

شباب عربي متطوع
من أجل مستقبل أفضل

Arab Youth Volunteering
For a Better Future

Arab Youth Volunteering for a Better Future

United Nations Volunteers





Arab Youth Volunteering for a Better Future¹

Region	MENA
Country	Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen (project activities ended in 2014).
Organization	United Nations Volunteers (UNV)
Name	Arab Youth Volunteering for a Better Future
Category	Civic engagement
Start date	2012
End date	2016
Partners	Civil society organizations, youth-led organizations, UN agencies, Governments
UN involvement	UN
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1. Background and description

The Middle East and North Africa region is experiencing an unprecedented 'youth bulge', with nearly 30 per cent of the population under 30 years of age. Over the last four years, the countries of the region have undergone a wave of mass uprisings in which youth have taken a leading role in demanding the dismantling authoritarian regimes and social and economic justice. The rate of youth unemployment, estimated at 29.7 per cent,² has been pointed out as a decisive cause behind the uprisings, but frustrations with a failing educational system and a lack of avenues for political participation and civic engagement have been equally critical.

Several studies suggest that civic engagement in socioeconomic development through volunteerism contributes to better development results,³ as youth have the time, energy and skills that can readily be tapped to address national and local development challenges. Volunteering engages people in a range of activities that can improve their participation and positively harness their energy to contribute to the achievement of local, national and global development goals.

¹ Desk review (May-September 2014); Implementer validation (24 February 2015); Final validation (October 2015).

² ILO (2013).

³ Assad, Ragui and Barsoum, Ghada, *Youth Exclusion in Egypt*, Dubai: Dubai School of Government, 2007.





Furthermore, volunteerism is an important mechanism for building the capacity of youth, particularly for complementing the skills gained through formal education. It also helps to develop the role of youth as positive agents of change in the community. As highlighted in the State of the World Volunteerism Report 2011, volunteerism is associated with the generation of community well-being, peace building and development processes.⁴ Through volunteering, youth can develop critical skills such as leadership, planning, teamwork, problem solving and communication, which are relevant for the job market and thus improve youth's readiness for employment. In the United States, volunteerism has been associated with a 27-per-cent increase in the odds of finding employment, notably among those without a diploma or located in rural areas.⁵

Recognizing the need for a deeper understanding and promotion of youth volunteerism in the Arab region, the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV) launched the regional pilot programme 'Arab Youth Volunteering for a Better Future', with the aim of promoting youth volunteering and mobilization in the five pilot countries of Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen. The programme focuses on harnessing the energy and power of youth through volunteerism with the objective of strengthening the capacity of youth and enhancing their ability to contribute to and participate in sustainable community-centred development. In line with the regional strategies of the United Nations system, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Secretary-General's Five Year Action Plan, the programme supports the establishment

and the strengthening of national and regional infrastructures necessary to build the skills and capacities of Arab youth through volunteering efforts. It enhances their participation and inclusion in the socioeconomic development of their communities and countries.

During the preparation phase, workshop consultations were organized with youth in each of the five pilot countries. The consultations allowed stakeholders within the volunteerism sector in each country to provide meaningful inputs into the design and implementation of the programme. Participants included representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector, media and government.

Organization profile

UNV is the United Nations organization that contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. Based in Bonn, Germany, UNV is active in around 130 countries every year. UNV, with field units in 86 countries, is represented worldwide through the offices of UNDP and reports to the UNDP Executive Board.⁶



⁴ The complete report is available here: <http://www.unv.org/swvr2011>

⁵ http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/employment_research_report.pdf

⁶ UNV – About Us: <http://www.unv.org/en/about-us.html>



2. Goal and objectives

2.1. Goal

The programme aims to empower Arab youth to effectively engage in civic engagement and sustainable community-centred development by promoting youth volunteerism and mobilization.⁷

2.2. Objectives

- Increase awareness of the role of volunteerism in socioeconomic development and participatory governance;
- Strengthen institutional frameworks for the promotion of volunteerism;
- Build and enhance the capacity of youth organizations and CSOs to promote youth volunteering;
- Strengthen formal structures for youth inclusion through volunteerism.

3. Target group

3.1. Age group

The programme targets Arab youth, defined as ages 15-32 years. This range covers the criteria for the age of youth adapted by participating countries. For instance, in Tunisia youth is defined as people aged 15-29 years.

3.2. Gender considerations

A gender-sensitive approach is pursued at the regional and country levels, identifying gender-based structural constraints to ensure equal opportunities for women. At the institutional level, the programme has devised advocacy and awareness-raising activities on gender issues.⁸

3.3. Ethnic / disability considerations

No strategy was devised to particularly address youth with disabilities or specific ethnic groups in the targeted countries.

3.4. Targeting the most marginalized / most at risk

The programme defines the 'most vulnerable' youth as those excluded from decision-making processes that affect their lives. The programme's interventions and activities target disadvantaged and marginalized youth who are not necessarily members of formal institutions, ensuring the inclusion of youth from diverse socioeconomic, cultural and academic backgrounds. The interventions also targeted staff working directly with youth.

Each of the targeted countries established a National Advisory Committee on Youth and Volunteerism (NAC). The NACs have an advisory, outreach and research supplementary function, and they support the process for selecting participants to ensure integration of the most vulnerable in the programme. The approach has led to the organization of inclusive dialogues with youth, CSOs and Governments as reflected in the regional youth volunteering forum, where 100 participants from 15 countries

⁷ UNDP (2012).

⁸ Ibid.



gathered to identify the challenges to youth inclusion and articulated recommendations regarding youth development through volunteerism.⁹

3.5. Human rights programming

The programme adopts a human rights-based approach and is aligned with the United Nations Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international conventions/declarations, promoting the full realization of adolescent and youth rights and recognizing adolescents and youth as agents and right holders. This approach is reflected in the recommendations emerging from the expert group meeting on the human rights of youth convened by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in July 2013.¹⁰

In terms of civil and political rights, the regional programme aims to increase civic participation among youth through volunteering for development, thereby making them active citizens able to claim their rights to express their views, participate in public life and assert their influence in political life.

In terms of economic, social and cultural rights, by promoting and supporting volunteerism for development, the regional programme's activities encourage young people to become involved in local development efforts and contribute to the development of a decent standard of living and economic and social security for people in their communities.

3.6. Youth involvement

A participatory approach underlies the conception, development and implementation of the activities; youth have been part of the consultation workshops, participating

in interviews, focus groups and stakeholder mapping, and providing inputs into the design and implementation of the programme. During the workshops, participants interacted with peers and expert leaders on volunteerism and non-profit management.

National youth development specialists under the age of 30 are volunteers who lead the implementation of the programme in each country, supported by UNV country programme officers.

The programme has cultivated working relationships with emerging youth organizations/businesses, which contributes to long-term skills building and employability. For example, the programme has worked with a youth-led video production company since the early stages. The programme has invested in training a youth to be a lead facilitator for training of trainers' workshops.

4. Strategy and Implementation

4.1. Strategies / theoretical approaches / methodologies

The programme is aligned with the UNV Programme Strategy (2011-2013) and with the Global Youth Programme that seeks to mobilize young volunteerism. Grounded on a rights-based, youth-led participatory approach, the programme operates at three levels: (1) at the policy level, it supports establishing and strengthening enabling environments; (2) at the organizational level, it strengthens existing capacities and addresses capacity gaps where they exist; and (3) at the individual level, it builds the knowledge and technical skills of youth.¹¹

9 UNV – Programme Inquiry Form.

10 Detailed table on Annex 1.

11 UNDP (2012).





4.2. Activities

Project activities are devised and implemented in collaboration with youth organizations, national government and non-governmental partners, as well as with United Nations agencies. The project supports local initiatives and uses a capacity-building approach to the work undertaken by CSOs and youth organizations, rather than providing initiatives that compete with existing ones. For example, most recently, volunteer clubs were established in Morocco and in Jordan, youth who previously participated in activities are creating a volunteer network to launch their own volunteer initiatives.

Activities for raising awareness of the role of volunteerism in socioeconomic development and participatory governance target youth and community leaders through traditional community institutions and new media. These events mainly correspond with international days of recognition to highlight the role of volunteers in development. Some examples of these activities include:

- Café des Volontaires. These are activities in Tunisia and Morocco where youth come together to discuss young people's involvement in promoting participatory democracy, participation in electoral processes and raising awareness. In September 2014, 23 participants in Morocco (eight females) discussed the Government's work to reinforce the role of youth in promoting participatory democracy. In Tunisia, 30 youth, joined by two experts from the UNDP Electoral Project, discussed the upcoming elections. Other previous discussions coincided with World Population Day and World Refugee Day.

- Knowledge generation. The project launched a report, in Arabic and English, regarding the national and regional consultations on volunteerism. This report includes discussions on the definition, perceptions, traditional forms and policy recommendations for the promotion of volunteerism.
- Online advocacy. The project's Facebook page reached over 14,300 followers. The UNV regional communications specialist develops the messages in collaboration with country offices. The success of the Facebook page translated into an average of 44 'likes' every day from October to December 2014. The age range and countries of the followers indicate that the project's online advocacy is reaching the targeted population; 86 per cent of followers are aged 18-34 years and 66 per cent are from the five project countries (Egypt, 4,003; Tunisia, 1,743; Morocco, 1,410; Yemen, 1,264; and Jordan, 979). The project's Twitter feed is having similar success with 1,404 followers as of end-November 2015, increasing by an average of 60 followers per month.
- Documentation and publication of success stories. As part of a two-phased national and regional awards process, 15 stories from young volunteers have been finalized. In the first phase, 15 young volunteers from the five project countries were awarded UNV Volunteer Award.¹² Five young volunteers were awarded the UNV/MBC Al Almal Youth Volunteering Award in the second phase of the process. The poignant stories have been published in English, Arabic and French conjointly with video stories following the regional Youth Volunteering Awards ceremony, which was held at the beginning of 2015 with MBC

¹² The award is presented through a partnership with MBC Hope, the corporate social responsibility arm of the of MBC Group, a Middle East broadcasting company.





Amal.

Activities for strengthening institutional frameworks of volunteerism

- Assessment of national frameworks. In Morocco, the completed assessment summarized opportunities to promote youth volunteering in national contexts, including the increasing youth population and the notable government commitments to promote volunteerism. These assessments went beyond a desk review and included dialogues, interviews, surveys and validation events with young people. The assessments provided recommendations towards developing legislation on volunteerism. The recommendations outlined in the report include the establishment a legal definition of ‘volunteer’, strengthening volunteer management and incorporating the values of volunteering into the education sector. Currently, the focus is on advocating the use of these recommendations and gaining support among CSOs, government officials and development actors for drafting the legislation.

In Jordan, the project formalized a partnership with the British Council, through a letter of agreement, to conduct the assessment in 2015.

Unfortunately, the working realities in Egypt and Yemen limited the identification of consultants. In Tunisia, the policy framework assessment was postponed until after the elections.

- Technical legal consultancies. Regional and Tunisian project teams partnered with the UNDP Regional Centre in Cairo and the World Bank to complete a capacity

assessment of the Tunisian National Youth Observatory. The Observatory is one of the most important actors in Tunisia working on young people’s civic engagement and contributes to the work of the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Women and Family. Through interviews with staff and external partners, the assessment analysed the extent to which the Observatory’s current work is meeting its stated mandate. Provided with the recommendations, the Observatory now has a baseline and staff can plan how to use their strong points to overcome identified challenges. This will contribute to the overall strengthening of the Observatory’s work to better serve youth in the future.

- National participatory dialogues. Some 135 young people and CSO representatives (49 females) came together in three policy dialogues to review national frameworks related to youth and youth volunteering. The dialogues drew on the findings of the recently drafted UNV national assessment of policies and legislation related to youth and volunteerism. During the dialogues, participants validated the assessment findings. More importantly, the dialogues provided the policy space for youth to express the main issues and challenges they face.

Activities for building the capacity of youth organizations and CSOs to promote youth volunteerism

- Volunteer management and youth inclusion toolkit. A draft of the volunteer management toolkit is available in Arabic. The next draft is currently being developed with the Global Platform, ActionAid and other experts in the region.



The draft toolkit has been piloted during three multi-country training workshops (one in 2013 and two in 2014). The toolkit provides users with a simple methodology to improve volunteer engagement within NGOs and youth-led initiatives. This phased dissemination approach has facilitated the inclusion of comments by participants and facilitators into further revisions. This approach has enhanced the practicality, relevancy and ease of use of the toolkit.

- Regional training of trainers' workshop. Building on the 2013 regional volunteer management training, the project conducted two multi-country trainings and five national trainings for 31 CSOs in 2014. The first multi-country workshop in Morocco trained 32 Moroccan and Tunisian civil society actors from 16 NGOs. For the second multi-country training, UNV collaborated with UNESCO and brought together 15 participants and organizers from conflict-affected countries, including Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, State of Palestine and Yemen. Inspired by these trainings, participants have replicated in their own networks.
- National replication of training of trainers. The training has been replicated in Morocco, Yemen and Tunisia. In Morocco, three NGOs replicated the regional volunteer management training. Association Tagmate (a participant in the 2013 training) replicated the training for 35 participants (nine female) from 15 different associations. Additionally, one of the participants in the 2014 training joined as a co-trainer. The training has also been replicated in Morocco by the associations 'ISSAAF Jerada Solidarité

et Développement' and 'Troupe Orchid'. In Yemen, nearly 60 civil society actors (28 females) from across the country participated in two national replications organized by the project team and local NGOs. One of the replications was led by Leaders of Community Services, a local NGO, for 24 CSO representatives (eight females) from across the country. In Tunisia, 12 CSO representatives (nine females) attended a post-training meeting and reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring the replication of the multi-country training held in Morocco. Using this discussion, many of the attendees finalized draft concept notes for training replications to be held in 2015. These national trainings demonstrate the ripple effect of the volunteer management training in national networks and the further strengthening of CSO networks to improve volunteer management.

- Training for the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Egypt. Over 150 ministry staff attended four-day workshop to strengthen strategic planning capacities. This training built upon the volunteer management training held earlier in the year, which underscored capacity gaps in planning and highlighted the limited relevance of programming for youth. By the end of the workshop, participants had identified challenges facing youth and drafted work plans for youth centres in nearly all 27 governorates in Egypt.

Activities for enhancing youth inclusion

- Regional volunteer exchange. Building on the successful partnership for the volunteer awards, UNV and MBC Hope are negotiating the development of a regional youth volunteer exchange.





Through peer-to-peer learning and other skills-building activities, this exchange will promote volunteerism by exchanging practical lessons learned and engaging in volunteer experiences. After attending this exchange, it is expected that attendees will be able to engage more youth in volunteer initiatives. Further, attendees will be able to develop and sustain volunteer initiatives, thus promoting the spirit of youth volunteerism.

- National volunteer exchange. To increase the number of available volunteer positions in Morocco, the project is piloting the placement of a national volunteer with the country's largest CSO networks, Carrefour Associatif. Building on an existing two-year funding agreement between Carrefour Associatif and the Agence Française de Développement, the project negotiated the inclusion of an initiative to establish a university volunteer exchange with Mohammed V University of Rabat. The objective of the activity is to create a sustainable mechanism for youth to assume leadership roles in existing youth-focused organizations, through facilitating volunteering opportunities within Moroccan civil society, and to build partnerships with national organizations. The mobilized volunteers are working to establish a volunteer exchange with one university and several CSOs. They are reinforcing these organizations' management of the volunteer exchange programmes by, for example, doing the reporting and monitoring and evaluation.
- Youth Volunteer Leadership Camps. Sixty youth participated in youth volunteer leadership camps held in Jordan in

2013 and Tunisia in 2014. The training sessions focused on life skills and project management (e.g., leadership, communication, negotiation, etc.). This focus was greatly appreciated by the youth participants and a group of 22 volunteers across Tunisia spontaneously proposed to act as 'ambassadors' of youth volunteerism. After attending the camps, the engaged youth volunteers are transferring their honed skills at the grassroots level and mainstreaming a culture of volunteerism for development while creating awareness and motivation for youth engagement in their own communities.

- Promoting volunteerism in the private sector. In Jordan, 38 companies adopted an employment policy that prioritizes volunteering experience in all entry-level recruitment. The partner companies include Orange, Toyota and the Arab Bank, representing well over 3,000 employees. This policy development is part of the cost-sharing initiative between UNV, INJAZ (a CSO) and the King Abdullah Fund for Development. This accomplishment formally recognizes the contribution of volunteerism in enhancing youth employability and placement in the job market.

4.3. Innovativeness

The Arab Youth Volunteering for a Better Future is the first concerted regional effort for promoting youth volunteerism and building the capacity of youth organizations and individuals to engage in volunteerism as a means for their social inclusion and active participation in the socioeconomic development of their countries.



The programme also has a unique focus on working with and for youth. Not only does the programme have an implicit emphasis on young people's involvement as implementers of the project activities, but more importantly youth are involved in all aspects of the programme cycle,¹³ including formulation, implementation and evaluation.

4.4. Cost and funding

The total budget is \$3 million, which corresponds to a three-year project in five countries, including eight salaries and country and regional activities.

4.5. Sustainability

The programme is funded for three years (2012–2015). The programme has established strong partnerships to ensure its continuity and stability. In a phasing-over approach, many of the programme activities are being transferred to local institutions. In Tunisia, the Ministry of Youth is preparing to carry out many of the activities initiated in the programme, demonstrating a strong sense of national ownership and commitment to sustain the activities, as well as the strengthened capacities to be able to do so.

Additionally, the programme is engaged in an ex-ante evaluation in preparation for a cross-regional initiative. This envisioned programme builds upon the lessons learned and results of the current programme in the Arab States and other UNDP youth programmes.

4.6. Replicability

The programme components have been replicated through other United Nations agencies, partner NGOs and individual participants.

In November 2014, UNESCO launched a replication of the 2013 regional training of trainers' workshop with 16 CSOs in

countries affected by conflict.

Combined with the programme's plan to train another 10 organizations, around 52 representatives from 26 CSOs participated in two training of trainers' workshops in 2014. This cost-sharing initiative includes representatives from Jordan and Yemen, and expands the scope to Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, State of Palestine and Syrian Arab Republic.

5. Evaluation of effectiveness

- Volunteer management trainings. Over 260 individuals have attended volunteer management trainings since mid-2014. Representatives from 70 NGOs based in Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen, as well as in the non-project countries of Bahrain, Lebanon and State of Palestine, attended five national and two regional trainings. Inspired by these trainings, CSO representatives completed five national replications. The trainings provided tools to better manage volunteers and engage youth. These training of trainers initiatives have enabled a multiplier effect in reaching a greater number of beneficiaries throughout the region; approximately 230 individuals (56 females) were trained in the last half of 2014. As one participant explained, "The training will allow me to manage volunteers in a more effective and constructive way, so that we can all build a successful strategy for a better volunteer management, contributing to their personal and professional development".
- Private sector volunteer policy as reflected by the employment policy that prioritizes volunteering experience in all entry-level recruitment developed in Jordan in collaboration with 38 companies (see page 9). This policy aims to recognize the contribution of volunteerism to enhance youth employability and preparedness





for the job market.

Monitoring and evaluation

In accordance with the programme policies and procedures outlined in the UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures, the programme is monitored through the standard formats, offline and online in the UNDP Enterprise Resource Planning system.

The programme has undergone an independent external mid-term evaluation. The evaluation serves the dual objectives of learning and accountability, to assess the programme's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, effects and sustainability. The specific objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Provide recommendations to improve the design, performance and implementation of the regional programme;
- Provide recommendations to inform future UNV programming at regional and country levels;
- Generate knowledge about good practices and lessons learned.

At the same time, the ex-ante evaluation is ongoing to prepare for the project's expansion in the next phase. This envisioned programme, a cross-regional programme covering the Arab States and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), will include a focus on innovation. This evaluation will help understand the processes that have been undertaken so far and the impact of the pilot to date. It will also highlight lessons learned and opportunities for joint work with existing youth programming in the regions.

Capacity development approach. The programme adopted a UNDP systematic capacity development approach and takes

into considerations that in certain contexts, there are key individuals and initiatives who are not part of such formal settings and who should not be excluded from programme activities. The programme worked on three levels: youth (e.g., leadership camps); organizational (e.g., volunteer management); and government (e.g., assessments).

Strengthening partnerships with the private sector. The programme brought together youth volunteers, CSOs and the private sector through mutually beneficial development initiatives. Innovative approaches such as the Volunteer Declaration in Jordan champion the role of youth in both civil society and the private sector. The declaration brought together all actors to formally recognize volunteerism as a mechanism to enhance youth employability and provide incentives for youth volunteerism. More importantly, this declaration helped to strengthen the enabling environment to foster volunteerism for development.

National ownership. The programme has developed strong partnerships with national Governments to ensure the sustainability of the activities as demonstrated in Tunisia, where the Ministry of Youth is preparing to roll out the activities initiated by the programme. The programme's strong partnership relations are ensuring the sustainability of impacts after the programme ends. In a phasing-over approach, many of the programme's activities are being transferred to local institutions. This demonstrates the strong sense of national ownership and commitment to sustain programme activities, as well as the strengthened capacities to be able to implement the activities. Additionally, the preparation of a cross-regional initiative is being explored. This envisioned programme would build upon the lessons learned and results of the



current programme in the Arab States and other UNDP youth programmes.

6. Challenges

Security. The security situation is particularly relevant for the programme. In Yemen, the situation deteriorated considerably, which significantly limited programme implementation. The programme attempted to recruit a national consultant in Yemen, but none of the 24 applicants met the required profile, suggesting that the national pool of experts is limited. The security of the programme team during programme implementation has been a growing ongoing concern.

Regional political instability. Notably, four of the five Government representatives who signed the programme document two years ago are no longer serving.

Recruitment and retention. The retention of volunteers working directly on the programme has been challenging. To address this, one of the suggestions has been to give volunteers a two-year contract. However, no concrete plans have been devised to fully address this challenge.

7. Next steps and the way forward

UNV envisages the expansion of the programme, regionally as well as cross-regionally (CIS countries), with the aim of focusing on new approaches and methods to youth volunteering. The new project – ‘innovation for development’ - would work with young volunteers to identify the issues of importance to them and their communities and hopefully develop the next generation of voluntarism.

Building on the focus of innovation and the envisaged programme expansion, as well as the shared priority of youth programming, UNV and the UNDP Regional Centre for Europe and Central Asia are actively exploring systematic and structured joint programmatic interventions. The programme aims to seek out young people who are active in volunteer efforts that benefit their communities socially and/or economically, and thus invest in existing community dynamics as opposed to creating something new.

8. Lessons learned and recommendations

- Involvement of youth at all stages of the programme cycle;
- Cultivate national ownership through partnership throughout the life of the programme;
- Ensure responsive programming that can be adapted to different country contexts, guided by a representative national committee (i.e. the programme’s national advisory committees);
- Ensure that youth-led initiatives are truly led by youth and that they feel supported and legitimized.

9. Resources

National and regional consultations report
Draft training of trainers’ manual on volunteer management

10. References

UNDP (2012). Regional Programme Document: Arab Youth Volunteering for a Better Future.