

Analytical Report on the Good Practices in Adolescent and Youth Programming



I. Rationale

Middle East and North Africa (MENA) /Arab States region has been documented in a variety of reports and publications.¹ Suffice it to say there is a large population of adolescents (ages 10-19 years) and youth (ages 15-24 years) in the MENA region, one of the largest in the world, due to the combination of sharp declines in child mortality and belated declines in fertility in the region. **Young people (10-24 years old) comprise an estimated 122.4 million people in the region, which constitutes 28 per cent of the total population.**² Several demographic and social trends are affecting young people. Greater exposure to the norms of global culture often creates rifts between generations, particularly as traditional social networks become more fragmented due to greater urbanization and rapid social change. **The youth unemployment rate in the MENA region is the highest in the world, 29.5 per cent.**³ This is partially a result of the lack of harmonization between the outputs of the educational system and the needs of the labour market. Youth are engaging in a variety of risky behaviours that influence their well-being. **Many youth in the region are also exposed to conflict and violence. Gender disparities and other inequities remain significant barriers to the ability of all youth to grow and thrive.** Child marriage continues to be practiced in some countries of the region, with 15 per cent of women aged 20-24 years married or in union by age 18.⁴ However, most of the countries have laws on the minimum age of marriage and significant progress has been made to curb the trend. A recent UNICEF report provides some hope, indicating that of all regions, the MENA region has “made the fastest progress in reducing child marriage” between 1985 and 2010, halving the percentage of women married

under the age of 18 years (from 34 to 18 per cent) in that time period.⁵

Many young people in the region feel marginalized politically, economically and socially, despite the investments of their governments. A powerful illustration is that one in three Arab youths desires to migrate.⁶ The primary reasons include **lack of skills development and employment opportunities, low sense of citizenship, missing opportunities for participation and a feeling of not being respected citizens of their own countries.**⁷ The social, political and economic marginalization felt by young people was reflected in the significant uprisings and social and political movements experienced in the region since 2010. Many of these uprisings and movements have been led by young people who, craving for their voices to be heard, sought more opportunities to participate in the political, social and economic processes of their countries, using both peaceful and non-peaceful means. Today the region continues to experience political transitions, conflicts and instability, including a massive crisis affecting Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and the surrounding countries.

In line with the above, working with and for adolescents and young people is a key priority for the MENA/Arab States Regional United Nations Development Group (R-UNDG). In 2009, the R-UNDG established the regional United Nations Inter-Agency Technical Task Team on Young People (UNIATTTYP) to guide regional and country-level action by the United Nations system concerning young people, ensuring that the requisite leadership and teamwork exists to respond to the needs of young people throughout the Arab States

¹ Assaad & Roudi-Fahimi (2007); Chaaban (2009); Singerman & Ibrahim (2003); Rachik (2005); International Labor Organization (2010); ESCWA (2009).

² U.S. Census Bureau International Database (July 2015).

³ ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM) 8th edition.

⁴ UNFPA (2012) *Marrying Too Young*. Available at: <http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>.

⁵ UNICEF (2015) *State of the World's Children Report*.

⁶ Silatech Index (2010). *Voices of Young Arabs*.

⁷ *Ibid.*



/MENA region. UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) co-chair the UNIATTTYP.

Key aims of the Regional Strategic Action Plan on Young People developed by the UNIATTTYP to guide regional youth work:

- Scale up regional evidence-based responses in the Arab States/ MENA region through concerted efforts to assist countries in the region;
- Ensure harmonization and synergy of R-UNDG technical and financial cooperation to better support country efforts in programming for adolescents and young people;
- Launch an intensified and concerted action to strengthen national policies and programmes in favor of young people;
- Strengthen programming among the most at-risk and marginalized young people, guaranteeing special attention to vulnerable groups.

At the global level, the United Nations Secretary-General has made working with and for young people a priority of his five-year Action Agenda. In addition to the appointment of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and the creation of a United Nations Youth Volunteer Programme, the Secretary-General has called for the development of a System-wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP).⁸ The Youth-SWAP provides strategic guidance to the United Nations system as a whole in its work on youth within the framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth. In addition, it focuses on the following thematic areas: employment; entrepreneurship; political inclusion; civic engagement and protection of rights; education, including comprehensive

sexuality education; and health.

The R-UNDG agreed that for the MENA region, the United Nations team will not roll out the Youth-SWAP immediately but instead focus on identifying practices that work and respond to the situation/priorities for adolescents and young people in the region.

The overall purpose of this good practices exercise is to recommend some 'best buys' in adolescent and youth programming. Specifically it aims to:

- Identify, rate and document global and regional good practices that have had positive outcomes on adolescent and youth development and well-being in priority areas specific to the MENA/Arab States region;
- Ensure that these strategic good practices respond to the critical needs of adolescents and young people in this region;
- Identify preliminary 'push factors' that lead to successful programming of these good practices;
- Recognize the requirements for scaling-up of adolescent and youth programming in the region;
- Review these good practices in the light of the comparative advantage of the United Nations system and support the scaled roll-out of the strategic good practices⁹ for this region.

This effort was led by UNICEF, on behalf of the UNIATTTYP, in partnership with the Center for Public Health Practice (CPHP) (Previously known as the Outreach and Practice Unit) of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the American University of Beirut (see annex 1).

⁸ [http://www.undg.org/docs/13099/UN%20System-wide%20Action%20Plan%20on%20Youth%20\(3\).pdf](http://www.undg.org/docs/13099/UN%20System-wide%20Action%20Plan%20on%20Youth%20(3).pdf).

⁹ The good practices were to be identified on thematic areas which respond to the critical needs of adolescents and young people in this region.



II. Approach

A variety of conceptual frameworks and approaches have been used to understand and analyse adolescent and youth development, resulting in multiple approaches to programming, including multisectoral youth development, rights-based and livelihoods among others.¹⁰ Traditionally, youth have been viewed as problems for society and as passive recipients of adult-directed interventions. Recent literature on young people has shifted from an emphasis on young people as problems and a focus on risky behaviours to seeing young people as assets, with a focus on protective factors. This paradigm – called positive youth development (PYD) or an assets approach¹¹ – focuses on all young people, not only those ‘at risk’¹² and advocates surrounding young persons with an environment that promotes their development, rather than focusing only on prevention of risky behaviours. The approach sees young people as contributing to community change by acting as resources and competent citizens in their communities.¹³ A youth development approach focuses on the strengths of youth rather than deficits.¹⁴ Although a PYD approach is interested in risk exposure, it is “focused on strengths rather than deficits, and on understanding health development in spite of risk exposure.”¹⁵ Strengths, assets and resources enhance the ability of young persons to resist and adapt to stressful events. These can be internal or external to the individual and the PYD approach confirms the importance of both for health and well-being. “The key hypothesis of the PYD perspective is that when the strengths of youth are aligned with the strengths of the context, positive and healthy development will occur.”¹⁶ A focus on PYD means that interventions target building life skills and enhancing protective factors, and

involve young people as active participants in the design, implementation and evaluation of a programme, not only as participants.

This good practices documentation project uses on a PYD /protective factors, asset-based approach to analysis.

For the documentation of good practices in adolescent and youth programming in the MENA region, the target age group considered is ages 12-24 years. Based on the situation assessment in the region and priorities identified by adolescents and young people, the key areas of interest for this project are:

- **Civic engagement:** meaningful and sustainable participation of adolescents and young people in local and national governance processes;
- **Skills development:** employability, workplace readiness, school-to-work transition, twenty-first century skills (such as critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration);
- **Health;**
- **Other:** social learning, volunteering, adolescent-led initiatives, internships (public/private partnerships), entrepreneurship.

III. Methodology

i. Mapping and identification of programmes

A multipronged process, as elaborated in the figure below, was used to map and identify the different programmes; 221 programmes were identified through the different channels (table 1).

¹⁰ UNICEF (2006) Adolescent Development: Perspectives and Frameworks. Available at: http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/files/ADAP_series_1.pdf ¹¹ Catalano RF, Hawkins JD, Berglund ML, Pollard JA & Arthur MW. (2002) Prevention science and positive youth development: Competitive or cooperative frameworks? *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 31:230-239. ¹² Pittman K, Irby M, Tolman J, Yohalem N, Ferber T, (2003) Preventing Problems, Promoting Development, Encouraging Engagement: Competing Priorities or Inseparable Goals?, Based upon Pittman K & Irby M (1996) Preventing Problems or Promoting Development? Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment, Impact Strategies, Inc. Available online at www.forumfyi.org. ¹³ Checkoway B, Richards-Schuster K R, Abdullah S, Aragon M, Facio E, Figueroa L, et al., (2003) Young people as competent citizens, *Press and Community Development Journal*, 38(4): 298-309. ¹⁴ Roth J, et al. (1998). Promoting health adolescents; Synthesis of youth development program evaluations. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*. 8(4): 423-459. ¹⁵ Fergus S, Zimmerman M. (2005). Adolescent resilience: A framework for understanding healthy development in the face of risk. *Annual Reviews of Public Health*. 26: 399-419, page 399. ¹⁶ Bowers EP, et al. (2010). The Five Cs Model of Positive Youth Development: A Longitudinal Analysis of Confirmatory Factor Structure and Measurement Invariance. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 39 (7): 720-735.

Figure 1. Process to identify/map potential good practices globally and regionally

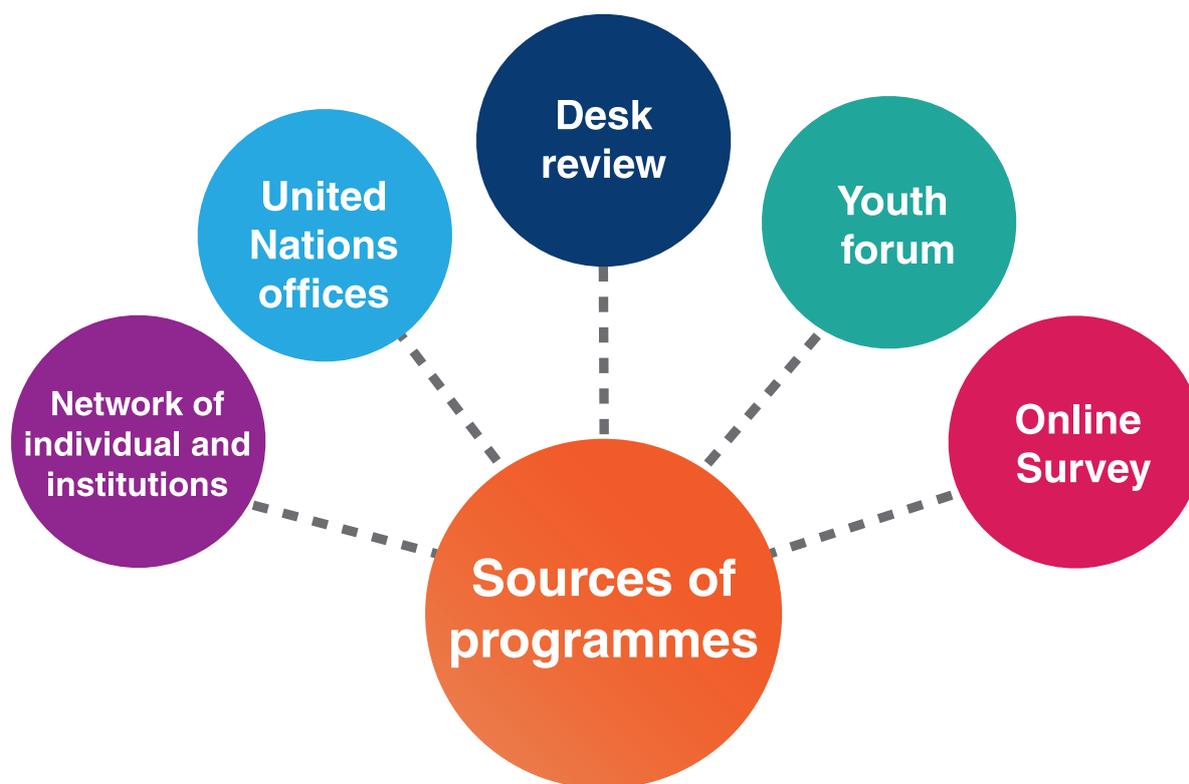


Table 1. Number of programmes identified by channel (See annex 5 for full list of all identified programmes.)

Channel	Number of responses	Number of programmes identified
United Nations system	48	29
Desk review	-	160
Youth survey	437	17*
Adult survey (through networks)	105	
Advisory (refer to next section)	-	15
Total		221

*This number includes the programmes identified from surveys completed by youth and individuals from the list of individuals and networks.



The regional offices of United Nations agencies in MENA (through the UNIATTTYP) involved in adolescent and youth programming were contacted to identify and share good practices. These offices identified a total of 48 programmes which were either their own, or programmes operated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Governments that they judged to be worth investigating. Members of the UNIATTTYP that were contacted are listed in annex 2.

A desk review was conducted to identify global and regional good practices in adolescent and youth programming, using the following search engines: Medline; Proquest; Google Engine Search; and Google Scholar Search. The main keywords used in the search included the following:

- Youth*ng AND/OR adolescence*ts AND “region” AND best or promising practices*program*initiative AND/OR evaluation*impact
- Youth*ng AND/OR adolescence*ts AND “country name” AND best or promising practices*program*initiative AND/OR evaluation*impact
- Youth*ng AND/OR adolescence*ts AND “category” AND best or promising practices *program* initiative AND/OR evaluation*impact Youth*ng AND/OR adolescence*ts AND “sub-category” AND best or promising practices*program*initiative AND/OR evaluation* impact

In addition to the five main categories that were steering the search, the following sub-categories were also identified and included: the ‘4Cs’ (collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, communication); life skills; information and communication technology; media and technical skills; career skills; risk

reduction; employability; school-to-work transition; resilience building; comprehensive programming in the humanitarian context; skills-/competence-building; innovations; social protection; youth policy development; education; sexuality education; reproductive health; youth parliament; youth-friendly cities; youth municipalities; youth councils; most at risk; vulnerable.

The search resulted in the identification of 160 programmes with varying depths of information ranging from a basic description to full reports and publications of outcome evaluations or synthesis of best practices.

A youth forum (link: <https://www.facebook.com/y2ymena>), developed by creating a youth-friendly Facebook page, was launched on 13 June 2014. The Facebook page has reached 3,256 youths (as of 6 March 2015). Its ‘fans’ are comprised of 49 per cent women and 51 per cent men ranging from 18 to 24 years of age. In terms of nationality, fans come from (in descending order) Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, State of Palestine, Lebanon, Morocco, Jordan, Yemen and Pakistan.

An online youth survey was developed to explore youth-oriented interventions which young people in the MENA region found to be effective and beneficial; to widen the search for available programs; and to obtain information about identified programmes and contact information of implementers. The survey encompassed 12 closed-ended questions and five open-ended questions (see annex 3). The survey was prepared in English and Arabic. The English language survey received 203 responses but only 32 survey forms were complete. The Arabic version received 234 surveys, of which only 25 were fully completed.





In order to capture less visible grass-roots, small-scale programmes, **80 individuals from organizations, networks and institutions** (annex 4) were targeted with an individual e-mail and asked to provide input into good practices that they have heard about or implemented by completing an adult survey was adapted from the youth survey. Some of these individuals forwarded the inquiry e-mail, yielding 105 responses. However, many were e-mail responses without a completed survey or surveys that were incomplete; only 23 complete adult surveys were received.

In summary, 542 responses to the online surveys were received, 80 of them complete. Of the suggested programmes, 17 were shortlisted as relevant programmes that met the basic requirements of target age group and theme, and were included for further evaluation. The incomplete responses either were not useful as they did not suggest names of programmes or the respondents were ineligible to answer (not in the appropriate age bracket or not living in one of the 22 countries of the MENA region).

ii. Reference groups to guide the process

Advisory group

An advisory group of 10 members was established to provide guidance to the project. The team consisted of experts in the areas of child and youth protection; children's rights; child inclusion; youth policy; youth participation; youth empowerment; capacity-building of youths; youth skills training; child and youth participation in civil society; youth sexual and reproductive health; and human rights (annex 6). None of the advisory team members were affiliated with a United Nations

agency.

The role of the advisory committee members was to: (1) provide insight into good practices they knew of for adolescents and youth globally and in the region in their areas of expertise; and (2) provide their expert opinion on a set of indicators developed by the core team that would be used to prioritize the good practices.

The advisory group raised some concerns regarding the process (see annex 7). Their main concern pertained to capturing contextual, local, low-budget, grass-roots, informal/non-formal sector programmes and not only those designed and funded by international agencies such as the United Nations, donor government agencies and international NGOs. In order to focus on local programmes, the members stressed the importance of using the Arabic language for communication and forms. Using only English would marginalize many of these programmes from the region. Thus, the CPHP team agreed to resolicit programs using Arabic communication and the youth survey was translated into Arabic. In addition, the CPHP team asked the members of the advisory group to identify potential programmes that they judged to be effective, innovative or sustainable and identify the relevant focal persons who could be contacted to facilitate the process. They identified 15 such programmes.

UNIATTTYP

In addition to its contribution to identifying programmes, the UNIATTTYP provided guidance on the process for the project. In its meeting of 14 August 2014 UNIATTTYP endorsed the suggestions of the advisory group to try to identify informal grass-roots programmes,





but suggested that programmes be classified as small-scale and large-scale initiatives since it is difficult to compare these two categories (see annex 8).

All parties involved in this project (UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office, UNIATTTYP, the advisory group and CPHP team) agreed that this documentation is an iterative process that cannot be a single activity which is limited in time. A periodic effort should be undertaken to update good practices in adolescent and youth programming.

iii. Tools developed for assessment and data collection

Rating scale

A rating scale to prioritize good practices was developed taking into consideration the MENA R-UNDG Youth Theme Group for Good Practice Documentation (March 2013), coordinated and led by the International Labour Organization (ILO) on behalf of UNIATTTYP. The rating scale includes eight criteria: (1) effectiveness; (2) sustainability (and/or); (3) replication, (4) equity analysis; (5) innovativeness; (6) evidence-based; (7) value orientation; and (8) youth involvement. (See annex 9.)

The CPHP and UNIATTTYP agreed that in order for a programme to be considered a potential 'good practice', at a minimum it must meet the criteria of effectiveness, sustainability or replication, equity and innovativeness. Criteria of evidence-based, values orientation and youth involvement were deemed as preferable but not necessary. The advisory group refuted this suggestion, stating that all criteria are equally important for a programme to qualify as a potential good practice. The UNIAAATYP concurred. Yet, it was agreed

that effectiveness has to be evidenced for a programme to be judged as potentially good. Therefore, upon discussion with the advisory group and UNIATTTYP, the following were the judgements defined for programmes:

- **Potential good practice.** Preferably meets all criteria; no programme qualifies for this category unless evidence of effectiveness and sustainability/replication is provided. Programmes that are weak on innovativeness, youth involvement or values orientation but with demonstrated effectiveness and sustainability or replication are judged as a potential good practice. Evaluation of process and outputs is not sufficient. Programmes that have been classified as 'potential good practice' are eligible for an in-depth interview with the implementers of the programme;
- **Promising practice.** Meets most criteria, mainly those for evidence-based, equity, values orientation, innovativeness and youth involvement, but no evaluation of outcomes has been conducted and thus there is no evidence of effectiveness. Programmes that have been classified as 'promising' are kept on file in order to follow their progress and encourage them to perform an evaluation;
- **Dropped.** Do not meet the criteria. The main reasons behind the judgment of 'dropped' were: the programme did not focus on the 10-24-year age group; the 'programme' was simply a one-day conference or workshop; there was no clear evidence of need and no effectiveness data; and the programme did not focus on or target those most at risk or in need. Dropped programmes were archived with did not focus on or target those most at risk or





in need. Dropped programmes were archived with the justification of their removal from the process and kept on file in order to respond to any future inquiry about them.

- **Continue to explore.** Unable to make a judgment due to lack of information. These were followed up with e-mails to implementers to try to collect information but with no response. Copies of e-mails were archived for future follow-up.

Interview guide

An interview guide was developed in order to collect in-depth data on the programmes that were rated as potential good practices. Primary data collected from the implementers of the programme complemented the secondary analysis of the data retrieved from the available published documentation. This information was meant to provide the grounds for the analysis of the factors that lead to successful programming in each thematic and cross-cutting area and for the identification of key elements for scaling up each programme.

Thus, the interview guide focused mainly on: the evidence that informed the design and planning of the programme; the theoretical approach and conceptual framework adopted, if applicable; the human and financial resources allocated; the elements that allowed its sustainability or replication such as partnerships, involvement of local stakeholders or structures created; the evaluation methods and results; challenges; and lessons learned and recommendations.

iv. Process of data collection and review

The initial strategy adopted for collecting information and rating was as follows:

Phase 1. Rating programmes by conducting a secondary analysis of the documentation retrieved from the desk review or provided during the mapping exercise by members of the UNIATTTYP, advisory group or networks;

Phase 2. Conducting in-depth interviews with the implementers of the programmes that were classified as 'potential good practices' to collect more detailed data;

Phase 3. Revising rating of the programmes based on the data collected through the interviews to validate the 'potential good practice' judgment.

Phase 1. Rating

Phase 1 proved to be time-consuming and of little impact mainly because limited documentation was found on the programmes. For example, as of 14 August 2014, after one month of review, information sufficient to make a judgement was found for only 3 of 45 programmes reviewed.

In an attempt to remedy this situation, an additional step was introduced to Phase 1 and tested during the end of August 2014. The team decided to move forward with quick interviews inspired from the interview guide to gather the information needed to make a preliminary judgment. Rating based on documentation available would continue in parallel. Again, this task proved to be very time- and labour-intensive although effective in gathering data if an interview was conducted. A team of six persons was set up to support this process. Only seven interviews took place in one month because 22 programmes invited for an interview did not respond. Of the seven that were interviewed quickly, most were eliminated based on two of the main criteria: no outcome evaluations conducted; and no replication or sustainability.



Thus, in order to move forward more efficiently, a letter inviting the programme implementers to share data on their programmes was prepared in both English and Arabic and sent by e-mail in August 2014 to the 178 programmes mapped through 1 August 2014. The rating of programmes based on available documentation continued in parallel.

A form (see annex 11) was attached that asked questions related to the minimum criteria to determine if a programme could be categorized as a good or promising practice. The implementers were asked to complete the form and/or send relevant documentation, and were informed that if the programme was judged to be a potential good practice, the team would follow up with an in-depth interview.

Again, this process had its challenges. In particular, finding the correct contact details of the programme's implementers was time-consuming. Staff used two sources of information to find this information: (1) websites of the organizations or programmes; and (2) asking the UNIAAATYP members and to the UNICEF regional and country offices for the information.

Phase 2. In-depth interview

As mentioned earlier, an in-depth interview was conducted with programmes that were rated 'potential good practices'. The purpose of this interview was to validate the rating of the programme and more importantly, to provide comprehensive documentation on the planning, implementation and evaluation phases of the programme in order to be able to scale it up. Each interview took around two hours to complete. A total of 32 interviews were conducted.

Phase 3. Re-rating

After the transcription of the interview, the technical lead of the project validated a 'potential good practice' to a final judgment of 'good practice' or moved it to the 'promising practice' or 'dropped' categories. All mapped and identified programmes were organized within a matrix including a summary of each programme and the justification of whether or not it met each of the eight criteria and the judgment.

v. Process for write-up of good practices

Prioritization of good practices

It was planned that once the three phases were complete; a prioritization exercise would occur with the participation of the advisory group, UNIAAATYP and selected youth. Unfortunately this phase did not take place because of the 221 programmes mapped, only 22 were validated as 'good', so that the initial output of prioritizing 30 good practices from a larger total was not applicable.

Write-up of good practices

A standard template for the write-up was developed and shared with the UNIATTTYP team. The template was piloted with two programmes during the third and fourth weeks of October 2014. The technical lead provided extensive comments on the write-up of one programme to ensure the quality, relevant content and consistency of all subsequent write-ups. In addition, the pilot write-up informed the interview process that was still ongoing in parallel and interviewers were given specific instructions on questions and issues that should be probed further.

The write-up process for each programme underwent several iterations. A team of three research assistants drafted the first versions





of 28 programmes in total (22 good and 6 promising, see below). A team of three senior technical staff reviewed the first versions of the write-ups to verify the significance, relevance, completeness and analytical depth of the information provided; the first drafts were returned to the writers to address the reviewers' comments. Whenever additional information requested from the reviewers was missing, the questions were forwarded to the implementers for answers; the writers incorporated the additional information and sent back a second version of the write-up for review. The reviewer cleared the technical aspect of the second draft, which was sent to the implementers for validation. The writers incorporated the implementers' comments, if any. The technical reviewers read the third drafts for final clearance of the content, structure and language and signed off on them. The 28 write-ups were sent to an editor to ensure consistency of language and style, and the final version was sent to the implementer for a final review and validation for publication.

Decision to include selected promising practices

As the process proceeded, a decision was made to include six 'promising' programme write-ups in this report, based on one of two justifications:

1. Because the analysis revealed a very limited number of potential good practices in the category of civic engagement and resilience development, we included the write-ups of promising programmes in this thematic area;
2. Several potential good practices went through over four iterations (write-up edits) as implementers responded tirelessly to our increasingly specific questions and comments about their programmes (e.g.

YEGP). Ultimately, these were judged as 'promising' but are included in this document to indicate a few programme that are truly on the cusp between 'promising' and 'good'.

vi. Challenges

The scope of this project with five areas of interest and examining programmes both at the regional and global levels required a full year of work and a team of four full-time research assistants, three technical staff and an editor to yield 22 good practices out of 221 programmes identified (a ratio of 10 per cent). This section describes the challenges that should be taken into account when engaging in future similar exercises.

- **The lack of written and/or published documentation on programmes has made the process of initial triage very time-consuming**, and might have resulted in a failure to detect programmes that qualify as 'good' since 57 programmes remain unexplored.
- **The lack of response from implementers that has resulted in 57 programmes being rated as 'continue to explore'**. The team assumed that this could be due to incorrect contacts or e-mail addresses and tried to remedy by mobilizing the country offices of the UNIATTTYP member agencies to inquire about the names of the focal points and addresses of the programme in their respective countries. This effort was also not very successful.
- **Delays in responding from implementers at all stages of the process**: responding to e-mails, sharing documents, scheduling interviews, reviewing write-ups, responding to questions.





- **A lack of experience on the part of some interviewers led to incomplete or superficial data.** The interview necessitated additional probing on the questions in order to capture all the information needed, requiring the interviewers to have good critical and analytical skills.
- **No youth involvement in the process except in the identification of programmes through the online youth survey.** Three strategies were thought of but not implemented, mainly due to lack of time and difficulty in obtaining a representative group of young people to support the process.
- **Limited access to Arabic-language programmes implemented;** although the youth survey was translated into Arabic, the adult survey was in English only. In addition, the desk review was limited to English databases and search engines.

IV. Results

Table 2. Overview of identified programmes and their ratings

Programmes	Number
Promising programmes	49
Dropped programmes	89
Programmes that need further exploration	57
Programmes that were not reviewed*	4
Programmes validated as good practices	22
Final total	221

* Reasons for not reviewing: (1) no response from the implementer; (2) implementers did not wish to report on two of the programmes; (3) no documentation available.

Table 3. Overview of United Nations and non-United Nations programmes based on region and category

	Civic Engagement		Skills Development		Resilience Development		Health		Other		Total by rating
	MENA	Global	MENA	Global	MENA	Global	MENA	Global	MENA	Global	
Good practice	1	2	8	3	0	2	0	5	1	0	22
Promising practice	13	2	16	0	3	1	5	6	2	1	49
Continue to explore	7	0	13	8	10	4	2	5	6	2	57
Subtotal by category and region (programmes considered)	21	4	37	11	13	7	7	16	9	3	128
Subtotal by (programmes considered)	25		48		20		23		12		128
Programmes not reviewed (non-United Nations)	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
Total by region category (United Nations and non-United Nations)	17	7	16	9	6	9	2	16	5	2	89
	39	11	53	22	19	16	10	32	14	5	221



Table 4. The 22 validated good practices

	Programme	Implementer	Area of intervention	MENA/GLOBAL
1	A Right for an Equal Life	Ebtessama Foundation	Skills development	MENA
2	Young Researcher Programme	Al Nayzak for Supportive Education And Scientific Innovation		
3	Economic and Social Inclusion Project	Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union (LPHU)		
4	The BRIDGE Programme	Unite Lebanon Youth Project		
5	Skills-Building for University Students	INJAZ		
6	Ishraq	Population Council		
7	Youth Economic Empowerment Programme (YEPP) II	United Nations Development Programme Yemen		
8	Youth Career Initiative (YCI)	Jordan River Foundation		
9	Know about Business (KAB) ¹⁷	International Labour Organization (ILO)		
10	Youth Employability Skills Network Project (YES)	Education Development Center, Inc.		
11	ENTRA 21	International Youth Foundation		
12	Passport to Success®	International Youth Foundation		
13	Adolescent-Friendly Spaces (AFS)	UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office		
14	Y-PEER	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	Civic engagement	GLOBAL
15	U-Report	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Uganda		
16	Strengthening Families for Parents and Youth (SFPY)	Parent Action on Drugs (PAD)	Health	GLOBAL
17	Unplugged	European Union Addiction Prevention Trail (EU-DAP) Coordinating Centre		
18	Family Spirit	John Hopkins Center for American Indian Health		
19	Students as Lifestyle Activists (SALSA)	University of Sydney		
20	Kenya Adolescent Reproductive Health Program (KARHP)	PATH and Population Council		
21	The Cognitive Behaviour Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)	The Treatment and Services Adaptation Center for Resilience, Hope and Wellness in Schools	Resilience development	GLOBAL
22	Building the Resilience of Youth	War Child Canada - Sudan		

¹⁷ KAB was categorized and analyzed throughout the whole good practices documentation exercise under the category of “other” given its focus on raising awareness about entrepreneurship among young people. However, KAB is presented with the skills development programmes as it also shares elements with these programmes. In the analytical section of the report and all the analytical tables, KAB remains under “other”, and it is not included in the discussion of critical elements of “skills development programmes”.



Table 4b. The six promising practices that were included in the selection

	Programme	Implementer	Area of intervention	MENA/GLOBAL
1	Youth Employment Generation Programme in Egypt (YEGP)	United Nations Development Programme	Skills development	MENA
2	Youth Empowerment Program	Palestinian Counseling Center (PCC)		
3	Arab Youth Volunteering for a Better Future	United Nations Volunteers Programme	Civic engagement	MENA
4	By Youth for Youth - Design Centre - Youth Advocacy Platform	Innovations Lab Kosovo ¹⁸		GLOBAL
5	Adolescent Asthma Action	Jordan University of Science and Technology	Health	GLOBAL
6	Golombiao	United Nations Children's Fund Colombia and Young Colombia	Resilience development	

In total, 22 good practices were documented: 11 in the area of skills-development; 5 in health; 3 in civic engagement; 2 in resilience development; and one in other (entrepreneurship).¹⁹

The number of beneficiaries ranged from 53 to 850,000 individuals, with seven programmes reaching over 100,000 beneficiaries. Eleven of the 22 good practices included young people under the age of 15 years. Funding for these practices came from a diverse range of organizations including embassies, ministries of health and national governments. (See annex 13, table 5 for more details.)

Thematic analysis was conducted by a thorough reading and rereading of all the good practices. This section will describe the overarching key elements of success, followed by specific elements of success within each theme. We describe these using qualitative narrative and quantitative data. In some thematic areas, as evident above, the number of good practices is limited, and therefore any suggested key element of success must be interpreted with caution. We

then present a comparison by thematic area between good and promising practices as well as an analysis of the promising practices in order to clarify the specific criteria that led to their being rated as 'promising' rather than 'good'.

The background to this report highlighted the benefits and effectiveness of a positive youth development / assets-based approach to programming for young people, and further emphasized the importance of youth engagement / 'participation' in programmes. It is of note that the programmes identified as good practices herein wholly support this evidence. They by and large focus on positive development of youth and on enhancing both internal and external assets through skills- and resilience-building and through connecting youth to community support systems.

One final note: despite the number of countries in the MENA region currently experiencing upheaval / emergency situations, there were very few programmes with proven effectiveness in resilience-building.

¹⁸ In the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

¹⁹ The practice Know about Business by ILO was categorized and analyzed as "other (entrepreneurship)", but it is presented with the skills development programmes.





i. Overarching elements of success

The analysis identified 13 overarching elements of success across the 22 good practices. These are different than the criteria used to rate the programmes (see discussion of phases 1 and 3 above). The good practices described in this section have already met the criteria for inclusion. The elements of success identified in this section are those over and above the criteria that arose out of a qualitative analysis of the documentation. Each of the good practices has been characterized according to each of these elements (annex 14, table 6). Below is a list of these elements and several examples of each.

- **Forging partnerships with the involvement of stakeholders:** All 22 good practices forged partnerships with or involved stakeholders in the implementation of their programmes. For example, Ishraq stresses the need to forge partnerships with all key stakeholders and at all levels – governmental and non-governmental actors, the private sector, the community, parents and girls' themselves – to ensure sustainability and the development of a generation of girls equipped with skills and knowledge to exercise their rights as active citizens and members of their communities. Al Nayzak is collaborating with the Palestinian Ministry of Education to adapt the curriculum to schools. This element is likely related to being a good practice as it is an indicator of potential for sustainability, as well as impact.
- **The intervention is delivered through existing institutions** (in already available spaces): 21 of the 22 practices were delivered through existing institutions such as schools, homes and NGO spaces. For

example, Cognitive Behaviour Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS), Know about Business (KAB) and (YES) are delivered through schools, Family Spirit in homes, and KAB, and YES through existing NGOs, and U-REPORT uses already established social media. This element is probably related to being a good practice in that it decreases the resources needed to ensure sustainability. It is likely also that it promotes an identity linked to the intervention programme, which also supports its institutionalization and replicability.

- **Utilizing community human resources in programme implementation:** 21 of the 22 programmes utilized community human resources during programme implementation. For example, CBITS and university students as facilitators; Ishraq engages female high school or university graduates as 'promoters' who served as teachers, role models and advocates for the girls; and INJAZ engages employees from its partner private sector companies as volunteers for technical expertise and mentorship. This is likely linked to being identified as a good practice as it suggests availability of human resources, cost savings as well as the seeds of sustainability.
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- **Skills-building:** 21 of 22 programmes included skills-building as part of their activities. The skills-building components were tailored to youth, parents and/or teachers. Skills-building curricula were developed and delivered in school-based settings in nine programmes. Depending on the thematic area, these skills-building covered life skills, peer education, parenting, work readiness and entrepreneurship. For example, ENTRA 21 focused on building three categories of skills – technical skills, life skills, job-seeking skills – and, in some cases, basic skills (literacy, mathematics). The technical skills were mostly around information technology (IT) and business. Some of the life skills commonly developed across the 59 projects of ENTRA 21 were creative thinking, working in groups, interpersonal communication, self-confidence, ethical behaviour and conflict management. Others included time management, citizenship skills and violence prevention. Additionally, all projects devoted part of the curriculum to developing youth's job-seeking skills. This element of success is likely related to being a good practice in that it indicates an approach of positive youth development and empowerment of youth. Evidence also suggests that skills-building is much more likely to result in impact than transmission of knowledge alone. Hence these programmes were likely to be more

effective, another key component of being labeled a good practice.

- **A documented need** usually identified using robust research methods: Almost all 'good practices' (20 of 22) were developed and implemented as a result of a clearly documented local (or regional) need. For example, ENTRA 21 – after documenting the high rate of youth unemployment (compared to adult unemployment) conducted surveys of or interviews with businesses to determine what type of entry-level skills they were seeking and what, if any, issues they foresaw in hiring youth; reviewed labour market studies or databases to learn about employment trends, where jobs were being created and what type of occupational areas were in greatest demand; and created an advisory group of business people and/or others who understood labour trends. For CBITS – as a result of members of the crisis intervention teams in the Los Angeles Unified School District expressing concern about students' exposure to violence – a survey of 28,000 sixth graders was conducted by the RAND Corporation and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The results were disturbing: over 90 per cent of the students reported exposure to at least one violent event within the past 12 months, and 40 per cent reported exposure involving a deadly weapon. The findings resulted in an intervention for traumatized students with the intention that it be soundly based in research and accepted into the school setting. As another example, the needs assessment for the Economic and Social Inclusion programme came from the experience of the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union (LPHU) working with



the target groups through outreach points around Lebanon, analysis of the legal framework, and a series of formal studies undertaken by LPHU examining the position of people with disabilities in the labour market.²⁰ These studies revealed that many youth with disabilities never actually had jobs or if they did have jobs, did not receive proper salaries or national social security funds. More specifically, this analysis indicated certain challenges that persons with disabilities face when seeking employment: transportation, both public and private, that was inaccessible or costly; unsuitable infrastructure in terms of roads and services, making it difficult to operate independently; heavy reliance on parents for assistance; lack of independence and autonomy; both public and private sector employers stating in their employment criteria that they need people without disabilities; and training centres never included or presented opportunities for the training of persons with disabilities. Documenting need is probably related to being a 'good practice' as it allowed the programme to be very clear in its objectives and the activities required to achieve those objectives, which made monitoring and evaluation more focused.

- **Flexible programming:** 20 of 22 programmes identified as good practices had flexible programming. For example, training cycles in ENTRA 21 vary in duration from 154 hours to a maximum of 1,920 hours, and are offered over a period of approximately 2-12 months. The length of training in terms of contact hours depended on a variety of factors such as the type of training provided; requirements imposed by employers

regarding minimum internship hours; certification requirements set by the executing agencies; and the youths' level of education and 'marginality' (defined as the youth not possessing secondary education, having a disability, being a single mother, etc.). Flexible programming may be related to identification of a good practice – particularly in combination with clear and detailed implementation plans – as it allows for innovations where needed for replicability and scalability.

- **Creating safe spaces for youth:** 19 of 22 good practices in one way or another created safe spaces for youth to share their thoughts and feelings, have dialogues and learn. For example, the Kenya Adolescent Reproductive Health Program (KARHP) and Y-PEER created youth-friendly health centres to provide sexual and reproductive health education and services tailored to the need of the youth and delivered in a stigma- and taboo-free environment. Ishraq created village centres for young rural girls to learn and interact with each other in a pressure-free environment. This element is most likely related to being a good practice for adolescents in that it indicates clear commitment to listening to youth and acknowledging their value, assets and promise.
- **Clear and detailed implementation guides for sessions:** 17 of 22 good practices included this element of success. For example, Ishraq has standard teaching packages for all four of its components: (1) for literacy, the Caritas 'Learn to be free' curriculum; (2) for life skills, the Centre for Developed by PATH and the Population Council in collaboration with Kenya's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to offer adolescents relevant

²⁰ 'Disability and livelihoods in Lebanon' (2003); 'Disability and Employment' (2004); 'The employment situation of people with disabilities in the Bekaa region: Difficulties and Opportunities' (2005); and 'Survey of Companies in the Private Sector to Explore Available & Potential Employment Opportunities' (2006).





and appropriate information on sexual and reproductive health, HIV prevention and life skills. Each session had a clear learning objective that was addressed through a series of participatory learning activities. As the programme developed, a series of guides and manuals was included, and the 'Tuko Pamoja' series now includes the adolescent reproductive health and skills curriculum, a guide for talking with young people about their reproductive health and a manual for peer educators. This element is probably related to being a good practice as it allows for a clear identification of the content provided as well as the conceptual thinking behind the programme (and often provided guide to the pathways of success).

- **Had thought about institutionalization or had a plan in place:** 16 of 22 good practices exhibited this element of success. For example, ENTRA 21 engaged national organizations in each area to conduct a needs assessment and implement the programme. Thinking about institutionalization and putting plans in place early in the history of the project decreases the probability that factors such as reduced funding influence a programme's continuity.
- **Youth 'presence and voice':** 16 of 22 programmes exhibited this successful element. Youth 'presence and voice' is a term intended to indicate that the programmes identified as good practices tended to be youthful either through the active and direct involvement of youth as programme implementers (Y-PEER) or as facilitators and mentors. This element of success overlaps with the element of using community resources where that resource was young people themselves

(e.g., programmes that engaged university students as facilitators). For example, former BRIDGE students volunteer as focal points at the schools of current BRIDGE students; there are seven fixed focal points in different areas to assist in following up and reaching out to high school students. In the Youth Employability Skills programme, representatives of youth NGOs were responsible for delivering the work readiness skills training to unemployed youth, and students from the vocational and educational training schools also acted as volunteers in the career centres. This element of success is likely related to being a good practice in that it indicates an approach of positive youth development and empowerment of youth. It also is likely linked to sustainability.

- **Diversified funding:** 14 of 22 programmes had diversified funding. For example, the Youth Economic Empowerment Programme (YEEP) received funds from the Embassies of Japan and Republic of Korea for its Phase 1, then from local governments and partners for other phases. Ishraq was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Embassy of the Netherlands in Cairo and the Population Council. More recently, it has received support from the local adult education agency. Diversified funding is likely linked to being a good practice by ensuring that the programme is not tied to one funding stream, thus enhancing sustainability. In addition, diversified funding often means some aspect of the programme is funded by local resources, enhancing ownership and sustainability.



- **A pilot test:** 12 of 22 good practices started with a pilot phase. For example, U-Report, which now has 275,000 members in Uganda, started with a pilot phase in April 2011 during which 30 polls were conducted on a series of issues ranging from violence against women to best practices in nutrition. Over 5,000 reports were received from around 60 districts and 900 ‘U-Reporters’. Whenever KAB is introduced in a country, there is a pilot phase which lasts approximately one to two years during which the concerned national institution works closely with ILO on implementation of the programme. Information workshops are organized to sensitize the partner education institutions on the role of entrepreneurship education in national youth employment and the relevance of the KAB programme. During this pilot phase, the curriculum is reviewed and adapted to the national socioeconomic and cultural contexts, including translation of materials. The training of teachers/facilitators also takes place at this stage over a period of two weeks, at which point implementation begins. The evaluation of this pilot phase involves an assessment of students’ attitudinal changes and improved knowledge, as well as review of feedback from the implementing teachers and schools. Depending on the results from the pilot phase, the respective governments decide whether or not to introduce KAB into national education curricula as a regular academic subject and replicate the programme country-wide. The pilot phase is probably related to being a ‘good practice’ as it allows the testing of an intervention at a small scale, for glitches to be fixed, and for lessons learned and adjustments to be implemented prior to

scaling-up.

Overall, when analysed by the 13 overarching elements of success, the good practices had a range of scores between 7 (one programme) and 13 (three programmes). The distribution of programmes by total overarching elements of success found in annex 14, tables 7 and 8 indicates the distribution of the elements of success in United Nations programmes in the MENA region, United Nations global programmes, non-United Nations programmes in the MENA region and global non-United Nations programmes. Overall, all United Nations programmes had four of the elements of success: using community human resources; forging partnerships and involving stakeholders; interventions implemented in available spaces; and flexible programming. Four of the critical elements of success were also in over 80 per cent of United Nations programmes: a documentation of need; using skills-building techniques; creating safe spaces; and a ‘youth presence or voice.’ The least likely element of success in United Nations programmes was diversified funding. With respect to non-United Nations programmes, only one element of success – using skills-building techniques – was present in all programmes.

Four elements were found in over 90 per cent of the programmes: documentation of need; using community human resources; using available spaces to implement the intervention; and partnerships forged and stakeholders involved. The element least likely to be found in these programmes was having a pilot phase.





ii. Key elements of success by theme

A thorough analysis of the good practices documentation in each thematic area also yielded elements of success within each. These sometimes overlap with the overarching elements, but sometimes are unique. Below, we described these key elements within thematic areas of skills development and health. Because only two resilience programmes and three civic engagement programmes were documented as good practices, no overall key elements of success were defined for these thematic areas.

Key elements of success in the area of skills development (Employability, workplace readiness, school-to-work transition, twenty-first century skills): an analysis of 11 good practices: six key elements of success were present in the good programmes within this thematic area:

- **Secure the buy-in of parents** (Ishraq, Right for an Equal Life, Bridge, Youth Career Initiative (YCI) and Economic and Social Inclusion Project): In 5 of the 11 practices, raising awareness and advocating with parents on the benefits of youth skills-building has been critical. This advocacy and awareness-raising focused on: (1) the importance of skills that enhance youth's ability to reintegrate into schools or generate sustainable income; and (2) the positive consequences of these skills on family well-being. The result has been to provide a supportive environment for adolescents and youth that allows them to persevere in the programmes. This is particularly necessary to allow the participation of girls from rural areas and promote gender equity and the

participation of adolescents and youth with disability. Buy-in from parents is critical when working with adolescents aged 18-19 years and below.

- **Advocate for community buy-in** (Ishraq, Right for an Equal Life (REL), YEEP, ENTRA 21): 4 of the 11 practices integrate strong advocacy tools to create a social and political environment which supports the programmes. This contributes to changing 'cultural mindsets' that limit engagement in particular jobs such as painting, hospitality services, banking and sales, particularly for girls and young women as was the case for the YEEP programme. Village committees formed by parents, community and religious leaders (Ishraq) and parent-teacher committees in schools have demonstrated the ability to raise awareness, promote programmes and secure some resources.
- **Secure buy-in from government and senior officials** (Ishraq, ESI, YEEP, YES, Young Researcher Programme): Necessary for the institutionalization of programmes.
- **Foster partnerships with the private sector** (Injaz, ESI, REL, YES, YEEP, YCI, ENTRA 21): 7 of the 11 practices have created strong networks with the private sector. The impact of skills development and employability²¹ programmes can be achieved only through the creation of jobs. The public sector has proven limited in its ability to generate jobs; thus, the creation of jobs is dependent mostly on private sector engagement. Partnerships with the private sector has taken several forms including securing internship for adolescents and youth, involving the private sector in the

²¹ Employability programmes are those that prepare young people for employment. Employment programmes actually place youth in jobs.





implementation of skills-building programmes and linking youth to business people in business partnerships. This strategy takes advantage of the growing trend in the business arena to develop corporate social responsibility policies. Some governments have also contributed to the success of such strategies by providing incentives to business (e.g., exemptions from taxes for branches established in rural areas.)

- **Provide skills development programmes in areas of market need** (ESI, YES, Passport to Success®, YEOP, ENTRA 21): 5 of the 11 practices conducted market assessment to identify the “type of economic activities, entrepreneurial activities and specific market sectors with the highest potential for sustainable enterprises/businesses, self-employment as well as wage employment”.²² Traditionally, skills-building programmes have focused on a few professions such as sewing and handicrafts for women and carpentry or car repair for men. This has led an oversupply in some sectors and consequently did not contribute significantly to reducing unemployment rates.
- **Establish mentoring programmes** (Ishraq, YEOP, YES and Bridge): 4 of the 11 practices ensure follow-up through coaching and counselling as an essential element of a successful comprehensive skills development programme. Sustainable advice, especially in the start-up phase of a small enterprise, contributes to the success of the initiative. It is unlikely that trainees can build profitable enterprises without hands-on mentorship.

Key elements of success in the area of health: an analysis of 5 good practices.

Seven key elements of success were present in the ‘good’ programmes within this thematic area:

- **Adopt a peer-led approach** (KARHP, SALSA): Peer education was adopted in two of the five programmes as a tool for changing the knowledge and attitudes of adolescents and youth towards risky health behaviours. All programmes deliver peer education activities through school settings, thus facilitating the monitoring of results for the target group at large and not only for peer educators. In addition to activities planned in the community, KARHP peer educators also deliver peer education sessions in youth-friendly facilities, although an evaluation of KARHP showed that the reach of facility-based interventions was low compared to the other methods employed.
- **Adopt a life-skills approach** (KARHP, SALSA, SFPY, Unplugged): All programmes used a life-skills capacity-building approach with parents or youth. Social skills-building varies depending on the target group – parents or youth – and includes, for example, parent-youth communication, resisting peer pressure, problem-solving, critical thinking, effective decision-making, goal setting and negotiation.
- **Creative interactive technique:** All programmes used an interactive, activity-based practice approach to learning using tools including games, videos, quiz shows, art, music and theatre.





- **Training of trainers** (KARHP, SALSA, Unplugged): Three of the five programmes use a training of trainers methodology – with minimal variances among programmes – to ‘cascade’ the education and produce a ripple effect from master educators or facilitators to peer leaders to peer educators to the target group. All four created national core groups of trainers that can sustain and replicate the trainings. Family Spirit uses a home-based training methodology delivered by paraprofessionals from the native community to adolescent Native American mothers that was evidenced to be effective.
- **Clear and detailed implementation guides for sessions:** In all programmes, training manuals with structured lessons plans, toolkits and additional resources have been developed and made available at no charge. This ensures the integrity of the programme and allows for careful process evaluation.
- **Integrate programmes into school curricula** (KARHP, SALSA, Unplugged): Three of the five programmes have succeeded in institutionalizing the school-based programmes by integrating them into the curricula. Trained teachers act as the educators in class and facilitators of youth-led activities. Buy-in from ministries of education seems to be a critical factor in integrating the programmes into the school curricula.
- **Secure the buy-in of families and community** (KARHP, Unplugged and SFPY): In three of the five programmes, raising awareness and advocacy was key to achieving programme objectives, especially for sensitive topics such as sexual and reproductive health and drug

addiction.

iii. Analysis of promising programmes

The analysis of promising programmes is intended to provide guidance on critical factors that may have hindered these programmes from achieving the status of a ‘good practice’. The analysis derives only from the review of the information available in the matrix of rating criteria. Although we did gather more in-depth information from some programmes which were at the cusp between being ‘good’ and ‘promising’, this additional information does not feature in this current analysis (as those followed up were limited in numbers). We do use that follow-up however to provide write-ups of some of the promising programmes as examples of the richness of these programmes (annex 16). A review of the matrix of promising programmes indicates specific gaps including:

- **A focus on process evaluation:** Most of the promising practices did include data on evaluation, although the indicators were process indicators rather than outcome or impact indicators. Few measures of effectiveness were found in promising programmes.
- **Dependence on external funding:** Several were rated as promising as they were not sustainable due to complete dependence on external funding with poor commitment from national government or local authorities. Programmes were likely to be ongoing when external funding was concurrent with integration in national programmes.





- **Limited youth involvement:** Promising programmes tended to have very little active involvement of youth in their design and planning, with United Nations programmes having less youth involvement than other programmes. Youth involvement was limited even in the good practices but was even more striking in the promising practices.
- **Lack of innovation:** Innovation was defined as a programme that is new to a system (rather than new in general).²³ Some of the promising programmes were not innovative in method, approach or design. There is some controversy over whether this ought to be a criterion to define good practices. In our analysis of good practices, it was not required but did provide a ‘tipping point’, meaning that if a practice was only missing innovation, it could be categorized as ‘good’.

Comparing promising to good

To further our understanding of factors that tipped the balance between ‘promising’ and ‘good’, we analysed the number of programmes in each thematic category and by type (United Nations or not; global/MENA) for practices identified as promising or good. (See annex 15, tables 9, 10 and 11.) Several key findings emerged:

- For all thematic categories, there were more promising than good practices – confirming the gaps raised above.
- The category with the lowest percentage of ‘good’ practices was resilience development – perhaps suggesting the difficulty of measuring resilience, of measurements during emergency situations or of sustaining these programmes.

- Almost 40 per cent of the health programmes and 46 per cent of the skills development programmes were rated as ‘good’, perhaps suggesting the enhanced ease of finding measureable indicators for these programmes, and therefore the greater likelihood that they were evaluated for impact.

The above findings suggested the need for a further analysis of promising practices by criteria to untangle potential reasons for thematic categories being more likely to be ‘promising’ than ‘good’. Annex 15, table 12 provides this analysis. Skills development initiatives were most likely to be based on a documented need, have effectiveness data and be sustained or replicated. Health programmes that were promising were most likely to meet equity criteria, although skills development programmes were a close second place. Civic engagement and health programmes were most likely to be innovative. Almost all thematic categories were based on evidence of a problem/issue (over 80 per cent of all thematic areas). Youth involvement was lowest in skills development and health. Overall, promising practices were most likely to be based on a documented need or an evidence-based programme and least likely to have effectiveness indicators.

²³ For the purposes of the documentation of good practices for this report, innovation was defined according to the definition by E Rogers (Diffusion of Innovation Theory) as “an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption”. This does not mean it has never been implemented anywhere; it is innovative if it is implemented for the first time in a particular social system. Innovative also can refer to a programme that has been implemented in a social system already, but new techniques, methods or approaches are being used to implement it.



V. Recommendations

The findings and analysis presented in this report suggest a variety of recommendations, which cover two categories: (1) recommendations for programme implementers, decision makers and policymakers; and (2) recommendations related to the next steps in documentation of good practices.

i. Recommendations to programme implementers, decision makers and policymakers

Best bet for success are those elements that were found in 90 per cent or more of the good practices. The key findings from the good practice documentation highlight the critical need to:

- 1 **Approach young people from an assets-based perspective, convinced of their promise and focusing on their strengths:** Many of the elements of success echo the conceptual assets-based approach to youth positive development.
- 2 **Ensure that skills-building and experiential learning form a key component of any intervention.** The analysis suggested that all but one of the good practices includes skills-building and many include experiential learning. This is in line with the positive youth development approach. Programmes with skills-building components are much more likely to show impact.
- 3 **Encourage and emphasize that the intervention is conducted with participatory engagement of the 'community':** three of the most common overarching elements of success are

related to participatory engagement: (a) use of available community human resources; (b) utilization of already existing facilities as sites for intervention; and (c) forging partnerships with community stakeholders. This participatory engagement strengthens and reinforces connectedness to caregivers, community members and mentors.

- 4 **Require that the programme respond to the needs and priorities of youth:** Almost all good practices were built on a solid identified need.

- 5 **Flexible programming:** The analysis suggested that the ability to be flexible and adapt programming to context, all the while having key components, was a critical element of success.

Go out on a limb: Several thematic areas and overarching elements need some bold risk taking.

- 1 **Encourage innovation and experimentation with programmes around civic engagement and resilience development:** There were many fewer programmes in these areas despite the rhetoric around their importance in international literature. Innovative programmes in these areas should be supported with the caveat that they should include as many of the overarching elements of success as possible to enhance probability of success. The concept of resilience that we promote here is not one that focuses on individual traits and risks blaming the victim. Instead we focus on resilience theory that highlights social and environmental influences.²⁴ Of note, we consider resilience programmes to be those that aim to develop 'resilient communities' rather than resilient individuals. Resilient communities are

²⁴ Fergus S, Zimmerman M. (2005). Adolescent resilience: A framework for understanding healthy development in the face of risk. Annual Reviews of Public Health. 26: 399-419.



composed of “healthy individuals, families, and communities with access to health care and the knowledge and resources to know what to do and care for others in both routine and emergency situations.”²⁵

2 Encourage youth involvement at the highest level: Many of the programmes that were reviewed (including those that were promising or good) state that the extent of their involvement with youth is when they are programme participants, take part in the evaluation of activities (process evaluation) or are ‘subjects’ in the impact evaluation (pre- and post-intervention assessments). Youth involvement in identification of needs, designing the programmes and implementing and evaluating the programme should be encouraged, if not required.

ii. Recommendations for smart programme management

Two specific recommendations are made related to programme management, and are a direct result of the analysis of promising practices. Two of the main deficiencies that led to programme being categorized as promising rather than good were: (1) the reliance on external funding; and (2) a lack of data on effectiveness. With this in mind, we recommend:

1 Planning for sustainability from the start: Plans for programme continuity need to be developed while the programme is in the early stages of planning. Most of the programmes identified as good practices have diverse funding bases and have institutionalized their activities into existing governmental or community structures. The programmes grew into

this through experiences and intent.

2 Improve the evidence: This can be accomplished by building capacity around monitoring and evaluation, committing to strengthening routine monitoring, and integrating outcome evaluations in the planning of programmes.

3 Funders should require that at least 20 per cent of every programme budget be devoted to monitoring and evaluation, based on a clear justification for the effects expected from each activity (a problem diagram and related objectives)

iii. Recommendations related to next steps in good practices documentation

1 The good practices should be highlighted, celebrated and disseminated: As evidenced by the number of programmes reviewed as compared to the number of good practices identified, good practice programming is rare. The 22 programmes that went through all phases of this project and emerged as ‘good’ should be celebrated. They have asked about the process of dissemination and are keenly interested in it. Mechanisms could include:

- A.** Hosting a conference/workshop on good practices programming and highlighting these by thematic area. The specific objectives and target audiences of the conference/workshop would need to be identified;
- B.** The production of reports on each good practice for sharing with decision makers, stakeholders and funders;
- C.** A scientific publication to inform and share with the academic community about the process and outcomes.





D. The engagement of youth in this process of dissemination should be ensured.

2 The process of documentation of good practices should continue: This process has been a learning process for all those involved. Many programmes identified as potentially good or promising or even those included in this overall assessment have been eager to provide data and engage in this process. Feedback to all 221 programmes included in the current review is needed to inform them of the decisions made, and the justification behind the decision regarding their programmes. All the organizations engaged in youth programming aim to enhance the well-being of youth and the feedback will serve as an incentive for them to continuously improve their programmes, and eventually will result in a larger basket of good practices for the region and globally.

- A.** One mechanism to share feedback is to upload the Excel spreadsheet of the 221 programmes to the Internet in some format that is accessible to all. This would ensure transparency and allow programmes to track their ratings and provide additional information that might have not been found;
- B.** If this process is to continue, it must be accompanied by a realistic time frame and budget.
- C.** The engagement of youth needs to be enhanced.

3 Identification of programmes led by grass-roots youth: The advisory committee had cautioned that the current process is likely to have identified programmes with particular characteristics and not others. Specifically, they were

concerned about language as most of the communication around the current process was in English, and with smaller grass-roots programmes run by young people themselves. They suggested that an active search in countries and through in-person focus groups with youth might lead to a wider selection of lesser known and resourced programmes that have potential. We concur with this recommendation. (This activity could be paired with other activities conducted in various countries; see recommendations below.)

4 Partnerships with academia should be enhanced to continue the work of measurement and documentation: This current partnership between academia and the United Nations has been synergistic at its core. Partners were committed to the well-being of youth, to the region, to evidence and to ensuring a robust process of documentation. Each partner had unique strengths and added value. Frequent and open communication was critical to the partnerships success.

5 Capacity-building workshops should be offered in gap areas that were evident in the rating of programmes. The matrix analysis of 221 programmes could guide targeted invitations to workshops.

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- A.** Workshop on documentation: Most programmes lacked sufficient documentation of their processes and intervention. This includes good, promising and other practices. The template utilized in this process for good practice analysis and write-up can serve as a good tool for documentation.
 - B.** Workshop on monitoring and evaluation: These can be offered per thematic area for programmes that were deemed promising (or a broader audience). Thematic group sub-workshops would be important to help those working in the same area to identify some common evaluation indicators that they would all be willing to use. Programmes found to be good practices could be invited to share their evaluation designs and or improve them.
 - C.** Workshop on youth involvement: More emphasis is needed on how to engage youth most meaningfully in decision-making. This workshop could be targeted at the good practice programmes as well as those designated as promising practices because overall this was a gap in all programmes.
 - D.** Workshop on environmental issues: Although not directly relevant, there is a big gap in the MENA region with respect to environmental concerns. Almost none of the programmes had anything to say about how they are taking care of the environment. Given the critical environmental situation in this region, it is critical to raise awareness around the issues of environmental sustainability so that it is a component of every good practice.