



2024 ECOSOC Youth Forum
**"Youth shaping sustainable and innovative solutions:
Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of crises"**

IDENTIFICATION	
Session title	Youth in the Arab Region Talking Social Justice as Part of 2030 Agenda
Session focus	SDGs 1, 5, 8, 10 & 16: Social justice, exclusion and conflicts in the Arab Region
Session leads	UNESCWA, UNDP Regional Hub and MGCY
Session co-organizers	United Nations Volunteers (UNV)
BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES	
<p>Despite being portrayed as a unique and valuable asset to crucial for hastening sustainable development, as often hailed by the 2030 Agenda, and despite constituting a quarter of an estimated total and rapidly growing population projected to reach 520 million by 2030, youth in the Arab region (aged 15 to 29), contrary to expectations, find themselves teetering on the brink of disempowerment and experiencing an overwhelming sense of disappointment.</p> <p>Not only do they remain to face systemic marginalization, enduring exclusion and chronic injustices most of them also and indeed dangerously live in and are affected by wars, protracted conflicts and various pockets of instability and turmoil punctuating the regional landscape, including but not limited to the recent amounting to genocidal acts and unprecedented humanitarian situation in Gaza. Youth in the Arab region are increasingly losing faith in international law and justice mechanisms as they've witnessed the impunity and lack of accountability demonstrated towards those engaging in decades-long aggression against their region. Today they are up against daunting challenges in reintegrating development processes and fighting to ensure that they are not left behind and are confronted with deep-seated frustrations and hopeless horizons.</p> <p>Youth find themselves constrained from taking action, despite being the first to bear the consequences, including enduring the scarring effects of long-term unemployment, which remains the highest globally. This situation is even worse for young women. The unemployment rate for young women is 14.9 percentage points higher than that among young men, with figures standing at 39.9% for young women and 25% for young men. Moreover, they face only scant decent job opportunities, with a staggering 85% engaged in the informal sector, where access to social rights and protection is often lacking. Additionally,</p>	

the percentage of youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET) is alarmingly high, reaching 19.7% for young men and more than double that at 41.9% for young women.

Critical role of young men and women in peacebuilding and their access to decision-making processes as underscored by UN Charter and SDG16 is widely recognized. However, youth in the Arab region face challenges due to narrowing civic spaces, persistent negative stereotypes, and participation in political processes remains notably low. This is primarily attributed to a lack of trust in decision-makers who frequently overlook the perspectives of young people. This is exacerbated by the fact that youth commonly witness public administration in the region suffering from institutional fragility, lack of transparency, and increasing irrelevance. Additionally, young individuals are left struggling to secure their basic human rights without the privilege of participating in political discussions and engagement.

Beyond the individual level, these issues profoundly impact the region's prosperity, stability, and equality in sustainable development efforts. The marginalization of both young men and women lowers confidence in political and economic systems, exacerbates youth migration trends, and undermines social cohesion and peace. Recognizing the pressing need to address these challenges, Arab youth require a tall order of policies and targeted interventions to ensure that their potential is unlocked and that they participate meaningfully as equal members of society. Therefore, it is crucial to harness the power of partnerships and collaborative efforts, where young people are treated as equal partners and meaningfully engaged in shaping and taking decisions related to social justice, thereby fostering positive change and creating a brighter future for all.

OBJECTIVES OF SESSION

This session is dedicated to give a meaningful voice to youth in the Arab to articulate their frustrations and the complex interplay between social justice, youth marginalization, and the effects on human development in the Arab region. This session will also touch on the long-term repercussions of persistent violence and crises on the aspirations and opportunities of youth. Through interactive exchanges, participants will analyze the structural impediments that perpetuate cycles of marginalization and hinder the realization of social justice. By amplifying the voices of youth and showcasing their experiences, this session will serve as a platform to debate on systemic reforms, youth inclusive policies, and the opportunities that youth need to feel empowered and bring in the positive change on the main development priorities.

OVERALL FORMAT/STRUCTURE

A regional interactive and in-depth debate between young people, decision-makers and experts on the global scene. The session will include participation of speakers representing the different sectors from different countries in the region and will have an open floor for discussion for all attendees to contribute to the discussion by adding the best practices and lessons learnt from their own countries on how to ensure youth social justice in achieved in the region.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does social justice mean to youth today, especially in terms of inclusion, equality, participation and rights?

2. What are the top three socioeconomic concerns that youth across the Arab region face today and that have far-reaching implications on their present and future?
3. What role(s) do youth wish their governments or international actors would play to ward off these concerns and other vulnerabilities and to truly empower them?
4. What roles can youth play to combat exclusion and marginalization and build a more just future?
5. Which poverty mitigation strategies from the Second Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report can be undertaken by Arab youth to reduce household poverty?
6. How can social protection strategies be tailored to be proactive and prevent youth from falling into poverty?
7. How can technology & digital platforms be leveraged to amplify the voices of youth & promote social justice initiatives? In such sectors as climate change, food security, technological advancements, education, access to health, etc.?
8. Can you think of young people, who despite their poverty and despair, became successful and are empowering others?

NAMES AND TITLES OF SESSION SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR(S)

Moderator				
#	Name	Country	Email address	Title
1	Ms. Manal Alshamrani	Saudi Arabia	mmas@bu.edu	Engineer
Speakers				
#	Name	Country	Email address	Title
1	Mr. Khaled Atta	Palestine	atta.khaled.01@gmail.com	Youth Activist
2	Ms. Amar Mousawi	Lebanon	gamarmsw2000@gmail.com	Student
3	Mr. Abdullahi Hashi	Somalia	abdullahi.hashi@undp.org	UNDP Somalia OIC Accelerator Lab Head of Experimentations
4	Mr. Walid Machrouh	Morocco	walid.machrouh@undp.org	Youth Project Associate
5	Ms. Manar Al-Sharjabi	Yemen	Manalalsharjabi1999@gmail.com	Youth Activist

OVERVIEW OF PREPARATORY EVENT/CONSULTATION

The UNDP Youth Regional team organized consultations, gathering dynamic youth delegates and representatives from across the Arab region to delve into the thematic framework of the ECOSOC forum's session for the Arab States.

The first, organized on February 15, engaged youth representatives from Somalia, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. Youth expressed interest in exploring the active role of youth in political participation and highlighted the support needed for them to fulfil that role. There was a consensus on the relevance of

discussing governance and poverty, with a suggestion to link topics to real cases and examples from the region. Youth recommended conducting sessions in Arabic for better comprehension and engagement. Several examples and success stories were shared, showcasing youth empowerment despite challenges. On February 23, a one-hour Zoom meeting gathered 25 youths from Lebanon. Participants expressed satisfaction with the chosen topic, highlighting its reflection of real challenges they face. Concerns were raised about the broad scope of the topic and the need for specificity in discussions. Suggestions included prioritizing practical implementations over theoretical initiatives, amplifying youth voices from various backgrounds and countries, and addressing the needs of vulnerable youth disproportionately affected by crises. Emphasis was placed on bridging the gap between education and available opportunities, tackling unemployment, and addressing the skills gap among youth in the region.

ADDITIONAL DETAILS, SUGGESTED READING, IF ANY

- <https://archive.unescwa.org/publications/bridging-inequality-gap-youth-Arab-region>
- <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/inequality-arab-region-ticking-time-bomb>
- <https://archive.unescwa.org/publications/reaping-rewards-demographic-transitions-investing-arab-youth>
- <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/cost-child-marriage-life-cycle-girls-women>
- [Youth Unemployment MENA English Web.pdf \(brookings.edu\)](#)
- <https://carnegie-mec.org/2024/02/02/economic-injustice-is-anchoring-itself-in-arab-world-pub-91537>
- <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/progress-towards-sdgs-arab-region>
- <https://archive.unescwa.org/publications/toolkit-mainstreaming-social-justice-principles-development-policies>
- [Arab Barometer](#)