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# ENGAGEMENT IN FULL CIRCLE

YLP5 Regional Forum  
Amman, 11-14 November 2019

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. YLP 5 approach and objectives
3. Forum content
4. Forum outcomes
  - 4.1 Identified barriers to youth participation
  - 4.2 Exchanged good practices on civic engagement
  - 4.3 Exchanged good practices on the SDGs
  - 4.4 Social media outreach
  - 4.5 Participant information
5. Selected youth innovations
6. Recommendations



YOUTH LEADERSHIP  
PROGRAMME

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The YLP5 regional forum in Amman from November 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> was a testament to the hard work that took place at the national level during YLP activities. Over 100 stakeholders from the Arab region participated in the four-day forum, covering sessions supporting youth engagement through addressing bottlenecks and shared obstacles. Young men and women had the opportunity to showcase their ideas, take part in live pitching, discuss the importance of civic and political participation and further expand the ever-growing network of the YLP family. The forum further equipped a new cohort of leaders, social innovators and change-makers of the Arab region to embark on their journey to tackle the developmental challenges in their communities.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Arab region is the home to the youngest population in the world, with over 100 million people between the ages of 15 and 29, making them an important stakeholder to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Political and economic instability and fragility, in addition to conflict and protracted crisis, has created socio-economic development challenges for the region as a whole and for the youth more specifically. These young women and men face several challenges such as the high unemployment rates, ongoing conflict, limited access to the internet in non-urban areas, lack of quality education, and growing distrust towards ruling parties resulting in an increasing exclusion of young people from decision-making processes.

Understanding how exclusion plays a role in youth's lives in the Arab region is important in the larger discussion of how youth can be agents of change in their respective countries. Through the lens of citizenship, and its relationship to the 2030 Agenda, poverty and inequality are central obstacles to social inclusion. Exploring the role and importance the citizenship plays for the youth in the region is central to identifying the challenges that prevent them from contributing positively to their communities and supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Unleashing their potential as agents of positive change requires their engagement as active partners in development efforts, peace processes and in influencing youth-inclusive policies.

In order to address the developmental issues in the Arab region and support the youth in achieving the Agenda 2030, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) launched the Youth Leadership Programme (YLP) 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 15,000 youth participants and supported around 5,000 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, Unleash, Hult International Business School, and the European Parliament.

The goal of YLP is to build a generation of young leaders, thinkers, innovators and change-makers in the Arab region to become drivers for social change and implementation of Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Agenda.



# Part I ABOUT THE FORUM

## 2. YLP5 APPROACH AND OBJECTIVES

Following the regional workshop that took place in March in Beirut, YLP regional team and eleven UNDP Country Offices worked with partner youth-serving organizations to implement the National Action Plans developed during the workshop. From April to October, the partners conducted national activities reaching nearly 13,000 participants, with an overall 50-50 gender balance. This included preparatory activities on political/civic participation and policy dialogue, raising awareness of SDGs and teaching Design Thinking to young social innovators, resulting in a mix of ideas that are entrepreneurial and others addressing a social development challenge. In order to reflect on the lessons learnt during the year, and showcase the hard work done by the young people, YLP 5 Regional Forum has brought together over 100 participants, including youth, youth serving organizations, public and private sector partners as well as policy-makers and high-profile speakers from across the Arab region.

The theme of **'Engagement in Full Circle'** was weaved throughout the forum by:

1. addressing the importance of engagement as a Citizen and with policymakers
2. Exploring engagement with stakeholders
3. Improving engagement through an exploration of one's self-awareness, emotional intelligence and empathy.

### OBJECTIVES

- i. Explore, through the lens of a citizenship and the SDGs, youth becoming change makers, the barriers they face and the prospects for accelerating SDGs with their participation by addressing these barriers.*
- ii. Provide a space for youth-serving organizations and youth to engaging with policy leaders and enhance cooperation on issues related to civic engagement through the exchange of good practices and networking.*
- iii. Reflect in-ward and explore self-awareness, emotional intelligence and empathy as part of development for engaging stakeholders more effectively and becoming future leaders of tomorrow.*
- iv. Advance UNDP strategic direction on SDGs through collaborative support and YLP's growing network while facilitating sharing of good practices and lessons learned.*
- v. Enhance knowledge around partnerships, financing, communications and pitching for youth.*





## Engagement with oneself through mindfulness and social innovation skills

When framing the larger context of citizenship and inclusion, there is also the question of the individual and the importance of looking at young people’s growth through a lens that is aimed inward. More specifically, diving into the individual’s approach to engaging, using self-awareness and emotional intelligence in their path towards becoming agents of change. Therefore, several sessions focused on fostering empathy and explored this both through an innovation lens and with a mindful approach to self-development. This connected different ways of how empathy applies to creating positive change; such as practicing use of the of collaborative empathy map – a tool that gives a deeper insight into the needs of the community by visualizing the users experience and context; by exploring how the changemaker concept is connected to leadership; and by learning how evolution, neuroscience and psychology can provide tools for cultivating self-awareness and emotional regulation.

### 3. FORUM CONTENT

The agenda and the main objectives of the forum were informed by the need to prioritize and promote civic engagement and advocacy of youth, as highlighted in the **UN Youth Strategy** (2018-2021):

*“it is only by engaging and working with them [youth], supporting them in standing up for their rights and creating the conditions allowing them to progress and play an active role, that the international community will be able to achieve peace, security, justice, climate resilience and sustainable development for all.”*

The following section describes how the forum supported this need.

*“I used to say that the more we understand who we are and how our brains work, the more we control our reactions and make the best decisions in the right moments, and [the self-awareness session] was perfect to boost this idea... Practicing this will contribute to our leadership skills and make one a better changemaker.”*

*- Seifeddine Trabelssi, YLP alumni, Tunisia*

## Engagement with each other through networking

The four-day event was also an opportunity for the young people to showcase their ideas, initiatives and projects to a wide audience during the Exhibition evening, attended by guests from partner organizations, agencies and the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Jordan.

Prior to the Exhibition, each YLP participant was trained in pitching and communication and invited to a live-pitching session in front of a panel of experts who provided feedback on their ideas and pitching skills. Common bottlenecks to youth engagement were addressed in sessions where support on how to identify the right partnership was given and innovative ways of financing social innovations – such as crowdfunding opportunities – were discussed by an expert panel.

***“You need to plan on making partnership over the long-term, not just immediate. You need to establish trust and a sustainable relationship that will last a long time to make a successful business model”***

***- Doaa Kazweni, Strategy and Research Department, Arab Youth Center***

## Engagement with society through citizenship and policy-makers

Change-makers can be supported by having their needs met and closer collaboration with policy makers fostered. It is urgent to do this by enabling the opening of spaces for youth engagement and leadership, and the forum addressed this both formally in specific sessions and informally by inviting different stakeholders to participate in the full event, with key sessions organized and facilitated by the **UNDP’s Regional Electoral Support Project**.

The facilitated policy dialogue between youths and key stakeholders resulted in presentations of policy recommendations on increasing youth turnout in elections through a bottom-up participatory approach, with specific action points to tackle this issue. By creating a platform for interaction between experts, youths, policymakers and partner organizations many different perspectives were included, and this resulted in sharing solutions to youths barriers, such as investment in youth initiatives, engagement in policy-making and the importance of including a gender lens.

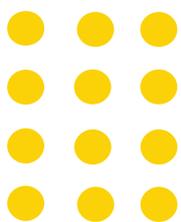
The application of Gender mainstreaming was given particular focus in a separate session for the youth participants, to strengthen how they approach this aspect in their society.



## Forum Agenda

|       | Monday 11 Nov  | Tuesday 12 Nov                            | Wednesday 13 Nov                    | Thursday 14 Nov  |
|-------|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| 8.30  | Registration   |   |                                     |  |
| 9     | Welcome and Opening  | Setting goals for the day                 |                                     |  |
| 10    | Civic and Political Participation, Opportunities and Challenges          | Design Thinking: Empathy                  | Setting goals for the day           | Launch of the YLP Platform                                     |
|       |  | Change Maker, What does it mean?          | Partnerships                        | State-citizenship engagement: youth policy dialogues in action |
| 11.30 | Coffee break   | Coffee break                              | Financing and Alternative Financing | Gender equality and gender mainstreaming                       |
| 12    | Youth citizenship and civic participation: impact stories from the field | Self-awareness and Emotional Intelligence |                                     | UNDP Youth work  |
| 13    | Lunch  | Lunch                                     | Lunch                               | Lunch  |
| 14    | Innovation in Youth Civic Engagement and Building Inclusive Processes    | Self-awareness continued                  | Communications and Pitching         | Mentorship Programme<br>Impact Assessment                      |
| 15    | Coffee break   | Coffee break                              |                                     |  |
|       | Coffee break   | Youth as Agents of Behavioral Change      | Live Pitch to a panel of experts    | Collaborative Leadership                                       |
| 16    | Empowering Youth in Varying Contexts                                     |   |                                     |  |
| 17    | Summary of day 1, recommendations  | Summary of day 2, recommendations         |                                     | Closing  |
| 17.30 |  |   | Reception and Exhibition            |  |
| 19    | Reception  |   |                                     |  |





## Part II

# RESULTS OF THE FORUM

## 4. FORUM OUTCOMES

The forum sessions were designed to support the needs of young Arabs in three different levels of engagement; with oneself, each other and society. This chapter shows the main forum outcomes of identifying barriers to youth participation, exchanging good practices related to civic engagement and exchanging good practices related to SDGs, and is followed by the social media outreach - which was heightened by a Communications team comprised of youth volunteers – and an overview of the participant information.

### 4.1. Identified barriers to youth participation

*“We need to have the knowledge and information to make a change and be a decision maker”*

*“Youth has the potential to drive SDGs by addressing the gender gap, and lead to the development of the society”.*

These are the inspiring words of YLP Alumni **Doha Ali AbuBaker**, who addressed the main barriers to youth engagement among Arab youth in a panel discussion. This and other sessions contributed to making the forum a safe space for acknowledging the differing contexts in the participants' countries while also addressing the obstacles and challenges the youth face in their countries - both when launching their social solutions and in everyday life.

This important aspect of achieving the SDGs, which is particularly prevalent among young women in the Arab region, was reflected upon by the youth who saw that “gender equality is part of every single SDG”, and urged each other to continue this engagement and raise awareness on different aspects of gender equality; through social media, by focusing on women with disabilities or partnering with other stakeholders that empower women.

In her opening remarks, **Susanne Dam Hansen**, the UNDP Strategic Planning Adviser, spoke with passion about gender equality:

*‘We need to collaborate more between countries, to achieve the maximum benefit of our resources, knowledge, and ideas, for example, problems in Somaliland just need funding in order to be solved, so it needs some sharing from other rich countries’*  
- youth participant, Somalia

## 4.2. Exchanged good practices on civic engagement

Stories, facts and experiences with civic engagement were shared throughout the forum in several sessions and discussions. The main conclusion that resonated with the participants was how it is important for the voices of the youth to be heard by the governments across the region, and the tweet on the right is an example of this. It was also shown that there is a need to push the young men and women to take an active part in the civic and political lives of their societies – and as Tunisian YSO participant **Asmae el Hajji**'s sentiment clarifies:

***“Before I was not making the link between the empty seats in the parliament and the problems we faced with education, streets or hospitals. Then I realized the link, and in my work I help others to make the link”***

The interactive session on innovation in youth civic engagement presented how big data, virtual reality, internet voting, social media and deep fake already affects civic engagement.



## 4.3. Exchanged good practices on the SDGs

Reaching the 2030 Agenda through the SDGs is one of YLP's main pillars, and therefore the participants were encouraged to share how they work with this in various ways throughout the forum. This focus led to interesting insights from the youth as they learnt about how the SDGs are interrelated and dependent on other aspects;

***“My project is about climate change, but politics and decision-making processes affects everything that happens in the community.” - Sara Hammoud, youth participant, Lebanon***

It was also concluded that youth are in a special position to raise and increase the awareness about the SDGs, especially by including promotion in the existing marketing for their projects. As students they can also influence the University decision makers to include the SDGS in courses and projects.

Both Youth Focal Points and Youth Serving Organizations shared their experiences on how to target the SDGs. While all YLP activities include the SDGs in their plans and outcomes, the national activities in Egypt took it a step further by arranging an SDG Campaign that raised awareness about Agenda 2030. It enhanced youth participation and engagement with communities, and the campaign reached 1500 youths at 25 of the 27 Egyptian governorates. In Morocco, creating synergies with NGOs that were already working on SDGs helped to organize awareness campaigns with a zero-cost strategy.

## 4.4. Social media outreach

The social media outreach aimed and engaging the YLP community both in the event and on national levels. This was done through ensuring live coverage in both Facebook live and live tweeting during the sessions. The forum participants were engaged also through daily social media challenges, that encouraged youth to get to know each other and the topics of the days. It was also received by participants with great enthusiasm. Many participants and partners posted content on their own channels, which was encouraged through the use of #YLP5 and #IamYLP hashtags, as well as through mentioning the official YLP social media channels.

The event communications were supported by the YLP Communications Team, which consists of youth volunteers and YLP alumni from various countries. Social media outreach started few days before the forum, and continued after the forum with material collected in the event.

Key social media results:

**20%**  
increase in Facebook fan count

**35,747**  
Facebook posts reach

**500**  
tweets with #YLP5 hashtag

**640,839**  
potential reach in Twitter



Above: Twitter analytics tracking #YLP5 during November 11th to 17th

## 4.5. Participant information



**12**  
countries

**147**  
participants throughout  
the days

Participating youth-serving organizations that had organized YLP activities at national level included Peace Lens, Syria Peace Maker, Shebbak Sourì Project, INJAZ Lebanon, DOT Lebanon, Lebanese International University, Riyada for Social Innovation, IDSA, Dary, Knowledge Gate, Tariq Ibn Ziyad Initiative, Association Passagers, Ministry of Youth and Sports (Egypt), Soryana, Dandara Culture Center, Palvision, FLOW Startup Accelerator, Save Youth Future Society, Le Centre de Technologie et d'Innovation pour le Développement, Le Centre de Leadership et de l'Entrepreneuriat de Djibouti, Fathi Initiative, Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs (Bahrain), Youth Pioneer Society, Ayadi, JCI Ras Jebel, Association Youth Clubs, Beb 18, ZINC-ZAIN Jordan, and Tammeÿ for Human Development.

In addition, partners and panelists from League of Arab States, Independent High Authority for Elections of Tunisia (ISIE), Global Platform, Wattan Media News Agency, ArabEMBs, Independent Election Commission of Jordan, and Arab Youth Center supported and facilitated sessions during the forum.

Youth pitched their ideas to expert panelists from Arab Women Organization, 17 Asset Management, The Online Project, Decapolis, Hassad, Sawwah Travel, SSI Incubator/ZAD Consultancy & Environmental Solutions, EcoPeace Middle East, Tech Tribes, Sequence Lab, Silicon Badia, Habaydna, ShopGo, Arabi Impact, World Bank Group, and USAID Jordan.

**40**  
youth

**28**  
youth-serving organizations

**10**  
volunteers / YLP alumni

**69**  
partners, policymakers, panelists,  
experts, UNDP representatives

## 5. SELECTED YOUTH INNOVATIONS



### Dream Big Academy

*Reem Obeid, Lebanon*

Reem started the “Dream Big Academy” initiative for youth to learn football and essential life values like leadership and teamwork because of her own personal experience. When she was young there was no one to teach football, and she was told to stop playing because of her gender. She kept chasing her dreams and is today a Lebanese National Team player. The Dream Big Academy encourages girls specifically as it gives them equal opportunities, therefore her initiative supports SDGs number 3, 4 and 5. They plan to expand the initiative to reach all remote villages in Lebanon, so that every child who wants to football will have someone to teach them.

Solution Point is in the process of starting up an online platform linking the private sector to the academia and students. It will be a platform where companies can share their challenges to be addressed by the academia as graduation projects for college students. This is important because college students in Iraq suffer from lack of practical and market experience, due to the gap between the academic materials and approach, and the market needs. This service innovation targets SDG 4 and 8.



### Solution Point

*Mohammed Albaqer A. Radhi, Iraq*



### Inclusivite pour Tous

*Soufya Azeroual, Morocco*

The project advocates for schooling of children with disabilities that have no access to pre-school education in Morocco, specifically in the Northern region. It aims to advocate for the government to integrate the gender dimension and inclusion, through raising awareness, networking and creating and strengthening partnerships to take action. This will develop accessible school environments and create ergonomic studying conditions, with a goal of reducing the social exclusion of children with disabilities by half by 2022

GYS is a mobile App that promotes tourism in Egypt specially for people with disabilities and solo travelers. The applicant will use Augmented Reality and Location Based Service to provide the tourists with a private virtual tour guide.

At the first phase the tour guide will be using the sign language to explain the touristic places and providing an exclusive experience overcoming the inequality in tourism.



**GYS (Guide Yourself)**  
Ola ElBoghdadi, Egypt



**E-Save**  
Safa Mohsen Matar, Bahrain

“E-Save” is an application that informs users of their energy consumption and that also connects users to solar power companies. It does this by tracking the energy consumption through a sensor attached to the electrical meter. The application then shares the information with the user, so that it allows the user to customize, track and achieve their energy consumption goals. “E-save” will help to achieve energy consumption goals by providing tips to save electricity and give information about alternative energy.



## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth-serving organizations, youth and UNDP youth focal points participated in split sessions that gave them the opportunity to showcase their progress, provide feedback about YLP5 and offer recommendations for future years of the YLP. They were asked to reflect upon knowledge gained during the sessions, how it can be applied to their work on the ground and what a future generation of YLP participants could benefit from.

### **Main recommendations**

#### **From youth participants:**

- **Support youth to understand the political systems of their countries to help youth contribute more in achieving the SDGs.**
- **Include self-development aspect into leadership training**
- **Ensure even greater youth participation and inclusion as speakers, facilitators and as part of planning activities at all levels**

#### **From youth-serving organizations:**

- **Provide networking and mentorship opportunities also for partners.**
- **Support partner activities through capacity building in certain topics and providing a toolkit for the trainings.**

#### **From youth focal points**

- **Scale up mentorship and coaching activities for youth participants in all countries.**
- **Involve and consult the youth, especially the YLP alumni, in the planning and implementation of the programme and activities at all levels.**

