁰⁵ World Bank (2007c).

¹⁰⁶ World Bank (2007c).

¹⁰⁷ McKenzie (2005).

4.18 *When they do succeed in migrating, youth workers do not always have access to benefits and may be exploited and/or underemployed.* Currently, individuals who desire to migrate to the Gulf States must be “sponsored” for admission (*kafeel* system). In some cases, recruitment agencies ask migrants to pay “sponsor fees,” while not guaranteeing a job upon arrival. As a result, migrants may arrive in debt and jobless, and they have the choice of working illegally or returning home in debt.¹⁰⁸ In addition, imported workers in many cases are not protected in the host country. For example, MENA labor importing countries use temporary contracts employment in which employees are not covered under local labor laws, particularly unskilled laborers. This puts migrants in a position of vulnerability. Finally, it is often particularly difficult for migrant workers to find jobs that match their education level or skills. A young Egyptian holding a master degree, for instance, has only a 49 percent probability of obtaining a skilled job in the US (compared to 80 percent for an Indian national). While there are probably a multitude of factors explaining this difference, it raises the issues of equivalency of diplomas and experiences and, more broadly, of quality of employment.¹⁰⁹

4.19 *Therefore, providing youth with proper information and guidance about the range of migrating options available to them (e.g., within country, intra-region, and international) and about the risks of illegal immigration could help them make better informed and safer decisions.* Trafficking, which often happens when youth are lured into seemingly attractive migration opportunities through personal contacts or newspaper advertisement, could also be reduced by providing youth with adequate information regarding the risks involved in such schemes.¹¹⁰

4.20 *Ultimately, whether Governments should encourage and facilitate migration will most likely vary depending on the context and type of migration at stake.* Whether secondary and higher education are publicly financed, whether remittances compensate for potential losses, whether migration can help alleviate tensions on the labor market, all influence the decision to go abroad. In addition, the relative weight of positive and negative migration outcomes may differ at the individual and national levels. It is clear that youth migration is an important economic and social phenomenon in MENA worthy of further country-specific research.

Area(s) for further research:

1. Magnitude of youth migration in MENA countries, duration, and prevalence of return migration.
2. Scope of illegal immigration (number of illegal youth migrants and types of issues they are faced with in terms of education, employment, health, etc.);
3. Role of youth and family networks in encouraging and supporting migration.

¹⁰⁸ International Labor Organization (2004).

¹⁰⁹ Mattoo, et. al. (2005).

¹¹⁰ World Bank (2006).

4. Access to finance in relation to youth migration (i.e., financial means as a potential constraint to migration or to legal migration as opposed to illegal / more risky options).
5. Earnings and human capital effects of migration on youth migrants.
6. Extent and effects of migration on women and children in home and receiving countries.
7. Effective policies and programs to manage migration that benefit home and receiving countries.

5. STAYING HEALTHY AND FORMING FAMILIES

'In the absence of good quality health services...the population will continue to suffer.'
(Abdul, male from urban Taiz, Yemen) *Voices of the Youth*

5.1 *An array of health-related issues affect the youth of the region. Improving access to related health care services, particularly for the most vulnerable, and making them youth 'friendly' could go a long way to improving their health outcomes.* Issues include: reproductive health (including HIV/AIDS), mental health and the effects of violence (see Box 11), maternal health, access to recreation, qat chewing, tobacco use, drug use, nutritional issues including diet and exercise etc. Gender discrimination within personal status codes, unfavorable labor legislation, social and penal sanctions for sexual relations outside of marriage and a socially conservative environment make it particularly difficult to address many of these issues.¹¹¹

Box 11: Youth at Risk, Opportunities, and Second Chances

*The Psychosocial Impact of Conflict and Refugee on Children & Youth: The Case of West Bank/Gaza*¹¹²

Citing studies and surveys carried out separately by academic institutions, NGOs and the Palestinian Authority, UNICEF reported that 75 percent of Palestinian adults think children and youth are experiencing greater emotional problems and changes in behavior in 2005 compared with the year before. Sleep-related problems are the most common form of psychological distress among children and youth reporting problems. These include nightmares, bed-wetting, insomnia, and irregular sleeping patterns. Studies show that children and youth alike are experiencing psychosomatic symptoms, such as headaches, stomach cramps and skin problems. While very young children (up to age 5) are most likely to cry and cling to parents and children age 6-12 often rely on aggression and rebellion as a way to express fear and anxiety, youth age 13-18 are more likely to suffer from risk-taking behavior, a sense of helplessness, frustration, withdrawal, or becoming aggressive themselves. According to these studies, this increase in psychological distress is directly linked to the current conflict. While repeated exposure to the sound of shooting and shelling is the major cause of psychological problems for 73 percent of affected children and youth, watching violent scenes on television and direct exposure to conflict play a role in 46 percent and 27 percent of cases, respectively.

5.2 *While MENA countries have achieved significant improvements in terms of health outcomes during the last three decades, several challenges remain that prevent youth from enjoying healthy lifestyles and outcomes.* Total fertility rates declined remarkably in the 1980s in several countries, and infant mortality rates decreased in most MENA countries (see Figure 20). Despite these achievements, health outcomes related to youth development are not particularly encouraging. Several MENA countries still suffer from a high incidence of risky behaviors among youth, including drug use and unsafe-sex. Both are correlated with prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STI), including HIV/AIDS, and with a range of other health-related, social, and economical

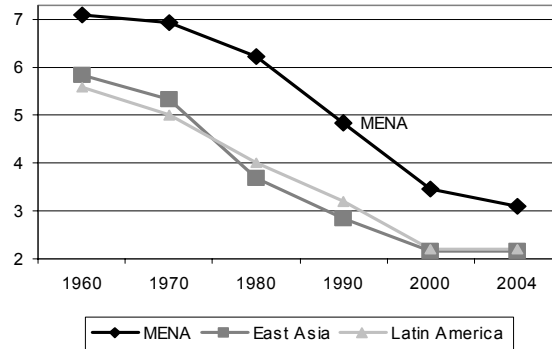
¹¹¹ Sheperd and De Jong (2005).

¹¹² World Bank (2005c).

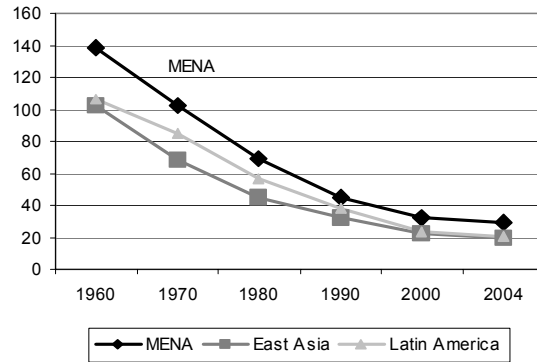
consequences. In addition, and despite progress in delaying marriage for girls, fertility rates remain high. Teenage pregnancies, in particular, are related to issues in terms of both maternal and infant health. Finally, female genital cutting (FGC) remains prevalent in some areas of the region, particularly in Egypt and Yemen, and is also related to low maternal health.

Figure 20: Fertility Rates, Infant Mortality Rate and Life Expectancy, 1960-2004

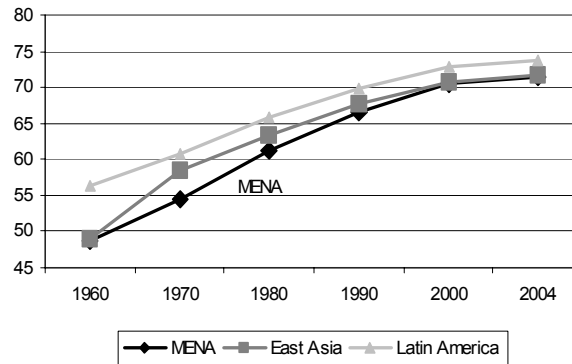
a. Fertility Rate, Total (births per woman)



b. Mortality Rate, Infants (Per 1,000 Live Births)



c. Life Expectancy at Birth (Years)



Source: World Development Indicators (2005).

5.3 *Unemployment, coupled with the lack of activities and means of distraction, may create a sense of idleness among youth which may in turn encourage them to engage in risky behaviors.* As a young Moroccan male puts it: “In the absence of activities and means of distraction, and of athletic facilities and youth centers, young people turn to drugs.”¹¹³ This statement certainly does not capture the many factors leading some youth to engage in risky behaviors but it does point towards possible explanations and areas for further research and intervention. The United Nations World Youth Report (UN, 2003) also identifies scarcity of employment opportunity, which is itself linked to educational level, as the principal reasons for poor young women engaging in commercial sex. Finally, migration (often seen as an alternative to unemployment at home as previously documented) may also lead to increased risky behaviors among youth who find themselves away from their families and traditional value and support systems. In all cases, youth exclusion in one domain (e.g., unemployment, itself related to education, general idleness and migration) clearly has knock-on effects on other youth developmental domains, in this case health.

5.4 *Tobacco use typically begins during early youth.* There are more than 40 million smokers in MENA, and as in other regions, the overwhelming majority start before the age of 25. The resurgent popularity of the *shisha* (*hookah* or waterpipe) as a medium for tobacco use should be of concern for the region. Several studies conducted in Egypt suggest that the potential damage of frequent waterpipe usage is comparable to that of cigarettes, and may have a disproportionate effect on young women who are otherwise culturally dissuaded from cigarettes.¹¹⁴

5.5 *In Yemen, the chewing of qat has been documented as a key health concern that begins during youth.* Recent evidence indicates that Yemenis start using qat in the teenage years, with the first use occurring between 16 and 24 years of age.¹¹⁵ Some 72 percent of males and 33 percent of females report chewing qat regularly. Qat is the most significant cash crop in Yemen and accounts for some 6 percent of GDP. Health effects have been linked to child malnutrition and household food insecurity as well as the incidence of dental diseases, high blood pressure and cancer.

5.6 *Drug use (particularly through injections) is related to a range of health and social issues.* In Egypt, 6 percent of youth surveyed in 5 governorates had used drugs, and another small nonrepresentative study suggested that around 16 percent of drug users injected.¹¹⁶ In Iran, a study indicated that 2 percent of the population uses heroin and opium and that 10-18 percent of these drug users injected -- suggesting that IDU's (Injecting Drug Users) make up .02-.04 percent of the total population. The average age of onset of drug use is 22 +-7 years, meaning that these IDU's are predominantly youth. Injecting drugs was further correlated with high risk behaviors: half of the 50 percent of

¹¹³ World Bank (2007c).

¹¹⁴ World Bank (1999) and Labib et. al. (2007).

¹¹⁵ World Bank (2007g).

¹¹⁶ El-Sayed (2002) and Jenkins and Robalino (2003).

male drug users who were married engaged in extramarital sex; of the half who were not married 70 percent engaged in pre-marital sex, 74 percent of these with sex workers.¹¹⁷

5.7 *Unsafe sex is also correlated with a range of health and social issues.* With both young men and women spending more time in school and delaying marriage, and with puberty starting earlier, in part due to better nutrition, the period of adolescence and early adulthood has considerably lengthened in most MENA countries. During this extended period, youth may have pre-marital sexual relationships, which put them at risk for both STI and unwanted pregnancies. Young married women are also at risk of contracting these infections, especially when they marry older men who have had previous sexual relationships and/or who may have more than one partner after marriage.

5.8 *The estimated prevalence rates of STIs and HIV/AIDS are relatively low in the MENA region, compared with other regions; however, reported AIDS cases are increasing rapidly.* Compared with other regions, estimated adult HIV prevalence in MENA remains low at only 0.3 percent and appears to be concentrated among high risk groups such as injecting drug users, sex workers and prisoners, although the absence of reliable surveillance data among these groups makes the actual level of infection uncertain. However, low prevalence does not mean a low risk of an epidemic. Indeed, the total number of AIDS deaths has increased almost six-fold since the early 1990s, and half of new HIV infections are among young people ages 15 to 24, the period when sexual activity usually begins.¹¹⁸ Currently, and despite social and cultural values that have helped prevent rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in MENA countries, several factors could contribute to increased transmission, particularly among youth. These include widespread migration, silence and stigma, civil conflicts and security problems that could undermine government ability to respond effectively; and unemployment.

5.9 *Maternal health has improved at least somewhat in almost all MENA countries, but it remains a key health challenge for young mothers in parts of the region.* Maternal mortality data, often used to assess women's access to health care, shows that the MENA region compares favorably to other regions (see Figure 21). There are, however, significant disparities among the countries in the region (see Figure 22). Djibouti, Yemen, and Morocco still demonstrate high rates. Egypt, on the other hand, was able to bring its maternal mortality rate to 84 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births through the adoption of the safe motherhood strategy, which helped decrease home deliveries and increase the percentage of medically assisted deliveries, and the utilization of maternal health care and antenatal care services.

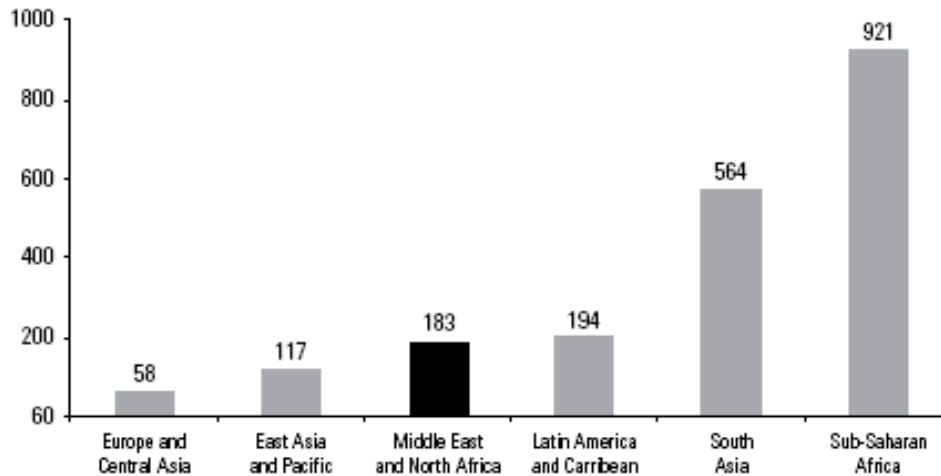
5.10 *As with education, while health indicators relating to forming families have improved across the board, the poor still lag far behind their non-poor compatriots.* Demographic and Health Surveys from Jordan, Morocco, Egypt and Yemen reveal that on average children born into the poorest quintile are more than twice as likely to die before the age of 5 as children born into the richest quintile. Likewise, four times as many

¹¹⁷ Jenkins and Robalino (2003).

¹¹⁸ De Jong et al. (2007).

mothers and children in the poorest quintile suffer from malnourishment as in the richest quintile. There is additional variation within countries, as Figure 23 demonstrates.

Figure 21: Maternal Mortality Ratio (Per 100,000 Live Births) – 2000



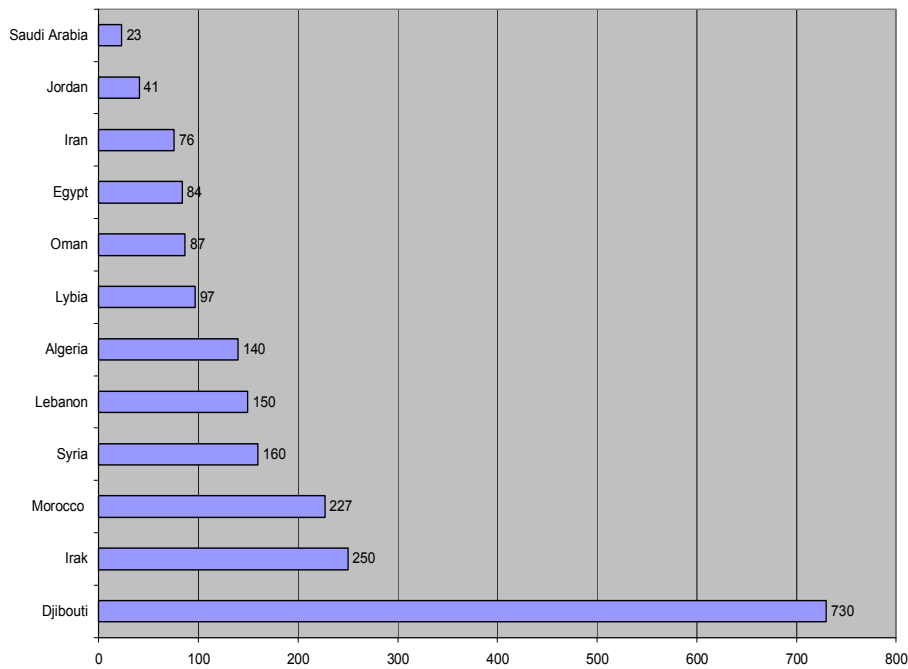
Source: World Bank (2007d).

5.11 *Given these disparities, aggregate family health indicators, which are roughly on par with other lower middle income countries, mask the extent to which inadequate health threatens poor youth.* Among the poorest quintile in Egypt and Morocco infant and under-5 mortality rates are worse than the average rates in South Asia, a region generally considered to have poorer health indicators. In an even more extreme case, the poorest quintile in Yemen has child and infant mortality rates that rival those in Sub-Saharan Africa, some of the highest in the world.¹¹⁹

5.12 *Nutritional deficiencies in both infants and mothers are most apparent among women of reproductive age belonging to lower income & rural areas.* Low birth weight prevalence rates of more than 10 percent were observed in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. Low birth weight is mainly attributable to the poor health and nutrition status of pregnant women. The incidence of low birth weight is higher among mothers who are short, undernourished, or anemic increasing the risk of fetal malnutrition, chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes mellitus. Moreover, only about 50 percent of mothers in MENA countries exclusively breastfeed their infants, and the duration of breastfeeding is further declining gradually in most countries, especially in urban areas. There are numerous traditional beliefs and attitudes that negatively affect breastfeeding practices. Anemia is also common among women and children throughout the MENA region regardless of income level; the incidence in Kuwait is similar to that in Egypt and WBG. Risk factors of anemia for women include high fertility, short birth intervals, poor maternal health care, an unbalanced diet, and lack of nutritional knowledge.

¹¹⁹ Iqbal (2006).

Figure 22: Maternal Mortality in Selected Countries



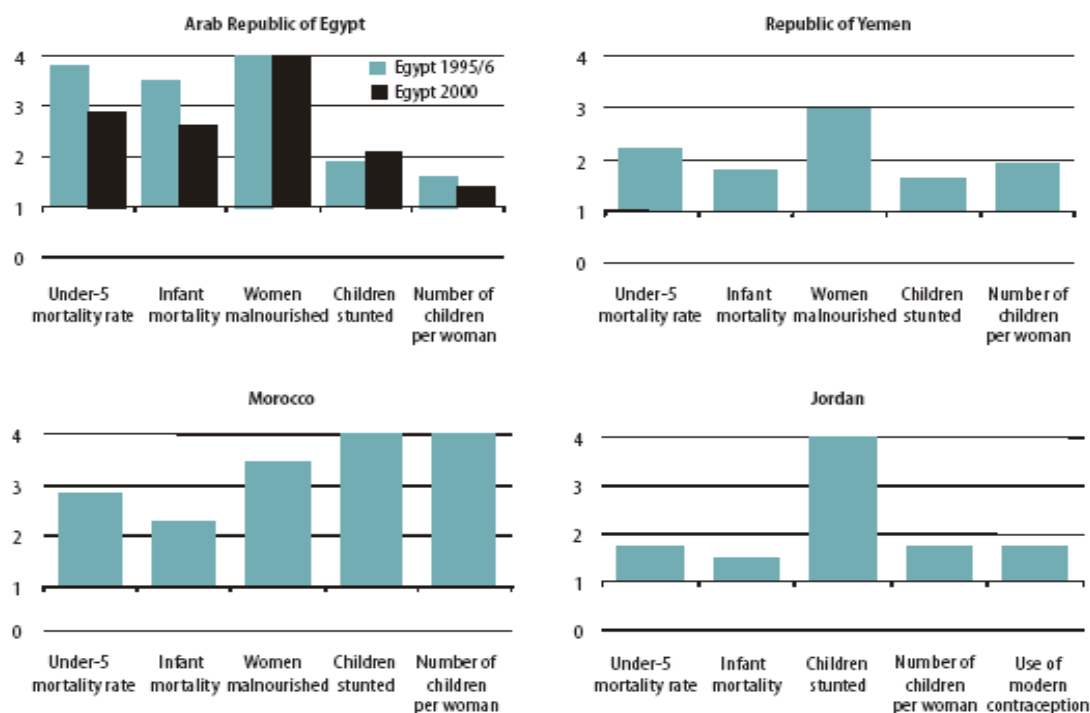
Source: UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, Maternal Mortality in 2000

5.13 *The health risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth are generally higher for young teenage mothers than for women in their twenties, particularly among poor youth in rural areas and among undernourished girls.* Age of mother at first birth is an important factor influencing the birth weight of a newborn. Evidence shows that there are notable health disadvantages for infants born to young mothers. Adolescents who are still growing are likely to give birth to smaller infants than mature women of the same nutritional status because of the competition for nutrients between the growing adolescent and the growing fetus and poorer placental function. Better-nourished girls grow faster before puberty and reach menarche earlier than undernourished girls, who grow more slowly but for longer, as menarche is delayed. Because underweight adolescent girls are growing for longer, they may not finish growing before their first pregnancy.

5.14 *Teenage mothers face greater risks of disability and death due to childbirth than women in their 20s.*¹²⁰ In Yemen, one third of maternal deaths can be directly linked to early marriage. The survey indicated that 12 percent of girls between 12 to 19 years had already had at least 1 child. In addition, 16 percent of women under 20 years of age were either already mothers or pregnant with their first child. 2 percent of 15 year olds and 6 percent of 16 year olds were mothers; according to DHS data, this percentage doubles for each consecutive year and reaches 29 percent for girls aged 18. The percentage of girls who start childbearing at an early age is even higher in rural areas (17 percent) as compared to those in urban areas (14 percent).

¹²⁰ De Jong et al. (2007).

Figure 23: Health Outcome Inequalities in Selected Countries (Ratio of Poorest to Richest Quintile)



Source: Iqbal (2006).

5.15 *Early pregnancy carries with it another important risk: the risk of the intergenerational transmission of poverty.* Women who marry in their teenage years are typically more socially isolated, lack knowledge about family planning and reproductive health services, and may lack the power to make decisions about their own health, particularly if their husbands are much older. They also face social pressure to have a child soon after marriage. In Morocco, the poorest adolescents are three times more likely than the richest adolescents to be pregnant or have had a child.¹²¹ The health of the poorest children is also affected because they are least likely to deliver their children with a medically trained birth attendant.

5.16 *While the rising age of marriage has benefited women greatly by reducing the health risks associated with early childbearing, there are still population groups where early marriage and childbearing remain common.* In MENA, about 1.6 million girls are married before age 20, and every year about 900,000 babies are born to teenage mothers. High teenage fertility in MENA countries is in part due to the high incidence of early marriage. Approximately 60 percent of married women are under the age of 24 in Yemen and Oman, and more than 40 percent of Egyptian women were married before the age of 20. Teenage fertility rates in Yemen, Oman, and Libya are twice the global average.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Box 12: Capabilities
Information and Guidance in relation to Staying Healthy and Forming Families

The risks associated with sexual relationships are heightened by young people's lack of access to information and services related to sexual and reproductive health. Young people's experiences related to marriage and childbearing vary greatly across the region. Yet, they share a need for more and better information about sexual and reproductive health. While Iran and Tunisia have taken pioneering steps in reaching out to young people to address their needs, the region as a whole lacks the political commitment and institutional capacity to do so.

Cultural taboos are particularly detrimental to informed discussions about sexual and reproductive issues, particularly with regard to young people. The silence stems in part from the high value that society puts on girls' virginity before marriage and the belief that talking openly about sexual and reproductive health might encourage unmarried youth to have premarital sex, which is strongly condemned throughout the region.

Young couples who are unable to marry for social or financial reasons may resort to unconventional forms of marriage to legally and/or religiously sanction their union and sexual relationship. Such arrangements include "urfi" (or common-law) marriage in urban Egypt and "temporary marriage" in Shi'a Islam.¹²² Although such practices are recognized as a social phenomenon, no data seem to exist on their prevalence among today's youth. While legal, such unconventional marriages are often taboo and socially frowned upon. As a result, many young couples engage in sexual relationships without seeking or receiving reproductive health information and services, which places them at a greater risk of facing unwanted pregnancies and/or contracting STIs.

Young people in MENA perceive more information to be beneficial. Sex education programs most easily reach young people through schools and other institutions where they meet. Since the great majority of young people in MENA are in school, as previously documented, it would be a missed opportunity not to provide correct information about reproductive and sexual health in schools. Yet, only Algeria, Iran, Morocco, Tunisia and, more recently, Bahrain, have included a human reproduction and health education module in their national school curricula.

In addition, many youth may have other health and family related concerns beyond reproductive health, such as mental health, particularly in the context of conflict, disability, substance abuse, nutritional issues, etc. Therefore, it is crucial that they also receive information and guidance on how to access services related to these other issues. In Jordan, for instance, a study found that most interviewees ages 10 to 24 believed that health centers serve mothers and babies only, and that they would be unwelcome there.¹²³

5.17 Abuse of youth by adults and juveniles is another major issue in MENA.

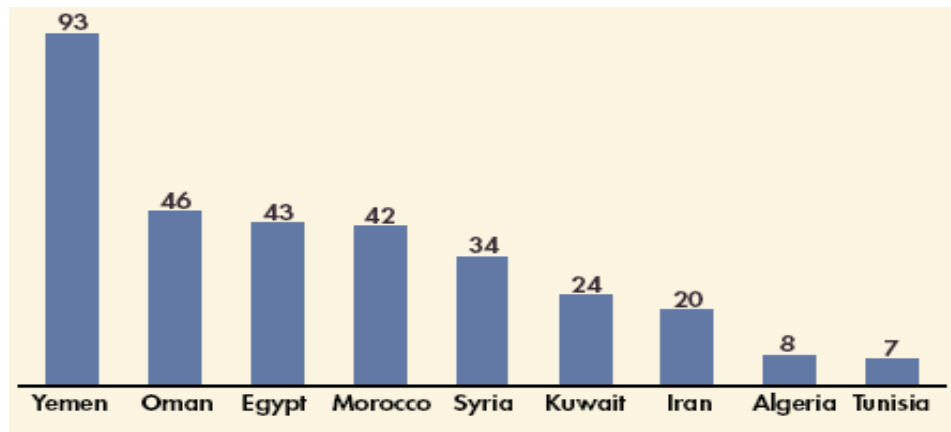
Approximately one-third of the youth respondents in a survey conducted in Jordan reported experiencing physical abuse within the family.¹²⁴ Gender-based abuse is of particular concern throughout the region. In Jordan, the rate of sexual abuse has reached 11 percent of total crimes reported in 1995, while crimes of honor against adolescent girls and young women reached 23 percent, almost a third of total murder crimes committed during this period.

¹²² De Jong et al. (2007).

¹²³ World Health Organization (2002).

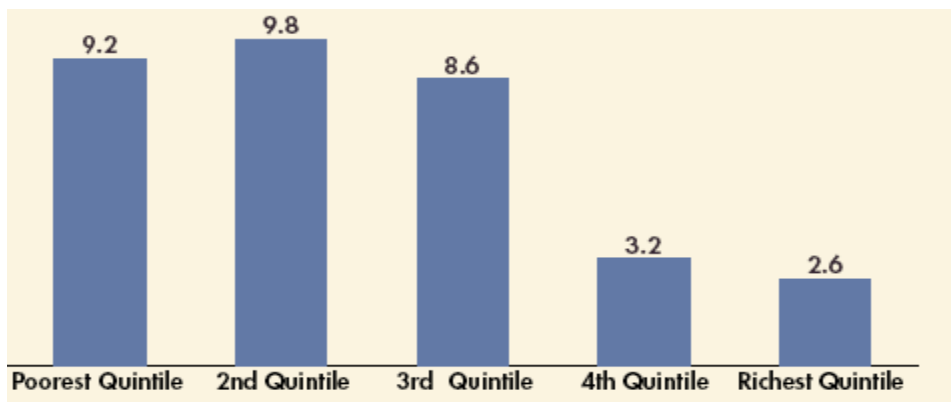
¹²⁴ World Bank (2003d).

Figure 24: Births per 1,000 Women Ages 15-19, 2004



Source: World Bank (2006).

Figure 25: Percent of Moroccan Adolescents Ages 15-19 Who are Pregnant or Already Mothers, by Wealth Quintile



Source: World Bank (2007c)

5.18 *Finally, despite international condemnation and a government ban, Female Genital Mutilation (FGC) of young girls remains a major issue in some countries. Most Egyptians have a positive attitude toward the practice, and almost all Egyptian women have undergone the procedure. FGC is practiced on a smaller scale in the coastal areas of the Arabian peninsula, including Yemen, Oman, and Saudi Arabia, and is also practiced among Ethiopian descendants in Israel. FGC finds its roots in local traditions rather than Islamic or other religious beliefs.*

Table 2: Prevalence and Attitudes Towards Female Genital Cutting (FGC)

| | | % OF WOMEN WHO HAVE UNDERGONE FGC | % OF WOMEN WHO SUPPORT THE PRACTICE |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Egypt | | | |
| Age | 15–19 years | 98 | 85 |
| | 20–29 years | 98 | 83 |
| | 30–39 years | 96 | 80 |
| | 40–49 years | 97 | 81 |
| Residence | Urban | 94 | 70 |
| | Rural | 100 | 91 |
| Education | No education | 99 | 93 |
| | Primary/secondary | 98 | 77 |
| | Completed secondary | 90 | 57 |
| Yemen | | | |
| Age | 15–49 years | 23 | |
| Residence | Urban | 26 | |
| | Rural | 22 | |
| | Coastal | 69 | |
| Subregion | Mountainous | 15 | |
| | Plateau and desert | 5 | |

Source: World Bank (2007d)

Area(s) for further research:

1. Age of marriage among young men, in relation with access to finance / dowry and implications in terms of reproductive health, STIs, livelihoods, etc;
2. Access to recreation for young men and, particularly, for young women
3. Drug and alcohol use/abuse
4. Risky driving / traffic accidents as a major cause of death or injury among youth
5. Prevalence of abortion

6. PROMISING CROSS SECTORAL AND INCLUSIVE YOUTH POLICIES

6.1 *In order to better align aspirations with opportunities there is a need to rethink the region's youth agenda.* Earlier chapters have highlighted the fact that there is a fundamental misalignment between the expectations and energies of MENA's youth and the opportunities available to them across transitions and domains. While the region's youth have made significant gains in terms of educational attainment, health outcomes and basic gender inclusion to name but a few areas, they are also faced with enormous challenges and are frequently excluded from community decision making processes that collectively hamper their ability to start and build their families and lead fulfilling and independent lives. In short, their hopes and dreams for their futures are frequently at odds with the opportunities available to them.

6.2 *At the policy level there are numerous channels through which youth-related issues can be addressed* including: national policies, educational policies, health-related laws, welfare and family services, infrastructure development, and labor market regulations, among others. However, current approaches to youth programming, while important, are often narrowly defined, fragmented and lacking in cross-sectoral breadth. When efforts are not coordinated youth exclusion can be exacerbated by failures of existing policies and failures of the labor market as well as failures to finance appropriate services when markets do not work.

6.3 *Although examples of recent concerted and coordinated efforts at youth programming do exist in the region, there is little evaluation of their effectiveness and many are in their infancy.* Hence, the question of how to develop effective youth-centered integrated approaches is timely. In order to explore areas for improvement and identify the path forward, this chapter provides examples of policies and/or initiatives that appear promising on one or both of two counts: (i) they are cross-sectoral, and/or (ii) they are inclusive of youth.

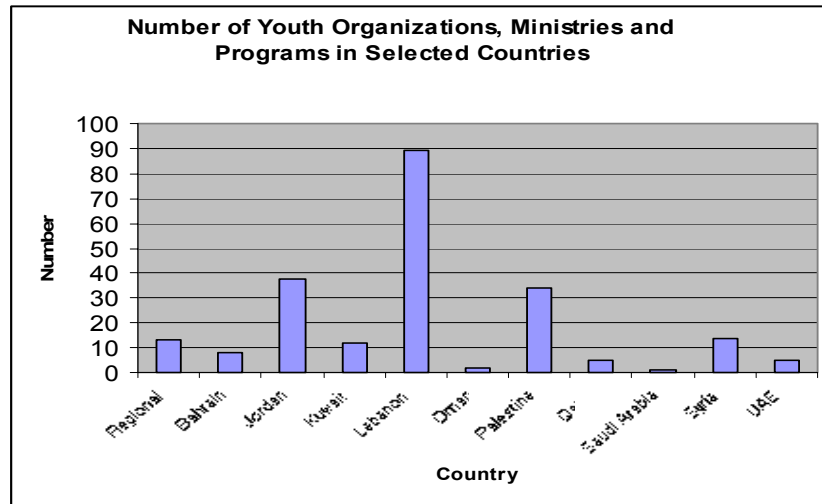
6.1. PROMISING CROSS SECTORAL YOUTH POLICIES

6.4 *An increasing number of governmental and non-governmental institutions in the region are involved in youth-related work.* The *Infoyouth Middle East Youth Directory*, which gathered information on youth 'organizations, ministries and programs' (OMP) in 10 countries identified a total number of 221 youth organizations in 2004.¹²⁵ Although this did not represent an exhaustive tally of existing OMP's, it does indicate that the regional picture of institutions involved in youth programming varies enormously. At one extreme Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine had the largest number of youth-related OMP's with 80, 38 and 34 respectively, and at the other extreme the countries of the Gulf region and Syria lag behind (Figure 26). This tally of OMP's while useful, does not help

¹²⁵ The 10 countries included in the study were: Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates. The definition of youth organizations was quite broad and included any organizations related to youth using the UN definition of youth 15 to 25. http://www.infoyouth.org/cd_rmed/mains/overviewme.htm.

address what actual impact these initiatives have had on the youth of the region and how sustainable the changes, if any, may be.

Figure 26: Number of Youth Organizations, Ministries, and Programs in Selected Countries



Source: Middle East Youth Directory, www.infoyouth.org

6.5 *Despite the existence of various governmental and non-governmental institutions youth-specific interventions are not always the result of conscious government policies and the exclusion of youth from the policy arena is often inadvertent.* For example, in Yemen until recently youth were not identified as a stakeholder group per se but were rather targeted within the scope of overall sector policies and programs, which were themselves fragmented and uncoordinated.¹²⁶ In Morocco as well, youth have not historically been considered a distinct interest group.

6.6 *In the MENA region youth policy has never been high on national agendas and it is only recently that efforts are being made to coordinate the development and implementation of national youth policies.* The scope for positive policy interventions is high although the lack of comprehensive national strategies often hinders a holistic vision and the region presents a scattered picture in terms of national-level youth programming.

6.7 *At the government level, the youth agenda cuts across a number of institutions but policies and programs are often fragmented and conceived and implemented within the mandate of individual sectoral ministries.* In many countries, it is not unusual to find as many as seven or eight government ministries overseeing various youth programs. This may include for example labor, social affairs, health, education, culture, planning, information, youth, justice, and interior. The degree to which any one of these ministries has youth issues as its central mandate varies, as does the degree of cooperation and coordination among them. Ministries of youth exist in a number of countries in the region however their programs more often than not focus on sports. For example

¹²⁶ This omission is however being rectified with the development of a National Children and Youth Strategy for 2006-2015

Ministries of Youth and Sports exist in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Yemen. In Egypt, the Ministry of Youth is a stand alone ministry within which a Supreme Council for Youth and Sports coordinates national youth policy along with other youth serving ministries and NGO's.¹²⁷ In other country contexts youth issues can be paired with other ministries such as Culture (Jordan and Qatar) and Education (Oman). Again, no systematic analysis of the effectiveness and impact of these institutions exists. In sum, although the majority of countries in the region have ministries which address youth issues, they often lack integrated national strategies devoted to youth programming, and those that do exist have yet to be monitored or evaluated.

6.8 *International agencies and donors are increasingly recognizing the importance of cross-sectoral youth policies.* In December 2004 a Regional Seminar on National Youth Policies for the Middle East and North Africa was organized in Beirut by UNESCO with the aim of sharing experiences in developing and implementing national policies.¹²⁸ The seminar highlighted the fact that visions for youth development in the participating countries were not unified and there were even different interpretations of the definition of 'youth' with some countries opting to define youth up until age 35. The Beirut seminar delineated a definition of youth policy as follows:

*A national youth policy is a declaration of the commitment a country gives to setting and meeting the priorities and development needs of its young men and women and clearly defines their role in society and the responsibility of that society to the young people themselves.*¹²⁹

6.9 In May 2007 a Youth Policy Core Group Meeting took place in Istanbul, Turkey, organized by a multi-agency task force spearheaded by UNICEF to document and review MENA experiences in developing youth policies as well as to critically examine the successes and challenges and draw lessons learned. The meeting concluded with recommendations for a regional review of youth policy development which will inform regional and global learning.¹³⁰

6.10 *Youth themselves are more systematically and publicly discussing the issues that affect their lives.* In September 2007, close to 1,000 youth from nearly 100 countries and from every MENA country gathered in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt to participate in the first International Youth Forum organized by the Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement and with the support of private sector contributors and several UN agencies and the World Bank. Under the title "Youth Speak, We Listen," participants discussed issues of peace, security and development from the perspective of young people.

¹²⁷ Infoyouth.org

¹²⁸ The seminar was organized with the cooperation of UNICEF, Save the Children and the International Council on National Youth policy.

¹²⁹ Swedish Institute in Alexandria (2005).

¹³⁰ Authors' communications with Golda El-Khoury, Regional Advisor on Youth, UNICEF – Middle East and North Africa Region.

6.11 *At the national level increasing numbers of national youth strategies have been developed. However, to date there is very little evaluation of their effectiveness and scope. A brief overview of youth-related strategies in the region illustrates the fact that youth strategy development is ongoing and the picture is incomplete (Box 13).*

Box 13
Youth Strategies in MENA: Status Update

- **Bahrain:** UNDP supported Government in strategy development; *excellent mobilization of young people*; No update on implementation to date.
- **Djibouti:** Policy focused on sports; interest to revamp it.
- **Egypt:** Strategy needs to be activated and reviewed; UNICEF is working with the Higher Council for Youth to ensure that the process of review/*activation involves young people*.
- **Occupied Palestinian Territory:** policy process with *young people's participation* (supported by UNICEF & UNFPA); policy endorsed in 2006. Implementation stalled due to donor restrictions on new government. UNICEF currently disseminating the study among young people.
- **Iraq:** Ongoing work on development of youth policy; UNICEF supported with a youth survey and *consultations with young people*.
- **Jordan:** Policy process with *young people's participation* (supported by UNDP and UNICEF); policy endorsed, M&E plan for implementation under development.
- **Lebanon:** Policy process started with Save the Children and UNESCO; *strong role for civil society and youth*. UN Theme Group on young people follows up on the endorsement of policy.
- **Morocco** (as a UN country team effort) is considering the development of a youth strategy.
- **Oman:** UNICEF approached to assist in developing a youth policy; not much progress to date.
- **Syria:** Syrian Commission for Family Affairs interested in developing a youth policy (but capacity is limited). Process supported by UNICEF and UNFPA, a (draft) desk review of policies has been undertaken.
- **Tunisia** (as a UN country team effort) is considering the development of a youth strategy.
- **Yemen:** World Bank support (and UNICEF). Work has recently begun on costing an action plan developed out of a national strategic framework and incorporating it into the national development plan.

Source: Authors' communications with Golda El-Khoury, Regional Advisor on Youth, UNICEF – Middle East and North Africa Region.

6.12 In Bahrain and Jordan for example, youth policies have been developed and officially endorsed and are now being implemented. The draft youth policy document is being finalized in Lebanon and the consensus building process is ongoing. In Egypt and Djibouti existing policies are being updated. Syria and Iraq are in the early stages of policy development and have conducted workshops with youth involvement. Interest is now being shown in Algeria, Morocco, Oman and Tunisia. In Yemen the National Strategy for Children and Youth has been adopted and its budget will be integrated into the 3rd National Development Plan for Economic and Social Development (see highlights in Annex 1.1).

6.13 *In other country contexts while there are no national policies guiding youth programming, efforts at addressing the challenges youth face are relatively advanced. In*

Morocco for example, the Secretariat d'Etat à la Jeunesse, under the Prime Minister's Office is the public institution primarily responsible for taking up the youth agenda. The Secretariat runs over 430 Maisons des Jeunes throughout the country, reaching over 6 million youths. These centers serve as a focal point for youth civic education, entertainment and leadership training. The Secretariat is also responsible for running summer educational and extracurricular youth from especially disadvantaged households. Morocco also has an active NGO sector which addresses a wide range of youth related issues, from leadership and information, communication and technology skills development, to providing support for at risk youth such as unwed mothers and drug users.

6.14 *It is also important to analyze the motivations for youth policy development by governments and NGOs as these impact the kinds of policies that are implemented. As noted by UNICEF, youth policy development may be motivated by either "a genuine appreciation of the rights of young people and the important role that young people can play" or "a response to the increased number of young people who are unemployed, desire to migrate and/or are negatively stereotyped and [are] associated with social unrest, threat, crime and violence, substance abuse, and so on."*¹³¹ In other words governments may be motivated to address issues presented by youth either by a desire to harness the potential of these young assets or a desire to manage the problems that they are perceived to represent. Governments and NGOs across the MENA region are increasingly moving towards policies and initiatives that are more inclusive of youth by encouraging the expression of youth voice in the process of policy formulations and/or project implementation.

6.2. PROMISING INCLUSIVE YOUTH POLICIES

6.15 *At the regional level an increasing number of initiatives are being organized with a focus on youth participation, shifting the paradigm from youth as passive beneficiaries of public policies to youth as active participants in their own development. For example, the Regional Seminar on National Youth Policies for the Middle East and North Africa held in Beirut in December 2004 concluded that the participation of young people is a right based on international conventions and commitments, that it ensures that programs are appropriate and that it challenges key obstacles regarding negative perceptions; and enhances their self-esteem. The regional conference on Urban Children and Youth in the MENA Region held in Dubai in 2005 concluded in their conference declaration that, "the conference participants consider young people as an asset and commit to empower all children and youth by facilitating their participation in decision making at all levels of governance."* Most of these initiatives aimed at giving youth a voice in programming and policy making still tend to focus on one domain at a time (e.g., citizenship, education, employment, or health). Still, such an approach might be considered one step in the right direction.

6.16 *Some youth involvement in civic engagement in the region is being encouraged and monitored through a number of different initiatives. For example the National*

¹³¹ UNICEF, MENA Core Group Meeting on National Youth Policies. 7-8 May, 2007 in Amman, Jordan.

Democratic Institute for Political Affairs has been active in the region and has worked: 1) with members of Parliament in Morocco to host roundtables and town hall-style gatherings throughout the country and created training strategies to promote youth inclusion in political parties; 2) to increase youth participation in political life in Algeria; 3) established regional youth roundtable dialogues to both educate and engage Bahraini youth.¹³² In Jordan, HM Queen Rania Abdullah and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation have supported the development of the Jordan Youth Forum which has expanded its membership, activities and impact since its inception (see highlights in Annex 1.2).

6.17 *In a few countries in the region youth have formalized their participation in civic issues at the national level.* In Iran, for example the National Youth Organization has established a "National Plan of Dialogue between Youth and Authorities" which aims to, "[attract] the youth's intellectual participation in the country's high-level planning and updating the authorities' information on the condition of the youth..." A nationwide call was made to youth to participate and over one million registration forms were received. Nearly 5000 sessions were held in the provinces during a seven month period in 2001 and 2002. Of these, 3,500 were held in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and about 1,500 sessions were held independently by the branches of the National Youth Organization in the provinces. The information collected during these sessions was compiled to feed into a comprehensive system of planning. In addition, the National Youth Organization is helping youth NGOs to participate in policymaking and decision making bodies in the provinces.

6.18 *A small but increasing number of initiatives are being launched in the region to include youth themselves in the formulation and articulation of policies that affect their educational experiences.* These initiatives are scattered at the moment but they do exist and may serve to inspire replication, provided that their impact can be properly evaluated. In Morocco for example, several initiatives have been launched with youth at their core. In one example youth are active participants in a school renovation project (see highlights in Annex 1.3).

6.19 In another example, a census taking exercise of out of school youth including both drop outs and those who had never been to school was undertaken by in school youth themselves. This initiative was developed by the Secretariat d'Etat a l'Alphabetisation et a l'Éducation Non Formelle as part of the implementation of the government's literacy and non-formal education strategy. Some 9,500 students were mobilized to participate and over 80,000 out of school youth were interviewed. This initiative led to a marked increase in youth participation and engagement.¹³³

6.20 Similar youth-inclusive initiatives are taking place in the domain of youth employment. In Egypt, for instance, a national action plan on youth employment aims to develop specific interventions to target and include youth in the labor market through policies developed with youth participation (see highlights in Annex 1.4).

¹³² National Demographic Institute for Political Affairs. <http://www.dni.org>

¹³³ UNICEF (2006).

6.21 *Finally, a number of initiatives involve young people themselves in defining the scope of and implementing health-related initiatives.* These opportunities in turn assist the youth in developing their skills. In Egypt for example a youth-led effort has been established to raise awareness of reproductive health needs (see highlights in Annex 1.5).

6.3. PROMISING POLICIES THAT ARE BOTH INCLUSIVE AND CROSS SECTORAL

6.22 *Several national-level inclusive and multi-sectoral initiatives are also being launched.* These initiatives, while modest, do exist and serve to inspire replication as the cases of Morocco, Yemen, Bahrain and Jordan illustrate.

- **Morocco.** In Morocco the government has recognized the central importance of integrating youth themselves into youth agendas. In its Fiftieth Anniversary of Independence Report (2005), the Government noted that, *“although young people constitute the largest component of the population, politicians of independent Morocco, despite real efforts in sector planning, have never successfully integrated youth into the general development equation.”* As articulated in its 2004 Social Development Strategy, the government has identified youth inclusion as a key development priority, placing special emphasis on professional training and job creation for youth. A large part of the government’s action is also focused on the reform of the education system towards the goal of providing youth with training that is more adapted to the job market. This reform emphasizes the qualitative aspect of training and the elimination of illiteracy. The Ministry of Agriculture has also expressed a strong interest in working with rural youth, especially young farmers and has implemented micro-credit programs targeting youth, with mixed success. Finally, the Government has taken youth programming one step forward by advocating for youth inclusion and participation via the INDH initiative (see highlights in Annex 1.6).
- **Yemen.** The recently approved National Children and Youth Strategy recognizes the importance of youth participation. Youth were involved in the consultations surrounding the formation of the strategy and will be involved in implementation and evaluation. The objectives of the National Children and Youth Strategy are to enhance the capacity of young people to develop an identity in Yemeni society and strengthen the involvement and contribution of Yemeni young people in community and national life (see highlights in Annex 1.7 for a list of priority interventions).

Also in Yemen, the *Youth Voices* initiative supported by the World Bank introduced a program in 2003 which focuses on developing the capabilities of Yemeni youth by focusing on their training needs and enhancing their participation in policy and program development

- **Bahrain.** In Bahrain youth participation was at the core of the development of the National Youth Policy (see highlights in Annex 1.8). The policy was designed to “utilize a wide range of participat[ory] methodologies to ensure

maximum participation by all stakeholders.”¹³⁴ According to the draft of the national youth strategy, at least 16,000 young Bahraini’s have been consulted on their opinions, expectations and ideas. The next stage of the national youth policy process is information gathering, in which a high level of youth participation is envisioned.

- **Jordan.** In Jordan, the Higher Council for Youth and the Ministries of Education, Health and Social Development is implementing an ”Adolescent Participation and Empowerment” project with the support of UNICEF. It has three components: 1) The development of a national gender-sensitive youth strategy; 2) An adolescent knowledge and development component focusing on ten key areas of basic life skills and health lifestyles; and 3) A ”Society for Adolescents” component which aims at ensuring an increase in the percentages of young girls and boys actively involved in participation structures (less than 10 percent to 25 percent by the end of 2007).
- Also in Jordan, the Questscope initiative, a Government/NGO partnership supported by the World Bank is a successful integrated project structured around three components: (i) Establishing one-to-one mentoring relationships in the juvenile correction system (the initiative now covers 75 percent of all youth who are charged as juvenile criminals); (ii) Creating effective referral relationships with GO’s & NGO’s for access to services; and (iii) Stimulation of community volunteerism to restore “at risk” children to supportive networks. The lessons learned included identification of the high social return on investing on re-inclusion of disadvantaged children. The project identified the importance of:
 - (i) Allowing children to contribute to solutions;
 - (ii) Ensuring that children become active stakeholders in society to benefit themselves and others;
 - (iii) Validating their improved social status in appropriate ways.

6.23 Given the expansion of promising policy and initiatives just described, it now appears particularly crucial to identify key next steps for moving the youth agenda forward in the MENA region. Towards this end, it will be particularly important to: (i) rigorously assess which approaches are in fact effective (rather than simply promising) and which are not, depending on the context; and (ii) to derive policy advice accordingly. The next chapter considers the ways forward and examines the potential role for donors and the World Bank in supporting the youth agenda in the region.

¹³⁴ GTZ (2005).

7. FILLING KNOWLEDGE GAPS AND SUPPORTING THE YOUTH AGENDA

7.1 *The critical step that is needed is for policy makers, stakeholders, and donors to view policies through a youth lens so that impacts on youth are considered and decisions appropriately taken.* Helping youth to successfully navigate the critical transitions they face should be a social priority, and indeed should be a public priority to the extent that the benefits to society exceed the individual benefits in the presence of market failures, as has been argued in this report. However, the creation of a new “youth sector” is not advocated, nor would it be possible. But a multisectoral, inclusive, youth-centered approach toward existing sectors and programs is required to assist youth to realize their productive potential. But developing such an approach is not easy, given the institutional structures and tendency for policies to focus only within narrow sector silos. Experience in several countries suggests that a starting point can be a strategic framework at the national level, which provides some monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track and obtain the results of sectoral policies and programs.

7.2 *Much remains to be done to operationalize an inclusive youth approach.* It is beyond the scope of this report to set out the policies that should be part of a new youth-centered approach. A start at identifying promising approaches that are already being followed in the region was reviewed in the last chapter, but this is in no way comprehensive and does not suggest best practice policies. This daunting task is left for future work and will require both resources and coordination across the policy community. There is at present a dearth of information worldwide on what programs work for youth in different country settings. Initiatives must proceed on the research front to quantify the effects of youth transitions and the key points of departure from optimal development paths requiring policy attention. Funding the operation and monitoring and evaluation of promising interventions is needed, and dissemination and discussion among policy makers is required before coordinated policies can become operational. This short final chapter examines some of the knowledge gaps that remain, and how the World Bank can effectively support the youth agenda.

7.1. EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE ON YOUTH ISSUES AND POLICIES

7.3 *Most of what is known about the impact of the transitions or the effectiveness of youth programs comes from research carried out in other regions.* Africa has so far focused on the problem of orphans, which is not a critical policy or social issue in MENA countries. Latin America and the Caribbean and Eastern Europe and Central Asia have both studied at-risk and vulnerable youth, while many of the program approaches to these groups have been developed and (for some) assessed in OECD countries and the US. Whether the conclusions reached from some of this research apply to the MENA region is unknown. There is therefore a large set of unanswered questions, some of which have been identified in earlier sections of this report. It will be important to increase the access to publicly available data and research on youth in order to understand the true impacts for the region and contribute to informed discussion and debate.

7.4 Data on Youth. *There is a lack of data on youth in the region generally.* Most of the information that exists comes from either household income and expenditure data, labor force data, or Demographic Health Survey information. These sources are only available for certain years in certain countries. There is virtually no publicly available information on vulnerable or at-risk youth. There is little systematic understanding of even basic questions such as how categories of youth actually spend their time. What do they do when they are not in school and not working or looking for work?

7.5 Core Transitions. *There are a variety of questions about the core transitions that need further research.* What are the links between education and investment in human capital and access to employment? What is the extent of informal sector participation among youth? To what extent does lack of information or misalignment of expectations with real opportunities influence unemployment among youth? What is the influence of unemployment and access to credit on age of marriage and family formation? What is the access to recreation for youth, and how does this influence their propensity to engage in risky or destructive behavior? What are the rates of drug and alcohol abuse and STDs? What are the rates of criminal behavior and incarceration rates for youth compared to older adults? All of these questions also need to be examined by gender and by geographic divisions. Some may be particularly important for women, such as the use of contraceptives and access and use of reproductive health services, others for youth living in rural environments, such as use of religiously based education or access to recreation.

7.6 Migration. *A key issue for the region clearly centers around the causes and effects of youth migration.* Information on migration is extremely limited and centralized, and is virtually impossible to obtain for GCC countries. Important questions relate to the reasons youth migrate, where they migrate and the share that can be considered temporary versus permanent. What role does the perception of limited opportunity or access to finance play in motivating youth migrants? What share of migrants have illegal status and what implications does this have in terms of education and health opportunities? What is the extent of Brain Drain (and Gain) in the region?

7.7 Social Inclusion and Empowerment. *More systematic study of these concepts is needed with a view toward identifying operational implications.* There is increasing recognition that inclusion, empowerment and participation are important for youth transitions, at least on an anecdotal level as reflected in exercises such as the Voices of the Youth. But there is little evidence on which forms inclusion should take to be most effective, or even how to consistently measure inclusion and empowerment.

7.8 Program Effectiveness. *There needs to be a greater emphasis on monitoring and evaluating program outcomes and impacts.* There is little evidence on which programs work and which don't for youth. Innovative programs should have evaluation components.

7.2. POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE WORLD BANK

7.9 *By virtue of its multi-sectoral perspective and integrative capacity the World Bank has a potentially crucial role to play in advancing a more integrated approach to the youth agenda in the Middle East and North Africa region.* The Bank already engages directly in the major domains that affect youth transitions, including education, health, social protection and takes a cross-sectoral perspective with respect to employment, migration, social development and gender, all of which impact youth. The Bank can help focus and support the youth agenda through its three main functional areas: (i) consultation, capacity building, and coordination; (ii) knowledge production, management and dissemination; and (iii) grants and lending. In each of these areas, there are options for an agenda in the immediate future.

7.10 **Consultation, Capacity Building and Coordination.** No one ministry or agency has the responsibility of ensuring that the range of policies effectively considers youth. The Bank can help translate awareness, support capacity building, and facilitate the necessary coordination through its ongoing dialogue with country policy makers. The WDR 2007 serves as an effective launching point for stimulating discussions, and the Bank can further support at the regional level:

- *Regional youth awareness and policy conferences* to exchange ideas and further consultations across countries and institutions.
- *Technical assistance* for governments seeking to develop youth-oriented strategies grounded in economic and budget realities.
- *Incorporating youth outcomes into the CAS.* The Bank can encourage countries in the region to prioritize youth development through CAS discussions, and its work on sector strategies.
- *Capacity building* for practitioners in line ministries, local authorities and NGOs to facilitate coordination and distill knowledge on youth-centered initiatives.

7.11 **Knowledge Production, Management and Dissemination.** Through its involvement in every country in the region, its global experience, and its ability to synthesize and distill practical lessons from research, the Bank can help fill some of the knowledge gaps identified above, serve as a center of readily accessible information on knowledge and policy and facilitate informed dialogue on the range of youth issues. Activities could include:

- *Applied research on impacts of youth transitions.* Additional research is needed on the economic impact of youth transitions, particularly with respect to the school-to-work transition and in the implications of inclusion and participation. Core work on measuring the well-being of youth and assessing the impact of policies on well-being is needed. Examples of this effort from LAC include the measurement of the costs of failed youth transitions and the effort to develop a Youth Well-Being Index.
- *Syntheses of policy lessons.* Case studies and summaries of lessons emerging from experiences with youth-programs from other regions and from within MENA can

be valuable for policy makers, and will begin to address the gap in identifying “what works” for youth. This can include syntheses of evaluation or assessment findings, summaries of projects underway, and descriptions of promising approaches covered in policy seminars or youth discussions.

7.12 Grants and Lending. The Bank can encourage innovative projects and approaches to address youth issues through grants and projects. As noted throughout this report, there is no consensus on what constitutes good policy or successful programs for youth. Policy makers are still searching for good ideas. Yet, there are many experimental initiatives taking place. In 2006, the Bank already invested some \$50 million in youth-oriented operations in the region. Although most of this amount was for education operations, the potential exists for more systematic grants and lending for youth. Grants are equally important resources for stimulating innovative approaches, particular for regional or non-government initiatives. Finally, the Bank can play a catalytic role in mobilizing resources from other donors. Among the more important areas needing support are:

- *Public awareness and information.* Lack of information for youth and their families is potentially a significant cause of suboptimal decisions and failed youth transitions. Supporting public awareness campaigns and facilitating the dissemination of youth-relevant information on health, education, and school transitions can have a big impact for limited cost. An example is the effort in a Jordan university to provide job information and assist students to identify and prepare for job interviews.
- *Private-sector led initiatives.* NGOs and the private sector can help with information dissemination and targeted service provision for youth.
- *Second chance programs.* There are few second chance programs for youth in the region. Well-targeted initiatives can benefit youth and help them recover from earlier bad decisions or negative risk factors.
- *Monitoring and evaluation.* The Bank should support efforts to monitor and evaluate programs that affect youth transitions. Rigorous, well-designed evaluations are needed to allow the policy community to identify useful approaches.

7.13 An Agenda for the Immediate Future. In the short term, including the next fiscal year, the Bank should focus regionally on the operationalization of the first two areas highlighted above. This translates into three specific types of activities, depending on budget availability:

- *Knowledge advancement and exchange.* The regional youth team, together with support from the Children and Youth hub, researchers from the Development Economics Group and outside experts can begin to systematically examine the implications of failures in youth transitions for MENA youth and assess the resources and needs of youth, including:

- Resource and Needs Assessment. The study, which could be carried out through individual youth interviews and surveys or focus groups (or a combination of both) would rigorously examine: (i) what goals youth identify as their priority in life; (ii) what obstacles prevent them from achieving these goals; and (iii) how youth think that policies and programs (both existing and new) can be better tailored to help them build on their resources and meet their needs. This study would involve design and piloting in one country, and possibly adapting and replicating to other countries in the future.
 - Regional study of youth employment. Work is underway in other regions, notably ECA, to examine the needs of youth toward employment and to review evaluations of labor market and youth programs. Similar work is needed for MENA.
 - Regional study of vulnerable and at-risk youth. Little is known about the classification and scope of youth requiring second chances, although this is a potentially large area for policy engagement in the region.
 - Launching a regional youth web site to make available ongoing work and link to other institutions and youth initiatives. This can be part of the website maintained by the Children and Youth hub or reside regionally within the Bank.
- *Identifying results framework*. More systematic use of standardized youth indicators in terms of outputs, outcomes, and (when feasible) impact associated with youth programs. The Bank can help develop such a framework in coordination with other donors particularly active in the youth agenda, such as UNICEF. To the extent possible, the regional team should ensure that new programs or policies include an impact evaluation plan prior to the launch, and the team should facilitate the design and execution of high quality evaluations.
 - *Consultation*. The youth team should participate in and support a regional policy conference to further dialogue with client countries and to facilitate information exchange on research and promising programs.

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ANNEX 1: COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

1.1. Yemen: National Strategy for Children and Youth

While a national strategy has been defined, specific policy prescriptions are yet to be elaborated. The National strategy, *'seeks to provide a positive national vision, a holistic framework and a state policy for all government agencies and civil society groups interested in, and committed to contributing to child and youth protection and development'*. The focus areas for youth programming have been identified as: Creating a national youth employment environment and plan; Strengthening national identity, youth inclusion and participation; Increasing leisure options and creating child/youth friendly urban planning; Preventing early pregnancy and reducing the risks to reproductive health.

1.2. Jordan Youth Forum: Increasing Youth Participation and Civic Engagement

"Jordan Youth Forum" (under the patronage of HM Queen Rania Abdullah and supported by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation) aims at increasing youth participation in civil society. Active male and female Jordanians aged 18-32 from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to participate in voluntary work, collective planning, and self-organized youth workshops. Thus, young Jordanians develop their capacity to initiate and participate in self-help projects, and create an effective network of governmental & non-governmental organizations for the benefit of other Jordanian Youth.

To avoid duplication of work and wasted efforts, the JYF is networking with around 40 associations working with youth and over 300 active volunteers from around the Kingdom.

Sharing knowledge, experience and creating a structured youth network of committed volunteers gives young Jordanians hope and encouragement to become active citizens in their communities and participate in developing their society, and achieving the change they want.

Based on this understanding, the Forum objectives were collectively developed, and committed Jordanian youth founded the National Forum for Youth and Culture, registered with the Ministry of Culture on February 29th, 2004.

Source: <http://jordanyouth.org/english/joryouth/history.asp>

1.3. Moroccan Young People Rally for High Quality School

Inspired by the World Congress of Youth 2003, UNICEF and the ASSBI Association have sponsored a project that offers young conference participants the opportunity to participate in a concrete way in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. The project focuses on the quality of the educational experience at a school in Zoumi, a town in Northern Morocco... Young people [among others] and local participants from

the village were all called upon to cooperate in the repair and renovation of their school. But rehabilitating the physical environment is just the first step in a long process that aims to improve the quality of the entire educational system.

Source : http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco_13399.html

1.4. Egypt: Developing a National Action Plan on Youth Employment

Following the completion of a comprehensive situation analysis of young people in the Egyptian labor market, the Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MoMM) with the support of the YEN Secretariat and the ILO is in the process of identifying policy priority areas which would form the basis of a National Action Plan (NAP) on youth employment. Work will now take place to develop proposed interventions in the areas of macroeconomic policies, education and training reform, enterprise development, labor market policies and programs, and governance.

[There is] ongoing capacity building and development of the Egyptian Youth Consultative Group [which is] the official body endorsed by the Government to represent youth perspectives in the NAP process, to ensure they are fully representative of Egyptian youth. Within the MoMM, [a youth representative] assists in the training of government employees on the NAP process and establishing the Secretariat as a national public information point on youth employment and the NAP initiative.

Source: The Youth Employment Network: Newsletter, March 2007

1.5. Egyptian Youth Champions: Youth-Led Reproductive Health Initiative

The Youth Champions initiative is a youth-led effort to raise awareness of reproductive health needs and **to strengthen the involvement of youth in policymaking and implementation.** [It] has... deepened the commitment of Egypt's Ministry of Youth to addressing population and reproductive health issues.

Egypt has many important policies affecting adolescents, but differing definitions and a lack of operational coordination among various official institutions have resulted in policies and programs that are not fully responsive to the needs of young people.

By **involving young people in advocacy, the initiative aims to incorporate a youth perspective into reproductive health** issues, create links for policy action at the national level, and ensure that national and regional plans are responsive to the needs and priorities of young people. A collaboration between the POLICY Project and the MOY that began in 2003, the initiative encompasses a series of activities that **emphasize a youth-to-youth approach.**

- **Youth advocacy events.** In January 2003, youth champions held a national conference on youth and population, attended by 150 youth from different governorates... Youth champions also participated in diverse youth events at centers and camps in 11 different governorates, reaching more than 1,000 young people. Champions prepared

their own evidence-based presentations to their peers and led discussions on priority reproductive health issues. In February 2004, the Minister of Youth committed to extending the Youth Champions initiative to an additional 15 governorates. By mid-2005, almost 400 young people had been qualified as champions, with the group split roughly between males and females.

- ***Establishment of the National Youth Task Force.*** Another outcome of the Youth Champions initiative was the establishment in April 2004 of the National Youth Task Force, under the auspices of the MOY. The goal of the task force is to set priorities for reproductive health issues and advocate for their inclusion in various national plans. The National Youth Task Force includes multi-sectoral representation from young people, the NGO community, and key ministries.
- ***Improving advocacy skills.*** In June 2004, youth champions received additional training to enhance their advocacy capacities and update their knowledge base with the most recent information concerning the population situation in Egypt...Youth champions from all Upper Egypt governorates...have advocated among their peers in almost 100 youth events. Some of the issues addressed include the need for youth-friendly reproductive healthcare and the small family size norm.

Lessons Learned

- ***The Youth Champions initiative has successfully secured youth participation in the national policy dialogue on reproductive health.*** The formation of the National Youth Task Force is a significant recognition of the need for young people's contribution to the policymaking process.
- ***A youth-led advocacy approach is important.*** The youth-to-youth approach to advocacy has been instrumental in allowing young people to communicate their pressing reproductive health needs so that they resonate with policymakers and program managers.
- ***Young advocates require special support.*** Young people have special insight and effectiveness as advocates for their age group. They do, however, require special support to be effective. This support includes updating their knowledge of statistical data and evidence; providing general information of the experiences of other countries; providing guidance about the best approach to tackle some specific questions, especially related to religion; and enhancing networking and meetings to avoid contradictory messages and to exchange experiences.
- ***Formal agreements breed sustainability.*** The Youth Champions initiative operates under an official agreement with the MOY. By formalizing the commitment of the MOY, such an agreement enhances the potential sustainability of advocacy efforts, in particular through the National Youth Task Force. Moreover, to ensure sustainability of the youth advocacy program, the MOY instructed all Youth Directorates at the governorate level to include such activities in their regular programs and allocated relevant funds in the 2005/2006 budget.

Source: <http://www.policyproject.com/pubs/YRHCBS/Egypt%20country%20brief.pdf>

1.6. Morocco: The National Initiative for Human Development (INDH)

INDH is being implemented by the Ministry of the Interior and includes youth as key actors of development, where they play an active role in identifying, designing implementing, monitoring and evaluating sub-projects. Indeed, one of the key intermediate outcome indicators is the. ‘Percentage of households, women and youth who report that they participated in all or part of the participatory process’ and this is founded on the premise that, ‘in both urban and rural areas, youth have little say in decision making and face challenges in economic participation. As part of the initiative a three year action research program is being launched entitled, “Breaking the Barriers to Youth Inclusion.’ It aims at analyzing the factors contributing to youth exclusion and will propose actions that will be implemented under the INDH.

1.7. Yemen: Strengthening National Identity, Youth Inclusion and Participation: Priority Interventions

1. Promote and support volunteer/community service initiatives that appeal to young people and are youth friendly.
2. Encourage school based community service projects and values/citizenship curriculum.
3. Strengthen the role and contribution of student councils.
4. Encourage youth representation at all levels of government, non government and community planning and decision making.
5. Encourage participation of young people on national and government boards and committees.
6. Instigate an annual Youth Week highlighting youth contribution and ideas.
7. Create an annual awards program to recognize youth contribution.
8. Support youth leadership, coaching and peer education in terms of local recreation and sport programs.
9. Establish an Initiatives Fund for youth initiated and local community service projects.
10. Facilitate opportunities for children and young people to participate in international youth events and exchanges.
11. Encourage civil society groups to adopt a quota for young people in leadership positions.
12. Encourage the formation of youth councils at the governorate and local council levels.
13. Promote youth and children’s role and participation in developing and implementing programs at the national, governorate and local levels.
14. Establish a Youth Parliament based on the success of the Children Parliament and models occurring in other Middle East countries.
15. Find ways to utilize the mosque role in developing youth identity and participation.
16. Integrate the values of scouting into the school curriculum.

Source: Draft National Children and Youth Strategy of the Republic of Yemen. 2006-2015

1.8. Bahrain: Youth Participation in the Implementation and Evaluation of the National Youth Policy

- A Youth Voice Campaign involving 10,000 youth to youth interviews/dialogues
- An audit of current national youth organizations and program initiatives
- 8 working groups on key youth themes and on important aspects of a National Youth Policy with high level of youth participation and over 30 focus groups on all key themes, involving several hundred young people.
- Undertaking of a National Youth Perceptions Survey of young people in 1840 households
- A website (www.bahrainyouth.com) designed and operated by young women and men.
- A set of 11 online radio programs, created and broadcasted by young men and women
- 19 Internet discussion forums which generated over 3,500 posts and 16,000 hits in four months.
- Creation of a youth media group
- Formation of a youth advisory committee
- Organized study tours to Namibia, South Africa, Oman and Qatar

Source: GTZ 2005

1.9 Lebanon Youth Civic Responsibility Project

Save the Children is partnering with **INMA** (meaning ‘Development’ in Arabic) to implement “Youth Civic Responsibility” projects in Northern Lebanon. The objective of the projects is to empower youth to make a difference as positive citizens in their communities. As a result of the project, communities have benefited from:

- A strengthened youth civic consciousness
- Improved good governance through Youth watchdogs
- A youth-friendly resource book that was produced on civic responsibility now being widely disseminated and used.

For many of those who are participating in the project, this is their first exposure to community and self-development and their first opportunity to openly discuss issues of good governance and civic consciousness in a supportive peer setting.

Source: <http://www.savethechildren.org/countries/middle-east-eurasia/lebanon.html>

ANNEX 2: REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WITH A YOUTH FOCUS

The list of organizations below is non-exhaustive, but is intended to provide an initial starting point for readers interested in finding out more about youth activities in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) (www.araburban.org)

AUDI is a regional, non-governmental, non-profit urban research, technical and consulting organization, based in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A major goal of the Institute is the enhancement of the quality of municipal services in Arab towns and cities through professional and technical support. AUDI has been very active in organizing regional conferences on urban children and youth issues. It further hosts the secretariat for the MNA Child Protection Initiative operating in several countries in the region. The CPI aims to upgrade the capacities of local authorities and municipalities to improve the well being of children, especially vulnerable and disadvantaged ones, and to enhance knowledge of effective policies and programs that address critical issues of children in the region.

Foundation for the Future (www.foundationforfuture.org)

The Foundation for the Future is a multilateral, non-profit organization supported by the governments of more than a dozen countries both in and out of the Middle East and North Africa. The Foundation focuses on grant-making in support of rule of law, independent media, empowerment of women, civic education and engagement of youth. The overarching goal of the Foundation's efforts is to support democratic reforms by supporting the capacity of local NGOs. It provides grants and capacity-building efforts in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent – Youth (www.ifrc.org/youth/index.asp)

The International Federation's programs are grouped into four main core areas: promoting humanitarian principles and values; disaster response; disaster preparedness; and health and care in the community. The Federation has a specific youth program focusing on each of the core areas, and maintains publications, youth directories and other resources. IFRCRC works through MENA.

International Labour Organization Youth Employment (www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/yett/index.htm)

The ILO undertakes data collection, research, and provides guidance to governments and stakeholders to act as a catalyst in mobilizing support and implementing integrated policies and programmes to effectively meet the Millennium Summit Declaration's commitment on decent and productive work for youth.

International Youth Foundation (www.iyfnet.org)

The IYF is an international NGO working in nearly 70 countries to improve the conditions and prospects for young people. IYF works with hundreds of companies, foundations, and civil society organizations to strengthen and "scale up" existing programs that are making a positive and lasting difference in young people's lives. Four core issues concern IYF's global initiatives: (i) Education; (ii) Employability; (iii) Leadership and Engagement; and (iv) Health Education and Awareness. In the MENA region, the IYF has strong partnerships in: Jordan with the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development and the Queen Zein Institute for Development; West Bank and Gaza with the Welfare Association (locally known as Ta'awoun); and both in Morocco and in Egypt through the Education and Employment Alliance (EEA), an initiative aimed at building active and sustainable local alliances that seed activities in the area of education and employment.

The Population Council (www.popcouncil.org)

The Population Council conducts research worldwide to improve policies, programs, and products in three areas: (i) HIV and AIDS; (ii) poverty, gender, and youth; and (iii) reproductive health. In particular the *Transitions to Adulthood* program seeks to better understand adolescents' lives and develop effective policies and programs to improve them. The Council is especially active in Egypt, where it has strong office and field presence.

Soros Foundation Open Society Institute, Middle East and North Africa Initiative (www.soros.org/initiatives/regions/mideast)

The Middle East/North Africa Initiative program of the Open Society Institute offers grants to organizations around the world to foster freedom of expression, access to information, women's rights, development of the rule of law, local governance, and educational reforms in the Middle East.

United Nations Programme on Youth (www.un.org/youth)

The Programme on Youth is based in the Division for Social Policy and Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. It has been set up to: enhance awareness of the global situation of youth and increase recognition of the rights and aspirations of youth; promote national youth policies, national youth coordinating mechanisms and national youth programmes of action as integral parts of social and economic development, in cooperation with both governmental and non-governmental organizations; and strengthen the participation of youth in decision-making processes at all levels in order to increase their impact on national development and international cooperation. In addition, each major UN agency also has youth-specific activities.

UNFPA (www.unfpa.org)

The United Nations Population Fund helps governments, at their request, to formulate policies and strategies to reduce poverty and support sustainable development. The Fund also assists countries to collect and analyze population data that can help them understand population trends. It is supporting collection and use of information on adolescents and youth, in particular.

UNICEF (www.unicef.org)

The United Nations Children's Fund has been very active in youth issues in the MENA region. In addition to children's issues, they focus on nutrition, adolescent health, life skills and monitoring and evaluation of interventions. For example, the *Youth Voices Initiative* aims to offer children and adolescents in the region a safe and supportive global cyberspace where they can explore issues through participation with their peers and with decision makers globally. UNICEF organized the *Youth Core Group Meetings* in Istanbul in May 2007.

Wolfensohn Center for Development Middle East Youth Initiative

(www.shababinclusion.org)

The Middle East Youth Initiative was launched by the Wolfensohn Center for Development at the Brookings Institution and the Dubai School of Government in July 2006. Its objective is to accelerate the international community's ability to better understand and respond to the changing needs of young people in the Middle East. By creating an international alliance of academics, policymakers, youth leaders and leading thinkers from the private sector and civil society, the Initiative aims to develop and promote a progressive agenda of youth inclusion. The Initiative has three complementary pillars: research and policy, advocacy and networking, and practical action.

World Health Organization Child and Adolescent Health and Development

(www.who.int/child-adolescent-health/asrh.htm)

The Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development (CAH) aims to improve health and development from birth through age 19. Current priorities include: (i) Integrated management of childhood illness; (ii) Child and adolescent rights; (iii) Adolescent sexual and reproductive health; and (iv) HIV/AIDS.

Youth Employment Network

(http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strat/yen/)

The Youth Employment Network is supported by the UN, ILO and the World Bank. It is a network of organizations and youth organizations devoted to youth employability, equal opportunity, entrepreneurship and employment creation. Iran, Egypt and Syria are all "lead countries" in the preparation of national action plans for youth employment.



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