REGIONAL DISCUSSION PAPER

“ANTI-CORRUPTION AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN THE ARAB REGION”

Developed with the support of the

joint UNDP-KOICA regional project

Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (ACIAC)

Dr. Kathleen Fincham, 2025

Contents

Forward ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Executive Summary ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

List of Tables ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Abbreviations and Acronyms 2

Chapter 1 Introduction 4

Background 4

Regional institutional framework underpinning the anti-corruption nexus 5

Objective, purpose and scope of the paper 6

Research methodology 6

Chapter 2 Conceptual framework 7

Human rights 7

Agenda 2030 and SDG 16 8

Gender equality and inclusion 8

Chapter 3 The Arab States regional context 10

Regional overview 10

Corruption in the Arab States 11

Impediments to anti-corruption efforts in the region 15

Chapter 4 Youth in context 16

Understandings of 'youth' 16

Youth in the Arab States 16

Youth and corruption 17

Chapter 5 Youth Participation 19

Benefits of youth participation 19

Conceptual challenges and debates around youth participation 19

Factors impacting youth participation 20

Gender, social exclusion and youth participation 21

Chapter 6 Youth Engagement in Anti-Corruption Efforts 23

The importance of youth engagement 23

Examples of best practice from the region 23

Issues to consider 24

Technical and practical considerations 25
Chapter 7 Conclusion 27
Recommendations for policymakers and practitioners 27
References 29

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACIAC	Anti-Corruption and Integrity in Arab Countries
ACINET	Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRDP	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DCC	Data for Children Collaborative
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
ENNHRI	European Network of National Human Rights Institutions
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission (UK)
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GII	Global Integrity Index
GPI	Global Peace Index
HRBA	Human Rights-based Approach
ICAC	Independent Commission Against Corruption (Hong Kong)
IJRC	International Justice Resource Center
ILO	International Labour Organization
LAS	League of Arab States
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NIS	National Integrity System

OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PA	Palestinian Authority
PAR	Participatory Action Research
RLI	Rule of Law Index
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCAC	UN Convention Against Corruption
UN DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization
WJP	World Justice Project

Chapter 1 Introduction

Background

Corruption, defined as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, is a complex global challenge which takes many forms (e.g. bribery, embezzlement, abuse of function, trade in influence, illicit enrichment, etc.) and manifests itself in varying degrees across all countries. Corruption is simultaneously a crime in itself and an enabler of other forms of organized crime (e.g. money laundering) (UNDP 2024a). Corruption evolves over time, follows trends and adapts to an ever-changing and hyperconnected world (ICAC 2023).

Corruption may occur in both the public and private sectors. For example, politicians may misuse public money or grant public jobs or contracts to their sponsors, friends and families. Moreover, bureaucrats and inspectors in the public sector may demand or take money or favours in exchange for services. In the private sector, firms may bribe officials in order to be awarded lucrative deals. Corruption may also be categorised as 'petty' (i.e. small bribes paid by citizens to low-level officials to streamline bureaucratic procedures) or 'grand' (i.e. abuse by senior public officials of their office and powers to use large amounts of public funds for their self-enrichment or for the enrichment of their associates in an unlawful manner). In countries with high levels of both petty and grand corruption, public institutions become vehicles for self-enrichment, as corrupt political elites and their allies in the private sector embezzle public funds or funds provided by aid agencies intended for socio-economic development (Merhej 2023).

Corruption flourishes most in places where anti-corruption measures are weak and the overall political, economic and social environment is conducive to monopoly, opacity and impunity. This includes, but is not limited to, the 22 Arab countries that comprise the membership of the League of Arab States[1] (LAS) (UNDP 2024a). Costs of corruption accrue in different shapes and forms. They can be direct (i.e. in the form of a shrinking public purse), or indirect (e.g. in the form of poor infrastructure and basic public services, lost opportunity in the form of discouraged investment and lost job creation). The latest estimates for the Arab region put the financial cost of corruption at USD$90 billion per year (UNDP Arabic 2018). Perhaps the highest costs of corruption are unquantifiable but remain observable at the micro, meso and macro levels (UNDP 2024a). Corruption threatens peoples' sense of dignity and security, erodes their quality of life, and adversely affects every aspect of sustainable development. It undermines democracy and the rule of law, hinders government effectiveness and efficiency, erodes trust in public institutions, and undermines states' efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It distorts markets, impedes economic development, increases poverty, and deepens inequalities and social division. It leads to violations of human rights, fuels instability, increases vulnerability to conflict, and enables organized crime and terrorism to flourish. Corruption also impedes progress towards environmental sustainability by derailing anti-climate change funding and initiatives, undermining sustainable forest conservation and management programs and fuelling wildlife and fishery crimes (UNODC 2024a).

Widespread corruption in the Arab States has significantly undermined progress in the region, deepening social and structural injustices and jeopardising people's fundamental human rights (e.g. access to education, healthcare and employment) (Merhej 2023). In some contexts, illegal practices have become so much a part of everyday life that people accept them as the norm (El-Seblani & Natta 2018).

[1] Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Yemen

Tackling corruption is a complex process that requires implementing anticorruption measures, such as leveraging the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), preventing resources from being siphoned away from public services and crisis response, recovering stolen assets and disrupting illicit financial flows, cutting off revenue streams for organised criminal groups and terrorist organisations, upholding the rule of law and promoting public trust, strengthening the foundation for peace and security, human rights and the SDGs, establishing strong legal frameworks, reforming institutions, bolstering international cooperation, boosting partnerships with civil society, academia and the private sector, and strengthening awareness through education (UNODC 2023).

Regional institutional framework underpinning the anti-corruption nexus

Historically, leaders in the Arab States region have not only failed to tackle corruption, they have even failed to acknowledge its existence. A first regional breakthrough in tackling corruption came with the adoption of the UNCAC on 31 October, 2003, and it entered into force on 14 December, 2005 (El-Seblani 2018). Boasting 190 states-parties (as of 10 October 2023), including 20 countries from the Arab States region, the UNCAC is the most comprehensive, and the only legally binding universal anti-corruption treaty providing a roadmap for countries to prevent and combat corruption (Transparency International 2016, UNODC 2024b). While not providing an explicit overarching definition of corruption, the UNCAC defines specific acts of corruption, such as bribery in the public and private sectors (articles 15, 16 and 21), embezzlement in the public and private sectors (articles 17 and 22), trading in influence (article 18), abuse of functions (article 19), Illicit enrichment (article 20), money-laundering (article 23), concealment (article 24) and obstruction of justice (article 25).

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) serves as the custodian of the Convention and as the Secretariat of its Conference of States Parties. The Convention covers five main areas: preventive measures, criminalization and law enforcement, international cooperation, asset recovery, and technical assistance and information exchange (StAR 2024). The Convention expands the realm of anti-corruption reforms beyond the traditional approach of criminal law, making it a multi-disciplinary field of work that seeks to identify and tackle factors that drive or restrain corruption. Those include targeted reforms that promote transparency, accountability, integrity, the rule of law and public participation, as well as broader reforms that seek to reduce administrative burdens and encourage trade openness, budget transparency, judicial independence, e-citizenship and freedom of the press, amongst others (UNDP 2024a). Using the UNCAC as a roadmap, many countries have made legislative amendments to harmonise their national laws with the requirements of the Convention, and some states have drawn up strategic plans to fight corruption (Transparency International 2016).

On 30 July 2008, the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET) was established with support from UNDP. ACINET is the first Arab regional mechanism to bring together governmental and non-governmental organisations to consult and cooperate against corruption. The network currently includes 50 ministries and official agencies from 18 Arab countries, two observer members, and the 'Non-Governmental Group', which consists of 28 independent organizations from civil society, the private sector and academia. It is recognised as the region's leading participatory mechanism for capacity development, information exchange, and policy dialogue in the field. It is also recognised as a key actor for training and education (ACINET 2023, UNDP 2018).

In 2011, UNDP launched the Anti-Corruption and Integrity in Arab Countries (ACIAC) regional initiative, with a focus on the middle-income countries of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. Promoting the inclusive and effective implementation of the UNCAC within the Arab States region, ACIAC's overarching objective is to support institutions and organisations to address awareness, prevention and enforcement of anti-corruption and integrity measures to maximize availability of resources for poverty eradication and contribute to the establishment of

inclusive and effective governance in line with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). The ACIAC initiative has helped to shift the issue of corruption from a taboo subject that is avoided in government discourse to a top priority that is clearly articulated by government leaders and is increasingly reflected in national agendas (UNDP 2024c, El-Seblani 2018).

ACIAC's comprehensive approach encompasses various strategies, including policy and legislative support, training initiatives, and the provision of advanced technologies and tools to enhance the capabilities of relevant institutions. ACIAC supports rigorous participatory processes that enable governments to design national strategies and specialized laws that promote integrity, transparency and accountability. A key feature of the work of ACIAC is the focus on prevention in sectors that are vulnerable to corruption (e.g. health, customs and justice) (UNDP 2024c, El-Seblani 2018).

Objective, purpose and scope of the paper

It is within the institutional framework discussed above that this paper explores the nexus between anti-corruption and youth engagement in the Arab States region, with a focus on the seven priority countries of the ACIAC (i.e. Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt). Intended to be a stand-alone report, as well as a component part of a research series commissioned by UNDP focusing on anti-corruption and key development priorities in the region (i.e. conflict and peace, climate action, private sector development, youth engagement), the paper addresses the following questions:

- How are youth in the Arab States region impacted by corruption in terms of their economic, social and political participation?
- What is the institutional framework in the region underpinning the anti-corruption nexus?
- What is the status of youth participation in national/regional development efforts in general and anti-corruption efforts in particular?
- What are the benefits of youth participation to anti-corruption efforts, and the benefits of participation in anti-corruption efforts to youth?
- What are the enablers and barriers to youth participation in anti-corruption efforts?
- What are some examples of successful initiatives in the Arab States region engaging youth in anti-corruption efforts?
- What are the lessons learned in the Arab States region with regards to the achievement of SDG 16?

The objective of the paper is to provide a comprehensive understanding of existing knowledge on the topic, identify knowledge gaps where further research may be needed, and collate examples of best practice and lessons learned to support the work of policymakers and practitioners. The paper concludes by providing recommendations for how youth participation in anti-corruption efforts can be successfully embedded within broader anti-corruption and integrity reform efforts in the Arab States region to achieve SDG 16.

Research methodology

This paper is the outcome of secondary research using human rights, the SDGs/Agenda 2030, and gender equality as conceptual frameworks for the analysis. Existing literature and data (academic, organisational, institutional) relevant to the topic of anti-corruption and youth participation in the Arab States region were identified, reviewed and analysed using both ‘a priori’ thematic coding aligned to the key concepts and frameworks which emerged from the desk review and discussions with the project team (i.e. UNDP, ACIAC and youth regional team members), as well as inductive coding, where appropriate. While primarily relying on the analysis of secondary data, the research has been supplemented by interviews with key informants and surveys coordinated and disseminated through UNDP’s networks.

Chapter 2 Conceptual framework

Human rights

Human rights (including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights) are inalienable basic standards to which every person is entitled to enjoy by virtue of their humanity. International human rights treaties are covenants between States and the international community, whereby States agree to guarantee certain rights to everyone within their territory or under their control. Human rights treaties protect individuals from government action (or inaction) that would threaten or harm their fundamental rights. States' human rights duties include both 'positive' and 'negative' obligations. When States ratify human rights treaties, they agree to guarantee enjoyment of rights by individuals and groups within their jurisdictions (positive obligations), as well as refrain from violating these rights (negative obligations). At the national level, this requires States to put in place laws and policies necessary for the protection of human rights as well as the regulation of private and public practices that impact individuals' enjoyment of those rights, including protection against the erosion of rights by corruption. Regional and international human rights bodies monitor States' compliance with their human rights commitments. These oversight mechanisms also provide opportunities for redress and accountability that may be non-existent or ineffective at the national level (IJRC 2024, EHRC 2014).

All human rights apply to all children and youth without exception. However, due to their unique vulnerability and dependence, young people under the age of 18 years also have specific rights, recognized in the 54 articles and set of Optional Protocols of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UNICEF 2024). Examples of the rights of children and youth outlined in the CRC include: protection (e.g. from abuse, exploitation and harmful substances), provision (e.g. for education, health care and an adequate standard of living), and participation (e.g. listening to children's views and respecting their evolving capacities). The CRC also outlines specific protections and provisions for vulnerable populations, such as indigenous children and children with disabilities (UNICEF 2024).

The Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA) is a conceptual framework for human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power (e.g. corruption) that impede development progress and result in groups of people being left behind. The HRBA requires human rights principles (universality, indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination, participation, accountability) to guide development cooperation, and focuses on developing the capacities of both 'duty-bearers' (i.e. governments) to meet their obligations, and 'rights-holders' (e.g. youth) to claim their rights, including freedom from corruption. Within this framework, all programs of development cooperation, policies and technical assistance should further the realisation of human rights as laid down in international human rights instruments, and the human rights standards contained therein (UNSDG 2014).

The HRBA recognises that 'participation' is intrinsic to the realisation of human rights. Thus, a number of human rights treaties (e.g. CRC, CRDP, CEDAW) contain provisions on participation, ensuring that everyone is entitled to actively participate in decision-making processes which affect the enjoyment of their rights. The HRBA acknowledges that effective participation may require education, training and capacity-building. For example, young people need to be made aware of and understand their rights, as well as empowered as 'rights-holders' to claim and exercise their rights. Similarly, 'duty-bearers', who have the obligation to respect, protect, promote, and fulfil human rights (i.e. governments), may also benefit from capacity building and must be held accountable to fulfil their obligations towards 'rights-holders' (i.e. address corruption) (ENNHRI 2024).

Agenda 2030 and SDG 16

Adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a global movement and structured pathway to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development and peace by 2030 through the achievement of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The core tenet of the 2030 Agenda is the concept of 'no one left behind' – the principle that sustainable development must include all people regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, migratory status, income, disability or geographical location.

The SDGs and targets are global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, priorities, capacities and levels of development. States have the primary responsibility for implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Governments set their own national targets and decide how the SDGs should be incorporated in national planning processes, policies and strategies (e.g. legislation, adoption of budgets) ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of these commitments (UN DESA 2024). The SDG monitoring framework emphasizes a participatory approach in which all stakeholders (including government, civil society, business and academia) recognize their shared responsibility in achieving the 2030 Agenda through the effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete action (UNESCO UIS 2021). It is within this context that the regional institutional framework on anti-corruption discussed above has been established and is coordinated across stakeholder communities.

The SDGs and targets are integrated, indivisible and have been designed with their interconnectedness in mind. Good governance is crucial to the achievement of all other goals. For example, SDG Goal 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) and Goal 4 (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education) cannot be fulfilled in the absence of good governance and in the presence of widespread corruption (UN DESA 2024). From this standpoint, anti-corruption is no longer a simple agenda of crime and punishment, but rather a complex reform agenda and a critical part of agenda 2030 and the SDGs as a whole. This is clearly articulated under SDG 16 and its underlying targets, which aim to 'promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'. The most notable of these targets are the ones aiming to 'substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms' (16.5) and 'develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels' (16.6). Other SDG 16 targets supporting anti-corruption are those that include references to asset recovery (16.4) and access to information (16.10), both of which are explicit requirements under the UNCAC (UN DESA 2024, UNDP 2024a).

Gender equality and inclusion

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is imperative to make progress across all SDG goals and targets. The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities. Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation, as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels. All forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls also need to be eliminated, including through the engagement of men and boys.

It is within this context that Agenda 2030 contains both a specific SDG goal (# 5) on achieving gender equality, as well as calls for a systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of all the SDGs, including a significant increase in investment to close the gender gap, and strengthening of support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional and national levels (UN DESA 2024). Agenda 2030 and the SDGs recognise that other groups who are vulnerable (e.g. children, youth, persons with disabilities) must also be empowered. States are, therefore, called upon to remove obstacles and

constraints, strengthen support and meet the special needs of these vulnerable groups (UN DESA 2024).

Sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security; and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. It is within this context that factors which give rise to violence, insecurity and injustice, are addressed in Agenda 2030 (e.g. inequality, corruption, poor governance, and illicit financial and arms flows). Conversely, the Agenda recognizes the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights, effective rule of law, good governance at all levels, and transparent, effective and accountable institutions. It also advocates for special consideration of people living in areas affected by complex humanitarian emergencies and terrorism (UN DESA 2024).

Chapter 3 The Arab States regional context

Regional overview

The 'Arab World' is commonly understood to consist of the 22 member countries of the League of Arab States (LAS). While 'the Arab World' is a way of defining a geographical area, the region is quite heterogenous in terms of political systems, economic models and social structures, and important differences between states relate to levels of economic development, population demographics, health status, inequity, political stability, history of conflict or war, and the presence of refugee or displaced populations. Countries in the region also differ significantly in terms of security. For example, with reference to the countries discussed in this paper, the complex security environments of Palestine and Iraq contrast sharply with the relative political stability of Morocco. Moreover, in some countries, refugee crises have had a significant socio-economic impact, with Jordan and Lebanon hosting large numbers of Palestinian refugees since 1948, Iraqi refugees since 2003, and Lebanon and Jordan hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees since 2011. These differences make it difficult to engage in meaningful communal debate or to find solutions to regional problems (Blair et al. 2014).

Having said this, there are important historical, economic, linguistic, political, and socio-cultural links between countries. For example, most countries in the Arab States region share a historical legacy of Ottoman rule and/or European colonialism. Economically, the entire region is poorly integrated into the global economy. Moreover, poorer and wealthier countries alike suffer from a lack of economic diversity, with the regional economy being heavily skewed towards oil and commodity exports. The absence of economic diversification means that the region lacks vibrant manufacturing and service sectors that can provide jobs today and in the future. This, in part, helps to explain why the Arab States have the highest unemployment among developing regions, the highest jobless rates among the best educated, and the lowest economic participation rates by women (Zoellick 2011).

The focus countries of the ACIAC (and the countries discussed in this paper) all have 'developing economies' and are classified as having medium (Morocco, Iraq) or high (Lebanon, Jordan, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine) levels of human development[2] (UNDP 2024b). All of these countries have majority Arab and Muslim populations (some with large minority ethnic, linguistic and religious communities), high (but declining) fertility rates, a high prevalence of early marriage and a low prevalence of HIV/AIDS (UNDP 2010, UNICEF 2021, World Bank 2024).

In terms of demographics, the Arab States region is characterised by high population growth and a growing youth bulge. Young people (aged under 30) constitute more than half (55%) of the population across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), compared with 36% of the population across OECD countries (OECD 2022). Moreover, the region has the world's highest youth unemployment (25.9% in 2021, 10 percentage points higher than the global average) (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4).

A common theme across the Arab States region is that most countries, to varying degrees and in different forms, are characterized by a large, expensive, underperforming and unsustainable public sector (Bellin & Lane 2016). With private investment averaging only around 15% of GDP, and a saturated public sector, new jobs are scarce. The inability of the public sector to create jobs has distorted labour market outcomes and created a favourable environment for corruption and the spread of bribes, intermediation and nepotism in order to obtain the few jobs available (Zoellick 2011). This situation has undermined efforts to improve government efficiency. Moreover,

[2] achievement in relation to three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living

international experience indicates that large governments are harder to reform, particularly when the public sector accounts for a large share of jobs (Bellin & Lane 2016).

Many countries in the region have been impacted by broad political, social and economic upheavals. For example, in a number of countries, there have been dramatic changes on the political landscape, particularly since the events of the so-called 'Arab Spring' in 2011, which have had important repercussions for the wellbeing of local populations, as well as UN operations. Moreover, the region has been affected by the global financial crisis in differing measures, ranging from reduced remittances from Arabs living in the diaspora, to large numbers of returning workers, to reduced donor aid flows (Malouche 2014).

Another aspect that unites countries in the Arab States region is gender inequality. An analysis of the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) indicates that women's economic, political, health and educational attainment is lower than that of men across the region (WEF 2022). Moreover, the region has the second widest gender gap in the world as measured by the Gender Development Index (GDI), a measure of gender inequalities related to health, education and command over economic resources (UNDP 2023b).

As with most other parts of the world, the Arab States region has been adversely affected by climate change, and food security and sustainable agriculture (SDG2), as well as sustainable water management (including access to clean drinking water) (SDG6), are high-priority challenges in most countries (Göll et al. 2019). In some countries, the water stress level is above 70%, indicating the strong probability of future water scarcity (UN 2018). Jordan, for example, is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world and imports over 90% of its energy and national grain consumption needs. Jordan's population has more than doubled (from 5 to 11 million) over the past two decades, putting additional pressure on limited natural resources. Jordan also faces several climate-related hazards that exacerbate these challenges including significant temperature increases, precipitation decreases and increased incidents of drought (World Bank 2023). Development has brought its own challenges with the mean level of air pollution (SDG11) in the region being more than five times the guideline value defined by the World Health Organization (WHO). This means that nine out of ten people living in urban areas lack clean air (Göll et al. 2019).

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, progress towards achieving sustainable development and the SDGs has been slow in the Arab States region, especially in relation to SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), where nearly zero progress has been made. Moreover, there has been a regress in SDG 2 (zero hunger). The Arab States region is the only region in the world with an increasingly undernourished population (Göll et al. 2019). Slow progress on Agenda 2030 can be attributed to many factors, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, ongoing crises and conflicts in the region, and widespread corruption. It is likely that the Arab States region will not achieve all the SDGs by 2030 if no additional concrete efforts are made (ESCWA 2023).

A major constraint on the achievement of Agenda 2030 for countries in the Arab States region is that there are large data gaps for several SDG indicators. Limited availability of quality, timely and disaggregated data, and a lack of standards and baselines to measure progress, has made monitoring the SDGs difficult. More coordinated efforts to strengthen the capacity of national data collection systems is needed to measure progress towards the achievement of the SDGs and to inform decision-making and promote accountability (UNESCO UIS 2021, UNESCO 2022).

Corruption in the Arab States

Corruption remains endemic in the Arab States while assaults on freedom of expression, press freedoms and civil society continue to escalate. Top-down efforts have blocked public participation

and airing of grievances, and traditional forms of societal consultation have been extinguished. In this way, governing elites have often become isolated and, seemingly, untouchable (Zoellick 2011).

As mentioned earlier, corruption flourishes most in places where the overall political, economic and social environment is conducive to monopoly, opacity and impunity (i.e. undemocratic societies), and where anti-corruption measures are weak. The Arab States struggle to fulfil their commitments, in large part, due to the absence of proper infrastructure and national integrity systems. The Arab States suffer from a 'governance deficit', as evidenced by indexes such as Global Integrity (GII) which indicate that the region lags behind other parts of the world on many governance dimensions. The gaps are particularly pronounced in areas such as transparency, civil liberties, media freedom, participation and social accountability. The access-to-information deficit in the MENA region is probably the most pronounced governance deficit if compared to other parts of the world (Bellin & Lane 2016). As a consequence, overall government accountability is weak, public sector service delivery does not meet the expectations of citizens, and public perception of corruption is high. For example, 19 out of 21 Arab States scored below 50 in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)[3] in 2017. The Arab States also comprised 7 of the bottom 10 scores on the CPI. Most Arab States have failed to improve their positions on the CPI for over a decade (Transparency International 2024a).

The Arab States region is also characterized by a considerable gap between legal frameworks and actual implementation of laws. Many countries in the region have problems of weak, unpredictable, or discretionary implementation of policies and regulations, and the enforcement of the law is unequal and inconsistent, which has had a detrimental impact on public trust in government. Independent judiciaries are an integral part of the overall system of checks and balances, and many MENA judiciaries suffer from a lack of independence, as do many other accountability institutions, such as supreme audit agencies, ombudsmen or anticorruption agencies (Bellin & Lane 2016).

Many Arab States grapple with deeply rooted social and structural injustice. These prevailing conditions perpetuate various forms of inequality, including disparate access to essential services (e.g. education and health) and resources. Poverty, social exclusion, disenfranchisement and the arbitrary lack of law are mutually reinforcing (Zoellick 2011). Thus, not only does corruption exacerbate social inequalities, it also severely impedes achievement of the SDGs (UNDP 2024a).

Political insecurity and violent conflict also fuel corruption. According to the 2023 Global Peace Index (GPI), countries in the Arab States region remain the least peaceful in the world for the 8th year in a row. Conflict and war prevent the development of integrity systems and effective anti-corruption policies and mechanisms. The spread of conflict and the fight against terrorism are often used as excuses for not carrying out real political reforms (Transparency International 2024a).

As discussed above, states in the region share many similarities in relation to corruption. However, countries also face different types and levels of corruption:

- Lebanon: In Lebanon (ranking 149/180 on the 2024 CPI), corruption is widespread and permeates all levels of Lebanese society (e.g. political parties, public administration, the Parliament, the police) (Transparency International 2024b). Lebanon is a consociational democracy, meaning that its political system is constructed around a power-sharing arrangement based on sectarian division between 18 different recognized religious communities, represented by nearly 100 political parties. Partly due to this political instability, the country has not established the necessary integrity structures. Moreover,

[3] The CPI ranks 180 countries and territories around the globe by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, scoring on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).

there are no indications of a strong political will to fight corruption. Lebanon's confessional power-sharing arrangements fuels patronage networks and clientelism, which further undermine the country's governance system. Pervasive clientelism is at the core of the country's political system making political corruption and nepotism Lebanon's most serious corruption challenge (Transparency International 2012).

- Iraq: Among the worst performing countries in the region on the CPI (ranking 154/180 in 2024), Iraq has a decentralised government, and its political system is constructed around a power-sharing arrangement based on ethnic and religious affiliation. Iraq suffers from weak public institutions, internal conflict and deep instability. This enables corruption to become rife with little to no checks on official abuse. Amid ongoing violence, as well as internal wars and conflicts, all forms of good governance have been eroded (Transparency International 2024c). Efforts to address corruption have been undermined by weak political structures and an ongoing lack of will to build adequate integrity systems. In December 2023, Iraq held its first local elections in a decade. However, this was overshadowed by the sectarian divisions in the country influencing the political structures, and one of the main political parties boycotted the election altogether (Transparency International 2024a).

- Jordan: Jordan (ranking 63/180 on the 2024 CPI index) has made some progress in fighting corruption through the 2006 establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission (Law 21 No. 62) (Transparency International 2024d, Transparency International 2016). However, despite clear government initiatives attempting to advance good governance, systemic imbalances remain. This limits people's access to equal opportunities which often rely on personal connections (*'wasta'*) (Transparency International 2024a). Moreover, despite recent advances in judicial reform, enforcement of judicial decisions remains problematic. Judicial independence is further undermined by parallel systems of security or military courts, by which politically sensitive cases, often including corruption cases, are removed from the regular criminal courts and transferred to military or security tribunals. In these courts, general safeguards related to fairness and independence may fall further below minimally acceptable standards (Burgis 2007). Jordan has also been implicated in broader regional challenges escalated by the violence in Syria. The Jordanian government has responded by using antiterrorism and cybercrime laws to criminalise free speech on the internet (Transparency International 2024d).

- Palestine - Since Palestine is subjected to the Israeli occupation, it is not easy to apply international criteria to it, such as a CPI score. Moreover, the Palestinian Authority (PA) does not maintain control over government finances (e.g. taxation, transfer of funds). In 2010, the (2005) Law of Illegal Gains was amended to become the Anti-Corruption Law. The Anti-Corruption Commission, which has a legal framework and financial and administrative independence, was established in the same year. The scope of those subject to the Anti-Corruption Law has widened to include the president of the PA and all governmental employees, in addition to nongovernmental organisations, political parties and trade unions. However, with regards to independence, the Palestinian political system suffers from severe political polarisation due to the Israeli occupation and internal political divisions, which affects the filling of public positions and has led to most senior roles being filled by politicians. It is therefore difficult for senior positions to be filled by people who are neutral and independent from the PA (Transparency International 2016).

- Morocco: Morocco ranks 97/180 on the 2024 CPI index (Transparency International 2024e). The government established the Central Authority for the Prevention of Corruption (ICPC) in 2007 and the National Anti-Corruption Strategy in 2015. However, progress against corruption has been slowed by a lack of political will, low institutional capacity, and the influence of elites who benefit from the status quo. Government procurement processes have lacked oversight, public contracts have been awarded to government patrons and mismanagement of government funds has been met with impunity. Overall transparency is limited, and the monarchy, with its vast array of economic interests, is not subject to scrutiny (Freedom House 2022). Dissent against the government has been met with threats, and journalists and activists known for their criticism of public authorities or investigations into cases of the lack of transparency have been arrested and imprisoned (Transparency International 2016). Moreover, the Moroccan government has responded to protests in the Rif mountains for people's calls for social justice and an end to corruption and power abuse with an iron fist (Transparency International 2018).

- Tunisia: Tunisia ranks 87/180 on the 2024 CPI index (Transparency International 2024f). Following the 14 January 2011 revolution in Tunisia, two enquiry committees were formed: the National Inquiry Committee on Abuses and Violations perpetrated during the recent events (starting from 17 December 2010), and the National Inquiry Committee on Bribery and Corruption (established on 18 February 2011 pursuant to Decree No. 7 of 2011). This authority was concerned with investigating and collecting information on corruption and bribery during the era of ousted president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in all state bodies (Transparency International 2016). However, Tunisia witnessed a setback with the adoption of a controversial reconciliation law granting amnesty to corrupt public officials who served under the old regime of Ben Ali (Transparency International 2018). Tunisia is currently confronting significant democratic challenges. In 2023, the country elected a new parliament with the lowest turnout in voter history at a mere 11%. President Kais Saied seized control of the judiciary and suspended the then existing parliament in 2021 and continued to consolidate his power raising concerns over the checks and balances essential for a functioning democracy. The Anti Corruption Commission in Tunisia was undermined, and its closure dealt a severe blow to transparency and accountability and endangered the safety of whistleblowers and anti-corruption activists. The Tunisian government's intensified crackdown on human rights has compounded these issues. Freedom of speech and assembly have been curtailed, civic space has shrunk under increased surveillance, and legal prosecutions of dissenters has escalated. These developments have signalled a worrying departure from the democratic ideals of the Tunisian revolution drawing domestic and international concern for the future trajectory of the country's democratic and human rights landscape (Transparency International 2024a). Moreover, the judiciary branch in Tunisia has been the object of significant criticism over its independence, neutrality, and relationship to the executive branch (UN OHCHR 2022).

- Egypt: Egypt ranks 108/180 on the 2024 CPI index (Transparency International 2024g). Egypt also remains among the lowest-scoring countries in the world in the Rule of Law Index (136/142) (World Justice Project 2023). Since 2013, the military has had influence over political decision-making profoundly undermining the private sector and contributing to the economic crisis. In December 2023, President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi secured his 3rd 6-year term. His tenure has been marked by excessive infrastructure spending which lacks transparency and a robust economic strategy. This approach has led to a substantial increase

in national debt (Transparency International 2024a). In Egypt, even many basic economic statistics have not been made public, and there are concerns over the transparency of its public finances and the independence of its audit functions (Zoellick 2011). Government decisions are based on a system with very low judicial accountability, and nonenforcement of judicial decisions remains problematic (Al-Gharini et al. 2009). In the ongoing Gaza war, emerging corruption practices, such as the payment of fees on the border for those fleeing the war, is having serious impacts on the most vulnerable (Transparency International 2024a).

Impediments to anti-corruption efforts in the region

One of the challenges in addressing endemic corruption within the Arab States is that current anti-corruption strategies in the region are primarily reactive rather than preventative. Many countries that have drafted laws have failed to systematically mainstream anti-corruption measures with effective enforcement and prevention mechanisms. Simply increasing investigations and incarcerating corrupt individuals is not enough to address systemic issues. Rather, a holistic approach is needed to fix flawed systems. Moreover, incoming governments are often hindered by preexisting corrupt systems which limits their ability to tackle the root causes of corruption (Transparency International 2024a).

The historical context in which much of the Arab States region developed (i.e. Ottoman rule followed by European colonial rule) impeded the development of modern states with democratic governments. Subsequent military coups and control by military/totalitarian regimes, or political parties with exclusionist ideas regarding controlling power, all marred the development of the true civil state[4] in which individuals and civic communities, including political parties, contribute to its management in line with the principles of contemporary governance (i.e. participation, accountability and transparency). Moreover, this historical legacy has resulted in a weak sense of citizenship in many states in the region (Transparency International 2016).

Effective combating of corruption requires a high degree of press freedom, the ability to obtain information on the financial affairs of the state and how these are conducted, high levels of integrity of senior officials, independence of the judiciary, and justice and equality between people. However, there are real gaps in all these factors in the Arab States region. Contrary to what had been expected after the 2011 so-called 'Arab Spring', public freedoms, freedom of expression and freedom of opinion have all seen a sharp decline. Similarly, civil society and non-governmental institutions have been subjected to increased pressure from governments, sometimes leading to their closure or suspension (Transparency International 2016).

[4] a secular state that separates religion and politics

Chapter 4 Youth in context

Understandings of 'youth'

Approximately one billion youth live in the world today (one person in five)(UN DESA 2024c). For statistical purposes, the United Nations defines 'youth' as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. While the UN Secretariat uses the terms 'youth' and 'young people' interchangeably, it is important to differentiate between teenagers (13-19) and young adults (20-24), since the sociological, psychological and health problems they face may differ. In addition, while teenagers are more likely to be engaged in fulltime education, young adults may be entering the worlds of work and marriage and beginning to start their own families (UN DESA 2024c).

Apart from this statistical definition, the meaning of the term 'youth' differs across organisations and varies across different societies around the world. Youth can be understood by a range of working indicators beyond age, including financial dependency, responsibility, and emotional reliance on primary caregivers. For example, in some cultural contexts, youth refers to the age between childhood and marriage (Dunne et al. 2015). Moreover, many countries draw a line on youth at the age at which a person is given equal treatment under the law – often referred to as the 'age of majority'. In many countries, this age is 18, and once a person passes this age, they are considered to be an adult (UN DESA 2024c).

The category of 'youth' is more fluid than other fixed age-groups. On the one hand, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment, as 'youth' is often referred to as a person between the ages of leaving compulsory education and finding their first job ('learning to earning' pathway) (UN DESA 2024b). However, a danger of the category 'youth' is that an emphasis is placed on age in a way that can obscure other social relations (e.g. gender, class, ethnicity, disability, migration and refugee status). Assumptions are often made that these relations are homogenous across different youth regardless of individual character or contextual location when, in fact, they are quite different. For example, the protected and constrained lives that many young people lead in Western countries in the Global North are in stark contrast to the 'adult' responsibilities many young people carry in the Global South (e.g. being the financial breadwinner for the family) (Hart 1992). Moreover, in many countries in the Global South, young females attain adulthood much earlier than their male counterparts (e.g. through early marriage), and the spaces available to them for performing their identities are both different and more limited (Dunne et al. 2015). In this way, the category of 'youth' alone becomes wholly inadequate to consider the complexities of the different social realities in which young people live. Thus, 'youth' is better understood "as an identity-project of 'becoming somebody'" through navigating the transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood (van Dijk et al. 2011: 5-6). This requires a recognition of the heterogeneity of young people and an acknowledgement of their different needs, especially those from marginalized backgrounds (ICAC 2023).

Youth in the Arab States

The Arab States region is home to more than 113 million young people between the ages of 15 and 29 who comprise close to 25% of the region's population, the largest ever cohort of youth. The large presence of youth in the Arab States is critical to the region's economic, social, and cultural development. Youth have proven to be an important catalyst for change in many societies, as they are eager to learn and play an active role in contributing to development. Thus, empowering youth is a good investment as it enhances their active participation in society and helps to build better futures for all (UNDP 2023a).

Youth in the Arab States face a number of unique challenges. One of these challenges is the poor quality of education on offer. Education systems across the region are characterised by dependence

on foreign aid and ongoing inefficiencies, including inadequate resources, poor infrastructure, bureaucracy, an abundance of poorly trained teachers, and corruption (discussed in more detail below). This has resulted in large numbers of dropouts and out-of-school youth (especially girls, those with disabilities, those living in rural areas, those speaking minority languages, and those caught up in violence). Moreover, across the region, there are below average learning outcomes, as well as ongoing unmet demand for instruction at post-compulsory levels of education. Countries in the region have been hindered in progress towards quality education due to a number of constraints, such as inadequate financial resources, lack of needed internal capacity, lack of focused policy and lack of coordination across relevant ministries (UNESCO UIS 2021, UNESCO 2022).

A number of factors have slowed (or even reversed) progress in education in the Arab States. The region is rife with political uncertainty and insecurity (e.g. Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon), which has resulted in personal safety challenges for youth, as well as severe challenges to national education systems. Periods of open conflict have resulted in displacement, injury and loss of life, while ongoing security challenges have resulted in electricity, fuel and running water shortages, as well as huge shortage of learning materials, school uniforms and bags. Widespread damage to, and destruction of, public infrastructure, school property and private homes has resulted in interrupted schooling, and the lack of school buildings has resulted in large classes and double/triple shift schools. The academic and psychosocial impacts of conflict have negatively impacted learning outcomes with many students also suffering from posttraumatic stress (UNESCO UIS 2021, UNESCO 2022).

Another major challenge impacting quality education provision has been the worsening economic situation in the region and the high levels of poverty experienced by many communities. For example, the current socio-economic crisis in Lebanon has been described by the World Bank as quite possibly one of the most severe financial and economic crises since the mid-nineteenth century (World Bank 2021). Shortages of food, medicine and fuel have left the local population struggling to fulfil their needs, and 40% of the population are now living in conditions of extreme poverty (ESCWA 2021). Deterioration of the economic situation across the region has resulted in increased school dropout at both the elementary and preparatory levels (often for males to undertake paid employment, and for females to marry early). In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic, and its' aftermath, have reversed much of the progress made in education in the region, with many more children and youth now falling behind in learning even basic skills (UNESCO UIS 2021).

Youth in the Arab States also face significant challenges in relation to employment. The region has the world's highest youth unemployment (25.9% in 2021, 10 percentage points higher than the global average), and the Arab States have the fastest-growing unemployment rate of young people aged between 15 and 24 years worldwide (ILO 2022). Moreover, the unemployment rate amongst young women is 42.5%, which is more than double that of young men (21.4%) and almost three times as high as the global average (14.9%) (ILO 2022). The Arab States have the highest unemployment among developing regions and the highest jobless rates among the best educated (Zoellick 2011). Labour underutilization also remains high in the region with the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2020 (35.6%) being substantially higher than the global average (23.3%) (ILO 2022). Reliance on rote-teaching (to the detriment of developing critical thinking skills) and lack of coordination with the private sector means that young people are often inadequately prepared for the needs of the labour market.

Youth and corruption

As they travel along the 'learning to earning' pathway, youth are particularly impacted by corruption in relation to education and employment. Within educational spaces, bribery, embezzlement, fraud and extortion are amongst the most common acts of corruption. Bribery may be defined as the offering, giving, soliciting, or receiving of any item of value as a means of influencing the actions of

an individual holding a public duty (e.g. a teacher or educational administrator) (LLI 2024). Bribery in education may involve a lecturer paying a member(s) of the selection committee of a university to be recruited over more qualified candidates, or a professor approving a flawed dissertation because of favours granted to him/her by a student's parents (UNODC 2024c). Embezzlement is the fraudulent taking of personal property by someone to whom it was entrusted, such as the misappropriate of government money for personal gain. An example of this in education would be when funds earmarked for school improvement are used to pay for a vacation for a school principal and his/her family (LLI 2024, UNODC 2024c). Fraud involves an intentional or negligent misrepresentation of fact to generate an economic gain (e.g. 'diploma mills' selling fake degrees over the Internet) (LLI 2024, UNODC 2024c). Extortion is the use of coercion, violence or threats to extract something from another person (e.g. an educator demanding sexual favours or non-required fees from students or their parents to receive better grades) (UNODC 2024c). Corruption in education has serious economic and social consequences, including depriving vulnerable youth of their fundamental right to education, a decreased quality of education, unsuitable people being allocated to jobs and positions of authority, an erosion of trust in people and institutions, wasted talent, broken dreams, unrealised potential for development, financial losses, deepening economic and social inequality, and hindered social mobility (UNODC 2024c).

Youth are also impacted by corruption in relation to employment. Employment corruption occurs in both the public and private sectors. Public sector corruption involves the abuse of government resources and the misuse of power to serve the public interest, whereas private sector corruption involves the abuse of private or commercial resources and the misuse of power to serve legitimate company interests (UNODC 2024d, UNODC 2024e). Corruption in relation to employment might include patronage (the use of State resources to reward individuals for their electoral support), nepotism (preferential treatment of relatives), cronyism (awarding jobs and other advantages to friends or trusted colleagues), and sextortion (the demand for sexual favours as a form of payment), among other offences (UNODC 2024e, UNODC 2024d). Because of the bloated public sector present in most Arab states, youth in the region are particularly impacted by this type of corruption. Employment corruption particularly impacts youth by depriving them of the opportunity to embark on career paths of their choosing, gain financial independence, start their own households and make headway in their careers (UNODC 2024d, UNODC 2024e).

Chapter 5 Youth Participation

'Youth participation' is a complex and contested concept. A broad definition would be when young people, individually and/or collectively, form and express their views and influence matters that concern them directly and indirectly (DCC 2021). Central to the concept of participation is inclusiveness, the inclusion in decision-making of those most affected by the proposed intervention, including the marginalized (Agarwal 2001).

Benefits of youth participation

Youth participation has many broad benefits. First, youth participation benefits youth. From a rights perspective (e.g. youth as 'rights holders'), young people have the right to influence decisions that affect them, and 'youth participation' is integral to young people claiming democratic citizenship (Hart 1992). Youth participation is also a form of empowerment and voice. Participation gives young people opportunities to understand and improve their own lives and their communities, enabling them to become confident actors in their own development and 'heroes of their own story') rather than just passive recipients of aid (Freire 2000). Participation also benefits youth in practical ways as it enables them to acquire confidence, knowledge, skills and networks (social capital). Participation makes important contributions to youth employment outcomes by helping young people to gain professional experience and bolster their CVs (Dunne et al. 2015).

Youth participation benefits development efforts. The youth bulge in developing countries has brought attention to 'youth' as a new target of the aid-industry and development interventions. With 87% of the world's 1.5 billion youth living in the Global South, the active engagement of youth in intervention programmes has become a key focus (Dunne et al. 2015). Within this context, youth have been recognized for their ability to strengthen democracy, address inequality, contribute to sustainable development, encourage positive social change and promote the realisation of human rights. On the other hand, engaging youth as active citizens and encouraging their participation in development programmes has been seen as a way to address concerns about 'idle' youth (e.g. those neither in school nor in employment) becoming vulnerable to terrorism and/or becoming threats to national and international security (Sommers 2011).

Youth bring with them many unique attributes and assets which make them important agents of change and valuable development partners. Taking research as an example, youth have deep knowledge of the contexts in which they live and can be invaluable assets in terms of orienting adult researchers to fieldsites. Moreover, youth are able to illuminate development issues from the perspective of young people within a given context with much needed nuance. This is invaluable as marginalized or remote rural youth, and urbanised and privileged youth, each experience their own unique issues and challenges. Youth researchers can also provide shared language and mutual understandings with other youth, which helps to create a relaxed atmosphere within a research context (e.g. when talking about sexual and reproductive health within socially conservative societies) (Dunne et al. 2015). Moreover, youth participation helps to provide more relevant and sustainable development solutions for communities.

Conceptual challenges and debates around youth participation

Despite all the benefits of youth participation described above, the degree to which young people should have a voice in matters that concern them is a subject that is hotly debated. On the one hand, some critics argue that participation is a naive notion for young people who simply do not have the decision-making capacity of adults. On the other hand, some child/youth advocates argue that young people should be protected from undue involvement and responsibility in the problems of society and that they should be allowed to have a carefree childhood filled with free time and play. However, Hart (1992) argues that young people need to be involved in meaningful projects with

adults, as it is unrealistic to expect them to suddenly become responsible, participating adult citizens at the age of 18, or 21 without prior exposure to the skills and responsibilities involved. Moreover, an understanding of democratic participation and the confidence and competence to participate cannot only be taught as an abstraction in schools (e.g. which are themselves often models of autocracy). Rather, this knowledge and skills can only be acquired gradually through practice.

In the development community, the idea of youth participation has become mainstream and almost mandatory in project/program planning. However, views diverge on how 'participation' is defined, whom it is expected to involve, what it is expected to achieve, and how it is to be brought about (Agarwal 2001). First, there is a lack of understanding and consensus on what 'youth participation' actually means. 'Participation' cannot be discussed without considering power relations. Not all activities that engage young people can be considered to be 'meaningful' participation. Moreover, participation may even have a negative impact on young people if their involvement in development projects and research is ambiguous, frivolous or exploitative. For example, adults have often used young people to influence a cause, such as in a conference or public forum setting, while youth have been involved in ways that have been 'manipulative', 'decorative' or 'tokenistic' (nonparticipation). Hart's Ladder of Participation serves as a beginning typology for thinking about young peoples' participation in development projects (e.g. anti-corruption initiatives) (Hart 1992). He argues that youth participation demands a significant shift in approach from 'doing for youth' to 'doing with youth' and eventually 'doing by youth' (i.e. youth-initiated shared decisions with adults) (Hart 1992, DfID 2010). Similarly, Agarwal (2001) argues that 'nominal' participation (membership in a group), 'passive' participation (being informed of decisions post facto; attending meetings and listening in on decision-making without speaking up) and 'consultative' participation (being asked an opinion in specific matters without guarantee of influencing decisions) all fall short of 'empowering' participation, which is when young people engage constructively in dialogue, raise issues that affect them and influence the group's decisions.

The critiques above suggest that authentic participation requires more than just a toolkit of techniques (participation as 'method') that can be used to involve youth in development projects. Rather, what is needed is a deep questioning of practitioner/researcher attitudes and behaviour and a critique of conventional methods and practice in relation to youth participation and empowerment (participation as 'approach'). Within the research space, Participatory Action Research (PAR) attempts to address these power dynamics. With reference to youth, its main features are: (a) research that is carried out by, or with, the young people concerned; (b) researchers' feeling committed to youth and to their control of the analysis; (c) research that begins with a concrete problem identified by youth themselves; and (d) research that proceeds to investigate the underlying causes of the problem so that youth can themselves go about addressing these causes (Hart 1992). Hart (1992) notes that youth participation does not mean that adults (who play an important role in young people's development) should be supplanted. Rather, adults need to learn to listen, support, and guide; and to know when and when not to speak (Hart 1992).

Factors impacting youth participation

Youth participation is contingent on a number of internal and external factors which can advantage/disadvantage youth, both separately and interactively (Agarwal 2001).

In part, participation is contingent on factors internal to particular youth (e.g. personal characteristics, endowments and attributes) which determine their ability to speak out, travel freely and assume the poster of leaders. These may include: developmental level; decision-making capacity; education, knowledge and skills; marital status; and social networks. Motivation is an important internal prerequisite to participation. Motivation to participate is increased if the issue at hand (e.g. corruption) is perceived by youth as being relevant to them, if they can have some sense

of control and ownership over intervention processes and outcomes, and if they have trust in decision-making systems and processes to result in meaningful outcomes and positive change (Hart 1992). Similarly, self-confidence and belief in the ability to successfully contribute to, and achieve, positive impacts are important internal prerequisites to participation. At the same time, youth are impacted by social perceptions of their abilities and contributions. If negative social attitudes towards young people are prevalent, the competence of youth is underestimated by adults, and much of what they do is undervalued by families and communities, youth can internalise these perceptions, lose confidence and decline to participate (Agarwal 2001).

Youth participation is also contingent on a number of external factors, such as institutional and societal rules, norms, and perceptions. For example, whether youth participate in an initiative is contingent on: a) rules of entry (criteria defining youth access to/membership in a particular social space); b) social norms defining who can speak up at meetings and how youth should behave in public (e.g. age segregation of public space, age division of labour, age behavioural norms), c) social perceptions regarding youths' ability to contribute to development outcomes, d) adults' entrenched territorial dominance over community structures and public forums, e) household endowments and attributes which define where youth fall within the structural hierarchies of gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic class, and g) practical considerations (e.g. youth having sufficient information on how to participate, youth having sufficient time to participate in light of education/work/family commitments and youth having access to affordable transport).

Youth participation varies according to family, cultural and national contexts. Within Western societies, agency is often associated with personal autonomy (e.g. the CRC defines children and young people as autonomous actors). However, this can be problematic when applied to Eastern contexts which value relational identities, interconnectedness and negotiation (El Guindi 1999). The power of relational identities means that youth cannot be seen as autonomous actors in terms of decision-making. Rather, decisions are often made communally with reference to both patriarchal and age relations (i.e. males and elders having more authority within the family and community) (Lokot 2018, Dunne et al. 2020).

In some contexts, youth engagement may have implications for young people's relationships within the family. For example, freedom of expression and participation in community issues may be contrary to the child-rearing attitudes of a young person's parents or caretakers. The importance of youth participation is sometimes difficult for parents from disadvantaged and/or low-income backgrounds to understand when they themselves have had no voice and see authoritarian child-rearing as the best approach for their child's success (Hart 1992). Moreover, youth participation in development projects may result in a clash of values within the household. For example, in the interest of combatting corruption in society, young people may be asked to resist power structures which are perceived to benefit the family and support its wellbeing (e.g. access to *'wasta'*).

Gender, social exclusion and youth participation

A young person's ability to participate is often impacted by their social positioning. While participation is meant to involve and benefit all sections of the community, it can effectively exclude significant sections. These 'participatory exclusions' (i.e. exclusions within seemingly participatory institutions, structures and systems) stem from systemic factors and can, in turn, unfavourably affect both equity and institutional efficiency (Agarwal 2001). Thus, it is fundamental to look at intersectional dimensions of diversity within the category of 'youth' to apply a truly inclusive approach.

Female youth often encounter unique barriers to their participation, such as being indiscernible in statistics and invisible in the public sphere (e.g. hidden within homes, involved in endless domestic

chores) (Hart 1992). On the one hand, challenges related to the participation of girls and women may be explicit. For example, in many postcolonial societies, state law coexists with a multiplicity of family, customary, personal and religious laws. This ensures that women's rights as 'citizens' are mediated through their roles as mothers and wives, and as dependents of men and wider kinship systems (e.g. in some countries, women legally need the permission of male relatives to participate in activities within the public sphere).

On the other hand, exclusion of females may also be implicit. Gender identities are regulated through cultural and religious scripts which shape notions of appropriate behaviour (Butler 1990). For example, female honour may be aligned with that of the family as well as the nation. In this scenario, women become the embodiment of ideals, such as tradition, culture and honour, and are expected to behave accordingly (Yuval-Davis 1993). Gender equality and gender empowerment also mean different things to different groups of people within different contexts. It is from this perspective that women, as rational agents, may appear to sanction dominant gender norms privileging men to obtain enhanced social status (Dunne et al. 2017). In practice, this may impact female youths' participation by restricting their freedom of movement and presence in public spaces, restricting their interactions with non-related men, restricting their activities to comply with locally sanctioned constructions of femininity and female honour (e.g. *sharaf*), and restricting their decision-making power. It is important to note that gender does not signify on its own. Rather, it interplays with ethnicity and class (among other social categories) in defining outcomes for different categories of women (Agarwal 2001).

Class often has a profound impact on youth participation, and a middle-class bias often colours how policymakers and practitioners view participatory processes and practices. For example, when recruiting youth leaders, adults often look for the personal characteristics of confidence, independence, autonomy and self-direction (more commonly found amongst youth coming from families with adequate economic resources). On the other hand, low-income families often place higher value on obedience from their children and see it as the means by which their children can succeed economically. The situation can be accentuated for girls, as their socialization often emphasizes protection and dependency, rather than autonomy (Hart 1992). On the one hand, it is not realistic or appropriate to expect youth who are living in extreme poverty to initiate development projects for others, or even for their own community, if they themselves are struggling for survival. On the other hand, relying heavily and repeatedly upon the leadership skills of a select number of elite youth does not model inclusive authentic participation or foster democratic processes amongst young people (Hart 1992).

Other social groups may also encounter specific restrictions to their participation. These include noncitizens (i.e. migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons), ethnic and/or religious minority groups, youth with disabilities, youth living in rural areas, and nomadic youth (i.e. Bedouins). Regardless of the challenges to participation, ways need to be found to enable all youth to understand their own lives and to take part in discovering and creating alternative pathways to a better future (Hart 1992).

Chapter 6 Youth Engagement in Anti-Corruption Efforts

The importance of youth engagement

Corruption is a complex and endemic problem which is not the responsibility of governments and anti-corruption authorities alone. Moreover, corruption cannot be fought in silos. Rather, it requires a holistic approach, where stakeholders from all sectors of society come together to understand, prevent and combat corruption in all its forms (ICAC 2023). The importance of a multi-stakeholder approach to fighting corruption is increasingly acknowledged through global policy instruments. For example, UNCAC article 13.1 stipulates that States parties are urged to "take appropriate measures to promote the active participation of individuals and groups outside the public sector, such as civil society."

As members of civil society, young people are an essential part of any efficient and sustainable anti-corruption solution. For example, at the ninth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the UNCAC, held in December 2021 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, a resolution was adopted affirming the need to "promote the role of education and youth empowerment in preventing and countering corruption". It reiterated the importance of a strengthened and coordinated approach to support anti-corruption education, engagement and the empowerment of young people (ICAC 2023).

With their unique skills and aptitudes (e.g. possessing dynamism, strong voices, unwavering spirit, innovative thinking, resourcefulness, limitless energy, tech savviness and innovative uses of social media), youth are high-value assets in the fight against corruption. Young people have a genuine interest in issues that directly affect their communities and their well-being (e.g. corruption), and they bring with them fresh ideas which can help to unearth innovative and creative solutions to corruption that may well have been overlooked by policymakers and practitioners. Moreover, young people are natural collaborators who typically place importance on collective approaches to problem solving, such as networking and building alliances, including through cooperation across generations. This means that young people have an important role to play in influencing their peers, their families and their communities to resist corruption. In particular, young people can help anti-corruption authorities better understand the priorities of younger age groups to which these agencies traditionally have less access (e.g. through social media and youth-friendly language and messaging). Being aware of the needs and interests of young people will help agencies ensure that their programming addresses issues that matter to a significant proportion of their constituents (ICAC 2023).

Examples of best practice from the region

Meaningful participation in anti-corruption efforts benefits youth. Young people who actively participate in anti-corruption initiatives become equipped with the knowledge, skills, resources and social capital they need to become active citizens and contribute meaningfully to governance and development (ICAC 2023).

Within the Arab States region, there are motivational stories of young people working with anti-corruption authorities to improve transparency in public services, promote integrity amongst their peers, find innovative ways to prevent unethical practices, and champion accountability, integrity and justice. The section below highlights some examples of best practice of youth engagement in anti-corruption efforts across the region:

* Examples of regional best practice to come from country offices & partner organisations

- …

Issues to consider

Meaningful youth participation in anti-corruption work occurs under enabling conditions, whereby young people actively participate at all stages of an anti-corruption initiative and in collaboration with stakeholders, resulting in personal empowerment and the promotion of anti-corruption outcomes. There are a number of issues to consider in order to achieve meaningful and effective youth participation in anti-corruption work:

- Youth participation is multi-dimensional, and there are enablers and barriers at the state, community and family levels. For example, states may formulate progressive policies with reference to youth participation in anti-corruption efforts, but local bureaucracies with less commitment may resist the implementation of these policies, or key departments/influential individuals may pursue retrogressive state structure out of self-interest in maintaining the status quo. On the other hand, governments lacking in will with regards to youth participation may respond positively to youth demands due to political pressure, pressure from international aid agencies, or states recognising the inefficacy of their own machinery in implementing aid programs due to corruption. Thus, within any given context, enablers and barriers to youth participation may be complex, shifting and unexpected (Agarwal 2001).

- Youth may want to participate in anti-corruption efforts in response to adult inertia (e.g. student protest movements). However, the degree of opportunity for youth to engage in these efforts is commonly a reflection of the participatory opportunities available for adults in a given national/cultural context. In contexts where adults themselves have little opportunity to influence community and state decisions, it is unlikely that young people will have many opportunities to become a force for change. Thus, improving youth participation is a means of fundamentally improving the whole society. Parents can be positively influenced and, therefore, drawn into community programs of participation, by seeing examples of their children's competence and achievements in relation to anti-corruption efforts. Participation is most effective when it involves collaboration between young and old, making best use of the special energies and perceptions of different generations, and providing continuity between the past, present and the future in the fight against corruption (Hart 1992).

- In keeping with the conceptualisation of 'participation' as a shifting of power, youth participation is not simply about adding youth to adult-defined structures. Rather, it involves bringing young people into a deeper understanding of their condition, helping them to identify causes which matter to them (e.g. corruption within educational spaces), and empowering them to be able to transform their lives and communities. It requires adults to be sensitive to young people's level of development and particular needs and to find ways to maximize their ability to speak about issues of concern to them to the extent that they are able, and in a manner which is most comfortable to them (Hart 1992). On the other hand, only treating young people as 'extra bodies' to fill up a room can disempower them, discredit the reputation and credibility of the organisation in the eyes of an important and often very large portion of the constituency that they serve, and risk young people losing interest in participating in anti-corruption initiatives (ICAC 2023).

- Schools, as an integral part of the community, are an obvious venue for fostering young people's understanding and experience of democratic participation. However, in practice, examples of schools as truly democratic institutions are rare. As the primary socializing instrument of the state, schools are concerned with guaranteeing stability, and this is generally understood to mean preserving very conservative systems of authority. Thus, anti-corruption agencies could work with educational authorities to change their conception of

schooling and transform the 'hidden curriculum' of authority in schools into a curriculum of justice in which the rights of students as well as teachers are taken seriously (Hart 1992).

- There are often challenges inherent in 'handing over the stick' (e.g. enabling greater roles for young people as experts and researchers). As the saying goes, 'when you ask a question, you lose control of the answer'. Engaging youth in decision-making may result in unanticipated and unintended outcomes, such as young people challenging deeply entrenched social and cultural power structures, including gender norms (Chambers 2002, Freire 2000). For example, in the Arab States region, opening the flood gates of youth participation may result in a rejection of traditional power hierarchies benefiting male elders and religious leaders.

- Participation in anti-corruption efforts may expose young people to retribution from authority figures (e.g. family members, government officials, religious authorities, community leaders) who are interested in maintaining the status quo of inequitable power relations. Backlash against participation in anti-corruption efforts may expose youth to harassment, educational disadvantage, job loss, and in extreme cases, acts of violence. As such, adequate safeguarding measures (e.g. protecting confidentiality) must be put in place to protect young people from the adverse effects of participation and ensure that a safe environment is created for youth engagement without the threat of retribution (ICAC 2023).

- Participation is not the panacea many people assume. Anti-corruption authorities are often created with high aspirations that, in turn, result in ambitious mandates and elusive expectations which are then passed on to youth. However, there are limits to what youth participation alone can achieve in terms of equity and efficiency given preexisting socioeconomic inequalities and relations of power. Engaging youth in decision-making can raise their expectations for change which cannot always be met. This may result in disillusionment and a sense of fatalism encouraging youth to acquiesce to the status quo (Agarwal 2001). Moreover, it is important for young people to be made aware that community-level change and societal transformation may not necessarily occur within the lifetime of an initiative, and therefore, they may not directly see the fruits of their labour (ICAC 2023).

Technical and practical considerations

Engaging youth in anti-corruption efforts raises a number of technical and practical considerations:

- Many anti-corruption authorities face significant shortages in terms of financial, human and technical resources. This is especially true in developing countries, where anti-corruption authorities often struggle with a combination of low levels of resources and high levels of corruption. Traditionally, youth participation has not been regarded as a primary component of the work of anti-corruption authorities, and many agencies lack the mandate, budget or necessary professional competence to engage with young people. The nature of youth engagement also requires a high degree of confidentiality and for policymakers and practitioners to have a specific skill set (e.g. deep understanding of the unique constraints facing young people in relation to participation), which they may not have. Consequently, preparatory work in institutional readiness needs to be undertaken at the outset of any anti-corruption initiative to ensure effective, sustainable and empowering youth participation (ICAC 2023).

- Youth may participate in anti-corruption efforts as individuals or as a group. While individual activism may be strategic within specific contexts, overall, it is unlikely to achieve long-term, widespread and sustainable anti-corruption outcomes. Group activism may be more

effective, but it is also more complex to initiate and sustain, and it requires efficient communication, coordinated mobilisation, and strong personal commitment from members. Establishing and leveraging shared-value partnerships can be a helpful strategy to form collaborations which are mutually beneficial and yield returns for all. This requires assessing strategic alignment of youth engagement priorities, arriving at a common goal, leveraging resources and networks, and making use of other contributions from both parties (ICAC 2023). It is important to keep in mind that group bargaining power is likely to be high only if the group is internally unified, holds political weight and can muster support from progressive elements within the state, NGOs, media, academics and international donors (Agarwal 2001).

- On a practical note, the process of engaging youth in decision-making is often very time consuming. For example, it is difficult to genuinely involve young people in the planning of an extremely large event with great logistical complexity. Moreover, the nature of and level of commitment expected from young people, as well as the frequency and intensity of interaction, needs to be carefully thought through in relation to young people's other commitments to family, community, schooling and employment. There are also ethical issues related to engaging young people in unremunerated volunteer work that demand cultural and contextual sensitivity especially in low-income countries. For example, there are often opportunity costs to a young person's participation in development projects, particularly for youth from poorer households (e.g. lost income, lost time caring for vulnerable family members).

- Gender considerations must be taken into account when planning and executing anti-corruption activities. For example, in conservative communities, young women may not be able to participate in engagement activities if they clash with their care and home responsibilities, if events occur at night or if they must travel alone. Traversing these gender norms may put young women into conflict within their families and communities. Moreover, organizers also need to consider which tools, approaches and facilities would be most appropriate when planning activities with youth with disabilities.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

There is great, and often untapped, potential for meaningful and inclusive youth engagement in anti-corruption initiatives in the Arab region. Engaging young people can support the work of anti-corruption authorities to overcome some of the challenges they are facing, thus actively contributing to their success. Moreover, by engaging young people, anti-corruption authorities can demonstrate support for Governments' national and international commitments (e.g. compliance with article 13 of the UNCAC, make progress towards the achievement of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, meet national goals on youth development or international targets such as those embodied in Youth 2030: The UN Youth Strategy) (ICAC 2023). Engagement in anti-corruption efforts can also be tremendously beneficial to youth, providing them with knowledge, skills, networks and the confidence to be positive changemakers in their communities and nations.

Recommendations for policymakers and practitioners

Policymakers and practitioners often seek easy-to-implement prescriptive pathways to address development challenges, such as corruption. However, in terms of youth participation, there is no 'one size fits all'. Rather, in each context, an analysis must be undertaken to ascertain which strategies and approaches would be most suitable to meaningfully engage youth, taking into account different national realities, capacities, levels of development and priorities. Moreover, prescriptive recommendations (identifying youth-engagement options based solely on the needs and challenges of anticorruption authorities) bear the inherent risk of non-youth-centered results (ICAC 2023).

Having said this, policymakers and practitioners are encouraged to contextualise and embed the following general recommendations within their youth engagement efforts in anti-corruption work:

<u>Education, training and capacity building</u>

- ✓ Promote youth awareness of issues that affect them (i.e. the impacts of corruption on young people)
- ✓ Foster the values of democratic citizenship, and model these values
- ✓ Build the capacity of young people to engage in anti-corruption efforts (e.g. develop knowledge and skills, critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, awareness of AI issues)
- ✓ Build the capacity of adult staff in anti-corruption authorities to have the knowledge and skills they need to constructively engage with young people (e.g. competence with youth-friendly working methods and materials, interventions that are aligned with the age and capacities of young people)
- ✓ Dialogue with likeminded organisations and learn from international best practice
- ✓ Guide youth to engage in constructive (rather than disruptive) activism

<u>Engagement-enabling environment</u>

- ✓ Ensure that adequate resources are available for youth engagement activities (e.g. a specific youth budget)
- ✓ Strengthen institutional readiness for meaningful youth participation (e.g. dedicated funding, staff capacity to engage with youth, senior leadership support)
- ✓ Create authentic, meaningful and empowering opportunities for youth participation in anti-corruption efforts (i.e. youth involved at all stages of the project/research process)
- ✓ Support young people to set ambitious, yet realistic, expectations of what can be achieved through their engagement in anti-corruption efforts
- ✓ If incentives are to be given to young people for participation, ensure that they do not support corruption (e.g. financial incentives) but instead lead to lasting youth empowerment (e.g. certification of skills, leadership opportunities)

- ✓ Recognise and champion the accomplishments of youth engaged in anti-corruption efforts
- ✓ Implement safeguarding measures to protect youth from backlash resulting from their participation in anti-corruption efforts, and ensure that a safe, respectful and inclusive environment is created for youth participation
- ✓ Implement a monitoring, evaluating and learning process to continuously improve youth participation and make it more meaningful

Coordination and partnerships

- ✓ Create opportunities for young people to engage with families, communities and civil society in relation to anti-corruption efforts (i.e. support intergenerational collaboration and partnerships)
- ✓ Support young people to coordinate and mobilise in their anti-corruption efforts
- ✓ Pursue shared-value partnerships to ensure meaningful youth participation benefits for both anti-corruption authorities and young people (e.g. arriving at a common goal, leveraging resources and networks, and making use of other contributions from both parties)

Diversity and inclusion

- ✓ Ensure that youth participation in anti-corruption initiatives is inclusive, leaving no one behind
- ✓ Conduct a stakeholder analysis: Identify youth groups (including the marginalized) with the aim of understanding their views and the barriers impeding their participation

References

Agarwal, B. (2001). Participatory Exclusions, Community Forestry, and Gender: An Analysis for South Asia and a Conceptual Framework, *World Development*, 29(10), pp. 1623-1648, ISSN 0305-750X, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(01)00066-3.

Al-Gharini, K., Al-Rashidi, I & Al-Gamal, M. (2009). *The Report of the National Survey of the Citizens' Opinions on Corruption, the Judicial System and the Quality of Governmental Services in Egypt*. Research, Monitoring and Governance Unit, Social Contract Center, Washington, DC. Available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAWJUSTINST/Resources/Egypt_Corruption_JudicialSystem_Government_Services_Report.pdf (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

Arab Anti-corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET). (2023). *About us*. Available at: Acinet | ACINET - Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network | About us (arabacinet.org) (accessed on 2 June, 2024).

Bellin, E. & Lane, H. (Eds.). (2016). *Building Rule of Law in the Arab World*. Boulder, USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers. Available at: Building Rule of Law in the Arab World : Tunisia, Egypt, and Beyond (oclc.org) (accessed on 4 June, 2024).

Blair, I., Grivna, M. & Sharif, A.A. (2014). *The "Arab World" is Not a Useful Concept When Addressing Challenges to Public Health, Public Health Education, and Research in the Middle East*. National Library of Medicine. Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3988371/ (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

Burgis, M. (2007). Judicial Reform and the Possibility of Democratic Rule in Jordan: A Policy Perspective on Judicial Independence. *Arab Law Quarterly*, 21, pp. 135-169. 10.1163/026805507X214424.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York; London: Routledge, 2006. Chicago, 17th ed.

Chambers, R. (2002). *Participatory workshops: a sourcebook of 21 sets of ideas and activities*. London: Earthscan (Routledge).

Data for Children Collaborative (DCC). (2021). DCC Dictionary: What do we mean when we talk about Youth Participation? Available at: https://www.dataforchildrencollaborative.com/news/dcc-dictionary-youth-participation#:~:text=In%20its%20most%20basic%20form,concern%20them%20directly%20and%20indirectly (accessed on 18 June, 2024).

DfID. (2010). *Youth Participation in development: A guide for development agencies and policy makers*. London: DFID–CSO Youth Working Group DFID-CSO Youth Working Group and Students Partnership Worldwide. Available at: https://www.youthpolicy.org/uploads/documents/2010_Youth_Participation_in_Development_Guide_Eng.pdf (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

Dunne, M., Durrani, N., Crossouard, B. & Fincham, K. (2015). Youth researching youth: methodological reflections from a multi-country study of youth claiming rights to education and sexual reproductive health. In Bastian, S. and Holmarsdottir, H.B. (Eds.) *Youth at the margins: experiences from engaging youth in research worldwide*. Sense Publishers, Rotterdam, pp. 299-

316. ISBN 9789463000512. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283757435_Youth_researching_youth_Reflections_from_a_multi-country_study_of_youth_claiming_rights_to_education_and_sexual_reproductive_health (accessed 9 June, 2024)

Dunne, M., Durrani, N., Fincham, K., & Crossouard, B. (2017). *Troubling Muslim youth identities. Nation, religion, gender*. Palgrave, London.

Dunne, M., Fincham, K., Crossouard, B. & Durrani, N. (2020). Gender symbolism and the expression of post-colonial national and religious identities, *Social Identities*, 26:3, pp. 376-387. DOI: 10.1080/13504630.2020.1765765

El Guindi, F. (1999). *Veil: Modesty, privacy and resistance*. Berg: Oxford, New York.

El-Seblani, A. (2018). *Corruption? What corruption?* UNDP. Available at: https://www.undp.org/arab-states/blog/corruption-what-corruption (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

El-Seblani, A. & Natta, A. (2018). *Universities Against Corruption*. UNDP. Available at: https://www.undp.org/arab-states/blog/universities-against-corruption (accessed on 5 June, 2024).

ESCWA. (2021, September). *Multidimensional poverty in Lebanon (2019-2021): Painful reality and uncertain prospects*. Available at https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/news/docs/21-00634-_multidimentional_poverty_in_lebanon_-policy_brief_-_en.pdf) (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

ESCWA. (2023). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab region*. Available at: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/progress-towards-sdgs-arab-region-english_3.pdf (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI). (2024). *Human Rights-based approach*. Available at: https://ennhri.org/about-nhris/human-rights-based-approach/ (accessed on 6 June, 2024).

Fakir, I. & Yerkes, S. (2018). *Governance and the Future of the Arab World*. Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2018/10/governance-and-the-future-of-the-arab-world?lang=en (accessed on 7 June, 2024).

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). (2014). *Human Rights in Action Case studies from Regulators, Inspectorates and Ombudsmen*. Available at: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/human_rights_in_action_rio_case_studies_1.pdf (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

Freedom House (2022). *Morocco*. Available at: https://freedomhouse.org/country/morocco/freedom-world/2022 (accessed on 10 June, 2024).

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Göll, E., Uhl, A. and Zwiers, J. (2019, March). *Sustainable Development in the MENA Region*. MENARA Future Notes No. 20. Available at: https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/project_papers/menara_papers/future_notes/sustainable_development_in_the_mena_region) (accessed on 7 June, 2024).

Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/24139916_Children's_Participation_From_Tokenism_To_Citizenship (accessed on 9 June, 2024).

IJRC. (2024). *Overview of the human rights framework*. Available at: https://ijrcenter.org/ihr-reading-room/overview-of-the-human-rights-framework/ (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

ILO. (2022). *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022: The Arab States*. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/briefingnote/wcms_853324.pdf) (accessed on 6 June, 2024).

Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) (Hong Kong) (2023). *Policy Guide for National Anti-Corruption Authorities on Meaningful Youth Engagement in Anti-Corruption Work*. Available at: https://www.icac.org.hk/icac/myeguide/pdf/policy_guide_full.pdf (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

Jones, N., Gbedemah, C., Monjane, P., Pereznieto, P., Rosen, G. & Villar, E. (2011). *Involving youth in development policy research: lessons learned*. Project briefing No.56. Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08ade40f0b652dd000952/60828_youth-development-policy-research-lessons-PB.pdf (accessed on 4 June, 2024).

Legal Information Institute (LLI) (2024). Wex legal dictionary. Cornell University. Available at: https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex (accessed on 14 July, 2024).

Lokot, M. (2018). *Syrian refugees: thinking beyond gender stereotypes*. Forced Migration Review, (57). Available at: https://www.fmreview.org/lokot/ (accessed on 5 June, 2024).

Malouche, M.M. (2014). *Beyond Remittances: How 11 Million Migrants from the Arab World can Impact Development*. Available at: https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/arabvoices/how-million-migrants-from-the-arab-world-can-impact-development (accessed on 18 June, 2024).

Masood, A. (2012). *Youth Unemployment in the MENA Region: Determinants and Challenges*. Available at: https://www.imf.org/external/np/vc/2012/061312.htm?id=18656 (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

Merhej, K. (2023). *Breaking the curse of corruption in Lebanon*. Available at: https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/06/breaking-curse-corruption-lebanon (accessed on 3 June, 2024).

OECD. (2022). *Young people in MENA: Coming of age in a context of structural challenges and global trends*. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/3ced02bf en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/3ced02bf-en) (accessed on 4 June, 2024).

Sommers, M. (2011). Governance, security, culture, and Africa's youth bulge. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 5(2), pp. 292 – 303.

Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (StAR). (2024). *UNCAC*. Available at: https://star.worldbank.org/focus-area/uncac#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Convention%20against,binding%20universal%20anti%2Dcorruption%20instrument (accessed on 7 June, 2024).

Transparency International. (2012). *Overview of corruption and anti-corruption in Lebanon*. Available at: https://www.u4.no/publications/overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption-in-lebanon.pdf (accessed on 12 June, 2024).

Transparency International. (2016). *Arab Anti-Corruption Authorities: The Way Forward*. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/publications/2016-regional-nis-report-arab-anti-corruption-authorities-the-way-forward (accessed on 5 June, 2024).

Transparency International. (2018). *Rampant Corruption in Arab States*. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/news/rampant-corruption-in-arab-states (accessed on 11 June, 2024).

Transparency International. (2021). *Morocco: Glaring gaps relieved by the response to the Coronavirus pandemic*. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/blog/morocco-glaring-gaps-revealed-by-the-management-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic (accessed on 12 June, 2024).

Transparency International. (2024a). *CPI 2023 for Middle East and North Africa: Dysfunctional approach to fighting corruption undermines progress*. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/news/cpi-2023-middle-east-north-africa-dysfunctional-approach-fighting-corruption (accessed on 12 June, 2024).

Transparency International. (2024b). *Our work in Lebanon*. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/lebanon (accessed on 11 June, 2024).

Transparency International. (2024c). *Our work in Iraq*. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/iraq (accessed on 10 June, 2024).

Transparency International. (2024d). *Our work in Jordan*. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/jordan (accessed on 9 June, 2024).

Transparency International. (2024e). *Our work in Morocco*. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/morocco (accessed on 8 June, 2024).

Transparency International. (2024f). *Our work in Tunisia*. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/tunisia (accessed on 8 June, 2024).

Transparency International. (2024g). *Our work in Egypt*. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/egypt (accessed on 9 June, 2024).

UN. (2018). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018*. Available at: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/201 (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

UN DESA. (2024). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Available at: https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

UN DESA. (2024b). *Definition of Youth*. Available at: Microsoft Word - YOUTH_Definition_2013-1-23.docx (un.org) (accessed on 5 June, 2024).

UN DESA. (2024c). *Frequently asked questions*. Available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/what-we-do/faq.html#:~:text=15.4%25-,%5B%2Faccordion%2Ditem%5D%20%5Baccordion%2Ditem%20title%3D%E2%80%9D,Latin%20America%20and%20the%20Caribbean (accessed on 6 June, 2024).

UNDP. (2010). *Human development report occupied Palestinian territory: investing inhuman security for a future state*.

UNDP Arabic. (2018, December). *Corruption?...What Corruption? Breaking an important barrier of silence in Arab countries*. Available at: https://undparabic.exposure.co/corruption-what-corruption (accessed on 2 June, 2024).

UNDP. (2023a) *Empowering youth in the Arab region to be part of the green transition*. Available at: https://www.undp.org/arab-states/stories/empowering-youth-arab-region-be-part-green-transition (accessed on 8 June, 2024).

UNDP. (2023b). *Gender Justice & the Law in the Arab region*. Available at: https://www.undp.org/arab-states/gender-justice-law-arab-region#:~:text=The%20Arab%20States%20region%20has,is%20the%20lowest%20percentage%20globally) (accessed on 10 June, 2024).

UNDP. (2024a). *What is corruption and how much does it cost the world?* Regional Project on Anti-Corruption and Integrity In the Arab Countries (ACIAC). Available at: http://www.undp-aciac.org/governance/anticorruption.aspx (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

UNDP. (2024b). *Human development insights*. Available at: https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights#/ranks (accessed on 2 June, 2024).

UNDP. (2024c). *Regional Project on Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (ACIAC)*. Available at: https://www.undp.org/arab-states/regional-project-anti-corruption-and-integrity-arab-countries-aciac (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). (2021, November). *Regional Overview: Bridging SDG4 and Education Monitoring in the Arab region*. Available at: https://tcg.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/11/Benchmarks-Report-ARAB_2021_EN.pdf) (accessed on 7 June, 2024).

UNESCO. (2022). *Progress of SDG4 in the Arab Region: A Summary Review*. Available at https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383552) (accessed on 2 June, 2024).

UN OHCHR. (2022). *Tunisia: Presidential decrees undermine judicial independence and access to justice, says UN expert*. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/07/tunisia-presidential-decrees-undermine-judicial-independence-and-access (accessed on 8 June, 2024).

UNICEF. (2021). *Children in the State of Palestine*. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/sop/reports/children-state-palestine-0 (accessed on 18 June, 2024).

UNICEF. (2024). *About the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Available at: https://www.unicef.ca/en/policy-advocacy-for-children/about-the-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child?ea.tracking.id=20DIAQ01OTE&19DIAQ02OTE=&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw0_WyBhDMARIsAL1Vz8sBzc-Yk12M9Q8Efma7OoE9MvwfUDiQPMVnZEr7MDLb4YYCZFnNP8MaAnWVEALw_wcB (accessed on 3 June, 2024).

UNODC. (2023). *International Anti-Corruption Day 2023 - Arabic statement*. UNODC Executive Director Ghada Waly. Available at: International Anti-Corruption Day 2023 - Arabic statement UNODC Executive Director Ghada Waly (youtube.com) (accessed on 2 June, 2024).

UNODC. (2024a). What is corruption and why should we care? University Module Series: Anti-corruption. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/anti-corruption/module-1/key-issues/corruption---baseline-definition.html (accessed on 14 June, 2024).

UNODC. (2024b). Learn about UNCAC. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/corruption/en/uncac/learn-about-uncac.html (accessed on 17 June, 2024).

UNODC. (2024c). Knowledge tools for academics and professionals. Module 9 – Corruption in education, Available at: https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/anti-corruption/module-9/key-issues/causes-of-corruption-in-education.html (accessed on 14 July, 2024).

UNODC. (2024d). Knowledge tools for academics and professionals. Module 4 – Public sector corruption, Available at: https://grace.unodc.org/grace/uploads/documents/academics/Anti-Corruption_Module_4_Public_Sector_Corruption.pdf (accessed on 14 July, 2024).

UNODC. (2024e). Knowledge tools for academics and professionals. Module 4 – Private sector corruption, Available at: https://grace.unodc.org/grace/uploads/documents/academics/Anti-Corruption_Module_5_Private_Sector_Corruption.pdf (accessed on 14 July, 2024).

UNSDG. (2014). *Human Rights-Based Approach*. Available at: https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/human-rights-based-approach#:~:text=The%20human%20rights%2Dbased%20approach,promoting%20and%20protecting%20human%20rights (accessed on 5 June, 2024).

van Dijk, R. de Bruijn, M., Cardoso, C. & Butter, I. (2011). Introduction: ideologies of youth. *Africa Development* 36, (3/4), pp. 1-17.

World Bank. (2021). *Lebanon Sinking into One of the Most Severe Global Crises Episodes, amidst Deliberate Inaction*. Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/01/lebanon-sinking-into-one-of-the-most-severe-global-crises-episodes) (accessed on 4 June, 2024).

World Bank. (2023). *The World Bank in Jordan*. Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/jordan/overview (accessed on 4 June, 2024).

World Bank. (2024). *Countries and Economies*. Available at: https://data.worldbank.org/country (accessed on 18 June, 2024).

World Economic Forum (WEF). (2022). *Global Gender Gap Report 2022*. Available at: https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/in-full/1-2-global-results/ (accessed on 10 June, 2024).

World Justice Project. (2023). *Rule of Law Index – Egypt*. Available at: WJP Rule of Law Index | Egypt, Arab Rep. Insights (worldjusticeproject.org) (accessed on 1 June, 2024).

Yuval-Davis, N. (1993). Gender and nation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16(4), pp. 621–632. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1993.9993800

Zoellick, R. (2011). *The Middle East and North Africa: A New Social Contract for Development* (paper presented at The Peterson Institute for International Economics – 6 April). Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2011/04/06/middle-east-north-africa-new-social-contract-development (accessed on 3 June, 2024).