Background
The Arab region is home to the youngest population in the world, with over 100 million youth between the ages of 15 and 29.¹ Unemployment among youth in Arab States is the highest in the world, 30 percent in 2016, compared to 13 percent worldwide². The region struggles with an ongoing exclusion of young women and restricting their capabilities and opportunities. Women in the region still face discrimination - the issue is exaggerated even more in countries facing conflict or post-conflict transition. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the region is vital for the young people to progress and become effective leaders and social innovators.

These young men and women have the potential to drive significant change and promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, they face several challenges making it difficult for them to reach their potential as change-makers including an overall constraining working-environment and lack of access to resources and support.

While positive steps have already been taken to foster youth inclusion in a number of Arab States, much more work remains to be done. The recently released UN Youth Strategy (2018-2021) has prioritized promoting the civic and political engagement of youth, noting that the UN must leverage its capacity in order to promote youth participation in public affairs at all levels.³ As a natural space for UNDP, more work has to be done to bring the youth in the Arab region to the policy making corridors and table.

Additionally, youth globally have also taken center stage in advocating for climate action, and are encouraged to champion change and innovative solutions. For the Arab region, it is already the planet’s most water insecure and food import dependent region, temperatures in the region are now rising faster than the global average, with climate change threatening to reduce food and water productivity by a further twenty percent by 2030. With environment and climate change being a cross-cutting theme along the SDGs, taking climate actions is crucial for achieving sustainable development. Engaging youth in the preservation of the environment is a necessity both for changing their behavior and attitude and empowering them through education, training, capacity building to establish an enabling environment in which young people can contribute to building a sustainable future. In the near future, some of today’s youth will become the community leaders, policy makers and decision makers that will determine our planet’s future.

This year marks one decade to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The global community has recognized that acceleration is required as most goals are far behind progress. One of the largest opportunities for acceleration is the youth population in the Arab region not only because they are a large portion of the population but also because of their great potential, creativity and innovative mind-sets. Empowering and engaging youth for the acceleration of the SDGs is not only smart it’s necessary. Young change-makers must be identified and supported, and closer collaboration must be fostered among the government, civil society, and private sector.

³ UN Youth Strategy. 2018.
Rationale of the programme

The Youth Leadership Programme (YLP) was launched in 2015 as an initiative to build the region’s most dynamic network working at the intersection of youth, innovation and sustainable development. YLP has run five successful cycles to date and, as of end of 2019, has worked with over 14,000 youth participants and supported around 7,000 projects. YLP participants have launched and established successful small businesses, won municipality elections, received recognition and awards for their innovative solutions, and presented their ideas at renowned universities and global platforms like the ECOSOC Youth Forum within the UN Headquarters in New York, Stanford University, Hult International Business School, and the European Parliament.

As the programme has been successful and popular across the region, attracting immense talent and diverse skill sets, the plan for next year is to scale up and aim for larger impact with young people and youth-serving organizations. In order to do so the programme is working on two tracks for 2020, 1. Carrying out YLP6 as part of our continued programming while testing approaches and 2. The development of a new youth project encompassing of YLP but aiming to address challenges and achieve greater impact. Once taken to the new heights this programme has the potential to revolutionize the way youth can contribute to the development, peace and stability in their communities and around the globe.

“YLP is in every way a catalyst not only for our participants and partners but also for UNDP. YLP has already made its mark on the region, drawing in top talent and empowering them to change their communities and their futures. We know that when taken to new heights, this programme has the potential to transform the way youth can contribute to peace and stability in their communities and around the globe.”
Mourad Wahba, Regional Director, UNDP, RBAS.

YLP 6 - 2020

Building on the lessons learned and momentum generated during YLP 1 - 5, YLP6 is set launch March 2020. As part of YLP6, UNDP will partner with youth-serving organizations in countries across the Arab region to host national activities designed to support and empower a diverse set of young women and men change-makers, as they design, implement and scale innovative, impactful and sustainable development solutions.

YLP made it easier to find connections, to find advisers, to find support in one place. This is not only a training camp, it is also a way to know what my peers and experts think about my project. YLP gives you overall advice how to progress and where to go after this step. - Tayma Abdulhadi, Youth Participant, State of Palestine
In addition, two regional events will be held to launch and support the programme, bringing together youth, youth-serving organizations, policy makers and relevant stakeholders from across the region.

The expected outputs are:

1) Strengthening the capacity and skills of youth-serving organizations, enabling them to train youth in their respective countries to become effective political and civic leaders, social and climate innovators and change-makers;

2) Increasing awareness of climate change to accelerate positive environmental effects related to the social innovations

3) Exploring approaches for accelerating youth engagement for SDGs acceleration;

4) Expanding training in essential skills training (communication, self-organization, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, to support youth on their path towards leadership and engagement;

5) Consolidating and expanding YLP’s network of youth-serving partner organizations to strengthen the ecosystem for youth-led innovation for development in the Arab region;

6) Testing a new vision with youth-serving organizations and youth on an expanded approach to youth programming.

Building from the previous years, YLP will continue to give training in gender equality and how inequality negatively impacts all spheres of society, private as well as public, is vital for the progress of social change and justice in the Arab region.

**A focus on SDG16 & Climate Action**

YLP6 will place dedicated emphasis on Political and Civic Participation and Climate Action. While Political and Civic Participation is not new to YLP, we will continue this year to take the conversation to the next level but focusing on the youth and youth-serving organizations working specifically in this area and offer dedicated training.

For Climate Action, we acknowledge the great potential of youth’s role in curbing climate change and addressing their social innovation through an environmental lens. We will dive into the interlinkages between the two areas, highlighting the importance of addressing challenges from multi-disciplines. This will be done in close collaboration and coordination with the UNDP Regional Electoral Assistance Project, the Climate Change, Energy and Environment Regional Hub Team and the Innovations Team, to ensure exchange of relevant expertise and experience-sharing between the projects’ partners and beneficiaries.

**YLP 6 Launch and Youth-serving Organizations Regional Workshop #1 (15 – 17 March 2020)**

A first regional workshop will be held in March 2020, which will bring the selected youth-serving organizations to launch YLP6.

The workshop will bring together about 80 people, including 45 youth-serving organizations from the participating countries over three days. It will provide a collaborative space where participants can engage in various sessions designed to familiarize them with the 2020 aims of YLP and to create networks among themselves, while developing a range of skills that will enable them to support youth when they return to their respective countries.
The main objectives of the first YLP6 Regional Workshop are to:

i) Bring together selected youth-serving organizations to familiarize them with the vision, methodology, and the 2020 aims of YLP;

ii) Discuss challenges related to YLP programming in the last 5 years, and challenges around preventing youth from engaging in politics, civic and policy dialogues;

iii) Provide learning in the areas of: gender mainstreaming, climate change and environmental awareness, social innovation, and other essential skills to support leadership capabilities;

iv) Facilitate networking and knowledge exchange among participants to build their understanding of best practices of varying YLP approaches;

v) Finalize National Action Plans (NAPs) with partner organizations to promote youth engagement.

Following the regional event, YLP6 will continue to provide access to technical expertise, networking for participating organizations and youth through the national activities, leading up to the second regional workshop in October 2020.

Participating countries in YLP6 for 2020 are: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, The State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, Tunisia, and Yemen.

**YLP 6 Forum: Regional Workshop #2 (September 2020)**

Following the initial regional workshop, YLP regional team through UNDP COs will work with partner organizations to implement the NAP developed during the March workshop and conduct national activities from April to June. Training at the national level for 2020 should be inclusive of Climate Action and Awareness, and environmentally friendly social innovations, gender equality, essential skills. Following these activities, there will be a regional forum focusing on YLP youth participants.

The main objectives of the second YLP6 Forum are to:

i) Roll-out the new vision and approach to YLP, expand knowledge of partner organizations to better support youth-led initiatives and change-makers at the national level, especially with respect to innovative leadership, civic/political participation, policy dialogue, community development, and entrepreneurship;

ii) Provide a space for youth-serving organizations/stakeholders to continue engaging with political/civic/policy leaders, building on YLPS Regional Forum’s policy dialogue;

iii) Showcasing youth initiatives and building essential skills of youth participants;

iv) Build further trust between young people, youth leadership stakeholders and local/national politicians, civic leaders, and policy makers through interactive activities.

v) Advance UNDP strategic direction on our Sustainable Direction Goals through our collaborative support platform.

“**YLP has been very helpful for us to integrate sustainability education in all our programmes. So far it has been a great success, because we see that we are doing an impact in increasing awareness of youth about the impact their solutions have on sustainability**” — Samar Dani INJAZ Lebanon.