ARAB YOUTH STRATEGY 2017-2022

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Executive Summary

This document outlines a strategy developed *by* and *for* Arab youth during the Arab Youth Forum held in Dubai in February 2017. This pioneering five-year strategy is an effort to invigorate Arab young people by centralizing their concerns or priorities as a core stimulating and motivating driver of sustainable and positive development in the Arab region. It is only by fully and openly embracing these challenges that the Arab region, and Arab youth, can find innovative solutions.

As a guiding document for Arab youth-led initiatives, this strategy encourages active citizenship, critical thinking, and visionary leadership amongst Arab youth in the face of complex, and at times perplexing, realities in the Arab region. The input, enthusiasm, and confidence of Arab youth will be indispensable for the process of current and future path of Arab development.

This report begins with an introductory segment that presents some of the key challenges for Arab youth, while also highlighting broader regional concerns. These challenges are grouped as:

- Navigating a Shifting and Complex Political Landscape
- Securing Prosperous Livelihoods for all Arab Citizens
- Building Affordable Educational Systems for a Global Knowledge Economy
- Realizing Health and Safety for Arab Youth
- Using Limited Natural Resources in Effective Ways for Sustainable Development
- Preserving Arab Identity and Culture in the Face of External Influences

The remainder of the document is the strategy section, which presents a broad framework, as well as the rationale for an Arab Youth Strategy, guiding principles, and an overall vision for Arab youth.

This strategy comes at a time of dynamic engagement around topics related to Arab youth. It builds on recent developments in the Arab region and renewed interest and momentum around the idea that effective youth development and participation is essential for the future of the region. It will contribute to fostering stronger youth, constructing a more robust region, and redefining how the world views and understands the Arab countries.

Concepts of "positive youth development" directly shaped this strategy and, specifically, influenced a new approach to Arab youth development that is more affirmative, optimistic, and uplifting than previous approaches which did not fully empower or engage young people. The framework of this strategy was designed to allow youth to take action and propose initiatives that respond to the included strategic priorities. It is built around **six dynamic concepts** that consciously incorporate "positive youth development" as a way for youth to live and act**:** Engage, Inspire, Empower, Collaborate, Achieve, and Celebrate.

This section goes on to highlight **5 Strategic Priorities**, which are briefly introduced here**:**

- **1. Health and Safety**– Arab youth lead healthy lives and they inhabit, contribute to, and build a safe and environment.

- **2. Education and Knowledge** – Arab youth benefit from modern education and are equipped with the knowledge and skills for life, work and participation in the 21st century.
- **3. Entrepreneurship** – Arab youth design, start, grow, and sustain startups and businesses, especially those that address social innovation.
- **4. Community Giving –** Arab youth nourish strong communities and apply their values through actively contributing, giving back, volunteering and forming strong social networks.
- **5. Arab Culture & Identity** – Arab youth preserve, promote, take pride in, and advance Arab culture, heritage and values.

The section also describes **Five Critical Success Factors** (Values and Ethics, Taking Initiative, Sustainability, Innovation, and Resilience) that can be incorporated into any work or initiative done by youth to make it successful and more impactful.

The strategy part of the document closes with a description of a **Vibrant and Enabling Ecosystem for Youth Empowerment and Engagement,** which explains the roles of different stakeholders in youth development, including governments, the private sector, media and other members of society.

1. Introduction

Developed around the premise that Arab youth are the greatest, untapped resource that will positively influence and impact the future of the Arab region, this strategy is the beginning of a new chapter. Given that nearly 60% of the population of the Arab countries is under 30 years of age[1], that resource is abundant and the ability youth to influence positive impact is immense. This strategy attempts to build on and take advantage of the efforts that have been made to tackle youth concerns and to encourage increased pan-Arab partnership and collaboration around youth issues. Despite real challenges, many Arab youth are optimistic, with 67% agreeing that "our best days are ahead of us[2]". The goal is to inspire young Arabs, and those who believe in them, around creative action to build that better future and to find solutions to local and regional challenges over the next five years. Importantly, this is the first youth- centric regional-level strategy that outlines a unified vision by and for Arab youth where they directly led the strategic development and design process.

The time period of youth is inherently full of questions – any young person is attempting to make sense of the world, solidify their identity, find meaning in life, and, on top of all this, generate income, start a family, and forge a path of their own. Youth in Arab countries are navigating these realities and many are also facing barriers in their ability to develop and grow in a positive and healthy way. This strategy does not attempt to negate or deny that this is a challenging time period for Arab youth. However, it does aim to support and embolden young people to take these tests, face them directly, and turn them into something positive, whatever that may mean for different individuals. Moreover, this strategy invigorates young people to be confident leaders, proactive citizens, and involved in constructive nation building, however they can in their circumstances. Finally, this strategy welcomes the idea that small actions can have big impact, causing a ripple effect that spreads optimism, enthusiasm, and success at an individual, collective, and national level in the Arab region.

Methodology
150 youth from all 22 Arab countries gathered to discuss, brainstorm, develop, and design this strategy in Dubai over the course of the Arab Youth Forum. The strategy was further refined and organized for final presentation, and additional work was done to complete the structure, framework and stylistic elements. As part of the process, additional research was done in both Arabic and English to gather further information on key challenges facing Arab youth, including an initial review of government-level efforts to engage and empower youth.

Target Group
This strategy covers all 22 Arab countries [3], with a focus on youth between the ages of 15-29. These countries together have a population of more than 380 million and this strategy targets around a third of that population.

Many definitions of "youth" exist that are both smaller and larger in terms of age range. For example, the United Nations defines "youth" as 15-24 years[4]. However, for this strategy, the ages of 15-29 have been chosen because they represent the largest percentage of the Arab population that is impacted by the issues and challenges included in this strategy.

"Youth" is a definitive time period in human development, where people move from childhood to adulthood. During this time young people solidify unique personalities and develop their

sense of identity, as well as starting work, families and completing other life milestones, such as graduating from university[5].

Certain topics in the strategy, such as education, are important to children under 15. At the same time, adults over the age of 29 are also impacted by many of the issues in this strategy and can contribute to resolving them. However, for the purposes of implementation and evaluation, this strategy focuses on Arab youth between the ages of 15-29[6].

Additional Stakeholders

This is a youth-centric strategy from beginning to end and will be implemented by youth directly. However, any significant change for Arab youth will require the participation of many other local, national and regional actors. While these are further looked at in the section on the vibrant and enabling ecosystem for youth empowerment and engagement, it is important to touch upon this point. In particular, local and national government actors play a pivotal role in supporting implementation of this strategy, as do the private sector, educational institutions, media and society at large. Any effective youth strategy ultimately requires the participation of all levels of society.

A Strategy for the Diverse Contexts of the Arab Region

The different realities and circumstances that define Arab countries are well known. Some Arab countries have unique challenges that will take time and concentrated effort to solve. This strategy does not offer solutions for specific problems, but an overall path for engagement around shared regional challenges for Arab youth. The broad framework of this strategy can be applied and adopted by youth to fit their individual realities and abilities. Young people best understand their personal context and what is possible and appropriate for their particular circumstances.

2. Overview of Key Challenges for Arab Youth

The Arab region, comprised of 22 countries, is a diverse, dynamic, shifting, and complex region with a population of around 380 million people. The Arab region is also young, and overflowing with potential. "Youth" between the ages of 15-29 exceed 105 million people and constitute one-third of Arab populations[7]. Given this reality, any key challenge facing the region is inherently a youth challenge or issue as youth are the bulk of the population. Youth are often the ones who are most directly impacted by these issues and they are also the ones who will be 'inheriting' or dealing with future repercussions of these challenges. Thus, young people can be incorporated and empowered to engage with the process of finding solutions around not only "youth issues," but social, economic and environmental issues broadly.

Consisting of Low-, Middle-, and High-Income Countries (LICs, MICs, and HICs), the region is defined by stark contrasts in living conditions and context both between different countries and between regions within the same country (often between rural and urban communities). Notable and substantial progress has been made in many Arab countries across diverse developmental sectors and towards both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[8]. Nevertheless, the region still needs to address key challenges to secure a better, healthier and more prosperous future for all of its citizens, and especially for its young people. While regional themes do exist, such as unemployment or insufficient educational outcomes, how Arab youth experience specific challenges or social issues is further determined by their local context.

The Arab region is frequently described as "volatile". Volatility has a direct impact on sustainable and equitable development. After the world financial crisis of 2008-2009, and with the contributing factors of regional political instability and a sharp fall in oil prices, the growth of the human development index in Arab countries plunged by more than half between 2010-2014 compared to the rate between 2000-2010. If this pattern continues there is a likelihood that the region will rank fifth out of the six world regions on the human Development Index by 2050[9]. It is true that many elements of the region are highly unpredictable. Yet, this very fact can be a central tenant of any planning and development processes, making room for both governments and citizens to creatively solve problems and approach widespread local and regional challenges in new and inclusive ways.

With a relatively high life expectancy (70 years or older in most Arab countries), except for the 5 poorest countries –Mauritania, Comoros, Djibouti, Sudan, and Yemen (which range from 55-64), plus a high birth rate (average 3.1 children per woman), the Arab region has seen high population growth in recent years. Research shows that this trend will likely continue into the near future[10]. Effective planning and development processes will have to be conscious of this growth and consider what this means in 10-25 years from now. The youth issues of today will continue to be relevant in the future as children enter young adulthood. Thus, solving the challenges in this strategy requires both short and long term planning. The needs of this growing and young population must be a priority, particularly in areas that are already high density and face existing constraints around services, natural resources, space, and land use.

The region is at a significant juncture – if Arab governments can properly engage with and co-design a new way forward hand-in-hand with their citizens, particularly youth, they can set a shining example for global development practices. However, to achieve this, the challenges for Arab youth must be clearly defined. Yet, a lack of comprehensive, high-quality and up-to-date

data across the Arab countries makes properly identifying these very difficult. In many ways, this lack of data is its own challenge area, restricting the development of evidence-based strategies and prevents adequate analysis of how Arab countries are achieving core development challenges. However, with existing data some key trends are evident regarding youth issues. These trends correspond to the following challenge areas that were identified by youth in the Arab Youth Forum as the ones most impacting their lives.

2.1 Navigating a Shifting and Complex Political Landscape

Underlying all other challenges in the Arab countries is the political instability of the Arab region, which makes comprehensive pan-Arab policies hard to implement and contributes to uneven development. In a highly connected region, country-specific problems can easily spread across borders. Furthermore, unpredictable global political dynamics further compound this regional uncertainty.

The region is seeing active and prolonged conflicts, political violence, and/or humanitarian emergencies in Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen, while Sudan is rebuilding after 20+ years of civil war. A part of this picture is the recent emergence of a variety of terrorist groups, specifically ISIS or Daesh in Syria and Iraq, as well as Al-Shabaab in Somalia and others, that believe in extremism and violence as a way to further specific religious and political ideologies. Surveys show that Arab youth overwhelmingly reject ISIS[11], the group that poses the largest threat to the region, and their tactics. It is unclear at this point how long existing conflicts, violence or instability will continue. As a result of the subsequent chaos, many Arab youth are putting their lives and their dreams on hold, struggling to meet their basic needs, abandoning their education, and experiencing severe stress. The situations in these countries are unlikely to abate in the near future, however when they do, extensive rebuilding will need to happen and it is essential to incorporate youth and their needs into these processes.

Furthermore, since 2011, four long-standing Arab leaders in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen stepped down from power after mass popular protests in their countries demanded economic, political and social change. As a result of this period, commonly referred to as the "Arab Spring," these and other Arab countries have seen varying degrees of transformation[12], both positive and negative. Arab citizens have mixed views about this turbulence and its consequences, with surveys showing that 59% see it negatively, while 34% see it positively[13]. Youth specific surveys show that while 72% of youth in 2012 believed the Arab region was better off as result of the "Arab Spring" events, only 38% agreed with this in 2015[14]. The reasons for this are the adverse consequences of "the large-scale human loss, the spread of discord, chaos and lack of security, collapse of states and state institutions, and instability more broadly"[15]. Although they were key players in the Arab Spring and want to be involved in their communities and countries, many Arab youth remain skeptical around the ability of their countries to realize lasting and comprehensive reforms, and, in many places, continue to feel excluded from overall decisions that impact their lives[16].

This political instability and violence has led to mass waves of human migration, contributing to large numbers of both Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and refugees. Notably, the Arab region is home to 5% of the global population, yet in 2014 it was home to 47% of the world's IDPs, 45% of global terrorist attacks, nearly 69% of the world's battle-related deaths and nearly 58% of the world's refugees, including Palestinian refugees[17]. Both safety and economic opportunity (the two most common factors connected to human migration in the Arab countries) are linked to political instability and violence. While the predicament of nearly 5.2

million Palestinian refugees[18] remains unresolved and still a central issue in the region, refugees from Arab countries constitute the largest refugee population in current history. The following statistics further show the magnitude of this problem. By 2015, the number of people displaced by the Syrian conflict alone had reached an estimated 11.7 million. Of these, 6.6 million were internally displaced persons, while the rest were refugees or asylum-seekers outside their country of origin, who have gone to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, as well as to Europe and other places in the world [19]. In 2015, 53% of refugees worldwide came from three countries, of which two are Arab countries, with 1.1 million refugees coming from Somalia and 4.9 million people from Syria. Two Arab countries – Lebanon and Jordan- are among the top hosting countries in the world, with Lebanon hosting more than 1.1 million people and Jordan hosting nearly 665,000 people[20]. Importantly, over half of all global refugees, including those coming from Arab countries, are under the age of 18. [21] These present rough estimates, and actual numbers are likely much higher. Violent conflicts have a direct impact on youth health including through causing bodily harm, preventing access to services, emotional and psychological damage, and trauma[22]. IDP and refugee populations have specific needs, and require particular support to relocate, put their lives back together, and have a chance for a prosperous future.

Internationally, new shifts are also occurring. For example, one thing to consider is the impact of increasingly conservative governments in the United States of America (USA) and Europe. How these shifts will influence foreign policy in the Arab countries remains to be fully seen. One particular area that might be impacted is international development funding. While foreign funding has always been subject to ebbs and flows depending on existing political realities, there is a chance that funding mechanisms will be minimized or eliminated or strategic political alliances strengthened or re-aligned. These international shifts are particularly important with regards to addressing the needs of poor Arab countries, as well as IDP and refugee populations. Alternative mechanisms or sources of funding may need to be established to fill potential voids if there are funding cuts for international development. Furthermore, these changes may impact educational, work and immigration options for Arab nationals in the USA and Europe, disproportionately impacting Arab youth.

Given the tumultuous reality in their countries in recent years, many Arab citizens, youth included, yearn for stability. Recent surveys show that 53% of Arab youth agree that promoting stability in the region is more important that promoting democracy, 62% agreeing in GCC, 58% in North Africa countries and 36% agreeing in the Levant and Yemen[23]. Other results show that 53% of Arab citizens evaluate the level of security positively in their countries, while 46% view it negatively.[24] Arab youth surveys in recent years vacillate between two priority challenge areas, which are closely connected phenomena – insecurity/instability and unemployment/job creation/reliable income. In an attempt to address security and stability many Arab governments have invested state budgets heavily in military and security structures, often at the expense of job creation, healthcare, infrastructure, education and other basic essential social services for Arab citizens, with young people being directly impacted by these cutbacks in spending[25]. The key challenge is whether Arab governments can both achieve stability and security, while also investing in the infrastructure and services needed for positive and sustainable human development and job creation.

2.2 Securing Prosperous Livelihoods for All Arab Citizens

After security and stability, unemployment is perhaps the biggest social and economic challenge facing the Arab region and remains one of the most pressing areas of concern.

Surveys with the Arab public, particularly with Arab youth, confirm that unemployment and decent work opportunities or being paid a fair wage top lists of priority concerns, with around 80% of respondents often listing these as a top priority[26]. The rates of Arab unemployment, and specifically youth unemployment, are the highest in the world. The Arab region is also characterized by some of the lowest employment-to-population ratios in the world. This ratio has remained relatively constant between 1995 and 2015, rising from 44.1 to 46.8, a figure that is far below the global average of 59.2[27]. Another way to look at this fact is that out of 100 people that could work in the region, less than half of them do[28].

As of 2016, unemployment in North Africa stood at 12% and 11% in the broader Arab region, compared to global averages of 6%, even amongst emerging and developing economies.[29] However, there are large gaps between unemployment of Arab men and women. The unemployment rate in North Africa for men was 10 % and in the other Arab countries was 8 %, yet in the same locations, the rates for Arab women were 20% and 22%, respectively. These rates are almost double the unemployment rates for men, and substantially higher than global rates of 6%[30]. However, Arab youth unemployment rates have been nearly twice as high as the rates in other global regions since the early 1990s. In 2016, youth unemployment remained very high, reaching nearly 30% throughout the Middle East and North Africa, more than double the global average. These rates are likely to remain the same until 2019 [31]. In places with conflict and instability unemployment rates generally increase. The region will need to create up to 100 million jobs by 2020 to reach full employment levels[32]. The Arab labor market also has low productivity growth, and the performance of the region was one of the lowest in the world for both the 1995-2005 and 2005-2015 decades. For example, from 2005-2015 the region's growth slowed to 3%, while the global average rose to about 26%. A new trend in the region is to understand decent work and employment opportunities as a productive factor for growth, as opposed to a residual outcome[33].

It is important to emphasize the extent to which Arab youth are disproportionately impacted by unemployment. Young people's risk of unemployment is four times that of adults[34]. The proportions of unemployed graduates of higher education, including those with high qualifications, have reached 43% in Saudi Arabia, about 32% in Bahrain, 24% in Palestine, 18-22% in Morocco, 22% in UAE, 14-21.9% in Tunisia, 11% in Algeria, 15.5% in Jordan, 25% in Egypt, compared to an average of 3.5% in the European Union. Arab countries in North Africa have had the highest global rates of unemployment among higher education graduates, with a rate of 25%[35]. Only 44% of Arab youth agree that 'there are good job opportunities in the area I live in', while the percentage was much lower in countries like Yemen (only 2% agreed) and Libya (7%)[36]. Thus, Arab unemployment is overwhelmingly a youth problem and is also directly connected to issues of security and political instability in the region.

Unemployment can be an issue regardless of family class or background, although those who are poor or from vulnerable groups (such as refugees) may experience additional barriers to employment[37]. Furthermore, unemployment rates amongst Arab women are the highest in the world, with young Arab women experiencing barriers to work opportunities both because they are young and because they are female. Female labor force participation is the lowest in the world, about 23% for North African countries, and 21% for other Arab states, far lower than global average of 50% [38]. The share of women in GDP in the Arab region does not surpass 30 % compared to 50% in all developing countries [39]. However, most young Arabs believe in social equality and equal opportunity, and that one's ability and talent should determine what opportunities they have. Two in three young Arabs (67%), across gender lines, possess a desire

for governments to do more to give more rights to women, ranging from 76% in UAE to 90% in KSA[40]. Regarding employment, youth stand for equal opportunities for men and women[41].

The government has historically been the largest employer in the Arab countries. However, employment in these positions is often "determined by diplomas, not by merit or competency, which means youth have lost motivation to acquire new skills and knowledge that prepare them for the knowledge economy[42]". Despite this, some youth still prefer public sector jobs because they offer a sense of security, as well as multiple privileges, and are one of few options available in many countries.

Even with these high unemployment rates, many Arab countries are relatively hard places to open and sustain new businesses, which stifles private sector development, job creation, and the ability for young people to launch start-ups and Small-to-Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The World Bank's Ease of Doing Business ranking 2016 shows a disparity between the rankings for Arab countries. UAE was 26 on the global list and first among Arab countries, followed by Bahrain, Oman and Qatar. Yet, ten Arab countries ranked in the last forty spots between 153 (Comoros) and 190 (Somalia)[43] While there are many routes to addressing unemployment, the ability for young people to begin and maintain businesses is a critical step to properly address this social problem. This is reflected in the low numbers of startups opened in 2016 across the Arab region, with numbers ranging from 0-285 (with the highest numbers in the UAE), and most countries having 60 or fewer newly registered start-ups[44]. Many of these startups are not durable and will often close within the first few years of operation.

The reasons for this are complex, but key obstacles for startups and SMEs are connected to legal and policy frameworks, including damaging or non-existent bankruptcy laws, which severely restrict new business development. Many Arab countries limit hiring foreign labor, even though many youth do not have essential skills related to start ups, business administration, technology, design, coding or programming. Opening a business in many Arab countries, especially with limited means or connections, is a daunting and often tricky task. Additional barriers are connected to accessing finance options and the complex, long bureaucratic processes around business registration. Other ways to build a more hospitable and inclusive business environment for youth include equitable access to credit, competition, good governance, transparency, accountability, judicial systems that support business and enterprise, and the adoption of just labor laws that protect workers without undue constraint to employers[45].

As a result, innovation, competitiveness and entrepreneurship are negatively impacted for many Arab countries, as are young people's ability to participate in and contribute to these areas. The Global Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Competitiveness indices are all telling indicators. Overall, there is a consistent gap on these indices between the GCC and other Arab countries. Among the 138 countries listed in the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index 2016-2017, the Gulf countries have occupied relatively advanced positions, reflecting their economic advancement, and their progression in the knowledge axes. UAE ranked 16th worldwide, followed by the Qatar at 18th and Saudi Arabia at 29th. Conversely, other Arab states came at low positions on the international list, where Egypt ranked 115th, Mauritania 137th and Yemen 138th[46]

In the Global Entrepreneurship Index 2017[47], GCC countries again took the lead, with UAE ranking at 19th place, Qatar at 21st, Saudi 30, Bahrain 34, Oman 37, Kuwait 39, while countries like Egypt ranked at 81, Mauritania 134, Libya 104[48]. The 2016 Global Innovation Index [49]

indicates a major gap in the innovation indices in the Arab region, reflected in the value, rank, and progress of the "Global Innovation" indices for the region, in comparison to other regions of the world[50]. What this means for young people, is that those who have creative, innovative solutions are not necessarily able to implement those ideas or run enterprises that can be viable sources of income and livelihood. Furthermore, Arab youth may not be encouraged to develop and maintain an innovative orientation to the world.

Both entrepreneurship and securing available jobs in the private sector are closely linked to the formal education that young people receive (and will be explored further in the next challenge area). Despite the proven impact of entrepreneurship education, few ministries of education across the Arab countries have either introduced or facilitated entrepreneurship interventions into mainstream education[51]. Simply, Arab education systems are not adequately preparing young people with core competencies that allow them to contribute to a knowledge-based economy, fit into existing market demands, or build their own businesses. The existing skills gap between the outcomes of the Arab educational systems and the need in the labor market restricts economic growth and is a barrier to resolving unemployment.

The search for economic opportunity has pushed many talented young people to leave their location of origin, heading to cities or other countries for work or to open businesses. This so-called "brain drain" results in a loss of local talent in many Arab countries. Among all locations in the world, the Arab region is one of the most affected by the emigration of highly skilled academics and researchers. Migration estimates show that 10-15% of Arab youth migrate (both to other Arab countries and European or foreign countries); and this is higher among those with advanced degrees[52]. Rather than being able to build or take advantage of local opportunities, many young people have to go elsewhere. There is no shortage of Arab youth talent, however local prospects need to be created to entice youth to stay in their communities and countries.

Most Arab countries have weak or non-existent unemployment and social security benefits. Many people who cannot secure regular and consistent work, are pushed to informal or vulnerable work or to borrow or seek support from family or charitable organizations[53]. Women are more likely to work these jobs, especially in the agriculture sectors. Poverty remains a growing concern, with price increases on many basic food supplies putting additional strains on those already struggling to get by. Although extreme poverty in the Arab region is below other locations, the percentage of the population making less than $1.25 a day increased from 4.1% to 7.4% between 2010 and 2012[54]. However, it is also important to note here that the definition of the national poverty line varies across countries[55], meaning that 'real' levels of poverty can be hard to properly gauge. Thus, the real numbers people living in poverty in the Arab countries might actually be higher.

The 2015 Arab Opinion Index provides useful information on the economic reality for many Arab citizens. Only 20% of those surveyed reported their household income was sufficient for them to make savings after all necessary expenditures were covered, 48% could cover household expenditures, but did not have enough to save ("hardship families"), and 29% lived "in need," without enough money from household incomes to cover required expenses. More than half of those "in need" borrow to cover their expenses. 20% borrow from families and friends, while 9% borrow from charitable or governmental institutions[56], thus highlighting the importance of informal support networks in the Arab world. Many Arab youth also rely on taking out debts and loans to cover basic expenses[57]. A lack of employment options forces young people to rely on financial support that is unreliable and does not allow them to realize

financial security. When young people are unable to work, strong social security nets, whether through the government or informal network, can protect and support them.

Prosperous livelihoods can come from many sources, but there must be concentrated effort to address what prevents youth from accessing these opportunities. As GCC countries, in particular, diversify their economies and rely less on oil production, many new opportunities can be created. The key part of this challenge is how to create new jobs for young people through existing structures, while also easing the barriers for youth to open new businesses. Every Arab young person has the right to have meaningful work and achieve financial security. Regardless, the ability for Arab countries to shift towards a global knowledge-based economy will be a key factor to reverse unemployment trends and offer prosperous livelihoods for youth in the region.

2.3 Building Affordable Educational Systems for a Global Knowledge Economy

Overall, the educational curricula in the Arab region emphasize memorization and traditional exams over the development of key 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, social skills, creativity, communication, and leadership[58]. For example, the World Bank's Knowledge Index (KI) indicates mediocre Arab performance and an increasing gap between the Arab region and other regions of the world, in both Knowledge Index (KI) and Knowledge Economy Index (KEI), between the years 2000 to 2012[59]. Furthermore, the Quality of Education Index, which is a sub-index of the Global Competiveness Index (GCI) 2015-2016, shows a gap between Arab countries in terms of quality of the education system. While countries like Qatar, UAE, Lebanon, Bahrain and Jordan came in good rankings globally (out of 140 countries), other Arab countries came at the very end of the ranking such as Egypt (139th place), Mauritania (131) and Morocco (122)[60]. Thus, while progress has been made, data still shows that the advancement of the Arab region towards the knowledge economy in bridging the knowledge gap is still insignificant. Specifically, science and technology curricula are outdated, not properly translated and do not keep up with a rapidly changing research and knowledge landscape in those fields.

Furthermore, despite progress achieved in primary education enrollment and registration rates, and the narrowing of the gap in most of the Arab countries, the existing Arab school systems still do not meet the needs of younger generations. Many children at the primary-school age are not enrolled in school. As shown in UNESCO's most recent data, the number of children (up to age 18) not enrolled in school in the Arab countries was around 4.5 million children at the end of the 2012 school year, noting that females constitute around 57.8% of this number, and this number has grown in recent years. 30% of the Arab World is illiterate with 66% of total illiterates being women[61]. Thus, many young people are at risk of not completing basic secondary education or are unable to read and write properly, with young women being disproportionately represented. Without a solid educational base these children will lack critical life skills by the time they are young adults.

While education remains highly valued in the Arab countries, enrollment in higher education and universities remains below global averages. In 2012, there were 9 million Arab young people enrolled in higher education institutions, an enrollment rate of 26.1%, compared to a global average of 32%. High cost and perceived inaccessibility of higher education or technical institutions has much to do with this. Despite this, there are countries with rates exceeding this global average, such as Saudi Arabia (50.9%), Lebanon (46.3%), Palestine (49.1%), and Jordan

(46.6%)[62]. Interestingly, women's participation in higher education is specifically increasing. The percentage of women's enrollment in universities in some Arab countries ranges between 40% and 50%. In recent years, the number of women enrolled in universities in Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE has actually exceeded that of men. In Saudi Arabia, the percentage of female students among those who are enrolled in scientific disciplines reached 65% in 2010, compared to 40% in the past decade[63].

Fundamentally, there is a definite and noticeable gap between outcomes of the educational system and existing 21st century job market needs. Many graduates either lack relevant skills or their collective educational experience simply does not properly prepare them for the existing job market or to start their own businesses. This is the case both for secondary and higher education institutions. Yet, university degrees are expensive. Despite the cost and limitations of these degrees, Arab youth and society at large still tend to prefer them. Arab societies, including many young people, hold negative views of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), even when they might be cheaper and more practical for securing a job than higher degree diplomas. Furthermore, despite varying levels of reform during recent years in Arab educational systems, TVET education remained static or even regressed[64]. TVET, in particular, can be immensely useful for addressing existing labor market needs and increasing youth skills in technology, which is a highly technical field. Possession of core technical skills allows Arab youth, and by default the Arab region, to be able to adapt quickly in a tech-savvy and evolving world[65].

For those young people who do receive higher education, they and their employers, are not satisfied with the quality of that education. 69% of CEOs in the Middle East view the availability (lack thereof) of key skills as a potential threat to growth[66]. Many university graduates in the Arab world often think that their education did not properly prepare them for success after graduation[67]. Students further acknowledge that they do not receive adequate counseling and guidance regarding what to study or how to build their careers, course content and curricula is outdated or irrelevant to the skills and knowledge needed in the market, and that soft skills (highly sought after by employers) are not focused on or developed enough[68]. Research highlights additional factors that influence the quality of education students receive in universities, such as unsuitable modes of instruction, a deficiency in research and development policies and programs, specifically for science fields, and old academic curricula that do not meet current global knowledge requirements[69]. Another statistic that reflects the quality of Arab higher educational is that no Arab universities hold advanced positions in global rankings. For example, in the Academic Ranking of World Universities 2016, there are no Arab universities listed among the top 100 universities in the world[70].

The core of this challenge is how to offer affordable, relevant, 21st century, and job-oriented learning and educational opportunities to Arab youth. That is, education must contribute to building sustained livelihoods for young people. Arab youth must have an education that gives them the critical skills they need to start work, be productive employees or build their own thriving businesses, yet does not lead them to take out substantial debt.

2.4 Realizing Healthy and Safe Lives for All

The populations in different Arab regions and countries face varying health challenges, depending on if they are Higher Income, Middle Income or Lower Income. Political violence or conflict also impacts the health of different populations in unique ways, both in their ability to lead healthy lives and to access health care facilities. Youth, specifically, are not always

empowered to fully understand or take responsibility for their lifestyles and related health consequences. Thus, diverse factors shape the individual health of Arab youth.

As with many youth challenges, the lack of comprehensive and recent data, severely impacts health policies for Arab youth. Both globally and regionally, few global health surveys cover ages 16-18, while none cover the 15-29 year age range. This means that neither are the full extent of Arab youth health concerns clearly understood, nor are there global standards in place to offer appropriate baselines or comparisons[71].

Overall, all Arab countries, except for two (Iraq and Syria), have reduced Arab youth mortality in past decades. However, different age brackets in countries experience higher burdens of mortality[72], with the main causes of death for the 15-29 age group being almost equally divided among diarrhoeal diseases, lower respiratory tract infections and other infectious diseases; cardiovascular diseases; transport injuries; and unintentional injuries[73]. Top 5 causes of Disability-Adjusted Life Years[74] (DALY) in the Arab region across all age brackets are lower respiratory infections, diarrhea, malaria, preterm birth complications, and congenital anamolies. The DALY of lower-income countries is typical of countries with similar GDPs, and often is connected to access (or lack thereof) to adequate preventative medicine and health facilities, and environmental factors. However, the DALY in mid-higher income countries reflects health issues that are more commonly connected to lifestyle factors, including diet, smoking, mental health or traffic accidents. The top causes in DALY for middle and higher income countries are ischemic heart disease, lower respiratory infections, stroke, major depressive order, preterm birth complications, road injuries, low back pain, and diabetes[75]. Young people are either directly impacted by these health challenges, or at risk of being impacted later in life if they do not lead healthy lifestyles. Importantly, many of the causes of death and the DALY can be linked to various environmental factors, including ambient and household air pollution, lack of access to water, sanitation and hygiene, exposure to wastes and harmful chemicals and road traffic accidents[76].

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) - The Eastern Mediterranean region, which includes 9 Arab countries,[77] shows marked increase in two closely related health concerns – diabetes and overweightness/obesity. The Eastern Mediterranean region has the highest global rise in diabetes prevalence at 13.7 % (1 in 7 persons), while data for adults aged 15 years and older show that 74-86% of women and 69-77% of men are obese or overweight. The countries with the highest rates of overweight and obese people are in Egypt, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates[78]. The increase of body weight is a major risk factor for a number of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)[79], including heart disease and stroke, diabetes and some types of cancer. Research shows that Obesity in the Arab region led to the increase of type two diabetes mellitus (T2DM)[80.] Obesity, diabetes, and NCD related deaths are linked to multiple lifestyle factors such as, unhealthy diet and lack of exercise. Tobacco and alcohol use also influence NCD-related deaths.

The above are some of the primary health concerns impacting Arab youth, yet other notable problems are evident in their health landscape. While the prevalence of alcohol and drug use disorders is lower than global averages, youth tobacco use (both in cigarettes and water pipe/hookah) remains higher than global averages, according to World Health Organization (WHO), and requires specific attention. Although suicide rates remain relatively low in the Arab countries compared to global averages, depression, anxiety and symptoms of stress are on the rise and are particularly noticeable amongst young people who are struggling with securing work, starting families, or political uncertainty. Symptoms of depression are more

common among young women[81]. Many young people in conflict zones may experience symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Order. Notable other health related concerns for Arab youth include undernourishment[82], food insecurity, and malaria.[83] Vulnerable youth populations who require special attention with regards to appropriate healthcare services are young people with disabilities, young women (especially regarding culturally appropriate reproductive and women's health services for young unmarried women), youth who are poor and youth in conflict zones[84].

Other factors impact whether or not young people experience safe and healthy lives. The feelings of safety and wellbeing in public for young Arab women may be compromised by sexual harassment or other forms of physical or emotional violence. This reality has specific consequences for the emotional and physical wellbeing of young women. Accidents, crime and other unpredictable public safety events also cause unnecessary and preventable harm to young people. In research by WHO comparing 193 countries, five Arab countries were among the top 25 in the fatality rate associated with road accidents per 100,000 population, and 10 were among the top 25 in fatalities due to road accidents as a share of fatalities from all causes. Four Arab countries were the highest in the world on this indicator: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates[85]. These accidents overwhelmingly involve and impact young Arab men. Proper traffic safety rules should cover seat belts, child restraints, drunk-driving, excessive speed, and motorcycle helmets, yet many Arab countries are inconsistent with the implementation and enforcement of these laws[86].

Effective healthcare for Arab youth lies at the intersection of the provision of supportive, affordable, and accessible services and good health decisions and behaviors made by youth. How to handle current insufficient capacity of regional Arab health services is a key concern. Current health care inequities for young people can be influenced by many social factors. One factor is access – youth cannot access services because of money, distance, conflict, or other physical barriers. Yet, in some places, even where services exist, there are disparities in service quality, often for social and economic reasons. Poor health education, a lack of awareness, shortages of health professionals, basic medicines, medical technology, and differences in quality between public and private health sectors also affect youth healthcare. A comprehensive approach to youth health care is key. All policies, regardless of sector, can be viewed through the lens of whether they have a positive influence on youth heath.

2.5 Using Limited Natural Resources in Effective Ways for Sustainable Development[87]

Although, environmental concerns are not frequently top priorities for Arab young people when compared to other priority areas[88], the future of the region, and thus of Arab youth relies on environmental understanding and knowledge. Natural resources and their effective management are a core component of the human ability to develop. Without critical resources, such as water, land and clean air, there is no life. A key component of this challenge area is how to educate and encourage Arab young people to embrace and centralize all environmental issues and concepts of sustainability as youth challenges, regardless of their field of study or their profession. The Arab region faces multiple problems around natural resource management and environmental conservation, specifically around water shortages, energy, food security,

and the connection of all three to climate change and the possibility of rising global temperatures. The region has been described as energy rich, water and land scarce, and food deficient, with the three being linked in Arab regions, perhaps more so than other world regions[89].

Consisting of mostly arid or semi-arid zones, Arab countries already have some of the most limited water resources per capita in the world and groundwater reserves are being drained and used at very high, unsustainable rates. With low levels of regional rainfall, these reserves are not properly replenished. Furthermore, millions of people in the Arab countries (mostly low-income or conflict impacted countries) do not have access to consistent or affordable clean water or sanitation services. Currently, this limited water is being poorly managed.
85% of the region's water is used for agriculture, yet most countries in the region import more than 50 % of the food that is consumed. This reality is only getting worse, as the demand for resources is increasing with population growth, shifting consumer patterns, and poor efficiency in both the supply and demand sides of energy, water, land, and food. The effects of climate change further intensify these problems. Climate change would lead to both temperature increases and precipitation declines, which further contribute water shortages and severe drought and also decrease agricultural productivity by 10 to 40 %, which can both exacerbate further poverty, lead to an upsurge in rural to urban migration, and put additional strains on water, land, food, and other basic services. In short, all of the central and interconnected environmental problems currently facing the region will become more pronounced if climate change remains unchecked[90].

Reversing the course of climate change is a priority across the world and the Arab countries are not exempt from having to confront this reality. Although the region is largely desert and contributes smaller amounts to total world emissions compared to many other areas, it still carries the brunt of and is one of the most impacted by climate change. To curb this possibility, all Arab governments, except Syria, have ratified the Paris Agreement and have thus committed to reducing carbon dioxide emissions, as well as other comprehensive actions to address climate change[91]. This written commitment must be followed by concrete and comprehensive action. As a part of this, additional work can be done to educate and organize Arab youth around the interconnected challenges of water, energy and climate change.

Other key environmental concerns include coastal and marine preservation, sustainable management of fisheries, poor management and degradation of land resources, desertification, and pollution (especially air pollution). Rapid urban development combined with poor service provision (made worse by migration broadly, specifically forced dislocation of populations and increased rural-urban movement), unsustainable consumption patterns, and the impacts of conflict on the environment are additional factors to consider with regards to the environment in Arab countries.[92]. All of these impact youth as they directly influence current and future use of land and food sources, as well as the maintenance, access and distribution of natural resources[93].

The Arab region (mainly the GCC countries and Libya) produces nearly a third of the world's oil supply. The emphasis and primacy of oil in the region has limited Research and Development around renewable and green energy alternatives. With dwindling oil reserves, the need to explore and invest in energy alternatives is becoming imperative. The challenge is two-fold – how to transition economies that were built around oil to renewables, if this is chosen, and how to build sustainable infrastructures in places where no, little, insufficient or old infrastructure currently exist. The second is much easier, yet both need effective planning

and coordination. With no shortage of sun and experience in the energy sector, there is immense potential for Arab leadership in the field of renewable energy, yet this requires a new model of development[94].

Critical environmental factors are compounded by very high population growth rates, which further strains limited natural resources and has found local governments and municipalities struggling to keep up with demands for basic services, housing, and utilities[95]. Urban development, specifically, has often been unable to keep up with the demands of an expanding and very young population. As of 2010, Arab countries were home to 357 million residents, 56% of whom live in cities; by 2050, these countries will be home to 646 million people, 68% of whom will live in cities[96]. In Mauritania and Southern Tier countries, especially Somalia and Sudan, 67 to 94% of urban residents live in slums with one or more housing deprivations[97]. Rural areas may be overlooked in development schemes, causing them to fall into disrepair or not be included in sustainability planning, despite large numbers of young residents. Many young people have chosen to migrate, often to or near urban areas, as a result of conflict and political instability or for economic reasons. In many locations millions of people, many of them youth, live in sprawling refugee camps, slums, or informal urban settlements. While oil rich countries have often been able to subsidize housing, infrastructure, and basic utilities, in oil poor countries, governments have often faced difficulties in sustainably addressing the core needs of their citizens.

While environmental concerns are often low when listed in comparison to other social challenges or priorities for Arab youth specifically, environmentally specific surveys show a relatively high level of awareness on core environmental challenges amongst Arab citizens, including Arab youth. For example, in a 2015 survey[98] conducted by the Arab Foundation for Environment and Development, 72% of respondents believed that the environmental situation has worsened in their country in the last 10 years, and 82% believe their governments are not doing enough to solve environmental problems. The top five environmental problems for respondents included Solid Waste, Traffic Congestion and Transport Systems, and Industrial Pollution, followed by Inefficiency in Water and Energy Use, Air Quality, Food Safety and Quality of Sanitary and Wastewater Disposal Systems (all tied for fifth place). 88% recognize the threat of climate change, while 72% know the Arab region is the poorest in the world with regards to natural water resources. 46% believed that a lack of public awareness is the main reason behind high energy and water consumption in some Arab countries[99]. The next step is to mobilize this awareness around action to change individual and collective behaviors around environmental issues

Fundamentally, this challenge area is about creating opportunities and offering options for positive, healthy growth in both urban and rural communities, while consciously using the finite natural resources that are at the heart of and required for this growth. Furthermore, this challenge area is about realizing and maintaining environmental conditions in the Arab region that can sustain healthy populations and life for future generations. One interesting question is how to combine and integrate this challenge, and the overall transition into a more diversified or 'green' economy, into all other challenge areas, especially health and entrepreneurship. These complex and urgent concerns are inextricably linked to personal and collective health, economic opportunity, community development, and nation building. While youth do not always prioritize these topics in their daily lives, they must care about environmentalism since they care about their future.

2.6 Preserving Arab Identity and Culture in the Face of External Influences

This challenge section looks at the new stressors, influences, and inputs that are both directly threatening Arabic cultural heritage and influencing how Arab young people understand and define modern Arab culture, identity and community. The section highlights the importance of developing, fostering and strengthening a pan-Arab sense of belonging and pride in Arab identity and culture amongst Arab youth, while acknowledging the ways that technology is reshaping how Arab youth interact with, create and shape a modern Arab cultural identity and community. That is, Arab youth are both consumers and producers of modern Arab culture and identity, specifically with regards to the Arabic language. Perhaps the shapes of that cultural identity are different than how previous generations have understood, represented or recreated Arab culture. The principal point is the need to include Arab young people in a conversation about what both traditional and modern Arab culture and identity look like, what role these play in their lives, and how Arab youth can contribute to the development of both.

Often seen in connection to civilization, culture has multiple definitions. At its most basic and practical level, culture commonly refers to the broader ideas, views, values, norms, practices, behaviors, and customs of a specific group of people. However, it also incorporates a group's language, dress, and cuisine, as well as their literary, artistic, intellectual and technological accomplishments[100]. Culture, which is passed between generations by the process of socialization[101] is a defining element of a person's individual identity, contributing to how they see themselves and the groups with which they identify, as well as how other group's see and define them[102]. An individual's understanding of their identity starts when they are born and is molded by their social environment, with inputs from the family, community, media and educational system[103].

As the world grows more connected, especially through the spread of technology and the internet, there is increased interaction between people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. This connection brings with it both benefits and difficulties, that are particularly evident in the Arab countries. Indeed, many Arab youth are proudly connected and interactive members of a global community. Arab youth want to travel, study abroad and participate in a multicultural environment[104]. Yet, through this there is also growing exposure to an emerging 'global cultural homogeneity. Exposure to this culture creates many questions about definitions of "self" and "other" and "concerns about the extinction of the (Arabic) language and culture and the diminution and dissipation of identity have become omnipresent in Arab thought and culture[105]." While these fears can be valid, the ways in which Arab youth use this technology show that technological advancement and connection in the Arab world does not have to be in opposition to Arab culture and identity, and can actually be used as a tool to develop, promote, and enhance Arab culture.

The most ubiquitous form of global connection, i.e. technology and internet, has had a profound and complicated influence on the lives of Arab young people. In spite of different rates of internet connection and use between Arab countries,[106] Arab youth across the region have largely embraced technology, internet and social media use. On average, 64% of social media users in the region are under 30 years old[107]. Surveys show that social media and online communication are the main sources of information for young people, with 40% of Arab youth getting their news from online news resources and 25% from social media[108]. Facebook is the most popular social media platform in the region with around 156 million users by early 2017,

up from 115 million a year earlier, and the total number of regional accounts doubling over the past three years[109].

Membership in this global and virtual community has changed how Arab youth understand traditional elements of their culture, and has also transformed how Arab youth interact and identify with their local communities. Many young people might be attracted to foreign or non-Arab culture because it seems more "cool" and is linked more closely to 'modernity'. In someway, there is a cultural generational gap between young Arabs and their parents. This is manifested in preferences for movies, music, clothing, and perhaps, too, and even a shift away from 'traditional values'. Surveys show that a rising number of Arab youth are adopting "modern" values as digital technology reshapes their behavior and attitudes. Nearly half of all youth polled (46%) agree with the statement, "Traditional values are outdated and belong in the past; I am keen to embrace modern values and beliefs", compared to only 17% in 2011[110]. However, modern and traditional values can be more clearly identified and defined, and may not have to be in opposition to one another.

Changing values can be reflected through a change in how Arab youth affiliate with and interact with their families and local community. Despite the importance of community cohesion in Arab culture, many youth are not directly engaged or participating in community improvement projects, despite the importance of these to youth success. These forms of community giving are not seen as a priority for many Arab youth, and Arab civic volunteering rates remain the lowest in the world. For example, only 9% of Arab youth volunteer with a civic organization in a given month[111]. Active volunteers in the Arab region identified key challenges, including a lack of reliable data on existing opportunities, a lack of positive benefits for young people (such as capacity development programs), and the need to recognize the values and benefits of volunteerism on the national level[112]. Thus, despite the growing importance of virtual communities for Arab young people, there is also a need to offer spaces and opportunities where Arab youth can participate and contribute to their actual built communities.

Despite their diversity and differences, young Arabs are connected through their common native language. Arab identity is closely linked to the Arabic language and it is one of the main unifying forces in the Arab region. For example, 73% of Arab youth agree with the statement "Arabic is central to my national identity[113]". However, with increased connectivity to and communication with the rest of the world, there has been an increase in the use of English and a decrease in the use of Arabic language, with 47% of Arab youth saying that the Arabic language is losing its value, while 36% say they use English more than Arabic on a daily basis and 63% are concerned about the declining use of Arabic language. Despite this, 63% agree that knowing English can advance one's career more than knowing Arabic[114]. Interestingly, while the language was not previously supported on many social media platforms, Arabic is now being used more and is now used in a majority of social media activities in the Arab region, with 55% of all social media activity being conducted in the Arabic language.[115] North African countries showed the strongest growth of Arabic language use over social media during the past two years. In contrast, the rates of using Arabic language on social media in all six Gulf countries have dropped during the past two years[116].

The reasons for this shift are complex, however it can be linked to "the neglect that it has experienced in recent decades, since most Arab states suffer from a lack of a clear linguistic policy aimed at reforming linguistic performance,"[117] as well as a large influx of English language movies and media, and the importance of English in securing a job. Language is core to the broader Arabic cultural structure as it is connected to intellect, creativity, education,

information, heritage, values and beliefs. Yet, the language itself is facing severe challenges in accommodating to the requirements of a knowledge-based society and a predicament with regards to grammar, vocabulary, usage, documentation, creativity and criticism and the relation of these to expanding human capital for a knowledge-based economy. Additionally, the need to digitize the language and make it compatible with IT, computer and technological advances presents real obstacles for youth to integrate the Arabic language into the shape and fabric of their daily lives"[118].

In addition to increased external influences, other factors have directly challenged the preservation of Arab culture and identity. For example, political instability, civil unrest, violence and the rise of extremist group have led to the destruction of important cultural, historic, archeological, and heritage sites in the Arab region, especially in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Egypt. In addition to outright destruction, many of the sites have been looted, with stolen cultural property then sold on the international black market. However, these heritage sites are central to the legacy and identity of the Arab region and this destruction has raised the concerns of regional and international organizations and governments. In its 2016 Watch Sites, the World Monuments Fund listed seven cultural heritage sites facing imminent distributed across six Arab countries (Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Sudan)[119]. These threats include natural disasters, earthquakes, pollution, population growth, and theft. Despite the region's historical importance, many Arab countries lack comprehensive digital heritage records and this makes the threat of destruction even greater[120].

With regards to other forms of cultural production, few statistics exist on the country or regional level that highlight to what extent Arab youth participate in and spend time on artistic or cultural pursuits. While surveys show that many young people spend large amounts of time as consumers of media, especially through TV or social networks, practically no statistics properly highlight youth as creators, either of media or other creative endeavors, such as the fine or performing arts, cinema, writing and poetry, cooking, or cultural heritage preservation. Physical location often determines who participates in cultural production, with facilities, supplies, and training centers more often located in urban centers. Cost may also prevent youth from participating in artistic and creative activities. While increasing numbers of countries are investing in and opening museums and other spaces for arts and culture, to what extent these are available to and used by Arab youth remains unclear. Overall investing in arts, culture, and heritage are not seen as priorities for many countries and this is reflected in low budget allocation to these fields and a shortage of comprehensive strategies to develop them.

Arab youth are navigating a complex landscape and have multiple influences that shape who they are and what it means to be a young "Arab" in the modern world. Even with changes to modern Arab cultural identity and external influences 87% of Arab youth are more proud of their Arab identity in the wake of the Arab Spring[121]. This challenge area has to do with defining and strengthening modern Arab identity and culture, while also recognizing that Arab youth want to be connected and contribute to a global community and participate in intercultural exchange. The challenge asks, "What is the role of young people in maintaining, preserving, contributing to, and defining modern Arab culture and identity?"

3. Arab Youth Strategy 2017-2022

3.1 A Pioneering Strategy Centered Around Arab Youth

The Arab Youth Strategy paints a future portrait of the Arab region that is resourceful, energetic, confident, and vivacious. It re-energizes the region as the "cradle of civilization," a place that the entire world looks to for inspiration, guidance and direction. Around 108 million youth between the ages of 15-29 are the artists who will create this masterpiece; they represent the vibrant energy and great potential of twenty-two Arab countries.

This strategy evolved over the course of the three-day Arab Youth Forum held in Dubai in February 2017 for 150 youth from all the Arab countries. It was designed and developed by and with youth at its core - they are the ones who will dream, envision, initiate, lead, implement, assess, and further expand this strategy. Arab youth must primarily be seen as agents who can positively influence their world and as fundamental, equal partners in building their nations and communities. The future of the Arab region lies in harnessing the spirit, determination, and contributions of its young people.

When implemented, this strategy will invigorate youth, offering them with opportunities to confidently build and advance their countries and the region around optimistic, future-oriented goals. Arab youth will work hand-in-hand with other key players, whether at the government or the community level, to mold their lives and the Arab region.

Grounded in the vision that Arab youth are realizing their full potential and flourishing in a stable, safe, healthy and positive environment, this five-year strategy:

- Highlights the essential and necessary elements for youth to have a better present and future, centralizing both their needs and their dreams as building blocks and drivers of progress;
- Articulates a vision, framework, strategic priorities, and critical factors for success that can guide action-oriented Arab youth in proposing and implementing innovative solutions to key challenges;
- Outlines key features of a vibrant and enabling ecosystem and a path forward towards implementation that will allow youth to be problem solvers and find solutions:
- Calls on Arab governments, society, private sector, organizations, media and other stakeholders to engage and support Arab youth in being action-oriented and finding these solutions;
- Builds on and recognizes the efforts of Arab governments and other bodies, whether through national youth strategies, policies, programs, or initiatives, that seek to empower youth and improve their conditions;
- Recognizes the importance of and finds inspiration in shared Arab identity and heritage, while also honoring the diversity and unique contexts of Arab countries and of Arab youth;
- Honors the many initiatives, ideas, and activities already developed by Arab youth.

3.2 Strategy Rationale – Why Now?

This is the first time a unified and comprehensive Arab youth strategy has been developed on a regional level ***by youth*** and ***for youth***, and in a way that fully reflects youth aspirations and dreams for a better future. Now is the perfect time for such an effort because it contributes to:

Seizing An Inspired and Enlivened Moment for Change
In recent years, many Arab governments have been dedicating more attention to their young population. Since 2011, many Arab countries have started to develop or formally adopted national youth strategies or policies. Despite the differences that arise between Arab countries, a key feature of most youth strategies and policies are the priorities they address, such as unemployment, health, safety, stability, education, equal opportunity, and education which reflect common aspiration and hopes of Arab young people.

Despite concrete efforts and positive intent, many country level approaches have been limited in their success. This can be connected to a lack of adequate implementation and coordination, absence of accountability mechanisms, and exclusion of youth in the formulation and implementation of decisions. However, it is important to highlight that any proper assessment of these endeavors would require a full study and analysis of national youth strategies, as well as regional-level efforts.

Regardless of how successful they have been, what these efforts point to is the fact that there is clear momentum around the importance of engaging and empowering Arab youth that must be built upon. Harnessing the energy of youth is particularly critical. So many young people and decision-makers are currently committed to and working for a new reality for Arab youth. Correctly engaged with, this can create a positive domino effect, influencing other young people to step up and acquire the skills needed to be world-class innovators, leaders, and problem-solvers.

There is also global momentum, as nations see that preparing for the future requires a fundamental shift with how young people are viewed, engaged, and brought into decision-making processes. Youth inclusion is becoming a global necessity, and this provides a great opportunity for Arab countries to play a leading role in global phenomena.

Building A Strong, Connected Neighborhood
A tenacious neighborhood is comprised of alert, engaged and resourceful neighbors. This strategy will foster much-needed collaboration between Arab countries that allows them to be propelled by a forward-looking approach to shared problems, many of which are inherently cross-border. With regional mechanisms of coordination already in place, new partnerships or methods of working together can be easily initiated and maintained, while encouraging intrapreneurship and innovation within existing structures, or starting entirely from scratch. Mutual experience sharing around youth challenges and solutions, especially between countries, generates excitement and new energy.

Recognizing the interconnectedness of the region, this strategy embraces the idea that young Arabs in different countries and geographical areas can coordinate together and learn from each other to solve common problems. Morally, the Arab countries have a responsibility to build a better future for all Arab youth, regardless of who they are and where they come from. Working together builds trust and an enhanced sense of unity, which will nourish a strong, connected Arab neighborhood.

While there is consensus that youth must be prioritized, the Arab region still lacks a unified vision, agenda, or strategy for Arab youth empowerment and engagement, which results in uneven development and exacerbates existing development gaps between countries. Approaching common issues in a unified way encourages regional cooperation, shared learning and innovative problem solving.

Writing A New Narrative for the Arab Region

Young people in the Arab region want to dream and make their dreams a reality. Working together drives Arab countries to learn from their success stories and experiences, and encourages young Arab men and women to inspire each other towards greatness, no matter what the barriers. Through supporting each other, Arab youth can achieve seemingly impossible tasks.

Stories of success can be used to develop a new narrative for the Arab region, one that highlights courage, hard work, perseverance, resilience, brilliance, ability and creativity as quintessentially Arab characteristics. This new narrative will change youth attitudes, and change adult attitudes towards youth so that both are more positive. This narrative can also alter negative perceptions and misconceptions about the Arab region that may persist.

3.3 Guiding Principles and Points of Understanding

A set of guiding principles and core beliefs was central to designing this strategy, as outlined below:

Guiding Principle	Which Means…..
Youth Matter for Development	Understanding that youth are integral to Arab society and the basis for human, economic, and social development and nation building.
Youth Are Partners	Seeing Arab youth as partners in finding solutions and agents of influence and impact with a focus on positive outcomes.
Development Is An Extended Process	Allowing for the long-term developmental needs of young people within the implementation of this strategy. That is, the needs of a 16 year old may be different from those of a 25 year old. Development does not happen overnight or at only one period of time, which requires both short- and long-term planning.
Youth Development Requires Everyone	Acknowledging that successful youth empowerment needs the participation of all segments of society including the family, governments, private sector, organizations and media.
Arab Culture and Identity are Valuable Assets	Honoring that the identity, heritage, histories, cultures, and diversity of the Arab region are a source of pride and inspiration.
Commonalities Unite the Arab Region	Recognizing the diverse challenges and unique needs of Arab countries, while highlighting their shared issues and challenges. Commonalities also include a shared language, cultural traditions, and history.
Cooperation and Collaboration is a Key Factor for Success	Viewing cooperation and collaboration, whether between countries, generations, or diverse populations, as a source of strength and possibility.
Inclusivity and Equality Are Essential	Welcoming women, people with disabilities, refugees, the poor and other marginalized populations to be included in the process.
Arab Youth Are Global Citizens	Integrating Arab youth as citizens of an international and interconnected world.

3.4 A Shared and Inspired Vision for the Future of Arab Youth

A strong future for Arab youth requires a clear and collective vision that fosters excellence and commitment from multiple parties. Developed by and with the direct input of youth during the Arab Youth Forum, this vision provides a clear picture of the possibilities of this strategy:

"Arab youth are realizing their full potential and flourishing in a stable, safe, healthy, and positive environment. They have the skills to thrive in a knowledge-based economy and actively shape a bright and sustainable future, while embracing strong values and taking pride in their Arab identity and heritage. They are responsible citizens, nation builders, entrepreneurs, and empowered leaders who innovatively address present and future challenges".

3.5 A New and Motivating Approach to Arab Youth Development

The framework for this strategy was designed by and with individual Arab youth at its nucleus. This framework is based on research of youth in the Arab region and inspired by theories of "positive youth development," which can be defined as an "approach or philosophy that guides communities in the way they organize services, supports, and opportunities so that all young people develop to their potential[122]". The way this strategy was developed reflects these elements of positive youth development. 150 Arab youth gathered for workshops where they directly participated in discussing, formulating, and finalizing this strategy.

Fundamental to "positive youth development" is the notion that human development "occurs in interaction with the environment and a set of social systems. Young people grow up in families, peer groups, school, work settings, neighborhoods, and within social structures and norms. The internet adds another global dimension. Also, "it is through interaction with various social groups or systems that young people develop competencies and values[123]". Therefore, the relationship between youth and their ecosystem is not only one-way in nature. In summary, youth are definitely shaped by their surroundings, however, they also actively shape their environment.

Putting youth at the center is a deliberate tactic to shift the paradigm of youth development in the Arab region, as it refocuses on the human element of social progress, and sees Arab youth in their full humanity. Yet, it also places individuals as active players and agents in their development, improvement, and growth. This approach encourages that the strategy be implemented by youth themselves, as much as possible. Without their action, engagement, and personal investment, this strategy loses its meaning and impact. The paradigm shift emphasizes healthy relationships. Not only the relationships that youth have with themselves and each other, but with the rest of society, such as with decision-makers, local and national government bodies, employers, teachers, and their families. These external, surrounding factors and relationships are referred to in this strategy as an "vibrant and enabling ecosystem" for positive youth development and are explored further in later sections.
This paradigm shift can be understood as follows:

Older Approaches	**The Approach of the 2017-2022 Arab Youth Strategy**

Youth problems need to be "fixed"	Youth empowerment requires a focus on building strengths and capabilities, while engaging youth with to find solutions.
Youth problems are reacted to	All stakeholders are proactive in finding positive solutions and opportunities
Youth are the "problem"	Youth are the "solution".
Youth are recipients of services, advice, interventions, etc.	Youth are partners, co-creators, and contributors
Youth issues are only solved by professionals who work with young people	Youth issues are important to everyone in a community. Youth issues are everyone's responsibility.

3.6 Overview of Strategy Elements

This strategy is built around a framework that centralizes individual youth at the heart of its design. The structure is built around **Six Dynamic Framework Concepts** that are meant to motivate youth in manifesting this strategy:

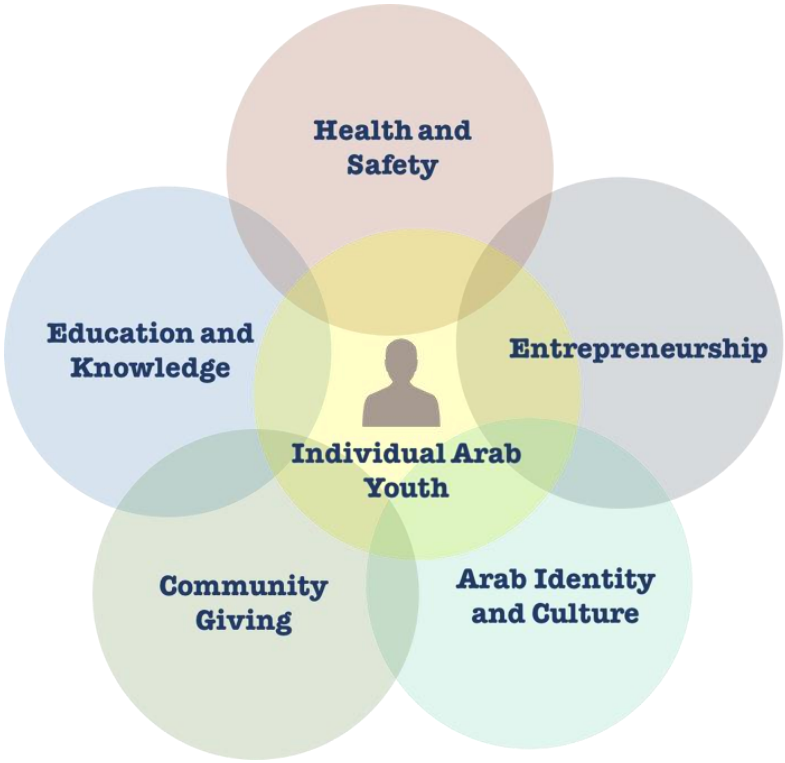
- Engage
- Inspire
- Empower
- Collaborate
- Achieve
- Celebrate

Perhaps less of "framework" in the traditional sense and more of a way for youth to engage with this strategy, these concepts guide ***how*** positive and action-oriented implementation happens in the hands of youth.

With these dynamic concepts as its base, the strategy further expands to **Five Strategic Priorities** that correspond and overlap with key challenges for Arab youth today:

- Health and Safety
- Education and Knowledge
- Entrepreneurship
- Community Giving
- Arab Identity and Culture

While individual, the **Five Strategic Priorities** also interact with and influence each other. This holistic approach recognizes the inherent reciprocity between both individual youth and each of the strategic priorities, as well as between different priority areas. That is, to be solved, the strategic priorities must be understood as both separate areas and in terms of how they relate to each other. This model depicts this idea:

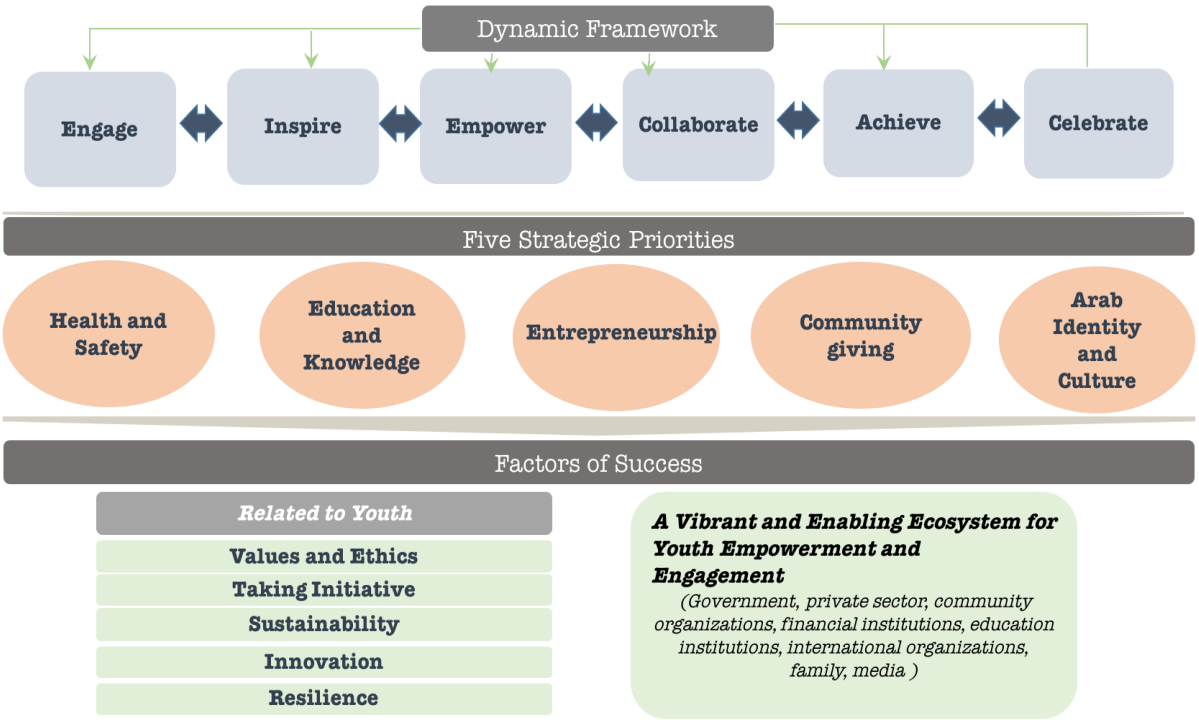


Additionally, **Five Factors of Success** uphold this entire framework. These can guide initiatives (youth-led or otherwise) in any of the strategic priorities. These five factors related to youth can be seen as cross-cutting requirements that should be incorporated into the design and implementation of any successful initiative or program.

- Values and Ethics
- Taking Initiative
- Sustainability
- Innovation
- Resilience

A final section on **A Vibrant and Enabling Ecosystem for Youth Empowerment and Engagement** describes the required roles and responsibilities of diverse segments of society in the creation of an ecosystem that supports positive youth development. It highlights the diverse contributions of governments, private sector, and educational institutions to families and the media.

Taken together, these **Dynamic Framework Concepts**, **Strategic Priorities**, the **Factors of Success,** and **the Ecosystem** can be understood through the following model:



Both the **five Strategic Priority Areas** and the **Five Factors of Success** and **the Ecosystem** will be further explored and defined in upcoming sections.

Finally, this framework is specific, but also broad enough to allow for the diverse realities and various contexts of the Arab region. How this strategy is implemented may change from country to country or even within the same country, but the heart of the strategy remains the same. Young people might interpret and use this strategy differently. Whether in cities, villages, or refugee camps this strategy can be applied and customized to individual youth regardless of their specific situations

3.7 Strategy Framework: Key Concepts in Action

The dynamic concepts of Engage, Inspire, Empower, Collaborate, Achieve, and Celebrate are fundamental to this strategy and can be used by Arab youth to ask critical questions about challenges in their lives. For example, these questions can be:

- In what ways can we positively engage in order to address challenges? What do we need in order to act or be engaged around a specific challenge? How do we engage in a way that reflects our values and uplifts our community and those around us?
- Who or what inspires us? How can we act in order to inspire others? What inspires us to build great nations, resilient cities and vibrant communities?
- How do we empower ourselves and others? What do we need to be prepared and empowered to address key challenges? How can we be empowered to make an influential positive impact?
- Who are the people or groups we should collaborate and coordinate with to make an impact? What are the skills we need to collaborate effectively with others or to address a specific challenge? How do we effectively collaborate to find the best solutions?
- What do we need to achieve success and thrive in our personal and professional life? How can we achieve and thrive despite the challenges we may face?

- How can we celebrate our own achievements and those of other young people? How do we build on our success? How do we both celebrate success and remain humble?

Every individual Arab young person may take these concepts and understand or engage with them differently. However, fully applied these dynamic key concepts can manifest as follows:

Arab Youth Engage…. with their world
Arab youth engage with challenges facing their community, their region and their world. They actively listen to all views, discuss issues in a way that open to diverse opinions, and show interest in shared conundrums. They learn from experiences that are different from their own. They see how various challenges are interconnected and view solutions holistically. They have an individual and collective ability to positively influence their world and act responsibly because they see that their actions have consequences.

Arab youth are proactive, they look for new information from diverse sources and reach out to different stakeholders who work on youth issues. They have constructive dialogue and seek to influence decisions related to their lives and futures.

Arab youth understand that they have individual and collective ability to make a difference in the world. They are engaged, empowered and actively participate in their classrooms, communities, workplaces, and homes. They work vigorously to better and improve their nations, the Arab region and the world.

Arab Youth Inspire ….. greatness
Arab youth are a source of inspiration for each other, as well as for all youth and people around the world. Through their achievements, innovations and contribution to global knowledge, Arab youth set an example of ambition, hard-work, and dedication. They move through the world with confidence in their skills, yet open to learn new things.

Arab youth are passionate storytellers and imaginative trailblazers. They use the arts, technology and other tools to assuredly and creatively share their personal and collective stories and aspirations. These stories stimulate the hearts and minds of people regionally and internationally. Arab youth embrace scientific and technological inquiry, invention, and advancement, contributing to international knowledge production.

Arab youth live an inspired, value-driven life that is rich with meaning and significance. They are dedicated to social justice, and support equal opportunities for all people in their society. They work to build equitable societies and adhere to the highest standards of tolerance, diversity, and respect for others.

Arab Youth Empower …. themselves and those around them
Arab youth empower themselves and those around them. They do so by preparing for the future and embracing education. They take advantage of educational facilities and opportunities that equip them with 21st century skills and competencies, especially those relevant to their future livelihoods. They are curious, engaged, well-educated, knowledgeable and poised. They are critical thinkers who welcome innovation and the good use of technology.

Arab youth are empowered to envision and define their success. They are enterprising and ambitious, while keeping up with a rapidly evolving world. They welcome technology, science, design, and entrepreneurship as tools that can help them solve problems and find solutions.

They seek out new knowledge and skills that will expand their problem-solving tool kit and achieve success. They continue to develop themselves outside of formal education in order to support their personal growth and leadership ability.

Arab youth are empowered to care for their physical and mental health. They are sound in mind, body and spirit. Their most basic needs, from housing to essential services, are taken care of and they have access to the fundamental things that allow them to develop. They define, understand, and embrace concepts of healthy and happy living because they understand it is the basis of their empowerment.

Arab Youth Collaborate ….to find solutions

Arab youth realize that the region's complex problems require cooperation, collaboration and communication with diverse stakeholders. Finding solutions to complex problems also requires courage, and a willingness to take risks. Arab youth find strength in working together to achieve common goals that positively influence everyone. They welcome problem solving as both a mindset and orientation to the world. They openly share their experiences and build on other successful models.

Arab youth understand key challenges that impact them and their communities and work to lessen their negative impact. When they encounter a problem or challenge they reflect, analyze them from different perspectives, and know what options they have to take action and find innovative solutions. They prepare for challenges and remain strong when confronting them. They implement these solutions, yet also evaluate and learn from their mistakes.

Arab Youth Achieve…. positive and meaningful impact

Arab youth act with integrity to achieve their goals. They emphasize high quality work and give their best efforts to what they do. They successfully and responsibly fulfill their commitments towards themselves, their communities and countries, which encourages them to work harder and expand their personal limits.

Arab youth are visionaries, doers, makers, creatives, and agents that positively influence their world. They meaningfully contribute to their economies. They are engaged in shaping their future and advancing the region in a sustainable way. Arab youth build and grow sustainable and inclusive economies, communities, and cities. They help their communities, volunteer and give to others, not for recognition, but because it is vital to their existence.

Arab youth act thoughtfully and dutifully while embodying their values. They behave in a way that supports healthy living and positive development, uplifting themselves and others. Arab youth are purpose-driven, focused, resolute, and thoughtful. They think about how they have done things and looking for ways to change or adapt their actions for the future. They are able to positively bounce back from personal challenges and are responsive in times of national emergency.

Arab Youth Celebrate…. their contributions

Arab youth offer valuable and sustainable contributions to their communities, their nations, the Arab region, and their world. They celebrate and take pride in their accomplishments to build and advance their countries. Arab youth work to preserve their unique Arab identity, heritage, history, and traditions, which they openly share with humanity. They continue to develop and add to Arab cultural, technical, and scientific achievements.

Arab youth celebrate their success, yet also practice gratitude, humility, and grace. They commit themselves to both positive self-development and to elevate those around them. They remember their personal victories, while also standing with those who are less fortunate. They take stands on complex issues, embracing environmental and social leadership.

Arab youth celebrate each other. They are allies and support other young people in their endeavors. They engage in practices of healthy competition, and commit to positive and constructive team-building, but not destructive criticism. They celebrate their unity and strong relationships, both with Arabs and other people around the world. They are proud to be global citizens who contribute extensively to humanity's accomplishments. In response to these achievements, Arab communities honor and acknowledge, their young people and encourage them towards success

3.8 Strategic Priorities

This section on strategic priorities further explores how Arab youth can address and solve problems and challenges that directly impact their lives. While it is mostly focused on what young people can do, each action area also includes elements of what should happen generally (beyond the actions of Arab youth) and who is responsible for this. These priorities represent the views and perspectives of the 150 youth participants in the Arab Youth Forum in Dubai, while also directly responding to what other Arab youth identify as priorities according to multiple regional surveys.

None of these issues or action areas can be solved by youth alone. Impact happens through multiple factors or forces interacting together. Few of the challenges can be solved without certain policy or higher-level changes. Where needed, these points are incorporated and highlighted into the action areas. While youth will certainly play a leading role in implementing this strategy, the roles of other actors in society, such as governments, private sector, families, organizations and media, cannot be undervalued and are looked at in detail in the coming section on A Vibrant and Enabling Ecosystem for the Empowerment and Engagement of Arab Youth.

3.8.1 Priority One: Health And Safety

Why is This Priority Important?

Health and Safety is the first key priority and looks at the closely interconnected areas of personal health, the broader environment and safe surroundings, all of which are essential for their healthy development. Firstly, the priority looks at the built or physical environment – the space and place that youth inhabit, and the inputs that are used to make and sustain them. The priority further addresses the need for safe and stable surroundings – whether in the home, street, workplace, or online. Furthermore, the priority looks at key environmental factors that are essential for development in the Arab region and the ways in which Arab youth can remain resilient in the face of stressors to and in their environment. Environmental factors are seen as central contributors to healthy and safe lives for Arab youth. This priority provides huge opportunities around social innovation, entrepreneurship, and volunteering for Arab youth, while also being critically linked to individual and collective wellbeing. Embracing personal health, healthy built environment, public safety, and environmental stewardship as closely

connected issues will be vital for the future of the Arab region. While sustainability is presented as a crosscutting factor for success throughout all of the Strategic Priorities, it is especially important here.

At its most basic level, good physical and mental health is what allows young people to live long, meaningful, full, and productive lives. When Arab youth are well in mind, body, and spirit, and have access to the resources and services required for them to realize this state of wellness, they can thrive in life. Healthy living, in all its forms, allows youth be fully engaged and contributing members of their families, workplaces and communities. Having strong physical and mental health allows them to have peak performance no matter what their endeavors. With an emphasis on preventative medicine and healthy lifestyle adjustments, Arab youth can avoid expensive and damaging health problems, disease or disability later in life. Nutritious and affordable food, clean water, and necessary medical services allow Arab youth to sustain themselves. When Arab youth do not have these basic necessities it is unrealistic to expect that they can fully participate and develop.

Whether in their homes or places of work, on the street or browsing the internet, Arab young people have a right to an overall social environment where they feel safe and free from harm. On a political level it means that Arab youth are protected from political violence, conflict, war or terrorist attacks. Socially and on the interpersonal level, youth, and especially young women, are safe from harassment or abuse that harms them, whether privately or publicly. Laws and policies can be designed, implemented, and enforced so that they do discriminate against young people based on their age, while also protecting them from unnecessary harm. Risk-free and stable surroundings lead to predictability, physical security, and peace of mind, which allows young people to focus, plan, and grow in new, positive, and healthy ways.

Additionally, in order to thrive in life, Arab youth also need a healthy, safe built environment, such as adequate and affordable housing and access to basic infrastructure, utilities, and services. Shelter is one of the most basic requirements for human survival. Having well-made and secure homes allows young people to put their energy and talents into developing themselves. Critical infrastructure includes the underlying foundations, structures and public works systems that allow a region or country to function. Affordable and efficient transportation systems and roadways can be designed around the needs of young people. When transportation is easy use, it allows young people to move safely and access educational, work and volunteer opportunities. When youth have and utilize core services, such as clean water, sanitation and sewage systems, garbage and recycling, energy and electricity, communication networks, and internet, they can realize a healthy, improved, connected and dignified life.

Without key natural resources, healthy and sustainable development cannot happen in the Arab region. Clean water and air, in particular, will sustain life. With the Arab world facing unique challenges related to environmental factors and natural resource management, the future of the region relies on finding innovative environmental solutions. Left unchecked, the impacts of climate change will worsen and can fundamentally shift the possibility of development in Arab countries. A growing priority will be how to transition Arab regional economies away from oil dependency and towards renewable energy. The state of the environment also directly determines both population health and future survival. A clean environment and well-maintained, available resources are the basis for future growth in Arab countries.

The shift to a green economy can create a “win-win” situation for individuals, society at large, national and regional economies, and the environment. It can create jobs in multiple sectors,

such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, ecosystem rehabilitation and protection, ecotourism and waste management. The International Labour Organization (ILO) reports that many 'green' sectors require a larger number of employees than those are less environmentally, such as organic farming versus traditional farming. Most importantly, this transition could stimulate the creation of over 30 million jobs within a decade by employing efficiency measures, mainly in energy, water, agriculture, transportation, buildings and waste management.[124]

How Can Youth Engage Around This Priority?

Arab young people must be engaged and reflect critically about their own health. Rather than being perceived simply as "patients" or recipients of services, Arab youth become active creators and agents of their health and are empowered to make healthy decisions. Starting with an assessment and analysis of personal lifestyle and behavioral decisions, Arab youth educate themselves about healthy diet and lifestyle choices. They refrain from using drugs, alcohol and tobacco. They also lead educational and awareness campaigns, especially around key issues like diabetes, obesity, smoking, anxiety, and depression. Arab youth find ways to incorporate exercise and sports into their lives and lead initiatives to promote exercise, movement, and sport amongst their peers. Moreover, they embrace healthy and positive attitudes towards challenges and in their interactions with people. They also learn about nutrition and make smart decisions about what they consume. Young people cook and feed themselves nourishing food. Arab youth help build healthy workplaces, homes and public spaces, where other young people are supported in making healthy decisions. They understand and practice concepts of work-life (or academic-life) balance.

Arab youth understand key signs of mental illness and emotional wellness, address stigma around these issues in their societies, find creative spaces and ways to emotionally support each other, and know where to go for help when they need it. They create new methods and forms of emotional support that make sense for and speak to other young people, emphasizing tools to encourage self-esteem and positive thinking. As a result, Arab youth are emotionally resilient and able to bounce back from failures or setbacks in a positive way. They understand and have tools to deal with stress and anxiety and can live emotionally healthy and stable lives by understanding and having the tools to deal with stress. They are conscious to engage in preventative measures, including the prevention of addiction and harmful behaviors. Arab youth shape their personal experiences and make choices that allow them be healthy, happy, and fulfilled.

Arab youth can play a fundamental role in building and providing youth-friendly health services, especially those studying medicine, psychology, social work, counseling, nutrition, and other related fields. They are a bridge between policy-makers, health and wellness fields, and other young people – forging partnerships, addressing laws and policy, and developing awareness and education campaigns that can speak directly to their peers. Additionally, Arab youth are interested in health fields as areas of academic and professional focus. They also use technology and innovation to improve health outcomes and deliver messages about healthy living.

Furthermore, at the individual level, youth take responsibility for their actions and contribute to collective safety and health. When Arab youth see the long-term consequences of their behaviors and how they treat people, they can become more responsible, while also seeing

whether these behaviors align with their values and goals. Young people are law abiding, and also respectful of others regardless of background or gender. They refrain from engaging in activities that harm themselves or others, understanding that their actions have consequences and repercussions. They behave in a way that is filled with positive intent, but also engage in critical reflection. Specific issues, such as lowering road accidents, eliminating sexual harassment, and reducing the threat of cyber security threats require shifting personal and individual behaviors. Thus, addressing these necessitates a public conversation around what is 'appropriate, good or acceptable' behavior, as well as what constitutes public health and safety. Youth work to stop harassment and abuse in all its forms. They understand the need for online safety and are aware of potential risks, and engage in activities that keep them safe from potential damage. Youth drive safely and abide to road traffic laws, as it is essential to responsible citizenship. Training and awareness work around these issues is led by youth, and can supplement these public conversations. Thus, public health and safety is linked to the individual and collective actions of young people and becomes a collective responsibility for everyone to maintain.

Envisioning a better reality, young people embrace planning and design for a healthy present and a secure future. Youth-centered urban and regional planning can be prioritized, where young people influence and shape their built environment. By becoming architects, civil engineers, developers, designers and planners, young people build cities or villages that directly meet the housing and infrastructure needs of other young people. When asked, youth provide their inputs and perspectives about what makes their community livable, enjoyable and healthy. In a commitment to their communities, youth empower themselves to understand how their city or village works, how things are built and maintained, and what systems keep their community running and functioning. They utilize public transportation and encourage other youth to use this viable option. They also responsibly use roads and highways, and play a direct role in maintaining them as safe and clean resources for everyone. Arab youth are efficient, effective and practical in their use of key utilities and services. They design consumer campaigns, service systems, and solutions for water conservation and efficiency, electricity or garbage and recycling that are user-friendly and youth-specific. Additionally, they start enterprises that creatively solve key challenges in housing, infrastructure and services, committing themselves to the improvement of all elements of their built communities.

Many of the key environmental issues can be addressed by Arab youth who embrace environmental leadership, which can include designing green buildings and infrastructure, preserving or purifying water resources, conserving green areas, combatting climate change and desertification, or cleaning up environmental toxins. At its heart, environmental leadership is about Arab youth thinking about the environment as central to anything they do. Arab young people take an increased interest in sustainability studies, environmental science, conservation and resource management, seeing these as the basis of future regional development. They make environmental sustainability and curbing climate change a top priority, because they know it is indispensable for their survival. To this extent they lead awareness campaigns of the dangers of climate change, pollution, and environmental degradation, and mobilize other young people to work on these issues.

Embracing holistic thinking, they see the connections between the environment, improved health outcomes, and better consumer choices, and commit to practices that support environmental sustainability. Arab youth know that they are one of the largest consumer markets in the Arab countries and understand the power of their purchasing decisions to influence social good. This is already reflected in surveys that show that 77% of Arab citizens

are willing to pay more for water, electricity, and fuel if the increase was compensated by direct social benefits, 84% agreeing that they are ready to change their dietary habits to save water and energy resources, and an overwhelming 99% saying they are willing to change dietary habit to improve their health conditions[125]. These statistics show that many Arab youth are willing to make changes that positively influence themselves, and their community and the environment.

Arab youth play a prominent role in transitioning to more "green" or environmentally friendly and conscious forms of development, building and living. As the region shifts away from oil production and towards renewable energy, there will be increased investment and job creation around "green infrastructure"; young people can be renewable energy pioneers and start businesses that support this transition. Most importantly, Arab youth lead the social education and awareness efforts that will be required for this shift and organize environmental campaigns in their communities around renewable or alternative energy, dangers of climate change, pollution, and environmental degradation. On multiple levels, Arab young people see how the environment both influences them and how they influence their environment, and the need to integrate environmental awareness into their lives and their work. To this extent, young Arabs take an increase interest in sustainability studies, environmental science, conservation ad resource management, seeing this as both central parts of personal decision -making and ethical behavior, as well as the basis for future regional development.

What Else Must Happen Around This Priority?

At a *policy level*, Arab governments can develop more comprehensive and affordable health care systems, which directly respond to the needs of Arab youth, especially Arab women and young mothers. Health care systems can also include comprehensive school counseling programs and increased support to work in mental health fields and social work. Health policies can incorporate the perspectives and input of Arab youth into health education, policy development and service provision to ensure that all health programs are youth-friendly. Governments can foster strong partnerships and collaboration between education and health institutions to integrate health education in school curricula. Furthermore, governments can invest in and allocate more budgets into building facilities and programs, which encourage youth to participate in sports and recreational activities. Policies can be implemented to offer nutritious meals in schools, as well as those that address food insecurity and malnutrition. Arab governments are required to be conscious about the health needs of youth during emergency response and the needs of youth in highly vulnerable populations, such Internally Displaced Persons and refugees.

Policy measures can also make housing, transportation and services more affordable and relevant to youth. It is important for youth to be seen as both consumers and builders of more equitable housing and services. There are multiple ways that young people can be better incorporated into the planning and construction of their communities at the government level; from forming youth planning boards to providing quotas for the hiring of youth-led planning, engineering and design firms. Governments can design urban development projects and services from the perspective of all who use them, including youth. Through participatory planning at the national or local levels, youth provide input into housing and community development projects, allowing their voices and perspectives to be included in the processes that shape their lived environment. Local municipalities can also be empowered and given more opportunities to work directly with young people under their jurisdiction. Housing and physical infrastructure development offers unique opportunities for cross-sector partnerships, especially between the government and private sector, particularly youth-led businesses.

Furthermore, governments have a responsibility to create safe and stable lived environments. Young people can be better informed about the laws and policies that impact their lives. Efforts can be made to build trusting and respectful relationships between Arab youth and law enforcement officials. Arab youth should feel that their country's judicial system treats them fairly, and that the law is equally applied and enforced, regardless of background or gender. However, in some areas, stricter laws around certain health and safety problems (i.e. traffic accidents and harassment) can be designed, implemented and enforced, with a special emphasis on educating young people around these laws.

Concrete efforts can be made to better include youth perspectives into formal environmental policy, at a local, regional and even international level. Environmental educational curricula is designed and built into standard educational requirements. Governments can offer subsidies for youth-led businesses that are environmentally friendly and committed to practices of sustainability. Governments can encourage youth to lead the transition from oil-based to more diverse economies, specifically around renewable energy production and use. Governments can also invest in environmental research and protection agencies, creating further jobs for young people.

As governments commit to realizing healthy and safe lives for young people, more holistic forms of youth development can be incorporated into formal planning and policy procedures. Any sustainable and positive youth development processes can better incorporate the relationship between personal health and the broader physical and social environment.

How Can Success Be Determined?

- Number of Arab youth with chronic disease or admitted to hospital goes down.
- Numbers of young people with key health problems, such as obesity or diabetes, decreases.
- Number of Arab youth who feel, safe, happy, content, and healthy increases.
- Number of Arab youth who adopt healthy lifestyle behaviors (i.e. stop smoking, avoid junk food, and engage in regular exercise) increases.
- Number of traffic accidents and number of youth deaths from accidents per year in Arab countries decreases.
- Number of harassment incidents, especially towards young women, decreases.
- Number of Arab youth killed as a result of conflict, terrorist attacks or other forms of violence decreases.
- Number of Arab youth using drugs and alcohol decreases
- Number of Arab youth entering the health, urban planning, design and engineering fields increases; number of young people represented or participating in key ministries (i.e. Ministry of Health or Housing) increases.
- Number of municipality planning departments with youth representative bodies and youth participation in local municipal planning projects increases.
- Number of Arab youth living in slums or inadequate housing shelters decreases.
- Number of young people without access to critical services/utilities (health, water, internet, garbage service, etc.) decreases.
- Number of youth-led startups addressing critical services, infrastructure or development (i.e. housing, transportation, water and energy) from an environmental or sustainable perspective increases
- Number of young people who see climate change and environmental issues as priority social concerns increases.
- Number of Arab youth who choose "green" or environmentally friendly products increases.

3.8.2 Priority Two: Education And Knowledge

Why Is This Priority Important?

Although presented as separate priorities, education and knowledge are closely connected to other priorities or challenges, specifically to entrepreneurship, addressing youth unemployment, and building a knowledge- based economy. Young people must not only receive an education, but a *quality* education that gives them relevant and applicable knowledge that allows them to understand themselves and their world in a more cohesive manner, while broadening their perspectives and horizons. It is one thing to give young people any information, and it is another to equip them with the fundamental skills that allow them to thrive and succeed in their future.

Education that builds key skills, such as critical thinking and analysis, dynamic leadership, technological fluency, foreign language competency, and cross-cultural communication, prepares youth for life and work in a shifting, complex world. It is important for Arab youth to be "knowledge-able," where they can put data, facts and information to good use in achieving successful [personal] development[126]. These skills and knowledge contribute to youth who are flexible to change and able to compete and thrive in various environments. Education must prepare youth to confidently interact with their community and their world, and with diverse types of people.

A critical and progressive education encourages young people to be more open to other views, perspectives and cultures. An education that incorporates health and well-ness, fosters an awareness and commitment amongst Arab youth to make healthier decisions, prevent disease or chronic health problems, and avoid behaviors that could harm their health. An education that includes logic and critical thinking provides young people with the ability to tell what is right from what is wrong and to make rational, thoughtful decisions. A technology-filled education allows young people to keep up-to-date with new technologies, innovations and inventions. This knowledge makes them more able to use these technologies to enhance productivity, achieve efficiency, and find sustainable solutions

Education, specifically higher education, is key to national economic development and growth. Education, knowledge, and the growth of 'human capital' are the foundations for the creation of a durable knowledge-based economy in the region, which requires a highly educated workforce equipped with relevant skills and competencies. Knowledge gained though continuing education and lifelong learning, contributes to ongoing youth self development and empowerment. This commitment to education makes youth independent, successful, and more productive. Education creates new opportunities, contributes to economic growth, and allows youth to be active participants in the economic cycle. As a result, this can contribute to reducing unemployment, poverty and social inequality.

Arab youth have the talent and the aptitude to learn. There is no shortage of ability in the Arab countries, but these talents have to be cultivated and Arab youth (and governments) can fully embrace the idea that "Knowledge is Power". It is the power that will fuel personal and national development and create a sustainable future for all Arab citizens. The key is to give Arab youth an education that pushes, engages and inspires them to use that power for social good.

Note: While this strategy does not formally include children under 15 or look at primary education, it is important to remember that critical educational experiences and skill building begins young, at the earliest stages of development. A strong educational foundation better prepares kids for later life stages. Thus, when they are 15 years old, youth naturally have many of the critical skills because they have been immersed in educational environments that nourish them. Thus, primary education must remain a government priority for every Arab country.

How Can Youth Engage Around This Priority?

While the process and administration of education, in particular, often lies outside the responsibility or agency of youth, they can still play a prominent role in embracing this priority. Firstly, Arab youth are the recipients and participants in the acquisition of knowledge. They must be engaged, active and committed to their learning, not only while they are in school or university, but as a lifelong process. They challenge themselves to gain and perfect new skills during and past graduation that are relevant to their careers and allow them to participate more fully in their communities and countries. They continuously ask questions and seek out additional support from mentors, teachers, and tutors to fully comprehend and expand their learning.

Youth value self-education and personal growth in an effort to learn and build their knowledge and skillset. They read regularly, embracing learning about different topics and fields through books, magazines and scholarly articles. They launch initiatives that encourage reading and take part in regional competitions, such as the Arab Reading Challenge[127]. Youth know how to uncover information from a variety of sources, including real world experience. To this extent, they smartly use technology and the internet to increase their knowledge, self-development and awareness. They know how to search for information, use electronic databases or traditional libraries, find reliable information and triangulate information. They learn from a wide variety of online courses, videos, and educational websites, Arab youth also contribute to the development and creation of these learning tools.

Arab youth study vigorously and seek out ways in which they can apply their knowledge in the real world and continuously improve their knowledge, competencies and skills. They possess knowledge that is useful to the 21st century and can be applied to future work. They challenge themselves to think critically and seek out diverse forms of knowledge and opinions. Arab youth must learn these skills, not only in theory, but also in practice, and are able to actively apply them in their lives. They innovate, create, build, invent and experiment in their learning environments.

Dreaming about their future, Arab youth think about their personal development, by defining their interests and passions, seeking advice from mentors, counselors, and professors, and exploring different career options. They understand the labor market needs and future trends before choosing a specialization for a degree. They link their present decisions to the future, building a strong a vision for their life and future success. They also seek opportunities to train, volunteer, apprentice, or intern while studying to gain experience, skills and a better perspective on the labor market. They apply their education to real world needs of their community. Arab youth are open to different experiences and trying new things. They embrace study abroad options, and see international travel and inter-cultural exchange as critical to their learning.

Young Arab thought leaders change the way their peers understand and interact with their education and the acquisition of knowledge. For example, many negative social perceptions exist around TVET, but young people can change these public views. The voices and stories of those who have completed TVET and successfully found well-paid, stable jobs can support this shift. The same is true for youth who have pursued education and careers in STEM fields or business. When Arab youth empower themselves to make smart decisions about their education, they increase their chances of finding work or having the skills needed to start and sustain their own business. Hearing from young people who have made good educational decisions can guide other youth in the right direction.

A growth in educational facilities requires increased numbers of qualified and passionate teachers, educators, educational technologists, IT specialists, librarians, counselors, curricula developers, and administrators, as well as people to design and develop innovative, modern curricula, technology based learning tools, software and more. Young people must be at the forefront of educational professions and construct new and improved educational systems. The participation of young people in transforming education offers great opportunities for job creation and personal empowerment. Arab youth can engage in education campaigns broadly, encouraging their peers to value, prioritize and take full ownership of their education and the acquisition of knowledge.

What Else Must Happen Around This Priority?

At a *policy or government level*, the most basic element of the education priority is accessibility. Meaning, there are both enough schools and universities and Arab youth can physically and financially access them. Investing in educational infrastructure, especially in places with school or university shortages, is a first step. Yet, schools, universities, and other institutions, such as TVET centers, also need to remain high quality and financially viable for all Arab youth, regardless of their class or financial situation. Spaces should be safe, have modern resources and enough teachers, and utilize updated curricula that supports innovation and creativity. Decision-makers and educators can think of education holistically, through the entire education cycle, and as connected to future employment. All levels of education can become a priority for Arab countries, reflected in both meaningful policies and investments.

Governments can set goals of universal education and 100% enrollment. Young people who do not want to go to university have access to secondary education that equips them with basic life skills that allow them to function in and contribute to a changing economy, such as literacy, computer or technical skills. Concentrated efforts must address the educational needs of specific populations. For example, young people with learning disabilities have appropriate modifications and support. Specific campaigns can target youth at risk of dropping out of secondary education, especially young women. Education must also be seen as an urgent priority for Arab youth displaced by political violence or conflict. Whether in refugee camps outside their country or internally displaced within their home country, all youth have the right to continue their educational pursuits.

Education can be further promoted as a valid professional option. Rather than seeing youth as recipients of education, educational systems shift to see youth as active contributors and builders of their educational experience. Governments can offer incentives to youth who work in education. Bringing young people into education can change pedagogical methods used in Arab classrooms. Rather than focusing on pure memorization, education can offer youth more practical, engaging, customized, dynamic, and holistic forms of learning. TVET can be

reformed so it is relevant to the changing market needs and future trends. Government-sponsored campaigns can improve how both society and students view TVET and to make them more feasible and acceptable educational options.

Updating or supplementing old curricula with new materials, pedagogical methods, experiential learning, and resources is essential for creating competitive, innovative and more relevant education that emphasizes key skills. These skills include basic literacy (reading/writing especially in Arabic, math, and ICT skills), as well as communication, financial management, teamwork, problem solving, logic, technical and vocational skills related to specific fields, and social and interpersonal skills. Many of these are required skills and core competencies for the "global knowledge economy" and are essential for employment, regional job growth, job security and businesses development. Shifting to new modes of learning requires a large investment in STEM education, but also in social innovation, entrepreneurship and building 'human capital'. This investment is especially important at the high school and university levels, so that the Arab countries can keep up with international trends and prepare for the future.

Schools and educational institutions are critical components of an empowering ecosystem for youth and can be seen as incubating spaces for youth talents and skill building. Government and private sector entities can collaborate and create supplemental activities and programs for youth in the form of career guidance, mentorships, on-the-job learning opportunities, and apprenticeships. Thus, Arab youth grow their skills and gain practical experience, so that they can assess their interest in different fields. Such opportunities can be paired with career and academic counseling, that provide Arab youth with practical information for the existing job markets and help them in the transition from school to work.

How might success be determined?

- Number of Arab youth enrolled in and graduating across all grade levels increases
- Number of Arab youth (under the age of 18) who drop out of school in order to work decreases
- Number of initiatives promoting STEM, innovation, and entrepreneurship in schools increases
- Number of young people who are illiterate decreases.
- Number of Arab universities that place in global higher education rankings increases.
- Number of new schools/universities/TVET centers built and actively used increases
- Number of new curricula developed that actively involve young people increases
- Number of young people graduating in STEM fields increases, aggregated by gender
- Number of youth engaged in mentorships, apprenticeships, and other practical learning opportunities increases
- Number of employers who believe youth have critical skills increases
- Number of research papers published by Arab youth increase
- Ranking of Arab countries in the Quality of Education Index[128] improves

3.8.3 Priority Three: Entrepreneurship

Why Is This Priority Important?
Unemployment remains one of the biggest challenges in the Arab countries, specifically for young people. While there are many ways to address unemployment, this strategy focuses on entrepreneurship, as it is the option that most actively incorporates youth in job creation. Social

entrepreneurship, specifically, gives young people a vehicle to find solutions for pressing social problems, contribute to the general good of the society, while also generating income. When approached properly, entrepreneurship can ingeniously combine economic development, employment, job creation, and social innovation[129]. Engaging in entrepreneurship allows youth to have jobs where they are challenged, continue to develop skills, and grow as leaders.

Entrepreneurship is a popular approach to economic development across the world, and it is gaining popularity amongst Arab youth who seem eager about the possibility of entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial spirit across the Arab world is increasingly evident as more youth are keen to start businesses. More than two thirds (67%) of youth agree that people of their generation are more likely to start a business than in previous generations[130]. In 2016, there were more than 200 events in MENA related to entrepreneurship, startups, technology, and innovation. The top three events in terms of attendee numbers were BDL Accelerate in Lebanon, Riseup Summit in Egypt, and the Step Conference in UAE. In 2014, those same events drew a total of 5,600 attendees, but in 2016 they had nearly 30,000 people in attendance[131].

Despite this increased popularity, many Arab countries still score low on Global Entrepreneurship indices[132], which means that there is a disconnect between the desire of Arab youth to be entrepreneurial and their ability to be so. Thus, specific attention can be given to strengthen the health and quality of entrepreneurship ecosystems. This priority encourages young people to take creative and business risks. However, there must also be policies in place to support if their business flounders. Entrepreneurship encourages calculated risk taking, which can build character and strong leaders. While more businesses are opening and there is an increasingly friendly environment towards those businesses, work can still be done at the country and regional levels to support the success of young business owners.

Entrepreneurship not only creates jobs, but it also stimulates economic growth and can be highly valuable for the region. Some estimates show that if a 10 percent improvement in the conditions for entrepreneurship were made in Arab countries, then the collective economic benefits could be worth $700 billion [133]. Entrepreneurship is both a driver of growth and a means for youth to participate in building their economies, nations, and personal livelihoods.

How Can Youth Engage Around This Priority?

At its most basic level, entrepreneurship is understood as the process of designing, starting and administering a new business. The core of this priority is that Arab youth do just that. However, with this comes both responsibility and assumption of risk, particularly financial risk. Therefore, engaging with entrepreneurial ideas means the willingness to participate in things that might not be financially successful, at least not at first. Arab youth have a right to believe their dreams are possible. They must not be afraid to try to make their endeavors real, possibly fail, and try again. Arab youth take calculated risks, yet are also given and take advantage of safety nets if and when they need additional support. Rather than being scared of failure, young entrepreneurs can navigate and confront this uncertainty, grow as a result their mistakes, and build on these lessons for future success.

Through this, young Arabs have jobs that give them life – not only in terms of sustenance and livelihood, but in terms of feeding their sense of purpose. Youth solve seemingly complex social problems through entrepreneurship. When entrepreneurship is engaged with smartly and

correctly, both the personal and the social payoffs can be great. Entrepreneurship requires the knowledge to identify opportunities, the skills needed to grow these opportunities, and a positive attitude that encourages taking initiative. Youth adjust to different contexts or challenges they may face as they start their business ventures. This is achieved by youth adopting an entrepreneurial mindset and working to build an overall environment and culture that fosters an enthusiasm to innovate, create, and take risks.

This priority is not just about youth opening businesses, per say, but about making ideas real. The fundamental premise here is that young people bring ideas and initiatives to fruition, no matter what shape they might take– new businesses, a charity, a cultural or arts center, or even a new initiative within an existing organization. Thus, this priority is also about encouraging intrapreneurship- that is, supporting creative and entrepreneurial thinking within existing organizations. In addition to an entrepreneurial spirit young people can learn how to work efficiently and produce high quality work. Youth ask, "What do we need to make this idea happen in the best way possible? Once it happens, how do we make the ideas financially viable and able to sustain? How can we do things differently? How do we approach existing ideas and initiatives in new and better ways?" No matter where they are, if young people can embrace entrepreneurial thinking, learn to see and develop opportunities, and do their best work, they can influence their world positively.

Some youth are naturally business-oriented or enterprising – they can see both an end goal and the steps needed to get there, they are persuasive and clear communicators, they are good with numbers and administration, they are not afraid to ask for investments, they take risks and they have a clear business vision. Yet, not all young people necessarily think or function like this. Thus, Arab youth seek out the skills that prepare them to start and run a business. Youth know where and how to secure funding and investments. They can understand how to be results oriented, manage teams, time, and resources. Arab youth know what they need to make ideas real, be prepared and realize success, whether through knowledge, skills, or training.

Youth entrepreneurs support each other and encourage other young people to open businesses. Youth, especially young entrepreneurs, play an active advocacy or lobbying role in order to change the policy environment to accommodate businesses started and run by youth. Many active young entrepreneurs in the Arab countries are already engaged in these efforts and continue to grow as leaders. Youth launch awareness campaigns around the importance of entrepreneurship for young Arabs. By showcasing successful and life changing stories of young entrepreneurs in the region, youth will motivate each other and help create a positive entrepreneurial culture. As a result of these efforts, societies will become more welcoming to entrepreneurial thought and action. Youth can also educate communities and families in order to gain broader support around risk taking, business ventures and youth development.

Youth actively organize and create events, online platforms, hackathons, workshops, conferences and discussions aimed at increasing knowledge and developing skills, business design and growth, and moving forward with implementation of business ideas. They communicate, network, exchange ideas, learn from success stories and each other's experiences, and engage in mentorship programs, both mentors and mentees. Online platforms are created that offer data and information about young entrepreneurs and their businesses around the region, helping Arab youth to be aware of existing opportunities. Such online resources link youth to potential partners, funds and investors who want to support them. Youth utilize business planning and strategy development as a way to think about the future and how they can make their businesses scalable and sustainable.

What Else Must Happen Around This Priority?

At a *policy or investment level*, many changes can be made to support youth entrepreneurship. Embracing and promoting entrepreneurship at a social level is about more than simply giving young people the skills to design, develop and grow their idea. Governments can be more open to receiving youth input about how an existing business environment can be more youth-friendly. Through this input, fundamental shifts can occur around policy and legal frameworks. Barriers that prevent young people from starting their own businesses can be minimized or removed, the process of setting up a business can be simplified, and certain laws related to entrepreneurship, such as bankruptcy laws, can be reviewed and reformed in order to have an environment that is conducive to youth business ownership. More youth will start businesses if the administrative and bureaucratic process of registering, opening, and maintaining a business is eased.

Creative financing options and schemes can be developed, expanded and made more easily available to start ups, Small-to-Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and initiatives, especially those started and run by young women or other vulnerable groups. Governments, banks and other bodies can develop and offer incentives and special programs for entrepreneurs. Whether through accessible funding mechanisms, subsidized workspaces or tax breaks, there are many ways to build incentives for people with entrepreneurial ideas. These can be developed according to each country's context.

Additionally, it is essential that young people have space where they nourish and grow their ideas. Entrepreneurship and experiential or applied learning can better integrated into the education system, especially into secondary schools and universities curricula, including through the introduction of specialized courses, or workshops. Whether through design labs, research centers, business incubators, or accelerators, Arab youth need to be able to experiment, prototype, design, analyze, and refine, and further develop their ideas. If these spaces do not yet exist, they can be invested in and built by governments and the private sector. Through assessing what stops young people from pursuing their ideas, the government and private sector can create proper interventions and initiatives to make the process more open and accommodating. Special attention can be given to supporting incubators in Arab higher education systems. Both universities and TVET centers can be great starting points for youth to develop their businesses before graduating.

The private sector and existing entrepreneurs can play a leading role to encourage and support budding entrepreneurs through offering specialized internships and mentorship programs for young people in different industry areas. Executives can be encouraged to step into mentorship roles, motivating young people towards success and supporting them through hard times. The private sector can also introduce competitions for new business ideas with enabling mechanisms that fund and incubate winning ideas.

Despite the risks involved in initiating new ideas, concrete measures can be taken to assist young people in businesses. Coordination between multiple layers of society and diverse stakeholders is key, with young people leading the conversation about what they need to make their ideas and for these ideas real and financially viable.

How might success be determined?

- Number of unemployed youth in Arab countries decreases
- Number of new businesses run by Arab youth that remain financially viable after 5 years increases
- Number of new startups owned and run by Arab youth and in Arab countries (not in foreign countries) increases, aggregated by age of owners and gender
- Number of young people who define themselves as self-employed or business owners increases, aggregated by gender
- Performance/ Ranking for Arab Countries in Global Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness, and Ease of Doing Business Indices increases
- Number of new laws or policies implemented at national government or regional levels that support youth entrepreneurship increases.

3.8.4 Priority Four – Community Giving

Why Is This Priority Important?

The priority of Community Giving emphasizes the importance of strong kinship in Arab societies and how these elements influence and motivate the lives of Arab young people. It is about the qualitative elements of society – a society that is just, hospitable, caring, tolerant and supportive. This is manifested in youth who have "a desire to contribute to the common good, out of free will and in a spirit of solidarity, without expectation of material reward (as the motivating factor)"[134]. Even without material reward, youth who give back to their communities and actively volunteer to make them better, solve problems, and help those who are less fortunate, can recognize great benefits. So, too, can their communities.

Globally, more than 1 billion people volunteer, the majority of them working in their own countries, with the positive impact of this involvement being improved social bonds between different segment and sectors of society, more cohesive and robust community, increased interest and activity around civic engagement and citizenship, noticeable support and input to the global economy, delivery of needed public services, as well as, growth of self-esteem and positive personality development of volunteers.[135] Through volunteering, young people can commit themselves to social improvement, contribute to communal stability, challenge marginalization and exclusion, generate a spirit of belonging, and build trust between community members. When young people are seen and recognized as being committed, generous members of their local community, they are more likely to be treated as influential individuals who can positively contribute to society as a whole. Thus, this priority highlights the importance of the healthy relationships and positive interactions that Arab youth have with each other and with other members of their community, country and region, all of which are fundamental to social cohesion and positive youth development.

Beyond enforcing the importance of being kind and generous, volunteering and giving back to their society helps young people grow, develop, and learn skills required for the job market such as leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, planning, management, creativity, communication, conflict resolution, and negotiation. Notably, in some parts of the world, volunteering is connected to a 27% higher chance of employment, and the impact is stronger for youth who do not have a high school diploma or who live in rural areas[136]. It also helps young people expand both their career paths and their worldview. Through volunteering, young people build their knowledge around areas of interest, and gain real world experience that strengthens their professional skill set. They are encouraged to try new things and find their passions in life, while also remembering the significance of remembering and improving the

place they call home. Importantly, volunteering also increases self-confidence and self- esteem, giving young people a sense of purpose and responsibility.

Volunteering and community participation give youth a stronger sense of individual and collective identity, while also growing their social network and support system. Being surrounded by a strong, supportive social network– friends, mentors, role models, coworkers, and neighbors- is directly connected to a young person's positive development and ability to navigate hardships. Whether in poor countries or rich ones, many youth seem to be drifting – often not guided by a strong sense of purpose or possibility. This makes it hard for them to identify personal goals and objectives and do the things needed to make those goals a reality. Positive relationships allow youth to be rooted, while helping them to reach their full potential.

If millions of Arab young people can instill and be driven by a sense of meaning in their lives while also giving to their communities, incredible things can happen, including economic and collective benefits to society as a whole. Building and establishing that meaning will take time and effort, but the payoff can be great. Through the support of strong social networks and the participation in meaningful community work, Arab youth are given the room to explore, develop their talents and find that meaning. Through the process of volunteering, they gain new perspectives and understand how they can contribute positively and productively to building their nations.

How Can Youth Engage Around This Priority?

At its most fundamental level, this priority emphasizes young people who believe they can positively influence things that impact them and the lives of other people in their community. Currently, active volunteerism or community work is not necessarily seen as a priority or critical thing for many Arab young people. To change this, young people commit to active citizenship and community giving. They have a strong sense of civic engagement, and seek avenues for active participation and involvement. They also have a strong sense of belonging to their families and communities. These communities uphold youth vitality and development by creating youth-friendly spaces where youth volunteer and participate. Conversely, Arab youth act in ways to improve their immediate environment, whether in the home, at work or on the street. They see "giving back" as an essential component of building a cohesive society and a healthy, just community.

Arab youth look for opportunities to volunteer whether on the individual level or through community based organizations. Where no options currently exist, Arab youth organize and create them. If nothing exists around pressing issues, young people take the lead to start and grow community-based initiatives. They also help people in need and are there for each other in hard times. Arab youth participate – in fundraisers, public service events, and active volunteer hours- on a regular basis. They proactively identify causes or issues they are passionate about and determine how they can positively engage with them. Moreover, they are advocates for and seek to increase their knowledge about things they are passionate about.
Arab youth step into mentorship positions to share their knowledge and skills with younger generations. They understand that even the smallest actions can make a difference.

Arab youth lead social conversations about what it means to be a "giving" society and how to build societies around social justice and tolerance in ways that value and honor differences and diversity. They lead advocacy efforts that address inclusive development 'progress' that incorporates all people in Arab countries, and gives everyone an equal opportunity to

participate, regardless of gender or background. Arab youth work for social inclusion and stand up for equality, recognizing the importance of no one being left behind. They are also motivated by these core ideals that guide their involvement in community work and engagement. Additionally, they commit to the discipline of personal self-improvement, specifically with regards to increasing their emotional intelligence. They are conscious individuals who are aware of their actions and how they treat other people.

Arab youth identify core needs of their community and translate these into meaningful initiatives, campaigns, social enterprises or organizations. They understand how to design, implement and assess a high-impact community initiative, whether through an organization or independently. They also understand how to delegate tasks, mobilize resources, recruit other young people, and motivate others to participate in and care about issues of importance.
Arab youth look for regional or global examples, of other youth influencing positive change at the local or national level, and they examine these to see what they can learn from them to benefit their communities.

Arab youth harness new technologies to launch creative and effective, cross-border campaigns around regional challenges. To this extent, they develop digital platforms and applications that highlight local, regional and global volunteer opportunities. Success stories of high impact and influential volunteers are collected and young people coordinate with the media to distribute these stories locally, nationally, and regionally. When fully engaged with their communities, Arab youth will become more confident and generous, while nourishing the relationships and place that they call home.

What Else Must Happen Around This Priority?

While youth have a responsibility to give back, they must also be given chances to participate, and volunteer. At a *government or policy level*, governments can establish programs for youth voluntary service, both as a way to solve pressing problems and as a way to decrease the negative impact of unemployment. Voluntary programs can be incorporated into formal education system, often as core requirements for graduation. Both of these options can foster meaningful cross-sector collaboration with educational institutions, private sector, and community centers and organizations. In schools and universities, youth are taught the importance of community giving and volunteering, and how these things support and highlight core Arab values and also help young people learn and grow. The *private sector* can also promote youth voluntary work through offering incentives to young employees, while also showing a preference for hiring youth who actively volunteer. Businesses can also encourage voluntary, community, or mentorship work as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility programs.

Local organizations can offer options for youth to influence things connected to their local community and their daily lives. Organizations can offer youth-friendly programs, capacity building and guidance for youth who want to be more involved in their communities. Youth need opportunities to engage in meaningful activities that grow their character, skills and commitment to their communities. Whether locally, nationally or regionally, organizations can play an important role supporting the development of relevant skills that young people need and giving them spaces to blossom. Moreover, organizations can better provide youth with information about voluntary work opportunities. Yet, opportunities can also be developed at the national or regional level, giving young people the chance to collaborate and contribute in different ways.

Regardless of the sector, all of these bodies can better acknowledge positive youth contributions and efforts through offering recognition, prizes, awards, scholarships, and other honors. Additionally, resources can be mobilized to support and build these youth volunteer and capacity-building programs.

At a *social level,* young people thrive when they are encouraged to find meaning in their lives, something that grounds them or helps them to focus and propels them forward. Volunteering and having access to strong role models within the context of volunteering play a vital role in this. Conflict or instability leads to confusion and unpredictability, preventing many youth from defining what they want in life and what will bring them meaning. For many, the future is unknown, however, youth are aided by strong direction and guidance from adults. When adults lack this in their lives or their lives are turned upside down by unstable conditions, this can leave a lasting imprint on young people. Adults who champion, guide and inspire youth to fully participate, volunteer, and contribute in their communities will be the cornerstones of advancing Arab society.

How Might Success Be Determined?

- Number of Arab youth involved in meaningful volunteer, charity, or community work increases.
- Number of websites and mobiles applications in Arabic language that offer or actively promote volunteer opportunities increases.
- Number of Arab youth who have a supportive and cohesive social network increases.
- Number of Arab youth with increased feeling of self-confidence as a result of community work increases
- Number of youth-led community organizations, campaigns and initiatives increases.
- Number of youth who feel they have a mentor or strong, supportive adult figure in their life increases.
- Number of pathways for youth engagement at the community level increases.
- Number of media pieces, news and articles highlighting youth community work increases.

3.8.5 Priority Five: Arab Identity And Culture

Why Is This Priority Important?

Like many areas of the world, Arab countries are committed to preserving, maintaining, and promoting their identity, culture and heritage in the face of global and external influences. Young people, in particular, are more influenced by external factors. This is reflected in multiple ways regionally – from a decline in the popularity of the Arabic language amongst Arab youth to dietary changes, often to the detriment of their health. This priority explores Arab identity and culture and offers a pathway for nurturing Arab cultural development and participation amongst young people, while also emphasizing the importance of maintaining unique elements of Arab culture and heritage. The preservation and active use of the Arabic language is probably one of the most important elements of this, as it is one of the defining characteristics of Arab identity. Yet, all aspects of the region's rich and diverse culture, including traditions, collective memory, values, beliefs, customs, archeological sites, literature, arts, music, folklore, cultural and artistic expression, dress, and cuisine are all central elements of young people's identity and existence that need to be maintained. Fundamentally, Arab cultural heritage is an asset and must be approached as such.

Arab Identity, understood as how individuals define themselves, is itself defined by collective contributions of Arab culture and heritage, and how young people relate to these elements. Modern Arab identity is an essential part of how young Arabs both interact with each other and with non-Arabs, and influences all parts of a young person's lived experience. However, conversations must also happen to define what exactly is modern Arab identity.

With some of the oldest urban centers and continuously inhabited cities in the world – the Arab region is rich in cultural traditions, and boasts unique architecture and archeological sites that highlight its diverse history. The region is home to nearly one hundred UNESCO natural and cultural heritage sites, 9% of total UNESCO world heritage sites[137]. Once revered as the "Cradle of Civilization," the Arab region can work to restore and reclaim this title. Arab cities will be at the heart of this renaissance. Recently, the connection between culture and sustainable development has been made clearer. Specifically, there is a concrete relationship between culture and urban development that is being embraced by diverse parties. A report published by UNESCO in 2016 presents a strong argument for the interconnected elements of identity, urban heritage, social and economic development, and the construction of cities. The idea of the traditional Arab 'medina', specifically, offers unique lessons for the sustainability of cities around the world[138].

Investing in arts, cultural, and heritage work can also make economic sense. Cultural and creative industries contribute up to 10% of the GDP in many developing countries and generate about 30 million jobs worldwide, employing more people aged 15-29 than any other sector[139]. The creative economy can create jobs, contribute to more vibrant cities and countries, and increases the ability for young people to create and innovate. Moreover, preserving and promoting heritage sites and building a vibrant cultural scene can attract tourists, create new jobs and boost economic growth. The possibilities for Arab countries to benefit economically and socially from investing in and sponsoring cultural festivals, performing arts, cinema, music, literature, and the entertainment industries broadly are immense. Artistic and cultural production can help Arab countries enhance their image and be used as a tool for cultural diplomacy.

Preserving the diversity of Arab heritage and culture takes coordinated effort, vision, and investment, but these can positively contribute to sustainable development, economic growth, intercultural dialogue, and global peace efforts. Art and cultural expression, perhaps more so than anything else, have the possibility to move across boundaries and borders, act as an educational tool, bring people together, tell stories of shared humanity, and shatter stereotypes.

How Can Youth Engage Around This Priority?

Arab youth understand and take pride in the things that make them Arab – their shared language, values, heritage, and histories. They are cultural ambassadors, yet in order to serve in this capacity they must develop both their linguistic and their creative talents, whether as writers, musicians, chefs or designers. Arab youth find a creative endeavor that speaks to them and develop their skills and talent in that area. They work to preserve Arab heritage through arts and cultural initiatives that are traditional and yet, allow for modern cultural development. Young Arabs sing and write in Arabic, make films in Arabic, design websites in Arabic and practice calligraphy. They cook traditional Arab food, yet also develop the cuisine in new ways. Arab youth preserve and adopt Arab customs and cultural practices that make sense for them.

Arab youth create meaningful artistic and cultural initiatives that highlight and explore social and environmental issues, such as equality, gender rights, water, and climate change. They

participate and attend cultural events, such as art exhibitions, films, music festivals, literary readings, and theater shows. Young Arabs acknowledge the importance and symbolism of Arabic architecture and structural heritage, and commit themselves to preserving and restoring Arab historic and heritage sites. Through reclaiming Arabic architecture and urban design, they see how historic Arab city centers can be used to shape and design the cities of today.

At a linguistic level, Arab youth make an effort to use Arabic more in their daily lives, and to build their skills with the Arabic written language, in particular. They create initiatives to promote the Arabic language amongst young people. To update the language so it better fits the needs of a technology-filled knowledge economy, Arab youth design software and technology that allows Arabic to be used more easily. They read frequently in Arabic, seeking all forms of writing, including literature, poetry, news, and scientific and academic research. Arab youth are active authors, linguists, researchers, translators, and publishers who work to maintain, update, and share their language.

Arab youth accept that technology can be a tool to preserve, promote, develop and maintain their cultural identity and traditional heritage. They take initiative to document their national heritage and collective memories, whether in writing, videos, photography or storytelling. Youth utilize their talent in technology to build digital heritage archives for their countries. Using technology, they can cross borders and educate themselves about other cultures, arts, and traditions. Furthermore, Arabic youth develop the Arabic language to be more compatible with international trends in knowledge and technology.

Arab youth are able to make a living from art and cultural endeavors, and understand the possibilities for entrepreneurship in these fields. It is vital that youth nurture the Arab narrative, culture, history, and identity, yet it is also important to do so in a way that advances society. Arab youth are actively interested in their historical roots, while accepting new ideas that help families survive and thrive. Moreover, it is imperative that they recognize the role that certain practices, cultural factors and beliefs can play in triggering further research and creative endeavors that contribute to new knowledge, innovation, and new forms of cultural expression.

Arab youth share their identity and heritage with the world through events, activities and the use of social media, highlighting the best of what it means to be Arab. They also educate themselves and take interest in joint Arab heritage, learning more about the history and cultures of all Arab countries, in addition to their own. Young people engage in inter-Arab exchange programs, as well as with exchange programs with non-Arab cultures and countries. They are open to learning from difference and diversity, while also sharing their cultural identity and heritage with others. Arab youth welcome cultural tolerance, acceptance and diversity, on one hand, while at the same time contributing to the active preservation and development of Arab culture, arts and identity. Embracing technology and interaction with the world, does not have to lead to the erosion of Arab culture, traditions, values or history. They are global citizens who are open to and engage with global advancements, yet they are keen to preserve their identity and culture.

What Else Must Happen Around This Priority?

At a *policy* level, governments can embed culture into all development efforts. Work can be done to increase access to arts, cultural, and heritage programs, especially in schools and universities. Dynamic, interdisciplinary Arab arts, cultural, and heritage education can be funded and prioritized across the Arab countries. Young people must be encouraged to

participate in diverse kinds of creative and artistic pursuits and to build their talents. Access includes building broader cultural infrastructure, such as museums, theaters or music halls, but also media outlets, publishers, and more. Importantly, this requires investing in and creating such places, but also actively promoting their use. To do this, governments can increase their budgets for culture and heritage work, while also supporting cultural organizations, funds, and institutions. Investing in arts and cultural work and education outside of major city centers, where such things tend to be concentrated, is an important step. Governments can also invest in and support exchange programs between Arab countries, and also between Arab and foreign countries. Moreover, governments can develop regional toolkits to enhance cultural contributions to development, along with key indicators to assess cultural policies at the regional level.

With regards to the Arabic language, extensive work and investment can happen in multiple sectors to expand the written and spoken forms of Arabic language. In order for young people to use it more, it should be updated according to how young people need and want to use it in their lives. This is particularly true for certain educational curricula in schools and universities. The Arabic language has to keep up with international trends in business, science and technology in order for young people to use it more frequently. When governments and private sector invest in cultural training and production efforts, young people have an easier time centralizing and prioritizing creative and cultural endeavors in their lives. Comprehensive linguistic reform policies can help secure Arabic's role in modern life, and a changing world[140].

The role of government in promoting youth and private sector participation in heritage preservation is particularly noteworthy. There is not sufficient involvement of private sector actors in heritage conservation and urban regeneration (especially for old and traditional city centers). As a way to boost private sector involvement, governments can encourage private sector-led heritage preservation projects and initiatives through increasing tax exemption options, especially for companies who actively incorporate and hire youth in their projects[141]. Increased investment can directly lead to new jobs and also to capacity building options of young people, which is seen as an essential task in the region,"[142] as it both teaches them about their heritage and how to actively protect it.

The broader roles of the private sector and media are also important to highlight here. The private sector, for example, can dedicate a significant part of its Corporate Social Responsibility budgets to support heritage conservation, arts and culture among young Arabs. Media should play an active and conscious role in promoting Arab culture. Regardless of the sector, any arts and cultural space can be welcoming and relevant to young people's experiences and perspectives. Whether through TV shows or museum exhibits, radio programs or blogs, this means allowing young people's voices, stories and creations to be included and featured.

How Might Success Be Determined?

- Number of new cultural prizes and honors for young people in the Arab countries, aggregated by gender increases.
- Number of Arabic films made, and translated and distributed outside the Arab region increases.
- Number of cultural heritage regeneration projects started and completed, that actively involve and hire people under 30, increases.
- Number of new Arabic cultural institutions, especially those that highlight the work of young Arab artists and cultural workers, increases.

- Number of books written in Arabic, and translated into other languages, and vice versa, increases.
- Number of hours that Arab youth read or write in Arabic increases.
- Number of museums, cultural centers, artistic/cultural training spaces, and performance spaces in the Arab region increases, as do the numbers of Arab youth using these facilities.
- Number of curricula or initiatives promoting Arab culture, arts, or heritage in secondary schools and universities increases.
- Number of Arab youth who work in the creative or arts industries increases.

3.9 Critical Success Factors

Five critical success factors have been identified that can be incorporated into any initiative taken around the strategic priorities. Such success factors encourage youth to take initiative in a way that reflects their ethics and values, in addition to being sustainable, innovative, and resilient. The five critical success factors are further highlighted here, as are key questions that youth can ask to determine if their initiative integrates and is built around these success factors.

Values and Ethics

The first critical success factor is that Arab young people lead ethical initiatives, which incorporate and are reflective of their values. In a rapidly changing world and a region where there are significant challenges – whether due to conflict or families struggling to meet basic needs– youth may be easily swayed by their circumstances and forget core values. This success factor means young people live an ethical, value-driven life and apply their values when addressing the strategic priorities. It is essential that young people and their work be grounded in values that allow them to flourish. Clear values strengthen young people's personalities and their sense of purpose in life. Defining and identifying key values, such as patriotism, respect, tolerance, compassion, responsibility, acceptance, honesty, forgiveness, and commitment is a critical first step. Values can be a guiding force for action and engagement of Arab youth. A conversation about values can encourage accountability, and lead young people to put their ideals into practice. It allows youth to be conscious and reflective – giving space for youth to examine themselves, their behaviors and actions in the world.

Key Questions That Youth Can Ask: Have we clearly stated our values in relation to this initiative? Are we open to reflect on whether these values have been present in design and implementation? Was this initiative designed in the most ethical way possible that highlights our core values? Have we explored all options and determined that this one best reflects our values?

Taking Initiative

Arab youth are always motivated to take initiative. Taking initiative is about being confident and boldly stepping into a position of responsibility. It means understanding the steps that are needed to influence positive impact and choosing them proactively. Young people are willing to make their voices heard about their priorities and aspirations, and can effectively communicate important ideas to diverse groups of people. In addition, Arab youth start and maintain partnerships and meaningful relationships that allow initiatives to succeed. Taking initiative highlights an orientation to the world that is optimistic, curious, resourceful, and spirited. Young people possess self-confidence and trust in themselves to make good decisions

and take action. Regardless of the priority, Arab youth seek to push themselves outside of their comfort zones in order to make things happen, beginning even with the smallest of steps. However, taking initiative does not mean acting blindly or without thinking. Rather, youth take initiative in a way that is thoughtful, logical and analytical without being fearful or hesitant.

Key Questions That Youth Can Ask: How can we take initiative around this issue or challenge? What do we need to take action? Have we identified key partnerships and formed key relationships? How can we have an impact? Are we reflecting about how we act? Are we confident in our actions and process? Do we possess clear visions for what we are doing?

Sustainability

Sustainability is often used in reference to protecting the environment or using methods that do not completely use up or destroy natural resources. While, sustainability definitely includes this, the definition is viewed more expansively in this strategy. Simply, sustainability refers to something being used without being completely used up or destroyed, or to describe something that can last or continue for a long time. It describes a capacity to endure and a process for building things that last. Thus, sustainability can refer to job creation or entrepreneurship, individual health and well-being, and all other areas in this strategy. When designing strategies and solutions, Arab youth look at ways of maintaining, sustaining and scaling progress and integrating these throughout the planning and implementation process. They approach sustainability both as a success factor for any initiative, and also in terms of how they live.

Key Questions That Youth Can Ask: Was this initiative designed from the perspective of sustainability (both in terms of time and resources)? Is this initiative mindful of the environment? Can this initiative endure far into the future? What is needed for this initiative to last and be scaled?

Innovation

The complex challenges facing Arab youth and the fast pace of change that the world is witnessing, require thinking of alternative and new ways, methods and models to identify solutions and solve problems. Innovation should be integrated as a mindset and creative approach to overcoming challenges. Innovation itself is an action-oriented process. Showing young people how to engage in innovative practices, in any part of their life, can lead youth towards finding their own answers and solutions. Technology can play a critical factor in this, but 'innovation' can exist in any context, even where technology does not exist. Arab youth think about how innovation can be applied in their daily lives, in their homes, places of work and in their initiatives. Innovation can be applied anywhere, in any field, and during any process.

Key Questions That Youth Can Ask: How do we use innovation to look at and approach things in new and different ways? How can we see this problem or challenge in a new light? Can we see this issue from another perspective? What are the creative and different ways in which we can think about this problem?

Resilience

Resilience refers to the ability to be strong, healthy, or successful again after unplanned, bad or unexpected events. Both individuals and groups or communities can be resilient. This

concept is critical in the context of the Arab region, which in many places is defined by unpredictable and stressful living conditions or concentrated problems, that can cause stress at an individual or collective level. Shocks or unplanned events at the community level can be violence, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, impacts of climate change, and other large-scale events. On a personal level, individuals can be resilient in the face of illness, unemployment, addiction, poverty or failure. However, resilience can also simply mean being able to manage and adapt to any changes that happen. Understanding resilience and its importance can help Arab youth in designing and implementing initiatives that are able to withstand or adjust to changing circumstances and environments. It makes them more savvy and less prone to stress or anxiety when things do not go as planned. Instead, they are able to go with whatever life may bring them and effectively plan to prevent undue damage.

Key Questions That Youth Can Ask: Are we resilient in the face of shocks or unplanned events? Can this initiative withstand external shocks or challenges? In what ways does it emphasize or contribute to resilience? How do we build resilient communities and initiatives? Are we prepared and do we have contingency plans? What does it mean for us to "bounce back" after something goes wrong?

3.10 A Vibrant and Enabling Ecosystem for Youth Empowerment and Engagement

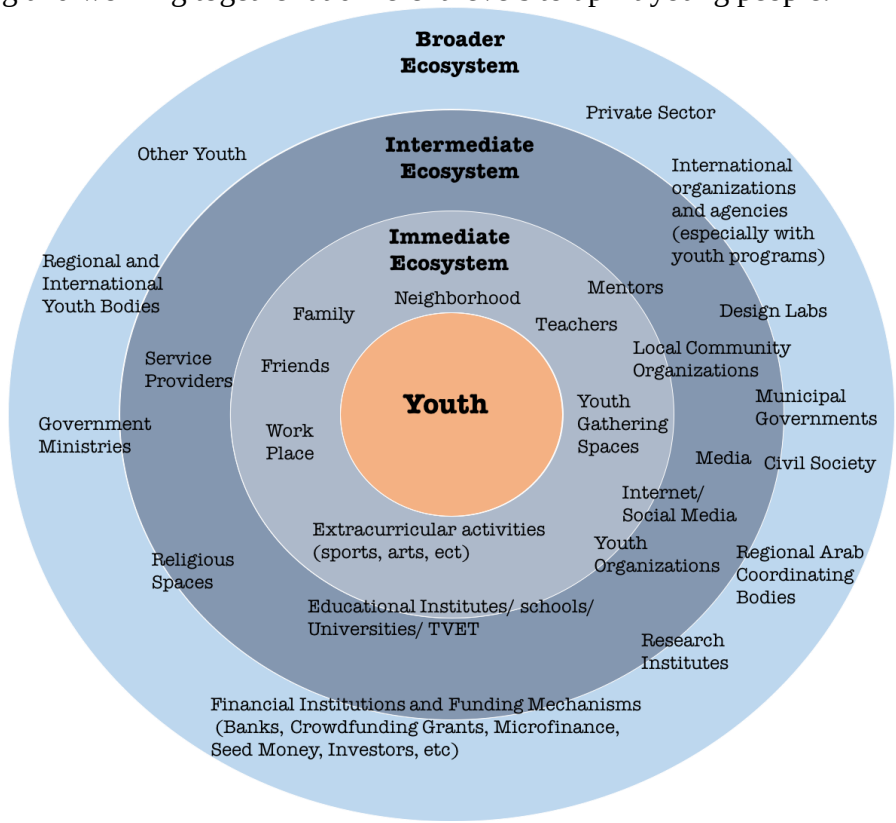
At its most basic definition an ecosystem is all of the components of a specific environment. One of the key elements of an ecosystem is how its different parts are interconnected to and interact with each other. Ecosystems are often complex, but are also adaptive, and they can change over time.

In order to create and sustain a vibrant and enabling ecosystem for youth empowerment and engagement, it is necessary to first define who or what is involved in this ecosystem, and what role they currently or could play in empowerment initiatives. This section looks at what these parties can do to build this environment right now. It is also important to see how different sections and levels of an ecosystem are interacting and coordinating with each other, and in which ways they depend and rely on each other.

On a general level, there is a need to develop evidence-based policies, programs or interventions that are meaningful, efficient and have higher impact. This is true at nearly all levels of the ecosystem. Yet these can only be designed through the collection, analysis, organization, and distribution of current and comprehensive data at the local, national and regional level. At all levels of the ecosystem, different stakeholders have a responsibility to generate and produce youth-centric knowledge and statistics and to make this information publically accessible.

The chart below helps to break down this idea. In the center are individual youth. The immediate ecosystem of young people consists of their closest surroundings that they interact with daily, such as their family, friends, teachers, neighborhood, schools, work places, where they gather to socialize and relax. The intermediate level consists of community-level bodies, such as municipal governments, community organizations, and the media. The broader ecosystem consists of higher-level bodies, such as government ministries, the private sector, financial institutions, international agencies and organizations. Many stakeholders straddle different levels of the ecosystem and are not necessarily clearly in one level versus another, showing the flexible nature of an ecosystem. An ideal and fully effective ecosystem for youth

empowerment and engagement should include the active involvement of all these stakeholders, coordinating and working together at different levels to uplift young people.



It is necessary to remember that an ecosystem is composed of both individual actors and groups or institutions. While a collective body, such as a governmental ministry, may exist regardless, they might not be prioritizing youth empowerment and engagement. Thus, collective bodies need to be composed of individuals, at least one, but preferably more, who actively champion and work to advance youth empowerment and who make youth empowerment part of their mandate, mission, and daily work.

Examples of what specific bodies or individuals can do to build an enabling and empowering environment for youth are explored below. It should be noted that this is not a comprehensive presentation of an enabling environment, but does offer concrete suggestions.

National and Local Government Level

- Youth-Centric Policies and Strategies: National government ministries can develop and adopt short, medium and long-term youth-centric policies and strategies with clear objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). While these can start at a small level, it is important to develop implementation mechanisms and programs that are scalable. Government policies must be cross-sector to be fully effective. At an individual level, this requires that relevant ministers are engaged in and responsive to youth issues, and that there is increased coordination between different ministries or government bodies.

- Educational level: Implement reforms related to the educational system in order to meet the needs of youth, job market, and future trends. Ensure that the education system and curricula gives youth key skills and knowledge for the 21st century. Design and invest in creative curricula for entrepreneurship, innovation, STEM and other key subjects.

- Regulatory and Legal Environment: Introduce or amend laws and regulations and offer incentives that would create an attractive environment for businesses and investors and enable them to create more jobs for youth. It is also important for laws and regulations be implemented to support startups and small-to-medium enterprises and to foster their growth and development. This will encourage more Arab youth to follow the path of entrepreneurship.

- Youth Inclusion, Participation in Decision-Making, and Citizen Engagement: Actively engage youth in designing policies and strategies that affect their lives, as well as giving them chances to offer feedback on policies or programs. Offer government sponsored internships and volunteer programs to expose and involve young people to formal governmental processes at the local, national and regional level. Bring youth into local councils or decision-making bodies. Engage youth in local/regional planning and design efforts and implementation. Provide young people with guidance and trainings on how to better understand their rights, roles and responsibilities.

- Increased Collaboration with Private Sector: Increase Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and improve cooperation with the private sector through the implementation of joint large scale projects that would create new jobs for youth. Governments offer incentives for private sector businesses that prioritize youth employment and engagement. Government bodies work closely with the private sector and leverage its experience, to identify skills, needs and future trends. Governments also take immediate measures to reform the education system to be aligned with current and future demands.

- Youth Conscious Budgeting: When designing national budgets, governments are conscious of youth needs, and fund relevant programs. Allocate larger budgets and invest more in sectors that are important for youth development, such as health, education, entrepreneurship, and technology.

- Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET): Invest more TVET centers and lead public campaigns to change attitudes about technical training opportunities. Offer incentive packages for students and young workers to attend vocational centers.

- Critical Infrastructure and Services: Offer youth friendly services, especially in education and health sectors. Governments can also offer affordable housing, public transportation or utility subsidies that target young people. In addition, host training for staff in diverse departments on youth-friendly policy, infrastructure and service provision.

- Transparency and Accountability: Ensure effective implementation of youth policies, strategies and programs, with mechanisms in place to ensure that these are transparent and responsible, so that people can be held accountable.

- Access to Information: Collect quality and accurate information on youth to inform the design of new strategies and programs, and make this information accessible to the public.

- Promote the Achievements of Young People: Recognize and celebrate youth success stories through national awards, competitions, and events.

- Social Media: Use social media platforms and new technologies to reach and engage more young people across all the above-mentioned interventions.

Private Sector

- Focus on job creation and growth with an emphasis on job creation for young people, especially those who possess required skills for the labor market.

- Explore hiring quotas for Arab youth, particularly those from the local community, in order to give them opportunities.

- Support entrepreneurship, innovation training and mentoring; help youth acquire the right skills to become entrepreneurs and innovators.

- Provide apprenticeship, internship and fellowship programs that help Arab youth in their transition from universities to work and develop their real life skills.

- Focus on corporate social responsibility budgets and programs to give back, support and empower youth work at the community level.

- Develop incentive programs to get and retain top young Arab talent, in coordination with the government, in order to prevent emigration or 'brain drain'.

- Consider and include youth in business strategies and plans, this can include youth market research and engagement, and how to bring in young people into the structure of a business.

- Raise awareness among youth of market needs, required skills and future trends and engage in the design of curricula and training programs in coordination with universities and governments.

- Invest in leadership development and continuing education options for bright, committed, and young employees that are affordable, connected to their work, and challenging.

- Offer scholarships to Arab students to continue their education or training, especially if they choose fields where there is a high demand for such skills and knowledge.

- Build and invest in incubators and accelerators for startups that target young entrepreneurs, and for businesses that have a strong success or sustainability rate.

Financial Institutions and Funding Mechanisms

- Support financial inclusion by creating youth-friendly finance and credit schemes that are easy to access and understand.

- Grow youth financial literacy by offering free or affordable financial services and education that teaches young people about personal financial planning, budgeting, saving, terminology, and accounting.

- Encourage youth to invest in savings accounts and encourage saving as opposed to spending.

- Invest in and support community development programs that work with youth, both as a form of corporate social responsibility and as a direct way to build the skills of young people.

- Develop specific options to finance and invest in youth startups, small businesses and other initiatives that encourage accountability and good governance.

Community or Charity Organizations

- Build and lead high-impact voluntary, charitable, and civic engagement programs that directly recruit, mobilize and invigorate youth around key community issues or strategic priorities.

- Support volunteers in helping their communities through offering capacity building courses, physical or human resources, emotional support, mentorship, strategic guidance and networking opportunities.

- Encourage youth participation by helping youth find their 'cause' or passion, and giving them a chance to lead initiatives or local campaigns.

- Increase both community and governmental advocacy efforts to raise awareness about specific youth challenges or problems, youth-friendly policies and development.

- Provide current and organized data on voluntary opportunities, capacity building, positive impacts of volunteering, training programs, and resources for volunteers

International Organizations

For many young people, especially those impacted by violent conflict, more of their interactions (or rather services/support) might be provided by international or humanitarian organizations, thus it is essential that these players be seen as part of the ecosystem

- Continue to develop youth-centric programs and projects and fund such interventions, working in close coordination with governments, community organizations and youth in positive, mutually beneficial ways.

- Advocate, especially at the international level, to encourage youth-centric policies, budgets, programs, and government interventions that support the positive and healthy development of Arab youth.

- Provide advice, capacity building and technical assistance to Arab governments to develop youth policies and strategies.

- Offer opportunities for international networking, and the exchange of information, success stories, and lessons learned between different countries and regions.

- Share cases, models, leading practices and success stories from around the world with governments to inform policy-making and youth strategy development.

Educational Institutions

- Update curricula to align with market needs and future trends; emphasize 21st century skills building and knowledge, specifically STEM education.

- Develop and offer innovative curricula and experiential learning tools that engage, inspire and involve Arab youth in their learning.

- Commit to building safe, welcoming and creative spaces for learning that prioritize the health and positive development of Arab students.

- Support teachers so they can better assist and educate their students through generous payment and benefit packages, personal and career development opportunities, and safe working conditions.

- Work closely with startups/SMEs working on educational issues as a way to solve problems around methodology, pedagogy, learning tools, and curricula.

Family

- Provide support to youth and encourage them to be engaged and active in their education, communities, and extracurricular activities.

- Listen to the ideas and concerns of young people through reciprocal and respectful conversation.

- Believe in Arab youth and their potential, and encourage them to grow, take risks, succeed and be contributing members of society.

- Urge youth to explore new endeavors, embrace learning, curiosity, and knowledge development that is relevant to their future and their ability to navigate a changing world.

- Offer a nourishing, safe and protective domestic environment where young people's basic needs are met so they can thrive.

Media

- Create and disseminate stories connected to youth issues and specifically to youth success so that social perspectives about Arab youth can be more positive (both locally, regionally and internationally).

- Lead and shape public conversations around youth issues, especially those that directly engage and empower young people to produce and participate in media pieces or other documentation.

- Give voice to youth and allow them to share their aspirations and views through both youth specific channels, as well as those geared towards the general public.

- Develop unique modes for youth participation, such as youth talk shows, youth blogs, interactive social media, websites, and more.

Regional Level

- Develop new modes and mechanisms of cooperation to improve regional coordination efforts around youth issues, especially for existing regional bodies.

- Enhance cooperation and collaboration between Arab countries on youth related issues through conferences, websites, information and knowledge sharing, experience and success stories.

- Commit to generating regional-level knowledge – collect and publish comprehensive regional data in a way that is accessible (electronic, updated, and multi-lingual).

- Work collectively on introducing youth initiatives and programs on the regional level.

- Collaborate to create funding mechanisms dedicated to supporting the implementation of youth-led initiatives and programs.

3.11 The Path Forward: How to Implement This Strategy

Youth programs in the Arab world that were developed in a way that addresses youth as the "problem" instead of the "solution" proved not to be fully successful. Additionally, those that were country-specific were limited in scope and vision with regards to larger, regional problems that impact Arab youth. Therefore, this strategy proposes an approach that recognizes youth as key players in the process of identifying challenges and not only proposing, but also implementing solutions. A youth-led, regional approach is what differentiates this strategy from previous national-level strategies.

Arab youth are the primary stakeholders who will implement this strategy, supported by key players in diverse sectors and vibrant youth-friendly ecosystems. At the helm of this strategy, are responsible and forward thinking youth who are willing to take action to influence and implement positive results-oriented initiatives. However, the way forward and success of this strategy requires the support of multiple players and actors, with actions taken simultaneously at multiple levels.

Additional actions can support the implementation of this strategy. Perhaps most importantly, is a commitment from different parties, especially governments, to coordinate around the collection, analysis and dissemination of accurate data on Arab youth. This data must be accurate, comprehensive, and collected at a local and regional level in order to properly develop evidence-based initiatives and policies. Youth councils or boards can be created at the local and regional levels that work closely with different bodies in the government and private sector. Finally, it is necessary that substantial investments support brilliant ideas generated by Arab youth. Without investment and policy change, young people will be limited in their ability to properly execute their ideas.

1. Conclusion

The meaningful contributions of Arab young people are directly connected to the present and future development of the Arab countries. However, in order to fully contribute, Arab youth require key skills, knowledge, capabilities and opportunities that will allow them to succeed

and navigate a complex region and world. This strategy, the first one that has been designed on a regional level by and for Arab youth, outlines how this can be actualized. The strategy reflects how Arab youth view and understand their challenges, their future, and their role in advancing their countries and the Arab region.

Improving the conditions of Arab youth and giving them a chance at a better future is a collective effort that begins with youth, but also requires the support of other stakeholders. When youth are fully engaged, inspired and empowered to make a difference and take action, they can contribute to and positively develop their communities, nations, and the entire Arab region. As they collaborate to find solutions, Arab youth will surely make a positive impact and achieve greatness. It is important that Arab youth celebrate their progress, while continuously working for personal and collective advancement.

Driven by this strategy, youth will continue to ask critical questions over the next five years, embrace creative action, identify innovative solutions to existing challenges, and play a leading role in implementing these solutions. This strategy will only be successful through the consistent, prolonged, and enthusiastic involvement of Arab youth. Youthful energy is the lifeline of the Arab region.

Endnotes

[1] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2016. This percentage includes children under age 15, as well.
[2] Source: Arab Youth Survey 2015
[3] The 22 Arab Countries are: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates.
[4] Source: UN Definition of Youth Factsheet
[5] Source: UN Definition of Youth Factsheet
[6] Other documents on youth include ages 15-29, such as the Arab Human Development Report 2016
[7] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2016
[8] Source: The Arab Millennium Development Goals Report and Arab Sustainable Development Report 2015
[9] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2016
[10] Source: Arab Development Challenges Report 2011
[11] Source: Arab Youth Survey 2016 - 78% of youth reject ISIS/Daesh outright, and 50% think Daesh is the biggest challenge facing the region: See Also Arab Human Development Report 2016 showing information from the Doha Institute that in most countries more than 80% of young people view Daesh negatively.
[12] Sources: Arab Countries in Transition: Economic Outlook and Key Challenges IMF 2014 and Toward New Horizons - Arab Economic Transformation Amid Political Transitions 2014
[13] Source: Arab Opinion Index 2015
[14] Source: Arab Youth Survey 2015
[15] Source: Arab Opinion Index 2015
[16] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2016
[17] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2016
[18] Source: This number represents the number of Palestinian refugees formally registered with the United Nations. Source: UNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2015
[19] Source: UNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2015
[20] Source: UNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2015
[21] Source: UNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2015
[22] Source: Arab Millennium Goals Report
[23] Source: Arab Youth Survey 2016
[24] Source: Arab Opinion Index 2015
[25] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2016
[26] Sources: Arab Youth Survey 2015, UN MyWorld Survey, and Arab Opinion Index all list these as top priorities. Arab Human Development Report 2016 shows that the 2014 Arab Barometer for 12 Arab countries reflects the top challenge area as: Economic Situation (poverty, unemployment, and price increases) - 75.77%
[27] Source: World Bank Database – Employment to population ratio.
[28] Source: Challenges in the Arab World: An ILO Response
[29] Source: Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of men and women
[30] Source: Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of men and women
[31] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2016
[32] Source: Addressing the 100 Million Youth Challenge
[33] Source: Addressing the 100 Million Youth Challenge
[34] Source: Challenges in the Arab World: An ILO Response
[35] Source: Arab Knowledge Report 2014
[36] Source: Arab Youth Survey 2016
[37] Source: Arab Knowledge Report 2014
[38] Source: Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of men and women

[39] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2016
[40] Source: Arab Youth Survey 2016
[41] Source: Expo 2020 GCC Youth Survey
[42] Source: Arab Knowledge Report 2014
[43] Source: World Bank Ease of Doing Business ranking 2016
[44] Source: Magnitt Directory
[45] Sources: Set Them Free: Startups in the Arab; Education For Employment: Unleashing the Potential of Arab Youth. These points are also highlighted in multiple other reports, including those by the IMF and World Bank. For example, see: Arab Countries in Transition: Economic Outlook and Key Challenges IMF 2014
[46] Source: Global Competitiveness Index 2016-2017
[47] Measures the health and quality of the entrepreneurship ecosystems in 137 countries.
[48] Source: Global Entrepreneurship Index 2017
[49] Source: The 2016 Global Innovation Index (GII); GII aims to capture the multi-dimensional facets of innovation and provide the tools that can assist in tailoring policies to promote long-term output growth, improved productivity, and job growth. The overall GII score is the simple average of the Input and Output Sub-Index scores. It covers 138 economies around the world. https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/analysis-indicator
[50] As with other indices, there is a gap in between Arab countries, UAE ranked at 41 globally and first in the region. Out of the 128 countries included in the index: Saudi Arabia at 49, Qatar 50, Bahrain 57, Kuwait 67, Lebanon 70, Morocco 72, Oman 73, Tunisia 77, Jordan 82, Egypt 107, Algeria 113, Yemen 128
[51] Source: Preparing Arab Youth for the World of Work
[52] Source: Arab Knowledge Report 2014
[53] Source: Global Youth Employment Trends 2015
[54] Source: The Arab Millennium Development Goals Report 2013
[55] Source: Challenges in the Arab World: An ILO response
[56] Source for all statistics: Arab Opinion Index 2015
[57] Source: Arab Youth Survey 2010
[58] Source: Arab Knowledge Report 2014
[59] Source: Arab Knowledge Report 2014
[60] Competiveness Rankings – World Economic Forum
[61] Source: Arab Knowledge Report 2014
[62] Source: Arab Knowledge Report 2014
[63] Source: Arab Knowledge Report 2014
[64] Source: Education for Employment: Realizing the potential of Arab youth
[65] Sources: Arab Knowledge Index 2015, Arab Knowledge Report, and Education for Employment: Realizing the Potential of Arab Youth.
[66] Source: Matching confidence with competitiveness: 16th Annual Middle East CEO Survey
[67] Source: Education for Employment: Realizing Youth Employment
[68] Source: Education for Employment: Realizing Youth Employment
[69] Source: Arab Knowledge Report 2014
[70] Source: Shanghai Ranking 2016
[71] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2016
[72] 15-19 years in Kuwait and UAE, 20-24 years in Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia, and the 25–29 age-group faces a higher burden of mortality, accounting for around 40 percent of all deaths among youth deaths in all Mashreq countries, Maghreb countries, except Tunisia, Qatar and the least developed countries in the region.
[73] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2016
[74] DALY is a common public health and medical term. One DALY can be understood as one lost year of "healthy" life. The sum of DALYS across a specific population, also known as the burden of disease, can be thought of as a measurement of the gap between current health status and an ideal health situation where the whole population lives to an advanced age, free of disease and disability. See: World Health Organization
[75] Source: Arab Environment 9 - Sustainable Development Report 2016 in a Changing Arab Climate

[76] Source: Arab Environment 9 - Sustainable Development Report 2016 in a Changing Arab Climate

[77] Those countries are Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and UAE
[78] Source: WHO-EMRO website page on obesity
[79] Noncommunicable diseases are medical conditions and diseases that are not caused by infectious agents. NCDs are frequently chronic, defined by slow progression over longer periods of time. NCDs are the leading cause of death across the world.
[80] Source: Obesity-Linked Diabetes in the Arab World: A Review
[81] Source WHO website and Arab Human Development Report 2016
[82]Malnourishment mostly impacts 9 Arab countries, mainly Comoros and Somalia, where more than 60% of people are impacted by it, but undernourishment is also prevalent in Iraq, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen.
[83] Source: Arab Millennium Development Goals Report

[84] Sources: Arab Human Development Report 2016 and Arab Millennium Development Goals Report
[85] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2016
[86] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2016
[87] For additional references on Sustainable Development see: Sustainable Development Goals website.
[88] This is represented in the UN MyWorld survey where youth put environmental concerns as their lowest priority of 16 priorities.
[89] Source: Arab Environment 9 - Sustainable Development in a Changing Arab Climate
[90] Sources: Arab Environment 9- Sustainable Development in a Changing Arab Climate, Environment Outlook for the Arab Region, and The State of Arab Cities 2012- Challenges of Urban Transition
[91] Source: UN and Climate Change website. At the Paris Climate Conference (COP21) in Dec 2015, 195 countries adopted the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal.
[92] Source: Environment Outlook for the Arab Region
[93] Source Environment Outlook for the Arab Region
[94] Sources: Arab Environment 9- Sustainable Development in a Changing Arab Climate
[95] Sources: Environment Outlook for the Arab Region and The State of Arab Cities 2012- Challenges of Urban Transition.
[96] Furthermore, according to African Development Bank Group 70% of Algeria's 40 million people were living in urban areas by 2015. Egypt and Tunisia have also experienced particularly large rates of rural-urban migration.
[97] Source: The State of Arab Cities 2012- Challenges of Urban Transition.
[98] 40% of respondents were Arab youth under 30
[99] Source: Consumption Patterns in Arab Countries: AFED Public Opinion Survey
[100] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2003
[101] Source: Culture and Identity
[102] Source: Culture and Identity
[103] Source: Cultural Exchange NSW
[104] Source: Expo 2020 GCC Youth Survey
[105] Source: Arab Human Development Report 2003
[106] Source: Arab Knowledge Report 2014
[107] Source: Arab Social Media Report 2017
[108] Source: Arab Youth Survey 2015
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[110] Source: Arab Youth Survey 2014
[111] Arab Human Development Report 2016
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[128] A sub index of the Global Competitiveness Index
[129] Social innovation refers to the process of using and finding new solutions to social problems that are more just, effective, sustainable, and efficient than current, existing ones. Value is accrued mostly to society as opposed to individuals. Source: Stanford Center for Social Innovation.
[130] Source: Arab Youth Survey 2014
[131] Source: Wamda website
[132] Source: Global Entrepreneurship Index
[133] Source: Wamda website – Based on the estimates of the Global Entrepreneurship Index 2017
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