

Chapter

8

Empowering youth secures the future: Towards a development model fit for youth in the Arab region

This chapter provides a brief summary of the challenges that youth are facing in the Arab region. It also proposes that responding to the needs and aspirations of youth requires adopting a development model fit for youth that focuses on

the imperative of building capabilities, expanding opportunities and mainstreaming gender equality. This model should also be solidly based on the achievement of peace and security at the national and regional levels.

8.1

Youth in the Arab region: Challenges to human development in a changing reality

This Report focuses on the many causes and dimensions of the challenges in Arab countries that affect human development especially among youth. It relies on a broad concept of human development as the process of enlarging people's real freedoms, that is, the opportunities and choices they have reason to value. How the Arab region has fared in terms of enlarging the choices of its youth in the last decade is a central inquiry of this Report.

The growth rates in the 1960s and 1970s created a large, demographic wave that is rippling through the population (table 8.1). Today, the region is more populous than ever, and almost 30 percent of the population is below the age of 30. Today the region's youth are more educated, urban, and more networked and connected to global knowledge and information than previous generations, but they enjoy fewer opportunities than their parents to convert their skills into higher living standards. Because youth possess so little hope of achieving tangible progress, the presence of such a large and dynamic youth population is also shaping the region's security landscape. Research on conflict and political violence indicates that young populations are more prone to engage in conflict than older ones and that youth are more likely to join radical organizations than adults. For this reason, this Report examines the

problems and challenges of youth in light of the recent uprisings as well as the role of youth in society and proposes ways to ensure the inclusion of youth in the development process locally, nationally and regionally.

Issues revolving around youth in the Arab region attracted the attention of scholars, policymakers, civil society and international organizations even before 2011. While this Report represents a natural progression from earlier Arab Human Development Reports, it has been drafted within a quite unique context. Since 2011, several countries in the region witnessed uprisings, and the region has experienced the most rapid expansion in war and violent conflict among all global regions over the past decade.

8.1.1

Youth exclusion is pervasive in the Arab region

The main conclusion of this Report is that youth in the Arab region are struggling to attain full social and economic inclusion in their societies. The exclusion of youth is pervasive throughout the Arab region, and it is felt in multiple ways. The high levels of exclusion ignited uprisings across many Arab countries in late 2010 and early 2011, causing some to descend into social and political instability and deep economic uncertainty.

The mass disenfranchisement of youth constitutes one of the key stumbling blocks in the development process in Arab countries. Young people have not been recognized as legitimate agents of change, nor have they been empowered to fulfill this responsibility. Many of the root causes of

Table 1 1970–1990 and 1990–2010: The biggest rise in youth populations in the Arab region

| | Youth population increase, ages 15–29 | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|-----------|---|-----------|---|-----------|---|-----------|---|
| | 1950–1970 | Increase as % of total population, 1970 | 1970–1990 | Increase as % of total population, 1990 | 1990–2010 | Increase as % of total population, 2010 | 2010–2030 | Increase as % of total population, 2030 | 2030–2050 | Increase as % of total population, 2050 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 25,521 | 9% | 55,832 | 11% | 101,473 | 12% | 154,835 | 11% | 174,896 | 8% |
| Arab states | 11,085 | 9% | 29,458 | 13% | 41,800 | 12% | 20,208 | 4% | 11,326 | 2% |
| Africa | 32,583 | 9% | 73,303 | 12% | 121,189 | 12% | 162,809 | 10% | 178,810 | 7% |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 29,189 | 10% | 52,018 | 12% | 31,860 | 5% | 2,286 | 0% | -13,110 | -2% |
| Asia | 169,880 | 8% | 378,188 | 12% | 192,653 | 5% | -57,138 | -1% | -76,549 | -1% |
| Oceania | 1,921 | 10% | 1,975 | 7% | 1,526 | 4% | 1,663 | 4% | 1,413 | 2% |
| Northern America | 16,429 | 7% | 9,816 | 3% | 6,477 | 2% | 2,896 | 1% | 7,471 | 2% |
| China | 70,146 | 9% | 146,539 | 13% | -6,248 | 0% | -95,377 | -7% | -38,726 | -3% |
| Europe | 6,452 | 1% | 15,792 | 2% | -13,312 | -2% | -26,805 | -4% | -8,315 | -1% |
| Japan | 6,652 | 6% | -2,167 | -2% | -6,418 | -5% | -3,738 | -3% | -2,044 | -2% |

Source: Report team calculations based on UNDESA 2013c.

the exclusion of youth stem from the institutional arrangements in Arab societies, such as insider–outsider models of employment and political participation, whereby well-established individuals (insiders) can effectively block the inclusion of newcomers (outsiders).¹ Youth are outsiders by definition, struggling to join institutions such as public sector agencies.

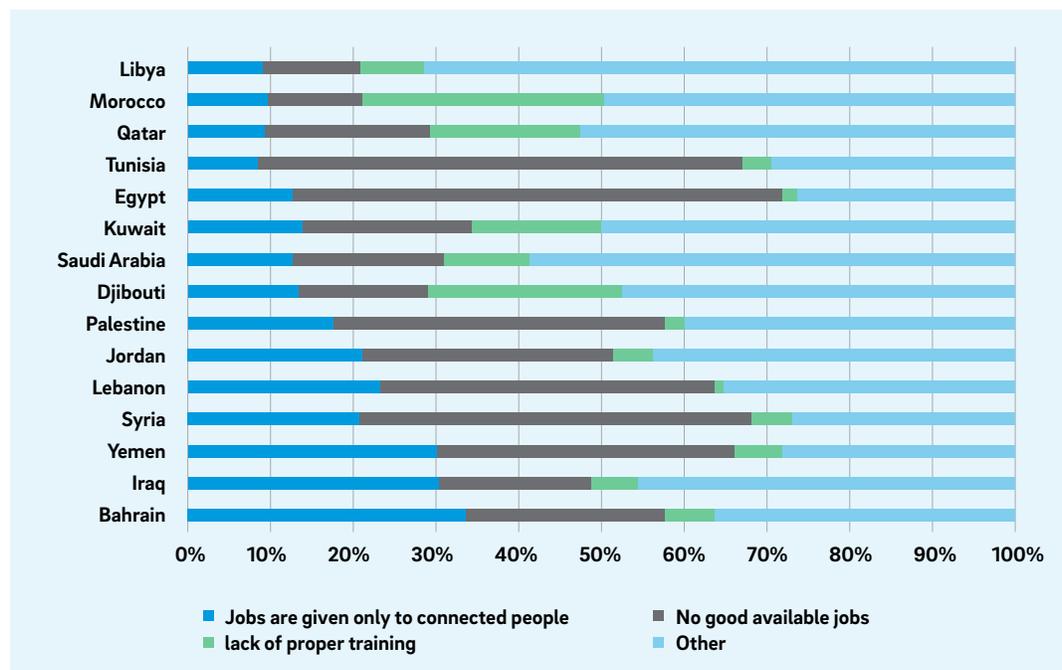
One of the main means of achieving progress in human development among youth is education. Yet, in the Arab region, though indicators have shown improvement, this has not translated into tangible gains. Inequality in educational attainment is greater in the region than in any other group of countries. In the region, children in poor households and children in rich households do not have an equal opportunity to attend school, and the probability of ever attaining or even attending secondary education depends significantly on family background. The state-dominated educational systems of the Arab countries have supported a rapid rise in average years of schooling, but have failed to ensure that students secure good results on international standardized tests.

Likewise, the region, which, until only a few years ago, had the goal of universal primary education well within reach, today faces a disastrous situation: more than 13 million

children, or 40 percent of the 34 million school-age children, are not attending school in the countries affected either directly or indirectly by armed conflict.²

Youth in the region exhibit low labour force participation rates (primarily among young women), alongside the highest unemployment rates among this age-group in the world. Five years after the uprisings, the youth unemployment rate is close to 30 percent and is projected to remain at this high level until 2019.³ Many youth endure long periods of idleness in the hope of landing secure public sector jobs. However, the traditional social contract whereby governments are the first-best providers of jobs is breaking down as governments in non-oil-producing economies struggle to contain public sector wage expenditures. Meanwhile, in the private sector, most economies in the region are specializing in industries with low potential for employment growth. Jobs are not being created quickly enough to employ the huge number of young people in the region. Overreliance on the public sector for jobs at the expense of the private sector, a lack of business financing, poor access to external markets, and misguided economic policies have resulted in an anæmic private sector that does not create a sufficient number of jobs.

Figure 8.1 Perceptions of youth on the constraints to obtaining a job, selected Arab countries, 2013



Source: World Bank 2014b.

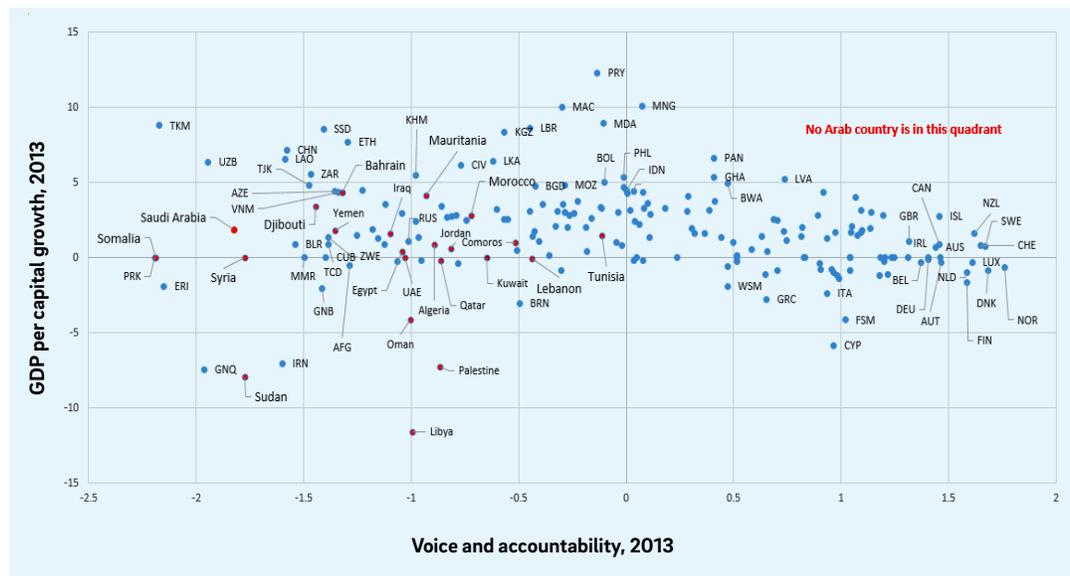
In attempting to secure jobs, young people, particularly poor youth, have less access to support networks than adults, which disempowers youth economically.⁴ Though a large majority of young people rely on family connections when they are looking for jobs, youth in more well connected families generally do better on the job market (figure 8.1).

Another of the principal factors in achieving progress in human development among youth is ensuring and maintaining optimum health among this age-group. Youth is a stage in life when people begin to adopt new behaviours – for example, smoking, consuming alcohol and drugs, engaging in unprotected sex – that may negatively affect their future health. However, one of the least discussed challenges facing youth in the region is the maintenance of good health in light of the numerous socio-economic barriers youth must overcome. Health care systems in Arab countries suffer from insufficient capacity to deal with the health needs of youth. The data on health, though scarce, generally confirm the link between socio-economic determinants – such as welfare status, educational attainment, rural or urban residence, and gender – and health outcomes among youth. The problems in capacity are compounded by poor transport networks, administrative hurdles, high out-of-pocket fees and other common obstacles confronting youth in accessing health services.

People in the Arab countries are denied voice and representation in various fields. As indicated in figure 8.2, no Arab country is among the countries with positive per capita GDP growth and high levels of voice and accountability. The participation of young people in formal institutionalized political processes in the Arab region is among the lowest worldwide, despite few formal legal barriers to such participation. The voting age is 18 in most Arab countries, and the average age of eligibility to become a member of parliament is 26. Yet, political participation is limited, and civic engagement among young people in the region is the lowest in the world. A median of only 9 percent of the 15–29 age-group across Arab countries volunteer to work with organizations in a given month, compared with 14 percent in sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the next lowest rate of volunteerism.⁵

This calls into question the representativeness of the political system and reflects the disenfranchisement of young people. These trends maintain the exclusion of young people from many routine experiences in adult life because young people face financial difficulties in marrying, finding independent housing and starting families. Distrustful of the political processes in the region, youth are voting less and are thus becoming excluded as agents of voice. This has played a major role in driving regional instability and unrest in recent years.

Figure 8.2 Voice and accountability versus per capita GDP growth, 2013



Source: World Bank 2015b; World Bank 2014c.

Young women suffer substantially because of the political, legal and economic conditions in various Arab countries. As conservative factions gain more influence and power, the movements, behaviour and dress of young women are more likely to become constrained, including by law enforcement authorities, while the freedom of choice among women about their lives is tending to become more narrow. This is especially true in the poorer and more rural areas of the region.

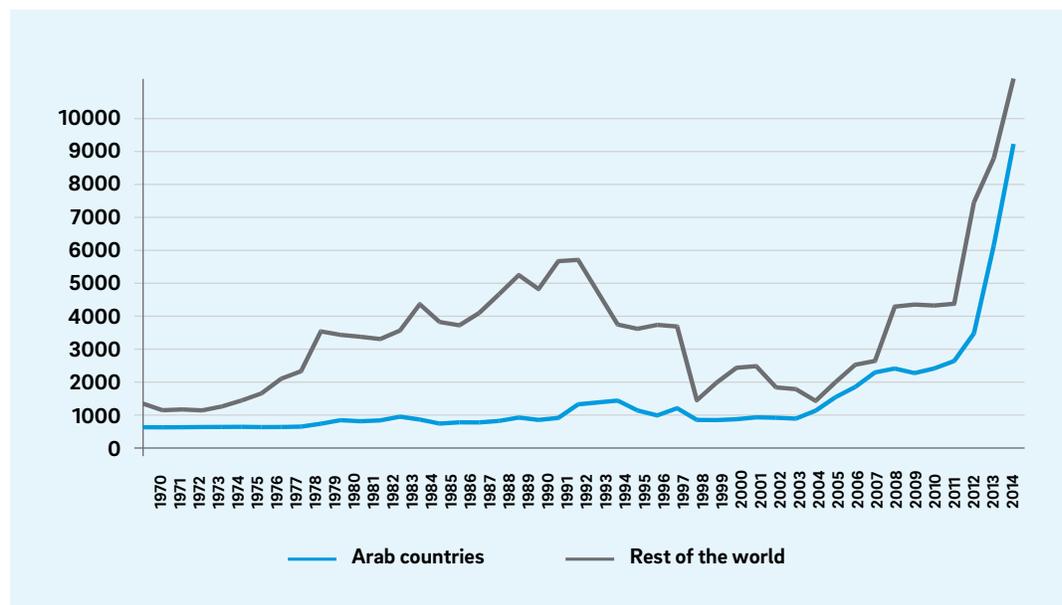
As shown in the previous chapters, there are significant roadblocks to fostering the progress of human development in Arab countries. The hobbled process of development exposes youth to the harsh effects of exclusion. This failure of Arab countries is leading young people to form negative perceptions of society and the future and providing a fertile ground for radical thinking and radical action among youth. Deeply disgruntled individuals tend to be less inclined to use social action to change their environment and, if they engage in such action, they tend to choose more violent forms of protest. Inactive young people confronting deprivation, marginalization, and exclusion are more susceptible to recruitment by armed groups and militias. Absent true political competition, meaningful opposition parties, and independent judiciaries and legislatures, and with little room for independent civil society organizations, calls to unconventional and volatile political and civic action may have appeal.

8.1.2 Violent conflicts: Human development under fire

The deep polarization and profoundly violent conflicts in the Arab region are derailing development and represent a threat to communities and the lives of individuals. More than any other phenomenon, conflict strips people, communities and countries of the options they require to become productive, establish security and plan for a better future. It erases hard-won gains in development and makes progress in addressing long-standing challenges all the more difficult.

War and violence inflict enormous damage on young individuals and the prospects for their future. Over the past five years, the Arab region has

Figure 8.3 Number of terrorist attacks, 1970–2014



Source: START 2015.

witnessed a sharp rise in the number of conflicts, accompanied by an increase in the number of violent terrorist attacks.⁶ In 2014 alone, the region accounted for almost 45 percent of all terrorist attacks worldwide (figure 8.3). These attacks claimed the lives of more than 21,000 people.⁷

In addition to the deterioration in living conditions, the destruction of property and the suffering and death among people, these events adversely affect human development in the region. A clear example is the contraction of GDP in Iraq, where terrorism is estimated to have cost US\$159 billion (in purchasing power parity dollars) since 2005. This is equivalent to 32 percent of the country's 2014 GDP (figure 8.4a). In the case of Syria, the ongoing crisis led to a decline by almost 31.0 percent in GDP in 2012, and the drop had almost reached 38 percent by the end of 2013 (figure 8.4b).

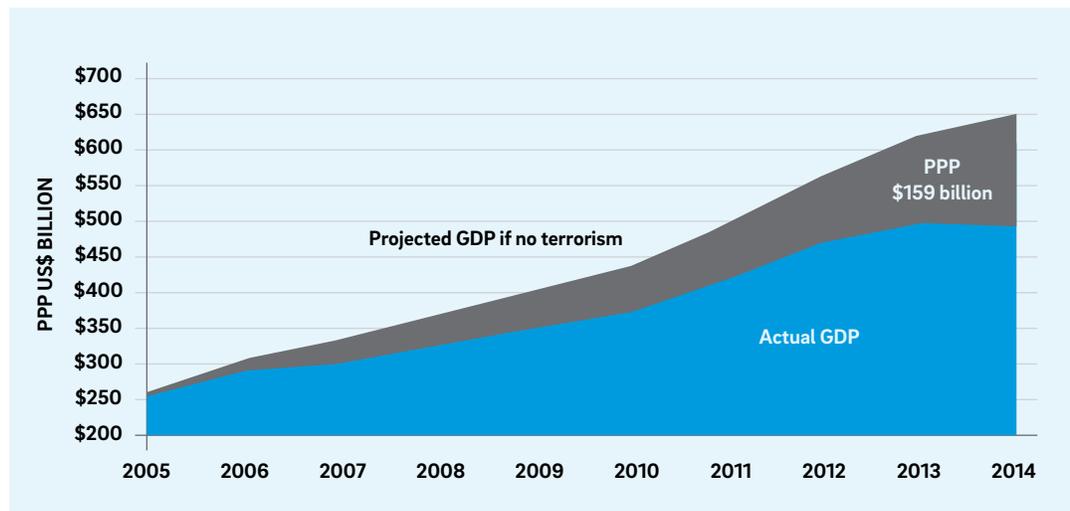
Conflict has led countries to allocate large shares of public expenditure to military and security programmes, further weakening the prospects for development. Currently among the most militarized in the world, several Arab countries are characterized by huge military outlays, which represent missed opportunities to invest in broader economic and social progress. In 1988–2014, military expenditures in the Arab region reached almost US\$2 trillion. Military expenditures increased by a factor of more than two in 2000–2014, and per capita military expenditures in the Arab states grew 2.5 times in 1990–2014.⁸

Another adverse effect of conflict on human development is massive displacement. The Arab region is home to only five percent of the world's population, but also home to 47 percent of its internally displaced, and 58 percent of its refugees – the latter growing from 34 percent in 2000.⁹ In a matter of days in June 2014, 500,000 people were displaced in Iraq.¹⁰ In Yemen, at least 2.5 million were internally displaced since the conflict erupted in March 2015 (as of December 2015).¹¹ Three of the six main countries of origin of refugees are Arab countries (Somalia, Sudan and Syria), in addition to the long-standing plight of Palestinians, who constitute the largest refugee group worldwide (more than five million).¹²

Conflict also disproportionately damages the autonomy and development of women, particularly young women. In situations of conflict or poverty, young women's educational opportunities are greatly reduced, and the physical and economic insecurity can be a lead determinant in earlier or less-favourable marriages for them. Young women in conflict situations also suffer from higher rates of gender-based violence, and such rates are usually even higher if the women also belong to a minority or marginalized group.

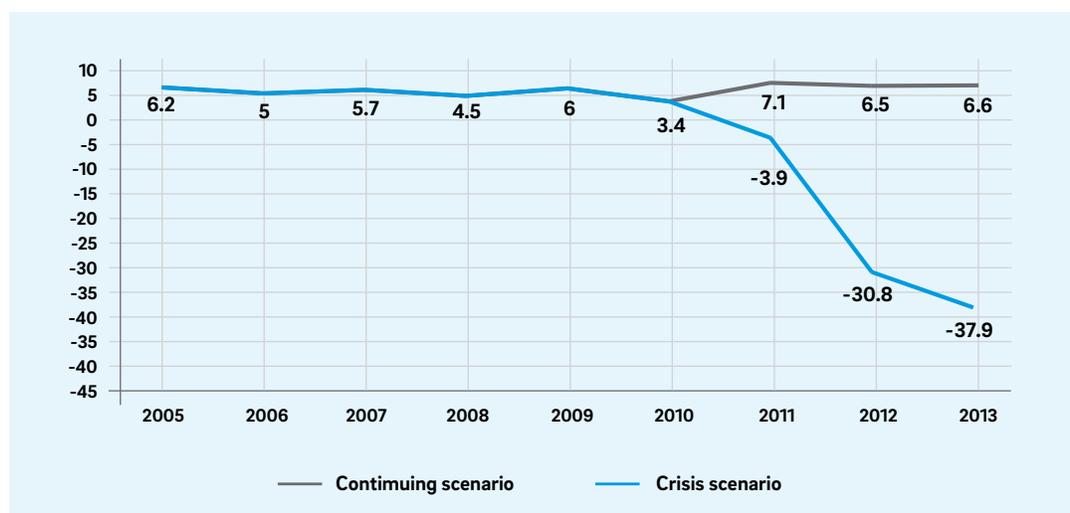
Regional integration has been affected by the spillovers of conflict in neighbouring countries. According to the World Bank, the Arab Mashreq countries – Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria – lost

Figure 8.4a Total accumulated losses in GDP because of terrorism, Iraq, 2005–2014



Source: Institute for Economics and Peace 2015.

Figure 8.4b GDP growth rate 2005–2013 in crisis and continuing scenarios (constant prices 2000), Syria



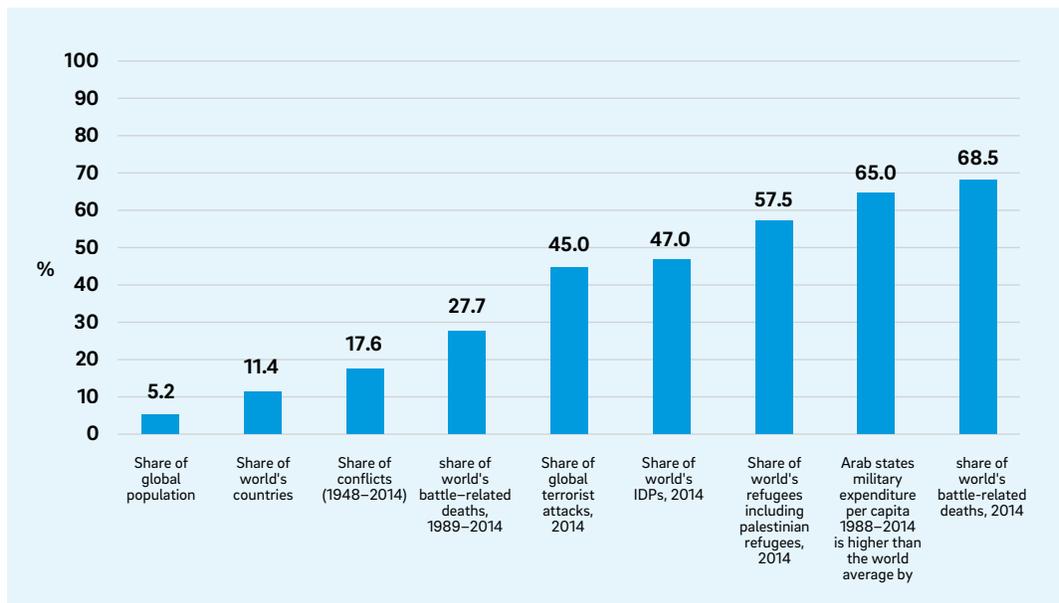
Source: Mehchy 2015.

an estimated US\$35 billion in output (measured in 2007 prices) during the first three years of the conflict in Syria (2011–2014).¹³ More recently, the trade ties among these countries have nearly collapsed because of the troubles in Syria. The Arab Monetary Fund’s 2015 Arab Economic Outlook Annual Report states that “Syria’s border recurrent closures have impeded regional trade by discontinuing or cutting off a key route connecting the wider Levant and the Gulf states”.¹⁴ On the investment side, inflows of foreign direct investment to the Arab region declined from US\$66.8 billion in 2010 to US\$47.5 billion in 2013 and to US\$43.9 billion in 2014.

Two bits of data are indicative: the Arab region is home to 5 percent of the world population, but around 18 percent of the world’s conflicts over 1948–2014 (figure 8.5). Over 2010–2013, the Arab region was home to one-fourth of the world’s conflicts.¹⁵

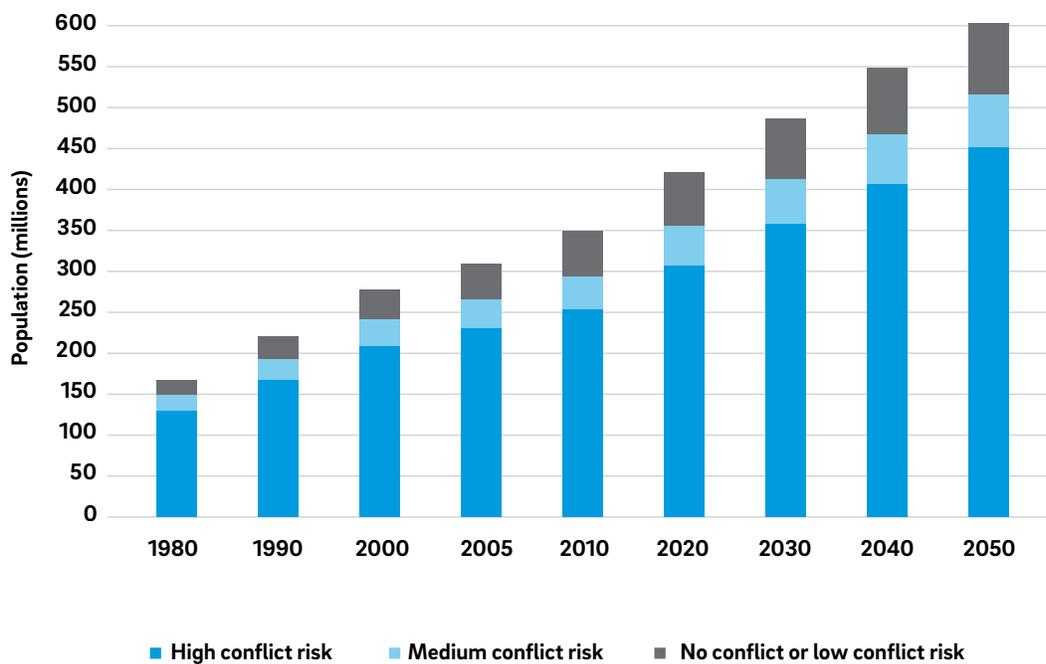
While past conflict is not necessarily a recipe for future violence, the number of people in the region living in countries at high risk of conflict is projected to grow from about 250 million in 2010 to over 305 million in 2020; the number is likely to double over 2010–2050 (figure 8.6). To stop the past from defining the future, mediating ongoing crises and preventing future violence are crucial.

Figure 8.5 The Arab region: Home to 5 percent of the global population, but . . .



Source: Report team calculations based on START 2015, SIPRI 2015, UCDP/PRI0 2015, UCDP 2015, UN DESA 2013, and UNRWA 2015.

Figure 8.6 The Arab countries most at risk of conflict have the largest populations in the region



Note: High conflict risk is defined based on 16 or more years of conflict in 1946–2013. Medium conflict risk is defined based on 5 to 15 years of conflict in 1946–2013. Low conflict risk is defined based on less than 4 years of conflict in 1946–2013.

Source: Report team calculations based on UNDESA 2013c and UCDP/PRI0 2014.

8.2

Towards a development model fit for youth in the Arab region

A new development model that is centered on investment in youth, who represent the hope of today and the reality of tomorrow, must be established for the decades ahead. Yet it is easy to lose perspective given the uncertainty in the Arab region today. As one crisis succeeds another, the policy agendas often focus on the most immediate problems rather than the most important ones. It is essential to step back and assess each situation. Populations in an expanding number of Arab countries are suffering from acute distress, a weakening social fabric, increasing threats to personal security and a growing sense of individual isolation. Several countries in the region are on the verge of disintegration. The underlying causes are often lack of socio-economic progress and limited participation in politics and society.

Arab countries should prioritize the expansion of the frontiers of opportunity among young people. Accordingly, an integral part of the role of the government is to allow space for initiative and innovation and then roll out solutions that have a chance for success. This Report considers, accordingly, that it is imperative that Arab countries adopt a development model fit for youth in order to harness the potential of demographic transition to its benefit rather than becoming dangerously burdened with a large young population lacking equal capabilities and missing opportunities. This approach is grounded on firsthand accounts of youth who have actively participated in consultations in the preparation of this Report as well as in regional and global surveys of the opinions and perceptions of young people in various age cohorts.

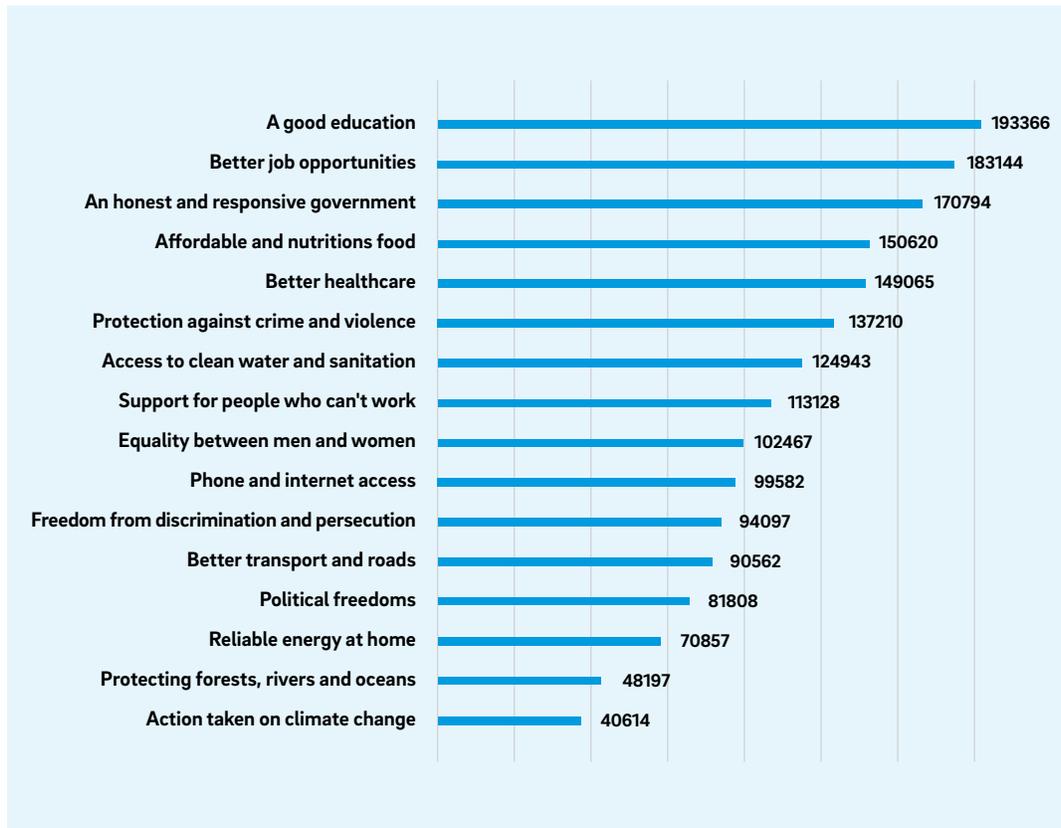
One of the information sources of the Report is the World We Want, a global survey among citizens, including youth, conducted to identify the main issues that would make the most difference in the lives of respondents and to establish priorities for the post-2015 development agenda (figure 8.7a). The issues were selected from among priorities described by people in research and polling exercises. They included the Millennium Development Goals, plus sustainability, security, governance and transparency. A regional source of information is the Asda'a Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, which covered 3,500 youth aged 18–24 in 16 Arab countries (figure 8.7b). The Report also relies on the Gallup World Poll dataset, which covers 21 Arab countries, and the World Values Survey, which covers 10 Arab countries.

The main areas selected by survey respondents highlight the importance of achieving peace and security; building capabilities, including better access to health services and good-quality education; expanding opportunities, especially through decent jobs; and acquiring a sense of agency. These areas reflect a broad view of human development and require targeted policy interventions that are derived from a shared understanding of the need to safeguard social justice and equity.

Taking this analysis into consideration, this Report considers that a development model fit for youth should encompass peace and security as overarching goals and, as the two principal pillars, the building of capabilities (through health care and education) and the expansion of opportunities (in employment and participation) (figure 8.8).

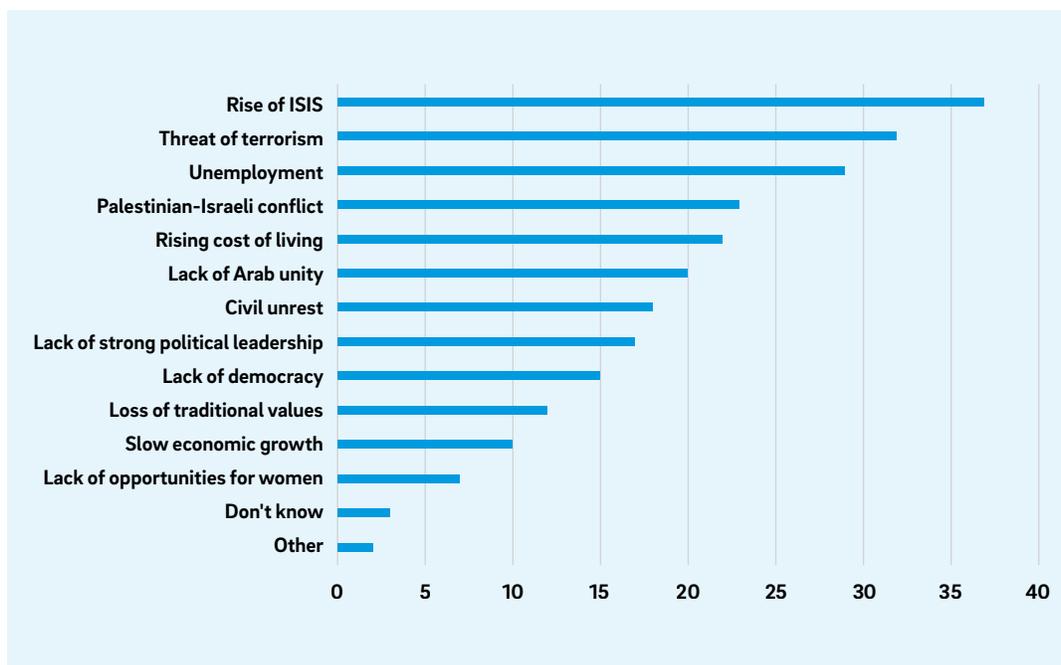
The broad outline of a development model fit for youth proposed should not be considered a stand-alone approach, but should be integrated into national policies. Youth-specific policies should be developed based on extensive consultations with stakeholders, including youth represented through youth organizations. They should ensure the participation of all segments of youth. Moreover, all youth policies should be supported and monitored based on indicators that measure the progress achieved in strengthening youth capabilities and expanding opportunities. Implementation and monitoring should be the responsibility of ministries of planning and interministerial committees. Youth organizations should be involved in the implementation and monitoring process to ensure ownership and help identify constraints.

Figure 8.7a My World: The priorities of Arab countries



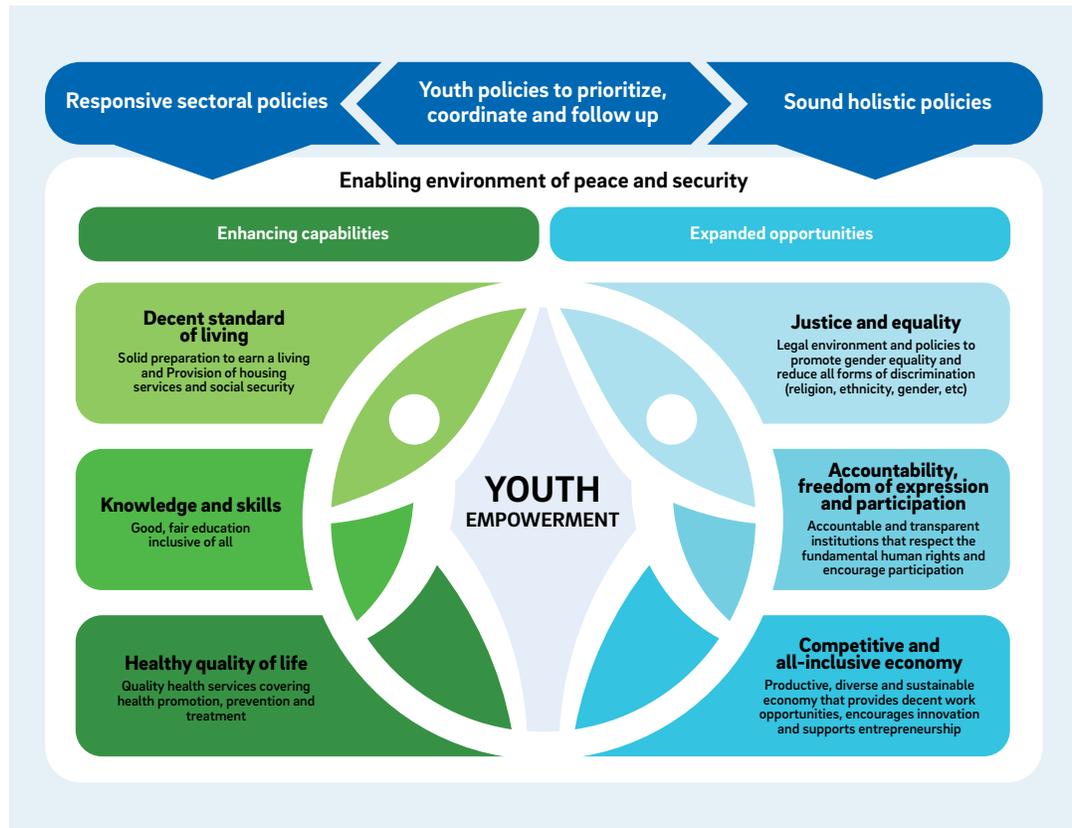
Source: UN 2014b.

Figure 8.7b Youth perceptions: What do you believe is the biggest obstacle facing the Middle East?



Source: Asda'a 2015.

Figure 8.8 Development model fit for youth in the Arab region



Source: The report team.

8.2.1 Achieving peace and security

Empowering youth requires an enabling national and regional environment of peace and security. Armed conflict is one of the most critical challenges that a majority of young people are facing today in the Arab region, rendering them vulnerable to voluntary and involuntary military involvement. Limited economic, social and political opportunities are key factors causing youth to become caught up in conflict. Exclusion among youth is

a leading ingredient in conflict. Thus, without the meaningful participation of youth in discussions and other efforts and interventions to ensure peace and establish security, sustainable peace cannot be achieved.

As young people in the Arab region learn the dreadful costs of war and civil conflict, their yearning for peace and security grows. Development depends on peace and security. Conflict has a high economic cost, including the opportunity cost of military expenditures. Conflict reduces investment by 10 percent or more. Economic growth, meanwhile, lowers the risk of conflict by fostering higher incomes.¹⁶

Serious initiatives should be undertaken in the Arab region to address the impacts of conflict and to end war. The Arab-Israeli conflict remains one of the most significant challenges in the region. It is of vast legal and moral significance and is a major focus of the political life of the region. The issue of Palestine occupies a central stage in Arab public opinion. According to the 2015 Arab Opinion Index

of the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies, 75 percent of people in Arab countries believe that the cause of Palestine is not solely a Palestinian issue, but also an Arab issue, and 85 percent oppose diplomatic recognition of the State of Israel by Arab countries. For decades, the conflict has been a subtext in other regional and global confrontations. The approach to resolving the conflict and its links to other political and economic issues must be comprehensive. Under international law, an occupation that is transformed into a long-term regime of control and governance is unjustified and illegal. From a human development perspective, only the end of Israel's occupation of the territories it seized in 1967 and the restoration of the rights of Palestinians, foremost among which is the right to self-determination, will bring peace. The absence of peace has contributed substantially to the frustration of human development in the region.

Within countries, a peace and security agenda seeking to integrate youth should represent a collective effort that involves all levels of government, the private sector and civil society. Through the participation of youth, it should aim to create more cohesion and inclusiveness and to offer space for innovation among youth. The agenda should provide for local, national and regional cooperation.

Ensuring the active, systemic and meaningful participation of youth in efforts to address issues of peace and security is an imperative for demographic and political reasons. It is crucial to recognize the positive role that youth can play in ending conflict and building peace. This is so also because of the close interrelationship among social justice, sustainable development, human rights and peace in the daily lives of youth. By engaging youth productively in society in ways that strengthen their livelihood opportunities, the vulnerability of young people can largely be addressed. If young people are held back by their lack of experience, their exclusion from mainstream decision-making processes and deliberate political and social marginalization, then a critical constituency necessary to achieve peace and development will be lost.

Youth participation in associations and voluntary youth movements should be encouraged and ensured. Local youth organizations can play an important role in social change and serve as a key link among local communities. Through their participation in associations and movements, youth can become involved in peacebuilding and other processes that seek to improve the quality of the lives of populations.

Peace education should be promoted in Arab countries. Fostering a culture of peace and inclusion within society to achieve sustainable development can contribute to reducing violence. Governments, religious institutions, the private sector, and civil society groups should invest resources in promoting peace education, including reorientation programmes that instill the value of peaceful coexistence. Such education will help youth appreciate the value of peace, thereby making the engagement of radical groups among youth more difficult. Peace education should be integrated in curricula from primary to tertiary education. Radicalization among youth and the insidious ideologies that underpin violent extremism in Islam can be curbed by ensuring that religious leaders preach messages of moderation in mosques as well as through initiatives delivered on television, through social media and in group discussions. Governments, civil society groups and the private sector should partner with artists and film producers to create programmes designed to counter narratives that promote violent radicalization among youth. To confront the destructive trend of conflict and violence, Arab governments should cooperate to build and communicate a message of moderation through interventions focused on dialogue, peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

New tools are needed to promote the active participation of youth in all aspects of social, economic and political life and to enhance the prospects for peaceful and inclusive social change in the region. In countries in conflict, youth are crucial agents in building peace and positive social change. The portrayal of young people as causal or secondary agents of conflict neglects the fact that, if they are able to contribute meaningfully to social, economic and political life, young people can play an important role in facilitating the peaceful transition towards an inclusive society. Youth participation in decision-making at all levels is key to achieving the peaceful resolution of conflict and other difficult problems.

Governments should facilitate an open space for dialogue through formal and informal mechanisms for reasoned debate and for discussions about the future of society, especially the future of youth. Tunisia seems to have achieved this. The new constitution was drafted in a participatory manner, and a free and fair election and a peaceful transfer of power was completed in 2014. In October 2015, Tunisia's National Dialogue Quartet received the Nobel Peace Prize for its key role in

Box 8.1 The United Nations Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security

On 9 December 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2250 (2015), which:

1. Urges Member States to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels in local, national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including institutions and mechanisms to counter violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, and, as appropriate, to consider establishing integrated mechanisms for meaningful participation of youth in peace processes and dispute-resolution;

2. Calls on all relevant actors, including when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to take into account, as appropriate, the participation and views of youth, recognizing that their marginalization is detrimental to building sustainable peace in all societies, including, inter alia, such specific aspects as:

(a) The needs of youth during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction;

(b) Measures that support local youth peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution and that involve youth in the implementation mechanisms of peace agreements;

(c) Measures to empower youth in peacebuilding and conflict resolution . . . ;

Prevention

10. Urges Member States to facilitate an inclusive and enabling environment in which youth actors, including youth from different backgrounds, are recognized and provided with adequate support to implement violence prevention activities and support social cohesion;

11. Stresses the importance of creating policies for youth that would positively contribute to peacebuilding efforts, including social and economic development, supporting projects designed to grow local economies, and provide youth employment opportunities and vocational training, fostering their education, and promoting youth entrepreneurship and constructive political engagement;

12. Urges Member States to support, as appropriate, quality education for peace

that equips youth with the ability to engage constructively in civic structures and inclusive political processes;

13. Calls on all relevant actors to consider instituting mechanisms to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, intercultural and interreligious dialogue that involve youth and discourage their participation in acts of violence, terrorism, xenophobia, and all forms of discrimination;

Partnerships

14. Urges Member States to increase, as appropriate, their political, financial, technical and logistical support, that take account of the needs and participation of youth in peace efforts, in conflict and post-conflict situations, including those undertaken by relevant entities, funds and programmes, inter alia, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, UN-Women, and by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other relevant bodies, and actors at regional and international levels;

15. Stresses the vital role [of] the Peacebuilding Commission in addressing the conditions and factors leading to the rise of radicalization to violence and violent extremism among youth, which can be conducive to terrorism, by including in its advice and recommendations for peacebuilding strategies ways to engage youth meaningfully during and in the aftermath of armed conflict;

16. Encourages Member States to engage relevant local communities and non-governmental actors in developing strategies to counter the violent extremist narrative that can incite terrorist acts, address the conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, including by empowering youth, families, women, religious, cultural and education leaders, and all other concerned groups of civil society and adopt tailored approaches to countering recruitment to this kind of violent extremism and promoting social inclusion and cohesion;

Disengagement & reintegration

17. Encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the needs of youth affected by armed conflict, including, inter alia, such specific aspects as:

(a) evidence-based and gender-sensitive youth employment opportunities, inclusive labour policies, national youth employment action plans in partnership with the private sector, developed in partnership with youth and recognizing

the interrelated role of education, employment and training in preventing the marginalization of youth;

(b) investment in building young persons' capabilities and skills to meet labour demands through relevant education opportunities designed in a manner which promotes a culture of peace;

(c) support for youth-led and peacebuilding organizations as partners in youth employment and entrepreneurship programs.

Source: United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/2250 (2015).

mediating among the various parties involved in the political life of the country after 2011. In the acceptance speech, the Quartet stated that the efforts of Tunisia's youth allowed the country to turn the page on authoritarian regimes.

If they are not encouraged, development and peacebuilding are endangered. Proactive conflict management and peacebuilding should capitalize on the remarkable resilience exhibited by women. Women must be placed at the centre of national policies aimed at development and peacebuilding. Countries must remove the social, economic and cultural barriers affecting women to ensure they have equal access to education and vocational training and equal opportunities for full participation in society, including in the political arena. Governments and civil society must also foster greater participation by girls and young women by adopting measures to promote appropriate role models and facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life.

All Arab states face an array of challenges related to peace and security. This could offer the impetus for regional cooperation. Unilateral and bilateral approaches are no longer sufficient. None of the most pressing issues can be tackled by national governments alone. Yet, Arab regional organizations have been remarkably weak and have proven incapable of playing a decisive role in crisis management and conflict resolution. This lack of capability is partly a product of the fragmentation that characterizes the region. Founded on the basis of Arab cultural solidarity, the League of Arab States functions as an arena for reaching consensus and demonstrating unity among the Arab states. Nonetheless, efforts at conflict management and dispute resolution have been handled by individual actors outside the scope of the League. The establishment of effective

regional mechanisms for dealing with crisis is thus one of the challenges facing Arab countries. So long as such mechanisms are lacking, crisis in the region will continue to invite external unilateral or multilateral intervention.

By highlighting the lived reality of countries in the western Balkans and sub-Saharan Africa that have achieved progress in addressing ethnic and territorial conflicts, cross-regional experience sharing would be useful for the Arab region. This could also emphasize the lessons learned through the incorporation of young people in endeavours to achieve sustainable peace. Some countries have sought to end conflicts and promote peacebuilding by enforcing restrictions on access to arms among non-military and by establishing standards for media coverage on conflicts to address the pervasive violence in the media.

In several resolutions, the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations have recognized the importance of youth engagement and empowerment in post-conflict situations. These resolutions have recognized the direct link between youth exclusion and global unrest and insecurity. Safeguarding meaningful youth involvement in efforts to advance peace and security is thus a reasonable step.

The UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security is a powerful tool for engaging young people in such efforts and thereby strengthen peacebuilding (box 8.1). Empowering young people is not simply a matter of equality or justice, but of global peace and security. Peace and human rights are global values that unite young people around the world. Nonetheless, the establishment of justice and equality across generations has to be the first step in acknowledging the role of youth in peacebuilding.

8.2.2

Expanding capabilities: Health care and good-quality education

There is widespread agreement that educational achievements and good health early in life are crucial to proper individual cognitive and physical development. Education and good health in the early years of life are enablers of productive economic participation and civic engagement in adulthood. Among the barriers identified in this Report to improving health among youth in the region are the difficulties these people face in accessing services and information to address their concerns about their own health as well as their inability to formulate their health needs. Few health care systems address the health needs of youth, particularly in reproductive health and mental health. Conflict has also placed health care systems under enormous strain in some countries, making health care among children and youth unattainable and creating other disablers. The number of casualties, refugees and displaced persons associated with conflict has been huge. International organizations and humanitarian relief agencies have been providing much of the health care, but access is still a major problem.

Health among youth is a key determinant of long-term health outcomes. Excellent and equitable health care coverage through universal health care or youth-friendly health services is only half the solution.¹⁷ The other half is awareness, participation and agency among youth.

Among the most effective interventions to enhance youth well-being are interventions that tackle the social and structural determinants of

health, including the promotion of healthy social and physical environments and addressing inequities. A primary means of enhancing health among youth is universal health care coverage to ensure that all people have access to “promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative health services, of sufficient quality to be effective, while also ensuring that people do not suffer financial hardship when paying for these services”.¹⁸ Implementing universal health care coverage schemes among youth, including mental health care and the integration of sexual and reproductive health education in schools, represents an important programmatic intervention that can improve the quality of life among youth.

In several countries in the Arab region, the barriers in the provision of health care include high out-of-pocket costs, the poor quality of care, the shortage of trained health professionals, the lack of access to essential medications and technologies, and deficiencies in health information systems. The mere availability of a service in a particular context does not guarantee equitable health care delivery. Care must be accessible, acceptable, effective, and used by the most disadvantaged groups.¹⁹

Outside the Arab region, some countries have invested in out-of-the-box private sector-led initiatives such as health micro-insurance schemes, which are considered a potential financing option for covering the poor.²⁰ While such schemes are appropriate for health care provision among youth, the provision of health care for the elderly should also be a priority not only because this is a right of the elderly, but also because of the burden represented by the elderly on younger household members. In the absence of state-led provision, young household members must care for ageing relatives. This is especially the case in the Arab countries, where the share of adults aged 60 and older is projected to reach 11.7 percent in 2050, up from 4.3 percent in 2015.²¹

Access to adequate health care in the Arab region should not be tied to employment-based insurance schemes or employment status. Arab countries supply excessive food and fuel subsidies (10 percent of the cost). So, there exists fiscal space to support more effective public health care systems. Indeed, according to ILO estimates, by spending the equivalent of 2 percent of GDP, any country can provide a minimum universal level of social and health insurance. Food subsidies do not address the problem of undernourishment, which is endemic in the Arab region. Social barriers that

Box 8.2 Fahem mish hafez*

Tahrir Academy was a non-profit online collaborative learning platform that aims to build the biggest Arabic video library to provide educational content to 13- to 18-year-old youth in Egypt. The Academy website features more than 400 educational videos organized into courses in three main areas: Life, that is, natural sciences and well-being; Humanity, or human sciences and languages, and Numbers, or mathematics and technology. Courses cover subjects ranging from physics and astronomy to Arabic grammar. Elementary- and secondary-school students are also offered the chance to carry out experiments. The Academy produces educational videos based on crowdsourcing knowledge among a pool of volunteers and experts who help revise and produce content that is presented in an unconventional, attractive way. During the first year after its launch, the Academy achieved more than 2.5 million views on YouTube.

** 'Thinking critically, not memorizing': a phrase used to criticize the overemphasis of Arab educational systems on memorization as a learning method.*

Source: Tahrir Academy <http://tahriracademy.org/>.

***Tahriri Academy suspended its activities on August 10th, 2015 due to lack of funding.*

determine the lack of access to basic incomes and essential services must be resolved first. Out-of-pocket health expenditure can account for over 50 percent of household spending in the Arab region and is a key determinant of poverty and inequality.²²

Governments in the Arab region should consider how the unemployed, informal sector workers and workers on low salaries may gain access to essential social services and basic incomes. Targeting or means testing raises questions about the inclusion of some, but not others, and may also stigmatize those who do receive assistance. Targeting and means testing also risk creating dependency among vulnerable groups, thereby aggravating long-term problems of poverty. This issue is especially important in view of the high rates of unemployment in the Arab region.

Education, particularly education within small communities, should be a concern of all in society, all government agencies rather than one or two ministries, the private business sector and civil society. This is especially important in higher education.²³ Overcoming education system failure must be a priority for policymakers and educators, who should strive to achieve a good fit between the output of educational institutions and the demands of the labour market. This would involve a survey of the distribution of enrolments across subjects, skills and disciplines, upgrades in technical education and a review of curricula to promote problem-solving skills, entrepreneurial and management capacity and the value of self-employment. Education

should also enhance women's social and economic participation and encourage pro-gender attitudes. National efforts have achieved a high degree of quantitative expansion in basic education, particularly in more well off and less highly populated Arab countries. The need to boost the coverage and the output of education systems, especially higher education, is significant in the poorer Arab countries. Improving education quality represents an even greater challenge (box 8.2).

Improved planning and cooperation among the state, the private sector and civil society are necessary to harmonize educational systems and the labour market. There is little hope for education reform unless substantial cooperation emerges between education establishments and local communities. Embedding schools in society requires multiple channels for interaction between schools and communities, not simply the parents of students.

Education is undergoing a massive transformation as a result of the digital revolution. Children and young people are gaining access to vast sources of knowledge, characterized by generally high-quality online courses, learning facilities and other web-based material. However, traditional learning materials are often low in quality. New technologies could be harnessed to create learning opportunities that challenge the traditional role of schools and universities. This should be coupled with greater access among those individuals who now lack internet and the enrichment of the Arabic content of websites and information networks.

8.2.3

Expanding opportunities: Jobs and voice

Unemployment among young first-time job seekers in the Arab region is often measured in years, not months. Governments should adopt policies that promote inclusive employment-led growth and concentrate on economic sectors that benefit the poor. Policies aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty must also focus on youth, given the links among poverty, lack of education and skills, and the absence of decent jobs.

Easing the transition of young people from school to work by offering career guidance and counselling is important. The relevant strategy should be combined with aptitude tests that help young people identify a career matching their strengths and interests. An increasing number of universities in the region have started introducing

guidance services or augmenting existing services through the use of psychometric assessments.

Limited access to information and financial concentration have created an economic structure that serves a closed community of businessmen. Amid this constraining economic structure, youth in the Arab region have been widening their entry points into economic activity. Thus, young, socially minded entrepreneurs in the region have been launching initiatives focused on recycling, renewable energy, good nutrition, and training and information awareness (box 8.3). Governments should encourage such efforts or at least not view them as encroaching on government prerogatives. Examples of such enterprises include KarmSolar, a private, commercially viable Egyptian company that installs high-capacity off-grid solar water-pumping stations that reduce reliance on diesel power, and Visualizing Impact, a firm based in Lebanon that aims to improve transparency and attract attention to minority perspectives by visualizing data about social, environmental, political and economic issues. In 2013, the firm won the prestigious Prix Ars Electronica.

Access to information should be facilitated to help young people choose careers, exploit opportunities for civic engagement and become politically involved. Especially important is access to labour market data, particularly sectors that are

Box 8.3 Youth and innovation: KarmSolar

Founded by young Egyptian entrepreneurs, KarmSolar is a solar technology and integration company that delivers innovative solar solutions for the agricultural, industrial, tourism and business sectors. Since its founding in 2011, KarmSolar has been Egypt's largest private off-grid solar energy integrator, with exceptional experience in developing award-winning high-capacity solar pumping stations, including the region's largest off-grid hybrid pumping and irrigation system. KarmSolar also offers megawatt-scale off-grid solar energy stations and grid-connected utility-scale installations. It is the leader in off-grid solar power in Egypt. Other projects centre on private solar panels and, more recently, wind energy. On 18 October 2015, KarmSolar announced a US\$17 million

project with Tahrir Petrochemicals to build a 10 megawatt solar station for the Tahrir Naphtha Cracker project at the Ain Sokhna station. The station will be implemented during 2016 and 2017 and will be part of the chemical company's diversification of its energy mix. This will triple KarmSolar's energy portfolio from 5 to 15 megawatts. KarmSolar has become the first energy company in Egypt to be allowed to sell electricity from a major off-grid solar power plant. The license, for a 1 megawatt installation at a dairy farm owned by a subsidiary of Juhayna, a dairy foods company, was approved by the Egyptian Electricity Regulatory Agency and has been assigned to KarmPower, a subsidiary of KarmSolar. The installation is expected to be operational by April 2016.

Source: Wamda: <http://www.wamda.com/memakersge/2015/10/karmsolar-first-license-solar-power-off-grid>; KarmSolar: www.karmsolar.com.

likely to grow and generate jobs. This would help young people make sound career decisions. Labour market intermediation could also contribute to improving the decision-making process. Youth organizations and the private sector in the region, such as Bayt.com, have led the way in innovative programming. Many of these organizations and start-ups, some managed by young people, have embarked on job matching and intermediation initiatives. While personal connections will continue to play a key role in securing jobs, such platforms can widen access to information and inclusion among marginalized groups.

Access to financial and social assets is crucial to helping youth make independent economic decisions and become productively involved in their countries. Enhancing the access of young people to financial services, offering a safe place to save, or an appropriately structured loan for investment in an enterprise or education can promote entrepreneurship, asset building and sustainable livelihoods. Only 13 percent of young people in the region have accounts at formal financial institutions, versus 37 percent worldwide.²⁴ Across the region, youth are underserved by financial institutions, which perceive youth lending as risky, a view that is not borne out by the data.²⁵ Few financial service providers, including banks, credit unions and microfinance institutions, understand and adequately serve the youth market, and the

regulatory framework is typically not designed to be youth inclusive or to protect youth rights.

The financial component is especially effective among youth if it is accompanied by training in entrepreneurship and financial literacy and by mentorship opportunities. The evidence on microfinance is mixed and anecdotal, but programmes that improve access to credit alone appear not to function as well as programmes that combine training and potential integration into value chains.²⁶

A successful initiative has been led by Silatech, which has partnered with Al-Amal Microfinance Bank in Yemen to address such gaps. In 2009, only 15 percent of Al-Amal Bank's lending went to young people. After working with Silatech to develop a youth-lending facility, the share climbed to 53 percent, and the repayment rates were better among youth than among older clients. This experience encouraged Al-Amal to expand its youth customer base and attracted the interest of others in the industry, such as Fondation Banque Populaire in Morocco.

Crowdfunding, that is, funding from multiple sources, holds great potential for plugging the gap in access to finance among youth and unlocking job creation potential in favour of youth.²⁷ Credit-based crowdfunding or lending is one type of crowdfunding. Kiva Arab Youth, run in partnership with Kiva, the world's largest microlending

Box 8.4 Working together: once a dream, today a necessity

No Arab country alone can achieve dramatic social and economic progress based on the diversification of sources of income and the acquisition of competitive capabilities through accumulated knowledge and industry. However, by coming together, Arab countries can reap the benefits of size and scale, diversify their combined economies and open up opportunities for investment that would be unavailable in the absence of coordinated efforts and cooperation. In addition, acting as a group will empower Arabs and allow them to secure rights and legal claims in international agreements, which are inevitably affected by the negotiating power of the parties involved. More generally, Arab countries must seek to agree among themselves about what they need to do to take their place in this new world. To this

end, they should formulate a shared perspective and establish realistic common goals and effective institutions capable of attaining these goals so as to improve the outcomes of economic and societal efforts, along with competitiveness. The argument for Arab cooperation revolves around the need for an economic and social group with a cooperative, innovative policy designed to fulfil a comprehensive agenda for broad-based social and economic renewal. This endeavour should involve more than the launch of an effective economics programme or even the adoption of a system of government programmes. It should include working towards mutual understanding, assistance and cooperation, together with a clear strategy that allows all in society to join together as partners.

Source: UNDP 2002.

platform, allows direct online peer-to-peer lending to young microentrepreneurs in five Arab countries through the Arab Youth Channel. Kiva Arab Youth mobilized US\$5.5 million in financing for 3,900 Arab businesses, enjoyed a 98 percent repayment rate and helped create 30,000 jobs. Equity financing among youth is also emerging as a feasible crowdfunding alternative; examples include Ruwwad in Jordan and Eureeca in the United Arab Emirates.

Enhancing labour force participation among young women in Arab countries requires that governments introduce better structural schemes and incentive packages for employers and potential employees. More young women would be willing to work and persist in the labour market if social protection were extended to cover flexible and part-time work. This would encourage employers to offer these work options. Furthermore, governments should consider undertaking infrastructure investment with the private sector, identifying limited-duration public service jobs among youth and, during economic or political crises, establishing limited-duration public works programmes.

Greater intraregional cooperation, trade and financial flows could help sustain economic growth, increase job creation and promote a healthy labour market. This would benefit not only young workers, but also worker-sending and worker-receiving countries if the relevant bilateral agreements could be reached and policies that support labour mobility and ensure good working conditions are introduced (box 8.4). Reforms would include overhauling the labour sponsorship system, licensing and supervising worker recruitment agencies, reviewing and vetting employment contracts, and ensuring that migrant workers obtain pre-departure training. A business travel card scheme could ease labour mobility. Skills assessments and standard certification can help workers take their skills across borders. Similarly, matching jobs and employment qualifications can boost productivity

and provide greater opportunity for youth in the Arab region, whose Arabic language and technical competencies represent advantages.

Regional cooperation can help the Arab countries reduce their structural problems, particularly youth unemployment. One possible approach is to start with the easiest reforms among countries that are prepared for more wide-ranging cooperation. Services and labour mobility should be at the heart of the process. Issuing special long-term visas for businessmen, researchers and students can also be a good starting point. Special programmes for youth should be launched, widening the possibility for students to obtain scholarships to study in other Arab countries. Creating centres of excellence in various fields in each country could contribute to attracting the best students and researchers from other countries and realizing significant scale economies.

The role of civil society in this sensitive period is crucial in convincing political leaders of the need to give youth a more optimistic perspective on their future. A new Arab cooperation project has to be based on solid foundations. These foundations should be realistic, taking into account the security, political economy and social constraints of each country.

Young adulthood is a critical period for forming political beliefs and behaviours. According to life cycle theories, stable patterns of civic engagement tend to emerge once individuals step into the adult roles that build up their stake in community affairs, such as securing stable jobs, housing, marriage and parenting. Civic engagement is important for the functioning of society and is an integral part of any human development agenda that is relevant to the region. It can be argued that, because youth make up a significant share of the current generation of young adults, the level of civic engagement among youth reflects the existing social contract and is an important barometer of the future of societies.

Box 8.5 The Constitution of Tunisia, 2014

Article 8. Youth

Youth are an active force in building the nation.

The state seeks to provide the necessary conditions for developing the capacities of youth and realizing their potential, supports them to

assume responsibility, and strives to extend and generalize their participation in social, economic, cultural and political development.

Source: See https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Tunisia_2014.pdf.

Investment in youth participation represents recognition of the active and positive contribution of young people to society, especially intercultural understanding. Such investment must target youth from all cultural and religious backgrounds, including young people from disparate communities, as well as young people with disabilities and vulnerable or marginalized youth.

Policy advocacy is another form of civil society engagement and participation in which youth can play a meaningful role. There are few youth-led policy advocacy initiatives in the region. Establishing such initiatives could fill a significant policy advocacy gap among youth and provide learning opportunities for those who might become policymakers in the future.

At the legislative and institutional levels, key policies are important in opening the space for youth civic engagement. Despite the fact that the voting age is 18 years in most Arab countries, youth representation in parliament remains a challenge. Based on data available on nearly 100 parliamentary chambers (72 lower houses and 26 upper houses), analysis of the Inter-Parliamentary Union shows that a large majority of members of parliament (39 percent) are between 51 and 60 years of age. The next largest age group is the 41–50 age-group (22.6 percent), followed by the 61–70 (20.5 percent) age bracket.²⁸ This trend has been changing as countries adopt targeted youth quotas. In Morocco, 305 of the 395 members of the lower house are elected in 92 multi-member constituencies through a proportional representation system, whereas the remaining 60 seats

are reserved for women, and 30 seats are reserved for candidates under the age of 40.²⁹ In Tunisia, at least one candidate under 35 should be among the top four candidates on party lists across the four electoral districts.³⁰ The Constitution of Tunisia includes an important provision on youth (box 8.5).

Young people who participate actively in their communities early on are more likely to become engaged citizens and voters. Capacity development among young candidates, for example, has proven to be more effective as an ongoing effort rather than as a one-off event three months before an election. Support for the political participation of young people should also extend across the electoral cycle.

Youth political participation needs to be meaningful and effective. Capacity development is an integral part, and, while building individual capacities is important, the capacities of organizations and the degree to which an environment enables individuals and institutions to participate in political processes should also be factored in. Following a rights-based approach entails considering youth as potential agents of change, that is, as part of the solution, not as a problem to be resolved by others.³¹

Young women and men must play a crucial and proactive role in monitoring the performance of governments and public institutions. Participatory, youth-driven accountability monitoring through the establishment of a watchdog tool can be effective. The tool could be used to monitor issues ranging from corruption to water quality.

Endnotes

- ¹ Assaad 2014.
- ² UNICEF 2015.
- ³ ILO 2015.
- ⁴ Robalino and others 2013.
- ⁵ Silatech-Gallup 2013.
- ⁶ The Global Terrorism database defines a terrorist attack as the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion or intimidation. To be included in the database, each of the following three characteristics must be present: (a) the incident must be intentional, that is, it must be the result of a conscious calculation on the part of a perpetrator; (b) the incident must entail some level of violence or immediate threat of violence, including property crimes and violence against people; and (c) the perpetrators of the incidents must be subnational actors. The database does not include acts of state terrorism.
- ⁷ START 2015.
- ⁸ SIPRI 2015.
- ⁹ UNHCR 2015, UNRWA 2015.
- ¹⁰ IOM 2014.
- ¹¹ UNOCHA 2015b.
- ¹² UNRWA 2015.
- ¹³ World Bank 2015, Quick Notes Series No. 93881 (January).
- ¹⁴ AMF 2015, p. 9.
- ¹⁵ UCDP/PRIO 2014.
- ¹⁶ Mueller 2013.
- ¹⁷ Halfon and others 2014.
- ¹⁸ See "Universal Health Coverage", World Health Organization. http://www.who.int/healthsystems/universal_health_coverage/en/.
- ¹⁹ O'Neill and others 2014, p. 57.
- ²⁰ ILO 2010b.
- ²¹ UN-DESA 2013c.
- ²² Jawad 2013.
- ²³ UNDP 2002.
- ²⁴ Stein and others 2010.
- ²⁵ Silatech 2014; Demirgüç-Kunt and Klapper 2012.
- ²⁶ Goldberg 2005; Robalino and others 2013.
- ²⁷ InfoDev/World Bank 2013.
- ²⁸ IPU 2014b.
- ²⁹ See <http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=MA>.
- ³⁰ IPU 2014c.
- ³¹ UNDP 2013b.