Accelerating SDG progress on youth economic empowerment in the Arab Region:
Perspectives and implications for family-centered approaches

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Background Paper for EGM Session on Youth and the SDG[1]

Session background: Effective youth transitions are not only significant for the development of youth, but also for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In fact, "we pay a high cost when our development policies and programs fail to recognize the particular needs and aspirations of youth." Therefore, supporting healthy youth transitions is of paramount importance to the achievement of the SDGs. What policies might help countries improve youth outcomes, moving towards the youth related SDG targets (Target 4.4, 8.5 and 8.6)? What are the challenges that youth face in the achievement of youth related SDGs? How important is a healthy transition from youth to adulthood towards and in the achievement of SDGs? What family policies might reinforce youth employment policies and help countries to improve youth outcomes, towards youth-related SDG targets (targets 4.4, 8.5 and 8.6)?

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1. Young men and women's empowerment: A SDG Accelerator

Effective youth transitions could be described as *transitions that effectively empower young men and women, economically, but also socially and politically***.** The notion is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, which recognizes the youth as *critical agents of change* and integrates their priorities and needs across all dimensions of sustainable development. Young people are embedded within the fabric of the SDGs. There are 20 youth-specific targets spread over six SDGs: Goal 2 (hunger), Goal 4 (education), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 8 (decent work), Goal 10 (inequality) and Goal 13 (climate change); and altogether 65 out of the 169 SDG targets reference young people explicitly or implicitly, with a focus on empowerment, participation and/or well-being. These targets typically refer to all age groups and focus on gender-responsive, life-cycle approaches[i]. Children and Young people are also one of the 9 Major Groups with which the UN closely collaborates to ensure broad participation and representation of all corners of the society.

Children, young women and men are critical agents of changes and will find in the new Global Goals a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world – *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Point 51)*

The empowerment of young men and women – and the elimination of gender disparities in empowerment - are essential in their own right and a key pathway to Leaving No One Behind (a core principle of the Agenda). **Youth empowerment also carries a wide range of co-benefits for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals across the five pillars of the 2030 Agenda: People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace, and Partnerships, acting as a "SDG Accelerator".** There is increased evidence that economies are stronger, more resilient in countries where women and youth actively and meaningfully participate in all aspects of social, economic and political life. Remarkably, empowering youth – but also women and families! - is a central call of the Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015) Security Council resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security and more recent Resolution 2419 (2018)[ii]. These Resolutions acknowledge that young men and women play an important and positive role in the realization of sustainable development, critically through preventing crises and advancing peace. Youth empowerment and inclusion is fully embedded in the emerging policy and programmatic paradigm on "sustaining peace"[iii]. Whilst more empirical evidence is needed, a recent quantitative study on Youth, Violence and Peace Building commissioned by the UNDP Youth

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[1] The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations, including UNDP, or the UN Member States

Global Program (Youth GPS)[iv] suggests that young people, especially young women are likely to be constructively engaged in their community and have a positive outlook on life and future perspectives in conflict-affected areas. Another study - entitled "*The Missing Peace*"[v] – which involved consultations with more than 4000 youth around the world and of different backgrounds (including refugee youth, former gang members and youth living in hard-to-reach locations) also points out to the diversity of actions through which youth are contributing to peace.

> **The United Nations Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security** "*Encourages Member States to engage relevant local communities and non-governmental actors in developing strategies to counter the violent extremist narrative that can incite terrorist acts, address the conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, **including by empowering youth, families**, women, religious, cultural and education leaders, and all other concerned groups of civil society and adopt tailored approaches to countering recruitment to this kind of violent extremism and promoting social inclusion and cohesion*";

Youth around the world demonstrate increasing social and environmental awareness. Together with women and local communities, youth are explicitly recognized as key actors in combating climate change (SDG 13) and can play an important role in supporting transitions of towards low-carbon and climate resilient societies. Furthermore, youth are often at the forefront in adopting sustainable and environment-friendly practices, including on conflict affected countries where youth groups can also contribute to reduce the environmental impact of recovery efforts, strengthen environmental and economic resilience as well as sustainable use of natural resources for income generation.

> ***Young people are key SDG accelerators*** - *Drawing on the expertise, know-how, networks of young people and adopting promising practices for youth engagement early on can also create the space for experimentation and learning that could set the stage for the discovery of innovative solutions, modes of collaboration and actions, such as youth-led development or volunteering, that could multiply development gains over the lifetime of the Agenda*"[vi]

A key assumption underlying the notion of youth empowerment as a 'SDG Accelerator' is that young people's involvement through their innovative thinking, energy, networks are indeed indispensable if sustainable development and peace are to be achieved. However, unleashing this potential remains challenging in many parts of the world, and especially in the Arab Region, where many young men and women, particularly in fragile and crisis affected countries, continue to face barriers in accessing their rights, intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization, limited civic and political inclusion, limited access to health systems, and not least skill development opportunities and decent jobs.

In the following sections, we are discussing various challenges – including in their gender and Leave No One/Youth Behind dimensions – to the achievement of youth economic empowerment-related SDG targets in the Arab Region and implications regarding the development of family centered responses.

2. Accelerating SDG progress on youth socio-economic empowerment in the Arab Region: some perspectives on the potential for family-centered responses

The SDG framework provides a number of strategic entry-points for coordinated action to empower young men and women economically and socially, particularly through the achievement of SDG 4.4 8.5 and 8.6[vii] and accelerating progress on these targets will be key to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda as a whole. Within the context of the Arab region, the UNDP AHDR (2016) -which was entirely dedicated to youth empowerment issues noted-, "*The more youth are granted equitable access to education, matched with proper standards of educational attainment and achievement, hold satisfying employment and are in control of their lives, the more well equipped they will be to 'reclaim' reason, assert themselves as powerful agents of change, and own the necessary debates around tomorrow's society*" (p.42).

Referring to the international community's widespread anxiety about youth bulges and the nexus between youth and violent extremism, the '*Missing Peace'* study echoes this point, stressing that "*the youth-bulge theory overemphasizes youth violence, the resulting political and policy discourses downplay the role of structural inequalities and exclusion that contribute to youth poverty and powerlessness*" (p.6). In this regard, the study found that economic inclusion, meaning "*a fair access to meaningful and reliable employment*" as well as access to social protection, were key concerns (although not the only one[viii]) in relation to peace and security. On the policy front, the study notably warns against the counterproductive effects of repressive measures that target so-called 'at-risk' youth, suggesting that "*integrated strategies that prioritize early childhood and family support, mentoring and work opportunities for at-risk young men*", could be far more effective (par. 17, p.7).

Advancing young men and women's economic empowerment in the Arab Region - a daunting challenge

More than half of the population of the Arab world is under 25 years of age. However, youth unemployment rates have been nearly double the rates of other regions since the early 1990s - – 29.3 per cent in the Middle East and 30.6 per cent in North Africa, respectively, in 2016 - and according to ILO, youth unemployment will keep rising, reaching 29.1 percent in the Middle East and 30.7 percent in North Africa by 2019, whereas the peak rate in other world regions will not exceed 18 percent. Moreover, under-employment, informal and vulnerable employment is an issue for a growing majority of the young workforce. **As showed in the AHDR, the lack of economic opportunities notably results in lack of access to housing and marriage, which significantly hinders the transition to independent adulthood[ix].**

Young women face the double burden of gender and age. In the Middle East and in North Africa, the unemployment rate gap between males and females aged 15–24 was 27.6 percentage points and 20.3 percentage points, respectively, in 2016. Whilst the region has a large pool of highly-educated young women and even features a 'reverse gender gap' at tertiary level[x], this potential is poorly mobilized and women economic participation remains strikingly low .The gender gap in entrepreneurship is also substantial: only 12 per cent of women, compared to 31 per cent for men seek entrepreneurial jobs in the MENA region, and men continues to play a dominant role in entrepreneurial ecosystems (UNWOMEN, 2016).

A recent study estimates that gender gaps in employment and entrepreneurship amount to a total income loss for the region of 35 per cent in the short term and 38 per cent in the long-run.[xi]

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*Bottlenecks to Arab youth economic empowerment and policy responses***: Over the past 5 years, macro and micro, supply and demand sided bottlenecks to youth economic empowerment through education and access to decent jobs in the Arab Region have been extensively studied**. Whilst situations differ across countries, these include the overall inability of economies to create enough formal jobs particularly in the private sector, low productivity, as well as a range of 'governance gaps', including weak labor markets and regulations, poor enforcement systems, lack of transparency and accountability of public institutions. This also includes persisting gaps in the provision of quality education and skill development services, particularly technical education and vocational training (TVET) as much as the lack of 'positive attitudes' towards TVET[xii], and likewise entrepreneurship and private sector work. These have resulted in a protracted situation where '*young people fail to acquire the skills needed in today's jobs, let alone tomorrow's*"- the so-called '*skilled mismatch'* (Samans & Zahidi, 2017, p. 9)[xiii]. Skill gaps cut across a wide range of skills from basic skills (such as creative and independent thinking), problem-solving skills and soft skills, to sector-specific, functional and so-called 'tech-skills'. The 'skill development' challenge is further compounded by the need to also adapt skills to the needs that rapid technological change and the 'evolving world of work' are creating globally and in the region…

Whilst the role of and partnerships between Governments, communities, civil society organizations, development partners, private sector, the media and youth themselves are increasingly acknowledged in policy and programming processes, the actual role of families in removing some of these bottlenecks has yet to be explored. A quick scan of existing youth-relevant policies in the region shows that the role of the families is acknowledged to various extents, but there are only a few explicit commitments to enhancing families' role in achieving SDGs[xiv]as whole, and youth related targets specifically. A recent paper from OECD (2016) on the development of youth strategies in the

Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia however suggests that new dynamics are underway. In Tunisia for instance, families were engaged in a national dialogue organized to inform the formulation of the strategy. The consultations touched upon a range of issues such as employment, health, citizenship and high-risk behaviors (p.14). However, the development of informed family-centered approaches to youth socio-economic empowerment requires further research. A few entry-points are considered below:

Youth skill development: **Generally, there remain important knowledge gaps when it comes to the specific role that families and family relationships at large play in shaping -** *positively or negatively* **- youth educational/skill acquisition outcomes**. As noted by UNICEF recent study on Families and SDGs (2018), little is known for instance about families' engagement in career advice, training, and, critically in the development of soft skills[xv]. Because social competencies play a key role in shaping socio-economic outcomes for the youth, there is also a need for more evidences on how mothers and fathers' behaviors in various settings and country contexts actually contribute to build these competencies, including resilience capacities in the event of conflicts and other social stresses, capacities to deal with gender, cultural, ethnic diversity, etc… Looking into the future, the question also arises as whether families could help support or could be assisted in supporting life-long formal or informal learning strategies and in facilitating the adaptation of young men and women to the changing world of work, together with academic institutions, communities, professional and social networks and enterprises. How could families be engaged in supporting greater knowledge and skills regarding climate change & human rights, (SDG 4.7), so as to empower they youth to take action as peer educators, entrepreneurs and leaders in the future?

Youth access to jobs and entrepreneurship. Considering the status and determinants of various dimensions of youth economic empowerment in the Arab region, the AHDR 2016 (UNDP) noted that **an important driver of Arab youth access to jobs relates to the amount of social capital they can rely upon**. **Reportedly, personal contacts play a key role, with friends and family connections representing the dominant resource** (more than 70%) for youth in many countries, including Egypt, Palestine (p.172)*.* **However, such findings about the role of family and social networks do not tell anything about the quality of youth employment outcomes**. **Considering the high prevalence of informality in the region this is an important issue to consider.**

As a means to curbing the adverse trend in youth unemployment (and given limited alternatives in formal labor markets), many development partners in the Arab region, and UNDP in particular - have been supporting youth entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship programs targeting young men and women. These initiatives usually involve a combination of technical skills and soft skills, mentorship; and access to business development services, including (micro)financing and savings schemes. However, the experience so far suggests that to make these interventions more effective and transformative, it is essential to better understand what *intimately* drives, and critically, what inhibits young men and women to engage in entrepreneurship and take business risks.

A better understanding of youth entrepreneurship drivers and inhibitors may require probing deeper into young men and women's history and relationships within their families. 'Behavioral insights' approaches[xvi] could be particularly useful in this regard. The working assumption behind the use of behavioral insights is that "*Behind every policy lie assumptions that humans will behave rationally, and that this will inform why we act the way we do. But these assumptions are not always correct, and more important, they are often left untested*"[xvii]. Under its *Youth Leadership Program: Innovation for Sustainable Impact'*, also known as YLP, UNDP - RBAS is now partnering with the UK the Behavioral Insights Team (BIT), to further probe into factors affecting incentives of young men, and especially young women in the Arab region to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

The Youth Solutions SDSN Youth Report (2017)[xviii] provides additional insights on this matter. Critically, the report concludes that there a need to "*bridge the gap that still exists between youth-led solutions and those stakeholders, including businesses, governments, and fellow citizens, who could further empower, support and invest in them, once they know more about the incredible impact that youth are having across their communities and regions*" (p.7). Among others, the lack of public awareness, the lack of understanding for their work, social and cultural barriers, difficulties in communicating (due to potential differentials in literacy levels or access to ICTs) are found to be major bottlenecks to the effective implementation of youth-led solutions for sustainable development. The report further notes that "*youth innovations are not born in a vacuum, but rather emerges and prospers where there is an appropriate ecosystem that can provide support and opportunities to young students, leaders and entrepreneurs*" (p.32). Whilst the report does not refer to families, **the role of families/ family relationships could play within such 'an ecosystem', would deserve further attention.**

3. Leaving No One Behind, Gender and Governance Dimensions

The 2030 Agenda is meant to Leave No One- *thus no young women, no young men* – behind, meaning that **SDG implementation will not work for youth empowerment if youth are treated as a homogeneous entity and if youth needs are not differentiated**. **The multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and deprivations (i.e. based on gender, location, abilities, migrant status, ethnicity etc.) facing the youth need to be fully documented** *(hence the need for highly disaggregated youth data)* **and taken into account.** This is of particular significance for the Arab Region, given the pervasiveness of gender gaps in labor market and other development outcomes, and if one also considers the large numbers of displaced, including forcingly displaced youths.[xix]

As shown below, tackling inclusion gaps in the achievement of SDG 4.4, 8.5, 8.6 will require mobilizing action towards a large number of other SDG targets.

Youth and Family Poverty As noted by UNICEF (2018), differences in accessing employment opportunities are often based on family situations, including income and parental employment. Considering the role of family and social networks on youth access to jobs in the region, the UNDP AHDR (2016) also noted that these outcomes tend to intersect with the family poverty status, whereby youth in well-connected, usually wealthier families, generally do better on the job market compared to poor youth (p.172). **This means that policies that can directly or indirectly empower families, poor families in particular, by encouraging employment at large (SDG 8.3)[xx], protecting family members, including young members from income and other shocks (SDG 1.3)[xxi], as well as policies that facilitate access to information/ICTs, and foster socialization and connections (SDG 11.2[xxii]; 11.7[xxiii], SDG 9.c[xxiv] 5.b[xxv]) could play an important role**.

> '*Gender equality and empowerment are intimately intertwined with family and cultural issue (….) Without addressing the relationships of men and women in families and the cultural norms and behaviors that so often influence these processes, we cannot make progress on the goals of gender equality and empowerment, and subsequently the various Sustainable Development Goals*"- UNDESA, 2018[xxvi]

Young women and gender norms-: **Note that SDG 4.4, and SDG 8.5 and related indicators are 'gender blind'. However, these cannot be achieved in the region (and elsewhere) without adopting a strong gender lens**. For Arab countries, closing the overall counterproductive divide between young women's education and access to decent jobs underscores transformative advocacy and policy work to remove restrictive gender and cultural norms that constrain young women's options to seek paid employment or engage in entrepreneurial and other activities. **Whilst cultural and gender norms are not the only**

drivers of young women choices and resulting gender inequalities in labor market outcomes[xxvii], these are powerful influencers. In this regard, SDG 5.1[xxviii] is another important SDG area where family-centered solutions should be explored, starting with enhanced efforts of communication and dialogue with families and young women to overcome these barriers.

The reality is also – despite aggregate progress- is that many girls and young women remain disadvantaged in terms of accessing education, which deprives them of the ability to decide about their lives, including through the pursuit of potential higher education and employment opportunities. As stressed by the UNDP AHDR (2016, p.92), this is particularly true in poverty (mostly rural) and/or conflict -stricken countries and areas, where violence and/or the lack of resources negatively intersect with other gender factors such as high prevalence of early marriage[xxix] and high caregiving burdens. In such contexts, advancing progress on SDG 4.4, 8.5, 8.6 will never occur without commensurate action to eliminate gender-based violence (**SDG 5.3[xxx]**), enhance access to sexual and reproductive rights (**SDG 3.7[xxxi] and SDG 5.6**), and efforts to acknowledge and alleviate young women's care burden (**SDG 5.4**[xxxii]). **Both SDG 3.7 and SDG 5.4 implicitly call for family centered action**. **Whilst the former underscores family education, SDG 5.4 does not only call upon governments to provide enabling public services and infrastructures, including social protection, it also implicitly calls upon households and families to reconsider gender imbalances in domestic care responsibilities.**

Youth in Crises, Youth and Displacement: Another reality is that over 13 million children and youth in the Arab region are not going to school due to crises and conflicts[xxxiii]. With the collapse of basic services, young men and women trapped in conflict situations lack access to meaningful formal and non-formal learning opportunities, including skills for employment. Adolescents, youth, and families at large are also affected psychologically in the midst of often heightened risks of social tensions and exclusion, making adolescents-youth transitions particularly challenging. Similar challenges face young people and their families who have no other option but to flee their place of residence for other places in their home country, or in other countries. **In such contexts, more would need to be known, for instance, about the engagement of affected families in the supply of non-formal education, as well as the role of parents, mothers and fathers and other family members in preserving youth mental health (SDG 3.4) or unhealthy behaviors (SDG 3.5) and how families can be supported in doing so**.

The vulnerabilities of young migrants (those not falling under the refugee or internally displaced status - as much as the impacts of migration on families 'left behind' (and the children, adolescents and youth within these families- cannot be overlooked either. Within the SDG framework this underscores of course the criticality of efforts towards **SDG 10.7**[xxxiv]. **Whilst its implementation lies mainly with governments, recent demographic research points out to the role of families in shaping young migrants' empowerment outcomes** – recalling that youth migration is primarily a 'family-based strategy'. It does not occur in a family vacuum but often entails connections with broader family systems and represent an extended period of parental investment in human capital and well-being[xxxv].

Youth Political Inclusion and Economic Empowerment Nexus: There is evidence that the economic difficulties facing young men and women in the Arab region are further exacerbated by their exclusion from decision-making processes and lack of effective opportunities for civic engagement. The recent OECD report (2018) on youth empowerment in Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia [xxxvi] notes for instance that there is a strong positive correlation between the level of youth civic engagement and economic outcomes for young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) – implying that "*greater opportunities for participation in community and political processes at local and national levels are likely to reduce youth inactivity by more than half* "(that is achieving SDG 8.6). In the case of Jordan, however, the report suggests that youth can be reluctant to become engaged politically

because traditional norms represented by the family (and society) continue to influence what is perceived as an acceptable behavior.
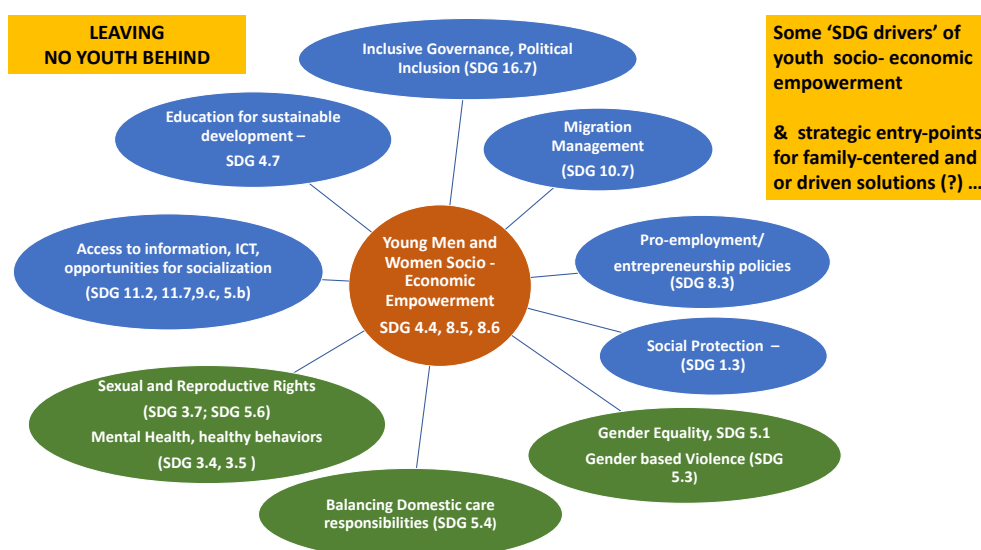
From an SDG lens this also means that delivering on youth economic empowerment will also need "Ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels" (SDG 16.7) with a particular focus on youth and families[xxxvii]. **Families, along with educational institutions, are the 'first port of entry' to help youth learn about their legal and social rights but also to encourage them to engage in public life through moral support and recognition.**

4. A few concluding remarks

The effective mainstreaming of youth economic empowerment into family policies, and likewise, the mainstreaming of families into youth economic empowerment policies and programs for achieving SDG 4.4, 8.5 and 8.6 in the Arab region will first require closing important knowledge gaps on the relationships between family 'attributes' and development pathways of young men and women. This in turn requires rigorous research supported with reliable, gender, age, disaggregated data on youth and families and tailored to country contexts[xxxviii].

It will be particularly important to better understand the influences of families, family relationships, on Arab youth incentives to engage in meaningful learning, entrepreneurial and other economic activities, whilst accounting for the fact that the 'Arab family' (and prevalence of 'patriarchy') is also witnessing a number of changes, due to economic development, demographic transitions, and changes in legal frameworks regarding women's empowerment.[xxxix] *Approaches such as Behavioral Insights could be useful in this regard*.

Accelerating progress on youth socioeconomic empowerment targets (SDG 4.4, 8.5 and 8.6) in the Arab Region will also require accelerating progress on many other SDGs and targets, in particular to ensure that no young men, no young women is left behind. This is not surprising because the 2030 Agenda is integrated and indivisible, meaning that all SDG targets influencing (positively or negatively) youth economic empowerment related targets would need to be taken into account for a comprehensive and effective policy response. As explored in this paper, there are a number of SDG targets that can shape economic empowerment outcomes for young men and women in a way that leaves no one behind with some of them being of particular relevance for **family-centered and/or family driven solutions.**

END NOTES

[i] See: https://youtheconomicopportunities.org/sites/default/files/uploads/blog/FF-Youth-SDGs_Jan2016_FINAL%20%281%29.pdf

[ii] Resolution 2419 (2018), Security Council calls for Increasing Role of Youth in Negotiating, Implementing Peace Agreements

[iii] https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/04/sustaining-peace-can-new-approach-change-un/

[iv]https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-(s01/%5BDRAFT%5D%20UN%20Youth%20and%20Peacebuilding_Justino%20-%20Jan%202018.pdf: Justino P., Youth, Violent Conflict and Sustaining Peace: Quantitative Evidence and Future Directions, draft January 2018; p.5

[v] https://www.unfpa.org/resources/missing-peace-independent-progress-study-youth-and-peace-and-security

[vi] http://restlessdevelopment.org/file/guiding-principles-youth-engagement-in-2030-agenda-implementation-pdf
UNDP and Restless Development have developed these guiding principles on behalf of the Working Group on Youth & 2030 Agenda and in collaboration with other UN entities, the UN Major Group of Children and Youth, and other civil society actors, including youth organizations. For more information, please contact youth@undp.org

[vii] "Substantially increase the number of youth (and adults) who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship" (Target 4.4.); - "Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people (and persons with disabilities), and equal pay for work of equal value" (Target 8.5.); "Substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training." (Target 8.6.)

[viii] These include, stunted economic and social mobility, political exclusion, disillusionment with corrupt institutions, rigid intergenerational social structures, p.13

[ix]http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbas/doc/poverty/ExpandingYouth%20Opportunities%20AHDR%20research%20paper.pdf

[x] In some countries, particularly those in the GCC, young women's participation in education is rapidly outpacing men's

[xi] UN Women, The Business Case for Women's Economic Empowerment in the Arab States Region, 2016, page 16

[xii] UNICEF and ILO. (2016). Consultation on technical and vocational education and training in the Middle East and North Africa: Workshop report. Amman, Jordan. http://www.oosci-mena.org/uploads/1/wysiwyg/reports/TVET_Consultation_Meeting_Report_Sept2016.pdf

[xiii] Samans, R., & Zahidi, S. (2017). The future of jobs and skills in the Middle East and North Africa: Preparing the region for the fourth industrial revolution: Executive summary. http://www3.weforum. org/docs/WEF_EGW_FOJ_MENA.pdf

[xiv] In Qatar, the Social Development Pillar of the vision 2030 has a commitment to preserving the institution of the family while at the same time having a clear commitment to empowering women. In Jordan, the government has put the citizen at the heart of progress, to help the welfare of the community but at the same time the government recognizes the role of the family in shaping the aspirations of young people

[xv] UNICEF, Families and SDGs, May 2018
https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Families_and_SDGs_Synthesis_Report.pdf

[xvi] Behavioral Insights draw on diverse disciplines such as behavioral economics and neuroscience to explain human behavior and decision making

[xvii] http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/presscenter/speeches/2018/statement-of-sarah-poole--behavioral-insights-for-womens-economi.html

[xviii] Youth-led solutions are transformative projects and endeavors, ranging from entrepreneurial ventures to educational programs, and include research activities, charity initiatives and so forth, that showcase the innovative approach that youth are taking in solving the multiple challenges of sustainable development

[xix] Arab youth have been moving around within their own countries and the region at an unprecedented scale. In 2017, the region was home to around 9 million refugees and 15 million internally displaced persons (IDPs)(UNHCR Population Statistics online database available at: http://popstats.unhcr.org/, combined with figures for Palestine from "UNRWA in figures as of 1 January 2017"

[xx] SDG 8.3 promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises including through access to financial services

[xxi] SDG 1.3 implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable

[xxii] SDG 11.2 access to safe, affordable, accessible transport ,…with special attention to the needs of people in vulnerable situations, women children, persons with disabilities and older persons

[xxiii] SDG 11.7 provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green public spaces, in particular for women…

[xxiv] SDG 9.c increase access to information and communication technologies and strive to promote universal access to the internet..

[xxv] SDG 5.b Enhance the use of enabling technologies, in particular information and communication technologies

[xxvi] The Role of Families and Family Policies in Achieving Inclusive Societies. Focus on Sustainable Development Goals 16 & 11: Ensuring Social Rights through Legal Frameworks, Participation, Housing, and Public Green Spaces; Bahira Sherif Traskhttps://www.un.org/development/desa/family/meetings-events/family-policies-for-inclusive-societies.html

xxvii The UNDP ADHR (2016) emphasizes here also the importance of the 'political economy and economic environment': "*the negotiations in which young women engage vis-à-vis marriage and the views of their immediate families, for example, are closely related to changing demographics and economic necessity. For women seeking entry into the workforce, the realities and opportunities of the labor market are as crucial as any cultural sanction against women working outside the home*" (p.102).

xxviii SDG 5.1End all forms of discrimination against women and girls

xxix According to a 2017 survey conducted by UNFPA, the American University of Beirut and Sawa for Development and Aid, amongst the Syrian refugee populations in some areas in Lebanon, more than one third of women aged 20 to 24 were married before age 18, and amongst girls currently between the ages of 15 and 17, 24 per cent were married. UNICEF figures for 2016 suggest that 72% of all Yemeni women between 15-49 were married under 18 see: https://www.unfpa.org/news/new-study-finds-child-marriage-rising-among-most-vulnerable-syrian-refugees

xxx SDG 5.3 eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and ...

xxxi SDG 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; SDG 3.7 --By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and program.

xxxii SDG 5.7 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household

xxxiii UNICEF. 2015. Education Under Fire.

xxxiv SDG 10.7 facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well managed migration policies

xxxv https://www.demographic-research.org/volumes/vol33/27/33-27.pdf

xxxvi http://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/youth-engagement-and-empowerment-report.pdf

xxxvii UNDP. (2016). UNDP support to the implementation of sustainable development goal 16. United Nations Development Program. Available at http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/sustainable-developmentgoals/undp-support-to-the-implementation-of-the-2030-agenda.html

xxxviii In 2014, the UN Secretary General in 2014 explicitly called upon governments and relevant stakeholders to "support data collection and research on family issues and the impact of public policy on families and invest in family-oriented policy and programme design, implementation and evaluation."

xxxix AHDR, 2016