

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)**

**POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

**ISSUE NO. 5**

**YOUTH EXCLUSION IN THE ESCWA REGION:  
DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC, EDUCATIONAL  
AND CULTURAL FACTORS**

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## Executive summary

Social exclusion is an important emerging issue within social research and in the management of social issues. Social workers and social policymakers agree on the difficulty of measuring social exclusion. However, they recognize that human populations experience exclusion in varying degrees and most societies include groups vulnerable to it; mainly those social and economic groups experiencing life cycle transformations, such as young people, especially those aged 15-24 years.

This age group is more concerned with education, training, empowerment and economic and social integration, the facilitation of all of which requires provision of numerous opportunities. However, increasing social and economic challenges have impeded youth integration, leading to the persistent exclusion of youth and the disruption or decline of their life cycles.

In the Arab region, the youth bulge in recent years coincided with a range of societal and economic tensions, which led specialists and policymakers to assess the social status of this vast segment of society in an attempt to understand the factors causing exclusion and social and economic marginalization. However, it is not the case that youth issues have only recently become a political or social priority on the agenda of the countries of the region. On the contrary, since the 1970s all Arab countries have sought to satisfy the educational, social, economic and political needs of youth. Yet, political, social and economic systems fell short of meeting their changing needs, resulting in a deepening sense of exclusion and marginalization.

Objective analysis of youth exclusion requires determining the various structural, behavioural and institutional factors and determinants that constrain exploitation of the energies, skills and capabilities of youth. The approach adopted in the first part of this report starts with defining the concepts of youth exclusion and youth social exclusion, identifies the various factors leading to their production or re-production, and assesses the application of these concepts to contemporary Arab reality. In its second part, the report analyses the impact of the demographic characteristics of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region on youth. It also identifies the dimensions and consequences of the youth bulge, especially in relation to the rapid growth of the labour force, and describes the nature of the relationship between two related phenomena; the demographic window and the demographic dividends.

Educational and cultural factors are among the main institutional determinants impacting the social status of youth and the level of their social exclusion. Researchers agree that youth culture is a product of the relationships of young people with various social institutions, such as the family, the school, religion and the state. Indeed, these institutions determine the attitudes and choices of youth. To analyse the role of educational and cultural institutions in the exclusion of youth, the third part of this report relies on a number of quantitative indicators of education and of various means of communication, community participation, and policy.

Youth employment is one of the main determinants of their inclusion or exclusion. In the ESCWA region, youth face a number of structural and subjective challenges that impede their access to sustainable employment and live in countries that suffer some of the highest levels of youth unemployment in the world. Hence, the fourth part of this report focuses on the nature and characteristics of economic exclusion of youth in the region, through analysing a set of quantitative labour-market indicators.

In light of the need to formulate new institutional visions towards youth as a social group with distinct characteristics and features, as well as the need to raise the levels of youth participation, and enhance youth capacities in line with the objectives of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the fifth part of the report puts forward a number of organizational and institutional recommendations. These are aimed at eliminating various aspects of youth exclusion in the ESCWA member countries and promoting the participation of youth in developing their countries and making their future.

The report notes that exclusion does not have a single cause. Rather, its production or re-production is determined by a multiplicity of mechanisms and by the interrelation of personal and institutional determinants. Exclusion is variable, inconstant and unstable; it changes from place to place and time to time. The demographic weight is not necessarily a major factor in limiting youth integration; it depends on the interplay between the various governmental and non-governmental institutions that contribute collectively to the promotion of youth participation in education and labour markets.

Investments in education in the ESCWA member countries have contributed to growth in student numbers, but not significantly to enhancing the quality of youth capacities. Moreover, labour market policies failed to harmonize the outputs of education, especially higher education, with local and regional labour market requirements. In addition, unemployment rates among females are exceptionally high, adding a gender dimension to the problem. Youth seeking employment opportunities for the first time face additional multidimensional difficulties, religious, sectarian and political, that impede their economic integration. In addition, globalization has had a negative impact on the relations of youth with their social environment and the external environment, exposing many to various forms of exclusion, particularly cultural exclusion.

The report concludes that in formulating national youth policies, it is important to refer to international initiatives for guidance. It proposes a number of recommendations emphasizing the need for taking immediate temporary measures to address the multiple facets of exclusion suffered by victims of illiteracy, unemployment and social marginalization, as well as the need to enact legislation and develop strategies designed to pre-empt youth exclusion in the future. The report also recommends adopting an approach based on youth involvement in the various phases of developing policies and programmes, while providing the necessary funding for the success of such policies and programmes.

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## Introduction

The problem of social exclusion is an important emerging issue within social research and in the management of social issues. The concept first appeared in Europe at the end of the 1970s,<sup>1</sup> coinciding with signs of social dysfunction and mounting social tensions that led to the emergence of a particular lifestyle and behavioural patterns amongst certain social groups. Social workers and social policymakers recognize the difficulty of measuring social exclusion, but acknowledge that it results from the decline of social harmony and the disruption of social integration.

Features of social exclusion are not limited to the economic vulnerability of certain social groups, or to the implications of social marginalization or the lack of employment opportunities or resources. Such features also include a decline in the attainment of social rights guaranteed by legislation for all, including minorities. Social researchers agree that human groups are unequal in relation to social exclusion and that communities include social groups that are more vulnerable to exclusion; mostly economic or social groups undergoing life cycle transformations, such as youth in the 15-24 age group.

This age group is more concerned with education, training, empowerment, and economic and social integration. Facilitating the economic and social integration of youth requires provision of numerous renewable opportunities, which in turn calls for expansion of institutional and societal investments and opportunities in various areas that are vital for gradual integration and a reduction in youth exclusion. However, as a result of increasing social and economic challenges, opportunities for the empowerment and integration of youth have declined in various regions of the world, leading to the exclusion of increasing numbers of youth, despite economic growth, social development and increased investment.

These challenges intensified youth exclusion across the world, making youth issues a priority and a primary concern for the international community, and one of the priorities of the United Nations in the last two decades,<sup>2</sup> with the declaration in 1995 of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. In addition, several international programmes have been established aimed at eliminating the economic exclusion of youth. The World Bank Global Partnership for Youth Investment (2008)<sup>3</sup> seeks to improve the living standards of young people by promoting their economic advancement. In 2006, the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) launched an initiative on youth employment in 16 countries, which were complemented by regional initiatives. The Middle East Youth Initiative was launched in 2006 by the Wolfensohn Centre for Development at the Brookings Institution in Washington in partnership with the Dubai School of Government,<sup>4</sup> aimed at promoting investment in youth capabilities in the region to ensure a better future for them. The Qatari initiative Silatech<sup>5</sup> seeks to create employment opportunities and expand access to capital for the 18-30 age group in the Arab region in order to enable independent developmental projects.

Through multiple approaches and knowledge tools, international, regional and national initiatives defined the nature and features of youth exclusion in various regions of the world. However, it was the World Youth report of 2007<sup>6</sup> that initiated a paradigm shift, helping to define the importance, indeed the seriousness, of the implications of youth exclusion. The report determined the nature of the difficulties faced by youth in various regions of the world, especially the challenges they face in their transition to adulthood,

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<sup>1</sup> René Lenoir, 1974, *Les Exclus, un Français sur dix*, Paris, Le Seui.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Social Development Bulletin: Bringing Equity to Development Agenda, Volume two, first issue, November 2006.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.imagenations.org/partnerships/gpyi\\_arabic.aspx](http://www.imagenations.org/partnerships/gpyi_arabic.aspx).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.shababinclusion.org/section/arabic/facts>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.silatech.com/Arabic>.

<sup>6</sup> [http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/news/attachments/World\\_Youth\\_Report\\_2007.pdf](http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/news/attachments/World_Youth_Report_2007.pdf).



which results in the exclusion and marginalization of large numbers of youth. The report emphasizes the necessity of recognizing the value of youth as a human resource and an essential factor of economic and social change and development. In trying to address the challenges of integrating youth, especially during their transition to adulthood, the report calls for ensuring the objective conditions for youth empowerment through investments in education, training and health, as well as through the provision of opportunities that help expand youth participation in development. This shift has resulted in a change of approach to youth issues. Providing youth populations with services is no longer the only general framework that governs the policies of the state; these now go further to deal with youth as a group supportive of and effective in development. The report calls upon all parties concerned with inclusion and empowerment to eliminate all forms of discrimination against young women, and to increase opportunities for their empowerment.

All regions of the world are facing numerous challenges concerning youth exclusion, with levels and features of this exclusion varying from one region to another by demographic characteristics, such as the size of the youth population, demographic shifts, economic and development conditions, economic structure, and labour market growth or decline. Added to these factors are the type of development policies pursued and the extent of their interaction with the requirements of various social groups, such as youth. In recent decades, the Arab region has perhaps experienced the greatest exacerbation of youth exclusion. Indeed, countries of the region, including Arab countries in Western Asia, share common features that have led to one of the highest rates of youth exclusion in the world. In unanimous agreement, various international and regional reports have warned of the enormous societal challenges and risks resulting from widespread exclusion of youth in the region.

The 2007 World Youth Report indicated that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has the highest levels of youth unemployment in the world. A 2008 World Bank report that focused on a long-term perspective on people and job mobility in the MENA region<sup>7</sup>, indicated various future challenges facing stimulation of growth in the region, emphasizing in particular the need to create around four million jobs a year to meet the steady increase in the numbers of young people, as well as the need to improve the quality of education, particularly higher education.

The reasons for youth exclusion or lack of integration are not limited to the structural or institutional determinants of the official system, but also include determinants related to community and cultural structures. What is the nature of the factors that have led to a decline in youth social integration? Is it because of a rupture between the prevailing system of social and cultural values on the one hand and the current social and cultural trends amongst youth on the other? Is it owing to the breakdown of the traditional family, especially familial solidarity? Or is it an expression of generational conflict?

Some maintain that there are various aspects of exclusion, marginalization and the lack of integration, including subjective factors relating to young people themselves, particularly those associated with the prevailing youth culture. What then are the subjective factors hindering youth integration? Are they related to the difficulty of adjusting to new economic and educational conditions, with the weakness of initiatives among youth, or with the culture of dependency on institutional care (the state and the family)? Recent and unfolding changes in the Arab region have spawned challenges to youth, while raising their aspirations. The beginning was the story of one individual, Mohammad Bouazizi; a story that reflects the situation of large numbers of youth in Arab countries, a story of social and economic exclusion and marginalization and lack of hope. This story invites us to ponder the future challenges facing young people in the Arab region and calls for reviewing the dominant institutional approaches to addressing youth issues, with a view to eliminating, reducing or controlling aspects of exclusion. Adopting new approaches to youth issues requires first of all the implementation of immediate and long-term regulatory and institutional reforms and measures, followed by sectoral and technical interventions in various critical societal areas affecting youth and their future. Institutional and societal associations, particularly youth associations, should be involved in such

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<sup>7</sup> World Bank, *Shaping the Future: A Long-term Perspective of People and Job mobility for the Middle East and North Africa*, 2009, Washington, [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMENA/Resources/Shaping\\_Future\\_Overview-ARB.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMENA/Resources/Shaping_Future_Overview-ARB.pdf).

reforms and measures, as a first step towards involving youth in building their future and towards listening to their initiatives.

An objective analysis of youth exclusion in the Arab region requires identifying the various areas of exclusion, as well as the structural, behavioural and institutional factors limiting utilisation of youth energies, skills and capabilities. Hence, this report analyses the determinants and aspects of youth exclusion and lack of integration and the neglect of youth capabilities, taking the view that youth are a group vital for development and a force for modernity in the Arab countries. The report concludes by determining the types of policies that can support the developmental role of youth, relying on the recommendations of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, aiming to transform the public vision toward youth issues in the region, from one based on provision of care to youth to one based on partnership with them.

The analytical framework of the report is based on the identification of the various areas of youth exclusion in the ESCWA region, as well as on a quantitative assessment of the various manifestations of exclusion observed in the region in recent years. The report analyses different forms of exclusion with a special focus on gender as a determinant of youth exclusion in the ESCWA Region. Aspects and levels of exclusion have changed due to objective and subjective factors, such as gender, educational level, types of educational certificates, and professions. Moreover, the composition of excluded youth has also changed. Indeed, the structure of youth as a group, the development of education and curricula, the shifts in the labour markets and in their requirements, and societal transformations, especially the participation of women, are all factors that have contributed to shaping the structure and characteristics of exclusion in the ESCWA member countries in recent years. Clearly, as a phenomenon, youth exclusion combines traditional factors with others that are the product of the emergent population and social, economic and political trends. As a result, the report deals with the phenomenon of youth exclusion as a dynamic transformative process.

To answer the various questions posed, the report addresses a large number of topics. Part one deals with defining the concept of exclusion and the social exclusion of youth from the perspective of the social sciences and social actors. It is based on defining the mechanisms that produce social exclusion, its nature, and the various factors contributing to its production or re-production, as applied to the present-day Arab reality. The purpose of this approach is not to formulate a unified concept of exclusion, but rather to diagnose the diverse approaches adopted in the definition of exclusion and its social and economic manifestations, as exclusion is multifarious, with varying societal manifestations in various components of society.

Part two analyses the impact of demographics in the ESCWA region on the situation of youth, identifying the dimensions of the youth bulge and its effects on their situation and social conditions. It analyses the challenges resulting from the youth bulge, particularly its impact on the rapid growth of the workforce. Demographic shifts produce new age groups that change the demographic and social composition and impact the various stages of life, especially transition to adulthood. This part also identifies the relationship between the demographic window and the demographic dividends, and how youth represent a driving force for development.

Part three deals with the educational and cultural factors as the major institutional determinants that impact the social status of young people and their social exclusion. The education system has expanded quantitatively in recent decades, but has not achieved the desired qualitative shift by providing appropriate educational opportunities and high quality, modern education that contributes to the integration of local graduates in local and regional labour markets. Youth culture, as agreed by researchers, is the product of the relationship between youth and various social institutions, such as the family, the school, religion and the state. It could even be said that these institutions determine the attitudes of young people and their choices in various fields. However, the multiplicity of youth cultures in the Arab world, the spread of Western culture and the emergence of new cultural features as the result of globalization have all led to the declining impact of traditional societal institutions on young people, although these institutions have not completely lost their influence.

Part four addresses economic integration as one of the challenges facing youth in the Arab region, recognising that youth participation in the economy contributes to their inclusion or exclusion. The report focuses on aspects and characteristics of economic exclusion of youth, through analysing some labour-market quantitative indicators, as well as through outlining the impact of educational systems on the disparity between the education of young people and the requirements of local labour markets. Moreover, the impact of the globalization of labour markets in the Arab region on reducing the competitiveness of Arab youth and on their exclusion cannot be underestimated. In addition, analysing the economic exclusion of youth in the region requires considering a set of quantitative indicators that include the gender variable.

Part five discusses policies and policy options for the development of various programmes aimed at improving the lives of everyone, including social groups most vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion, such as young people. Currently, the countries of the region face challenges that require the formulation of new policies to eliminate aspects of youth exclusion or reduce them, and to put an effort into positively employing youth capabilities in national and regional development. Hence, Arab countries, including ESCWA member countries, need to formulate new institutional visions of commitment to youth as a social group that has its own characteristics and whose participation needs to be enhanced. These countries need to develop new labour mechanisms, based on partnership with young people and various civil society organizations concerned with youth issues, to provide new opportunities for young people, enabling them to participate in all vital fields, without exception, and to raise their formative capabilities constantly in line with the objectives of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

Part six puts forward a number of regulatory and institutional recommendations to develop new national and regional visions to eliminate youth exclusion in the ESCWA member countries; thus ensuring the wider participation of youth in the region in developing and making the future of their countries.

This report is based on a number of papers presented at the Expert Group Meeting on Reinforcing Social Equity: Integrating Youth into the Development Process, which was held in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates, from 29 to 31 March 2009, in collaboration with ESCWA and the Family Development Foundation in Abu Dhabi; as well as on a number of studies and research on issues and problems of social and youth exclusion in the Arab region and other regions of the world, and on a variety of international, regional and national statistical sources.

## I. SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF YOUTH

### A. THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF YOUTH: ITS ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION

The concept of social exclusion of youth first appeared with the publication of the book *The Excluded* in 1974.<sup>8</sup> The concept expressed the author's pain at the failure of the growing French economy of the time to integrate certain groups, such as those with physical and mental disabilities. The author noted that a tenth of the French people were living in social and economic conditions that differ from those of the rest of population. The French social system had produced a disadvantaged social group living on the margins of traditional social structures. Social exclusion is therefore an element of social decay resulting from a persistent social rupture that detaches the individual from society. The implications and meanings of social exclusion, as a concept, were not limited to the specificities of the social and political situations in which it emerged, but were expanded and multiplied to include new social indications. The concept thus became a category that expands and varies with social and political transformations.

In light of the economic and social conditions of the early 1970s, emergent social phenomena required new analytical tools. In the analysis of the new social situation, marginalization and new poverty became some of the most used terms in Europe. Marginalization is the process by which material deprivation has pushed individuals to the fringe of the traditional structure of society, marginalized groups also include individuals who have chosen to live on the fringe, but nevertheless continue to contribute to the making of history. The marginalized include population groups who chose to leave the cities to live in special communities, student protestors, and social rebels, i.e. all those who in seeking alternative lifestyles, adopted ideas, values and views that run counter to the mainstream. In Ireland, Spain, Italy and Portugal, the concept of marginalization denoted the process in which a social group detaches itself from its environment temporarily, such as young people seeking work, or for long periods, such as travellers or gypsies; i.e., marginalization is a transitional voluntary or involuntary situation falling somewhere in between the two phases of integration and lasting exclusion.

In Latin America, the concept of marginalization emerged in the 1950s to describe the social conditions of dwellers of slums that grew as a result of large numbers of the rural population moving to the big cities. However, in contrast to the case in Europe, the marginalized were not marginalized out of choice, are not a minority, did not integrate into the formal economy, and do not have any chance of integrating into the mainstream social, cultural and economic structures; a situation caused directly by the worsening of prevalent inequality.

However, by the 1980s, interest in the marginalized and victims of exclusion shifted, as public authorities and the media turned their attention to the phenomenon of new poverty. Restructuring of international labour markets and the economic crisis impacted employment rates in various regions of the world, leading to a decline in the living conditions of new social groups, particularly skilled workers who were laid off as a result of industrial restructuring, technological development, and the inability to adapt to institutional and economic developments. Women, in particular, were badly affected.

### B. ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION PATTERNS

Notwithstanding its recent nature, the concept of exclusion has been widely used, owing to the multiplicity of the meanings of exclusion and marginalization in various societies, as well as the multiplicity of approaches and tools used to analyse and measure them in line with the social, economic and political situation of each society. This diversity is due to the array of intellectual and theoretical frameworks adopted in the analysis of social exclusion, most notably: solidarity, specialisation and monopoly. In fact, these patterns reflect certain philosophical theories in the field of social organization; each of which defines social

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<sup>8</sup> René Lenoir, 1974, op. cit.

exclusion in terms of the prevailing political philosophy in society, especially the philosophies associated with the republican, liberal or social-democratic systems.

The first pattern comes from the idea that solidarity is intrinsic to human societies. Society is based on a set of shared values and that constitute its moral foundation. Through various institutions, society endeavours to ensure total integration of individuals within it. However, levels of integration may drop in certain stages of development of a nation, resulting in failure to maintain solidarity which manifests itself in social exclusion. In other words, exclusion reflects a failure by social institutions to perform their functions, especially those related to the maintenance and promotion of solidarity among all social elements.

The second pattern follows on from consideration of the effects of specialisation on social and economic situations and positions of individuals. Society is based on specific regulatory frameworks governed by division of labour and economic and social interactions that determine the status of each individual through his or her relations with these various frameworks. The status of the individual in society, including exclusion, is determined within these frameworks as a result of the behaviour and interactions of the individual himself or herself. Thus, social exclusion reflects primarily the exclusion of certain kinds of individual or group characteristics. This approach attaches great importance to personal factors and individual characteristics. It assumes that individuals may be excluded by their choices, by their social and economic interests, by the prevalent contractual relations among social actors, by discrimination or dysfunction in the market, or by lack of respect for the rights of an individual. Individuals in society, who contribute voluntarily in specific areas, exclude each other. However, exclusion from certain social arenas does not mean total exclusion from society as a whole.

The third pattern issues from the idea of monopoly. Society is a hierarchical structure controlled by various social groups, each out to protect its respective arena from others, blocking their access to employment opportunities, cultural resources and services, while all the while encouraging various forms of solidarity within the group. Hence, belonging to society is essentially unequal. That there exist strategies to integrate or exclude makes this model more complex than the functional solidarity model. Determinants of integration determine the social identity and characteristics of the victims of exclusion; at times excluding immigrants, and others illiterates or religious minorities, making exclusion central.

The above three patterns or models do not cover all theoretical frameworks for analysing social exclusion; rather, they represent those most widely used. However, analysis of on-the-ground manifestations of exclusion in various societies requires integrating or combining these three types, or introducing other frameworks, such as the tribe, as is the case of many ESCWA member countries, most notably Yemen.<sup>9</sup>

### C. YOUTH EXCLUSION: CAUSES AND FACTORS OF ITS SPREAD

Describing the living conditions of individuals and groups and understanding related phenomena is fraught with risks, particularly when dealing with multidimensional concepts, such as exclusion and marginalization. This is due to the nature of the phenomena themselves, the multiplicity of the mechanisms that produce them, and the interaction between their subjective and institutional determinants. Moreover, exclusion is evolutionary, in that it is variable, dynamic, and changes from place to place and from time to time.

Causes of exclusion and factors leading to it are numerous, but can be classified into several categories. Social exclusion can be caused by subjective individual or societal factors, or by factors that are political, economic, cultural, and ethnic and religious.

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<sup>9</sup> Mouna H. Hashem, 1996, Goals for Social Integration and Realities of Social Exclusion in the Republic of Yemen, Research Series, No. 105, Geneva, International Institute for Labour Studies.

### 1. *Subjective individual and societal factors*

This category consists of many elements. The most important are: (a) anxiety and bitterness engendered by the inability of the individual or those close to him to achieve personal aspirations; (b) certain individuals or social groups choose voluntarily to exclude themselves, for reasons of artistic or intellectual creativity; (c) violation of laws or social customs; (d) the close link between exclusion and inclusion, as the presence of one automatically means the existence of the other; (e) social barriers, where social groups that establish separation barriers exclude those who do not belong or do not recognize the prevalent values, whether religious, political or cultural; (f) decay of symbolic social relations and exacerbation of conflict over the nature of the communal project as individual conflicts grow and prevalent community values become fragmented and heterogeneous.

### 2. *Political factors and absence of participatory and democratic culture*

Due to the crucial role of political and community participation in determining levels of integration or exclusion of individuals and groups, the political dimension has attracted the attention of many researchers studying exclusion. Analysis of political exclusion rests on the examination of the political integration of citizens' rights issues and the identification of barriers to it. Civil rights, such as individual freedoms, the right to own property, and the right of movement; political rights, such as the rights of assembly, association, expression and participation; and social rights, such as the right to social protection and integration, all refer to the exercise of citizenship, political and communal participation, and the relationship of individuals and groups with the state and state institutions. Political exclusion results from the absence of political participation of the majority of society in institutional mechanisms that govern public affairs, which is common to most Arab regimes, notwithstanding the growing role of societal institutions and civil-society organizations that aim to defend the interests of their members and which have transformed into spaces for social participation and the fight against various forms of exclusion.

### 3. *Economic factors and absence of equity*

Without underestimating the role of social and political dimensions in producing and reproducing exclusion, it must be emphasized that the concept of exclusion derives from economic exclusion. Notwithstanding its importance, the concept of economic exclusion is not associated with the birth of economic theory. Moreover, an economic approach that is built on the scarcity model considers victims of exclusion as either a source of unnecessary demands, a surplus people, unsuccessful persons inferior to other social classes, or persons who are difficult to categorize.

The measurement of economic exclusion is based on the analysis of the position of individuals in the labour market in an attempt to identify who is inside and who is outside of this market, as well as on the premise that there is a two-level labour market and that certain social groups benefit from state care, to the exclusion of others. This approach refers to the nature of relations between the employed and the unemployed, between the formal economy and the shadow economy, between the formal sector and the informal sector, and between the various actors. However, the economic aspect of exclusion is both fragmented and cumulative. Therefore, to determine the position of individuals in relation to the labour market and social protection, it is proposed to classify them as follows: those who have a job and benefit from social protection; the unemployed who benefit from social protection (recipients of unemployment benefits, pensioners, and people with physical disabilities); those who have a job, but do not benefit from social protection (who work in the shadow economy or in the informal sector); and those who do not have a job and do not benefit from social protection.

Thus, social exclusion can be defined as an accumulation of convergent phenomena followed by successive breaks in the economy, politics and society, leading to the gradual marginalization of individuals, groups and regions, to the reduction of their value and to their exclusion from the centres of power, resources and prevalent values.

#### 4. *Cultural factors and globalization*

When human groups identify their affiliations through absolute adherence to some specific cultural frameworks, they exclude anyone who does not fit within such frameworks. Human history bears witness to a number of cases of exclusion on the basis of cultural, religious and political factors. Cultural factors also lead to the exclusion of individuals and groups within the country, especially in societies where there are internal cultural differences, such have as the apartheid regime in South Africa. With the globalization of trade, the centres of economic power changed. In addition, with advances in communication technology, especially the Internet, a new type of exclusion has emerged. The emergence of a new virtual world gives the impression that all Internet users are integrated, when in fact cultural exclusion is expanding. Some consumers lack the knowledge tools necessary for discovering various features of the Internet, such as mastering languages and enjoying cultural openness, whereas others do not.

#### 5. *Ethnic and religious factors*

Sometimes exclusion is associated with ethnic, religious and cultural minorities, particularly economic and social oppression suffered by groups of people in many societies due to a lack of economic, social, cultural, political and administrative rights. Since many minorities across the world lack fundamental rights, their members, including young people, live in deprivation and suffer ill treatment. They are denied schooling and access to health services and jobs in government institutions. In addition to institutional persecution, they suffer social oppression due to the discriminatory practices and habits entrenched in the consciousness of their communities against minorities that are often long established, with a presence dating from decades or even centuries ago.

All these conditions produce exclusion, which in turn reflects decay in the network of social relations, disharmony among prevalent values, difficulty of formation of social poles and spaces based on identity, and difficulty of reaching collective composite answers to successive divisions and exclusions. Institutional factors of exclusion are manifested at the personal level (micro), in relationships between women and men, and in relationships between individuals themselves and within groups and intermediate institutions, (middle level), and as well as through numerous interactions with society (macro). However, this does not mean that social exclusion is separate or distinct from political or economic exclusion, for these various aspects of exclusion are organically linked, growing closely and mutually reinforcing, growing in parallel, or one preceding others.

#### D. MEASUREMENT OF EXCLUSION

In an age of tremendous local, regional and international changes in economy, politics, society, technology, urbanization and population, the measurement of exclusion requires identification of methodological and applied frameworks for understanding and interpreting the phenomenon and drawing strategies for the elimination of various aspects of exclusion, or at least reducing them. Measurement and analysis of exclusion should not be limited to purely quantitative indicators; on the contrary, the role of various economic, social, demographic, political, cultural and legislative determinants and their impact on individuals and groups must be clarified. And this should be from a dynamic perspective, since exclusion is inconstant and continuously undergoes transformations.

Excluded social groups are not classified administratively, nor do they appear in official statistics. Hence, researchers resort to longitudinal surveys to help determine the effects of economic cycles and demographic, social and political shifts in the long run through a generational approach, and also help to identify the numbers of those who were excluded relatively, those who overcame exclusion, and those who suffer from it. In the absence of such surveys, researchers rely on household expenditure and labour force surveys, as in many European countries. Such surveys are necessary for gaining an idea of the situation of persons and families, but are nonetheless insufficient for building an active model that explains various structural and institutional transformations.

In recent years, resorting to a variety of sources, such as censuses and administrative records on living conditions and incomes of individuals at the national, regional and local levels, several countries have provided statistical series on some manifestations of exclusion, such as poverty and unemployment. These sources, which provide snap-shot analyses, help in understanding various aspects of exclusion, as well as in developing appropriate policies for addressing it.

In addition to traditional approaches to the measurement of exclusion, new statistical tools designed to measure exclusion through special indicators have appeared in recent decades. These composite indicators are based on a set of social indicators, the most prominent of which is the human development index, which has proved popular despite criticism.

To measure aspects of exclusion in relation to deprivation from certain goods and services, quantity of life indicators that may be non-monetary are used. This methodology has been popular among researchers who adopt a multidimensional approach to exclusion, but not among politicians and with the media, since it does not provide an overall analytical indicator for policymaking. Yet, there is consensus on a set of indicators related to the measurement of life conditions, particularly those related to population, employment, education, housing, health, consumer goods, delinquency, access to services, equity, income, leisure, social integration, and societal participation. However, variations in social, economic and political condition from one country to another render these indicators non-comparable, making it difficult to adopt unified approaches at the regional level.

In several regions of the world, especially in Europe, there have been developments in measurement mechanisms at both country and regional levels. For example, Austria has adopted indicators of social and cultural integration, such as participation in civil society associations, and has used tools to measure levels of social relations, such as the number of weekly meetings with a family member or friends or talking with neighbours. In France, long-term social non-integration and isolation have been measured using indicators that measure dependency on social services, absence of health services for people with disabilities, and the duration of such conditions. At the European level, a set of proposals has been put forward, the most recent calling for establishing new indicators for international comparisons.

Interestingly, there is consensus among researchers that the use of a set of indicators, which do not necessarily include an analytical indicator, is the best indirect means for determining the various aspects impacting exclusion at specific geographical, social or demographic levels. However, use of general indicators to disclose exclusion of specific social groups may be infeasible, necessitating adoption of indicators that cover various aspects of the life of the social category concerned. Hence, description, measurement and understanding of exclusion should not be contingent upon any one methodology, since most suffer deficiencies and face challenges. Indeed, any objective acceptable approach requires reconciliation of various methodologies taking into account the specificity of the distinct social situation under consideration. In consequence, this report focuses on a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure and understand the various vital dimensions affecting youth exclusion in the ESCWA region both directly and indirectly.

## E. YOUTH EXCLUSION IN ARAB SOCIETIES

### 1. *Approaches to exclusion in Arabic writings*

Growing interest in problems of social exclusion across the world has been engendered by worsening poverty and marginalization and the expansion of vulnerable social groups in many parts of the world, including the Arab region. Pressures on traditional societies that weaken the natural functions of their various institutions, especially solidarity, have also been a contributing factor. Such changes have impacted social relationships and ties and have in many cases affected small communities in rural areas and villages. Social exclusion and marginalization have emerged and expanded in the Arab countries in such contexts. The economic recession that hit Arab countries during the eighties impacting all aspects of life, as well as the declining role of the state in many countries, were perhaps among the institutional and structural factors



heightening interest in issues of social exclusion and marginalization, and enhancing the credibility of the idea that there are no communities without excluded and marginalized people.

Under these new circumstances, researchers and those concerned with social issues began showing interest in the study and analysis of exclusion and marginalization in Arab countries. Numerous local and regional studies and researches were published, academic and administrative; all characterized by the dominance of social and economic approaches.<sup>10</sup> On the whole, studies focused on single aspects rather than a holistic analysis, although this did not mean that they failed to grasp reality. The issues addressed included unemployment, poverty, discrimination against women, the informal sector, and peasants. For example, research conducted by the Centre for Studies and Economic and Social Research in Tunisia on social exclusion and marginalization in the Arab world<sup>11</sup> focused on the exclusion of specific social groups, such as ex-offenders, children, women and people with special needs, without attaining a holistic analysis of the phenomenon. The same approach was adopted by another study of marginalization in the Maghreb,<sup>12</sup> which incorporated an analysis of the exclusion of minorities in the Arab countries, such as black people in Tunisia and workers in certain professions such as fishermen, sex workers, and others. However, these studies were purely descriptive, omitting to analyse the causes of exclusion or marginalization, its future transformations, and the institutional and societal mechanisms generating it.

Issues of poverty and unemployment have been among the most important exclusion-related traditional issues preoccupying researchers in the Arab region. They have provided rich material for numerous studies based on economic approaches, with interest in them heightened with the advent of the Millennium Development Goals, which included elimination of extreme poverty and hunger and provision of employment opportunities. Moreover, the interest of international institutions in issues of development, poverty, unemployment and the labour market in various Arab countries has increased, in the light of growing unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, in recent decades. For the first time, research into youth unemployment, which reached exceptional levels in many Arab countries, concluded that youth are the most vulnerable to exclusion. As a result, research into social exclusion focused on youth exclusion and the migration of Arab youth. Indeed, in the 2000s in many Arab countries, youth exclusion became a priority issue for researchers and those concerned with social issues, which prompted new and multidisciplinary approaches.

In contrast to earlier studies of social exclusion and marginalization, recent studies are characterized by the diversity of fields and approaches; no longer confined to traditional issues, they have expanded their scope, adopting regional and country perspectives and focusing on the most relevant category, that of youth. Of the major transformations, a number of comparative, innovative studies based on new research methods for measuring certain aspects of social exclusion, such as youth exclusion in the Middle East,<sup>13</sup> have appeared. These address a variety of issues, such as the role of institutional and economic determinants,<sup>14</sup> and the characteristics of youth exclusion and its cumulative nature.<sup>15</sup> Due to varying conditions, youth exclusion is affected by the specificities of each country or territory within the region.<sup>16</sup> In addition to new

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<sup>10</sup> Mongi Bédoui, 1995, *Bibliographie sur l'exclusion sociale dans les pays du Maghreb et du Machreq (Afrique du Nord et Moyen-Orient)*, IIES Série Documents de travail, No. 80. Genève, Institut international d'études sociales.

<sup>11</sup> Centre d'études et de recherche économiques et sociales, 1992, *Actes du colloque "Exclusion sociale et marginalisation dans le monde arabe"*, No. 109, Tunis.

<sup>12</sup> Fanny Colonna et Zakya Daoud, 1993, *Etre marginal au Maghreb*, Paris, éditions CNRS.

<sup>13</sup> Jad Chaaban, 2008, *Costs of Youth Exclusion in the Middle East*, Middle East Youth Initiative, Working Paper No. 7. <http://www.shababinclusion.org/content/document/detail/983>.

<sup>14</sup> Nader Kabbani and Noura Kamel, *Youth Exclusion in Syria: Social, Economic, and Institutional Dimensions*, December 2007. <http://www.shababinclusion.org/content/document/detail/537>.

<sup>15</sup> Ragui Assaad and Ghada Barsoum, 2007, *Youth Exclusion in Egypt: In Search of "Second Chances"*.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations, 2007, *Literature Review on Social Exclusion in the ESCWA Region*, New York.

concerns, research into social exclusion since the beginning of the 2000s in the Arab world has dealt with traditional issues, such as labour markets, exclusion, poverty and education. New approaches have also been adopted, including those related to optimum employment of demographic shifts in the Arab world, especially the demographic window of opportunity, and the call for considering youth as an effective force for local and regional development, not as a hindrance or an impediment to developmental efforts, as was the case previously.

The diversity of scientific and administrative publications on social exclusion and marginalization in the Arab countries in last decade cannot be detached from the growing interest in youth conditions around the world during the same period, both by international and regional institutions and research institutions. Yet, this diversity also reflects the spread of manifestations of exclusion in many Arab countries, especially among youth, and the desire of these countries to face the major challenges of expediting the integration of Arab youth into development, of creating the objective conditions in the near or medium future for accommodating future groups of young Arabs in the local or regional labour markets, and of providing them with appropriate education and training that would contribute to economic and social integration and facilitate their life cycles.

## *2. Youth exclusion in the light of the Arab Spring*

The revolutions shaking most Arab countries are unprecedented in modern Arab history. For the first time, protest movements in Arab countries have turned into national issues, leading to uprisings and movements in other countries. Indeed, the “Arab Spring” refers to a number of social and political indications common to Arab societies, most notably:

(a) The Arab spring indicates common national feelings that link Arab citizens and peoples. In the past, these took the form of yearning for freedom from colonialism, the liberation of Palestine and Arab unity, but are now an expression of yearning for freedom, democracy, dignity, social justice, participation and social integration;

(b) In many Arab countries, there are economic, social and political conditions that bring deadlock and absence of hope. Human development reports of the United Nations Development Programme, Transparency International reports, and other reports and studies have confirmed the decline of public freedoms, development, science, rights, and the status of women and youth in all Arab countries;

(c) The self-immolation by the young Tunisian, Mohamed Bouazizi, in the Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid, in response to municipal guards destroying a kiosk that was his sole source of income, sparked a revolution. Popular anger spread in Tunisia and then to the rest of the Arab countries, leading to civil disobedience and a rebellion by an entire generation over the miserable conditions and the multifaceted exclusion of youth in Arab countries;

(d) The speed with which young people joined mass public protests ensues from the aspirations of an entire generation that has suffered manifold exclusion and marginalization;

(e) The leading and multifaceted role played by youth arose from their desire to participate in making their own destiny and taking control of their future, and expresses an awareness and political maturity, as well as their close ties to the community;

(f) Use by Arab youth of the various methods of modern, globalized means of communication, networking and organization is evidence of their mastering of globalization tools and their success in employing them properly and positively;

(g) Broad participation of young women in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen reflects the diversity and multiplicity of Arab youth capacities and their full engagement with the issues of society;

(h) Through broad popular participation and harnessing of organizational capacity and engagement in politics before, during and after the revolutions, youth organizations have proved the political potential of young people and the awareness of these organisations of both youth and societal demands.

Arab revolutions resulted from multiple historical developments and the social, economic and political exclusion of Arab youth was certainly a direct cause. Undoubtedly, demographics and the preponderance of youth in the population have played a direct role in the momentous participation of youth in the Arab Spring.

## II. DEMOGRAPHICS AND YOUTH EXCLUSION

Demography has a multidimensional impact on various aspects of the lives of individuals and groups; the most important is the economic and social impact, especially in relation to growth rate of the segment of population of working, education, training, and marriage age. Demographic shifts have a direct impact on the life cycles of the most susceptible groups, such as youth. Therefore demographic shifts, particularly those related to the youth bulge, pose a number of societal and institutional challenges that require large and successive investments to ensure an optimal use of human capacities. Such challenges entail associating the situation of youth in countries experiencing a youth bulge, such as the Arab and ESCWA member countries, with the various aspects of social and economic exclusion to which the youth are subjected, which in turn, raises the issue of the impact of structural demographic factors related to population composition on the population in general and youth in particular. Without underestimating the importance of the impact of the demographic structure on youth and on life cycles, youth demography provides numerous opportunities that generate various social and economic benefits, as has been shown in many Asian and European countries. This denotes that youth can be a force for development if appropriate institutional conditions are established, rather than an impediment to social and economic integration.

### A. REALITY OF POPULATION IN THE ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES

In recent decades, ESCWA member countries have experienced a number of behavioral and social changes as well as changes in living standards that affected the composition and trends of the general population. Following relatively moderate population growth rates in the 1950s and 1960s (about 2.6 per cent per annum) due to decline in mortality and high fertility levels, ESCWA member countries witnessed higher rates of population growth exceeding the highest international standards in the period from the 1970s to the 1990s, even in sub-Saharan Africa, the world's fastest growing region (more than 3 per cent per annum). Thereafter, rates of growth declined from 3.03 per cent per annum in the period 1980-1990 to 2.47 per cent in the period 1990-2000.

TABLE 1. POPULATION GROWTH IN THE ESCWA REGION  
(1950-2000)

Year	Total population ( <i>millions</i> )	Percentage annual growth rate
1950	51	
1960	66	2.58
1970	84	2.41
1980	116	3.23
1990	157	3.03
2000	200	2.42

Source: United Nations, *World Population prospects: the 2010 Revision*, New York, 2011.

In the ESCWA region, the population has grown at a rapid pace in the period between 1950 and 2010, to more than 250 million, i.e., by more than five times, and is expected to continue growing to exceed 370 million by 2030, notwithstanding the general decline in growth rates in recent decades. However, the future population of various countries in the region is dependent on economic growth, social and population policies, poverty, and political stability. In the coming three decades, such factors will determine the demographic shifts in the ESCWA region, which will differ across countries and regions.

The economic, social and even demographic heterogeneity of the countries in the region have resulted in varied demographic shifts,<sup>17</sup> depending on political systems, social and demographic priorities and

<sup>17</sup> Dominique Tabutin and Bruno Schoumaker, 2005, *The Demography of the Arab World and the Middle East from the 1950s to the 2000s: A Survey of Changes and a Statistical Assessment*, Population, Vol. 60, No. 6.

economic trends in each country and region, as well as on the crises the countries have witnessed for the last five decades. The difference in population growth between countries of the region is apparent from the varied growth rates for the period between 1950 and 2010 (table 2). Nonetheless, population growth patterns and demographic conditions are homogeneous within certain ESCWA geographic regions, particularly in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). In the last five decades, these countries have experienced exceptional growth rates, ranging between 5 and 17 per cent per annum. However, this phenomenal growth is due primarily to continuing recruitment of expatriate labour, which has become a major determining factor of population size and growth. The highest growth rate is in Qatar, followed by Bahrain and Kuwait, and then Oman and Saudi Arabia. However, associated with the requirements of developmental projects and economic policies, population growth rates in these countries remain unstable and fluctuating between one phase and another. They are also influenced by political events, such as wars, as for example in Kuwait in the early 1990s, when total population declined by around fifty per cent after the exodus of large numbers of residents.

Population growth in Jordan is worth noting. As a non-oil State with limited resources, Jordan experienced high growth rates, ranging between 3.60 and 7.80 per cent per annum in the period 1950-1995. Growth rates are usually governed by declining mortality rates due to improvements in health services and by declining fertility rates. In Jordan, however, population growth rates in recent decades were affected directly by hosting Palestinian refugees until the end of 1970s and Iraqi refugees since the early 1990s. Notable convergence of growth rates is observed in Iraq, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, which all witnessed continuous increases and then a gradual moderation of rates; consistent with the demographic shifts in each country.

TABLE 2. POPULATION GROWTH RATES IN THE ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES  
(1950-2010)

	1950-1955	1955-1960	1960-1965	1965-1970	1970-1975	1975-1980	1980-1985	1985-1990	1990-1995	1995-2000	2000-2005	2005-2010
Bahrain	2.85	3.88	2.82	2.57	4.49	6	3.05	3.35	2.52	2.65	2.55	11.09
Egypt	2.54	2.66	2.6	2.46	2.22	2.27	2.39	2.3	1.76	1.72	1.85	1.78
Iraq	2.75	2.35	2.79	3.33	3.24	3.08	2.38	2.31	3.1	3.24	2.74	2.93
Jordan	7.38	6.43	4.64	7.79	3.65	2.78	3.97	3.95	4.98	1.94	2.03	2.94
Kuwait	5.05	5.94	12.15	8.84	6.72	5.35	4.7	3.62	-4.98	3.52	3.08	3.79
Lebanon	2.47	3.12	2.89	2.23	2.31	0.21	0.64	0.43	3.22	1.55	1.59	0.85
Oman	1.86	2.15	2.46	2.98	4.1	5.48	5.28	3.88	3.56	0.29	1.41	2.71
Palestine	1.16	1.58	2.16	-1.15	3.24	2.66	3.06	3.36	4.42	4.17	2.12	2.55
Qatar	7.16	5.5	8.79	7.89	8.14	6.16	10.15	5.05	1.14	3.29	6.58	15.24
Saudi Arabia	2.49	2.68	3.39	3.74	4.82	5.77	5.99	3.99	2.72	1.61	3.64	2.65
The Sudan	2.23	2.36	2.38	2.52	2.97	3.17	3.19	2.36	2.58	2.52	2.33	2.51
Syrian Arab Republic	2.69	3.14	3.27	3.38	3.4	3.32	3.44	3.06	2.79	2.41	2.9	1.98

Source: United Nations, *World Population prospects: The 2010 Revision*, New York, 2011.

Egypt experienced relative population-growth stability until the end of the 1990s, followed by a decline as a result of population policies. Due to civil war, Lebanon experienced sustained slackening of population growth between 1975 and 1990, followed by a jump in rates with the return of stability upon the conclusion of Taif Agreement, which ushered a new era and the return of some Lebanese emigrants. However, population growth slackened again, generally as a result of social and cultural development. In Palestine, population growth is still linked to the political situation and high fertility rates in the Gaza Strip, which explains the high growth rates after the conclusion of Oslo Accords in 1993.

Social, economic and political conditions, as well as development trends, have affected population increases in the ESCWA member countries (table 3).

TABLE 3. POPULATION GROWTH IN ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES  
FROM 1950 TO 2010\*

Country	Ratio	Country	Ratio
Qatar	10.9	Jordan	3.1
United Arab Emirate	9.4	Palestine	3.1
Bahrain	4.7	Iraq	2.7
Saudi Arabia	3.7	Kuwait	2.6
Yemen	3.6	The Sudan	2.5
Syrian Arab Republic	3.2	Egypt	2
Oman	3.1	Lebanon	1.5

Source: United Nations, *World Population prospects: The 2010 Revision*, New York, 2011.

\* Population size in 2010 compared to 1950.

## B. THE YOUTH BULGE

### 1. Overview

The notable preponderance of youth in the population composition in the ESCWA region resulted from the demographic shifts in recent decades, particularly from a significant reduction in child mortality and the decline of fertility rates. In the beginning, this led to an increase in the proportion of children under 15 years old, and then to a rise in the proportion of the 15-24 age group, resulting in what is known today as the youth bulge, the beginnings of which date back to the late 1970s, when the growth rate of youth reached 3.75 per cent per annum (table 4). Such growth represents a unique moment in the history of the region. The total number of youth in the region has multiplied by approximately 5.32 times between 1950 and 2010, reaching an unprecedented level of 50 million, to constitute about 20 per cent of total population, making the ESCWA region one of the youngest regions in the world, after sub-Saharan Africa. Although growth will slacken, the number of youth in the region will continue to grow between 2010 and 2030 at an expected increase of about 800,000 a year, impacting directly a number of areas; notably the size of the workforce.

TABLE 4. YOUTH IN THE ESCWA REGION  
(1950-2030)

	Youth (15-24)		Annual growth rate
	Number ( <i>in million</i> )	Percentage of total population	
1950	9 546	18.75	
1960	11 347	17.31	1.73
1970	16 510	19.14	3.75
1980	22 227	19.13	2.97
1990	30 434	19.42	3.14
2000	40 575	20.32	2.88
2010	50 859	19.66	2.26
2020	57 928	18.16	1.3
2030	66 731	17.65	1.41

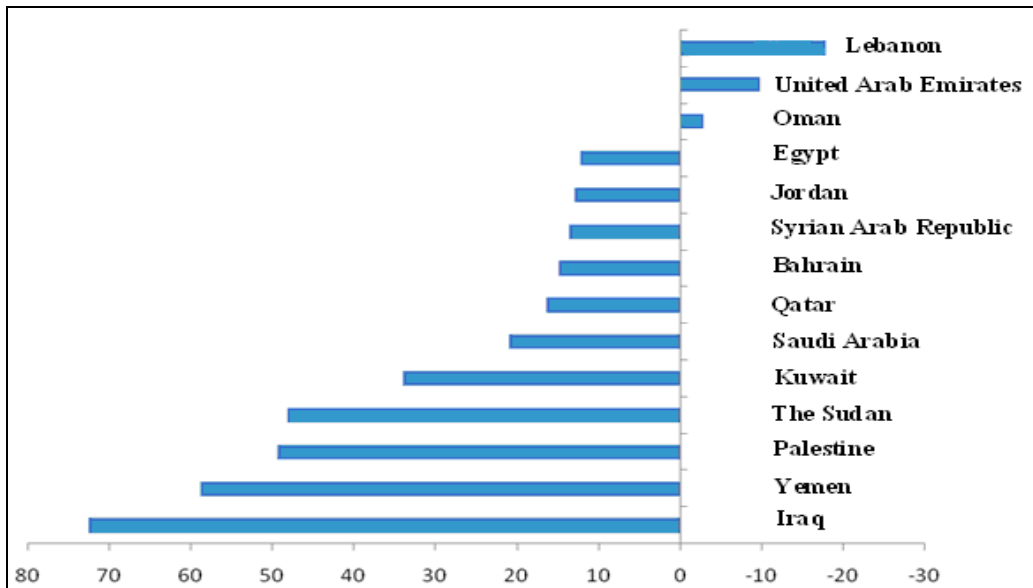
Source: United Nations, *World Population prospects: The 2010 Revision*, New York, 2011.

Growth trends have changed in all ESCWA member countries, but not uniformly. This should not be a surprise, given the diversity of these countries; some are rich such as the Gulf oil States, while others are

poorer, such as Palestine and Yemen, and some are middle-income. Some have a heterogeneous demographic structure that includes ethnic and cultural minorities, such as the Kurds and Armenians in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Kurds in Iraq, and the Nubians in Egypt. These factors have played a role in determining the nature of demographic shifts in each country and will have a role in determining their demographic future. As a result, youth in the region will face varied demographic shifts in the coming decades.

Over the next three decades, the numbers of young people in the Sudan, Iraq, Palestine and Yemen, where fertility rates are highest, are expected to increase. In Iraq, the number is expected to increase by 4.5 million from approximately 6.2 million in 2010 to reach 10.7 million in 2030. Over the same period, the number of young Palestinians is expected to increase from 0.858 million to 1.3 million, an increase of around 50 per cent. In Yemen, the increase is expected to be more than 3 million, an increase of around 59 per cent, while in the Sudan, the number is expected to reach 12.7 million, an increase of 4.1 million (figure 1).

**Figure 1. Changes in proportion of youth to total population in a number of ESCWA member countries (2010-2030)**



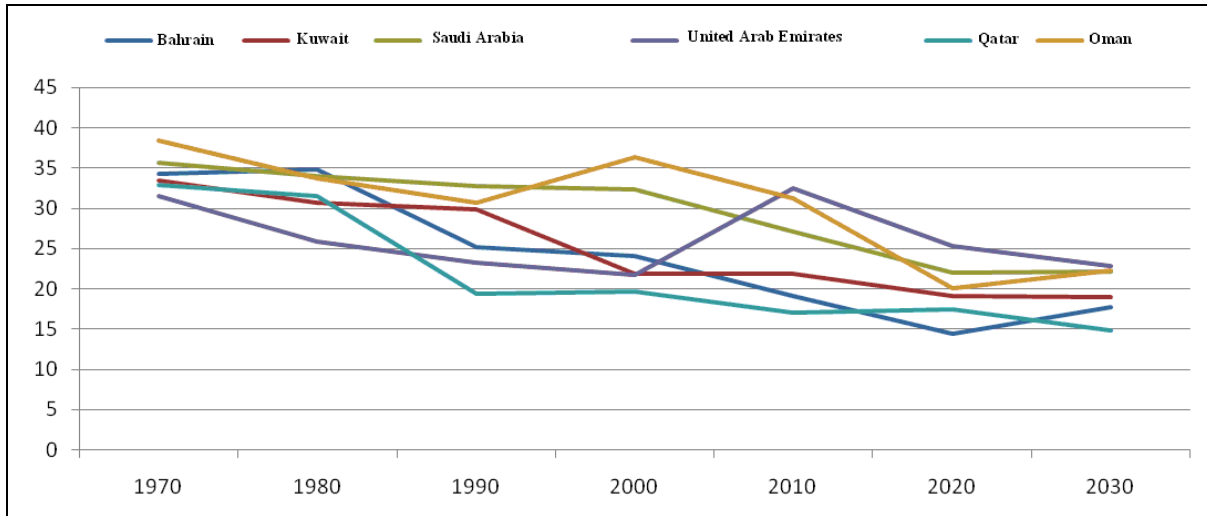
Source: United Nations, *World Population prospects: The 2010 Revision*, New York, 2011.

In contrast, in Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates and Oman, the proportion of young people to total population is expected to decline by 2030 to 18, 10 and 3 per cent respectively, and youth growth rates in the region as a whole are expected to decline over the next two decades due to lower fertility rates.

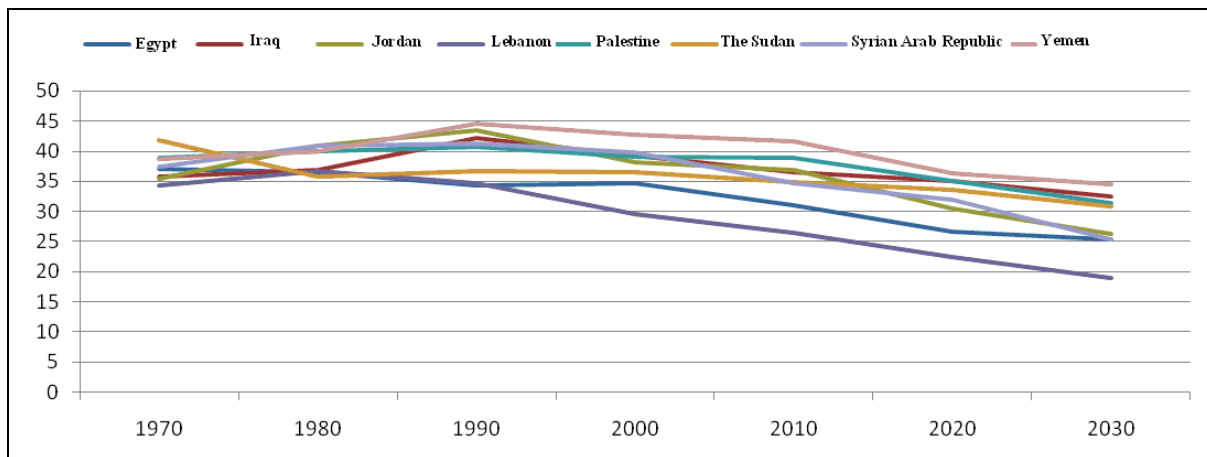
These indicators foretell new demographic transformations. Demographic shifts in each country will directly lead to the numbers of young people rising. However, this is expected to be followed by a continuous, slow decline at varied rates in the proportion of working-age youth in the working-age population over several time intervals until 2030 (figure 2).

**Figure 2. Trends in proportion of youth (15-24 years) in working-age population (15-64 years) in ESCWA member countries**

**In the GCC countries**



**In other ESCWA member countries**



Source: United Nations, *World Population prospects: The 2010 Revision*, New York, 2011.

Despite the continuous reduction in the proportion of youth in the total working-age population, the continuous decline of integration of youth in the labour market is expected to send rates of youth unemployment in the region to unprecedented levels, raising questions about the impact of the youth on the status of youth and the levels of integration or exclusion. What are then the challenges posed by the youth bulge in the region?

*2. Challenges and opportunities*

Demographic shifts in the ESCWA region pose a number of questions on the impact of the expansion of the 15-24 years old youth group on the economic and social conditions of youth, as well as on possible and desired integration levels of this group. Is the youth bulge a burden or an opportunity, and what impact does it have on various societal developments, including the exclusion of youth? Is exclusion or integration



of youth mainly associated with the size of the youth population and its growth rates, or is the status of youth in society due to other institutional factors?

Shifts in age structure raised questions on their impact on economic growth and individual incomes. Research has focused primarily on the positive economic role played by such changes in developed countries,<sup>18</sup> followed later by research on their impact on the societies and economies of developing countries. Studies of East Asian countries, which also experienced a youth bulge, made it possible to measure the role played by such transformations in creating new social and economic conditions. The demographic situation in these countries is similar to that in ESCWA member countries in terms of the weight of youth. Hence, they can serve as a model to analyse and measure the impact of the youth bulge on the integration of young people, as well as to identify various contributory factors to the utilization of age structure shifts positively.

East Asian countries, which are passing through an advanced stage of their demographic shift, have achieved exceptional economic growth rates and dramatic increases in individual incomes. Engaging positively with shifts in age structure, these countries have achieved what is commonly referred to as the Asian miracle. The success of this model of development is based on optimum utilization of the benefits of the youth bulge, through the development of human resources, enhancing the employability of youth, and raising the levels of savings and investment. Indeed, the experiences of these countries has a number of notable features:

(a) Since the 1960s, East Asian countries have achieved higher literacy and educational attainment rates and considerable improvements in the provision of a healthy environment for young people. Investment in education and care for children is based on a partnership between state institutions and families. Investment in human resources increased in both state and family budgets, and mortality rates declined compared to other countries with similar levels of development. The result has been a healthier and more productive workforce, which in turn stimulated larger investment in human resources. Moreover, diminishing differences in the educational attainment between genders and elimination of barriers to the participation of women in the national economy have led to the integration of women into the labour market, making them a key component in it;

(b) East Asian countries have succeeded in bringing about rapid growth in employment and labour productivity. Between 1960 and 1990, labour markets in six of the economies of these countries achieved an annual economic growth rate of 2.7 per cent, against an annual population growth rate of 1.3.<sup>19</sup> Flexibility has led to high labour productivity, both locally and regionally, and growth in wages in numerous economic activities. The opening up of labour markets and greater flexibility resulted from successful research programmes that enhanced agricultural productivity, as well as success in creating new industries, and opportunities and jobs in services and manufacturing. The positive business environment and export-promotion policies have also contributed to the rapid transformations;

(c) The role of savings and investment is one of the most important lessons to be learned from the experience of East Asian countries. Even in the absence of consensus on the nature of the relationship between savings rates and demographic shifts, the success of East Asian economies remains linked to the creation of an economic and political environment that allowed maximum utilization of the demographic dividends. Research on the impact of the transformed age structure on the economic and social situation indicates that the size of the youth population does not have an impact on various vital areas, and that the situation of youth is not determined so much by the size of the group as by institutional and regulatory

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew Mason and Mitoshi Yamaguchi, 2007, *Population Change, Labor Markets and Sustainable Growth: Towards a New Economic Paradigm*, Amsterdam: Elsevier Press.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew Mason, 2003, *Capitalizing on the Demographic Dividend*, Population and Poverty, Population and Development Strategies (8), New York.

factors and determinants that combine to create the general framework for utilizing the capacities of youth capabilities. Indeed, the economic and institutional environment is the key factor in reaping demographic dividends, with early dividends<sup>20</sup> depending on provision of various institutional and regulatory frameworks in specific periods accompanying the beginnings of the demographic transformation in each region. For example, the economist Mason believes that the economic benefits accruing from the first demographic dividends will continue for around 52 years in the Mashreq and North Africa, from 1980 to 2030. This requires providing appropriate regulatory and institutional frameworks to utilize the demographic dividends in the best way. The role of such frameworks is not limited to the current stages, but extends to the future. Hence, research into the effect of age-structure transformations on the economy, as well as on individuals and groups, in the coming decades needs to focus on addressing future challenges and opportunities in relation to policies and institutions.<sup>21</sup> Impacts of age-structure transformations will be inconstant, requiring continuous adjustment of structural and institutional transformations of societies and economies. Though important, age structure is not the fundamental determinant of levels of youth integration in society. In fact, the status of young people and levels of their integration and participation in various vital aspects of life depend on the interplay of social organizations, governmental and non-governmental, and their combined contribution to the promotion of youth participation and to the reduction of their exclusion. The ESCWA region needs such interactions to enable it to eliminate the exclusion of youth and ensure proper utilization of the transient bulge in their numbers.

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<sup>20</sup> Early demographic returns are achieved when birth rates decline and age distribution changes to allow meeting the needs of younger groups through smaller investments, thus easing the pressure on resources needed for investment in economic and family development and social welfare. Low birth rates limit the size of the youth groups, and hence dependents within the population structure. Moreover, early demographic returns improve the ratio of the productive working population; thereby accelerating economic growth and reducing material burdens on families.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Mason, 2007, Demographic Transition and Demographic Dividends in Developing and Developed Countries, Proceedings of the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Social and Economic Implications of Changing Population Age Structures, Mexico City, 31 August-2 September 2005.

### III. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, CULTURAL LEVEL AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO YOUTH EXCLUSION

Work on improving schooling opportunities in various Arab countries coincided with high levels of youth exclusion from all levels of the educational system, which for many years led to a decline in both educational level and employment prospects for youth. Education is not limited to formal educational institutions, but also extends to the system of societal culture and local cultural patterns.

#### A. EDUCATION

Given its role in the formation of an efficient national human capital<sup>22</sup> capable of meeting the varied renewed needs of development, since the 1960s and 1970s education has constituted a mainstay of local and regional development plans and policies in the ESCWA member countries, which proceeded to provide educational opportunities for members of society within the context of strengthening democracy. Having focused initially on providing access to primary education for children, ESCWA member countries gradually expanded the opportunities offered to cover broader population groups, such as youth, providing general secondary schooling and specialized higher education in order to facilitate integration of the target groups into labour markets. The number of students enrolled in the educational system grew gradually and educational opportunities were provided, especially girls.

Notwithstanding the quantitative growth of the number of students in the countries of the region, illiteracy and dropping out of school are still prevalent. Moreover, secondary schools and higher educational institutions are still unable to provide educational opportunities for new generations of young people, as well as failing to match educational outcomes, of higher education in particular, with the requirements of local and regional labour markets. The result has been the exclusion of thousands of young people from labour markets.

##### 1. *Expansion of the educational system*

The educational system in the ESCWA member countries has experienced rapid shifts in recent decades. From a few million students enrolled at the various educational levels at the beginning of the 1980s, the number of students enrolled in public, private, general, specialized and higher educational institutions is today more than 56 million, which amounts to 22 per cent of the total population and 40 per cent of the total population groups concerned with education (5-4 years). Indeed, the number of students grew by 9 per cent in the period 1990-2000 and by 3.7 per cent in the period 2000-2009.

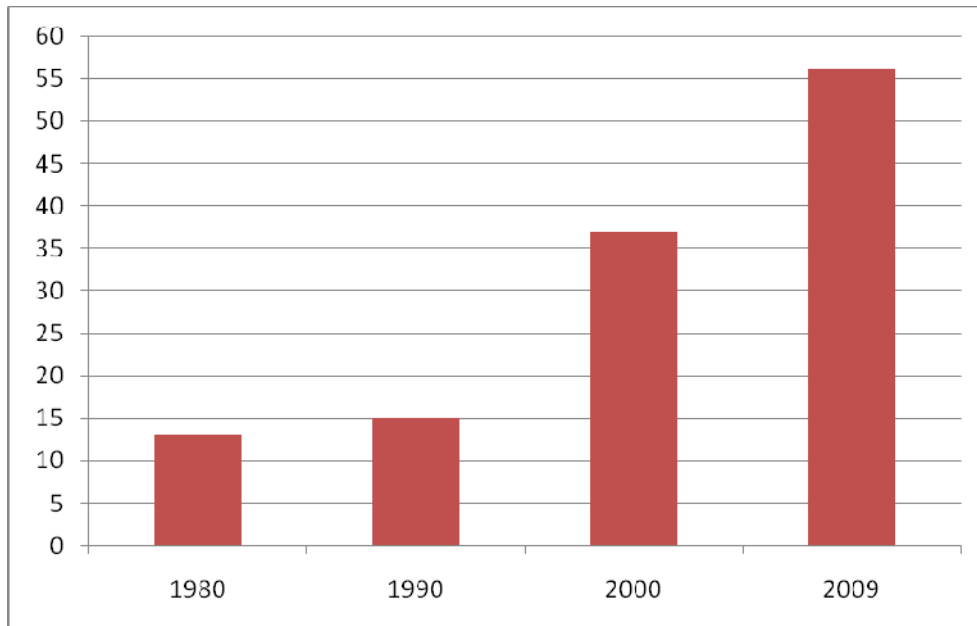
All countries of the region, albeit at different levels, have experienced growth in the number of students enrolled in education, with variations being a function of the demographics of each country and the requirements and trends of its development at various stages. Variations in the last three decades (figure 4) have also been affected by the size of investments in education and the impact of economic crises and transformations.

Variations notwithstanding, all countries of the region have experienced an expansion in student enrolment in basic education. The priority has been to provide educational opportunities to children, in line with international commitments, ratification of relevant international conventions, the Millennium Development Goals, and enactment of legislation providing for compulsory primary education. As a result, the educational base has expanded (figure 5), with primary and pre-primary students numbering now 34 million, accounting for 63 per cent of total enrolment in education.

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<sup>22</sup> Patrick Fitzsimons, 1999, *Human Capital Theory and Education*, University of Auckland, <http://www.vusst.hr/ENCYCLOPAEDIA/humancapital.htm>, on 29 March 2003; Theodore Schultz, 1961, *Investment in Human Capital*, *The American Economic Review*.

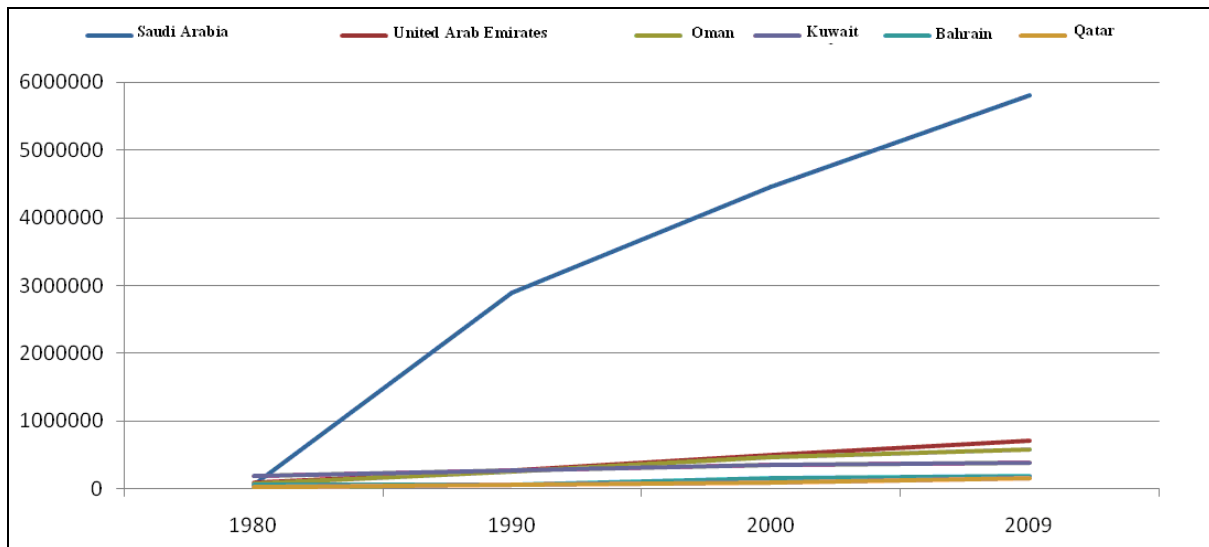
**Figure 3. Estimated numbers of students enrolled in educational institutions in the ESCWA member countries (1980-2009)**  
(In millions)



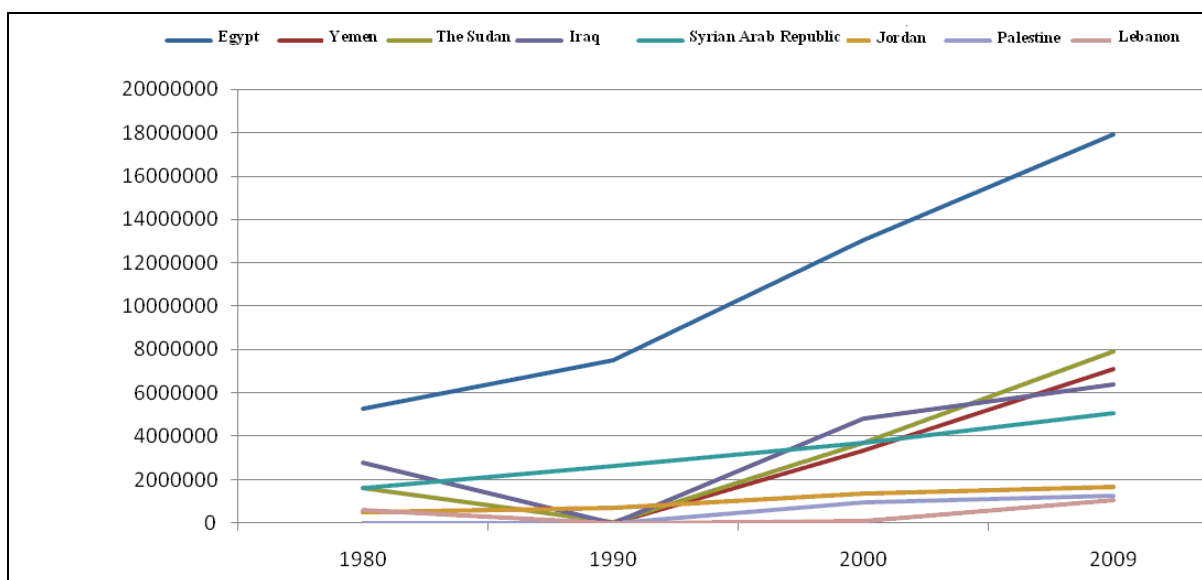
Sources: UNESCO Institute for Statistics; and Statistical Abstract of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia region, various issues.

Note: 1990 data do not cover Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen; 1980 data do not cover Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

**Figure 4. Number of students in ESCWA member countries (1980-2009)**  
**In the GCC countries**  
(In millions)



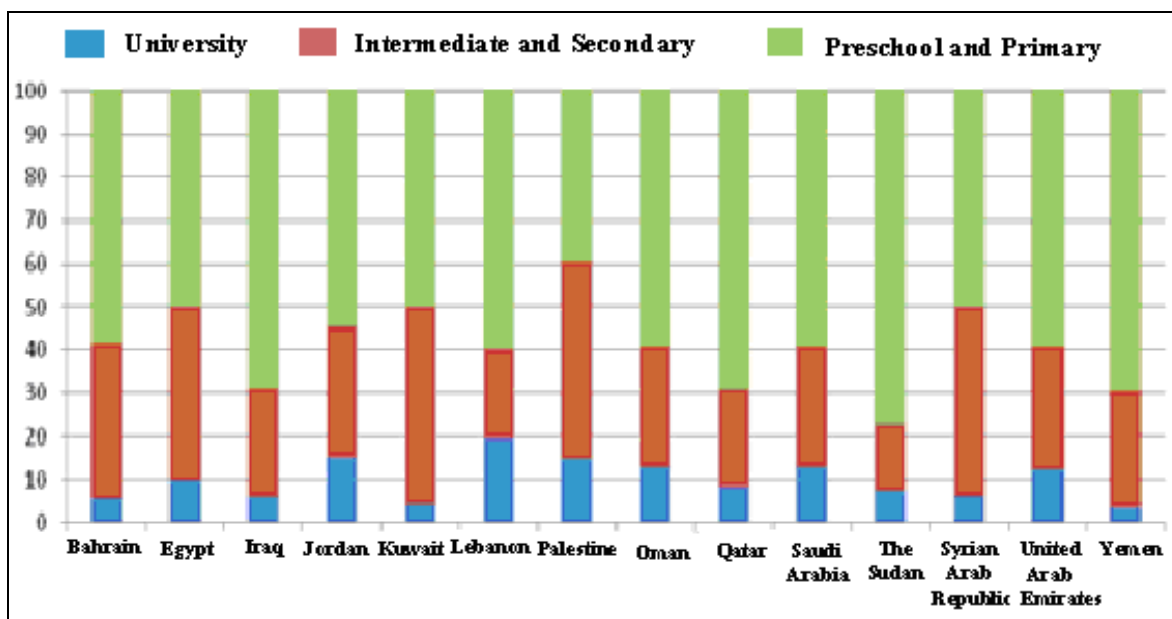
### In other ESCWA member countries



Sources: UNESCO Institute for Statistics; and Statistical Abstract of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia region, various issues.

Note: 1990 data do not cover Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen; 1980 data do not cover Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

**Figure 5. Proportional distribution of students on educational stages in the ESCWA member countries (2009)**



Sources: UNESCO Institute for Statistics; and Statistical Abstract of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia region, various issues.

Expansion of opportunities in early education stages resulted in the high enrolment rates of children of school age in most countries of the region (table 5).

TABLE 5. NET ENROLMENT IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES

Country	Total number of children (percentage)	Girls	Year
Bahrain	98.8	98.1	2009
Egypt	95.4	93.8	2009
Iraq	87.5	82	2009
Jordan	93.8	94.6	2009
Kuwait	93.4	92.6	2009
Lebanon	91.1	90.4	2009
Oman	81.1	80.4	2009
Palestine	77.5		2009
Qatar	98.4	98.3	2009
Saudi Arabia	86.4	85.1	2009
The Sudan	41.9	38	2009
Syrian Arab Republic	97.3	92.7	2008
United Arab Emirates	97.7	97	2009
Yemen	73	66	2008

Source: Millennium Development Goals Indicators, [mdgs.un.org](http://mdgs.un.org).

Though basic education has grown in recent decades reflecting demographic trends, intermediate, secondary and university education did not grow in correlation, and educational opportunities remained limited compared with population growth, particularly for the 15-24 years age group. Therefore, an inability to provide the young with educational and training opportunities remains the major weakness of the educational systems in the ESCWA region. Today, in countries of the region, only 15.5 million students are enrolled in intermediate and secondary education, amounting to a mere 27 per cent of total students, and just over 5 million students are enrolled in university education, amounting to 9 per cent of total students, which suggests that available educational opportunities to young people in the region are indeed very limited.

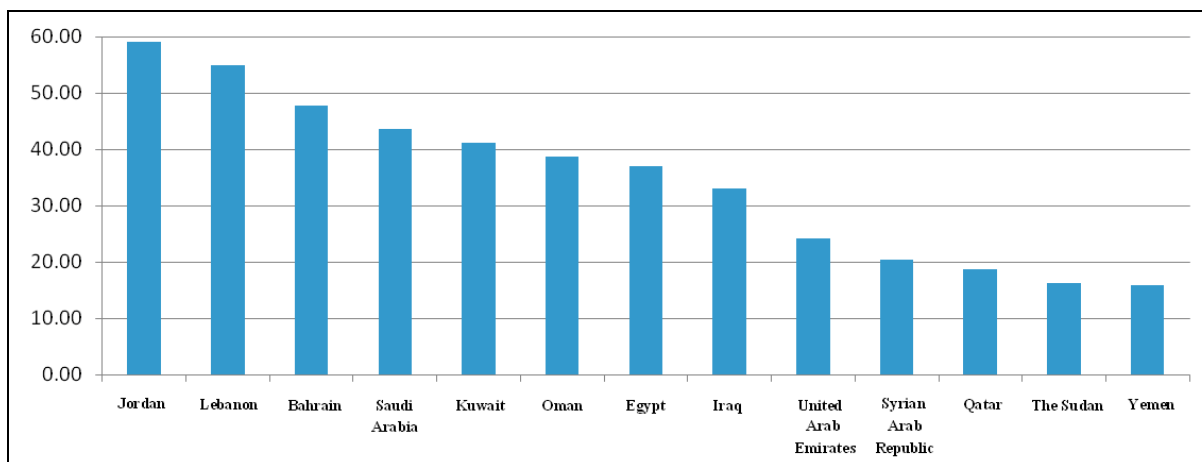
## 2. Educational opportunities available to young people

Educational systems face a range of societal challenges, most notably meeting the growing educational needs of new generations and matching demographic growth with appropriate educational provision. The continued growth of the very young and young age groups exacerbates these challenges, requiring numerous investments to meet new demands.

In the ESCWA region, development and education policies have focused primarily on providing primary-education opportunities and have not succeeded in securing achievements in intermediate, secondary and university education. Indeed, due to demographic growth and despite expansion of state investments in education in recent years, access to these latter levels has narrowed compared with primary education.

In many countries of the region, the absorptive capacity of intermediate, secondary and higher education institutions for youth in the 15-24 age group is limited. Only around a fifth of young people in this age group have access to education in Qatar, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, compared with one third in Egypt and Iraq. In Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia youth have wider educational opportunities, as more than 40 per cent continue their studies. This discrepancy, which may be affected by the relative weight of the youth in the population, can be further explained by educational policies in each country, periods of growth of the educational system, the development of new teaching systems in secondary education, such as the introduction of new specializations in technical and specialized education, and the diversity of higher education institutions, through establishing private universities and educational institutions.

**Figure 6. Proportion of those enrolled in intermediate, secondary and higher education of the total number of young people in per cent (2009)**



Sources: UNESCO Institute for Statistics; and Statistical Abstract of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia region, various issues; and the Population Division in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at the United Nations (2009).

The region is expected to face a range of challenges. Notable among these are: pressures of demographic growth on the educational system, which will cripple its ability to absorb new cohorts of youth; the need to diversify general and specialized educational institutions to expand capacity and create new learning opportunities, which requires the involvement of the various economic actors, including the private sector and employers; and the need to adopt a new approach to the management of education that goes beyond providing only educational opportunities to eliminate illiteracy to provide broader educational opportunities in line with developments in educational systems and the needs of labour markets and to reduce the exclusion of young people of school age. These challenges suggest that educational standards of youth in the region are contingent upon expansion of educational systems and opportunities; however this is not the only factor, for there are other important factors, such as motivating students to continue their studies.

### 3. Dropping out of school

Dropping out of school is one of the challenges facing educational systems, which attempt to introduce measures to eliminate it and limit its negative consequences on the education system itself, as well as on the students and their families. Such challenges reduce the level of future integration of individuals in the labour market, and the general level of education in society. They also result in systems that do not provide wide educational opportunities, especially for youth, as is the case in ESCWA member countries.

In this regard, ESCWA member countries face two types of problems: the failure to attend school altogether, and dropping out of primary, intermediate or secondary (general or specialist) education. Both constitute a failure of the educational system and reduce the chances of hundreds of thousands of young people integrating economically, which in turn increases the prospects of their eventual exclusion. The limited available data on school-dropout levels in the ESCWA member countries suggests that they are high. In Egypt, 1,103,192 people in the 6-18 years age group did not enrol in education in 2006, around 5.76 per cent, while the female dropout rate stood at 6.95 per cent. Moreover, school dropout rates, including females, vary within each country, being higher than average in rural governorates (table 6).

TABLE 6. SCHOOL DROPOUT (NON-ENROLMENT) AMONG FEMALES IN EGYPT  
(2006)

Governorate	Number		Percentage	
	Total	Female	Total	Female
Country total	1 013 192	590 831	5.76	6.95
Minya	122 974	82 497	10.5	15.04
Asyut	100 535	63 123	10.5	13.81
Sohag	81 396	53 486	7.75	10.69
Beheira	72 927	42 220	6.5	7.77
Beni Suef	70 729	46 223	10.99	14.92
Faiyum	68 104	42 036	9.98	12.84
6 <sup>th</sup> of October	47 421	27 012	7.36	8.75

Source: Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics in Egypt.

Dropping out occurs at all educational levels, including vocational training institutes. In Egypt, 416,023 pupils between the ages of 6 and 18 years dropped out in 2006, amounting to 2.37 per cent of the total population of that age group. The proportion of male dropouts, which exceeded that of female dropouts, was 2.67 per cent of the total of the 6-18 years age group and it varies from one governorate to another.

In Iraq, more than one million students dropped out of all levels of education, including vocational training institutions during the period 2006-2008. The majority were males, constituting more than 64 per cent of total dropouts for this period (table 7).

TABLE 7. DISTRIBUTION OF DROPOUTS BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND GENDER IN IRAQ  
(2006-2007 AND 2007-2008)

	Primary education			Secondary education			Vocational education			Total number		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Numbers												
2006-2008	432 630	269 319	<b>701 949</b>	208 325	94 025	<b>302 350</b>	17 272	4 570	<b>21 842</b>	658 227	367 914	<b>1 026 141</b>
Per cent												
2006-2008	61.63	38.37	<b>68.41</b>	68.90	31.10	<b>29.5</b>	79.077	20.92	<b>2.13</b>	64.15	35.85	100

Source: Ministry of Planning, Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract 2008-2009.

Dropout rates in ESCWA member countries suggest that students find difficulty in adapting to educational contexts and that educational systems and curricula are unable to adjust to pupils. This affects educational outcomes and illiteracy rates among young people, and reduces their chances of integrating into the labour market, leading to the exclusion of hundreds of thousands from the formal labour market, pushing them to work in irregular lower-paid jobs in informal markets.

#### 4. Illiteracy among youth

In 2009, in the ESCWA region, more than 6 million young people were illiterate, approximately 12 per cent of the total. Females accounted for more than 62 per cent of all illiterates, reflecting persistent differences in access to education between males and females as a result of numerous institutional, social and subjective factors. Illiteracy is not a personal choice; it is the outcome of differences in development between regions within a country, and the absence or insufficiency of basic educational institutions in rural and Bedouin areas, leading to paucity of educational opportunities, especially for girls. Societal factors, such as the behaviour of individuals and groups, contribute to the spread of illiteracy among girls, through depriving them of their right to learn and preventing them from leaving rural towns that lack appropriate educational institutions. In addition, poor households tend to dispense with the education of their children, especially girls, which purports to explain such high rates of illiteracy (table 8).



TABLE 8. DISTRIBUTION OF ILLITERACY AMONG YOUTH BY GENDER

	Males		Females		Total youth
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
Bahrain	15	51.7	14	48.28	29
Egypt	1 057 338	40.7	1 539 819	59.29	2 597 157
Iraq	474 426	44.9	583 157	55.14	1 057 583
Jordan	6 756	51.2	6 432	48.77	13 188
Kuwait	3 424	57.3	2 556	42.74	5 980
Lebanon	6 199	64.1	3 465	35.85	9 664
Oman	7 168	52.8	6 414	47.22	13 582
Palestine	3 321	51.1	3 172	48.85	6 493
Qatar	4 625	78.7	1 252	21.30	5 877
Saudi Arabia	32 405	27.9	83 662	72.08	116 067
The Sudan	474 899	39.4	730 057	60.59	1 204 956
Syrian Arab Republic	98 151	38.2	159 125	61.85	257 276
United Arab Emirates	25 479	76.0	8 035	23.98	33 514
Yemen	117 023	14.2	709 885	85.85	826 908
Total number	2 311 237	37.6	3 837 044	62.4	6 148 281

*Source:* Estimates of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics: Egypt (2006), Jordan (2007), Kuwait (2008), Oman (2008), and United Arab Emirates (2005).

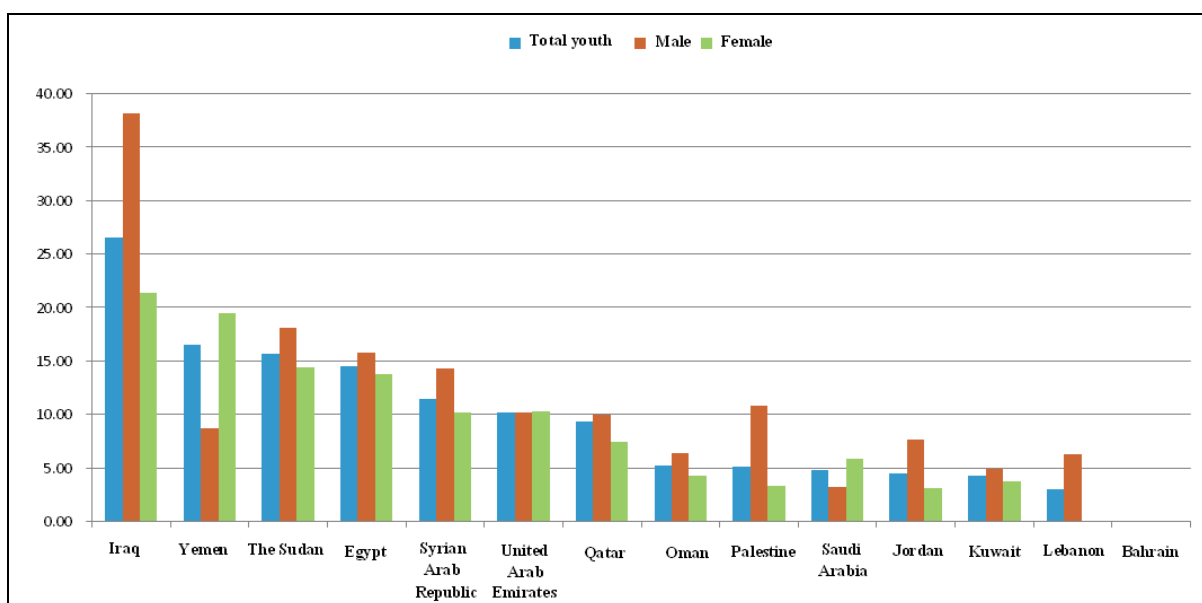
Youth illiteracy levels vary among ESCWA member countries (table 8). Egypt, Iraq, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen account for 97 per cent of illiterate youth in the region, compared with 3 per cent in the rest of the countries. While youth illiteracy is concentrated primarily in countries that experienced rapid population growth in recent years, countries such as Iraq, the Sudan and Yemen, where illiteracy is more widespread, have suffered political and social unrest since the beginning of the 1990s.

The disparity between the two genders is also clear. Illiteracy is widespread among girls in Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, but is widespread among males in the rest of the countries of the region. In addition, there are disparities within the same region. In the GCC region, for example, illiteracy rates among girls in Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are lower than in Saudi Arabia. These rates indicate a transformation in the status of women in the Gulf States, and attests to the fact many of these States have provided educational opportunities for both genders on an equal footing and without discrimination.

Notwithstanding the occupation and the limited capability of the Palestinian Authority, UNESCO data point to relatively low illiteracy rates in Palestine, mainly due to the presence of many old educational institutions and the keenness of Palestinian institutions since 1970s on providing educational opportunities for Palestinians in the camps in Palestine and the diaspora.

In view of the varied demographic characteristics and sizes of youth populations in the ESCWA member countries, the ratios of youth illiteracy vary, ranging from 3 to 26 per cent (figure 7), and is more than 15 per cent in Iraq, the Sudan and Yemen. These rates, which are some of the highest across the world, presage the difficulty of integrating young people in future, especially in the absence of remedial frameworks to help integrate them into working life. Unless the countries concerned take exceptional literacy and training measures in the period 2012-2015, and exert an effort to integrate youth gradually in the following years, social exclusion of youth will be exacerbated in the coming years or decades.

**Figure 7. Illiteracy rates among youth in ESCWA member countries by gender (2009)**



*Source:* Estimates of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics: Egypt (2006), Jordan (2007), Kuwait (2008), Oman (2008), and United Arab Emirates (2005).

Youth illiteracy rates in a second group of countries that includes Egypt, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates ranges between more than 5 and less than 15 per cent, while rates in a third group consisting of Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia are less than 5 per cent.

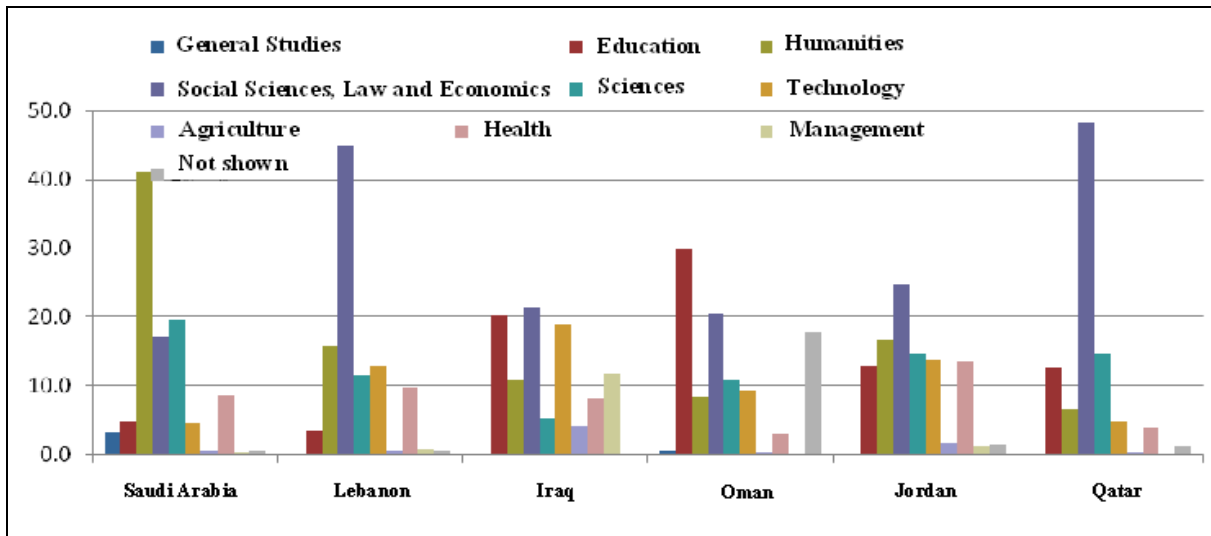
Undoubtedly, levels of youth exclusion or integration in the ESCWA region will be affected in the future by the educational standards of young people and their qualifications. The absence of the professional requirements essential for many jobs will reduce levels of integration and increase the exclusion of large segments of youth, especially in countries where rates of illiteracy exceed 15 per cent, while other countries can reduce youth exclusion through the development and implementation of programmes and plans aimed primarily at unqualified young people.

Lack of education and training, especially basic education, are the most important determinants of youth marginalization and exclusion in the ESCWA region. Yet, economic exclusion and unemployment also affect young qualified people and college graduates.

### 5. Higher Education

Higher education in ESCWA member countries has undergone major development in recent decades. From a few national universities in the 1970s and 1980s, it has expanded today to include numerous national and international higher-education institutes providing graduate studies in various disciplines and graduating large numbers holding advanced degrees. In the first decades, graduates of national universities did not face any difficulties in obtaining jobs. However, in recent years, graduate unemployment multiplied for several reasons: the shortage of available employment; the structure and content of higher education; and the dominance of traditional disciplines, such as education, humanities, law and general studies (figure 8). These disciplines do not meet the new requirements of local and regional labour markets. Moreover, national higher- education institutions persist in using traditional educational methods that create a disparity between the outcomes of the higher education system and labour market requirements. As a result, in an attempt to increase their chances of economic integration, many high school graduates enrol in international universities that have sprung up in various countries of the region, or if they can afford to, pursue their studies abroad.

**Figure 8. Distribution of students enrolled in higher education institutions in a number of ESCWA member countries by scientific specialization (2009)**



In addition, political and social youth exclusion ensues from the scarcity of opportunities available to young people for political engagement and participation in the management of public affairs, or even to have a say on issues that affect them, as well as from the lack of cultural and informational freedom and communication channels among young people within the country and the region.

## B. CULTURAL FACTORS

The trends and sources of youth culture in Arab countries are diverse. Some are derived from social customs, habits and traditions, thus constituting an essential component of general culture; and some are derived from contemporary culture, combining the originality of heritage and history with current-era philosophies, technologies and lifestyles. Indeed, Arab youth culture is abundantly rich and truly diverse.

Ibn Khaldun surmises that the attitudes and values of people, and therefore their culture and awareness, are determined by their chances of making a living. Adopting this viewpoint sheds light on the impact of the societal context on Arab youth status and participation. The full picture becomes clearer when the impact of external factors, especially globalization, is considered. Young people are more open to other cultures and aspire for change; hence the emergence of gaps between them and society, which sometimes leads to their exclusion.

### 1. Youth and the problem of cultural exclusion

The composition of youth in Arab countries is diverse. Some live in the countryside, others in cities; they belong to families of varied economic and social conditions and political affiliation; some are rich or wealthy and some are poor or impoverished. They are schooled in either local Arabic, multilanguage schools or foreign institutions; in religious, technical or general education. Some find rewarding jobs, others are unemployed and deprived. Some live in harmony with their surrounding environment, others rebel against environment and family. Moreover, young people are more open to other cultures and some travel abroad and discover other cultures and lifestyles. They are forward looking and ambitious, more inclined to adopt the values of change and renewal, and most rebellious against prevalent values and standards and social, political and life choices. Such social diversity is reflected in the wide-ranging relations of young people with their social environment, with many feeling excluded or alienated, particularly culturally.

Societal, cultural and identity-related issues are the principal areas where gaps between youth values and social attitudes are most apparent. A study prepared by the New Jordan Centre for Studies and Research in 2001 aimed at identifying the views of young Jordanians on a number of issues, showed that around 34 per cent of those surveyed believe that the most important problem facing young Jordanians is unemployment; while around 10 per cent said that it is discrimination against women; 8 per cent leisure; and 8 per cent drug addiction. The study concluded that youth problems in Jordan exist in several different areas and at several different levels, including: (a) the family: difficult relations among generations, gender discrimination, absence of youth participation in decision-making in family affairs, and finally the weak role of the family in the upbringing of young people; (b) participation in the public domain: absence of youth and student centres, lack of awareness by young people of the importance of participation in public life, interest by young people in their own living problems only, to the exclusion of participation in public affairs, laws that hinder youth participation, narrow confines of freedom of youth to participate, and weakness of non-governmental organizations; (c) work: common negative perceptions of certain professions and businesses, low wages, unemployment, reliance on patronage rather than competence in employment, difficult conditions imposed on private-sector employees, difficulty of labour migration, scarcity of training and qualification opportunities, shortage of funds to support youth projects, and lack of encouragement for young talent; (d) culture and cultural identity: inequality, lack of clarity on limits on freedoms, intolerance, tribalism, poor awareness and democratic upbringing, sometimes blind imitation of the West, certain negative norms and traditions, abandonment of moral and religious principles, and negative impact of social inequality on national unity.

Another study on Social and Economic Problems of youth in Syrian Arab Republic has classified the problems of Arab youth in general and Syrian youth in particular, in four categories: (a) psychological problems, such as feelings of loss, alienation and frustration because of various political interactions and family pressures; (b) economic problems related to employment, housing, concern about the future, unemployment, poverty, and lack of hope for a better future; (c) ethical-social problems resulting from conflict between the values of the young generation and the generation of their parents, as well as from religious extremism, lack of opportunities for constructive exploitation of leisure time, and limited recreation facilities; (d) problems of misbehaviour, delinquency and alcohol and drug abuse; (e) political problems related to certain existing systems and violated freedoms.

The cultural gap between young people and their societies is widening. Increasing numbers of young people feel that there is a barrier between them and older generations. Differences in ways of thinking and behaviour lead each party to have entrenched views of the other that are often stereotyped and replete with non-negotiable sets of prior judgments and maxims. Young people view older generations of parents, officials and intellectuals as more conservative, rigid and conformist to social norms and controls; accuse them of being heavy-handed, dealing with the young through commands and prohibitions; of lacking understanding and eschewing dialogue; and of patronizing and interfering with the personal choices of the young of careers, marriage, education, and perhaps even dress and appearance. On their part, older people see in the young nothing but impulsiveness, lack of experience, irresponsibility, indifference and recklessness. Thus, feelings of alienation among young people are mutually reinforced, in addition to being buttressed by political and economic marginalization factors.

## *2. Arab youth: diverse cultural patterns and problems*

The emergence of young people as an independent social cohort depends on youth having their own particular culture. In Arab countries today, youth culture seems globalized; much is imported from abroad and reaches Arab youth through general and digital media, modern communication means and educational institutions. Lucia Falk, a social and cultural researcher, presented a depiction of youth in the rich bourgeois class in Beirut, which corresponds in varying degrees to broad sectors of Arab youth in ESCWA member countries. She indicates that the lifestyle of this social group revolves around the interaction of three cultural spaces: traditional, local and global. Traditional cultural space denotes the various components of Lebanese popular culture, food habits and popular music; Arabic culture in general and nostalgia for and attachment to historical reference frameworks. By local space is meant local media, Lebanese television programmes, the

relationship with the new urban spaces associated with the reconstruction of Beirut and the satirical culture mocking the chaos of the new life. Finally, the global cultural space consists of Western music, stars, and fashion, the Internet, the proliferation of fast-food restaurants, such as McDonald's, and the hegemony of consumer culture and the English language. Youth culture is not homogeneous, nor does it emanate from a single source; rather, it has multiple sources and is affected by the classes and social groupings to which young people belong within the same country. One cannot speak of one youth culture but of youth cultures, which are variable cultures that are in a constant state of formation and re-formation in order to avoid confrontations and clashes. Hence, it seems that the quest for Arab identity or Arab nationalism is no longer a major concern for Arab youth, as was the case of the 1960s and 1970s. Instead, the focus has shifted from individual identity, to attitudes towards the other and the family, to the state and minorities, to daily life. In the southern suburbs of Beirut, for example, young men and women tend to reshape their space and give new meanings to their religious faith, constantly reconciling their need to experience lives different from those of their families with their avowed wish to remain under the umbrella of religion. They rationalize their hybrid choices, which combine new forms with the behavioural dictates of their sect, by referring to authorities of the same sect. In analysing the music produced by young Palestinians in camps in Lebanon, one researcher found that they reconcile national and revolutionary themes, which reflect the somewhat traditional concerns of their community and expressions of their daily concerns with such things as love and the hardships of the daily lives of refugees, mixing the traditional with the modern in a consistent synthesis.

The multicultural orientations of young people are not isolated from the overall cultural landscape of Arab societies, especially the multiplicity of the components of the general cultural identity; the impact and influence of the Arab, Islamic, Mediterranean and Gulf identities; and the proximity to or detachment from Western and other cultures. And this raises questions about the factors that shape the identity of Arab youth at a stage in their lives when building identity and determining belonging looms large. In addition, the multicultural identities of young people express their concerns and fears towards the challenges posed by the new globalised economic order; in particular fears of exclusion and unemployment.

### *3. Globalization and the making of youth culture*

Youth cultures in the Arab countries are highly influenced by the profundity of the history of the region; the diversity of its peoples: Arabs, Pharaohs, Berbers, Turks, Africans, and Persians; the multiplicity of its religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism; and the diversity of its civilizations: Islamic, Pharaonic, Greek and Roman. Indeed, Arab culture remains multifaceted and without any one dominant colour, which allowed it to be influenced by modern globalised culture. Youth culture in the Arab countries can be divided into three main categories, according to the extent of influence by globalization.

#### *(a) The first category*

This category consists of young people who had the opportunity to pursue a diverse higher education, acquired multiple educational skills and became proficient in more than one language. They belong economically to the upper class of businessmen and politicians; are able to access the finest education, which facilitates their entry into the labour market; and are adept at using communications technology skilfully and efficiently. Moreover, they are likely to agree with the culture disseminated by the satellite channels; this is reflected in their dress, their consumption patterns and their relationships with others and even with their group and their families. They have a greater freedom of choice than their peers and their family relationships are more flexible and less burdensome.

In general, youth belonging to this category are not concerned with domestic political issues and the consequences of the policies pursued, as long as they are unaffected. However, recent events have revealed an unexpected sense of Arab patriotism among youth; many having led and took part in protests against the United States intervention in Iraq and the ongoing aggression on Palestine. These young people have great networking capacities at the international level and many are members of international non-governmental networks.

Globalization has provided this group with new means of recreation and with better access to knowledge, enjoyment, learning, wider experiences and tremendous communication facilities, which has strengthened their ties with the outside world while weakening ties with their home countries. Emergence of this category of youth in all Arab countries is attributable to the formation of new professional groups of businessmen as a result of the economic changes in most Arab countries in recent years.

(b) *The second category*

This category includes young people who were able to benefit from national educational opportunities and managed to obtain a variety of national certificates at various different levels, without acquiring the skills and knowledge that facilitate integration into the labour market.

Members of this category, from both urban and rural areas, come from families able to educate their children. The upper middle class in this category benefits from the advantages of the Internet and means of communication, while the rest are content with the common manifestations of globalization, most notably satellite television.

The young people of this category acquire the values of globalization through satellite television, as well as by imitating the behaviour of the first category, leading them to modify their culture and evade religious prohibitions, and fuelling their ambitions to become wealthy and their desire to enjoy consumer goods.

These are the children of the middle class, which maintains and transmits local culture. In their relationship with their families, they are less rebellious than their peers in the first category; show a certain degree of loyalty to the family; are more religious, and constantly seek to achieve a balance between the new foreign culture and the local culture.

These young people attach great importance to their affiliations; are most concerned with the problems of the nation, as evidenced by their participation in various national demonstrations in, for example, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt; and are more actively engaged with general Arab issues.

This category is the largest, and its purchasing power fuels consumption of the products of globalization. If young people in the first category are experiencing a cultural conflict from within, members of this category experience such a conflict more acutely, for it involves searching for an identity.

(c) *The third category*

This category includes the young people who did not have an access to higher education and have acquired only middle-level qualifications. They come from the neglected and poor rural and urban areas and slums; and are either fully deprived of the technology of globalization, or consumers of information materials broadcast by audio-visual media. The size of this category varies from one country to another. The most serious problem they face is their heavy exposure to new values, through interaction with their peers in other segments of society, whom they imitate blindly and uncritically. The technology of globalization reinforces their sense of inferiority and deprivation, driving them to despair or violence and exposing them to crime, drugs and organized violence.

Burdened by their impossible expectations and powerlessness and by having to pay the price of the economic consequences of globalization, these young people feel frustrated and deal with cultural globalization only with the logic of the "stolen opportunity". They are also the ones who most watch indecent films, adhere to worn traditions and commit rape.

#### *4. Local culture and its manifestations in young people*

Researchers agree that local culture at the level of the country has a most important impact on young people. A cultural industry that is planned and programmed, as is the case in the West and China, is absent in Arab countries. This is due to the lack of a strategic sense of the importance of this industry, and to the

existing economic and social systems which continue to distance themselves from trading in values, as well as from making culture a capital resource. Often cultural heritage in Arab countries is formed incidentally and without planning, as a result of historical accretion of tribal or colonial-period norms. Local youth culture is derived from the prevailing economic systems, from the educational systems and their role in society, and from other societal systems, such as the family, the clan and the tribe. The political system also plays a role in the formation of youth culture and in the dissemination of political values and ideologies. Generally, these systems mirror society; they do not seek to change it, but rather to reproduce it through the perpetuation of the culture of the ancestry. Surveys in several North African countries indicate that violence, aggression and indiscipline are entrenched elements of spontaneous youth culture. These emerge in spaces where young people meet; most importantly in the school. As an official institution, the school seeks to teach young people patterns of behaviour consistent with prevalent morality and in line with the expectations of adults, but it often turns into an environment that reinforces a counter-culture based on violence and deviancy. Some research shows that behaviours such as violence in various forms, smoking, alcohol and sometimes drug abuse are widespread, reflecting lack of civil sense among young people. These patterns of behaviour have a serious impact on the mental and physical health of youth and reduce their ability to succeed in education, thus limiting their chances of social integration. Today, negative values and behaviours resulting from: absence of a national vision of the role of youth in community life; lack of citizenship; ambiguity of basic principles governing the relationship between youth and community, which determine the responsibility of the young towards themselves and their countries, including, most importantly, their rights and duties. Local culture and the absence of a cultural agenda have led to culture of argumentation, rather than one of dialogue and acceptance of differences; a culture of enmity, rather than tolerance; of submission and obedience, rather than encounter and competition. Compliance is also prevalent among young people, reflected in their reluctance to challenge bureaucratic systems and undemocratic patterns of power. Since they do not trust these systems, they decline to participate, preferring to stay on the margin. Convinced that they do not have a role to play, they withdraw and distance themselves from all that makes them feel helpless and incapable of self-realization.

As for youth participation in work, the prevailing culture is one of apathy, contempt for manual labour, lack of interest in voluntary work, rejection of self-employment, and reliance on others instead of self-reliance. The culture of entrepreneurship is almost non-existent, and this is reflected by low creativity in various fields. Obsolete cultural values that promote old economic systems and the importance of public sector as a safety net from unemployment and poverty are widespread. In addition, shunning manual work is prevalent; young people believe that these manual occupations are inferior and will not qualify them for marriage and social integration. Similarly, vocational education is undermined and the importance of schooling in gaining material and moral advantages is underestimated. The culture of indifference spawned by existing challenges and an absence of social development produces apathetic young people, who invariably attempt to shed all obligations and resort to sensual pleasures, through drug abuse, for example.

Youth culture oscillates between acceptance and rejection of women's rights and gender equality. Many young people, both male and female, express dissatisfaction with the present status of women in the Arab world. Some advocate greater equality and reject all forms of gender discrimination, while others simply acknowledge the various forms of injustice suffered by women in Arab societies, without calling for reform. Some young people believe that the current status of Arab women cannot be bettered, either comparing it to the past, or in the belief that red lines should not be crossed under the pretext of women's emancipation and gender equality, while others still feel that gender issues should be the purview of religious authorities. Proponents of this last position believe that the natural place for a woman is the home, to carry out marital duties and care for the children and husband. They add that any other course would be a departure from the correct path, resulting from unwarranted imitation of alien Western modernity. The multiplicity of these attitudes is due to various factors associated with: gender; historical characteristics of the social environment in which young people live; the impact of traditional religious institutions or new fundamentalist movements; the depth of rooted social and political reform and modernization movements within the country; and, finally, the interaction of several variables, at the forefront of which are urban lifestyles and belonging to the middle classes that are more open to modernity.

#### IV. ECONOMIC FACTORS AND YOUTH EXCLUSION

Demographic shifts and the emergence of new youth groups requires a range of measures to ensure the integration of youth in all vital areas, including economic life, and to provide them with opportunities to employ their capacities and enhance their participation. The numbers of young people in the ESCWA region have multiplied and the investment of countries in education has grown in an attempt to ensure the wider participation of young people in the future. Yet, in many cases, because of high rates of youth unemployment and unproductive employment, the huge investments were ineffective, thus impeding economic growth and excluding and marginalizing numerous human capacities. Youth economic exclusion and youth unemployment in the ESCWA region are associated to some extent with demographic shifts. However, they are linked primarily to economic structures and their flexibility; and the openness of local markets and their capacity to absorb new arrivals, by providing opportunities for decent work and ensuring smooth transition from the educational system to work. The ESCWA member countries, like other Arab countries, have some of the highest rates of youth unemployment in the world. However, young people are unequal in terms of economic exclusion; in fact, unemployment rates are exceptionally high among females, giving youth exclusion a gender bias. The composition of the unemployed youth thwarts the economic integration of first-time job seekers, hindering the transition from education to work and posing various economic and development policy challenges.

##### A. YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKFORCE

In 2008, the working-age population in the ESCWA region was 160 million, amounting to 2.03 per cent of the world's total working-age population. It also had 51 million young people, amounting to 4.2 per cent of the world total. Hence, the region is a reservoir of active manpower. Between 1998 and 2008, the working-age population increased by 37 per cent, and the youth population increased by the second-fastest rate in the world after sub-Saharan Africa (table 9). The increase in youth population in the region is due to the slowness of the decline in fertility rates.

TABLE 9. TOTAL YOUTH POPULATION OF WORKING AGE IN REGIONS OF THE WORLD

	Total population of working age (15-64) (thousands)			Total adult population (25-64) (thousands)			Total youth population (15-24) (thousands)		
	1998	2008	Change over 1998-2008	1998	2008	Change over 1998-2008	1998	2008	Change over 1998-2008
The world	4 170 917	4 991 468	19.7	3 114 375	3 782 996	21.5	1 056 542	1 208 472	14.4
Countries with advanced economies and the European Union	810 056	883 267	9	680 163	754 386	10.9	129 894	128 881	-0.8
Central and South Eastern Europe (Non-member States of the European Union and the Russian Federation)	284 814	306 797	7.7	223 114	242 461	8.7	61 700	64 335	4.3
East Asia	983 803	1 148 638	16.8	771 705	904 875	17.3	212 097	243 763	14.9
South East Asia and the Pacific	344 103	423 799	23.2	243 747	314 741	29.1	100 357	109 059	8.7
South Asia	856 592	1 084 512	26.6	593 200	77 066	29.9	263 392	313 853	19.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	344 993	418 967	21.4	246 432	314 184	27.5	98 560	104 783	6.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	339 585	448 349	32	219 028	289 981	32.4	120 557	158 368	31.4
The Arab Region	164 684	221 318	34.39	109 353	157 944	44.43	55 332	68 473	23.75
Countries of ESCWA Region	116 479	159 886	37.27	77 202	109 145	41.37	39 277	50 740	29.1
North Africa	48 205	61 432	27.43	32 151	43 699	35.91	16 054	17 733	10.45

Source: ILO Global Employment Trends for Youth Report, October/2008.



A distinguishing feature of youth participation in the local workforce in ESCWA member countries is the existence of two patterns of participation, one for men and one for women.

The first pattern applies to Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar and the Syrian Arab Republic, where the growth of male participation is higher. Since economic and demographic conditions in these countries vary, so do growth rates. In Qatar, for example, at 17.57 per cent annually, the growth rate of youth participation in the workforce is exceptional, resulting from the recruitment of young expatriates. Annual increases in rates of youth participation in the region range from 0.98 per cent in Lebanon, to 2.14 per cent in Egypt, 2 per cent in the Syrian Arab Republic, 1.85 per cent in Kuwait, to 1.72 per cent in Bahrain and Oman. The second pattern, which is distinguished by a high level of female participation compared to male, applies to countries with diverse economic, developmental, demographic, social and political systems. For example, the participation of women in the workforce in Qatar increased at an exceptional rate of 13.66 per cent per annum. This was a result of bringing in large numbers of females, especially as domestic workers and in public services, in addition to the increasing numbers of Qatari women participating in the labour market, followed by Iraqi, Jordanian, Omani, Palestinian, Saudi Arabian, Sudanese and Yemeni women, with annual growth rates ranging from 1.54 to 6.43 per cent. These changes indicate enhanced participation of women in recent decades as a result of the expansion of educational opportunities and emergence of new activities and occupations in which women are engaged. However, there have been some special cases, such as the rapid decline in youth participation in the United Arab Emirates, for example, resulting from shifts in the composition and size of the expatriate workforce and the departure of large numbers of international migrant workers in recent years.

TABLE 10. ANNUAL GROWTH RATES OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN WORKFORCE  
BY GENDER (2000-2009)

	Males	Females	Total
Bahrain	1.72	0.91	1.52
Egypt	2.14	1.07	1.44
Iraq	1.00	1.54	1.04
Jordan	0.87	3.72	1.19
Kuwait	1.85	1.59	1.77
Lebanon	0.98	0.64	0.88
Oman	1.72	2.10	1.83
Palestine	0.53	6.43	1.31
Qatar	17.57	13.66	17.06
Saudi Arabia	0.36	2.37	0.59
The Sudan	1.20	1.61	1.33
Syrian Arab Republic	2.00	0.89	1.80
United Arab Emirates	1.37	1.24	0.79
Yemen	3.79	4.95	4.01

Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Key Indicators of the Labour Market <http://kilm ilo.org/KILMnetBeta/default2.asp>.

In addition to social, economic, cultural, demographic and political conditions, levels of youth participation remain dependent on the employment opportunities available to them and wage levels. Nor can the effect of the nature of jobs (temporary or permanent) available to young people and their association with formal or informal work opportunities be underestimated, especially in light of growing informal employment and very low working standards. Notable also is the influence of the legal status of certain minorities in the region, which precludes participation of their youth in various local labour markets and exclude them from a wide range of formal jobs, for example, the Kurds in the Syrian Arab Republic and the stateless in a number of Gulf States, such as Kuwait.

## B. CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT IN ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES

Over 2001-2009, countries in the Middle East achieved the highest growth rates in employment in the world,<sup>23</sup> between 3.0 and 3.6 per cent. This growth applied, at comparable levels, to the various age groups (table 11) other than youth, whose employment levels declined since the beginning of the 2000s. In the ESCWA region, rates of youth employment, already the lowest compared to other regions in the world, declined rapidly, leading to a decrease in available job opportunities and difficulty in transition from school to the labour market. Indeed, economies of the region failed to integrate young people into the labour market, even in periods of expansion of total employment opportunities. The ESCWA member countries have plainly failed to meet the evolving and varied needs of their youth.

TABLE 11. GROWTH IN EMPLOYMENT RATES BY AGE GROUP IN ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES (1995-2009)

	Over 15 years	15-24	25 years and higher	Total
1995-2000	3.4	4.06	3.24	10.7
2000-2005	3.05	1.57	3.4	8.02
2005-2009	2.63	1.38	2.89	6.9

Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Key Indicators of the Labour Market <http://kilm ilo.org/KILMnetBeta/default2.asp>.

High employment rates in the region, except among the young, are attributable to the expansion of the needs of several countries, especially GCC countries, for foreign labour to implement developmental projects. However, this growth has excluded the regional workforce, as evidenced by the low levels of Arab labour participation in the Gulf labour markets in recent years.

TABLE 12. LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION IN WORKFORCE BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA (2000-2009)

	2000	2005	2009
The world	61.5	61.4	61.2
Countries with advanced economies and the European Union	56.7	56.2	55.5
Central and South Eastern Europe (Non-member States of the European Union and the Russian Federation)	51.7	52.4	53.4
East Asia	73.5	71.9	70
South East Asia and the Pacific	67.1	65.6	65.9
South Asia	57.5	58.5	59
Latin America and the Caribbean	58.1	59.9	60.6
Sub-Saharan Africa	63.5	64.3	65.2
The Arab region	44.30	45.15	46.20
Countries of ESCWA region	45.05	44.55	45.31
North Africa	42.46	46.66	48.53

Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Key Indicators of the Labour Market <http://kilm ilo.org/KILMnetBeta/default2.asp>.

## C. GROWTH OF THE YOUTH POPULATION AND THEIR INTEGRATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

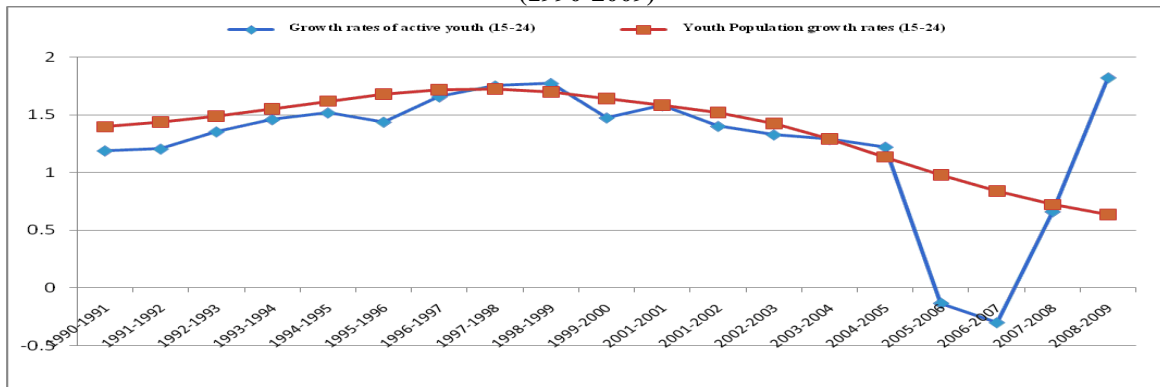
Demographic shifts pose a number of challenges, including: determining the levels of congruence or disparity between rates of population growth in general, the growth of certain age groups on the one hand, and the employment level on the other hand; determining the relationship between population growth and

<sup>23</sup> International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends 2011: The challenge of a jobs recovery*. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_150440.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_150440.pdf).

employment levels; and determining the extent of the impact of employment on population conditions and vice versa.

In ESCWA member countries which experienced an increase in the size of youth groups because of changes in rates of fertility and mortality, growth rates of the population and of active youth (figure 9) were close in the periods 1997-1999 and 2003-2005. The difference peaked in recent years, with widening disparities between population growth rates and employment, despite the low youth-population growth rates in recent years. As a result, the role of the demographic factor in determining levels of employment growth has declined and employment became constrained by other determinants, pertaining primarily to the flexibility and openness of the local labour market and the effectiveness and productivity of the active and the young workforce.

**Figure 9. Youth population growth rates versus working youth in ESCWA region (1990-2009)**



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Key Indicators of the Labour Market <http://kilm.ilo.org/KILMnetBeta/default2.asp>.

However, even though many ESCWA member countries share the previously mentioned features, the diversity of demographic and economic led to variations in youth population growth and employment rates. These are affected primarily by population conditions in each country, especially the size of the foreign workforce as is the case in Qatar, the partial opening up of the labour market as is the case in Yemen, or the impact of demographic changes that have taken place in Egypt.

A distinguishing feature of the relationship between population growth and growth of employment has been the differences between the trajectories of growth for young men and young women. Growth rates among young women in Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen were positive. It is interesting to note the variations in economic growth in these countries, which comprise rich countries receiving expatriate workers and poor countries with limited income, such as Palestine and Yemen, which indicates a decline of the role of demographic factors in determining employment, particularly the size of youth groups.

An implication of the differences between employment growth rates and population growth is the weak employment capacity of the region and its inability to accommodate the influx of new cohorts of youth, especially first-job seekers. As a result, the ESCWA region has experienced an exceptional increase in youth unemployment, which has become a basic feature of its labour markets. Even though youth unemployment is part of the general unemployment, the former is characterized by its exceptional levels, with devastating repercussions on government and private institutions, as well as on families and individuals. Indeed, youth unemployment has come to top the list of economic, social and even political challenges facing the countries of the region.

TABLE 13. EMPLOYMENT RATES BY GENDER VERSUS POPULATION GROWTH  
IN ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES (2000-2009)

	Total youth			Males			females		
	Growth of participation in labour market	Population growth	Difference in growth	Growth of participation in labour market	Population growth	Difference in growth	Growth of participation in labour market	Population growth	Difference in growth
Bahrain	1.53	2.64	-1.11	1.74	2.57	-0.83	0.98	2.72	-1.74
Egypt	1.86	1.75	0.12	2.60	1.77	0.83	0.05	1.72	-1.67
Iraq	1.19	2.09	-0.90	1.10	2.13	-1.02	1.76	2.06	-0.30
Jordan	0.64	2.31	-1.67	0.40	2.13	-1.73	1.85	2.50	-0.66
Kuwait	2.80	3.16	-0.36	2.93	3.21	-0.28	2.54	3.11	-0.56
Lebanon	0.93	1.10	-0.17	1.01	1.35	-0.34	0.73	0.84	-0.11
Oman	1.88	1.89	-0.01	1.76	1.87	-0.11	2.19	1.92	0.27
Palestine	3.83	4.06	-0.22	2.90	3.99	-1.09	9.48	4.13	5.35
Qatar	16.29	12.39	3.90	17.40	15.57	1.83	10.50	5.74	4.76
Saudi Arabia	1.76	2.30	-0.54	1.25	1.71	-0.46	4.66	2.95	1.71
The Sudan	1.53	2.32	-0.79	1.32	2.33	-1.00	1.88	2.32	-0.44
Syrian Arab Republic	1.80	2.11	-0.30	1.55	2.10	-0.55	2.64	2.12	0.53
United Arab Emirates	0.39	0.74	-0.35	-0.71	0.17	-0.88	3.70	1.51	2.19
Yemen	4.07	3.85	0.22	3.80	3.75	0.05	4.96	3.95	1.01

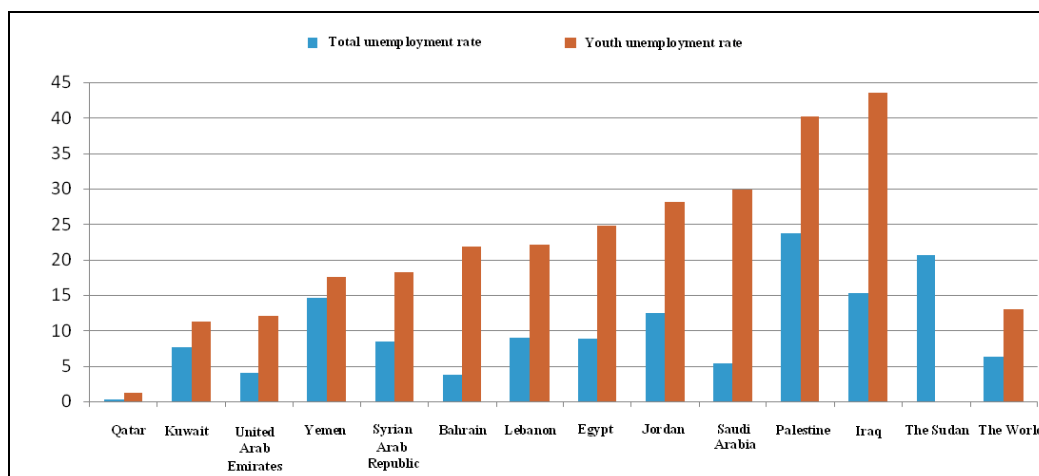
Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Key Indicators of the Labour Market <http://kilm.ilo.org/KILMnetBeta/default2.asp>.

#### D. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Youth unemployment rates in ESCWA member countries as a whole exceed global average rates (figure 10), with variations. For example, the rate of unemployment in Iraq and Palestine was more than three times the rate of global unemployment; in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, it was two times the rate of global unemployment; and in Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen it was above the global average. If unemployment rates point to existing variations in the situation of youth in the region, they undoubtedly indicate the severity of the problem of failing to integrate youth. Clearly, the demographic dividends, especially youth capacities resulting from it, are not being utilised. Youth unemployment in the region exists in various types of countries: those with a high gross domestic product (GDP), such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, where per capita GDP was US\$20,475 and US\$16,966 respectively in 2010; those with a medium GDP, such as Jordan, where per capita GDP was US\$4,500; those where per capita GDP did not exceed US\$3000, such as Syrian Arab Republic and Egypt; and those where per capita GDP did not exceed US\$2000, such as the Sudan and Yemen. Moreover, unemployment exists in labour-receiving countries, such as Bahrain, Jordan and Saudi Arabia; and in labour-exporting countries, such as Egypt, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Evidently, youth unemployment or economic exclusion of youth is common to the various countries of the region, notwithstanding their varied economic and social structures and institutional capacities. In addition, youth unemployment cannot be separated from general unemployment in these countries, which is among the highest in the world.

First-time job seekers in ESCWA member countries face a difficult task, irrespective of level of education, training and age. In fact, this group constitutes the majority of job seekers in almost all ESCWA member countries (figure 11).

**Figure 10. Youth unemployment and total unemployment rates in ESCWA member countries and the world (2010)\***

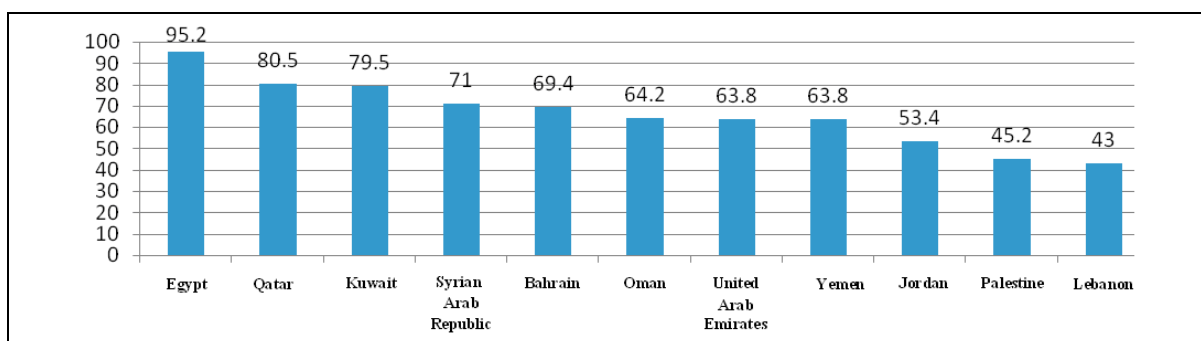


Source: International Labour Organization, Statistical update on Arab States and Territories and North African Countries, May 2011; and Millennium Development Goals Indicators, [mdgs.un.org](http://mdgs.un.org).

\* Bahrain (2001); Kuwait (2005); and Yemen (2003).

Youth are the principal first-time job seekers. In the Syrian Arab Republic, for example, youth (15-24) represented 50 per cent<sup>24</sup> of the total unemployed who have never been employed before. Hence, in addressing youth unemployment, particular attention needs to be paid to first-time job seekers, by virtue of the difficulty of integrating them in the labour market, given that they are in transition from the educational system to work environments and their lack of practical experience. However, not all youth are equal in relation to unemployment; female unemployment has properties that distinguish it from male unemployment in most cases.

**Figure 11. Percentage of first-time job seekers to total unemployed in ESCWA member countries**



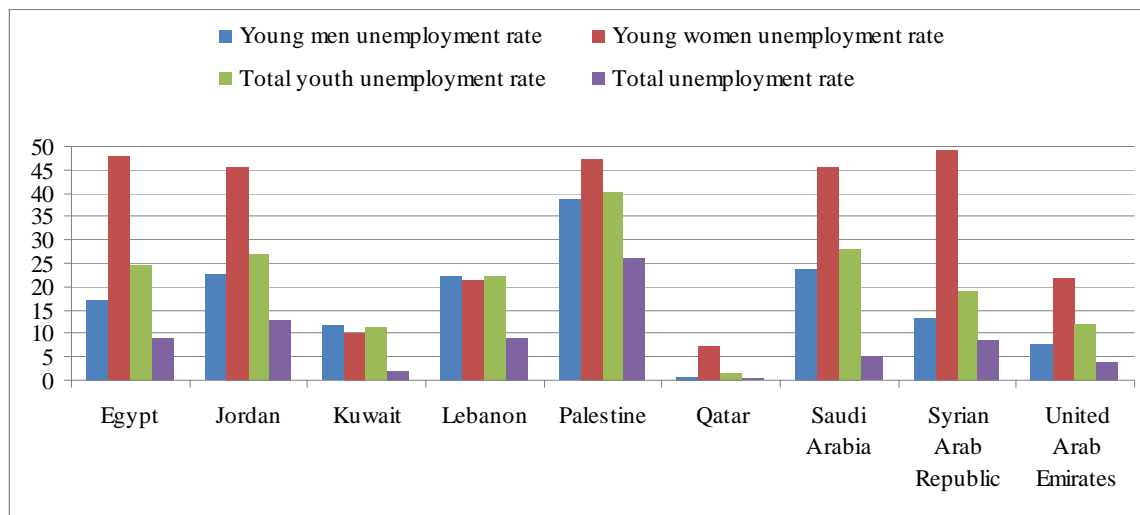
Source: Sameer Radwan, during the Expert Meeting on Reinforcing Social Equity: Integrating Youth into the Development Process, which was held in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates, in the period between 29-31 March 2009, in collaboration between ESCWA and the Family Development Foundation in Abu Dhabi.

<sup>24</sup> The Syrian Arab Republic, Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract, 2009, Chapter III manpower and labor force.

## E. UNEMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG WOMEN

Although participation of Arab women in the workforce has improved in recent decades,<sup>25</sup> it is still limited. This phenomenon is shared by many countries in the region, and is linked to factors such as the demand for female labour, areas of female participation, and the cultural backgrounds in relation to the respective roles of women and men in our traditional societies. The unemployment rates of young women are high, in most cases exceeding youth unemployment rates, almost without exception regardless of varied economies and social conditions in the region (figure 12). Notably there is unemployment among the generation of women who benefited from wider educational opportunities than their mothers did, even though they seek jobs within new legislative and administrative conditions, in the light of ratification by all ESCWA member countries of anti-discrimination international conventions, including discrimination against women.

**Figure 12. Youth unemployment rate by gender in several ESCWA member countries\***



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Key Indicators of the Labour Market <http://kilm.ilo.org/KILMnetBeta/default2.asp>.

\* Egypt (2007), Jordan (2009), Kuwait (2005 database of the International Labour Organization), Lebanon (2007), Palestine (2008), Qatar (2007), Saudi Arabia (2008), the Syrian Arab Republic (2007), the United Arab Emirates (2008).

Young women in the ESCWA region have benefited from the expansion of educational opportunities, which has led to improvements in their education. However, it has proved to be insufficient to provide access to decent jobs, since there is a disparity between education levels and the requirements of local labour markets. Most study traditional literary and social studies subjects and complete their studies with skills that are difficult to adapt to labour-market requirements. Moreover, women in the region are still disadvantaged in terms of access to education, compared to men, especially in regard to the first stages of education.<sup>26</sup>

Another impediment to enhancing the participation of young women in the labour market is their natural inclination to work in the public sector. However, employment in this sector in most Arab countries has declined in recent decades, leading to the exclusion of young women from the labour market, especially first-time job seekers. A continuing monopoly of employment by public-sector institutions in several countries of the region, such as Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic, reduces further the chances of economic integration of young women.

<sup>25</sup> Muna cherkaoui (2005) – *Musharakat al-Mar'a al-'Arabiyya fi al-Nashat al-Iqtisadi wa- 'Awa'idih* (The Participation of Arab Women in Economic Activity and Its Benefits), a background paper for the Arab Human Development Report (2005). <http://www.arab-hdr.org/publications/other/ahdr/papers/2005/cherkaoui.pdf>.

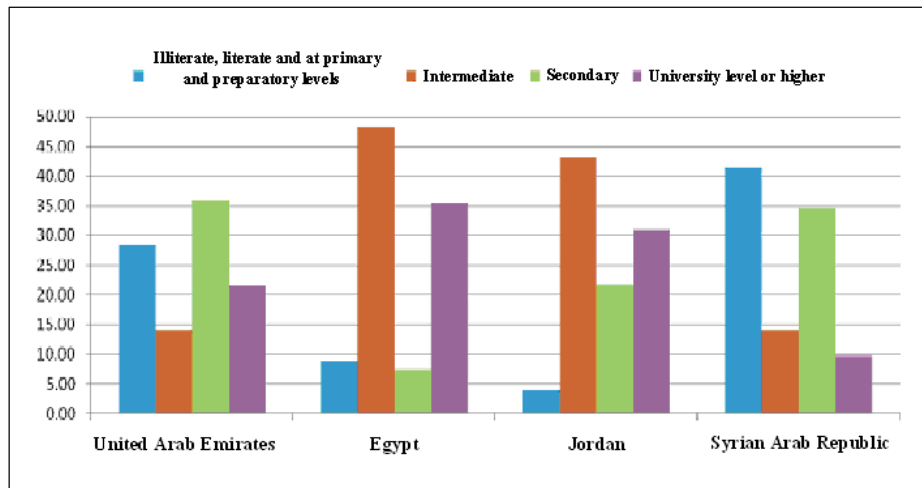
<sup>26</sup> <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Default.aspx>.

The inclination towards working in the informal sector for young women, like that of most women in the region, has led to an increase in their unemployment. This trend has notably increased in most Arab countries in recent years. The informal sector consists of small production units that are attractive to young workers, especially in traditional areas, such as textiles and sewing. However, the failure of this sector to absorb new workers diminishes the access of young women to new jobs.

#### F. UNEMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

The unemployed and job seekers in the ESCWA region include people educated at all levels (figure 13): primary, intermediate, secondary and university. Educated, semi-educated, and highly qualified people have become vulnerable to unemployment, though to varying degrees depending on the country. Unemployment among university graduates and among graduates of higher education institutes in many Arab countries has become persistent. The rapid growth in numbers of Arab university graduates in recent years and the inability of public-sector institutions to accommodate them, especially graduates of traditional national universities, exacerbate the situation.

**Figure 13. The unemployed in a number of ESCWA member countries (by educational attainment)**

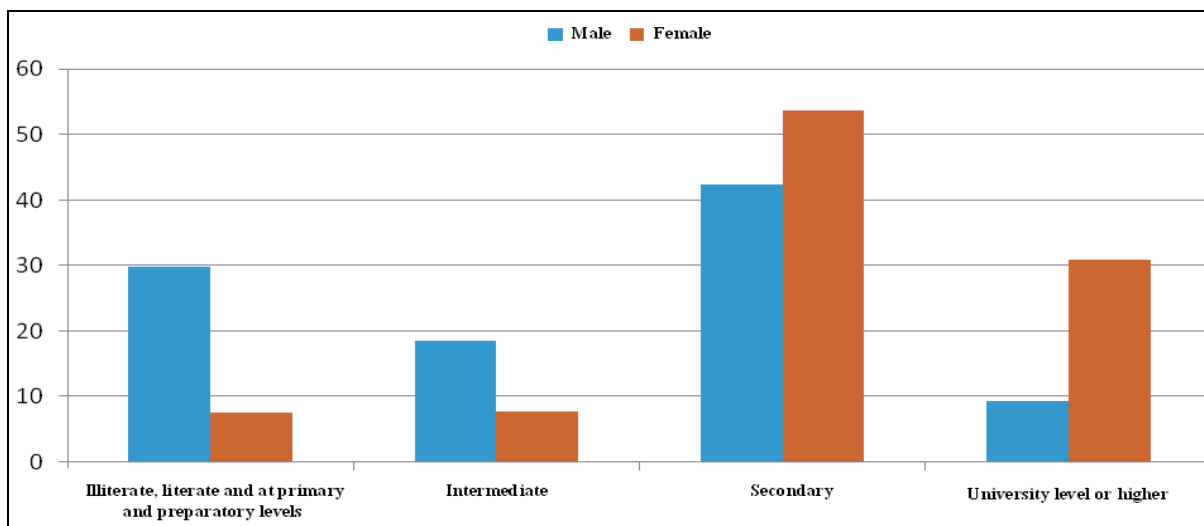


Sources: Egypt (Annual Estimates for 2009, the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics); Jordan (Labour Force Survey, 2009); Syrian Arab Republic (Labour Force Survey, 2010); United Arab Emirates (Census, 2005).

Labour markets in the ESCWA region are experiencing constant changes and shifts. They cannot afford the cost of absorbing the new groups of first-time job seekers, i.e. young people. Since markets seek profit and require a ready-to-work workforce, the doors of employment have been shut for many young people, no matter how high their education and qualifications are. It is therefore not surprising that among young job seekers there are those with varying levels of education, as in the United Arab Emirates, for example (figure 14).

Youth unemployment in the United Arab Emirates, which has recorded higher growth rates in recent years, indicates the incapacity of labour markets in ESCWA member countries to absorb new generations of job seekers, even if their numbers are relatively limited. The presence of large numbers of secondary and university graduates in the United Arab Emirates among the unemployed is perhaps due to the group holding out for better job opportunities. However, with transformations in Gulf societies, young people are showing more independence, and rising living standards incline them more to accepting job offers, rather than deferring. Overall, prospects of youth integration in labour markets are diminishing, particularly for young women who have completed their secondary or university education, due to their higher proportion in the total number of young people.

**Figure 14. Unemployment rates among young people who have not worked at all by gender and level of education in the United Arab Emirates (2005)**



Source: Central Department of Statistics, Ministry of Economy, United Arab Emirates.

Youth unemployment in ESCWA member countries is affected by some elements of total unemployment, such as the diversity of educational levels among the unemployed. However, this does not mean that getting a job is not affected by educational level. On the contrary, Arab labour markets are in dire need of cadres and technicians in all disciplines, provided they have qualifications that answer the requirements of the local labour markets. A degree is no longer the key to getting the right job, but, rather, the content and type of the education achieved. Unemployment among university graduates highlights one of the contradictions faced by higher education systems in Arab countries, which is the disparity between private and public universities, and between national and international universities in relation to meeting the requirements of the labour markets. The result has been a gradual exclusion of graduates of traditional national universities from certain professions and activities and replacing them with graduates of private and international universities.

#### G. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

Traditionally, employment and job creation are studied with reference to geographical areas, particularly urban or rural, and their impact on labour market growth. This new-old preoccupation, which is based on the differential relationship between the city and the countryside in relation to job creation, as well as on the economic and developmental capacity of each, presupposes the persistence of the traditional structure of activities and their distribution between the city and the countryside. However, economic transformations, redistribution of activities within each country, and emergence of new economic activities outside the city have all reduced the differences between cities and rural areas. Nonetheless, traditional differences between major and medium-sized cities, villages and rural areas have been persistent in Arab countries. Efforts to achieve equitable development notwithstanding, there are still clear differences in employment capacity between the regions, with major cities and provinces remaining the largest employment areas. Yet these are the most vulnerable to unemployment, including youth unemployment, for they suffer economic crises and always attract professional and population groups from other regions. As for small towns and rural areas, the employment situation is dependent on maintaining more traditional activities, such as agriculture and creating and attracting new economic activities. Hence, employment levels in these areas remain volatile. In addition, the growth of the informal sector in both urban and rural areas has a direct impact on employment. Migration between rural and urban areas, as well as emigration, has mitigated differences between youth unemployment and overall unemployment.



In Jordan, major governorates are the primary areas for employment and for attracting the active workforce, for high unemployment, and for providing new job opportunities. In the rest of governorates, especially rural or small, employment opportunities are unstable. Employment opportunities have been affected recently by the financial crisis, with these areas failing to create new jobs, conditions of job seekers deteriorating and poverty intensifying, which suggests the extent to which economic exclusion is affected by geography and place of residence.

TABLE 14. PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED JORDANIANS AND OF NET JOB CREATION BY GOVERNORATE IN JORDAN (2009)

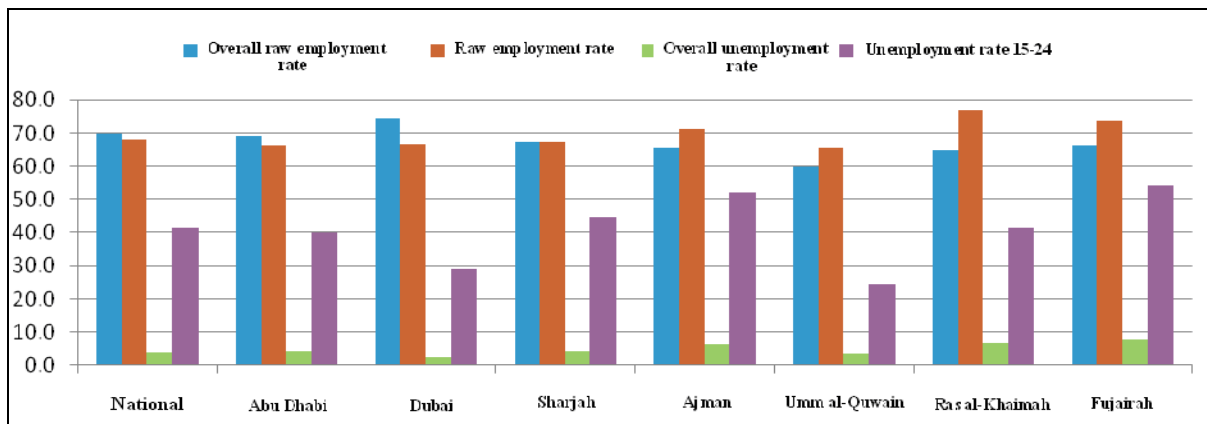
Governorate	Percentage employed	Percentage unemployed	Percentage of net jobs created*
Amman	39.9	34.1	59.3
Balqa	6.3	6.7	3.4
Zarqa	14.6	14.6	12.0
Madaba	2.5	3.1	1.6
Irbid	17.7	19.3	8.2
Ma'raq	4.2	4.5	3.1
Jerash	2.5	2.7	1.6
Ajloun	2.1	2.6	1.5
Karak	4.4	5.7	3.5
Tafilah	1.5	1.8	1.9
Ma'an	1.9	2.7	2.5
Aqaba	2.4	2.3	3.9

Source: Jordan, Ministry of Labour, Policy and Strategic Planning Unit, the Jordanian Labour Market in Figures 2009.

\* The percentages were calculated based on date for the first half of the year 2009.

In the United Arab Emirates, rates of youth unemployment are high in the emirates that have higher rates of youth employment than total employment (figure 15), which shows that youth unemployment is not necessarily linked to employment capacity of the region, but to the instability of the young people who enter the world of work for the first time. High unemployment among young people in the United Arab Emirates in spite of its extensive developmental capacity can be explained by the increasing movement of young people from one emirate to another, which consequently raises unemployment in one and reduces it in another. In addition, the demographic character of each emirate contributes significantly to determining the size of the new cohorts of youth entering the labour market.

Figure 15. Unemployment and youth employment (15-24) in the United Arab Emirates (2008)



Source: Ministry of Economy, Central Department of Statistics, Labour Force Survey 2008.

## H. IMPACT OF ECONOMIC CRISIS ON THE CREATION OF NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES

ESCWA member countries whose economies are linked to the global economy were affected by the global financial crisis. Dependence on oil revenues, large investments in European stock markets, large Arab investments in foreign banks, and pegging of currencies and monetary reserves to the United States of America dollar are all factors. Among the most prominent effects of the crisis, especially in 2009, was the fall in oil prices, which many countries in the ESCWA region depend upon, particularly in the Gulf. The crisis had a strong impact on labour and the labour market, with the laying off of the workforce in some countries and the suspension of new projects leading to high rates of unemployment, particularly among young people<sup>27</sup> and reducing the number of new jobs in the region. The negative effects were not restricted to unemployment, but also included low wages, low remittances of Arab workers residing in ESCWA member countries and declining levels of employment legal protection as a result of workers being pressured to accept lower wages or lose jobs.<sup>28</sup>

Data available on the reduction of jobs in the Gulf States indicate that job opportunities declined by about 19 per cent in 2009 compared to 2008. The decline was 15 per cent in the real-estate sector; 13 per cent in banking; 12 per cent in the information and communications technology sector; 11 per cent in education; 10 per cent in the construction, oil and gas sector; 9 per cent in the healthcare sector; and 7 per cent in retail trade. In addition, demand for labour dropped by 30 per cent and about 10 per cent of employees lost their jobs. The highest unemployment rate was in the United Arab Emirates, followed by Bahrain at 12 per cent, Kuwait at 10 per cent, Qatar at 9 per cent, Saudi Arabia at 7 per cent, and Oman at 6 per cent. However, as per government directives, this decline did not involve citizens of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

*Source:* Arab Labour Organization, the effects of economic crisis on national and Arab labour, eighth item, Arab Labour Conference, Thirty-eighth session, Cairo, from 15 to 22 May 2011.

Undoubtedly, the effects of the financial crisis on the labour market, particularly on rates of unemployment, was and will remain more severe on the economies that rely primarily on oil prices, which continue to fluctuate. In addition, countries in the region were affected by the decline in demand for real estate, while the financial crisis caused an unprecedented collapse in a number of financial markets. In the light of these facts, it was expected that employment would decline. However, that does not mean that high rates of unemployment are the result of new conditions. Unemployment in Arab countries, as well as ESCWA member countries, had been rising since the 1990s. Employment has been affected by the economic crisis, but other factors have been at play. Structural imbalances in Arab labour markets and in ESCWA member countries, weak growth rates, a widening gap between supply and demand for jobs and among economic sectors, have all contributed to high unemployment rates, especially among first-time job seekers, mostly young people. It is likely that this situation will continue until 2014, when growth is expected following economic recovery from the crisis. In addition, between 2011 and 2014, economic exclusion is expected to worsen with a rise in unemployment and inflation, and an increase in the number of poor and needy families.

<sup>27</sup> Arab Labour Organization, the Effects of Economic Crisis on National and Arab labour, eighth item, Arab Labour Conference, Thirty-eighth session, Cairo, from 15 to 22 May 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

## V. NATIONAL YOUTH POLICIES IN THE ESCWA REGION

In recent years, a number of ESCWA member countries have secured achievements in integrating young people, in education, training and employment; in protecting them, improving their health and living conditions; in eliminating discrimination against them; and in promoting their participation. Yet, in many countries the young still suffer from multifaceted exclusion and marginalization, which disrupts the development of national capacities, limits the prospects of such development, and threatens national security and stability. How could exclusion of young people in the countries of the region be addressed to ensure the wider participation of youth in development and the utilization of demographic dividends? What are the foundations of policies designed to eliminate exclusion of young people and enable them to take advantage of their manifold abilities and potentialities?

Interest in youth issues in the ESCWA region has resulted in recent years in adoption of a number of relevant policies and strategies. These strategies that have evolved in varied social, economic, demographic and political conditions in Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Oman and Yemen are based on varied macro approaches, aimed at addressing the most important youth issues in employment, education, political participation, health, population, culture, media, social activism and volunteer work, in line with the terms and directions of the Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY).<sup>29</sup> Several countries are still trying to formulate national policies for young people, while others address youth issues within their sectoral and national development plans.<sup>30</sup> However, the objectives of these policies have not been achieved, nor have they had the desired efficacy. This has been caused by several factors: social, economic and institutional challenges; the absence of requisite regulatory and executive mechanisms; the lack of follow-up; and the weakness of initiatives taken by the countries of the region in responding to WPAY and non-compliance with its guidelines,<sup>31</sup> which urge countries to give young people the importance they deserve in the planning process. Under the circumstances, it is imperative for national youth policies to build on broad institutional frameworks, by responding to WPAY, supplementing national strategies with operational proposals based on identifying the priorities of the young,<sup>32</sup> responding to shifts in their conditions, and dealing with them as a demographic, social and economic group with particular characteristics.

### WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR YOUTH TO THE YEAR 2000 AND BEYOND: STARTING POINT FOR NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

#### 1. *Overview*

The challenges faced by young people in various regions of the world since the 1960s played a direct role in the adoption of international measures and work programmes ensuing from the developmental role of young people and their aspirations to participate fully in society. These trends crystallized in 1965 when the General Assembly adopted in its resolution 2037 (XX) of December 1965 the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace and Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples. Between 1965 and 1975, the General Assembly of the United Nations and its Economic and Social Council focused on three basic themes in relation to youth: participation, development and peace, while emphasizing the need for an international policy on youth. In 1979, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 34/151 declaring 1985 to be the International Year of Youth. In the same year, the General Assembly approved the guidelines

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<sup>29</sup> United Nations, General assembly, Global Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, A/50/728, 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Population And Development Report, Issue No. 4, Youth in the ESCWA Region: Situation Analysis and Implications for Development Policies. 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Policy Issues in The ESCWA Region National Youth Policies within the Framework of The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY), 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), National Youth Policy: Priorities and Paradigms. E/ESCWA/PI/2009/12.

for further planning and follow-up in the field of youth, in order to meet their various needs, especially those relating to participation, development and peace. These constituted the starting points for WPAY, adopted by the United Nations in 1995. In 2007, WPAY was detailed to become an agenda for action, by setting standardized quantitative goals and objectives that can be monitored and evaluated over a period of time ranging between five and ten years.

WPAY, the drafting of which began in the early 1990s, is based on various recent international programmes, including: the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1995), the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development (1995), the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development (1995), and the Beijing Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995). WPAY is critically important; it provides a common standard for intersectoral policy development and programme design and implementation. Moreover, it represents a model for integrated actions to be taken at all levels to address more effectively the problems of youth in various environments and to enhance their participation in society. Hence, it provides an institutional framework for youth policies in all social environments, including ESCWA member countries. The provisions of Phases II and III of WPAY, which focus on implementation and evaluation of progress, offer appropriate tools for adapting long-term goals and measures.

WPAY is based on a number of principles: youth are a major force for change and an effective partner in achieving sustainable development; investment in the young has a positive effect economically by breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, socially by promoting social equity, and politically by endorsing the choice of modernity and modernization of society for present and future generations; the approach to young people ought to be based on rights and duties as enshrined in various general principles and concepts in relation to social, economic, political and civil affairs; and principles and requirements of citizenship need to be activated and made available to the young in all government institutions and civil society organizations, from the family to educational institution and institutions of work, to ensure full added value for the young participants, the institution, the organization and the community.

WPAY is an unprecedented initiative, in that it recognizes the value of young people as a human resource and a key factor for change and economic and social development. In addition, it is a document for national action and international support aimed at consolidating the conditions and mechanisms for improving the wellbeing of young people and their standard of living; provides a framework for public policy; and includes practical guidelines for bettering the state of young people in various regions, including in the ESCWA member countries.

## *2. Fifteen priorities of WPAY*

In collaboration with member countries, WPAY adopted fifteen priorities directly related to issues considered as such on the national and international levels by the countries themselves and by young people. These have been classified into three categories: (a) youth and the global economy; (b) youth and civil society; (c) young and welfare.

### *(a) Youth and the World Economy*

This category includes four priorities: hunger and poverty; education; employment; and globalization. To address the possible positive and negative impacts of globalization on young people, WPAY proposes a set of goals and targets for monitoring the progress of youth in the context of the global economy. The targets aim to enhance opportunities for youth participation in the global economy and reduce the negative impact of globalization on them. Globalization has facilitated movement of capital across national borders. Yet the chances for people to benefit, especially the young, are still limited. Unless enough opportunities for movement across borders are provided, young people will likely remain excluded from various globalized activities that would enhance their knowledge and qualifications. Hence, the proposed targets for monitoring

the progress of youth in the context of the global economy refer to the need for achieving a set of activities associated with: increasing educational opportunities across borders, the right to a legal identity and adequate social protection, and expansion of social integration programmes. The aims are: eradication of extreme poverty among young men and women and providing them with food security, providing them with good education and training in an effort to improve their abilities and enhance opportunities for their participation in the labour market.

(i) *Education*<sup>33</sup>

- a. Training a number of vocational guidance counselors to provide students with information on the professional needs and skills required in the labour market, wage levels and working conditions;
- b. Establishing more job centres to disseminate information on available jobs in the labour market and related occupational and educational requirements;
- c. Developing a greater number of quality databases that address the needs of public and private labour markets, whether local or regional, making them available to graduates of general, vocational and university education;
- d. Strengthening the partnership between the private sector and vocational schools in order to provide a trained workforce possessing the skills required for meeting the needs of the private sector;
- e. Providing social protection systems to help unemployed youth and young workers in the informal sector, ensuring coverage of all young people aged 15-24;
- f. Establishing training systems linked to sectors characterized by their need for a young workforce, such as the construction, telecommunications and information technology sectors;
- g. Instituting a merit-based scholarship system to provide educational opportunities to all young people, especially able young women, regardless of class, tribal affiliation or ethnic origin;
- h. Finding new sources of finance for education through networking between the private sector, government and educational institutions, ensuring appropriate professional skill outcomes;
- i. Increasing awareness and promoting a culture that values vocational education; review systems of admission to universities to reduce the demand for humanities; encouraging speedy vocational training courses; and enhancing the role of manual labour by making its returns rewarding.

(ii) *Employment*<sup>34</sup>

- a. Promoting a balance between labour-intensive investments and investments in advanced technologies, in order to ensure full youth employment;
- b. Overcoming obstacles related to division of labour markets into public, private and informal, by improving conditions and terms of employment in all sectors and reducing wage differences among them, to enable them to perform their economic and social role of recruiting young people;

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<sup>33</sup> Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Policy Issues in the ESCWA Region National Youth Policies within the Framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY), 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

- c. Creating an environment conducive to job creation, through initiating and pursuing institutional reform, in both the public and the private sectors (though reform tasks in each are different). Accountability, transparency and good governance are powerful job creation and investment promotion engines;
- d. Encouraging development of projects to provide employment opportunities, particularly small and medium enterprises that have proved to be very effective means of creating better, more stable jobs for young people;
- e. Enhancing cooperation and regional economic integration based on mutual respect and common interest, as indispensable for raising youth employment rates overall and sectorally.

(iii) *Hunger and poverty*

- a. Enhancing agriculture revenues and attractiveness of life in agricultural areas;
- b. Training youth in income-generation skills;
- c. Offering land grants to young people;
- d. Promoting cooperation between urban and rural youth in food production and distribution.

(b) *Youth and civil society*

This category includes five priorities: the environment, leisure, participation in decision making, information and communications technology, and relations among generations. The expansion of civil society and its participation in economic development and political transformation have resulted in changes in the composition of actors in development, which has now become a collective affair in which various institutions and social forces, including youth, partake. Hence, the Programme recognizes that young people are key actors in advancing development. The expansion and independence of civil society are two indicators of a growing capacity of community groups to benefit fairly from the potential of the country, solely on the basis of the principle of citizenship, and to move independently from the state and its organs. This in turn, contributes to ensuring the participation of various constituencies of society, especially youth, in decision-making and implementation mechanisms.

The goals and targets of *youth and civil society* address the need for formal and informal environmental education, through training primary and secondary-school teachers and community leaders. The goals and targets include protecting the rights of young men and women to leisure activities; promoting national recognition of the need for youth activities in entertainment, art, culture and sports; involving the young fully and effectively in the life of society and in decision-making; promoting intergenerational solidarity through regular, constructive voluntary interaction between the young generation and older people; and securing access for young people to information and communication technology and free, easy access to the Internet.

For the countries of the ESCWA region, the focus should be on interventions derived from the World Programme of Action as follows:

(i) *Environment*

- a. Sharpening the focus in the curriculum on environmental education, and providing training programmes to inform teachers of the environmental aspects of their subject-matter;
- b. Facilitating the dissemination of information on international environmental issues and the use by young people of environmentally sound technology;

- c. Encouraging young people to participate in environmental protection, conservation and improvement;
  - d. Strengthening the role of the media as a tool for disseminating information on environmental issues on a large scale among the masses of young people.
- (ii) *Leisure-time activities*
- a. Integrating leisure-time activities into youth policies and programmes as an integral part of them;
  - b. Integrating leisure-time activities into the regular education curriculum;
  - c. Integrating leisure-time activities into means of communication.
- (iii) *Full, effective participation of youth in community life and decision-making*
- a. Promoting access by young people to information to enable them to make better use of available opportunities for participation;
  - b. Encouraging and advancing youth associations through providing financial, educational and technical support and encouraging their activities;
  - c. Ensuring participation of young people in the design of national policies and plans affecting their concerns, as well as in the implementation and evaluation of these policies and plans;
  - d. Promoting closer cooperation among youth organizations at national, regional and international levels;
  - e. Calling on governments to promote youth participation in international fora and including youth representatives in national delegations.
- (c) *Youth and welfare*

This category includes six priorities: health, juvenile delinquency, drugs, girls and young women, HIV, and armed conflict. Young people in various parts of the world suffer deteriorating health and increasing risks, due mostly to the prevalence of harmful traditional practices and absence of a healthy environment and systems that promote behavioral patterns conducive to improving community health. The health of young people is affected by a set of factors; most notably: absence of a safe, healthy living environment; malnutrition; risk of water-borne infectious and parasitic diseases; and increasing consumption of tobacco, alcohol and drugs. To create a healthy environment for young people, WPAY focused on issues of: health, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, the well-being of young people, and care for girls and young women under conditions of armed conflict. The goals and targets for “welfare of young people” call for providing all young people with access to information and comprehensive health services at a reasonable cost; eliminating a number of diseases, such as HIV/AIDS; and treating drug abuse. In relation to delinquency, the goals and targets focus on the need for reducing crime rates. They also aim to promote gender equality, in line with goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals, and recognize the need to focus on addressing the issue of participation of youth in armed conflict and, first and foremost, to build a culture of peace.

In the ESCWA member countries, the focus needs to be on a range of sectoral interventions, based on practical proposals inspired by WPAY, as follows:

(i) *Health*

- a. Providing basic health services for all, and achieving national goals specified in the national health strategies, on the basis of equality and social justice;
- b. Eliminating major fatal diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis, cholera, typhoid fever and HIV;
- c. Developing health education in primary and secondary schools, through including primary health knowledge programmes and practices in curricula;
- d. Encouraging cooperation between government, educational institutions and health institutions to promote personal responsibility towards the adoption of healthy lifestyles, and providing the requisite knowledge and skills;
- e. Advancing general, as well as sexual and reproductive, health services, through appropriate educational programmes.

(ii) *Juvenile delinquency*

- a. Giving priority to preventive measures, and providing social, economic and administrative opportunities and services for rural areas to discourage migration of youth to urban areas;
- b. Launching information campaigns and educational and training programmes to educate young people about the effects of violence on the family, community and society;
- c. Providing rehabilitation services for ex-offenders.

(iii) *Drug abuse*

- a. Involving youth organizations, of both genders, in programmes designed to reduce demand for drugs by young people;
- b. Treating and rehabilitating young drug abusers, drug addicts, alcoholics and tobacco users;
- c. Caring for drug abusers and drug-dependent young suspects and criminals within the criminal justice system and in prisons.

(iv) *Young girls*

- a. Taking the necessary measures to eliminate discrimination against young women and ensure their full enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms, through developing comprehensive policies and action plans and programmes based on gender equality;
- b. Ensuring access by girls and young women, on an equal footing, to and completion of primary education, as well as ensuring equal access to secondary and higher education;
- c. Eliminating discrimination against girls and young women in health and nutrition and ensuring their access to health services;
- d. Protecting girls and young women from economic and non-economic exploitation, and from undertaking work that impedes their education or be harmful to their health;



- e. Enacting and implementing legislation to protect girls and young women from all forms of violence, especially the murder of girls.
- (v) *HIV*
- a. Providing affordable primary health services of good quality, sexual and reproductive health services, and education programmes on topics such as sexually transmitted diseases;
  - b. Promoting prevention from disease and illness among young people due to poor health practices;
  - c. Eliminating sexual assault on young people.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. SUMMARY

In recent years, youth in the ESCWA member countries have faced a set of challenges in employment, education and social participation that have affected their economic, social, and political integration and participation, leading to the emergence of several facets of exclusion of youth in many countries, albeit to varying degrees. The reasons for exclusion are many and varied: demographic, educational, cultural, economic, political and ethnic; hence there is a need to formulate declared national youth policies and establish multifaceted activities to address its various aspects. Addressing exclusion should be the top priority of national youth and development policies, as well as being placed at the heart of public policy. Countries should also develop knowledge frameworks that define community roles for young people and contribute to policy formulation and implementation aimed at young people as a special category.

The role of global and regional variables in the analysis of exclusion of young people in the ESCWA member countries cannot be ignored. This is a phenomenon common to various regions of the world, and is affected by global economic shifts; developments in the international labour market; educational trends, especially in higher education; and levels of individual mobility at both the international and the regional levels. It should therefore be understood in a dynamic context and within a holistic approach combining the local and the international. Challenges extend beyond the present to the short, medium and long-term future. Hence, interventions should not be momentary or transitory but should rather involve practical measures to address the exclusion of victims of illiteracy, unemployment and marginalization of today, as well as the adoption of legislation and strategic measures in vital areas to pre-empt exclusion of future generations of youth.

By virtue of its nature, reality and prospects, the exclusion of young people in the ESCWA member countries calls for exceptional policy development and macro and sectoral measures aimed at gradually eliminating manifestations of exclusion, in accordance with specific objectives, and controlling the quantitative expansion of the groups falling victim to youth exclusion. In formulating measures to reduce social inequalities in many countries of the region, the characteristics of each country must be reconciled with the priorities and mechanisms of WPAY. Young people and other social actors must be involved in policy development and interventions aimed at combating youth exclusion, and the resources and budgets needed for their success must be provided. Such interventions can take numerous forms; some could be linked to national programmes, others to regional and international initiatives.

The political, social and economic conditions experienced by many countries of the ESCWA region should not forestall implementation and follow-up of programmes to eliminate youth exclusion. Instead, obstacles must be overcome and all objective conditions created for further implementation of existing programmes, projects and initiatives to intensify local, regional and international efforts designed to reduce youth exclusion in various countries. The following are recommendations aimed at strengthening the response of the countries of the ESCWA region to WPAY.

### B. RECOMMENDATIONS

In approaching the issues of youth as a social group with demographic challenges of their own, governments should adopt modern scientific methodologies and develop national youth policies linked to other sectoral policies and integrated into national development plans, in line with WPAY and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Youth exclusion needs to be dealt with through adopting a set of strategic interventions designed to bring about social equilibrium and employ the dynamism of youth positively. This in turn requires a new vision of the role of youth in development and security and taking the necessary measures to address the various challenges that limit their empowerment and their economic and social participation. The adoption of new principles has to be complemented by the adoption of sectoral interventions commensurate with the specificities of youth exclusion in the ESCWA region, as well as with WPAY. To achieve the goal, a dynamic mechanism to address current exclusion and its expected future manifestations is needed.

The functioning of the process of addressing youth issues will be contingent upon a range of institutional and organizational changes, including the following:

1. *Adhering to the guidelines of WPAY*

Attempts to overcome social and economic exclusion of youth rely on policies aimed at young people as a demographic-social group that should be involved in all areas of public life and development, through adherence to the guidelines, methodologies, policies and strategies supportive of youth participation in the economy and society. This highlights the importance of the World Programme and the priorities, goals and targets it has set to help countries formulate national youth policies appropriate for their particular social, economic and political conditions.

2. *Taking legislative measures*

The success of youth policies is contingent upon determining the legislative frameworks that define the functions and responsibilities of government institutions and non-governmental organizations concerned with youth issues and the nature of the relationships and functions of each. Such frameworks define the relationships among institutions and mechanisms for their cooperation and partnership.

3. *Taking institutional measures*

By virtue of its nature, management of youth issues involves multiple institutions. This diversity results sometimes in overlap or conflict in the tasks and responsibilities between government institutions and non-governmental organizations, which hinders the achievement of the objectives of the macro and sectoral youth development programmes. Hence, good governance of youth issues calls for institutional development; in particular the establishment of a competent professional institution concerned with youth issues to coordinate the various sectors that address youth economic, social, and political priorities and encourage investment in youth resources.

4. *Developing the technical side of policy formulation*

Management of youth issues and making policies for their integration require the development of the technical side of the process of policy formulation, particularly building a national technical capacity qualified for making, implementing and monitoring youth policies, and following up. The proposed capacity would be vested in specialized technical departments empowered to address the various aspects of youth exclusion and provide mechanisms for integrating youth into society.

5. *Securing funding*

Government institutions and non-governmental organizations concerned with implementing and monitoring national youth policies and plans should be identified and provided the requisite funding, through allocations in the state budget or in sectoral budgets. These budgets would be distributed and assigned priorities in line with the national development and investment plans and the conditions of youth and the areas of exclusion, with a focus on sociodemographic target groups, such as first-time job seekers for those seeking specialized training opportunities, as well as on developing suitable opportunities for the integration of the present generation.

6. *Identifying monitoring and evaluation mechanisms*

Mechanisms for assessing and monitoring proposed policies should be identified, in order to evaluate the measures taken and the measures not taken yet at each stage, determine the nature of obstacles and the mechanisms to overcome them, and review the terms of set policies in accordance with field data.

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