



MENA - OECD
Governance Programme

Towards a new partnership between government and youth in Jordan

DISCUSSION PAPER

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Middle East
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Transition Fund





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THE MENA-OECD GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME

The MENA-OECD Governance Programme is a strategic partnership between MENA and OECD countries to share knowledge and expertise, with a view of disseminating standards and principles of good governance that support the ongoing process of reform in the MENA region. The Programme strengthens collaboration with the most relevant multilateral initiatives currently underway in the region. In particular, the Programme supports the implementation of the G7 Deauville Partnership and assists governments in meeting the eligibility criteria to become a member of the Open Government Partnership. Through these initiatives, the Programme acts as a leading advocate of managing ongoing public governance reforms in the MENA region. The Programme provides a sustainable structure for regional policy dialogue as well as for country specific projects. These projects correspond to the commitment of MENA governments to implement public sector reforms in view of unlocking social and economic development and of meeting citizens' growing expectations in terms of quality services, inclusive policy making and transparency.

For more information, please visit www.oecd.org/mena.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT

The regional project “Youth in Public Life: Towards open and inclusive youth engagement” covers Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia and is managed by the MENA-OECD Governance Programme.

In Jordan, the project is supporting the Ministry of Youth, line ministries and sub-national government as well as NGOs and foundations, and youth associations and civil society in the following areas:

1. Supporting the process of formulating and implementing the National Youth Strategy 2017-25 by conducting a review of the public governance arrangements for youth engagement and empowerment and deliver actionable policy recommendations based on OECD principles and good practices;
2. Scaling up the institutional and legal framework to foster youth engagement and representation in public life at the central and sub-national level;
3. Promoting innovative forms of engaging young men and women in decision-making to mainstream young people’s demands in the design and delivery of public policies and services.

The project includes country-specific activities and opportunities for regional policy dialogue and knowledge exchange among MENA and with OECD member countries.

HOW DOES THE OECD SUPPORT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC LIFE IN JORDAN?

In collaboration with the Ministry of Youth (MoY), a Steering Committee was created gathering various line ministries, NGOs and foundations as well as youth(-led) associations and other civil society actors in Jordan. During its first meeting on 16 November 2016, the participants stressed the need for a holistic assessment of the public governance arrangements in order to analyse whether the current legal, institutional and policy framework and practices indeed result in policy outcomes (e.g. public policies and services) that are tailored to their specific needs and priorities.

Following the official launch event with the Minister of Youth, the Ambassador of Italy to Jordan and policy practitioners from Slovenia and Germany on 6 December 2016, a series of fact-finding missions was conducted between December and March 2017 at central level and in six governorates (i.e. Greater Amman Municipality, Karak,

Tafilah, Aqaba, Irbid, Mafrq) to collect evidence. Peers from the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, the German Federal Youth Council and Karlstad Municipality in Sweden supported the missions. In a high-level conference on 1 March 2016 with the Minister of Youth and the OECD Deputy Secretary General, the concerned ministries committed to leverage the open government agenda and ongoing decentralisation reform to build mechanisms for young people to engage with public authorities across all levels of government. In the run up to the first local elections under the decentralisation and municipality law, the project supported mock elections with 23 young candidates and 2250 voters in on 23 May 2017 in Madaba. A first version of the Discussion Paper was presented and discussed with the members of the Steering Committee on 18 May 2017 in Amman in the follow-up of which additional feedback was collected.

The collected evidence will feed into the OECD Public Governance Youth Review of Jordan.

OBJECTIVE OF DISCUSSION PAPER

The discussion paper provides a synthesis of the public governance challenges for youth policy and young people’s engagement in public life raised by the various stakeholders interviewed during the fact-finding process. Based on a descriptive analysis, it offers a first assessment whether and to what degree the legal, institutional and policy framework and practices result in youth-responsive policy outcomes. For each of the ten areas identified, the paper presents good practices from OECD member countries. The paper will provide a basis to discuss the priority areas which should be covered by the OECD Review, redirect the analysis where necessary, and clarify potential information gaps.

1. Towards an inclusive and outcome-oriented National Youth Strategy 2017-2025

According to the Ministry of Youth, the Strategy will cover youth aged 15-30 which represent 29.1% of the Jordanian and 26.3% of the general population.

DESCRIPTION

The Ministry of Youth (MoY), the successor of the Higher Council for Youth has coordinated the formulation of the National Youth Empowerment Strategy 2017-25. The implementation of the Strategy is expected to be facilitated through multi-annual Action Plans the first of which covers the period 2018-20. The draft Strategy and Action Plan were submitted to the Council of Ministers on 30 August 2017.

An inter-ministerial committee was formed with representatives from the Ministries of Health, Labour, Parliamentary and Political Affairs, ICT, Education and Higher Education on 11 May 2017. Until August 2017, the formulation of the thematic chapters was led by UNDP in collaboration with two local consultants and United Nations (UN) agencies covering the following thematic areas: education (UNESCO, UNICEF), economic empowerment (ILO, UN Women), health (UNFPA, WHO), active citizenship (UNICEF, UNESCO) and security and peace (UNDP). The draft chapters were shared with the ministerial focal points as per thematic area for feedback and discussed in a joint meeting before being consolidated in a single document. In meetings with the ministerial focal points, the Action Plan for each thematic area was discussed together with the local consultants. According to the MoY, a Steering Committee composed of representatives from different ministries was created to review the draft and finalise the strategy which is expected to be launched in January 2018.

The process was coordinated and overseen by the National Fund for Sport and Youth Movement Support, the investment arm of the Ministry of Youth, and supported by a Technical Committee at MoY.

A National Consultation Forum was organised by the Ministry of Youth and UNDP on 24 May 2017 in Amman which brought together governmental and non-governmental youth stakeholders and researchers to discuss the five thematic areas covered by the Strategy. Youth consultations took place at the subnational level covering the Northern, Central and Southern region,

accompanied by an online research campaign and consultation events with youth and the staff of local youth centres on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning and International Co-operation. According to interviews, the idea of involving youth through a consultative committee has not been realised yet.

Evidence was collected through a review of relevant studies and databases (e.g. Population and Housing Survey 2015; UNESCO study on youth policies, descriptive analysis undertaken for the National Youth Survey, national strategies and policies, country briefs), field visits and social media-based research.

ASSESSMENT

The formulation of the National Youth Strategy 2017-25 comes at a timely moment to harmonise and synchronise public policies and services for youth among the many governmental and non-governmental stakeholders involved. It resonates with King Abdullah's 6th discussion paper in which he calls for empowering youth by developing state administration and enhancing the rule of law. With the backing of the Royal Court, it enjoys a strong political commitment to put youth concerns at the centre of government's attention. Its orientation along the timeframe of Jordan 2025, the country's long-term vision, places the Strategy within the broader national development process. The phased approach chosen (i.e. implementation based on three-year Action Plans) allows for timely adjustments if necessary. By recognising the need to empower youth in order to prevent violent extremism, the Strategy extends the thematic focus of previous attempts to formulate a coherent strategy for youth in Jordan in line with current challenges.

Young people's ownership of the Strategy will be a key determinant for its success. For the Strategy to be owned by young people, their involvement in all stages of its formulation and implementation is key, including in the identification of the priority areas. While consultations with youth were organised, the thematic areas covered by the Strategy had been defined prior to the first consultations. Interviews with members in two local youth centres suggest, for instance, that young people expect concrete commitments to facilitate young people's participation in all spheres of public life, including the political sphere. With the involvement of relevant line ministries in the formulation process (i.e. health, labour, parliamentary and political affairs, ICT, education and higher education), the Strategy goes beyond a narrow definition of youth interests.

It acknowledges that collaboration across administrative silos and departments is essential and that different ministries and non-governmental stakeholders need to work hand in hand for young people to benefit from more coherent public policies and services.

For the effective implementation of the Strategy, it will be critical to identify a mechanism through which inter-ministerial coordination can be facilitated in the long term. The limited involvement of line ministries in previous attempts to integrate policies and services for youth in Jordan into a coherent strategy was seen as a major shortcoming. The absence of the Ministry of Finance in the process so far risks that the activities and programmes will lack the financial resources and commitment necessary to turn commitments into tangible improvements. Moreover, it will be important to further clarify responsibilities and duties inside the Ministry of Youth as to who will oversee and monitor the implementation of the strategy. Ownership and clear accountability mechanisms could be enhanced by creating a dedicated office inside MoY (and efforts to strengthen the capacities of public officials in MoY in relevant areas (M&E, strategy development/strategic planning).

The collection of data and information suggests that age-disaggregated data is lacking in key sectors. A culture of openness and information sharing among all stakeholders involved is critical to ensure that the final version will respond to what young people themselves identify as the main obstacles to thrive in economic, social and political life.

OECD GOOD PRACTICE

Recent years have seen an upsurge in international efforts to identify principles to guide policy-makers and indicators to measure progress in formulating and implementing national youth policies (e.g. [2014 Baku Principles](#) for Youth Policy, [8 standards](#) developed by the European Youth Forum).

In **Ireland**, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs was in charge of drafting the National Youth Strategy 2015-20. The principle of inclusiveness drove the consultation process from December 2014 to March 2015 and included various key stakeholders e.g. young people, youth workers as well as other governmental agencies and departments¹. The Department used mainly online surveys, targeting specific actors, to reach out to a maximum number of stakeholders and make a variety of opinions heard. The priorities addressed by the strategy emerged directly

from the consultation. The strategy recognises a shared responsibility between government, state agencies and other stakeholders to deliver on its commitments. A “Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium”, composed of high-level representatives from government departments and agencies, experts and representatives from a wide range of sectors working with children and youth, was created to oversee implementation.

2. Align youth strategies and activities of different state and non-state actors

Representative of a line ministry: ***“While successful examples for collaboration between government, foundations and civil society exist, there is no structure explaining who does what and facilitating dialogue between government and non-governmental youth stakeholders”***

DESCRIPTION

A variety of state (e.g. ministries, parliament), state-affiliated (e.g. universities, schools) and non-state actors (CSOs, youth associations, private sector) and national and international NGOs and foundations are involved in the delivery of programmes and services of relevance for young men and women. The broader environment includes authorities such as family, sports, cultural and religious groups and the media. Avoiding the duplication of efforts and costs among these stakeholders is one of the key challenges Jordan and its youth are facing. Mandates and responsibilities need to be identified clearly among these institutions and regular communication channels need to be established to align programming and strengthen accountability mechanisms.

ASSESSMENT

Horizontal and vertical coordination across state institutions and non-governmental stakeholders are critical to ensure that all stakeholders are working hand in hand towards a shared vision for the development of youth in Jordan. Breaking up silo-based structures in favour of increased cross-departmental and cross-stakeholder collaboration relies on new incentive structures, for instance in the form of including concrete provisions in the performance assessments of public officials, and effective tools and mechanisms to ensure that the National Youth Empowerment Strategy 2017-25 and the Action Plan 2018-20 are cascaded down to subnational levels of government.

The Higher Council of Youth used to feature a board which brought together different youth stakeholders in Jordan. Currently, there is no institutionalised structure in place to facilitate aligning youth programming and strategy development across different state (and non-state) actors. On the contrary, in the absence of a culture of sharing information, different stakeholders risk being unaware

of the activities of other relevant institutions. Where collaboration exists, it is taking place on an ad hoc basis and relies largely on personal commitments. The absence of institutionalised structures for dialogue and coordination is of particular concern in the context of Jordan in which youth heavily rely on the training and awareness raising activities conducted by INGOs, societies, foundations and private stakeholders.

While initiatives have been launched in collaboration of line ministries, INGOs and national NGOs/foundations. On the other hand, this phenomenon the lack of a dedicated forum to coordinate youth-related initiatives and programmes has resulted in fragmented coverage in terms of the young people targeted and reached (e.g. limited coverage outside big cities and governorates). The risk of creating parallel structures prevails and is exacerbated by the fact that the gap of government action might be filled by initiatives of stakeholders which operate under limited democratic legitimacy and oversight. This is of particular importance in a sector such as education in which ministries (e.g. Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education) work side-by-side universities, schools as well as training institutes, NGOs and foundations which provide non-formal education outside the classroom.

The fragmentation of the youth sector in Jordan has resulted in the lack of a clear strategic framework for youth development based on a joint understanding of its direction, purpose and resource allocation. For instance, concepts guiding youth work in OECD member countries do not seem to be applied in a systematic way (e.g. life cycle approach).

Finally, the parliament is not perceived as a vocal advocate for young people's concerns except for the work of some individual parliamentarians. There is hence a need to revive the Youth and Sports Committee inside the Parliament and to redirect its focus towards young people's needs. According to the interviews, capacities among its members to act as ambassadors of youth concerns are weak; moreover, as for many other parliament committees, it has played a limited role in policy-making and government oversight.

OECD GOOD PRACTICE

Approved in 2010, the **Slovenian Act on the Public Interest in Youth Sector (ZJIMS)**² lists precisely the different “interest holders” in the youth sector, from the central government to the self-governing local communities (Article 7). It stipulates the prerogatives of each institutional body to avoid the overlapping of responsibilities. By introducing

relevant definitions and notions of the youth policy field (e.g. age range, youth work, youth policy, structured dialogue, etc.) it creates a common understanding of the rights and responsibilities of young people and the field of intervention of the various actors involved.

In **Finland**, the Youth Act (72/2006)³ identifies the main stakeholders and fields of action for each in the area of the national youth work and youth policy, local youth work and youth policy, and government funding. Among others, it features provisions on the role of the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, the development of cross-sectorial youth work at local level, and the transfers to local authorities and the system of state subsidies for youth (work) organisations and national youth centres.

Youth laws also exist in Luxembourg (Loi sur la jeunesse, 2008) and Sweden (Youth Law, 2004) among others.

3. Strengthen the capacities of the Ministry of Youth and inter-ministerial co-ordination

Representative of a line ministry: ***“We need greater coordination and a genuine culture of sharing information among line ministries to advance the cause of young people”***

DESCRIPTION

By nature, youth policy and services are delivered across various ministerial departments and agencies. In fact, it is increasingly recognised that beyond the “usual suspects” such as education, health and employment, youth have specific concerns and demands which should be reflected in all policy areas (e.g. housing, mobility, culture). Although the horizontal organisation within government can be organised in many different ways (e.g. by a dedicated Ministry of Youth, a ministry with combined portfolios, through a mainstreamed approach), strong links to the Centre of Government (i.e. the PMO or related offices) have proven to be a success factor for integrating a youth perspective in the national national planning/development agenda and secure high-level political support. Institutionalising inter-ministerial coordination (e.g. through a committee or focal points) is critical to overcome fragmentation/silo-based approaches and increase coherence and impact.

Although to a different extent, all ministries in Jordan deliver programmes, regulations and services of critical importance to young men and women. The recent transformation of the Higher Council for Youth into the Ministry of Youth and the current elaboration of the National Youth Empowerment Strategy 2017-25 provide for a new momentum to make youth concerns a priority and strengthen the capacities of the responsibility centre and horizontal coordination.

ASSESSMENT

The decision to establish the Ministry of Youth as the responsibility centre for coordinating youth policy is well-suited in the context of Jordan as capacities for a mainstreamed approach are limited. Key challenges faced by the Ministry include high running costs which have left limited financial resources for youth programming. Moreover, there is a need to build capacities among MoY staff in the area of strategic planning, policy/

strategy formulation, implementation and coordination service delivery across the whole of government. As the responsibility centre for youth concerns, the MoY further relies on strong links to the Ministry of Planning and International Co-operation both with a view to aligning its programmes with the broader government priorities as laid out in Jordan 2025 and establishing clear rules to apply for funds from (international) donors.

Collaboration between line ministries is typically regulated by a “bilateral” Memorandum of Understanding (MoU, e.g. between MoY and MoE / MoPPA). In light of the many co-existing bilateral MoUs, interviewees underlined the need for a more systematic and sustainable approach to strengthen communication and coordination across the whole of government. In the absence of a permanent mechanism, the identification of ministerial focal points to prepare the thematic chapters of the Strategy is a good starting point to think about a more institutionalised form to coordinate youth policy and services. Such a mechanism could be inspired by the example in the field of labour market policy, in which focal points of the Ministry of Labour are working in other ministries (e.g. MoE, MoT) and a commission composed of 15 entities meets on a monthly basis to foster coherence. However, the Ministry of Youth is not part of it.

OECD GOOD PRACTICE

In **Slovenia**, the inter-ministerial coordination of youth-related questions is facilitated by 17 youth coordinators. The youth coordinators, often junior officials, are based in line ministries and act as information accelerators and point of contact for the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth.

In **Canada**, when elected in 2015, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau appointed himself also Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Youth in Canada. This appointment made “youth issues” a part of the Prime Minister’s portfolio and hence underlines the importance attributed by the centre of government to increase coordinated action for them.

4. Use tools to integrate a youth perspective in policy formulation and service design

Representative of line ministry: **“Most of the financial resources at our disposal are needed to cover running costs.”**

DESCRIPTION

Policy outcomes affect young people’s opportunities to find a job, afford decent housing, found a family and successfully transit towards adult life in many more respects. By integrating young people’s perspective in policy formulation and service design and by recognising that youth are a heterogeneous group with diverse needs and priorities, governments can work towards policy outcomes that are indeed responsive to their demands. Governments have a variety of “tools” at their disposal to apply a “youth lens” to the formulation of new laws, regulations, policies and the delivery of public services (e.g. policy guidelines, allocation of public resources, human resource management systems, etc.).

Good practice examples exist for the application of each of these tools both at central and subnational level in Jordan. However, there is significant room to expand these examples beyond their current scope to redefine more substantially the way government works to ensure that young people’s considerations are at the centre of its attention throughout all stages and thematic areas.

- **Policy guidelines:** The Ministry of Public Sector Development (MoPSD) developed a user guide for policy-makers to foster the participation of CSOs and citizens in the policy-making process. The guide stresses the importance of involving different segments of society and in particular groups at the risk of exclusion, such as women and the disabled.
- **Public budget:** In partnership with UNICEF, the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) conducted child-sensitive budget analyses for eight ministries since its pilot assessments with the MoE, MoSD, MoH and Ministry of Labour in 2009 (covering the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Islamic Affairs in a second phase and the former Higher Council for Youth and the Ministry of Housing in a third phase). Meanwhile, the summary of the General Budget for the Fiscal Year 2017 lists the estimated allocation for children (aged 0-18) by ministry for the years 2015-19 (<https://goo.gl/f1Xuot>, Table 24) which presents a key initiative to increase transparency and accountability of government in delivering on the demands of the youngest generation.

- **Public human resource management** (e.g. capacity to train staff in working with and for young people; career development of newcomers): The MoPSD cooperates with the Institute of Public Administration in the design of a mandatory programme for young public officials (e.g. awareness and orientation). In light of tight fiscal space, the number of graduates joining the public sector each year decreased from around 9,000-12,000 to 4,000 since 2013 despite an uninterrupted popularity of the public sector among graduates (Around 70% of those queuing for a public sector job are less than 35 years old. Some are queuing for 10 years according to the MoPSD). According to the MoPSD, a new by-law to the civil service regulation decreased the weight of age in applying for higher positions in the public sector two years ago.

ASSESSMENT

The examples of tools used to assess and improve the performance of government in delivering on the demands of young people are encouraging. In particular, the rights-based approach applied to children (e.g. Jordan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) has led to promising initiatives such as the analysis of child-sensitive budgeting practices and the publication of children-related expenditures in the summary of the General Budget. Similar efforts could be replicated to determine and publish the allocation of public resources for youth with a view to empowering youth in fully claiming their rights and understanding their duties.

Existing policy guidelines for engaging stakeholders in the policy cycle could be reviewed and amended such as to acknowledge the productive role young people can play in this process. In light of the fact that neither the current health nor the housing strategy highlight the specific challenges faced by youth according to the interviews, this seems particularly timely.

OECD GOOD PRACTICE

Youth-responsive budgeting is one of the many tools that can be used to mainstream youth issues across government. In fact, the youth budget is not a separate budget for young people⁴. Rather, it examines the resources government is allocating to programmes to the benefit of young men and women, and whether these programmes adequately reflect their needs. For instance, the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment 2007-2015, endorsed by the **United Kingdom**, stipulates that all sectors and ministries must allocate at least 25% of their total annual budget in support of youth development.

5. Encourage youth to vote and run as candidates in national and local elections

According to data from the Independent Election Commission, the participation rate of youth between 17-30 years old (35.5%) figured below the average (37%) in the 2016 elections of the national parliament.

DESCRIPTION

The first local elections conducted under a new legal framework for the organisation of subnational and multi-level governance in Jordan (i.e. 2015 Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law) took place on 15 August 2017. The creation of elected councils at governorate and local (district) level has created high expectations to result in new opportunities for citizens, including youth, and CSOs to participate in local decision-making, in particular in the identification of local needs and priorities that would feed in the national planning and development process. A series of awareness raising activities was conducted with youth at governorate level by the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs (MoPPA) as well as the Independent Election Commission (IEC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior (MoI).

Although the minimum age to run in Jordan's local elections is still considerably higher than in OECD countries, it figures below the minimum age required to run for national parliament (30 years, Senate: 40 years).. According to RASED programme run by Al Hayat Center for Civil Society Development, the average age of elected members to the governorate councils in the 2017 elections is 49.7 years. While the candidates in the age group 50-59 represent the highest share of elected members to the governorate councils (41.7%), only around 10.5% of elected officials are between 26-34 years old. Among the most notable success stories of young contenders, a 27-year old candidate was elected mayor in Mo'ab Municipality and 26-year old women got elected the nation's youngest female member in the Governorate Council of Aqaba.

ASSESSMENT

The relation between youth, political parties and (elected) parliamentarians in Jordan is characterised by low levels of trust and dissatisfaction with performance. In a survey conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) from November 2016, 65% of the respondents stressed

that they have little or no confidence in political parties which continue to be considered weak (and 54% in parliament). Moreover, despite lowering the minimum age required to vote to 17 years and 90 days (Article 3a, Parliamentary Election Law 2016), voting decisions continue to be dominated by tribal affiliations. Especially young people from the big cities such as Amman, in which tribal affiliations play less of a role, therefore largely abstain from voting. And yet, promising initiatives exist to encourage young people to vote such as the initiative “Your vote is decisive” in Aqaba governorate which made extensive use of social media prior to the 2016 parliamentary elections .

Young people who want to compete in national and local elections are facing various challenges related to the cultural context (e.g. dominance of authorities/elderly; service culture/wasta) which can discourage them from becoming politically active and diminish their chances to be perceived as serious contenders. Lowering the minimum age required to run for governorate and local councils below the criteria for the national parliament is an important step to encourage their political participation. Although there seems to be little support to further reduce the minimum age, especially in a context of limited competition among political parties, it must be noted that this system still excludes a considerable share of the adult population (aged 18-24) . Moreover, the costs associated with running a campaign may deter young people who have typically less financial assets at their disposal. Awareness and training raising activities, such as the mock elections with 23 young men and women and over 2250 voters in Madaba on 22-23 May 2017, could be scaled up.

Interviewees suggested that the MoY could step up its efforts to encourage young people to vote and run in elections.

OECD GOOD PRACTICE

With the objective to encourage young people’s participation in the democratic process, the Government of the **United Kingdom** (UK) launched the national initiative “Rock Enrol” teaching school classes and youth organisations how to register and vote. This initiative is the fruit of collaboration between the government and “Bite the Ballot” a CSO dedicated to encourage youth to vote. Youth are invited to use an activity package which is downloadable on line⁵ to increase their political literacy, lead democratic debates and raise awareness why they should register to vote.

In the **United States**, the “Run for Something” initiative⁶, led by former Democrat campaign managers, encourages young millennials to run for office by raising awareness via online and offline network. Young people can register online and the most promising candidates are later invited to participate in trainings which prepare them for the race. The association also helps young candidate to raise funds and hire professional staff to support them throughout the campaign.

In **Norway**, mock elections date back to 1946⁷. During election year, schools invite young politicians from the main parties and youth representatives to debate with young student. In 2011 the process evolved into an “election square” – a market place where young people can gather and meet with members of political youth organisations, pick up campaign brochures and engage in discussions followed by the actual mock elections. The results of the election are later revealed in the media.

6. Fostering more open government and tailor government information and communication to youth habits

Italian Ambassador Brauzzi during the launch event of the project on 6 December 2016 in Amman: **“75% of the social media content in Arabic is generated in Jordan. Jordanian youth have great potential to profit from the digital era”.**

DESCRIPTION

Jordan was the first Arab country to join the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2012 and since has published three National Action Plans with concrete commitments to foster openness, transparency, accountability and citizen participation in policy-making. The All Jordan Youth Commission was involved in formulating the 3rd Action Plan (2016-2018). While the Plan does not feature youth-specific commitments as is the case in Tunisia and Finland, for instance, MoPIC announced that youth shall play an active role in its implementation.

Making government information accessible is a key element of open government agendas and important for youth to understand and exercise their rights and duties and increase transparency and scrutiny over government action. Communication should be tailored to young people’s communication habits and language, be proactive, timely, relevant and made available proactively. In the digitalisation era, many young men and women in Jordan are growing up as “digital natives”. As stressed in the OECD report (2016) “Youth in the MENA region: How to bring them in”, for 2013, the International Telecommunication Union estimated that around 40% of the youth population in Jordan (15-24) could be classified as “digitally natives” (using the Internet for at least five years). The OECD report (2017) “Benchmarking Digital Government Strategies in MENA countries” also points to the fact that, in line with many other MENA countries, Jordan has a higher number of mobile subscriptions per capita than the OECD average (148/100 people in 2014).

The MoY has undertaken significant efforts to open up new information and communication channels, for instance by creating a twitter account, and facebook and Instagram profile. This is replicated in some governorates, such as in Aqaba, where the youth directorate and youth centres use social media to reach out to young people (e.g. the

youth directorate has around 1450 Facebook friends). Despite the rapid progress in connecting less populated and impoverished areas to the Internet, such as through the 196 knowledge stations that are distributed throughout Jordan’s territory and managed by the National Information Technology Centre (<http://www.ks.gov.jo/>), access to digital technologies is not universal. Therefore, activities to inform and communicate with the offline youth population are critical to ensure that their needs and concerns are also taken into account.

One of the functions social media networks fulfil for young people in Jordan is to provide a forum to discuss more sensitive issues. On the downside, exposure to unlawful content (e.g. violence) and phenomena such as “hate speech” are causing concerns as they risk proliferating more easily due to the alleged anonymity of Internet users.

ASSESSMENT

Jordan’s membership in the OGP has been a driver to foster democratic reform and development. So far, however, despite young people’s innovative potential and, in some cases, leading role in calling for more open, transparent and participatory policy-making, they have been given few opportunities to participate in shaping or implementing the commitments covered by the National Action Plans. The participation of the All Jordan Youth Commission in the formulation of the 3rd Action Plan and the declaration by MoPIC that youth should become engaged in the implementation process present first and important steps ahead. In principle, all 12 commitments of the Plan provide possible entry points for the government to partner with youth. For instance, according to the Ministry of Public Sector Development, Commitment 4 (“launch and enhance the complaints registration system and follow-up mechanisms”) aims at extending the web-based system by making available a smartphone application and hotline by July 2018 in order to increase young people’s uptake of the complaint system. Statistics show that the number of complaints submitted through the system has decreased continuously from 2641 cases in 2013 to 1491 cases in 2016 (94% of the complaints were classified “solved” in 2016). It must be noted, however, that these statistics do not allow for an assessment of the satisfaction among the initiators of complaints with how their cases were dealt with.

MoY’s efforts to use digital channels to reach out to young people have been recognised by various youth stakeholders and young people. As of September 2017, MoY’s facebook profile, which is updated with information about activities on a daily basis, counts around 83,000

friends. The twitter account around 1840 followers (created in June 2016). MoY's website (<http://www.moy.gov.jo/>) provides general information about the ministry, youth cities and sport facilities as well as youth clubs. It features a platform for young people to submit their ideas and initiatives. The significant efforts invested by the MoY into sharing information with youth through social media are remarkable. Building on this positive example, the objective of moving from simply providing information to offering a space for genuine dialogue and interaction between government and youth (associations) could be envisaged. A more proactive role of the MoY to realise such a space was called for by different interviewees.

OECD GOOD PRACTICE

Reaching out to young people through communication channels that truly speak to youth is a challenge that is shared by all governments. Social media platforms are not only a tool to reach and inform young people but also to gather their opinion and feedback on policies, programmes and activities. The draft OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government acknowledges the need to "explore innovative ways to effectively engage with stakeholders to source ideas and co-create solutions and seize the opportunities provided by digital government tools" in this regard.

In **Germany**, the online portal "Ich mache Politik" (I do politics) invites young people to participate in shaping youth policy and political decision-making processes at federal level. The project is run by the German Federal Youth Council (Deutscher Bundesjugendring) which represents the interests of youth associations in Germany vis-à-vis the parliament, government and the wider public, and receives financial support by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

Between October 2014 and mid-2017, young people between 12-17 years old and youth groups (e.g. youth associations, school class, community groups) were invited to share their views on the formulation of the forthcoming Demography Strategy of the government. Through the e-participation tool (ePartool), youth could bring in their ideas and discuss intermediary results which are made available for discussion. In a second step, young people were invited to vote upon the most important statements and ideas brought forward by their fellows (e.g. a well-developed, accessible, affordable/free internet infrastructure). The platform allows young people to see how their contributions were dealt with and whether their input was taken into account.

7. Opportunities for civic engagement and political participation of youth (associations)

Civil society representative: ***"Young people often feel that government is not listening to them. And if they listen, young people believe that their ideas and views are not taken into consideration. We need to address the mistrust on both sides"***

DESCRIPTION

Youth engagement in public life can take various forms ranging from volunteering and civic engagement to both traditional and non-traditional practices of political participation (e.g. voting, campaigning, submitting petitions, participation in public consultations, membership in a political party, active participation in decision making procedures, social movement, etc.). It is recognised that engaging youth in both civic and political activities can enhance their personal skills (e.g. communication, consensus-seeking, problem-solving, leadership), make an important contribution to national development, ensure that results are responsive to their needs and demands, and ultimately strengthen the legitimacy of political decisions, democratic culture and trust in public institutions.

The new Law on Political Parties (Law No. 39 of 2015) specifies that party founders must be at least 18 years old. However, with few exceptions, political parties are weak and hence do provide little incentives for youth to enter the public/political sphere. In many aspects of social, economic and political life, tribal affiliations still exercise significant influence. Opportunities for young people to learn about political procedures are provided by the Ministry of Education's organisation of school parliaments. Programmes run by All Jordan Youth Commission aim at encouraging youth to become active citizens and start initiatives with their local community (For Jordan we develop), offer debate trainings and competition (Jordan Youth Voice) and organise brainstorming sessions with politicians and university teachers to make young people's voice heard and disseminated via media (A role waiting for us). Numerous NGOs affiliated to the Royal Court, INGOs and other stakeholders provide similar training activities targeted at young men and women.

There is no institutionalised mechanism that allows youth (associations) in Jordan to systematically represent their

interests vis-à-vis the government, such as in the form of a national youth council. Activities to bring young people and decision-makers together and raise awareness for government work rely on the programmes of individual CSOs (e.g. Diwaneh debate by Leaders of Tomorrow; My citizenship and my participation by Al Hayat Centre, the approach to share success stories among youth by New think). Moreover, an umbrella organisation or network of youth associations that could act as an independent mouthpiece does not exist. It reflects a general challenge for civil society work in Jordan to unite their efforts as only two CSO alliances are registered overall.

Civil society activity in Jordan is rooted within the tribal system and originally focused on charity and aid activities. CSOs focusing on human rights and democracy only started to emerge following Jordan's accession to international conventions. Civil society organisations acting as watchdog of government performance exist but are rather limited in number. According to the Law 51 of 2008 as amended by Law 22 of 2009, civil society organizations can work under three legal forms: societies (i.e. at least seven members, service provision/voluntary work, may benefit from tax exemptions/charitable status), closed societies (i.e. foundations: at least one member, financial resources are limited to the funds paid by the founding members) and private societies (i.e. 3-20 members, no open membership scheme). As of 2016, 5108 societies are registered with the Ministry of Social Development. Independent of their legal form, all CSOs are supervised by the competent ministry (e.g. societies specialised in providing health services are supervised by the Ministry of Health) and may not have any "political goals". Societies can target youth directly or indirectly through their programmes. According to the interviews, the registration of youth associations is subject to an ongoing debate between MoY and MoSD.

ASSESSMENT

In line with a global trend, young people are underrepresented in Jordan's state bodies. Moreover, in the absence of a dedicated institution to represent youth concerns vis-à-vis the government, engagement remains largely orchestrated by the latter and linked to selected projects. Forms of engagement that go beyond providing information and targeted involvement, such as initiatives in which final decisions are shared between government and youth stakeholders or in the hands of youth, do not seem to exist. Led by the MoY, the Al Hussein Youth Camps allow an annual 25,000 young men and women (2016) to engage in awareness raising, training, educational and voluntary activities aimed at strengthening and

enhancing national identity values, spreading the culture of volunteerism, and developing their abilities and skills (e.g. leadership empowerment, promoting tolerance and rejecting extremism and violence). Dedicated programmes to encourage young people to become politically active, however, do not seem to exist.

Among the major obstacles to foster civic engagement and political participation, CSOs and representatives from local youth centres first refer to the lack of job opportunities. For many, economic inclusion is a precondition to become more active in public life. Moreover, interviewees reported a certain fear among youth to become engaged politically due to traditional norms. In this respect, the norms represented by the family and society provide the key reference for what is perceived as acceptable behaviour. Moral support and recognition from the family can make a big difference in encouraging young people to engage. Joint activities for young people and family members, such as the Mother's and Daughter's Day in Al Tafleeh, thus serve an important purpose. In the field of civic engagement and volunteering, notable initiatives were created by the Jordanian youth themselves, such as the independent volunteering network Jeel 962 (<http://www.jeel962.org>). The network, which is composed of young people aged 10-24, plans and implements activities for community development and hence engages young people in finding practical solutions to challenges in their society.

Among the obstacles to CSO activity, interviewees referred to cases of self-censorship, slow bureaucracy (and, in some cases, the cancellation of activities without justification) and increasingly strict regulations for registration and acceptance of funding from international donors. Finally, capacities among youth themselves need to be strengthened. School and university curricula could be reviewed with a view to teaching the skills that are required for students from Jordan to compete in increasingly globalised labour markets, renewing the focus on the value of active citizenship and increasing young people's autonomy (e.g. critical judgment, teamwork, assume responsibility within the community, etc.). Such an approach relies on the joint commitment and shared understanding among government officials, teachers and students.

In the interviews, youth associations deplore the lack of opportunities to develop dialogue and debate skills and to practice critical thinking and engage in decision making processes as well as limited enthusiasm among decision-makers to engage in a dialogue and take into consideration their ideas and requests.

OECD GOOD PRACTICE

The design and purpose of representative bodies for youth vary greatly across OECD member countries. In fact, youth councils offer only one among various formats to represent young people's interests vis-à-vis the government and considerable differences exist with regard to their institutional architecture (e.g. composition, function and influence in decision-making).

The **Norwegian** Children and Youth Council (LNU) is an umbrella organisation uniting 96 nationwide non-governmental organisations for children and youth. The LNU organises a children and youth parliament and acts as representative of young people vis-à-vis public authorities.

In **France**, the Youth Policy Advisory Council (Conseil d'Orientation des Politiques de la Jeunesse, COJ), created in 2016, acts as administrative advisory committee to the Prime Minister Office. The COJ is responsible for creating coherent and transversal public policies concerning young people. It may be consulted on legislative proposals of relevance to young people and can examine any question of general interest in the field of youth policy. The Council can present proposals to the government in order to improve the situation of young people. An annual report of its activities is published and sent to the government.

It must be noted that these platforms tend to attract youth who already express a certain interest in political affairs and public life. In addition, tailored efforts are therefore necessary to reach out to the most disengaged and marginalised youth groups.

8. Leverage the decentralisation reform to empower governorates and municipalities

H.E. Hadeetha Khreshah, Minister of Youth: ***"By delegating authorities to the youth directors at governorate level, the Ministry of Youth is one of the first ministries to implement decentralisation in practice."***

DESCRIPTION

The ongoing decentralisation reform is expected to impact the relation between the central and subnational levels of government (i.e. governorates and municipalities) in the way youth-related policies and services are formulated, designed and delivered. At the core of the reform stands the objective to empower local authorities, in collaboration with non-governmental stakeholders, to identify local needs and priorities in the framework of the national planning and development process, share the benefits from economic development more equally across regions and redirect the attention of the national parliament away from a service orientation towards policy-making and oversight. As analysed in greater detail in the OECD Review "Towards a New Partnership with Citizens: Jordan's Decentralisation Reform", the National Committee for the Decentralisation Reform and its Executive Committee is charged with the implementation of the 2015 Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law

Jordan is a highly centralised state in which the central level assumes strong influence over subnational affairs. Governorates are headed by a governor who is appointed by the King and who acts, together with the deconcentrated directorates of line ministries as an extension of the central government (e.g. the staff of the youth directorates is delegated by the MoY). Under the previous legal framework, the vertical relation between the MoY and youth directors has been characterised by a top-down approach. Reportedly, the Secretary General (SG) at MoY sends general policy instructions (e.g. fight drug abuse) to youth directors who liaise with other directorates inside the governorate, youth centres and other partners in the formulation of annual programmes and supervise implementation. Annual meetings of the SG with the deconcentrated agencies offer a rare opportunity for the latter to raise local needs and demands. In fact, the 200 youth centres across the territory provide the main infrastructure at subnational level to organise seminars, trainings and workshops for youth (see also 9.) in collaboration with other deconcentrated

entities, foundations, local NGOs, INGOs, universities and other partners. Where operational, elected administrative committees/councils inside the youth centres participate in the programming of the annual Action Plan with the youth directorate (e.g. Karag, Aqaba, Tafleleh). These ideas are then forwarded to the MoY hence allowing for some degree of bottom-up programming. Monthly reports are prepared by the youth centres to report on their activities and sent to the Ministry. According to the MoY, the key objectives of the youth centres are to empower young people, provide safe environments, promote youth participation in public life, honour young talents and innovations, and promote values of loyalty to the nation.

The MoY approves and allocates the annual budget which amounts to 6000 JD (previously 4000 JD) following a decision by the Minister of Youth in early 2017. Additional funding is allocated for the maintenance of youth centres and facilities and the work of the youth directorate. In early 2017, the Minister of Youth delegated administrative and financial autonomy to the youth directorates with the objective to facilitate procedures and reduce approval stages. In 2016, 431 employees were registered in the youth centres supported by around 200 volunteers.

At the municipality level, the MoMA reportedly transmits local youth demands to the MoY. However, it is unclear whether a MoU exists to regulate day-to-day interaction between the two ministries. In some municipalities such as in Al Tafleleh governorate, young people are involved in voluntary work (e.g. street cleaning) under the supervision of the youth directorate.

ASSESSMENT

The recent increase in financial contributions to youth centres along with the decentralisation of autonomy in favour of the youth directors has been highly welcomed by the subnational authorities. It reportedly facilitates decision-making procedures and hence provides for a more timely response to local (youth) demands. Interviewees stressed the need to further increase the financial transfers from central level to deliver on local demands and modernise youth centres which largely suffer from outdated equipment. Additionally, the unconditional transfer of an equal amount to each centre could be reviewed and, if necessary, be restructured to ensure that resources are invested where they are needed and used efficiently.

There is a clear need to increase awareness raising activities concerning the implications of the new legal framework and clarify the future role of elected subnational authorities.

The future mechanisms to establish dialogue and exchange between local authorities and youth associations, activists and CSOs, are yet to be defined. And yet, the reform has raised hopes that it would allow for a bottom-up approach to strategic planning and development, in particular through the identification of policy/service priorities with the involvement of youth in their communities. It must be noted that these priorities can vary considerably between the centre, northern and southern region, and between governorate centres and remote/rural areas. As of today, the channels offered to raise complaints to local development units at governorate (GLDUs) and municipal level (MLDUs) and public relation units for citizens do not seem to satisfy the expectations of local communities. As stressed in the OECD report "Towards a new partnership with citizens: Jordan's decentralisation reform", LDUs often suffer from limited administrative and human resource capacities. Two municipalities in Ajloun Governorate have played a pioneering role in this regard as they reportedly opened a youth unit headed by staff from the municipality and supported by a 9-member steering committee which is composed of local young men and women from different social backgrounds. Among others, the youth committee has contributed to a survey about the demands of local youth and received funding for small projects from the municipality.

Communication and coordination across the deconcentrated entities (i.e. through the Executive Council) remain behind the hopes of interviewees. Moreover, some concerns were raised as to the future interaction between the elected governorate councils, the governor and the Executive Council in light of the genuine democratic legitimacy enjoyed by the first. A similar issue of credibility has, in some cases, affected the interaction between elected members of municipal councils and the delegated youth directors. According to the interviews, in some cases, the youth director had to involve the governor to coordinate with elected members from the municipality councils. The limited vertical collaboration at subnational level is further rooted in the lack of relevant regulation and mechanisms.

The establishment of systematic communication structures between youth directorates across the 12 governorates could provide an impetus to share good practices across the country. As most municipalities suffer from serious capacity shortages, unsustainable debt levels and increasing demands for access to public services due to the refugee crisis, it remains to be seen whether the creation of elected local councils will indeed result in more youth-responsive policy outcomes and better access to quality services.

OECD GOOD PRACTICE

Examples from OECD countries illustrate that both local governments and youth can benefit from “teaming up” at subnational level. In the region of Atlanta (**United States**), youth were invited to act as “civic leaders” and advisors to the Atlanta Region Plan⁸ which outlines a vision as to how policies and projects should be designed to ensure high levels of well-being for the region’s residents over the next 25 years. A checklist featuring seven key points was developed to encourage the steady and continuous participation of youth throughout the process stressing, among others, the importance of: a) partnering with other organisations and agencies to maximise participation; b) offering a complementary mix of both smaller, community-based forums, large-scale public forums and online opportunities for engagement; c) and evaluating the effectiveness of activities and projects developed in collaboration with planners, policymakers and elected officials.

9. Scale up capacities at subnational level to engage youth in public life

Member of women youth centre in Al Tafileh: ***“We want to be active and have a positive impact on the development of our community. We want to have a say when local decisions are taken.”***

DESCRIPTION

Government work with youth at subnational level involves multiple stakeholders and cuts across different policy fields.

The MoY oversees 200 youth centres (110 for young men aged 12-24 years; 90 for young women aged 12-30 years) which conduct specific activities for its male or female members. Some youth centres are owned by the MoY, others are rented from private persons or established by Royal Decree. Each centre is allocated an annual financial contribution of 6000 JD to conduct activities (up from 4000 JD) since 2017. Since June 2016, efforts have been undertaken to connect the centres to the Internet and increase security measures due to the occurrence of vandalism in some. Where operational, members of the centres are involved in formulating the annual Action Plans through elected committees. Moreover, the MoY oversees youth clubs, which are open to youth aged 18 years or older and provide mainly sports activities as well as sports cities, and youth hostels.

Different ministries are running centres at community level, however, many are suffering from a lack of capacities to operate and establish programmes targeting youth. In the spirit of fostering a participatory approach, the Ministry of Health, through the deconcentrated health directorate and in collaboration with universities and schools, has formed committees at community level in 10 governorates and 64 villages/municipalities to raise awareness among youth for health-threatening products and behaviour (e.g. courses, lectures and guidelines). Youth elect its members (5-6 people) from the local community for a period of six months. The committees meet at least once a month to identify local health challenges which are then forwarded to MoPIC to coordinate support in collaboration with international donors and charity organisations.

The Ministry of Social Development disposes of 65 local community centres 33 of which are owned by the ministry and 32 are managed by charity organisations). Activities through the centres target the most vulnerable segments of

society. While they are not specialised on youth issue, they are open to address the demands of vulnerable youth (e.g. women, disabled, juvenile) and shall, according to the MoSD, become better directed towards their needs. As services are delivered free of fees, running costs of the community centres leave limited resources for programmes. In addition, the MoSD targets youth indirectly through microfinance projects for families covering around 3000 households. A committee is currently working on a by-law to allow young people to benefit more directly from microfinance schemes. In collaboration with the Ministry of Telecommunication, shared service centres shall be created in governorates (e.g. personal services, licenses, ID, transport). Five pilot services are expected to be accessible through the centres by October 2018 based on a feasibility study conducted with the European Union.

The All Jordan Youth Commission (AJYC), established in 2006 as one of the initiatives of King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, which is implemented by the King Abdullah II Fund for Development, is represented in each governorate since 2007 with a proper office and staff (5 per governorate).

. The AJYC runs six main programmes to strengthen young people's role in public, social and economic life (i.e. Education Awareness Programme, Jordan Program for Volunteering, Our Youth Program, the Jordanian Youth Voice Program, and the Middle East Media and Social Media Program), in particular by offering trainings to youth in which they can strengthen basic life skills such as negotiation and persuasion skills, dialogue and acceptance of the other and problem solving skills.

Through the local family counselling centres (e.g. programmes are implemented by local NGOs, peer-to-peer coaching), the National Council for Family Affairs targets young people indirectly. The work of Al Hassan Youth Award at local level and in small villages aims at minimising violence and addressing environmental issues, among others.

Beyond the institutional infrastructure provided by different line ministries and non-governmental stakeholders, youth parliaments and children/youth municipality councils exist in some governorates. Youth parliaments with elected representatives provide a mechanism through which young people can get familiar with democratic principles and proceedings and, in some cases, transmit their recommendations to local authorities. In Irbid Governorate, the youth directorate attends the sessions of the youth parliament and submits its recommendations to the MoY. However, not all youth parliaments are operational. For instance, despite enthusiasm among young people, the work of the youth parliament recently stopped in Al Tafileh.

The Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) hosts children municipality councils with young people (aged 12-15) since 2005. What initially started with four districts and 44 schools to make children participate in assessing local needs, build skills, vote upon projects, understand the rights of the child and contribute to a child-friendly city, will enter its 5th round in 2017. In 2011, all 22 districts and 84.000 pupils participated. The council prepares three-year action plans. In each district, a specialised representative from GAM works with the young members of the local community committees as a mentor. Local community committees, meeting once a week, are composed of three boys and three girls and elect one among them to participate in the children municipality council. The 22 members include one disabled member and drop-out from school. In Karak, a youth municipality council exists which is composed of 24 members from school parliaments, students from Mu'ta University and Balqa University and youth organisations. The council meets once per week, can attend public municipality council meetings and reports recommendations to the Head of Municipality.

In collaboration with the education directorates at governorate level (MoE), the Haqiq Initiative ("Do it"), supported by Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II is a national leadership program which is directed to enhance, develop, enrich and help youth reach their full potential as productive leaders and caring citizens. It includes a variety of volunteering, cultural and artistic activities aimed specifically at ninth and tenth grade students in public and private schools.

In light of the serious capacity shortages faced by governorates and municipalities (see 8.), most initiatives and related expenditures such as for transportation are covered and implemented by NGOs and international donors. The example of Al Tafileh suggests that municipalities do not allocate a specific budget for youth-related issues but cover relevant activities (e.g. sports, culture) through the local community development programme.

ASSESSMENT

The youth centres spread across the 12 governorates provide a rich infrastructure for young men and women to gather, develop joint initiatives and organise themselves to get engaged in the development of their community. Especially for young women living in more conservative regions, the centres provide a safe space to express themselves and participate in local public life. Moreover, many centres suffer from outdated equipment (e.g. ICT, library, sports facilities) and limited space (e.g. some rented centres are not fit for activities as they only provide 1-2

apartment rooms); some are located in areas that are difficult for young people to reach. The lack of specialised supervising staff is another issue of concern. The system of allocating an equal budget to each centre could be reviewed based on a needs assessment and performance review. In collaboration with UNDP, the MoY conducts an assessment of youth centres, initially starting with 9 pilots in 6 governorates, which aims at rehabilitating infrastructure, programming and staff capacities. This could be expanded to identify operations and programmes inside the youth centres that could be entirely run by youth to increase their autonomy and sense of accountability.

The members of female youth centres met in Al Karag and Al Tafleeh express a feeling of being disconnected from opportunities in Amman but show strong energy and enthusiasm to have a positive impact on the development of their communities. There is a desire to better link the activities of the centres both to community life and youth stakeholders outside Jordan. In the absence of a structured dialogue between local authorities and youth, the centres could develop, among other activities, into a venue for political dialogue and exchange. Empowered with adequate financial means, and with local CSOs and CBOs on board, the centres could become a space for a structured dialogue between local authorities, youth (associations) and the broader civil society, a training hub for young people living outside big cities and the governorate centre and result in co-designed and delivered activities.

In terms of programming, there is a need for more specialised and long-term initiatives and trainings to empower young men and women (e.g. language courses for youth in remote areas). The focus of the curriculum at addressing poverty, unemployment, drug abuse, security, PVE, religious education and citizenship/patriotism could be accompanied by activities to increase young people's understanding of political processes and engagement to create a culture of local activism acknowledging that today's youth will assume increasing responsibilities and leadership roles in all spheres of life. According to Jordan River Foundation, in collaboration with MoY, an evaluation of youth centres is prepared to assess how the centres can be made usable more effectively to foster active citizenship and economic leadership. Peer-to-peer coaching models could be one way to encourage youth in this respect.

As to the collaboration among different stakeholders at subnational level, line ministries, in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders, could better link planning and activities in order to exploit synergies from the existing institutional infrastructure and reach a higher number

of youth. Based on a thorough study, the existing centres attached to the different line ministries could join forces to provide programmes for youth at shared costs and based on streamlined procedures (e.g. between MoY's youth centres, MoSD's community centres and the initiatives delivered by the Ministry of Education).

Examples provided above (Ajloun, Irbid, GAM) illustrate that good practices of mutually beneficial partnerships between youth and local authorities in Jordan exist. Yet, institutionalised forms of engaging youth in local decision-making, such as through local youth councils or youth advisory committees, do not exist. Establishing a link between youth and local decision-making is timely, in particular in the aftermath of the first local elections held on 15 August 2017 under the 2015 Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law (see 8.).

OECD GOOD PRACTICE

The San Francisco Youth Commission⁹ in the **United States** is composed of 17 youth between the ages of 12 and 23 and was created in 1995 to advise the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors on young people's needs and questions related to the impact of regulations, programs, and budget decisions. The Board of Supervisors, which is in charge of establishing city policies and adopts ordinances and resolutions, is requested to consult the Youth Commission before a final decision on relevant matters is taken. The work of the Youth Commission is organised in thematic committees (e.g. youth justice, public health, recreation, housing and homelessness, and education).

Recent experiences in OECD and MENA (e.g. Tunisia) have shown the added value of involving young people in the allocation of public budgets to make them familiar with deliberative processes and consensus-building. In 2013, **Boston** became the first American city to create a youth-led participatory budgeting process. Now in its fourth year, Boston's Participatory Budgeting Project¹⁰ engages over 2,000 Boston youth aged 12-25 to determine how to spend one million dollars of the city's capital budget. Young people from across the city were asked to suggest ideas for capital projects that will bring long-term physical improvements to parks, streets, schools, and neighbourhoods on city-owned property. Youth volunteers, called Change Agents, reviewed the ideas and turned them into proposals based on pre-set criteria (e.g. should benefit the public, cost at least \$25,000, and have a lifespan of at least five years). Proposals with the highest votes received from the young participants were implemented.

10. Address the double challenge faced by young women

MP Wafa Bani Mustafa: ***“We need to overcome the obstacles for young women to participate in political life. Young women are looking for successful role models.”***

DESCRIPTION

Young women worldwide often face a two-fold form of discrimination based on their age and sex. Data from the World Bank estimates that more than every second young woman (15-24) in Jordan is unemployed (56%) compared to 29% of young men (2016) despite outnumbering their male fellows in both tertiary (47% vs. 43%, 2015) and secondary school enrolment (85% vs. 80%, 2014). In fact, Jordan displays one of the lowest female labour force participation in the world (16% compared to 22% in MENA countries and 57% in upper middle income countries). Programmes by different line ministries attempt to challenge the status quo, such as MoL’s programme to foster self-employment among women working from home and MoH’s microfinance projects.

A quota system guarantees a minimum share of seats for women in the national parliament (i.e. 15 out of 130 seats), the elected governorate councils (10%, in addition, one third of the 15% of appointed members must be women) and in the municipal (25%) councils. Institutional networks to foster women candidates are supported by the Jordan National Commission for Women; in addition, the parliament features a women caucus. The King Hussein Information and Research Centre supports the parliamentary research centre to mainstream gender in its activities. According to the Ministry of Public Sector Development, current reform efforts target the civil service by-law with a view to empowering young women in the public service based on an extension of their maternity leave to one year and the introduction of more flexible working hours and teleworking.

However, despite these initiatives, the low degree of young women’s economic inclusion translates into an overall low participation in public life. It must be noted that young women are not the only group in society which is facing a particular risk of exclusion from economic, social and public life (e.g. rural, disabled, minorities). In Aqaba Governorate, a team of 15-20 youth volunteers, in cooperation with Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority, is reaching out to youth from less fortunate socio-economic neighbourhoods to collect evidence and prepare studies on their situation and allow for more targeted service delivery in areas figuring outside of government attention.

ASSESSMENT

Despite significant progress in recent years to fight legal discrimination (e.g. removal of Article 308 of the Penal Code in April 2017), predominant gender bias and gender stereotypes continue to perpetuate unequal opportunities for young women in accessing health, mobility, justice and other service areas.

The separation of youth centres by sex is welcomed by female members and provides an opportunity to leave parental home and participate in public life, especially for young women from more conservative backgrounds. For (young) women with an ambition to run as candidates in national or local elections, economic dependency can be a major obstacle due to the associated costs. Therefore, female candidates rely to an even greater degree on family/tribal support. Advocates for a more equal representation of men and women in the public sphere praise the quota system and express their hope that the decentralisation reform will provide new opportunities for women to assume local leadership roles. Mentorship programmes designed to bring together women in leadership roles and aspirational young women could be established to overcome the existing barriers for the latter to fully participate in public life.

OECD GOOD PRACTICE

In **London**, the civil society-lead “Us Programme”¹¹ targets young girls mainly from disadvantaged backgrounds to help them break boundaries and achieve their goals. The programme encourages self-development and offers continuous support to ambitious female students. It also provides special access to a network of successful women in industry, dedicated to sharing their knowledge. Aimed at female students aged 14 to 19, an annual conference is organised to showcase case studies, engage in panel discussions, group presentations and interactive workshops and provide networking opportunities and mentoring schemes.

END NOTES

1. <https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/20151008NatYouthStrat2015to2020.pdf>
2. http://www.ursm.gov.si/fileadmin/ursm.gov.si/pageuploads/pdf/ZJIMS/ZJIMS_ENG.pdf
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5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rock-enrol-engaging-young-people-in-democracy>
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