

YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Terms of Reference for a youth mapping in the MENA region

INTRODUCTION

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is a dynamic, diverse, vibrant and young region. Two-thirds of the population are under the age of thirty. Over the past decade or more, civil society and civic activism has flourished in MENA, calling for social justice reforms. In 2011, the region, particularly its youth, raised hopes worldwide with a wave of popular uprisings against failed economic and social policies and political repression. Today, the region is more often associated with adversity: some of the world's biggest and most protracted crises and humanitarian responses as well as the largest mass displacement of people on the globe are currently located in MENA.

Entrenched and structural inequalities along with exclusion have more recently led to renewed widespread protests and uprisings led by youth throughout the region. Young activists or youth organizations that trigger social change are increasingly non-traditional actors, particularly in contexts with shrinking or limited space for civil society. Informal youth groups, networks and also (a large number of) individuals that seemingly act fragmented often have similar goals and activities.

In this context, the Youth Participation and Employment (YPE) program addresses the challenges of youth economic exclusion and lack of civic inclusion of youth. Funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), YPE is part of MFA's 'Danish-Arab Partnership Programme' (DAPP). Established in 2003, DAPP's vision is to promote a democratic, prosperous and stable MENA region through partnerships between Danish and Arab actors. YPE focuses on involving young people in their countries' development and strengthening employment opportunities and entrepreneurship in inclusive ways. Youth participation is crucial for reducing inequalities as well as for including young women, young people from rural and urban areas, youth with disabilities and other marginalized groups of youth.

OBJECTIVES

The need and purpose of the proposed youth mapping research is multifaceted. Through the exercise, young people themselves will identify a wide and diverse foundation of **youth actors, spaces and networks in the area of youth engagement for economic inclusion**. This will provide a better understanding of different perspectives of young people in the MENA region on the actual challenges, needs and opportunities regarding youth economic participation. It will also provide a wider understanding of the different ways in which young people and their organizations prioritize and position themselves, respond to these challenges, needs and opportunities, and mobilize each other and organize their work.

The overall objective of the proposed youth mapping research is thus to obtain a more diversified and complete overview of formal and informal youth actors, networks, organizations, platforms and initiatives relating to economic participation of youth in the MENA region. Related to this, the outcomes of the research could help YPE to look into current approaches to youth participation and develop a clearer strategy on how to facilitate this in the program as well as identify potential youth stakeholders to work with to help reach the best results for YPE.

Secondly, the mapping intends to provide a better understanding of how these actors mobilize/operate, the networks they work within and how they are positioned/related to each other and other (local) actors and structures. By doing so, the mapping can provide recommendations regarding approaches, strategic focus and opportunities to work on youth economic participation with youth, based on the needs of youth.

SCOPE

The mapping will focus on national and local level organizations in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan, taking departure mainly in the regions within countries in which YPE works. Further, it will include a regional and cross-border perspective within the MENA region. The mapping research will target youth-led/driven groups, organizations, platforms and other actors that are working in (relatively) formal and organized ways as well as those working (relatively) informally, online as well as offline. Within the framework of YPE, the mapping will explicitly address the cross-cutting issue of gender, rural vs urban challenges, and the informal and formal sector and the ways in which these affect economic participation or exclusion of youth.

APPROACH

Methodology

The proposed mapping research will start off with a **desk review** which will identify existing documents, reports and other resources that can provide an initial overview of youth actors, e.g. through youth mapping research already done by others. Secondly, it will **gather data** through online and offline sources working in the field of youth. On this basis, an initial longlist of actors will be compiled. Short **interviews** will be conducted with each of these actors, and these interviews can subsequently inform the identification of yet other youth actors. As a final step in the research, a **network analysis** will be conducted to illustrate the dynamics between the identified actors/spaces/networks as well as between them and the more established system and the social structures that emerge from the recurrence of these relations. The networks will be illustrated in a network analysis diagram. This will help shed light on the way these actors interact with existing systems and structures in place (such as public institutions, INGOs etc.).

Research team

To identify a wide diversity of youth actors, we will work with **young community networkers**: a young person that can be an excellent gatekeeper in connecting us to young individuals and (informal) youth groups that we would not easily be able to get in touch with through our regular ways of working (via local partner organizations and networks). This young community networker will be asked to identify youth change makers in the area of economic participation: individuals that have powerful ideas, networks that are working on some kind of social change, etc. We hope for some kind of snowball effect where talking to one young person brings contacts to others. With help from a **young technical researcher**, short interviews will be conducted with these youth actors.

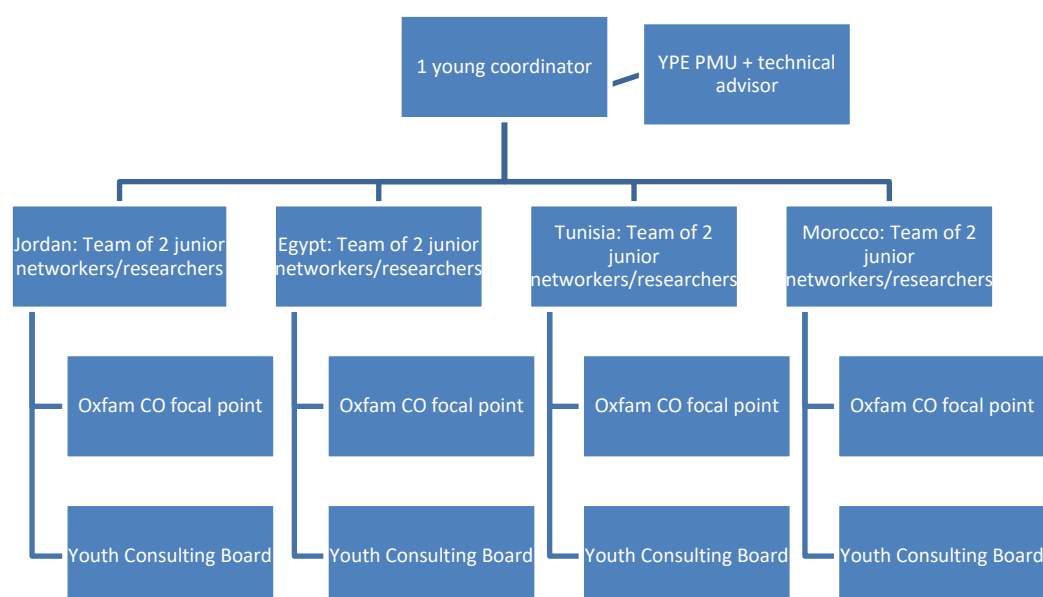
Organization

In each of the four countries, a research team will be established consisting of one young community networker and one young technical researcher. In addition, one overall coordinator will act as the lead for the entire mapping. This (young) person will coordinate the national processes in all individual countries involved, and in consultation with country research teams consolidate the findings from the national research teams and ensure cohesion between country research teams in terms of approach and findings. The coordinator may also encourage further investigation into regional youth groups and actors operating beyond borders.

The four national research teams and the overall coordinator will be supported by the YPE Project Management Unit, a technical advisor on youth participation, and the Oxfam Country Offices, and will get access to different resources and knowledge through YPE's networks and Oxfam's MENA regional platform.

To minimize possible bias in the selection and identification of youth actors, the coordinator will be recruited by a recruitment committee consisting of a focal point from Oxfam’s MENA regional platform, a representative from Oxfam Novib and from Oxfam Ibis. Once the coordinator is recruited, this person will join the committee for the recruitment of the national research teams, and the focal point from the regional platform will be replaced by a focal point from the respective Oxfam Country Office. Selection will be made on the basis of profiles for the different positions.

It is central to ensure rooting in local context and regular validation by local youth. This will be done through having a “Youth Consulting Board”, (YCB), in each country. This board will consult and guide the research along the way in order to ensure rooting and relevance to local youth. This will also ensure diversity and the inclusion of different regional perspectives within countries. The selection of 5-10 youth participants in the YCBs boards will be guided by a general guideline for all countries, developed by the PMU in cooperation with countries. The members of the YCB will receive support (including training) to enable them to carry out their role to the best of their abilities. Visually the organization of the research is summarized in the below figure.



OUTCOMES

- A wide and diverse foundation of youth actors, spaces and networks has been identified.
- This will further increase awareness, knowledge and understanding within Oxfam, YPE and DAPP of relevant youth actors and their needs and perspectives – particularly young actors and youth groups seeking to influence for economic inclusion and equality, potentially triggering social change throughout a country or across the region.
- A better understanding of the situation and needs of youth in regard to economic participation from different perspectives in a country is envisioned to result in better, more effective, more balanced and reciprocal relationships to achieve mutual goals.
- Enhanced understanding and documentation of how youth participation is instrumental in influencing youth policies related to economic participation. This, in turn, enables Oxfam/YPE/DAPP to co-create and implement more effective programs and projects and ultimately to better enable young people to become active citizens and combat economic exclusion.

OUTPUTS

Direct outputs of the scoping research will be:

1. An elementary inception report including methodology and workplan on how the mapping will be conducted, touching upon number of focus group discussions/surveys, geographical scope of mapping per country etc.
2. A short report per country synthesizing the interviews conducted with young individuals and (informal) youth groups, incorporating their perspectives, needs and priorities.
3. A synthesis report including overall findings, conclusions and recommendations from across the four countries and regionally. This will include a list of recommendations informing the design of youth-related activities in the future – both within and outside the YPE. How can youth programming improve based on the findings from this mapping and how to engage on this with partners and youth.
4. A number of cases to share results from the country reports and be used for initial communication purposes.
5. Adhering to all relevant data protection policies including the *General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)* and taking every reasonable precaution to ensure that any (digital) data or content does not place people at risk or render them vulnerable to any form of harassment, abuse or exploitation we will compile an actor list of young individuals and (informal) youth groups, also mapped through a network analysis on a diagram within the wider ecosystem within which they operate.
6. A learning note on the process.
7. At a later stage, in a second phase, the production of (visual) communication products (including e.g. short videos documenting the interviews conducted) will be developed and findings will be shared within and beyond the DAPP program.