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GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN YOUTH STRATEGIES
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Note: This Brief was prepared by the Population and Social Development Section of the Social Development Division of ESCWA, with invaluable input from Mrs. Henrietta Aswad, an expert in communication and development strategies.

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Introduction

This Brief was prepared by the Population and Social Development Section of the Social Development Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). This is the fifth Social Policy Brief in a series issued periodically by the Section. This Brief provides an overview of national youth policies in ESCWA member countries and underlines the importance of youth and gender integration in fostering sustainable development. It also includes an evaluation of gender mainstreaming in youth strategies, particularly in Bahrain and Palestine, by doing the following:

(a) Reviewing the National Youth Strategy (2005-2009) of Bahrain, and the Palestinian National Policy for Adolescents and Youth (2011-2013) and assessing the extent to which gender was taken into consideration in the analyses, objectives and issues proposed for action in those policies and documents;

(b) Formulating recommendations to assist ESCWA member countries in raising awareness of gender issues and mainstreaming them into national policies and relevant indicators; and highlighting best practice and lessons learned and sharing them with Governments and other stakeholders in the region.

United Nations and youth: An historical overview

Since 1965, the United Nations has aimed to deepen stakeholder concern for young people and youth-related issues. In that year, Member States adopted the Declaration on the Promotion Among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Peoples, and acknowledged that concern for young women and young men, their principles, noble ideals and capacity is vital in efforts to achieve development goals and objectives.

In the light of the demographic, economic, social and cultural factors affecting young people, the many national, regional and global challenges that they face and the key role they play in driving development forward, the United Nations has worked with governments and non-governmental organizations to focus attention at the global level on young people to strengthen their role and promote their integration in the development process, while taking their unique characteristics into account. Consequently, international standards and frameworks for youth were developed in 1996 in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond sets forth the basis, a framework for action and priorities to be considered by Member States when formulating policies, strategies and comprehensive national programmes for young people, with a view to strengthening their role and involving them in all sectors and at all levels of development. The programme of action was expanded in 2007 and now includes fifteen priority areas, namely hunger and poverty, employment, education, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure-time activities, girls and young women, full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and decision-making, globalization, information and communications technology, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict and intergenerational issues.

Following the report of the United Nations Secretary-General entitled “Goals and targets for monitoring the progress of youth in the global economy”, submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session in 2007, the World Programme of Action for Youth received strong support from the international community, elevating it to the level of a youth development agenda, particularly in connection with four priority areas, namely globalization, poverty and hunger, education and employment. The report included specific goals and objectives for the period 2005-2015 that can be monitored and evaluated.

In resolution 64/130 of 18 December 2009, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth: progress and constraints with respect to the well-being of youth and their role in civil society”, which included a set of goals and targets that complemented the priority areas listed in the World Programme of Action for Youth.

The General Assembly called upon Member States to consider using the goals and targets proposed in the reports at the national level to monitor progress towards implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth.

The United Nations proclaimed 2010 as the International Year of Youth. To highlight the important role played by young women and young men in development, an international youth conference was held in Mexico from 23 to 27 August of that year, in addition to numerous regional and national-level meetings in which States, civil society and young people participated. In that context, a number of meetings and activities on youth issues were organized in the region. Moreover, the Social Development Division of ESCWA issued a booklet that highlighted national youth strategies, key statistics for member countries, successes achieved by these countries when launching and implementing national youth programmes and projects and activities organized by ESCWA within the framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

The situation of young people in ESCWA member countries: A brief history

Young people between the ages of 15 and 24 represent the largest population age group in Arab countries, constituting more than a third of their populations. Young people cannot be overlooked and are an invaluable source of national wealth and human development, provided that their position in society is strengthened and their capacity directed in line with policies that meet their needs and their social, economic, political and cultural aspirations.

Globalization has had economic, political, cultural and social repercussions on the countries of the region and their peoples, and in particular on young men and young women. Observers believe that globalization and the opening of markets and economies in the region have failed to create anticipated employment opportunities for young people. Global markets have absorbed a limited number of young people, whose achievement can be attributed to their own networking and personal skills. Globalization has marginalized young people who lack access to such privileges and the knowledge or skills to obtain better employment. In the light of the impact of globalization and in the absence of human development that can keep pace with it, the countries of the region have come to understand that comprehensive youth policies must be drawn up before it is too late.

Despite different economic and developmental approaches, Arab Governments have sought to establish official youth committees, bodies and councils over the past three decades to draw up strategies and policies for young people. While demonstrating these countries' concern for youth issues, most of those strategies and policies have fallen within the scope of general development. While they have been very successful in certain sectors, including education, their degree of success has varied between countries according to the particular characteristics of each. Despite their success, the initiatives are not based on an up-to-date, standardized conceptual framework for those initiatives, and are subject to traditional, negative, rejectionist views of young people's behaviour. The initiatives are poorly planned due to limited experience in policy and strategy formulation and implementation at the institutional level and this weakens the participation of young men and young women, and hinders their integration in the process at all levels and in all sectors. Such initiatives are generally small-scale scattered projects and most fail to establish sectoral links or account for gender, two key elements in achieving comprehensive and sustainable development.

The 2009 Arab Human Development Report confirmed this assessment of the situation of young people, and noted that, with certain exceptions, unemployment rates in the period 1991-2004 reflected the increase in the number of young people, as young people now constitute about 44 per cent of the total unemployed in Arab countries. The Report stated that Arab countries had made only modest efforts, given their young people's needs, and that they needed to create more than 51 million jobs by 2020 to absorb those already seeking work and those joining the workforce. For decades, Arab Governments have promised young people a paradigm shift, but they have failed to deliver. In the midst of this reality and the major challenges facing these countries, comprehensive youth development will remain the top priority for Arab countries.

In the past decade, a significant shift has taken place in Arab countries' initiatives and approaches to youth policies and programmes. They began to base their activities on the framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth and draw upon technical support provided by the United Nations and ESCWA with a view to strengthen the knowledge and skills of stakeholders of the World Programme of Action for Youth and formulate more appropriate national and sectoral youth policies and strategies and programmes. This process, however, is a recent phenomenon in most of those countries, notwithstanding the disparity in their levels of development.

The youth revolutions occurring in the Arab region today make it clear that young women and young men are, without doubt, the real force driving toward change. The revolutions are a natural reaction, a rejection of the status quo and the failure of Arab countries' development efforts to bring about needed changes. Those efforts have long been rooted in social and economic models and policies that were based on traditional mindsets and approaches. It is ironic that, for decades, those countries purported to uphold international concepts and standards and ratified conventions on human rights that were seldom implemented for fear of change and a lack of confidence in the capacity of young people.

As part of its efforts to promote the World Programme of Action for Youth and encourage Arab countries to adopt it, ESCWA collaborated with member countries to organize a series of national and regional-level meetings and workshops to support the Programme's concepts and methodology. Those events addressed issues that included: developing national youth policies and strategies; exploring ways to integrate young people into the development process; strengthening documentation and the preparation of reports within the framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth; improving the collection of reliable and disaggregated data; developing methodologies; sharing information and experiences; and using all these mechanisms to ensure that regular and effective investment in young people takes place in all sectors.

The most important of those meetings and regional workshops included the following: the Workshop on Reinforcing National Capacities in Responding to the World Programme of Action for Youth: National Reports and Systematic Documentation of Accomplishments, held in Beirut on 17 and 18 December 2008; the Expert Group Meeting on Reinforcing Social Equity: Integrating Youth into the Development Process, held in Abu Dhabi from 29 to 31 March 2009; and a Ministerial round-table meeting on national youth policies. That round table took place during the twenty-sixth session of ESCWA, held in Beirut from 17 to 20 May 2010. Moreover, ESCWA recently convened the Expert Group Meeting on the Positions of ESCWA Member Countries towards the Development of a National Policy for Youth (Beirut, 29 and 30 March 2011).

Concepts and definitions

A number of international terms and definitions related to youth and gender are provided below with a view to ensuring that the issues addressed in this document are clear and understood. The definitions issued by the United Nations have been adopted by all countries, including Arab countries.

- *Youth*: defined by the United Nations as persons between the ages of 15 and 24. Other organizations at various levels have defined youth differently.
- *Gender*: refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and relations between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context and time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a women or a man. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in the responsibilities they have, activities they undertake, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader sociocultural context, just like other important criteria for sociocultural analysis, which include class, race, poverty level and age.

- *Gender mainstreaming*: the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men enjoy equal rights and freedoms. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.
- *Youth integration*: encouraging stakeholders to take into account the perspectives of young men and young women and boys and girls in all areas and at all levels of development.
- *Gender analysis*: an analysis based on socioeconomic methodologies that identify and explain the consequences of disparities and relations between men and women, within the context of achieving development goals. It is not possible to study disparities and relations between men and women in isolation from the broader social context. Along the lines of comparisons between men and women's participation in positions of authority and decision-making, a study of the disparities in the levels of their access to, and control over resources (land, labour, capital, production, tools, knowledge, institutions and social networks) is a key aspect of gender analysis. Such analysis can reveal other complex issues, such as gender-based violence, which is often overlooked in programmes in all sectors. To assess the potential outcome of relations between women and men and their comparative advantages, quantitative and qualitative data disaggregated by gender must be made available.
- *Gender-based constraints*: factors that prevent men or women from accessing resources or opportunities of any type. They include laws, policies, values, perceptions, traditions and cultural, social, institutional, political and economic practices.
- *Gender indicators*: indicators that account for disparities and relations between the sexes and chart changes in those disparities and relations and in gender equality over time. These indicators are used to assess progress in achieving equality between men and women by measuring changes to the status of each sex over a certain period. They are also used as a tool for assessing progress in development activities to achieve a greater degree of equality between the sexes, and as a tool for measuring social change and the impact and effectiveness of certain Government policies. In this context, these indicators may be linked to the following factors: (a) desired quality; (b) desired quantity; (c) target group affected by or benefiting from the programmes or projects; (d) timeframe envisaged for achieving set development goals.
- *National youth policies*: official Government instruments that provide the State with general guidelines on youth issues. They identify actions and measures to achieve national priorities and objectives, within the framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth, and seek to achieve the integration and involvement of young people in economic, social and political life.

National youth policies in ESCWA member countries

Overview

In contrast to some other societies in the world, Arab societies are young; young people between the ages of 15 and 24 constitute the largest segment of the population, which, according to United Nations statistics, exceeded 95 million people in 2005. The demographic social, economic, political and geographical characteristics of young men and young women vary within each country and between ESCWA member countries. The well-being of that group and its productivity depend on the extent to which governments are committed to the following: collaborating with youth and civil society in the development of comprehensive and integrated national and sectoral policies, strategies and programmes, to activate young people's role and

ensure their integration into the institutional, social, economic, political, cultural and geographical dimensions of the development process; meeting their needs and aspirations; and involving them on an equal footing in achieving sustainable development.

There are several reasons why Arab countries are drawing up comprehensive policies and strategies from an integrated sectoral perspective and seeking to promote young people's role and ensure that they are part of the development process. One of the benefits of national youth policies is that they provide a framework on youth issues for governmental and non-governmental organizations and for the private sector. The countries of the region can take advantage of the demographic window that will provide a range of opportunities for the development of young men and young women, particularly for those who are at the peak of their productive capacity. Countries can direct the energy, skills and abilities of young people into various economic social, policy and service sectors. Integrating young people into the development process, particularly those with skills, experience and competencies, enhances their productivity and their contribution to society, and thus drives development forward.

There are many successful experiences in this area. Some countries have been able to take advantage of the demographic window by formulating cross-sectoral youth policies and strategies that have helped to integrate young people, ensure that youth-related issues are taken into consideration in all programmes and initiatives and thus achieve gender equality and sustainable development for young people. All Arab countries can learn from the experiences of countries whose economies grew by 25 to 40 per cent in the 1990s, including China (particularly Hong Kong), Japan, Singapore and the Republic of Korea. That economic growth was enabled by high rates of demographic growth, which drove the development process. Experience has shown that young people do not impose a burden on society, but constitute a positive element of change and a source of productive strength, provided that their role within society is strengthened. In contrast, there is a high cost associated with not taking any action in that regard: this has serious future consequences for young people and their countries. An effective and well-timed investment in young men and young women remains the optimal solution for achieving sustainable human development in the countries of the region.

Population policies in ESCWA member countries address youth issues and aim to improve young people's social, economic and political lives and enable them to develop their capacities so that they can help build their societies. Those policies have highlighted differences between the orientations and priorities of various countries, particularly in the economic and political fields. Changes have taken place in the way the development policies of Arab countries address youth issues. These changes occurred during two time periods: the first in the 1980s and 1990s when a general development approach to youth issues was adopted; and the second, which began in 2000 and is still ongoing, characterized by a sectoral approach to youth development.

Despite differences in the economic and development approaches that they follow, Arab Governments have formulated a series of decrees and public policies that aim to improve the living conditions of their populations, including young people. These policies respond to national development priorities determined in the strategic vision for each country and the country's needs in the light of international trends. Governments have addressed development in a general manner, without focusing on sectoral development or the development of certain segments of society. For a considerable time, this traditional approach to development and the adoption of a general perspective in development management prevented the requirements of vulnerable social and demographic groups, including young people and women, from being considered independent of the general needs of the population.

Until recently, many countries maintained such a general perspective on development management. Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Yemen are under population pressure, while wars or conflicts have put pressure on Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and the Sudan. The general perspective on development led to a sense of marginalization and neglect among young people, as it prevented them from reaping the benefits of development, failed to address their needs and aspirations in all sectors and ignored their particular

circumstances, particularly in the midst of the demographic shifts that have shaken the region. The negative aspects of the general perspective also impacted the quality and content of research, data and indicators on population in general, and on young people and women in particular.

Moreover, the transition that a number of Arab countries went through in the last third of the twentieth century made it more difficult to clarify the parameters of a strategic vision for youth and negatively impacted the interpretation of policies and the implementation of national strategies and programmes for youth. At the beginning of the 1980s, as the global economy flourished, countries adopted the slogan “economic reform” that had been dictated by globalization and global markets. However, rapid economic growth began to slow in the middle of the decade, and great changes took place in Arab economic performance between 1985 and 1994, when investment fell by more than 6 per cent of the GDP of Arab countries and was directed towards countries in East Asia instead. The most vulnerable groups in society, namely women and young people, paid a high price as a result of those circumstances; Governments in the region realized that the sustainability of economic reform depended on achieving equitable human and social development that would allow people to move forward and provide young people with opportunities to enter the labour market.

The impact of sectoral development policies in Arab countries became apparent during the 2000s, resulting in significant progress in several sectors, albeit to varying degrees between countries. On the economic level, gradual recovery occurred as markets were liberalized and the private sector shared responsibilities for growth and development. In the field of education, the 2002 to 2006 Human Development Reports showed that literacy rates among young people rose from 36.9 per cent to 76.3 per cent, with the Gulf States achieving the highest levels, followed by the Arab Mashreq countries, and then the Maghreb countries. In the least developed countries, however, more than one third of young men and women remained illiterate, while illiteracy rates still exceeded 50 per cent among girls. Furthermore, maternal mortality rates fell by two thirds. Although such improvements demonstrate the success of the sectoral development approach, the success is modest when measured against the resources young people will need if they are to strengthen their role, improve their competitiveness in labour markets and production, and enjoy greater opportunities in their lives.

Unfortunately, the significant progress that has been achieved in some sectors did not have a positive impact on other sectors, perhaps because of a lack of coherence between sectoral youth development policies. While reports from a number of countries in the region highlight clear improvements in primary, secondary and tertiary education, and stronger economies and reductions in public debt, these successes did not generate a similar impact on the labour sector, indicating a lack of coherence between sectoral policies. For decades, unemployment has been rising in all Arab countries, even wealthy, petroleum exporting countries, along with a widening gap in educational levels and unemployment rates between young men and young women.

Weak strategic planning in the policy formulation phase and the lack of policy coordination and coherence have prevented successes in one sector from having a positive impact on other sectors. In addition, widespread social and cultural restrictions have resulted in the loss of numerous valuable opportunities from which young men and women could have benefited economically, socially and personally. There are several reasons for those failures, including the following: (a) prevailing attitudes and traditional practices in policymaking that continue despite the changes that have occurred in the region; (b) weak cooperation and national technical expertise in intersectoral planning; (c) sectoral policies for young people that are not comprehensive and that are weakly interconnected; (d) the exclusion of young men and young women from participation and involvement in development and decision-making processes.

The exclusion of young people, youth unemployment, and the depletion of human and social capital have a major impact and come at a high economic cost, demonstrated by high levels of youth unemployment and school dropout rates, deterioration in health care, and emigration. One study highlighted the enormous overall cost of excluding young people in the Middle East. In Egypt, for example, this cost may reach 17.4

per cent of GDP, while in Jordan it may reach 7.3 per cent. In the light of the high cost of exclusion, youth development must remain a priority issue for the countries in the region.

Policies in the past have been characterized by temporary, momentary solutions for youth problems, indicative of what is known as a “quick fix” or “putting out fires” approach. This approach has proven to be a failure: it exacerbated young people’s problems at both the national and regional levels and resulted in their exclusion from effective participation in the development process. In the past ten years, several countries in the region recognized the consequences and failings of this approach, and consequently began to invest over the long term in the development of young women and young men.

Governments must uphold their unimplemented declarations to address the ambitions and aspirations of young people with policies and programmes that will achieve justice and equality between men and women, and strengthen universal participation in decision-making and long-term strategic planning to find comprehensive sustainable solutions. In their efforts to achieve reform and modernization, Governments must not ignore the fact that young people constitute a valuable productive resource, and an indispensable intellectual resource.

The importance of youth integration and gender mainstreaming in achieving sustainable development

The scope of sustainable human development includes economic, social and cultural processes and human beings are its main focus. Sustainable human development relates to people’s needs and their social well-being, and the State is responsible to draw up development policies and take appropriate action to achieve the well-being of citizens. It emphasizes the need for coherence between the various aspects of economic, social, political, cultural and environmental development, and highlights human rights, equality, social justice and civil liberties.

Sustainable human development does not view people as a burden on the development process, but rather as the target and the architects of the process. This concept of development requires radical changes in legislative, economic, political and cultural systems to establish the appropriate institutional structure, support capacity-building and update concepts and methodologies. To achieve sustainable human development, all groups and parties involved in the development process must participate, particularly young men and young women. This includes participating in decisions about their lives, environment and communities, accessing markets and ownership of resources, and benefiting from information technology and public services. Such participation is needed to integrate people, empower them and strengthen their capacity so that they can assess their needs and put their experiences and energies at the heart of the development process.

The youth development perspective is based on human development approaches and principles. It views development as a collective and individual right; that young people are not its sole target, as it also targets policymakers; and that it requires sustainability, equity, equality, empowerment, the protection of rights and freedoms and the provision of opportunities. The perspective regards young people as more than a category targeted by the development process: they are a social group with particular characteristics, social aspirations and needs, and the aim is to involve and integrate them in all stages of the development process.

In 1995, a strategy was adopted at the international level at the Fourth World Conference on Women and a definition for the concept of gender mainstreaming was set by the Economic and Social Council in 1997. Gender mainstreaming aims to ensure that the needs, concerns and experiences of men and women are an integral dimension in the design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national and sectoral policies and programmes in the political, economic and social fields. It also seeks to ensure that everyone, including young people, has access to opportunities and available resources. Gender mainstreaming is a means to achieve equality between men and women and empower them in all areas. Although the implementation of this strategy has been constrained and obstructed at the national and institutional levels, it

remains the most effective way to ensure the participation of young men and young women, their empowerment and gender equality.

In the light of experiences and lessons learned, experts agree that stakeholder scepticism of the youth development perspective and the failure to integrate it into development practices and processes in society, politics, economics and administration threatens the ability of national youth development policies to achieve social justice. A youth integration approach has been developed along the lines of approaches used in the gender mainstreaming approach. This is based on several elements that are common to both, in particular, the cross-sectoral nature of those approaches and their ability to address a large number of common issues at various levels.

Gender mainstreaming in youth development policies and programmes is important because it contradicts the notion that young men and young women are a homogenous group while it affirms the principle of equality between men and women. Gender mainstreaming involves the implementation of key actions at the strategic and operational planning levels, the most important of which are as follows:

- Compiling statistics and data disaggregated by sex, and accessing quality information on the status of men and women;
- Conducting gender analysis to reveal differences between men and women on a number of levels, including the following: the division of labour and the distribution of roles; power relations; access to and control over resources; levels of participation and involvement in decision-making; the legal and legislative basis of equality or inequality; political, economic and social commitments to achieve youth and gender equality; the impact of traditions, culture, religion, attitudes and stereotypes on all those issues; disparities in social, economic and cultural relationships between men and women; and other cross-cutting issues like gender-based violence, early marriage and female genital mutilation;
- Adopting a unified conceptual framework for mainstreaming in all phases of planned and ongoing activities;
- Formulating gender-sensitive indicators to monitor gender mainstreaming and the implementation of evaluation mechanisms with a view to measuring equality and changes in gender relations.

The mainstreaming process provides for sustainable development and equality between young women and young men, because they constitute the true engine of development and equality. However, the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies remains a daunting task unless local and national cultural, political, economic and geographical characteristics are given due consideration and action is taken to disseminate constructive practices and to limit detrimental institutional and social actions that impede equality and justice for young women and young men.

In this context, the 2004, 2005 and 2007 evaluations of gender mainstreaming at the institutional level prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), established that disparities existed in the way gender mainstreaming was understood and in the determination of its key principles based on sex-disaggregated data, as well as in the way gender analysis was undertaken and in the language used to account for differences between the sexes and for gender equality. The evaluations revealed that in planning, monitoring and evaluation, there were no linkages between the mainstreaming process and regulatory functions, such as operations and human resources. This affected the implementation of gender mainstreaming approaches in national, governmental and non-governmental organization.

Certain countries and organizations impose restrictions to prevent young men and young women from accessing resources and opportunities of all kinds. These restrictions are exemplified in laws and policies,

entrenched values and concepts, and prevailing traditions and institutional and individual practices of a cultural, social, political and economic nature.

Gender mainstreaming in youth strategies in Bahrain from 2005 to 2009, and Palestine from 2011 to 2013: key findings

The present evaluation of the strategies of Bahrain and Palestine is limited to determining the extent to which they have incorporated a gender mainstreaming approach into their stated objectives and priorities, in related indicators, planned activities and resource monitoring. It also examines how gender analysis has been incorporated into those strategies. The evaluation does not address the implementation phase, as it has not been completed. Because the evaluation is a desk study that does not include any fieldwork, there have been no discussions with stakeholders regarding concerns, priorities and databases, nor have there been discussions with the compilers of that data.

The following is an overview of the national strategy formulation processes undertaken in Bahrain and Palestine, in addition to a number of key findings of the evaluation of the strategies.

1. *Bahrain*

(a) *National Youth Strategy*

The National Youth Strategy of Bahrain is based, in particular, on article 5, clause 1 of the Bahraini Constitution and on legislation contained in the National Action Charter. The Constitution and Charter reflect the desire of the State to promote the physical, moral and intellectual development of young people.

In August 2003, the General Organization for Youth and Sports, representing the Government of Bahrain, signed an agreement with UNDP to develop a National Youth Strategy for the period 2005-2009. The process to formulate this Strategy included a series of consultations and the preparation of extensive theoretical and practical studies. It also included a review of data, experience, international instruments and national literature on youth development. Eight working groups were formed to identify key themes for the strategy, and national conferences, workshops and panel discussions were held on a number of its aspects. Furthermore, 1,840 families took part in a national survey of young people's lives and aspirations and a campaign entitled "Express Yourself", was organized in which ten thousand interviews and discussions with young people took place. More than 16,000 young Bahraini men and women took part in the various activities held as part of the strategy development process and the high level of youth participation in a national event of this nature was considered to be a unique phenomenon that was unprecedented in the region.

The Strategy defined young people as the segment of the population between 15 and 30 years of age, and youth constitute 27.4 per cent of the total population, of whom 51.2 per cent were men and 48.8 per cent were women. The figures indicate that Bahrain has a youthful society. The Strategy identified ten key themes for youth development, namely the environment, healthy lifestyles, education and training, work, culture, sports and entertainment, information and communications technology, globalization, human and civil rights, and citizenship.

In 2004, the International Council on National Youth Policy, an international non-governmental organization working to strengthen national youth mechanisms and policies around the world, gave Bahrain two awards, one for the best national youth strategy and the other for the best working mechanism in the field of youth. In 2007, the Council selected Bahrain to become a Council member, along with ten other member countries that represented different regions of the world. This move reflected the Council's appreciation of Bahrain's efforts to improve the situation of young people.

(b) *Key findings*

The evaluation of gender mainstreaming in the documents, key themes, analyses, objectives, activities, indicators, and monitoring of human and material resources of the National Youth Strategy (2005-2009) resulted in the following key findings.

- In its various stages, the Strategy adopted a participatory approach. That was particularly the case prior to and during the planning stage. The very high levels of youth participation in the process constituted an unprecedented phenomenon in the region. However, the Strategy documents did not indicate the percentage of young men and women who participated. Moreover, it did not provide a detailed description of their roles or their input to the Strategy, or how that input affected the formulation of the Strategy, which would assist stakeholders in their efforts to understand group and gender dynamics and learn lessons from this experience with a view to improving youth participation levels in development in the Arab region.
- While the statements, key declaration, vision, strategic objectives and general principles reflected a strong commitment to and support for youth participation in the development process, in line with the Constitution of Bahrain, the Strategy documents did not contain any clear commitment to adopt gender mainstreaming as a key approach in strengthening the participation of men and women in efforts to achieve sustainable development in a spirit of justice and equality.
- The Strategy did not include a general analysis of the situation of young men and young women in Bahrain and instead provided only brief analyses in connection with its sections and major themes, including youth participation, key points, and strategic actions. Interestingly, those analyses addressing themes such as health, social and family relationships and employment, did not discuss fundamental issues facing young people which include gender-based violence, social marginalization and early marriage, as underscored by national human rights organizations, United Nations bodies, international non-governmental organizations and regional experts on population, employment and gender.
- None of the analyses contained in the Strategy address the different components of gender; the power relations between the sexes and the social, economic and cultural differences between them; obstacles to youth access to and control of resources; participation rates and decision-making; the presence or absence of a legal and legislative foundation for equality between men and women; the positive or negative impact of traditions, culture, religion, attitudes and stereotypes on the relationship between women and men; and the role of governmental, non-governmental and private institutions in fostering the participation of the sexes on an equal footing to ensure sustainable development and the political, economic and social commitments made by those institutions.
- While the Strategy aimed to integrate youth issues and increase young women's participation in all its stages, including the setting of priorities, goals, activities and mechanisms, the Strategy's approach did not demonstrate a commitment to achieving systematic gender mainstreaming or balanced and sustainable growth, because it failed to adopt a gender mainstreaming methodology that ensured an equal opportunity to participate to all.
- The Strategy document reveals serious and widespread shortcomings in data and surveys on young people as the results were not disaggregated by age and gender, despite the importance of disaggregated data for undertaking a gender analysis. As a result there was a poor understanding of the nature of power relations between men and women and their social, economic, cultural, individual and familial needs and aspirations; and in planning appropriately, and in ensuring equal and equitable participation of young men and women in all stages of the development process.

- Because the Strategy document did not address the monitoring and evaluation process, it did not provide any indicators for output, performance and change indicators, that would help measure progress, the tangible results of youth and gender mainstreaming, and the effects on, and changes to, relations, systems and structures.
- The Strategy document also failed to address the allocation of human and material resources: it did not specify the number of participating young men and women, and the funds needed for the proposed activities to be implemented.
- The Strategy also failed to specify the roles undertaken by young men and women, and the extent of their participation in the proposed mechanisms and activities.

The evaluation's key findings indicate that the Strategy sought to promote youth participation in the development process in all key areas and sectors, however, although the Strategy aimed to increase young women's participation in this process, it did not adopt a gender mainstreaming approach nor did it demonstrate that there was any intention of doing so.

2. *Palestine*

(a) *National Policy for Adolescents and Youth*

The National Policy for Adolescents and Youth in Palestine provides guiding principles and plans of action in the field of youth. The Policy is contained in a national document that sets forth a unified perspective on trends in youth development. That document was adopted within the country by institutions, the Government and young people themselves, and contains a commitment by all parties that youth issues are a priority that must be addressed seriously and in cooperation with other stakeholders to achieve the stated objectives. The Policy aims to integrate young people in the development process as both architects and beneficiaries. The perspective centres on the priority of integrating young people in the development process, and ensuring that their positions, interests, priority concerns and views are taken into consideration in all policies, programmes and laws.

In August 2009, the Palestinian Cabinet issued a decision that provided for the formulation of a national plan for the period 2011 to 2013, and the adoption of sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies as part of the work methodology to ensure the plan's success. The Ministry of Youth and Sports then worked with other ministries and national and international partners and youth organizations, and issued the Cross-Sectoral National Strategy for Youth in December 2010. The Strategy targeted those between 15 and 29 years of age, who constitute 29 per cent of the total population of Palestine, and focused on several key themes, namely participation, citizenship, affiliation, education and training, employment and poverty, health, culture, the media, the environment, sports and entertainment, and information and communication technology.

Palestine is suffering from conflict because of the Israeli occupation. In that context, youth development acquires special security, social and political dimensions. In recent years, several international organizations, including UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization and the World Bank, have worked to highlight their experiences in conflict zones, and the importance of addressing the strong link between exclusion and violence among young people, while focusing attention on girls in particular.

Although the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the main reason for the exclusion of young men and young women, a series of institutional, cultural and social practices exacerbate that phenomenon and increase the suffering it causes. The currently divided system, which is highly hierarchical and traditional, discourages the participation of youth of both sexes and undermines their confidence in decision-making entities. Furthermore, traditional male-dominated and patriarchal societies reinforce generational and gender

differences and entrench patriarchal authority and monopolize decision-making. Girls, as the least empowered group, bear the brunt of these conditions and suffer socially, economically, and in terms of their security as a result. This situation highlights the need to mainstream gender in all stages of the youth development process and ensure the participation of young men and young women in a spirit of justice and equality. Various sectoral initiatives that encourage such participation are now underway.

(b) *Key findings*

The evaluation of gender mainstreaming in the Palestinian National Strategy for Youth (2011-2013) covered a statement by Palestinian youth, the key themes of the Strategy, analyses, objectives, activities, indicators and the monitoring of human and material resources. The evaluation resulted in the following key findings.

- The Strategy adopted a participatory approach at various levels, particularly prior to and during the planning stage.
- A statement by Palestinian youth that was included in the section on their message, vision and principles affirmed the intention to achieve comprehensive youth integration in development, for both young women and young men, by building on several elements, including the principle of equality between the sexes. The statement did not, however, elaborate on the methodologies and mechanisms that the Strategy would adopt when addressing the key themes and the various sectors in order to achieve that integration.
- Although the Strategy included a number of analyses of the status quo and highlighted young people's outlook on their situation, their concerns and their suffering under occupation, it touched upon gender mainstreaming very timidly. The Strategy did not analyse the following key aspects of gender: power relations between men and women; social, economic and cultural disparities between them; obstacles impeding youth access to and control of resources; participation rates and decision-making; the presence or absence of a legal and legislative foundation for equality between men and women; the positive or negative impact of traditions, culture, religion, attitudes and stereotypes on the relationship between women and men; the role of governmental, non-governmental and private institutions in fostering equitable participation with a view to supporting sustainable development; and the related political, economic and social commitments made by those institutions.
- While the Strategy sought to integrate youth issues, promote the participation of girls in all stages of the integration process, and identify priorities and objectives, activities and indicators, the approach adopted in drawing up the Strategy did not ensure systematic gender mainstreaming nor the achievement of balanced and sustainable growth, since it did not adopt a methodology that would provide for gender mainstreaming, equality and equal opportunities to participate at all levels.
- Although the Strategy addressed the social, economic and psychological impact of conflict on young people, and highlighted how this was linked to incidences of violence against and among young people, it did not address the link between the exclusion of young men and young women and violence between young people and particularly violence perpetrated against girls. It also failed to address the impact of exclusion on gender relations at the individual, family, social and institutional levels.
- There are serious shortcomings in the data disaggregated by age and gender and surveys on youth, despite the fact that these are essential to gender analysis, and to understand the nature of power relations between men and women, and their needs and aspirations, which will facilitate the

formulation of strategic policies and plans and ensure the participation of young men and young women in the development process on the basis of parity and equality.

- The term “youth” is not used consistently in certain parts of the Strategy. Although that term is usually employed to refer to both men and women, in certain contexts it is used to refer to males only. (See pp. 12, 48, 55, 64, 72, 139 and 181 of the Strategy).
- The Strategy does not clarify the roles and participation rates of young men and young women in most proposed mechanisms and activities.
- Although the Strategy allocated a budget for various activities, no figure or amount was specified for monitoring material resources, or for monitoring human resources, namely the young men and women needed to carry out those activities.
- There were no indicators to measure the following:
 - Rates, changes and percentages disaggregated by age and gender;
 - The extent of the impact of specific objectives and planned activities on power relations between young men and women;
 - The extent of change occurring in relevant government institutions and non-governmental organizations pursuant to the integration of young men and young women;
 - The impact of actions to promote a gender-sensitive approach to the integration of young people in the development process and power relations between the sexes.

The evaluation’s key findings are that the Strategy seeks to promote youth participation in the development process in all relevant sectors and that, although the Strategy aims to implement measures to increase the participation of young women in that process, it has not adopted a gender mainstreaming approach. Moreover, the Strategy does not make it clear that there is any intention of doing so.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made pursuant to a review and evaluation of the national youth strategies of Bahrain and Palestine, and the outcomes of those strategies, with a view to promoting equal and equitable opportunities for both sexes to participate in efforts to achieve sustainable development. The recommendations are addressed to decision makers and stakeholders in development at the institutional and programme levels and identify systematic ways to organize the gender mainstreaming process.

1. At the institutional level

- Assign a leading role to high-level authorities in implementing a gender mainstreaming approach, and emphasize institutions’ commitment to promoting the approach within their structures and in youth policies and programmes.
- Establish a national committee with representatives from ministries, civil society institutions, political organizations, youth centres, student groups and the private sector, to be given responsibility the of identifying operating procedures and tracking mutual commitments so that the approach can be implemented progressively and within an appropriate time frame.
- Formulate a guidance paper on ways to achieve youth integration with the aim of mainstreaming the practice in governmental, non-governmental and private institutions, and among stakeholders involved in current and future policies and programmes.

- The experiences and lessons learned from international, governmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with youth and gender issues have shown that the success of gender mainstreaming depends on the following:
 - A strong commitment at the management level;
 - Strengthening the institutional framework for promoting gender mainstreaming;
 - Developing a clear, proactive strategy and an effective policy for the dissemination of that perspective at all levels and in all sectors;
 - Raising awareness of mainstreaming concepts and promoting collective responsibility to fully institutionalize the integration process;
 - Training national officials and strengthening their expertise to enable them to provide advice on promoting equality between the sexes in all programmes and projects;
 - Providing systematic training on concepts of gender mainstreaming, on tools for mainstreaming and thematic issues;
 - Allocating the necessary human and material resources to achieve systematic gender mainstreaming at all levels and in all sectors;
 - Enhancing motivation and partnership at all levels and in all sectors;
 - Documenting communication with relevant partners, and benefiting from local expertise and gender mainstreaming capacities;
 - Clarifying roles, strengthening vertical and horizontal cooperation and coordination, creating incentives and promoting mechanisms for accountability, so that progress is made in gender mainstreaming in all youth policies and programmes.

2. At the implementation level

- Address inherent weaknesses in the gender mainstreaming process by identifying obstacles in order to enhance performance and improve implementation rates. Proposed measures include: identifying the link between women's rights and the goal of achieving gender equality; improving the dissemination of information and developing guiding principles on implementation with an appropriate and more responsive framework.
- Commit to improve data collection and surveys, disaggregated by age and sex, that can be used to guide policy and programme design and evaluate their impact on young people of both sexes. Data should be collected and disseminated in a way that facilitates comparison across different contexts.
- Strengthen mainstreaming mechanisms and, wherever possible, improve the quality of output, performance and change indicators, as this will help stakeholders measure progress in gender mainstreaming and youth integration, the impacts on and changes to systems and structures, and to the relations between the sexes.
- Promote gender mainstreaming methodologies that have proven effective with a view to adapting youth programmes to the particular circumstances of countries, including conflict or post-conflict situations.
- Use language that is sensitive to gender disparities to raise awareness of the concept of gender mainstreaming in youth programmes, highlight the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective in the strategy and continue to adopt that perspective, and ensure the participation of men and women in the development process.

- Gender mainstreaming strategies cannot be successfully implemented without considering the cultural, political, economic and geographic characteristics at the local and national levels, taking steps to reinforce the positive characteristics and to modify or discourage institutional and social practices that hinder the achievement of equality and justice for young men and young women.

In conclusion, national and sectoral development policies, programmes and projects impact directly and indirectly on the lives of young men and young women. Efforts must be made to raise the awareness of stakeholders in the region, including governments, private and non-governmental organizations, donors, executive bodies and local communities, of the importance of integrating young men and young women into the development process to ensure its sustainability. The process must be based on collective partnerships and equal contributions from young men and young women.

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