



[DRAFT VERSION]

YOUTH & EMPLOYMENT IN POST-CONFLICT ARAB COUNTRIES

BEIRUT, 28 – 30 JANUARY 2004

Report of the Meeting

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Social Policy and Development

Hosted by ESCWA, under the Patronage of H.E. Dr Assad Diab, Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs and the support of the Lebanese Family Planning Association

Introduction

The workshop on Youth & Employment in Post-Conflict Arab Countries was held in Beirut, Lebanon, from 28-30 January 2004 at the ESCWA premises. The Meeting was hosted by the Economic & Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and organized by the Social Integration Branch, Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

This report is based on discussions in plenary sessions and reports of the working groups.

Objectives of the meeting

The regional workshop targeted youth in conflict situations, aiming to:

1. Contribute to a better understanding/assessment of the overall impact of conflict (civil or military) on youth (male/female) in relation to social capital and livelihoods because of sudden household responsibility inherited as a result of death of heads of HH;
2. Assess current policies/programmes for youth employment, focusing on the 4 main aspects including youth employability, equal opportunities, entrepreneurship and job creation;
3. Encourage/support the development of practical strategies for programme development and implementation to improve youth employability, equal opportunities, entrepreneurship with support from the government/banks;
4. Devise an advocacy strategy targeting national institutions for mainstreaming youth issues (including the workshop recommendations) and international institutions for resource mobilization, and,
5. Agree on a monitoring methodology and integrate mechanisms/indicators in the strategy.

Participants and agenda

The seminar was gender balanced with 13 young women and 13 young men from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, including resource persons from Canada, Algeria and South Africa.

The meeting was attended by participants drawn from Government, NGOs and academia as well as several UN experts based in Beirut. (See Annexes 1 and 2 for agenda and list of participants). The Agenda covered the following items:

1. Overview and framework for analyzing youth unemployment in post-conflict Arab states including best practices;
2. Devising strategies for selected target-populations among unemployed youth;
3. Capacity Building for Advocacy for youth employment
4. Consolidation of strategies and Evaluation

After a statement by the Division for Social Policy and Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Chairperson of the Lebanese Family Planning Association, Mr. Toufic Osseiran welcomed the participants, followed by Dr Mirvat Tallawy, Executive Secretary of ESCWA. The meeting was opened on behalf of the Government of Lebanon by Dr. Assad Diab, Minister for Social Affairs, with Ms Neemat Kanaan, General Director at the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The central point of the statement by Dr. Serour on behalf of the Division for Social Policy and Development was that no peace or development can be achieved without youth participation in decision making. Youth unemployment is behind social crises in many Arab countries because **it can lead to** 'marginalization, exclusion, frustration, low self-esteem and, sometimes, to acts that impact negatively on society and tear the social fabric'.

Mr. Osseiran underlined the link between the conflict in Israel and youth unemployment in the whole region, pointing to the fact that the conflict situation has aggravated the brain drain, causing many social problems. Then Dr. Mirvat Tallawy described youth unemployment as a 'bomb' ready to explode. She expressed her wish that this meeting will be followed by concrete actions to address the problem. The conflict situation has resulted in negative economic growth of the Arab countries as a whole, leading to a lack of investment, unemployment, demographic growth and massive emigration.

His Excellency, Dr. Assad Diab, focused on the impact of the conflict on economic growth. The need for a fair, full and sustainable peace in the region cannot be achieved without the involvement of the international community. He stressed that, for decades, it is the effects rather than the roots causes of conflict that have been addressed. Nonetheless, he adopted a self-critical approach, indicating that Arab governments are partly responsible for such economic stagnation as free mobility, open Arab economy, and respect for all citizens are still lacking. He further indicated that unemployment is also linked to inadequate

specialization and to mismatch between the needs of the job-market and the educational systems.

Background to the meeting

Youth make up more than 40 per cent of the world's total unemployed. Youth unemployment can lead to marginalization, exclusion, frustration, low self-esteem and, sometimes, to acts that create burden on society (E/cn.5/2003/4, para.7). Forced by poverty and the lack of possibilities for better jobs, many young people have no alternative but to turn to informal activities to earn income. With economic growth being insufficient to absorb new labour force entrants, there is a danger that informal work will become the only option for large numbers of young people, thereby making the objective of a decent job for all increasingly unattainable. Increasingly, the distinction between employment and unemployment has lost much of its meaning as young people move in and out of informal activities where neither term has any relevance". (para.8)

Youth unemployment thereby poverty are exacerbated by political instability due to conflict (civil or military). Between 1989 & 2000, 111 armed conflicts were reported in the world, the majority occurring in the poorest developing countries, particularly in Africa. There is no conflict without youth participation; indeed, young men constitute the majority of most armed forces (para. 45). Associated with conflict is the loss of livelihoods as a result of loss of assets, coping mechanisms and/or loss of breadwinners often shifting children/youth into the position of heads of household. Recent efforts have focused on demobilization and reintegration and the crafting of a culture of peace based on equal opportunities and participation in reconstruction, development and social transformation hence this capacity building workshop.

Eight (8) years ago, the General Assembly of the UN adopted a resolution, namely the 'World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond'. This is a useful framework for a global youth policy incorporating national youth policies (cross-sectoral), public and civil society strategies as well as global youth policies including local and international NGOs. The 10 priorities of the WPAY include: education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure activities, girls and young women, and participation

In 2003, the UN Commission for Social Development considered 5 additional issues, namely:

- Globalization
- Information and communication technologies
- HIV/AIDS
- Conflict prevention
- Intergenerational relations

The current trends in global youth policy are:

- Peace
- Development
- Participation

In fact, youth participation in decision-making will itself give a strong push to peace and development. Youth participation represents the best way to address youth exclusion.

A Youth Employment Network (YEN) has been established and is active through a high-level Panel. Moreover, governments have been encouraged to present youth employment reviews and action plans. The YEN is currently focusing on country level with a global agreement on March 2004 as a deadline for governments to submit their national reviews and action plans for youth employment. Such reviews should address four (4) core issues, namely employability, equal opportunities, entrepreneurship and employment creation. Additional issues may be addressed depending on local situations. This meeting attempted to address these issues in 8 post-conflict Arab countries. The present report is expected to assist these countries with their reviews.

At this stage of the introduction, note should be made of the fact that, sadly, representatives from Palestine, Iraq and Kuwait could not attend the Beirut meeting due to visa and other administrative problems. The workshop organizers had to adjust the programme, using panels to explore the youth unemployment situation in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria rather than presentation on specific country situations (see below).

Overview of Youth & Employment issues in post-conflict Arab States

This session started with a presentation on 'Youth and Unemployment in Post-Conflict Arab Countries: an Overview and a Framework' that was designed to set the tone for the meeting. Socio-economic and demographic indicators for Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria were used to analyze the relationship between demographic and economic indicators, focusing on the current scenario to forecast future scenarios in the period 2000 to 2020. The presentation insisted on the imbalance between youth at age of entry into the labor force and adults in the retirement age thus resulting in high unemployment particularly if job creation policies/programmes fail to analyze the situation from this perspective. The ratio is the highest for Palestine and Iraq and will continue to be over the next 20 years. The presentation focused on the importance of vocational training specifically targeting youths aged 15-19 on a priority basis and providing them with skills according to market demand. Developing vocational training can have 2 notable benefits: delaying entry into the labor force of the 15-19 and better preparing them to the market, decreasing the unemployment rate

among youth. For the time being Arab youth do not benefit sufficiently from vocational training, even if some countries such as Algeria, Egypt and Jordan have tried, to some extent, to develop the vocational training programmes to 'absorb' out-of-school youths. A specific example from Algeria's programme is used to share a practical mechanism for dealing with youth unemployment by fine tuning the combination vocational training-job opportunities. (For further details, please refer to the background, analyzing the situation of youth & employment in post-conflict Arab countries)

The presentation gave rise to mixed reactions as well as many questions, indicating different social, economic, political and even emotional perspectives. While the presentation's framework established a clear correlation between demographic growth, unemployment and exclusion of youth as well as conflict, some participants expressed views in favor of large population, reflecting traditional attitudes in the once pro-natalist Arab world. In most of the Arab countries, fertility rates are now going through a clear transition towards lower rates. However, some youths still indicate an inclination towards larger families. Even a journalist (full participant during the first day of the workshop) supported this traditional opinion. She fortunately changed her position in the paper she later wrote as she expressed a strong fear about large numbers of unemployed and hopeless/desperate youths.

Panels versus Presentations: Youth Employment policies/programmes in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon

According to the initial programme of the meeting, a presentation of the situation analyses in Palestine and Iraq were scheduled as were follow up discussions. Unfortunately, Palestinian and Iraqi representatives were not able to join the meeting because of visa problems. Subsequently, the programme was adjusted to allow for 3 panel discussions featuring Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

As a result of these adjustments, and in the absence of the most important countries in conflict, the following section cannot claim to provide a thorough situation analysis. However, important elements profiling each participating country are presented in order to highlight the national contexts within which participants have developed their youth employment strategies.

The following succinct profiles draw from information provided by panelists as well as other sources (ESCWA, ILO, Vocational Training European Foundation, etc). They are structured according to the outline recommended by the Youth Employment Network and contained in the aide-memoire for this meeting, namely:

1. youth employability mainly through vocational training (and education)

2. equal opportunities for both men and women
3. entrepreneurships to encourage self-employment
4. job creation

Algeria

According to the 1998 census, the total unemployment rate is 29% and around 2.1 million people are unemployed, 80% of those are aged under 30. About 70% of youth aged 16-19 and 50.5% of youth aged 20-24 are unemployed. Unemployed females account for 38%.

1. Employability: The Algerian educational system produces a high level of failures with a very small proportion of drop-outs being 'absorbed' by vocational training. An assessment of the estimated 3,478,000 youth aged 15-19 (i.e 11% of the total population) in 2000 indicates that
 - a. 25% of them are in basic or secondary school
 - b. 9% in vocational training
 - c. 5% are employed
 - d. 13% unemployed
 - e. 48% have no formal status. These represent the 'high risk' youths since they are exposed to informal activities, including drugs, violence and other deviances

(see chart 1 in annex 3)

2. Equal opportunities: In theory, equal opportunities exist but, in practice, due to the higher proportion of males in the labour force, unemployment rates are higher among males except for those aged between 35 and 59 years. (See chart 2 in annex 3)
3. Job creation and entrepreneurship: Since 1996, the Algerian government adopted 3 main mechanisms including the National Agency for Youth Employment Support (ANSEJ), the Social Development Agency (PNDA), and the National Programme for Agricultural Development (TUP-HIMO) and target graduates, workers who lost their jobs; unqualified youths, agricultural workers and experienced workers aged 35-50. A combination of the jobs generated by these agencies in the period 1995-2003 indicates an average of 178,978 jobs creation per year. However, most of these jobs are for non-qualified unemployed persons and have a short life span of 3-12 months. Sustainability has therefore proven to be a major challenge as most of these jobs are temporary in addition to the fact that they are state-sponsored. Nonetheless and, as an emergency measure, this type of job provides some revenue to the beneficiaries. (See chart 3 in annex 3)

Egypt

Egypt's unemployment rates are based on registered job-seekers. Therefore they tend to underestimate certain categories such as illiterates and other marginalized sub-groups. For instance, if we compare unemployment figures in Algeria and Egypt, we find that the former had a total of 2, 049, 264 unemployed people in 1997 while Egypt's official figure in 1998 was only 1,500,000 millions unemployed people. This raises a question mark on the reliability of such figure because Egypt's population is twice the size of Algeria's.

1. Employability: No statistical evidence is available on this issue. However the Egyptian government through the Kohl-Mubarak initiative is testing a German-like dual system in vocational training. In addition,
2. Equal opportunities: Women participation rate in the labor force is 21% compared to 72% for men. Yet unemployed females represent a large proportion with 750,000 unemployed females out of a total of 1.450,000. Women participation in the labour force varies according to age. The lowest level is among female adolescents with about 20%, a figure that increases to 30% between 20-29 and adopts a falling trend until 60 when women's participation is even higher than for males. This may be due to the fact that widows and divorced women have to take on headships of households. (See graph in annex)
3. Job creation and entrepreneurship: The Egyptian government is trying to replace the old 'government guarantee to provide each graduate with a job' by:
 - a. Human resource development: with the Kohl-Mubarak initiative as the most famous vocational training programme which has been testing dual training systems since 1990.
 - b. Direct job creation: through infrastructure projects using local resources, local manpower and labor-intensive techniques with a contribution by the private sector and unemployed youths.
 - c. Support in self-employment and enterprise-creation: development projects to make desert land productive represent a government priority to absorb unemployed youths. Training as well as credit and equipment are provided to beneficiaries (unemployed graduates who can apply for 5 acres of land) to ease the pressure on the job market and increase agricultural production

In sum, unemployment in Egypt seems to be a youth issue as they represent 90% of the total unemployed population. No assessment has been conducted of these schemes. (See chart 4 in annex 3)

Jordan

Jordan's labour market is both importer and exporter of manpower. In 1999, an estimated 350,000 Jordanians were immigrant workers in the Gulf countries against 300,000 foreign workers in Jordan (60% were Egyptians and a significant number of unskilled Iraqi and Syrian workers). The official figure for unemployment rate in 1999 was 14% but independent sources refer to 27%. Youth and women are severely suffering from unemployment (an estimated 75% of the unemployed population are aged less than 27 years). Unemployment is also increasing among educated youths. After the 2nd Gulf war (1991), many Jordanians have been expelled because of Jordan's position during the conflict thus exacerbating unemployment at the domestic level.

1. Youth employability: attempts at increasing youth employability have been mainly through vocational training. In general, this was considered as second category education. However, lasting unemployment among graduates is changing this traditional attitude and many initiatives in vocational training are being undertaken both by the government, in cooperation with external agencies, like GTZ, and NGOs and other foundations. In 1997, 25% of students aged 16 engaged in professional training (75% of whom were males and 25% females)
2. Equal opportunities for both men and women: Among the Jordanian labor force, women are employed in lower proportions than men until 40 and in higher proportions after 40. Rates of unemployment are about 5% for men after 40 and less than 2% for women after 40. At younger ages, unemployment rates decrease from 24% at 20 to 4% at 40, for men, and from 36% to 6% for women. (See chart 5 in annex 3)
3. Job creation and entrepreneurship: No reliable data could be provided by the panelists on job creation. They indicated entrepreneurs were encouraged to develop self-employment initiatives. (See charts 6 and 7 in annex 3)

Lebanon

Lebanon, like its neighbour Jordan, is both an importer and exporter of manpower. In 1997, the labour force was estimated at 1,362,000, with about 116,000 unemployed mainly youths. The official unemployment rate was estimated at 8.5% (9% for men and 7,2% for women).

1. Youth employability mainly through vocational training: About 26% of youths aged 15 are engaged in vocational training. Most of the trainees (50, 000) attend private institutions while public institutions cover only 25% (16,800). In general, the situation of youths aged 15-19 in Lebanon seems better than in, for instance, Algeria as about 50% of them are still in school compared to about the same proportion of Algerian youths having no formal status. In

addition, only 6% of Lebanese youths are unemployed while 15% of them are employed and 14% have no formal status.(See chart 8 in annex 3).

2. Equal opportunities for both men and women; Active women in Lebanon are in general more educated than men. About 27.5% of them have a university grade compared to 18.4% for men. Their participation in the labour force is lower, estimated at only 27.8% as compared to 72.2% for men. Similarly, unemployment rates among women aged 30 are lower but tend to increase afterwards due to marriage and family responsibilities (See charts 9 and 10 in annex 3).
3. Job creation and entrepreneurship: Given the nature of the Lebanese economy, predominantly private, the government has not faced the responsibility for job creation, leaving it to the private sector.

Syria

With a total labor force of 4.7 millions in 1998, Syria's unemployment rate was estimated between 12 and 15%. However, evidence suggests that such rate is not adequately reflected in official statistics because Syria did not have a centralized mechanism for employment services or labor offices. Even if the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is responsible for unemployment, registration is not compulsory and unemployed groups do not register because there are no social benefits. Nonetheless, the Syrian economy is going through a transition and the government has recently adopted a programme to curb youth unemployment.

1. Youth employability (mainly through vocational training): In 1999, an estimated 135,000 youths and 33,947 young trainees were in vocational as well as training secondary schools and technical intermediate institutes respectively. These figures account for 8% of youths aged 15-19.
2. Equal opportunities for both men and women: as stated above unemployment data is poor if existent. Evidence suggests that the female participation in the labor force is proportionally higher than men's before 40 and lower thereafter. (See chart 11 in annex 3)
3. Job creation and entrepreneurship: no data was available and/or provided by participants.

Data collection on Youth & Networking in the Arab Region (ESCWA)

ESCWA presented the objectives and methodology of this project which aims at gathering information relevant to you issues and policies. The presenter called on participants and agencies to support the project by sharing information on their own policies and programmes and supporting the networking mechanisms. In

addition to the substantive issues, the follow up discussion addressed process particularly in relation to the use of data generated by the project and monitoring.

Basic Guidelines for devising a youth employment strategy

The session aimed to:

1. Define the concept of strategy
2. Familiarize participants with the various stages of strategy development in a logical sequence;

The session started with a short presentation, focusing on the specific questions that should guide a strategy development, namely why, what, who to facilitate a logical sequence in the thinking process as well as ensure linkages between each component (see annex 7). The presentation insisted on the need to focus and refine the strategy through the selection of a target sub-population rather than remain global.

The broad framework of strategy development and linkages between components were distributed to participants before the working group sessions. The latter started with a general discussion based on the guidelines distributed with no specific country in mind. The working groups:

1. Facilitated an exchange of views/experiences between participants from different countries; and
2. Provided an opportunity for participants to apply the tools through the development of a generic strategy for youth employment;
3. Tested participants' ability to develop a general methodology without influence from national contexts thus allowing them to 'master' the tool before being 'trapped' in the specificities of their national contexts in the second round of working groups.

Youth employment strategies in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon

The working groups second round allowed participants to form new groups based on country of origin (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) and devise national employment strategies for youth as indicated below.

Strategy for youth employment in Algeria (See annex 8)

The Algerian participants contribution to the strategy was based on existing national initiatives for employment creation. They thus provided an overall survey of such initiatives which target all categories of unemployed people including:

- graduates
- workers who lost their jobs
- youths with and without qualification(75% of unemployed persons are less than 30
- agricultural workers
- experienced workers aged 35-50.

The Algerian representatives wanted to acknowledge such initiatives because they exist and have produced some results even if a systematic evaluation is yet to be made available. The strategy highlights (a) the partnership between Algerian banks and technical Ministries; (b) involvement of international donors in these programmes including the World Bank (for Highly labour-intensive work of public interest (TUP-HIMO), and the European Union for vocational training. The strategy recommended the strengthening of such initiatives through the public as well as private sector.

Strategy for youth employment in Egypt (See annex 9)

The Egyptian participants felt that the existence of government programmes for youth employment could not solve all the issues and it was necessary to strengthen the vocational training programmes. Their ensuing strategy for youth employment focused on vocational training and participation: The strategy targeted youths aged 15 – 20 years who are enrolled in an educational institution in one of Cairo's poor areas. It aimed to empower the target group, increasing their awareness and providing them with vocational training opportunities through a 3-5 year programme.

Strategy for youth employment in Jordan (see annex 10)

Jordan's strategy for youth employment started with a **SWOT** (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis that identified the high proportion of youths as both a strength and a weakness, indicating the:

S: Strength: High percentage of youth in Jordan. 60% of the total population are under the age of 30.

W: Weakness: Such high proportion of youths has a negative impact on and weakens the national economy.

O: Opportunities: Jordan's youths have a good level of education and training especially vocational training coupled with an efficient as well as effective use of technology. This is reinforced by the high level of cooperation between the government, public and private sectors.

T: Threats: Having a large number of unemployed youths can have negative results and risks for the community. Unemployed youths tend to develop unhealthy life styles due to feelings of distress and frustration. ‘

The strategy highlighted the need to pressure decision makers into allocating more funds for job creation.

Strategy for youth employment in Lebanon (see strategy in annex 11)

The Lebanese participants presented the most comprehensive youth employment strategy, targeting unemployed graduate youths. While noting that the government does not provide enough job opportunities for youth, the strategy comes with a smart idea for vocational training to help unemployed graduates change professional orientation. As a matter of fact, even if Lebanon is doing relatively better than other Arab countries in terms of education and vocational training, unemployment among graduates may increase if the educational and training system is disconnected from the job market and its needs.

Considering the lack of clear government policy for job creation, the strategy emphasized the need to develop a partnership between the government and civil society. The participants noted, in particular, the presence of foreigner workers in fragmenting the job market with foreign workers accepting low salaries that young Lebanese graduates would not accept.

Strategy for youth employment in Syria (see annex 12)

The Syrian participants devised an employment strategy targeting youths aged 18-30 years. It underscored the need for:

- a. students and youths (in and out of school) to organize themselves into pressure groups to lobby the government into considering the provision of specific resources/budgets for employment creation;
- b. youth participation in decision making because youth can devise their own solutions for unemployment. Youth should be represented in major institutions including parliament.

Capacity building for Advocacy

This session aimed to:

- a. define advocacy
- b. discuss various forms of advocacy;

- c. devise and agree upon a capacity building framework for advocacy & negotiation for youth employment and an implementation schedule with specific responsibilities at national and international levels;

DESA made a power presentation on advocacy that focused on the importance and timeliness of an advocacy strategy. The presentation specifically focused on the various forms of advocacy, their target audience and the required skills. A practical exercise allowed participants to quickly indicate their learning level from that presentation. The session was followed by a very interactive questions and answer session, indicating youth understanding of the importance of advocacy as a lobbying mechanism.

Preparing participants to market their employment strategy and lobby specific sectors to consider it.

Participants were divided into country groups to prepare for their role play. These were devised to:

- a. test their advocacy skills in presenting and defending their youth employment strategies to different stakeholders; and
- b. draw lessons from the exercise for self learning and DESA's learning for future capacity building and follow up initiatives with the participants.

The workshop participants including the resource team were given specific indications of their responsibilities within the role play as follows:

- a. Primary actors: are country representatives responsible for advocating and defending their strategy with a specific stakeholder (see below). At the end of the role play they would be given first priority to speak and share their learning from that process.
- b. Secondary actors: are the stakeholders listening to the primary actors advocating for youth employment (see below). They would be given second priority to speak and share their learning from that process.
- c. Observers: are the rest of the audience that would assess both the primary and secondary actors' performance from a substantive and methodological perspectives. They would speak last to share their observations in terms of strengths and weaknesses.

No specific instruction on how each actor should conduct himself/herself was provided. This was intentional in order to maximise the learning process.

Role-play 1: Algerian trade-unions representatives advocating for Youth to private sector representatives

In the Algerian economy, the public sector has been the main player for decades. With the current transition towards a liberal economy, the private sector is expected to play an increasingly important role. However, trade-unions are still used to deal with government and not so much with the private sector.

As the first role play, actors improvised to advocate for youth employment. There was also an excessive dramatization of the 'confrontation' between trade-unions and representatives from the private sector. The latter made it extremely difficult for the trade-union representatives to share their strategy and advocate for support. On the other hand, trade union officials became too emotional and threatened to leave the meeting.

One general question was raised by the large audience, namely why would a trade union advocate for unemployed youth? The answer was that there is really a trade-union fund created to encourage job creation, supported by Canada.

Main lessons: (a) advocacy and negotiation requires an even temper to remain objective and defend one's strategy objectively so as to be listened to and not dismissed; (b) both trade-unions and the private sector need to learn how to deal with new partners. Dealing with the private sector requires different negotiation skills to those normally used by trade-unions with the government.

Role-play 2: Egyptian Youth advocating to media

Egyptian youths had to present their strategy to media representatives. During the exercise, media representatives expressed stereotypes about unemployed youth in terms of 'sex, drugs, and football stories'. Youth representatives tested their advocacy skills, proposing a weekly topic on youth that would increase newspaper sales. One of the journalists indicated a favorable attitude towards youth but the others remained rather suspicious.

Remarks from the floor pointed to the fact that youth advocates (a) should have been better prepared for their media event with photos, a press-kit and, in general, a written testimony for the media representatives to take with them; (b) did not take advantage of the journalist's favorable attitude because advocacy is about identifying allies and using their influence; (c) should talk to the editor who will ultimately decide what the newspaper will print, and (d) should refer to the government programmes since the Egyptian government has a strong hold on the media.

Main lessons: (a) advocacy activities should be well prepared and well documented for a more effective impact; (b) youth should identify and target the ultimate decision maker, namely the editor.

Role-play 3: Jordan presentation of the King Hassan Foundation strategy through a website

The Jordanian participants decided to use ICT to present the youth employment strategy in an Internet café. The show was finely tuned as it indicated a clear mastering of Internet and PowerPoint resources. Participants acted convincingly in a realistic atmosphere of an Internet café. Jordan's employment strategy emphasized Information and Communication Technologies through its vocational training targeting educated youths.

Remarks from the floor were positive. One of the resource persons noted however that the presentation did not end with propositions/suggestions to the viewer as if the presentation was an end in itself rather than a means to something. A suggestion was thus made to add a final message such as: 'do you want to volunteer in the Hassan Foundation? This was thought to be a smart way to draw people to the project.

Main lesson In Jordan, vocational training in ICT is a success story given the level of education among youths and the limited natural resources in the country that constrain other areas of job creation.

Role-play 4: Lebanese Youth association advocating to UN Officials

The role play involved representatives from an 'Unemployed youth association' advocating their strategy with experts from a United Nations agency in Lebanon. A comprehensive situation analysis, including identification of the target group (jobless university graduates) was presented. The analysis also identified specific problems such as no government policy for job creation for youths, rural-urban migration/exodus, delayed marriage and celibacy.

Vocational training is presented as a solution to help jobless graduates to adjust their skills according to the job market, allowing a change of specialization according to other natural gifts such as acting. Awareness campaigns in schools, civil societies are suggested as means of disseminating these ideas

Comments and/or questions from the large audience addressed issues related to youth membership in the association, as well as monitoring and evaluation indicators that were missing from the strategy. For instance one of the questions was: 'what happens if a youth finds a job?', 'Did youth participate in this needs assessment and situation analysis presented in the strategy? A comment related to the need for the association to be officially registered, have statutes and an

address otherwise organizations such as the UN would be unwilling to discuss and/or negotiate any initiatives.

Main lesson: vocational training should not be limited to school drop outs, but should rather allow a change career orientations for unemployed graduates.

Role-play 5: Syrian Youth advocating to Ministry of Education

In Syria, the state remains the major player hence Syrian participants decided to target the Minister of Education for their advocacy campaign for youth vocational training. They identified their background carefully to allow them to make their case. For instance, the female youth identifies herself as an unemployed urban engineer who was unaware of the needs of the job market until she graduated. She is now advocating for youth professional orientation according to the job market before graduation.

A press-kit was been prepared and presented to the Minister, insisting on the importance of vocational training. Media should be used to disseminate scientific data on the labor market. A series of measures were suggested in order to decrease youth unemployment, including reducing the military enrolment, period, lowering the retirement age, decreasing taxes to stimulate investment, making it mandatory for firms to give graduate youths first work opportunity . Since this was the last role-play, the Syrian case was better prepared (press-kit, concrete measures, etc.).

Main lesson: the government needs to give youth systematic professional orientation and career advice during their studies in order to increase their awareness of the labor market.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite the numerous constraints, the workshop succeeded in bringing young activists (both with the government and civil society) and other stakeholders to not only address the issue of youth unemployment but also analyze its root causes and devise clear strategies to remedy such situation including advocacy and negotiation for a review of policies with a view to establishing and/or reinforcing the linkages between the educational systems including vocational training with the needs of the job market.

At the end of a very intensive work schedule, the participants considered that providing youths with jobs and sustainable employment will be the determining factor of an end to conflict and violence. They therefore recommended that:

1. A systematic follow up to this meeting (as outlined below) should be ensured, communicating with/informing participants about all the steps;
2. Arab Youth organizations should develop efficient networks both at regional and international levels in order to promote youth employment;
3. The United Nations should lobby Arab governments to support youth employment strategies, including those developed during the meeting;
4. The workshop report should be circulated to the different ministries in the participants' countries of origin;
5. Each country-team should organize a workshop with the support of the national UNDP office in order to translate the strategy into concrete implementation steps;
6. A similar meeting should be organized on a yearly basis to monitor and evaluate achievements, in a different city of the Arab world each year.
7. It would be useful to produce a booklet on the topic of the meeting and circulate it among participants so that it can be used as an advocacy tool;
8. The United Nations should select one of the country strategies and support its implementation in the coming years to learn the lessons from this pilot exercise;
9. A message containing these recommendations should be sent to the upcoming African Head of States meeting in Ouagadougou scheduled in September 2004.

10. Partnerships between youth associations in the Arab region and worldwide should be promoted and developed as a first concrete step;
11. A letter of thanks should be sent to the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs. This letter should contain the meeting recommendations.

List of annexes

- Annex 1 Programme of the meeting
- Annex 2 List of participants and resource persons
- Annex 3 charts and statistical data
- Annex 4 Overview presentation (A. Kouaouci)
- Annex 5 Presentation on Youth in South Africa (D. Everatt)
- Annex 6 Presentation on Advocacy (J. Larsen)
- Annex 7 Guidelines for a youth employment strategy
- Annex 8 Strategy for Algeria
- Annex 9 Strategy for Egypt
- Annex 10 Strategy for Jordan
- Annex 11 Strategy for Lebanon
- Annex 12 Strategy for Syria