

Chapter 5

Mainstreaming youth considerations in public governance

This chapter draws attention to the critical role public governance plays for setting the conditions for young men and women to raise their voice and engage in policy making. Noting that the considerations of young men and women in MENA are insufficiently reflected in public policies and strategies, and the delivery of public services, the chapter introduces pathways through which governments can work towards mainstreaming youth considerations. It argues that the integration of youth in public governance – the system of strategic processes and tools, as well as institutions, rules and interactions for effective policy making – is key to readjust them towards youth needs and increase the impact of youth programming. This concept is discussed with a view to the following fields: public sector integrity, public budgeting, public human resource management, regulatory policy, local governance and gender equality.

Public sector integrity: Secure a fair youth share of public resources

The trust of citizens in public institutions and government has eroded in both OECD and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries. Youth trust in government is no exception. As shown by Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3, the trust of the younger generation in the abilities of the government to respond to their needs is considerably lower than among their parents across all MENA countries covered in this report.

OECD evidence suggests that the degree of public sector integrity is a crucial determinant of trust.¹ Integrity policies and institutions with strong mandates to scrutinise government action can increase the credibility and legitimacy of policy makers, safeguard the public interest and restore confidence. The link between young people's trust in public institutions and in their own future, economic growth and social progress has been highlighted by the OECD.² If regaining youth trust in government through improved integrity frameworks is a matter of urgency for OECD countries, it is even more acute for MENA countries. In the 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International, no country covered in this report is ranked among the first 50 (out of 175). Jordan still does comparatively well at 55th position, whereas Libya is placed among the ten countries with the lowest score (Transparency International, 2014a).³

How does corruption affect youth in MENA countries?

Youth in MENA countries are affected by corruption through at least three pathways. First, they encounter corruption in their interaction with public institutions and officials hence undercutting the quality of services and reducing the creation of jobs. Second, petty corruption is an endemic phenomenon in MENA countries. Finally, young people suffer from political corruption that diverts resources and power away from effective use and opportunities. Each dimension will be discussed below.

Youth play specific roles in society, as students, workers, customers, or voters, all of which present potential entry points for those seeking undue influence. The OECD Integrity Review of Tunisia underlines that the risk of corruption is particularly high in the delivery of social services on which many young men and women rely. Youth are the primary users of secondary and tertiary education and among the main users of health services, job placement and employment bureaus. Each of these activities is vulnerable to corruption which can take the form of informal payments, bribery or disguised corruption, such as private lessons in secondary education and faculty sale of unpublished textbooks in university courses. The lack of accountability mechanisms in education contributes to such deleterious practices as cheating and side payments in tertiary education or teacher absence. The OECD Integrity scan of Tunisia found that 70% of 15-year-old secondary school students in Tunisia participate in lessons outside of their classrooms to succeed in school (OECD CleanGovBiz, 2013). This shift points to quality deficiencies in schooling systems, but it is also linked to a more general lack of confidence in public institutions.

Petty corruption presents another enormous problem with detrimental effects on youth. In a society where the success of (commercial) interactions, the reception of official documents (e.g. driving licenses) and the access to public services depends on the payment of additional charges, it is hard to imagine how things could work otherwise. Petty corruption is an enormous, but largely trivialised problem as a study conducted by the Tunisian Association of Public Controllers, a civil society organisation, confirms. In

this study, 70% of interviewees think that petty corruption facilitates daily interactions. This opinion is particularly popular among the younger cohorts (aged 18-25) of which 75% agree with that statement *vis-à-vis* 63% of those 55 years or older (Association Tunisienne des Contrôleurs Publics, 2015).

Finally, youth suffer from the distorting effects of corruption in public decision making. It diverts public money and influence away from the centre of society and cuts funding to improve education and health services, job opportunities and other critical services for youth. For example, when public construction costs are inflated, fewer new schools are built and young populations remain under-served, particularly in fast-growing peri-urban areas. A policy note prepared for the World Bank’s 2005 Egypt Public Expenditure Review found that schools constructed by the state’s General Authority for Educational Buildings “cost as much as 46.5% more for primary and preparatory schools and 15.9% more for secondary schools” than comparable schools built by an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) with donor funds (World Bank, 2005).

Involve youth in strengthening public sector integrity

Governments can partner with youth in fighting corruption. Civil society organisations in some MENA countries such as Tunisia have a track record in scrutinising government action and promoting integrity. Over the last few years, new civil society organisations were formed with an agenda to further transparency and open government. Professional associations of auditors and accountants have been spurred to expand activities and strengthen standards in their profession. Youth associations can play a similar role by evaluating the performance of public institutions with a youth portfolio in areas where the central government lacks the adequate capacities, especially at the local level.

Initiatives to engage youth in the fight against corruption are numerous around the world. Some are driven by governments, others by independent institutions, civil society and youth associations. In Hong Kong, the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) developed online tools and applications tailored to young people’s media use to promote integrity values (e.g. TV drama series, games, comics, social media presence). The work of ICAC (Box 5.1) provides a good example of using a youth lens to fighting corruption by raising early awareness among those who will take over responsibility in politics and the economy one day.

In the MENA region, civil society has taken advantage of the creativity of young people to increase resistance against the lure of corruption. Box 5.2 presents examples from Morocco and Tunisia that were successful in reconciling integrity messages with young people’s general interests.

**Box 5.1. Tailor anti-corruption messages to youth through digital media:
The example of the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC)
in Hong Kong**

The Community Relations Department of the ICAC in Hong Kong makes use of digital media to inform youth about measures to foster integrity, transparency and fighting corruption.

ICAC hosts a website that shares the latest news of the Commission, and provides information on corruption prevention and access to audio-visual products and publications. The website “iTeenCamp” (www.iteencamp.icac.hk) teaches integrity values through online games, comics, quizzes, and interactive sections (e.g. polling, personality tests). The games are designed for different age groups. The TV drama series “ICAC Investigators” is targeting cineastes. ICAC is active on Facebook (“iTeen Xtra”) and tweets about the detrimental effects of corruption.

Source: Independent Commission against Corruption of Hong Kong, www.iteencamp.icac.hk/EngIntro/Shows (accessed on 12 April 2016).

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Box 5.2. Fighting corruption on stage

On International Anti-Corruption Day 2014, a variety of events – including music, dance and theatre happenings – gathered hundreds of youth on the streets of Casablanca to celebrate integrity and raise awareness about corruption. As part of a theatre piece, the youth-led project “*Paroles Urgentes*” distributed umbrellas to the crowd which formed a huge shield against the shower of corruption. In Tunisia, the civil society organisation I Watch hosted a poetry slam and stand-up comedy session to mobilise young people to vote in the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2014.

Source: Transparency International (2014b), “Anti-corruption kit: 15 ideas for young activists”, http://issuu.com/transparencyminternational/docs/2014_anticorruptionkit_youth_en?e=2496456/8912943 (accessed on 10 April 2016).

Recommendations

MENA governments can engage with youth in strengthening integrity frameworks and fighting corruption in the public sector by:

1. **Involving youth in monitoring the implementation of policies, programmes and public services**, in particular at the local level, whether as volunteers or, preferably, contractors. This would provide governments with flexible support to monitoring and presents an opportunity for youth to acquire skills, potentially helping them to find more permanent positions, and participate in raising the

quality of services of immediate concern to them. Youth could also be tapped to help the government with analysis of existing data that is vital to the fight against corruption but has proven difficult to systematically tabulate and analyse. Where youth interest is high and confidentiality is not an issue, crowd-sourcing could also be used to expand data availability. Datasets with the potential to pull out and analyse youth- and gender-specific data would be especially appropriate for such uses.

2. **Promoting alliances to report abuse, misuse of resources and corruption** by building stronger partnerships between youth organisations, civil society organisations, independent institutions (e.g. anti-corruption agencies, ombudsman), and media.
3. **Establishing mechanisms and channels to encourage youth reporting of corruption.** Independent monitoring should be encouraged by providing for effective protection mechanisms. Current efforts of MENA countries to design legal frameworks for whistleblower protection (e.g. Tunisia), for instance, should ensure protection in areas where youth exposure to corruptive practices is particularly widespread.
4. **Strengthening communication efforts to raise awareness** among young people for existing standards of conduct in the public administration, citizen rights, and enforcement mechanisms. When interacting with public officials, youth should know about their rights to avoid abuse due to a lack of information.
5. **Support integrity awareness for students and other citizens.** Youth with skills in communications and those interested in teaching or training as a profession could be engaged on a temporary basis to develop and deliver training programmes for high school and college students and other audiences that could benefit from greater understanding of corruption and how to reduce it.

Public budgeting: Increase the impact of youth programming

The OECD “Recommendation of the Council on Budgetary Governance” characterises the public budget as the central policy document unfolding how government objectives will be prioritised and achieved. As such, it presents a powerful instrument of government policy to turn national plans and strategies into reality, and election pledges into tangible improvements. For a young person, the distributional impacts of policies as well as the share of public expenditures in critical public service areas (e.g. education, health) are hence of great interest.

The Recommendation addresses another angle of sound public financial management. It stresses the cross-fertilising role of good budgeting and modern public governance to achieve transparency, integrity, openness, participation, accountability, and ultimately build trust between public institutions and citizens.

Public budgets represent the key instrument for linking policy to objectives. Against the background of macroeconomic constraints and challenging economic prospects in key sectors (e.g. tourism), and overall low levels of investment and sluggish growth, an efficient use of public resources is more urgent than ever before. In this context, some MENA countries are currently undertaking ambitious reforms to link budgets to programmes, strategic priorities and objectives.

In Tunisia, the government introduced performance-based budgeting (*Gestion du Budget par Objectifs, GBO*) in 19 pilot ministries and is expected to adopt a new organic budget law by late 2016 or 2017 which will officially establish performance-based budgeting rules throughout the public administration. The reform aims at allocating public resources more efficiently and effectively with a view to improving the overall performance and control of public expenditures. In line with the recommendations provided by the OECD reports “Strengthening Fiscal Transparency for Better Public Governance in Tunisia” (2013a), “Towards better public governance : Performance-based budgeting” (forthcoming) and OECD support in publishing the country’s Executive Budget in 2014 – a decision that allowed Tunisia to adhere to the OGP – the reform is expected to increase transparency and government performance.

Similar efforts have been undertaken in Morocco, which recently published the new Organic Finance Law (*Loi Organique relative à la loi de finances, LOLF*) in the Official Gazette. The LOLF aligns the management of public finances to the new arrangements as stipulated by the Constitution. Accordingly, following an initial phase with four pilot ministries, budgets will be designed around programmes. In the Palestinian Authority, despite progress in increasing budget transparency and accountability mechanisms, key challenges affect the introduction of result-based budgeting and medium-term fiscal expenditure frameworks. Jordan’s first Action Plan submitted to the Open Government Partnership (2012-14) includes a commitment to assess the performance of government institutions against performance indicators and to upgrade the annual Government Units’ Budgets Law in accordance with the advanced phases of result-oriented budgeting (ROB). The plan commits to enhancing the orientation towards programmes and activities related to “social, gender and child” along with resources allocated over the medium term (Open Government Partnership, n.d.).

Linking taxpayer’s money to programmes and results rather than expenditure categories presents a potential leverage for aligning youth policy objectives with the allocation of public resources. In the definition of performance indicators and objectives, young people’s interests need to be reflected. National development plans are the place for governments to define the broader strategies and objectives and how government policy is supposed to work towards these goals. Youth consultation in the elaboration of multi-annual development strategies is crucial and should not be left to the exclusive discretion of public officials.

If public budgets do not yet thrill young men and women, it is maybe because a sense for the critical importance it plays for the social and economic development of a country and the personal opportunities for the younger cohorts is largely absent. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) qualifies public financial management as “maybe the most powerful tool a government has to implement its policies and advance the rights of its population” and identifies seven reasons why children and youth should be integrated in a dialogue along the budget cycle (see Box 5.3).

Box 5.3. Public financial management: The rights of children and young people

1. **Public resources belong to the people of a country.** Available funds should be managed fairly and responsibly to serve the needs of the population.
2. **Children and young people are rights holders.** They are entitled to see their rights realised in practice. States are legally obliged to use their resources to realise these rights.
3. **It costs money to protect and advance the rights of children and young people.** The more efficiently and effectively resources are managed to meet human rights standards, the more services of better quality can be delivered to them.
4. **A country’s budget reflects its real priorities in relation to development.** If a country is serious about prioritising the well-being of children and young people, this has to be reflected in its budget decisions and practices.
5. **Waste, mismanagement and corruption contribute to poor service delivery.** When services do not reach intended beneficiaries, it is particularly devastating for children and young people who are at risk or in danger, living with disabilities or in extreme poverty.
6. **What happens to today’s children and young people will affect the country for decades to come.** A healthy, well-educated population is better prepared to meet tomorrow’s challenges.
7. **The way a country raises revenue and the size of its debt burden has implications for future generations.** The children of today will face enormous challenges if they inherit state institutions and economies unable to provide for their people.

Source: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (2012), “Public financial management for the rights of children and young people”, www.sida.se/contentassets/dfa19bd6efc84f25800edaa90590008e/public-financial-management-for-the-rights-of-children-and-young-people_3224.pdf (accessed on 1 April 2016).

A dialogue between public officials and youth about the allocation of public resources requires well-informed participants on both sides. For young people, an adequate presentation of budgetary information and data in a language that young people can understand is maybe the most important hurdle to clear in order to arouse young people’s interest. For budgets to lose their scare factor, technical information should be translated into a visually appealing presentation, in particular in policy areas of immediate concern to young people. The mushrooming of citizens budgets in MENA countries, such as in Morocco (since 2012), Tunisia (since 2014), the Palestinian Authority (published in 2014) and Egypt (published for the first time in 2010 and again in 2014)⁴ provides a good starting point to make budget information accessible for youth. The previous chapter on the role of digital technologies offers some pathways for governments to use the right channels for dissemination. Youth could be encouraged to participate in this process, for instance through a competition calling on young people to share their ideas for translating budget figures into policy messages and advice.

The government of Hong Kong presents budget data and information in a youth-friendly format (see Box 5.4).

Box 5.4. Say it with a comic: How do public budgets affect youth affairs?

For the 2010-11 budget, the government in Hong Kong produced a comic book to increase interest among youth to concern themselves with public budget and finance. It tells a story about young people facing several problems and how they learn about and try to influence the budget in order to address them. The comic book can be downloaded or may be read on line.

Additionally, the website provides a clear overview of “budget highlights” livened up by various cartoon characters. It introduces the strategic objectives of the government (consolidating recovery, economic development, caring society), and outlines a number of specific policies that are linked to the respective objective (e.g. Caring Society: Developing human capital supporting learning, promoting culture and sport, fighting drugs, strengthening public healthcare, caring for the needy, supporting jobseekers).

The website highlights examples of allocating public money to specific purposes (e.g. “provide a \$1,000 allowance to students receiving student financial assistance. This will cost \$570 million”).

Source: Government of Hong Kong (2010), www.budget.gov.hk/2010/chi/flip/main.html (accessed on 12 April 2016).



The allocation of public resources is about making critical choices for the future of a society. Therefore, an inclusive approach to discuss the sources and beneficiaries of public funds is indispensable. All stakeholders, including youth, need the knowledge and capacity to engage with decision makers throughout the budget cycle, from planning to scrutinising public expenditures.

The city of Boston in the United States has shown confidence in, and openness towards, engaging young people in the allocation of public resources. Box 5.5 presents the “Youth Lead the Change” project that inspired other cities in the United States to organise participatory budgeting processes led by youth.

First experiences in involving young people in participatory budgeting processes have also been made in the MENA region. In Tunisia, citizens and in particular youth were invited to participate in the allocation of 2% of the municipal budget in La Marsa, Menzel Bourhuiba, Tozeur and Gabes in 2014. Most notably, in Menzel Bourguiba, the public authorities organised an awareness programme for citizens to encourage their participation in the relevant public meetings (Naser, 2014).

Box 5.5. Youth Lead the Change: Youth-led participatory budgeting in Boston

Boston has been a pioneer in organising youth-led participatory budgeting processes in the United States. In 2014, the city’s “Youth Lead the Change” project for the first time gave teens and young adults (aged 12-25) an active role in deciding how USD 1 million of the city’s budget should be invested. It is noteworthy that Boston’s young people were engaged in all phases of the process including the design of projects, the discussion about spending priorities and the submission of the final project proposals. The latter were developed in joint meetings with city officials and city agencies.

Over one week, young Boston residents were able to vote for 4 out of 14 co-designed projects in four categories: education, community culture (e.g creating art spaces), parks/environment/health (e.g. renovating parks), and streets and safety. Voting sites in community centres, schools and T stops throughout the city collected the votes and, in many cases, brought young people for the first time to the ballot box.

Source: City of Boston, Department of Youth Engagement and Employment, <http://youth.boston.gov/youth-lead-the-change/>; Gilman, Hollie Russon (2014), “What happened when the City of Boston asked teenagers for help with the budget”, 26 June, <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/boston-young-people-participatory-budgeting-winners-youth-lead-change> (accessed on 12 April 2016).

The last example from Tunisia (Box 5.6) illustrates that youth can become involved in monitoring public expenditures and government performance to safeguard against the misuse and waste of public resources and corruption. Youth-led civil society organisations can partner with parliaments, control and audit bodies and independent institutions, such as ombudsman and anti-corruption agencies, in holding government to account. In particular, with the turn towards performance-based budgeting in MENA countries, performance audits could build on the expertise of young people to verify reported outcomes against reality on the ground.

Box 5.6. Budget monitoring by youth-led civil society in Tunisia

With the objective of monitoring government spending, the youth-led civil society organisation Al Bawsala initiated the project “Marsad Budget”. The website aims at overcoming the technical character of public budgets and making them accessible and understandable for ordinary citizens to involve them in public debates about spending priorities and government performance.

The idea of Marsad Budget is to simplify budget data and information in order to facilitate the control of budget processes, and to inform the wider public about the design and implementation of regulatory initiatives. By drawing on data made available by the public administration and other sources, the website offers easy access, use, and comparison of budget and human resources data for the Parliament, the Presidency and the different ministries. It compiles information on the development of expenditures for each entity since 2012 and offers the possibility to download budget datasets and contact details. For the entities in which performance-based budgeting is operational, Marsad Budget outlines the allocation of resources along objectives.

Source: Al Bawsala (2016), “Marsad Budget”, <http://budget.marsad.tn/fr/> (accessed on 2 April 2016).

Recommendations

MENA governments can involve youth and hence foster a more inclusive approach to public budgeting by:

1. **Consulting youth organisations** and youth-led civil society organisations to identify meaningful programme indicators and objectives, especially in the context of the transition towards performance-based budgeting. An inclusive approach is likely to increase legitimacy and result in more ambitious and realistic targets.
2. **Publishing a citizen’s budget that highlights youth-related expenditures** to illustrate the public investments made into the opportunities for young men and women (e.g. public spending in education, health, youth-specific projects and initiatives). Age-disaggregated data is likely to stimulate public debate about government performance and the priorities for youth-related expenditures.
3. **Involving youth in the allocation of public expenditures** through participatory budgeting approaches. The “Youth Lead the Change” project in Boston (see Box 5.5) illustrates that young men and women can participate in all stages of the budget process – from the submission of project ideas to the co-design of project proposals with local authorities and decision making by vote. Not least, youth-participatory budgeting presents an exercise in democratic decision making.
4. **Elaborating strategies to increase budget literacy among youth** to prepare them to critically reflect on public expenditures and hold government to account. Financial literacy presents a “core life skill” for youth to participate in modern society and choose between different career and education options and manage any discretionary funds they may have.⁵

Public human resource management: Remove structural obstacles to youth employment

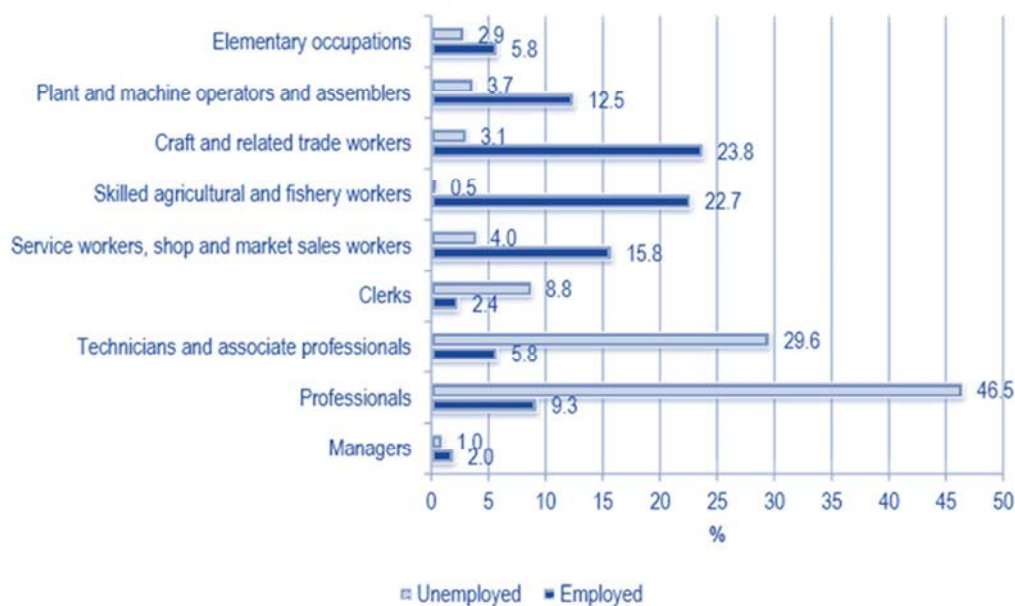
As the region with the world’s highest youth unemployment rate and the lowest female labour force participation, the MENA region is facing a number of structural obstacles that exclude large parts of society from contributing and benefiting from the economic development of their country.

High youth unemployment, in particular among young women, takes place in a context in which private sector development is weak and the public sector reached its limit to hire graduates from universities. Labour markets are characterised by insufficient capacity to absorb more qualified entrants and a prevalent mismatch of skills. This challenge is especially severe in countries like Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen in which 27-32% of enterprises report dissatisfaction with the competencies of young applicants. Dissatisfaction levels in the other countries covered in this report are considerably lower (6-12%) (World Bank, n.d.). Informal working arrangements often seem the only viable option to make a modest living, but often lack basic social or legal protection or employment benefits. In Egypt and the Palestinian Authority, around 51% and 57% of total employment is estimated to be informal, respectively.⁶

The mismatch between the supply and demand of youth labour

The rapid rise in tertiary education enrolments has encouraged youth to expect that they will find professional employment; many regard blue-collar work as unsuitable. Figure 5.1 compares the distribution of jobs held by employed youth in Egypt to the expectations of youth who still seek employment. Whereas 76% of jobseekers are looking for work as professionals or technicians, only 15% of the employed youth were able to find such work. Conversely, almost 60% of the employed youth hold jobs as craftsmen or other skilled blue-collar workers whereas less than 7% of unemployed youth would prefer this kind of work. The mismatch between the demand and the supply of labour points to structural deficiencies in many MENA economies and has resulted in growing dissatisfaction on the part of young graduates as well as employers.

Figure 5.1. **Occupations sought by Egyptian unemployed youth vs. those actually held by employed youth, 2014**



Source: Barsoum, Ghada, Mohamed Ramadan and Mona Mostafa (2014), “Labour market transitions of young women and men in Egypt”, *Work4Youth Publication Series*, No. 16, June, ILO, Geneva.

There is no easy recipe to tackle the above-mentioned structural deficiencies. This section looks at the performance of public human resource management (HRM) systems, in line with the argument made by Afioni, Ruël and Schuler (2014) and others that HRM management systems offer a potential pathway to foster youth’s economic empowerment.

The preference for public sector employment despite increasing informality and the lack of HRM practices

OECD analysis of national HRM frameworks takes a multi-dimensional approach, including legal frameworks governing public employment, the composition of public employment, HR management (e.g. recruitment, compensation, performance management and workforce planning), public sector leadership and others. While a

comprehensive analysis is outside the scope of this report, it will outline some of the key public HRM challenges MENA countries are facing today: a preference of young graduates for public sector work; an increase in informal employment within public institutions; and an absence of good HR practices in the public sector.

MENA governments remain under pressure to hire more youth. In the aftermath of the civil uprisings in some MENA countries, public sectors have experienced another surge of job creation mainly to appease popular demands and prevent already struggling economies from deteriorating further due to shrinking public demand. The National Employment and Self-Employment Agency (*Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant*) in Tunisia reports that 67 000 public sector jobs were created (OECD, 2015). As the OECD paper “Tackling youth unemployment in the MENA region” argues, this strategy has been exhausted and is no longer fiscally sustainable. And yet, public employment continues to be a major component in employment and a career objective for many young citizens especially women. The majority of these positions in the MENA region are service workers in education, health, and other government programmes such as public employment systems.

World Bank analysis of urban employment in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Yemen reaffirms that a substantial share of youth is either employed in the public sector or in private-informal employment. In Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen, the share of urban employment in the public sector shows a broadly similar pattern, rising steadily from very low levels in the late teens to around 20% for workers reaching age 25 (Angel-Urdinola and Tanabe, 2012). In all four countries, however, the share of private-informal employment among youth aged 15-29 outnumbers all other forms of employment (e.g. public; private formal; self-employed).

The significant lack of formal jobs in the private sector is one of the key reasons for the popularity of public sector jobs among young graduates. On average, public sector employment offers higher salaries than the private sector, employment protection and special status, in particular with SOEs (O’Sullivan, Rey and Galvez Mendey, 2013). It is therefore no surprise that the MENA region used to have the highest central government wage bill in the world (as a percentage of gross domestic product) even when accounted for the fact that government employment in MENA is comparatively high (Ahmed et al., 2012). Given the popularity of public sector jobs, public sector queuing is a widespread phenomenon. In a recent OECD study over 65% of youth aged 15-29 in Tunisia indicate that they prefer to work in the government/public sector whereas only a minority of 22% favours the private sector and 10% self-employment (OECD, 2015). Data for youth in Egypt show similar results (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Unemployed Egyptian youth by type of employer sought, gender, and area of residence, 2014

In %

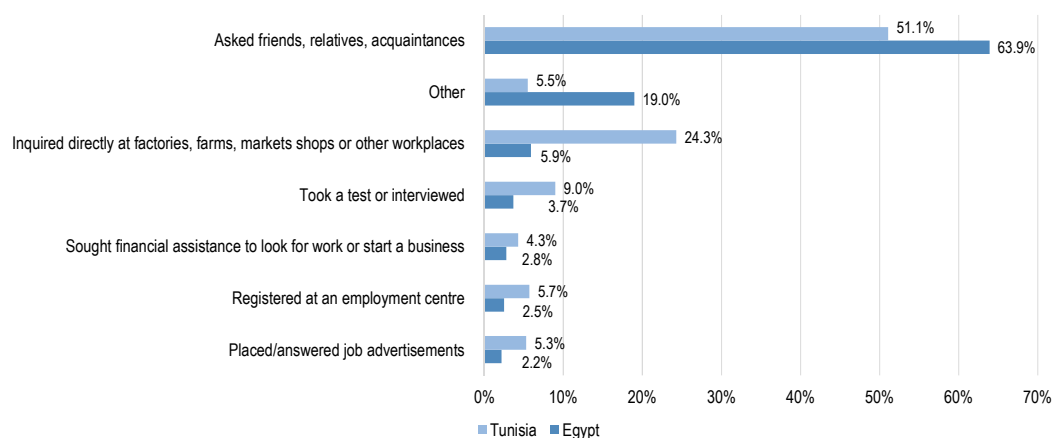
Employer sought	Total	Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Work for myself (own business/farm)	0.8	1.7	0.4	1.1	0.6
Work for the government/public sector	80.5	66.7	86.8	72.8	87.9
Work for a private company	17.4	30.3	11.6	23.6	11.5
Work for an international or organization	1.1	0.6	1.2	2.2	0.0
Work for family business/farm	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.4	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Barsoum, Ghada, Mohamed Ramadan and Mona Mostafa (2014), “Labour market transitions of young women and men in Egypt”, *Work4Youth Publication Series*, No. 16, June, ILO, Geneva.

Although the public sector is still the first choice of MENA graduates, informality *within* the public sector is increasing. World Bank data indicates that the share of informal employment within the public sector amounts to 11% in Egypt, 12% in Yemen, 18% in Morocco, and 31% in Jordan (Angel-Urdinola and Tanabe, 2012). While no age-disaggregated data exists, the overall pattern of informality suggests that the willingness to accept short-term contracts in the absence of permanent positions is higher among youth. In Egypt, teachers may even be hired on daily contracts. These workers may hope that a short-term contract will give them better access to permanent employment, but this is uncertain at best. Informally employed youth suffer from the lack of social protection, labour legislation and protective measures in the workplace and are more likely to become subject to abusive work practices (Wally, 2012).

Another challenge for young graduates is the absence of good practices in HR management in the public sector. Workforce planning is currently very limited in MENA countries. This leaves recruitment and compensation decisions to the discretion of individuals instead of being responsive to labour market developments and performance criteria. Figure 5.2 illustrates that personal relationships rather than public employment services play the main role in placing youth into public sector (and private sector) jobs in Egypt and Tunisia.

Figure 5.2. Sources of job search assistance reported by youth who found jobs, Egypt and Tunisia, 2014



Note: Some categories are combined for clarity and consistency.

Source: Barsoum, Ghada, Mohamed Ramadan and Mona Mostafa (2014), “Labour market transitions of young women and men in Egypt”, *Work4Youth Publication Series*, No. 16, June, ILO, Geneva; Observatoire National de l’Emploi et des Qualifications (2014), “Transition vers le marché du travail des jeunes femmes et hommes en Tunisie”, *Work4Youth Publication Series*, No. 15, June, ILO, Geneva.

The introduction of merit-based and more standardised recruitment processes could especially encourage young women to apply for senior positions who may find it more difficult to move up the ladder in an environment in which leadership positions are dominated by men and awarded through connections (OECD/CAWTAR, 2014).

Recommendations

MENA governments can foster the long-term employment opportunities for youth in the public sector by:

1. **Reinforcing standardised and merit-based recruitment and promotion** to recruit young graduates with the necessary skills and competencies, and encourage women to apply for senior level positions in the public sector.
2. **Monitoring such practices as contract-based hiring in the public sector** to avoid abuse. Experience demonstrates that short-term contracts offer flexibility in meeting variable personnel needs, but also opens up undesirable avenues for abusive HR practices, such as denial of benefits, which can affect youth with little professional experience disproportionately.
3. **Introducing placement systems into schools**, beginning with middle school, to support students who are entering the job market. Second-chance systems are also needed for young workers to enable them to continue their education on a more flexible basis.
4. **Revitalising staff development and training programmes in the public sector.** This would help the countries of the MENA region to prepare for the turnover in mid-level and higher ranks, preparing younger managers to move into place as older workers retire. Many of these programmes have been under-resourced for years and would benefit greatly from increased analytic and policy content in

curricula, linking training more closely to job responsibilities, and engaging the private sector.

5. **Introducing better human resource planning and management** to enable governments to identify upcoming needs for skills where youth have an advantage, such as ICTs management, and to expand leadership development programmes that cultivate young managers with leadership potential.

Regulatory policy: Increase regulatory quality for inclusive policy making and job creation

Mainstreaming a youth perspective in regulatory policy

The 2012 OECD “Recommendation of the Council on Regulatory Policy and Governance” defines regulatory policy as the “process by which government, when identifying a policy objective, decides whether to use regulation as a policy instrument, and proceeds to draft and adopt a regulation through evidence-based decision making” (OECD, 2012). Regulatory policy is embedded in a broader framework comprising the government’s core policies, systems, processes and tools, and actors, institutions and capacities (OECD, 2013b).

By adhering to the Open Government Partnership, Jordan and Tunisia committed to pursue regulatory policy with a view to reinforcing openness, transparency, citizen participation and accountability. The Palestinian Authority has identified OGP membership as a strategic objective and lever to build state institutions. Morocco is working towards fulfilling the eligibility criteria. Recently, both OECD and MENA countries discovered the potential of OGP Action Plans to further the cause of young people. For instance, Finland’s Open Government Action Plan 2015-2017 identifies the increased participation of children and youth as a horizontal theme and lays out concrete commitments to improve the possibilities of children and youth to influence the decisions that concern them, for instance by providing advice to the staff of state government and the municipalities on how to engage different age groups (Open Government Partnership, 2015).

Assessing the impact of regulation on youth

Any regulation implies costs and benefits that can be shared by different segments of society to quite different extents. By assessing the impact of new and existing legislation on vulnerable groups in society, such as youth, governments can anticipate the distributional effects of regulatory policy and, if necessary, make adjustments. Through the integration of a youth perspective into *ex ante* impact assessments (e.g. regulator impact assessments, RIA) and *ex post* evaluations, governments can assess the welfare effects for youth in order to avoid creating additional burden for this age group. However, the 2013 OECD Review, *Regulatory Reform in the Middle East and North Africa*, which assesses the regulatory environment in MENA countries against the 2009 Regional Charter for Regulatory Quality and the 2012 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Regulatory Policy and Governance, found that RIAs are not yet systematically used in MENA countries.

The Better Regulation Toolbox developed by the European Commission presents three core questions to guide policy makers in assessing the impact of new regulation on youth (Box 5.7).

Box 5.7. Better Regulation Toolbox by the European Commission

The Tool Box is structured around 8 main chapters and includes 59 tools. Tool 26 provides a set of questions for policy makers to assess the impact of new regulations on youth.

- **Is there an impact on social inclusion and integration of youth?** Provided that youth present a group particularly prone to certain measures, and can often face risk of exclusion and insufficient socio-economic integration, analysis of how these can affect this group is necessary to avoid possible negative outcomes. Well-being and the ability to participate in democratic life, including in cross-border programmes and activities, should also be taken into account.
- **Is there an impact on learning opportunities in respect to youth?** Identifying these is important due to the fact that youth is a vital part of educational activities, while education plays a key role in development of this group. Potential impacts on youth in terms of learning opportunities can be thus analysed by reviewing the section on education impacts with respect to youth.
- **Is there an impact on labour market, continuity of transition between education and professional performance in respect to youth?** Aspects such as effects on activation of young people in terms of employment and self-employment, period between leaving education and finding a first job, transition from internships to work contract, as well as potential impacts on population of young people out of employment, education and training should be considered in this part.

Source: European Commission (2015), “Better Regulation Toolbox”, http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/docs/br_toolbox_en.pdf (accessed on 12 April 2016).

Regulatory policy sets the legal framework in which citizens and businesses operate. Sound regulatory frameworks create legal certainty for private companies to do business whereas heavy administrative burden discourages economic activity among potential young entrepreneurs and job creation for young graduates. With a view to the existing regulatory framework, the *Ease of Doing Business Index* by the World Bank compares how easy it is for domestic firms to start and operate a business. Table 5.2 compares the performance of the MENA countries which are examined in this report.

Table 5.2. **Measuring business regulations: Ease of doing business in selected MENA countries, 2014**

Country	Rank	Top 50	Lowest 50
Tunisia	60	Getting electricity, trading across borders	-
Morocco	71	Trading across borders	-
Egypt	112	-	Dealing with construction permits, paying taxes, enforcing contracts
Jordan	117	Getting electricity, paying taxes	Getting credit, protecting minority investors, resolving insolvency
Yemen	137	Registering property	Starting a business, getting credit, protecting minority investors, resolving insolvency
Palestinian Authority	143	-	Starting a business, dealing with construction permits, protecting minority investors, resolving insolvency
Libya	188	-	Starting a business, dealing with construction permits, registering property, getting credit, protecting minority investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, resolving insolvency

Note: Countries are ranked on their ease of doing business, from 1–189. A high ease of doing business ranking means the regulatory environment is more conducive to the starting and operation of a domestic firm. The index includes a total of ten categories. The top/lowest 50 categories were added by the author to highlight categories in which the selected MENA countries figure among the best (1-50) or lowest (139-189) ranked countries.

Source: World Bank (2014), *Economy Rankings database*, Doing Business - Measuring Business Regulations, www.doingbusiness.org/rankings.

Recent research provides evidence that removing regulatory barriers is associated with increased job creation. Analysis of sustained periods of broad job creation found that they were strongly associated with good governance. Rapid, deep and sustained falls in unemployment resulted when government effectiveness increased, along with control of corruption, rule of law, and political stability, and where regulatory quality improved, as shown by a drop in the time required to enforce contracts, to complete import and export transactions, and to start a business (Freund and Rijkers, 2012).

Recommendations

With the adoption of the 2009 Regional Charter for Regulatory Quality and in accordance with the 2012 OECD “Recommendation of the Council on Regulatory Policy and Governance” MENA countries could move towards a more inclusive and youth-sensitive approach to regulatory policy by:

1. **Mainstreaming open and inclusive government principles across the whole of government** with a view to engaging youth more systematically in policy making and public consultations. In line with the recent practice of some OECD countries, member countries to the OGP can foster youth engagement through concrete commitments in their Action Plan – a document that benefits from the input of public officials and civil society (e.g. youth associations) alike.
2. **Gradually introducing regulatory impact assessments and cost-benefit-analysis.** Despite the fact that RIAs are currently not used systematically in MENA countries, new regulation with considerable distributional effects should be examined to anticipate the share of costs and benefits among different

segments of society, including youth and relevant sub-groups (e.g. male/female, urban/rural).

3. **Reviewing the stock of existing legislation** in order to consign redundant and inefficient provisions to history books, lighten the administrative burden and create an economic environment that encourages business activity, youth entrepreneurship and job creation.

Local governance: Promote youth engagement at all levels of government

The local level is the place where youth interact most regularly with public authorities and institutions use public services and participate in the development of their society as volunteers. The discontent with public service delivery at the local level was one of the factors that provoked mass protests among the young generation in some MENA cities in 2011. Representing the closest public authority to supply and deliver basic services, the protests targeted the municipalities before turning into demonstrations that reached the capital cities. The specific social and economic context and challenges faced by youth in big cities, metropolitan areas, or rural areas calls for tailored approaches to counteract political apathy or frustration, in particular among youth living in disadvantaged regions.

Decentralisation as an opportunity to promote youth engagement and deliver tailored youth policy

The MENA countries examined in this report are characterised by a long tradition of centralised systems in which the capital city has exercised great discretionary power over collecting and managing public resources. This has excluded many remote areas and their population from an equal access to government assistance and access to critical services. In the past, youth policies were formulated in the capital cities without the systematic involvement of public officials and civil society from the sub-national level. In recent years, however, a call for more decentralised governance frameworks has been sweeping through some of the studied MENA countries. The gradual transfer of competencies to public authorities at the sub-national level has the potential to redefine the way youth policy is being design and implemented. For instance, Egypt's new constitution calls for greater autonomy for local administrations, which are at present only branches of the national government. The 2014 Constitution of Tunisia stipulates that local communities have their own legal personality and financial and administrative autonomy, and hence manage local affairs in conformity with the principles of free administration. An explicit reference to a decentralised organisation of the state is also made in the Moroccan Constitution of 2011. In Jordan, the parameters for decentralisation reform are defined in the Municipality Law and the Decentralisation Law which were approved by the Parliament in 2015.

For the time being, however, central governments still assume wide discretionary power at the sub-national level through their line ministries. Local authorities suffer from weak institutional capacities to shape programmes and heavily depend on transfers and subsidies due to a lack of fiscal autonomy (Bergh, 2014). In countries in which decentralisation has progressed, many important services for youth remain under national control and administration. Local schools, for example, still report to national ministries of education, although some countries, such as Egypt, have introduced local advisory boards, enabling parents and local employers to have a modicum of influence on schooling. They do not have the capacity to influence curriculum, however, and, are not

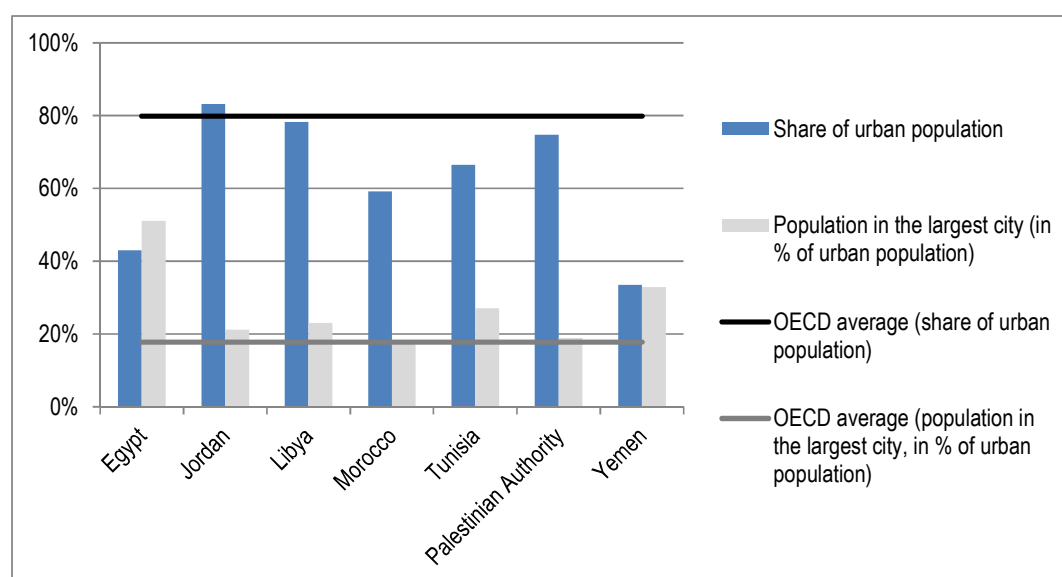
autonomous. It yet remains to be seen if the current decentralisation efforts will indeed result in more inclusive policy making and greater discretionary power among local actors to identify and implement policy priorities.

In a decentralised environment, local stakeholders across the territory must be able to participate in the identification of policy priorities to inform national youth policies and development strategies. In turn, for an effective implementation of youth programmes on the ground, local authorities and institutions must be able to rely on adequate human, technical and financial capacities. The mutual dependence of the different levels of government in the design and delivery of youth policy points to the importance of effective vertical co-ordination mechanisms, such as in the form of opportunities for deliberation among public officials and youth representatives from all levels.

Engaging youth in a context of rapid urbanisation and neglected remote areas

Rapid urbanisation has been a common trend in most of the studied MENA countries. In Jordan, the share of the urban population is higher than in the average of OECD countries. In Egypt and Yemen, the share of the urban populations considerably lower, however, in both countries the urban population heavily concentrates in the biggest city. As of 2014, Cairo accounts for more than half the overall urban population in Egypt; Sanaa hosts around one-third of all urban Yemenis (see Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3. Share of urban population and population in the largest city, as percentage of urban population in selected MENA countries, and OECD average, 2014

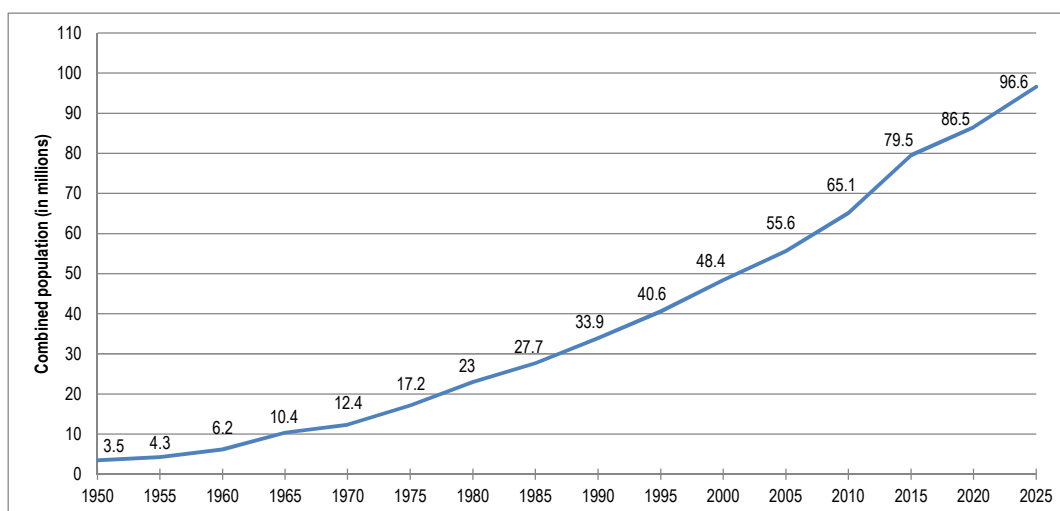


Note: OECD data presents the unweighted average.

Source: OECD's own work based on World Bank (n.d.a), "Urban population (% of total)", <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS>; "Population in the largest city (% of urban population)", <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.URB.LCTY.UR.ZS/countries>, United Nations, World Urbanization Prospects (accessed on 10 April 2016). and .

The popularity of cities and metropolitan areas is placing a heavy burden on national policy makers and city managers to address recurrent traffic jams, environmental degradation, and a lack of adequate housing, education and jobs. Figure 5.4 shows that only 3.5 million people lived in MENA cities, with a population of more than 1 million in 1950, compared to almost 80 million today. This figure is projected to rise to nearly 100 million within ten years.

Figure 5.4. Combined population in Arab cities with 1+ million people, 1950-2025



Source: UN Habitat (2012), *The State of Arab Cities 2012 - Challenges of Urban Transition*, Regional Cities Reports, <http://unhabitat.org/books/the-state-of-arab-cities-2012-challenges-of-urban-transition/> (accessed on 2 April 2016).

In rural areas, institutional state capacities to deliver youth-related services are scarce. Although poverty levels are higher than in urban areas, this need has proven resistant to translation into successful programming models that can be implemented at scale. Rural societies in MENA, as elsewhere, also tend to be more conservative with regard to the roles played by youth in society, in particular young women, and hence offer few channels to engage them in policy making or service delivery. Finally, territorial disparities are a common concern of all MENA countries covered in this report and present a considerable obstacle for youth from disadvantaged regions.

Youth are particularly exposed to the current shortcomings, but few formal or informal channels exist through which they can voice their ideas. There is a more general lack of participatory mechanisms at the sub-national level, which leaves weakly organised actors in society with no say in local decision making. In the absence of inclusive institutions and procedures, exclusive institutions tend to strengthen the voice of the already dominant groups in society. With a gradual increase of competencies in local institutions in some of the study countries, there is a momentum for institutional reform and opening up ways for a more structured and systematic engagement of youth.

OECD member countries have embarked on this process for some years, although to differing degrees. Finland ranks among the most progressive countries in this regard. Since 2006, according to Finland's Youth Act, "the opportunity to participate in the handling of issues relating to local and regional youth work and policy must be provided

for young people. Additionally, young people must be heard during the handling of issues concerning them” (Schauer and Klinzing, 2012). Making youth participation mandatory by law reflects advice provided by the Council of Europe which argues that the “active participation of young people in decisions and actions at local and regional level is essential if we are to build more democratic, inclusive and prosperous societies” (Council of Europe, 2013).

Strategies for youth engagement at the local level

Youth engagement at the local level can take many different forms. The concrete space given to youth to express their interests vis-à-vis local authorities will depend on the maturity of local governance frameworks as well as the organisational structure in each country. To start with, MENA government could open up public hearings and consultation meetings and provide incentives for young people to participate. Initiatives aimed at bringing young people together with local representatives, such as by the Tunisian civil society organisation I Watch, must be scaled up and become institutionalised to avoid giving the impression of mere decorative events. I Watch organised roundtable discussions in different municipalities, gathering young people and local representatives to raise awareness of mechanisms for youth to participate in local decision making and get involved in municipal elections. A promising government-led approach in this area has been launched by the National Observatory of Youth at the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Tunisia, called “*Agora – Débat de la ville*” (Box 5.8).

Box 5.8. Strengthening the foundations for dialogue between youth and local authorities

The *Agora – Débat de la ville* project in Tunisia aims at strengthening the free expression of youth in a context in which communication spaces and a permanent dialogue between youth and local authorities is absent.

The project’s target group are young people from the periphery of cities, members of youth organisations and youth centres. It co-operates with various societal actors, in particular youth and sports facilities, municipal youth centres, the Arab Centre for Media Training and Studies and the British Council.

Noting that few if any public spaces exist for youth to discuss politics and the future of their neighbourhoods with local authorities, the project focuses on three priority areas:

- **The creation of web community radios:** To create a space for relevant information for youth and debate between youth and local authorities.
- **The training of 150 youth leaders that are active in their communities:** To train other youth in terms of communication, participation in public life, active citizenship and local democracy.
- **The organisation of city debates:** To introduce dialogue between youth of specific districts, and between youth and public authorities within youth centres.

Source: *Observatoire National de la Jeunesse* (2016), “Projet AGORA débat de la ville”, www.onj.nat.tn/index.php/fr/projets/projet-agora-debat-de-la-ville (accessed on 1 April 2016).

The project presents an encouraging example for strengthening youth's voice and capacities to interact with local authorities on a more regular basis. A possible alternative pathway could be to allow for young people's direct consultation in local and regional councils or the creation of local youth councils. Media and civil society organisations both have a critical role to play by opening up spaces for dialogue and consolidating young people's voices for a more powerful message *vis-à-vis* local authorities.

In Morocco, the new Constitution of 2011 requires policy makers to take into account the concerns of young people in the design of development plans and programme delivery in local municipalities (see Chapter 3). Reportedly, local youth councils have been established with the support of international donors in cities such as El Jadida, Assilah, Salé and Fes but from a nationwide perspective, they leave much of the territory uncovered (Rabbaa, 2015). For these councils to facilitate dialogue between youth and local authorities, a legal framework needs to be established to define their duties and responsibilities as well as the mechanisms for dialogue.

Good practices to engage youth at local level

The benefits of strengthening the voice of youth in local policy making and public service delivery are fairly obvious. First, youth are heavy users of public services that emerge as issues of local concern, such as basic infrastructure services (e.g. water and sanitation, waste collection and management, transport, energy), social services (education, health, housing, elderly and childcare) and quality-of-life services (e.g. public safety, urban planning, culture and entertainment, sport, public space) (United Cities and Local Governments, 2013). In the absence of youth or a serious broker representing their concerns, scarce resources may end up being spent elsewhere. Second, youth can engage more easily than is generally possible in large, complex national bureaucracies. In line with the arguments put forward in Chapter 4, youth involvement in local consultations and participatory processes provides venues in which young men and women can develop their understanding of government processes, train advocacy skills, and expand their network of relationships. A more systematic involvement can increase the legitimacy of the overall decision-making process and make an important contribution to building trust between policy makers and younger citizens.

It is important to note, however, that an elite-led project limited to highly educated youth risks creating new divides. For instance, given that young women face additional barriers to participation, possible obstacles to their involvement need to be removed (see Chapter 2) (Refstie, 2012). Finland's Initiative Channel, an online tool to broaden the participation base in community affairs, was successful to reach out to youth. The Initiative Channel is presented in Box 5.9.

Box 5.9. Local communities give youth a voice on line: Finland’s Initiative Channel

Through the Initiative Channel, Finnish communities have given young people an opportunity to make their voices heard on line and contribute to the development of their neighbourhoods. Young people could post their ideas, before they were being put to a vote. The most promising ideas had the chance to be turned into real initiatives in partnership with local authorities.

The e-democracy service corresponds to the strategic goals of Finland’s Child and Youth Policy Development Programme 2012-15 and Section 8 of Finland’s Youth Act, which makes youth participation mandatory.

By August 2015, the website reported around 245 000 visitors and almost 15 000 comments. Recently, the website was replaced by a new service entitled nuortenideat (“young people’s ideas”).

Source: Nuortenideat (2016), <https://www.nuortenideat.fi/fi/>; Koordinaatti Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling (n.d.), www.koordinaatti.fi/sites/default/files/koordinaatti-and-initiative-channel.pdf (accessed on 10 April 2016).

Box 5.10. European Youth Capital

The European Youth Capital (EYC) is a title awarded by the European Youth Forum, a platform representing 99 national youth councils and international youth organisations.

The European Youth Capital is given the chance to showcase, through a multi-faceted programme, the opportunities for its young population to participate in cultural, social, political and economic life and development.

During an EYC year, the host city holds events and projects designed to demonstrate the active, essential role that young people and youth organisations can and do play in society; and thus lead to significant change in terms of sustainable long-term youth participation in the city.

Source: European Youth Capital (2016), www.europeanyouthcapital.org/about/ (accessed on 12 April 2016).

Recommendations

MENA governments could promote inclusive youth engagement across the different levels of government by:

1. **Providing effective and permanent channels** for youth from all socio-economic backgrounds to contribute to the identification of local youth needs and hold local authorities accountable, such as through local youth councils. These councils should be given real influence in the decision-making process to avoid creating the impression of mere decorative events.
2. **Implementing communication channels**, such as community-based and youth-led radios, that offer a space for young people to interact with local authorities, seek information on local affairs and inform their friends and fellow youth of opportunities to engage.

3. **Involving young people at the different sub-national levels to participate in the identification of public service needs and their implementation and monitoring**, such as by providing incentives to volunteer and contribute to the development of their neighbourhood.
4. **Engaging with local universities and technical institutes**, which are a natural channel to engage youth productively and help them build job-relevant skills as well as making connections with potential future employers.

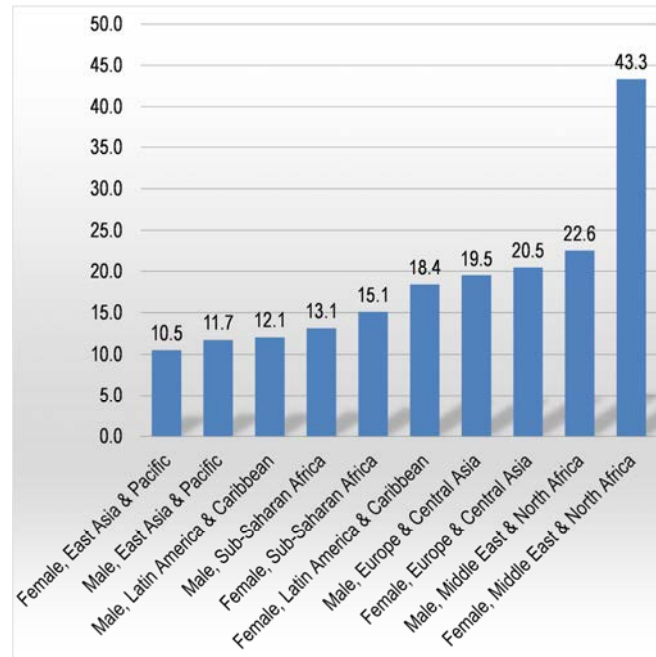
Gender equality: Tackling the structural and cultural barriers to equal opportunities

Young women in the MENA region confront gender-based barriers and obstacles associated with their status as youth. The situation for young women is therefore often described as a double challenge that affects all dimensions of participation, namely in politics, society and the economy. For instance, the employment gap among young men and women exceeds those in all other regions of the world, as shown in Figure 5.5. If the economic participation of women in MENA countries is low, it is even more difficult for young women to find decent jobs. As Figure 5.6 shows, this gap is particularly significant in Egypt, Libya and the Palestinian Authority, where more than half to two-thirds of young females are unemployed compared to 25-40% of total female unemployment. In Morocco and Tunisia, this gap is considerably smaller, but still striking.

These findings come at a time when progress has been made towards achieving gender equality in education. Today, the gap between male and female literacy is much smaller among youth than among older population segments; and the proportion of women compared to men in tertiary education has moved beyond parity in some countries, such as the Palestinian Authority. However, obstacles in the legal frameworks, institutions and policies as well as prevailing traditional views on women's roles in society disadvantage young women to move from education into jobs.

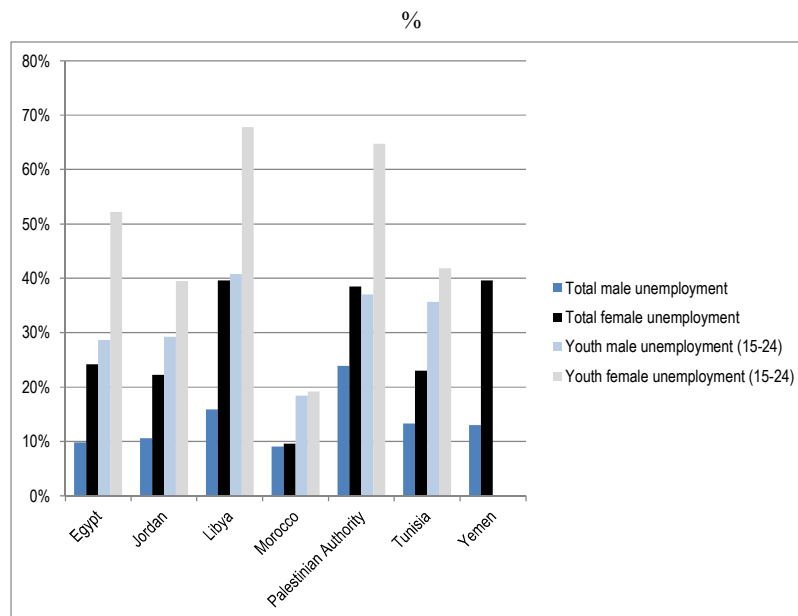
The OECD report, *Women in Public Life: Gender, Law and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa* (hereafter, "2014 MENA Gender Report"), finds that the employment gap is only one among several divides that prevent women from participating in economic, social and public life in the same fashion men do (OECD/CAWTAR, 2014).

Figure 5.5. Youth unemployment by region and gender, 2004-12
Average (%)



Source: Modeled ILO estimate, WDI data.

Figure 5.6. Male and female unemployment rates in selected MENA countries, total working age population and youth, 2014 (or latest available year)



Note: Latest available data for each country. Tunisia (total: 2013, youth: 2012); Morocco (total: 2013, youth: 2012); Jordan (all 2013); Egypt (all 2013), Yemen (2004); Palestinian Authority (total: 2014, youth: 2013), Libya (all 2012). The Palestinian Authority is referred to in the ILO statistics as West Bank and Gaza Strip. For Jordan, disaggregated data is available for age groups 15-19 (male: 34.4%, female: 22.8%) and 20-24 (male: 24.1%, female: 56.2%). Data shown presents the unweighted average. No youth data is available for Yemen.

Source: OECD's own work based on World Bank (n.d.) "Unemployment, female (% of female labor force)"; "Unemployment, male (% of male labor force)"; "Unemployment, youth female (% of female labor force ages 15-24)"; "Unemployment, youth male (% of male labor force ages 15-24)" (all modeled ILO estimate), <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/>.

Although women enjoy equal rights as men to participate in political life according to the Constitution of Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Yemen, overall women's representation in consultative bodies and parliaments in the selected MENA countries remains low. In Yemen, the share of women in parliament does not exceed the 1% granted by the proportion of seats reserved. In fact, only Tunisia is reaching levels similar to the OECD average (around 30%). The judiciary in each country is also characterised by a significant under-representation of women. So far, the engagement of (young) women in public life is most successful outside of government institutions, for instance in civil society organisations.

Obstacles to the economic self-determination of young women

OECD evidence from the 2014 MENA Gender Report suggests that public governance frameworks and traditional roles assigned to women in society both play a role in perpetuating an environment in which young women find it particularly more difficult to enjoy the same opportunities as men. Despite recent efforts to remove legal discriminations in the existing regulatory frameworks of MENA countries, biased provisions prevail. Discrimination can come in many different and oftentimes hidden forms, such as workplace regulations that provide a stronger incentive for employers to hire men over women. Limited opportunities to reconcile professional and family life and uneven salary checks for the same job – prevailing practices in most OECD countries too – can place an additional burden on women.

Table 5.3 explores some of the workplace regulations which can negatively affect (young) women. The table demonstrates the importance of analysing the conditions in each country at sector-level. It points to the fact that provisions with a seemingly positive connotation (e.g. restricted access to jobs which are considered to be too hazardous or arduous) may actually put the brakes on women's participation in the labour force. These challenges cannot be overcome if they are addressed at the sector-level but require a more general commitment to establish equal opportunities for young men and women.

Table 5.3. Do women have equal rights in the workplace in MENA countries?

Working hours and industry restrictions	Egypt	Jordan	Morocco	Palestinian Authority	Tunisia	Yemen	Percent "No"
Can non-pregnant and non-nursing women do the same jobs as men?	No	No	No	No	No	No	100%
Can non-pregnant and non-nursing women engage in the following occupations in the same way as men?							
Mining	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	83%
Construction	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	33%
Metalwork	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	67%
Factory work	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	33%
Jobs requiring lifting weights above a certain amount	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	33%
Jobs deemed hazardous	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	67%
Jobs deemed arduous	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	67%
Jobs deemed morally inappropriate	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	33%
Can non-pregnant and non-nursing women work the same night hours as men?	No	No	No	No	No	No	100%
Does the law mandate equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value?	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	83%
Are there laws mandating non-discrimination based on gender in hiring?	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	83%
Is it illegal for an employer to ask about family status during a job interview?	No	No	No	No	No	No	100%
Are there laws penalizing or preventing the dismissal of pregnant women?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	17%
Must employers give employees an equivalent position when they return from maternity leave?	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	67%
Are employers required to provide break time for nursing mothers?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	0%
Do employees with minor children have rights to a flexible/part time schedule?	No	No	No	No	No	No	100%
Percent "No"	88%	65%	41%	65%	53%	65%	63%

Source: World Bank (2013), *Women, Business and the Law 2014: Removing Restrictions to Enhance Gender Equality*, World Bank, Washington DC, <http://wbl.worldbank.org/~media/WBG/WBL/Documents/Reports/2014/Women-Business-and-the-Law-2014-Key-Findings.pdf?la=en> (accessed on 1 April 2016).

Traditional gender roles discourage the economic activity of young women in many MENA countries. Work-life balance measures such as specific entitlements for pregnant women or flexible start and working hours contribute to create an environment that encourages young women to enter the labour market. Table 5.4 illustrates to what degree the countries examined in this report, Lebanon, and selected Gulf countries have introduced suchlike measures to increase flexibility in professional life. It illustrates that while some of the most basic requirements as set out by the International Labour

Organization are met, other benefits are very unevenly offered. Although personal and family relationships may provide an alternative to legal entitlements, the absence of effective measures for women to participate in economic life is likely to perpetuate and enforce traditional gender roles.

Table 5.4. **Work-life balance measures in selected MENA countries for employees of the central civil service, 2014**

	Yemen	Egypt	Lebanon	Jordan	Tunisia	Morocco	Bahrain	Palestinian Authority	Kuwait	United Arab Emirates
Specific measures for breastfeeding women	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Leave for sick family member		x		x		x	x		x	x
Specific measures for pregnant women	x	x		x			x		x	x
Leave for elderly family member		x		x	x		x			x
Part-time employment solutions	x	x			x		x			x
Flexible start and working hours and time saving	x	x					x			x
Employer provided childcare facilities		x		x						x
Subsidies for childcare		x				x				x
Condensed/compressed work week							x			x
Teleworking										x
Other	x				x		x			x
Total	5	8	-	5	4	3	8	1	3	11

Source: OECD/CAWTAR (2014), *Women in Public Life: Gender, Law and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264224636-en>.

Finally, initiatives aimed at strengthening partnerships between business, government and academia should be gender-sensitive to allow female graduates a smoother transition from university to workplace. The paper of the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme suggests that women seeking jobs or career guidance should benefit from tailored services just like young female entrepreneurship to offer alternative pathways to economic self-determination.

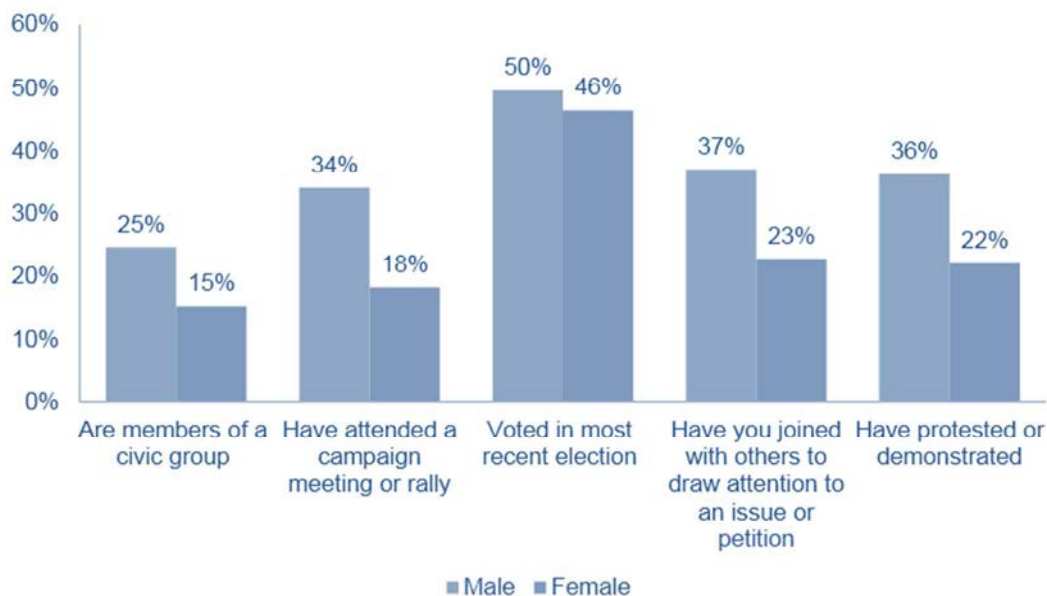
Obstacles to the engagement of young women in public life

Women in the selected MENA countries are facing significant barriers to raise their voice in the political discourse. Although some civil society institutions feature the participation of young and very engaged young women, these positive examples cannot reverse a general trend that women are significantly under-represented in both official positions and public life more generally. Similar to patterns in OECD countries, the 2014 MENA Gender Report finds that the disparities between men and women increase as one climbs the organisational ladder. The gap in the top management of the civil service, for instance, varies between 9% in Tunisia and 78% in the Palestinian Authority in favour of men. This gap is even larger in the judicial sector. Whereas women are already significantly underrepresented in the Supreme Court in OECD countries (28%), available data for the selected MENA countries suggests that only 2 out of 48 judges of the constitutional court are women (4%) (World Bank, n.d.).⁷

Even if participation in executive bodies plays less of a role for young women who still lack work experience to carry out such duties, the absence of women in leadership positions shapes the overall perception of women's role as there are few role models to look up to. Evidence from Tunisia suggests that young women in the MENA region are also more likely to abstain from voting and engaging in political parties (National Democratic Institute, 2012). Moreover, Figure 5.7 shows that women are less likely to be engaged in civic activities than their male counterparts. MENA governments need to

tackle this phenomenon decisively as the absence of women as active citizens risks reinforcing programmes and institutional frameworks that fail to deliver on their particular demands – despite the introduction of voluntary party quotas and reserved seats for women in some MENA parliaments.

Figure 5.7. **Male and female youth engagement in civic activities in MENA countries, 2012**



Source: Mercy Corps (2012), “Civic engagement of youth in the Middle East and North Africa: An analysis of key drivers and outcomes”, March, http://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/mena_youth_civic_engagement_study_-_final.pdf.

As discussed previously, the backlog in women’s participation in economic and public life is also due to traditional gender norms and stereotypes that identify men as the main breadwinners. According to a study undertaken by the National Democratic Institute, a majority of men reported to be more comfortable working with a male boss because they could not accept taking orders from a woman (National Democratic Institute, 2012).

Recommendations

MENA governments can support young women in addressing the double challenge of gender-based barriers and those associated with their status as youth by:

1. **Undertaking a systematic review of the legislation to eliminate all forms of discrimination** in the legal system and ensure that international norms related to gender equality are fully embedded in the national legislative framework, especially those that affect the development of young women.
2. **Reviewing existing workplace regulation** with a view to eliminating provisions which discourage young women to apply and strengthening measures to facilitate women’s economic participation (e.g. work-life measures).

3. **Integrating the specific needs of young women in national youth strategies and gender equality strategies** to mutually reinforce each other and empower young women in economic and public life.
4. **Gathering sex- and age-disaggregated data sets** to promote better informed policy-decisions, especially in the area of critical public services such as education, employment and health.
5. **Increasing the opportunities for young women and women associations** to participate in all spheres of public life including civic engagement, participation in youth-representative bodies and standing for leadership positions.

Notes

1. For more information, see www.oecd.org/gov/trust-in-government.htm.
2. “People’s trust in institutions and in their own future is one of the most precious assets a country has: it is the cornerstone of effective governance, the main ingredient to promote economic growth and social progress.” - OECD Secretary General, Joint Conference of OECD and Transparency International on the Link between Integrity and Regaining Young People’s Trust, 9 December 2013, Paris.
3. Tunisia (79th), Morocco (80th) and Egypt (94th), Yemen (161th).
4. Based on data provided by the International Budget Partnership’s Country Info, <http://internationalbudget.org/opening-budgets/open-budget-initiative/open-budget-survey/country-info/>.
5. For more information, see OECD work on youth, www.oecd.org/youth.htm.
6. In this report, informal employment refers to the total number of persons whose main job was informal. A job is informal when it lacks basic social or legal protections or employment benefits and may be found in the formal sector, informal sector or households (ILO, 2012).
7. Calculated on the basis of available data for Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestinian Authority and Yemen.

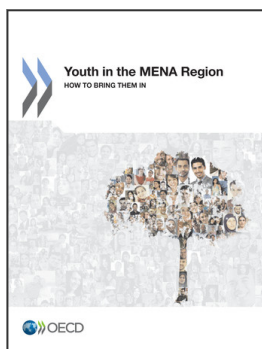
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