

ISSUES RAISED BY BAHRAIN “YOUTH AND MDG’S” WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

1. There needs to be a consistent definition of what constitutes “youth”, given that there are various discrepancies between local and regional ones. The global definition situates youth between 15 and 24 years of age, and takes into account the era of childhood as covered by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2. In terms of MDG’s, there is a need to define the common interests of Arab youth in order to address priorities which may be somewhat fragmented; should we target poverty alleviation as a whole (Goal 1) to address other shortcomings or work on health, education and thematic interventions instead? Do we need to make a choice?
3. Regarding IT and the media as part of globalization, the exposure is inevitable. Is it a positive or negative impact on balance, and how do we as a region interact with these phenomena?
4. Issue of statistics and data is crucial, especially the need to standardize measurements and definitions in support of informal policy making based on real needs/analysis.
5. Awareness raising among youth of the key issues affecting their societies, along with confidence-building measures, must be introduced early on and consistently, so that this can be a catalyst for dynamic change and social renewal.
6. Youth strategies must be inclusive in the process of their elaboration – not just of youth groups but also of the wider stakeholders beyond government, such as the private sector.
7. Employment is a critical factor for many social and economic reasons that directly impact youth. Issues that need closer review are job search mechanisms; wage policies; linkages between education and the needs of the modern labour market; as well as opportunities for upgrade and rehabilitation of skills.
8. The phenomenon of migration and its impact (along with the dependency on foreign labour) on employment patterns must be assessed from the perspectives of the youth themselves. A crucial consideration is the MDG emphasis on “decent work” and the qualitative aspects of well being. Comprehensive labour and human resource strategies are required.
9. On the issue of potential participation there is much to be learned from the European model, which locates the participation within a continuum of possibilities and impact from the local, to the regional, to the global. Linking these levels provides required space for the development and political maturity of youth groups.
10. Participation must be considered in the social context of family and societal pressure, which may often push youth away from active involvement, and freedom of expression/choice.
11. It is clear that active and creative youth participation offers a unique and positive opportunity to support national identity in a rapidly evolving historical and political context with greater transparency.
12. If youth are to play this critical role, major investments are required to ensure their skills acquisition, cultural development and the mainstreaming of democratic

principles and practices into both formal and informal education systems from a very young age.

13. Coordination, both within countries and across the region on these issues is important, including a review of legal mechanisms to deliver the required policies.
14. There is a crucial need for practical follow-up once youth leave the relatively more sheltered environments of home/school to enter the real world. Societies must ensure that their energy and contributions continue to be harnessed in a sustainable manner.