

# Arab Youth Report 2012

*A Work in Progress*

November 14, 2011

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# An Arab Youth Report for 2012

## Challenges

- A highly volatile political scene with some Arab Spring movements in gestation and others taking fledgling steps
- An uneven evidence base: countries with rich data and others with very little
- Arab youth are a very diverse group, particularly across income country groups

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## Supporting Factors

- There is no need now to justify a research- / policy-focused agenda on youth
  - Though we worry about tokenization and sole focus on male unemployed youth
- There is no need to justify listening to young people
- We don't start from scratch. The issues have been identified – need now to ask better questions and seek workable solutions

# Methodology

- A stock-taking exercise
- FGDs by UNFPA
- Contributions by Young People through LAS Competition

# A Working Framework

The five life transitions as a conceptual tool:

- Staying Healthy
- Getting an education
- Employment and livelihood
- Family formation
- Civic participation

# Staying Healthy

- Very gendered health outcomes
- High rate of smoking, Lebanon/Egypt
- Upside: very low prevalence of HIV
- BUT: low rate of “comprehensive knowledge” about HIV (21% of those 15-24, EDHS08)
- Nutrition, obesity and malnourishment
- Females carry the brunt of early marriage and FGM in certain areas

# Education:

- **Enormous variations**: only 30% of young females enrolled in secondary education in Yemen vs. 98% in UAE, 86% in Algeria and 77% in Egypt
- About 2 million young people (10-29) in Egypt have never been to school. (13% of females and 3% of males).
- The common pattern is that those who are out of school are primarily females, rural, issue of language minorities

# Education:

- Higher education is a privilege to the rich and the urban.
- Relevance of higher education to labor market needs is weak, STWT surveys confirm this
- Concerns over quality of education: TIMSS and PISA scores vary but are not high even in some oil-rich countries



# Unemployment:

- The region with the highest unemployment rate in the world (25% vs. 14.4%, WB 07)
- Youth are 80% of the unemployed in Egypt, 40% in Lebanon, 20% in Morocco (ibid.)
- Figures of unemployment fail to capture joblessness, discouraged labor and the underemployed
- An increasingly growing educated youth population and a slow pace of job creation

# Employment:

- Job creation for youth has been primarily through the private sector.
- The informal economy has been the sponge that absorbs surplus labor
- Decent work deficit: if work is the only asset of the poor, bad jobs devalue this asset
- Gaps in technical and employability skills; information about jobs; entrepreneurial and financial skills

# Family formation

- The youth bulge in the Arab region is the outcome of a demographic transition with slowing fertility.
- Fertility plateau in some countries, others not starting their transition
- Fertility rates vary across the region, with TFR at 5.3 in Yemen, 2.9 in KSA, 2.1 in Lebanon
- Early marriage persists in certain pockets/countries though declining

# Civic Participation

- Little evidence base, problems with operationalization
- Data on voting behavior in Egypt showed 16% participation in 2009
- There is increased tokenization of youth in the public sphere after Arab Spring
- Social media has introduced new forms of civic participation

# Civic Participation

- Despite the Arab Spring, many young Arabs remain disengaged
- Italy's Lampedusa left in crisis after Arab Spring
- Willing and intending to leave home country in Egypt in 2009: one in three (28%) of male youth (15-29) want to leave

# Social Media

- WB: How to use social media to hold governments accountable?
- A result of the exclusion from other channels of civic participation due to ageism
- Blogs opened venues for young people to express frustration, allowed to talk about problems , taboo issues human rights activists, homosexuals, sexual harassment ...

# Social Media

- Cheap, speedy, easy, allows for anonymity, difficult to obstruct or control let alone co-opt.
- The twitter revolution of Iran in 2009.
- Global issues less pronounced: sexting, internet bullying
- Can be used as a tool for awareness, job creation,

## *The So What Question*

- How can social media be a tool for accountability and good governance?
- Urgency of expanding economic opportunities and for reforms to support decent job creation: Pro-youth employment policies and strategies focusing on the informal economy
- Programs need to take a holistic approach to address the multi-dimensional nature of youth exclusion