



Life Makers – Youth Participation

Theory of Change

Introduction

This document is presented to UNDP Egypt as a starting point to support developing strategies for impactful interventions focused on volunteerism and youth participation. It provides a holistic concept of the channels through which youth can be supported to actively address developmental challenges of their local communities, that includes but not limited to education, health, environment, livelihoods, basic needs and youth development. That is in addition to supporting all aspects of humanitarian actions that starts from building local communities' readiness as first responders to different crises and initiating timely and quality responses to different humanitarian needs, like the provision of shelter and food to recovery actions for affected populations. Therefore, Life Makers promotes the role of youth as positive change makers during emergencies, transitional periods and sustainable development process.

The enclosed Theory of Change (ToC) is developed based on Life Makers' on-the-ground-experience and has been modified and amended over the years. It is envisioned that this ToC will continue to develop and improve as we further enhance our understanding of how to best support youth participation in the Egyptian context, and how this can be successfully disseminated to the regional level and across the globe.

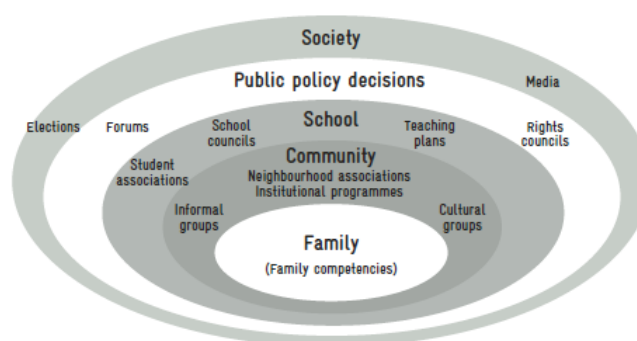
Background

Egypt is the most populous country in the Middle East and the third on the African continent with a total number of 94.8 million inhabitants according to Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) report 2017. The increased population coupled with economic challenges have enforced existing challenges and threats including a rapidly increasing poverty rate, high unemployment among youth and women, illiteracy, poor access to clean water and sanitation, limited access to medical care, coupled with unpredicted conflicts and natural disasters threatening the lives and the living conditions of affected communities. Youth are not only considered the most important capital of Egypt but also constitute the largest segment of the population 57.2% of the Egyptian nationals are under 25 years old. However, devastation and frustration continue to affect a big segment of young people, especially as they continue to suffer from marginalization and unemployment (79.6% of those unemployed are between 15 – 29 years old – CAPMAS 2017).

For Egypt to bring about positive and constructive change in sustainable development efforts need to be spent to leverage the potential of young men and women as present and future leaders and positive change makers. History and recent events have proven that young people are active actors of the society and do have the potential and determination to create social change and impact the lives of vulnerable groups and victims of disasters. With escalating conflicts in the region and unstable security condition, the needs grow for competent and informed youth with the skills and awareness to respond to emerging risks and conflicts. UN Security Council resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security 2015 highlights the necessity to advance the leading role of youth in humanitarian actions and as drivers of resilience and transition. Studies show that young people who participated in various risk management and risk reduction programs have demonstrated better knowledge and understandings of security issues and risk management. They then are equipped to actively promote a better preparedness in their communities. Young people participating in community-based

interventions and/or humanitarian actions have a better ability to handle disasters and emergency situations practically and mentally.

Dr. Frank Pittman, defines youth development as “an ongoing process in which all youth are engaged in attempting to: 1) meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful and be spiritually grounded, and; 2) to build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute to their daily lives”. As suggested by the quote, youth are valuable resources to invest in and not problems to be solved. Youth and adolescents want to develop their capacities and participate in their communities as active citizens; Youth Participation is understood as “a program strategy or an attitude that encourages youth to express their opinions, to become involved and to be part of the decision-making process at different levels”¹. Youth participation can become effective in various degrees of formalization; from entirely informal settings, as in family and among peers to institutionalized participation in different spheres of society. Additionally, youth participation can be considered as an integral part of a strategy building for an effective communicating with community interventions aiming for enhanced Accountability with Affected Populations (AAP)².



Shape (1) spheres of participation according to UNICEF

Theory of Change

This theory suggests that “if young women and young men are equipped with required knowledge, key competencies, and tools while provided with spaces, channels of communication and opportunities for participation they will actively response to emergencies and effectively contribute to the overall development of their communities, as active citizens and responsible future leaders”. For this result to become sustained, youth need opportunities, guidance, spaces of freedom and appropriate interventions to become and remain positively engaged in their communities. Therefore, young people should be educated in a way that offers them adjusted knowledge and develops their capacity for crisis management and preparedness to ensure their readiness for emergencies. Efforts need to be made to create supportive structures, communities and public spaces that enable youth and adolescents to move along pathways to be active citizens, and to have institutions that value youth participation and are supportive to youth involvement in decision-making processes. It is also vital to have youth leaders who are competent to promote active citizenship values and to act as role models for younger generations.

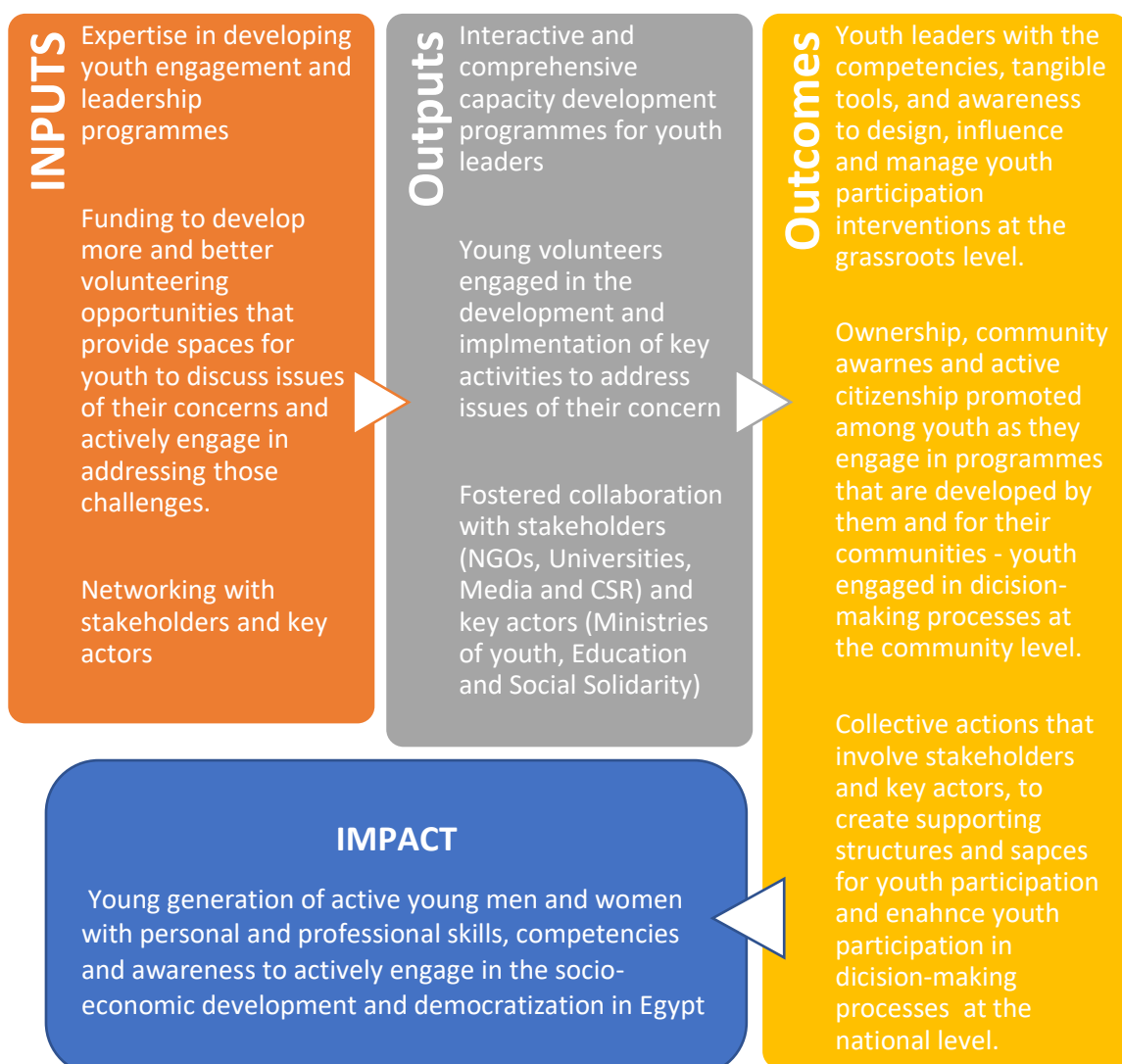
The concept is to work through three main directions: 1) Raise youth awareness of the community needs and arousing risks and challenges; 2) Develop youth skills and competencies on the personal and professional levels through an interactive process of active learning and practical implementation; 3) Leverage youths’ sense of ownership as they greatly contribute to identifying challenges,

¹ Golombek, S. (2002): *What Works in Youth Participation: Case Studies from Around the World*, p. 8

² UNHCR (2018): *Communicating with Communities: A practical guide from the UNHCR Innovation Service*.

emergencies and areas of interventions, taking leading roles in implementation and engage in M&E processes. The main three key pathways are as follow:

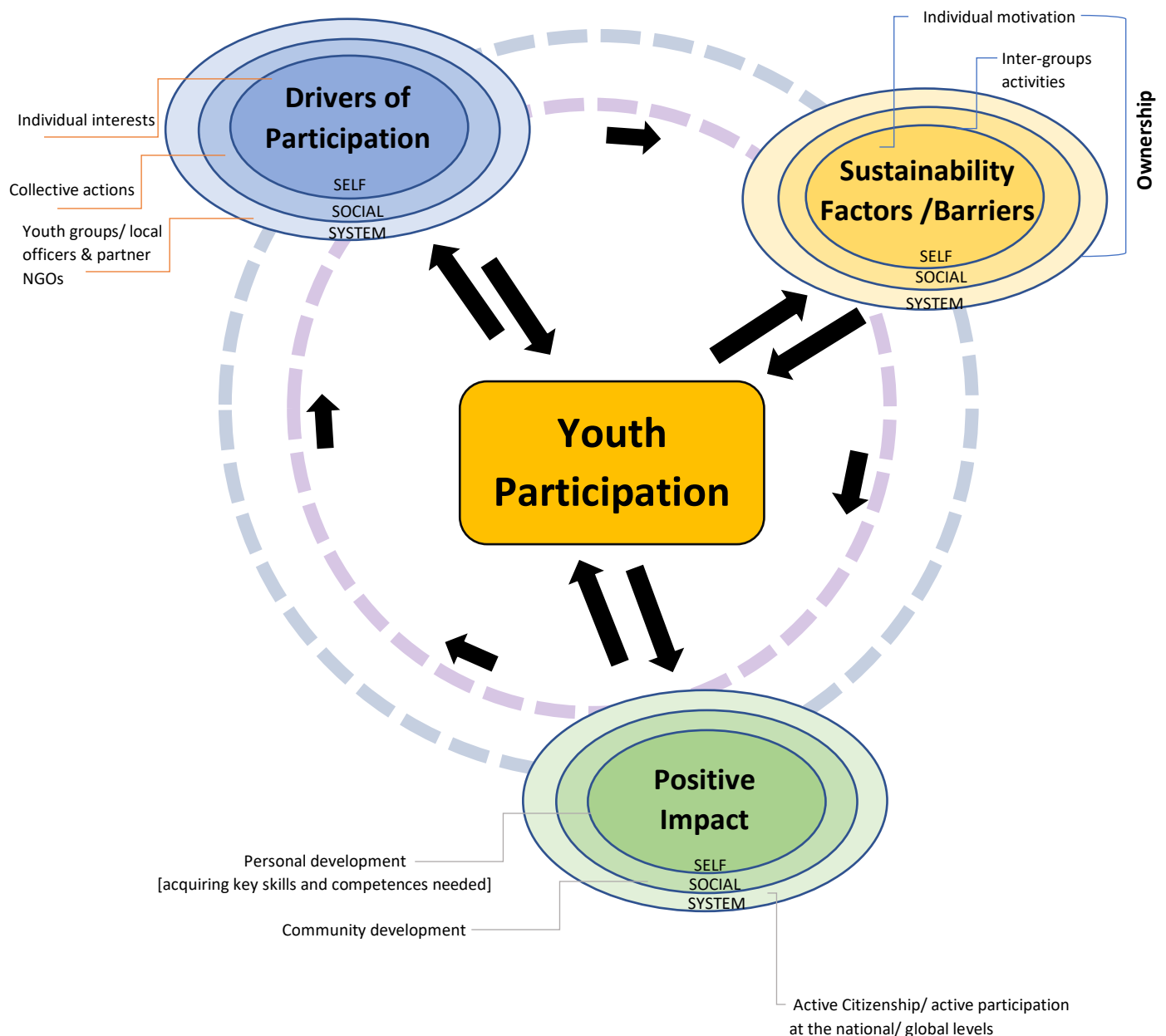
- 1) **Youth leaders (women and men) have required competencies and tools to identify community challenges and alternative solutions:** for youth to take leadership actions they need to acquire knowledge, competencies, and tools to leverage their capabilities to identify, analyze and lead groups of young people to address their challenges of concern.
- 2) **Youth from all backgrounds and locations are taking collective actions:** for this to happen, youth groups must have opportunities to connect, discuss and share their perceptions about issues they care about. Identifying collective concern(s), while youth from the affected communities, regardless their backgrounds and gender, are working together toward a shared aim. Hence, youth groups and young volunteers need to have support and resources that allow them to identify clear objectives, develop action plans and connect with stakeholders, peers and key actors to ensure sustainability.
- 3) **Youth actively participate in decision-making processes at the community level:** for this to happen, youth need to be aware of the issues in targeted communities and be motivated to take part in shaping the solutions. Stakeholders and key actors must create effective channels of communication with young people, enabling mutual respect and for key actors to value youth participation and create spaces for youth to actively participate in decision-making-making processes.



Shape (2) illustrates LMF experiential plan

Approach

Life Makers Foundation works with over 5000 youth leaders and young volunteers across the country to develop their awareness, enhance their skills and benefit from their enthusiasm and motivation toward social change. LMF adopts a comprehensive approach that seeks to tackle drivers of participation, promote sustainability factors and eliminate barriers/ issues that may hinder youth participation. The following shape illustrates the youth participation model adopted by LMF:



Shape (3) illustrates LMF model of youth participation

A- Drivers of Participation: By drivers of participation we mean the reasons why an individual becomes involved in an activity, in the first place. It is known that involvement process of young people can be different from one person to another and according to the type of the activity. The following three factors are identified by LMF as key drivers of youth participation:

- 1- **Individual or “self” factors:** these represent the characteristics such as values, principles, interests, and temperament, etc.
- 2- **Social factors:** youth often get involved in practices and activities to join their peer, following role models or respond to friends/family/leaders’ requests.
- 3- **Enabling environment/ system:** the set of processes that may influence whether youth become involved or not. This includes the foundation of bodies (youth groups, NGOs, communities, etc) through which, youth can find spaces and opportunities to participate, it also represents regulations, perceptions, and stereotypes that may contribute to/ or hinder youth participation.

With this understanding, LMF thrives to address the three drivers of participation, by:

- 1- **Creating volunteering opportunities that are built on the individual interest**, including but not limited to youth development programs (e.g. learning opportunities, training and guidance, spaces for leadership, etc.), and community support actions (e.g. charity, basic needs programs, community development initiatives, awareness campaigns, etc), LMF continues to create more and better opportunities for youth participation to heighten youth participation in the target communities and maintain sustainable participation among engaged youth.
- 2- **Promoting collective actions and volunteerism among youth** through youth-led campaigns, working groups on and volunteers’ camps at the local and national levels coupled with fostering online and on-the-ground engagement among youth from different backgrounds and geographical distribution.
- 3- **Establishing and support the establishment of enabling environments/ spaces for youth participation** that includes a growing network affiliated Students’ Societies in 16 universities³, 38 youth-led NGOs and local offices across Egypt. LMF constantly works to expand its network of partners and create partnerships with key stakeholders to enhance the accessibility to the spheres of participation.

B- Sustainability factors/barriers: Once youth are involved in an activity, they may decide to keep their participation or stop it. Similar to the drivers, sustainability factors can be different for each person and based on the type of the activity. Sustainability factors represent the things that foster participation or discourage it, and they are usually influenced by the personal characteristics, the social element and the system in which the person lives and works.

Building on the above conclusion, LMF seeks to keep the momentum and sustain youth participation by:

³ (Canal Suez University, Asyut University, Alexandria University, 6th of October University, Beni Suef University, Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Ain Shams University, 10th of Ramadan University, Menofeya University, Sadat University, Fayoum University, Menya University, Tanta University, Kafer El Sheikh University, Sohag University and West Valley University)

- 1- **Motivation:** while working with youth, we understand that their individual interests and values may develop over the time. Therefore, LMF endeavors to provide diversified opportunities for participation and capacity development programs with means of efforts' recognition and accreditation, as applicable, to ensure that motivation and interest to participate are continually recharged among youth. Moreover, LMF adopts a bottom-up approach to ensure that the voices/ideas are heard and included in the decision-making process. [See chart 1: LMF governance model]
- 2- **Recreational activities and regular retreats:** to maintain close relations, continue building teams and promote collective actions among the volunteers, LMF adopts strategy that focuses on providing spaces for groups gatherings/camps, interactive channels of communication and networking activities, LMF model of youth participation strives to maintain an enjoyable environment to the volunteering experience.
- 3- **Ownership:** sustainability is fostered when target groups develop ownership over the activities they are involved in. LMF embolden youth ownership through different layers of effective participation that includes, involvement in planning, delivering, monitoring and evaluating all the foundation's programs. Moreover, one of the most effective approaches adopted by LMF in that context, is the board of volunteers, an elected board of 11 volunteers that share the decision-making processes with the executive committee and the board of trustees.

Life Makers governance model

Life Makers Movement is committed to a participatory governance model designed to ensure the effective participation of young people in the decision-making process, through a bi-directional communication in a democratic setup.

The participation of the University students' societies, NGOs, and youth groups occurs through organized governance structures, each with its own leadership as follows:

Volunteers' General Assembly (VGA): Elected group of 200 active volunteers through a national election that takes place every two years. The VGA contribute in shaping the strategic directions of the movement, under the umbrella of the Life Makers Foundation, in close coordination with the LMF Board of Trustees

Volunteers Management Board (VMB): A group of 11 youth leaders elected in a national election alternating with the VGA election every two years. VMB organizes and facilitates all the communication and coordinates all the interaction between the LMF executive management (CEO), LMF head of Operations and the youth groups at the grassroots level. This happens through a network of volunteers' coordinators, NGOs officers and the Board of University Students' Societies. VMB also contribute to the decision-making process through their housed members in LMF executive committee.

Board of University Students' Societies: The board members are selected through an intensive selection process that involves assessment of performance, skills, competencies, and potential. The selection process involves both the VMB and VGA without intervention from LMF management and board of trustees.

The following chart illustrates the governance model adopted by Life Makers.

Life Makers Movement

* Volunteers General Assembly (VGA) is formed through a national elections every two years alternating with the Volunteers Main Board elections.

**Volunteers Management Board (VMB) is formed through elections every two years alternating with VGA.

*** Governorates Coordinators are selected by the VMB through an intensive selection process

**** Students Main Board are selected

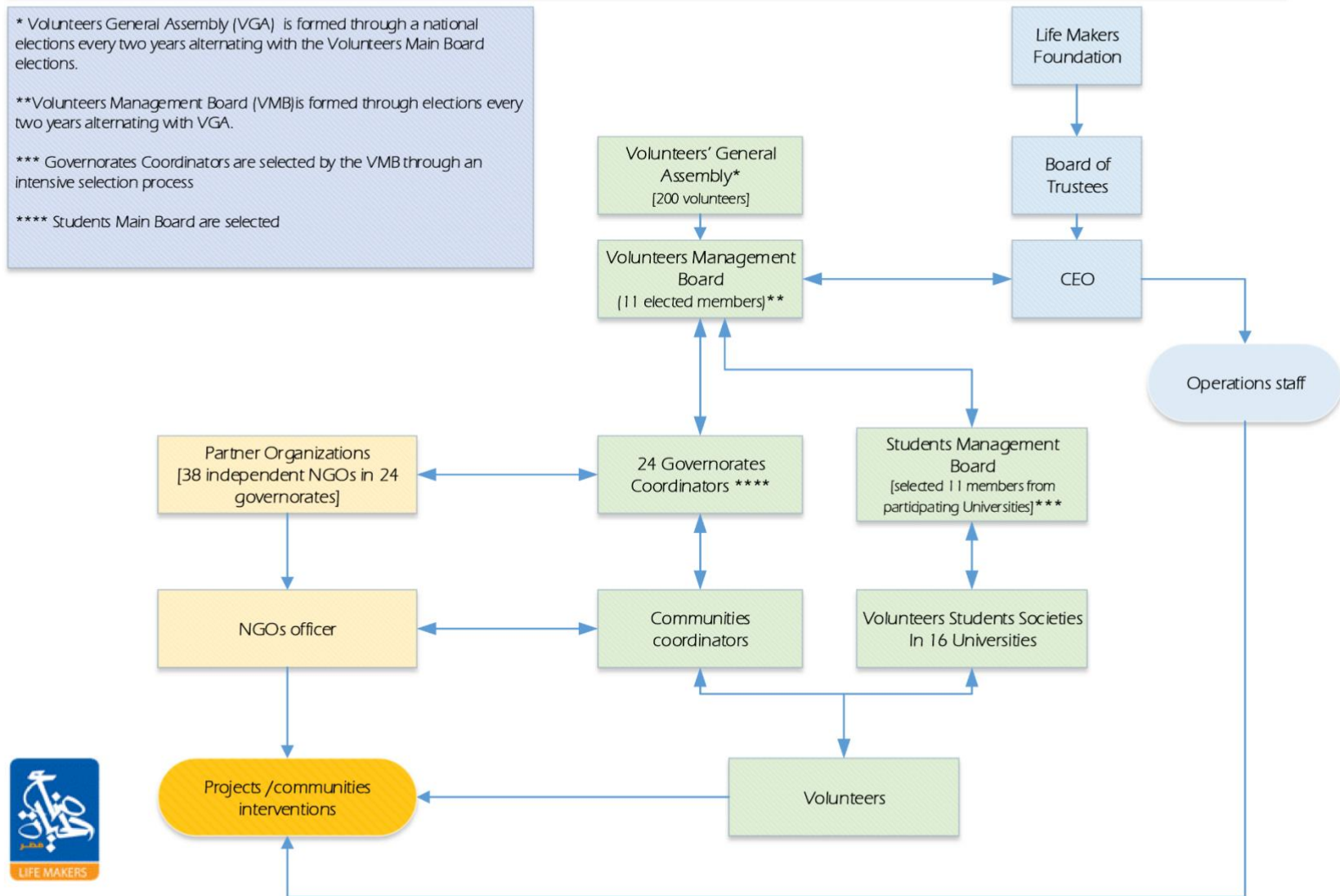


Chart 1: LMF governance model