



EuroMed Youth III Programme



## STUDIES ON YOUTH POLICIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNER COUNTRIES

# EGYPT



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This programme is funded by  
the European Union



This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the EuroMed Youth Technical Assistance Unit and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the EU.



The third phase of the **Euromed Youth Programme\*** (Euro-Med Youth III), funded by the European Commission (DG EuropeAid) and launched in October 2005, is a regional Programme set up within the framework of the third chapter of the Barcelona Process '*Partnership on Social, Cultural and Human Affairs*'. The overall objectives of the Euro-Med Youth Programme are to promote intercultural dialogue among young people within the Euro-Mediterranean region, motivate active citizenship as well as to contribute to the development of youth policy.

The overall aim of the studies undertaken in **Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey** on Youth Policies, was to be a reference tool which would give all stakeholders in the field of youth, as well as youth project organisers, an overview of the situation of young people and of provisions available for them in the 10 partner countries. The objectives were to identify whether there was a Youth Policy, legislation or any other national strategy addressing the needs of youth and what kind of provision was made through non-formal education and youth work in the relevant partner countries.

Research for the studies was carried out by 7 experts and involved gathering of information, during a 5-month period, on basis of available written materials and resources, and as a result of missions to the studied countries to interview relevant youth authorities, organisations and young people individually or through focus groups.

The outcomes of the studies, each produced in a report format following a common structure for all the ten studies, give an enlightening overview of the definition and situation of youth in the Mediterranean partner countries. The studies focused on young people's rights and entitlements as active citizens, such as opportunities to vote, get elected and contribute to the decision-making process; the challenges faced by youth such as unemployment, immigration, housing, marriage, generational and cultural conflict, young women's place in society; young people's reactions in response to such challenges and description of provision for leisure-time activities and non-formal education through governmental and/or non-governmental youth institutions and organisations.

A reading of all the studies shows that a national youth policy is not yet fully implemented in any of the partner countries. However, each of them has a number of national directives, legislations, policies and/or strategies to address youth issues, usually at cross-sector level, even if youth are not, in some cases, recognised as a priority. The definition of youth varies from country to country, sometimes even within the same country depending on the responsible national authority. Non-formal education has no, or limited, place in most of the studied countries, formal education being the main priority of national authorities. The Euromed Youth Programme is assessed positively and considered to be an essential tool for the promotion of youth work and non-formal education.

Each report, published individually, provides a factual background on youth issues on basis of information collated by the relevant researchers. In addition, one document bringing together the executive summaries from each of the ten studies has been also produced to highlight an overview on the situation of youth within the Mediterranean region.

\* [www.euromedyouth.net](http://www.euromedyouth.net)



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

.....	6
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## COUNTRY REPORT : EGYPT

1. <b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	9
1.1 Objectives .....	9
1.2 Methodology .....	9
1.3 Challenges of the study .....	9
2. <b>SITUATION OF YOUTH</b> .....	10
2.1 Definition of Youth: .....	10
2.2 General Statistics: Demography, young people's rights and conditions .....	10
2.3 Youth culture and trends: .....	12
2.4 Young people's needs and challenges: .....	14
3. <b>STRUCTURAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE ASPECTS OF YOUTH POLICY</b> .....	16
3.1 Provisions .....	16
3.2 Institutional approach to the Youth Sector .....	19
3.3 Non-formal education and youth work .....	22
4. <b>THE YOUTH ASSOCIATIONS AND NGOs DEALING WITH YOUTH</b> .....	24
5. <b>THE EUROMED YOUTH PROGRAMME</b> .....	28
6. <b>OTHER YOUTH SUPPORT MECHANISMS</b> .....	29
7. <b>PERCEPTION OF THE ACTORS</b> .....	30
8. <b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	32

## ANNEXES

Annex 1: Acknowledgements .....	33
Annex 2: Country Profile .....	33
Annex 3: List of Abbreviations .....	34
Annex 4: Glossary .....	35
Annex 5: Bibliography and resource materials .....	35
Annex 6: Additional statistical tables/charts .....	37

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth in Egypt has come to the limelight and occupied a significant position in the national agenda; young people's diversity and autonomy has been recognized, and this is reflected in the creation of especially designed programmes and projects for this population group and their inclusion in the sectorial priorities. The national youth policy in Egypt is clearly echoed through several formal reports and documents that express the state's policy. The most important one was the «National Youth policy» which was formulated in 2003-2004 by the National Democratic Party (NDP). Later, this policy was unfortunately neglected, though it was due to be adopted by the government and parliament. The other important documents are the "National Youth Plan for the Millennium" (December 2000) and the documents on the establishment of youth higher institutions like the republican decree that established the National Council for Youth. However, it is rather difficult to say that any of those documents have ushered in a comprehensive vision for a youth policy in Egypt. Despite the fact that there is no formal document that contains the state's public policy in this field, youth policy is rather echoed in the legislations, institutions, budgets and programmes of political socialization of youth and children.

The analysis of youth situation in Egypt illustrates that although youth potentially constitute a demographic gift, they put enormous pressures on the educational system and the labour and housing markets. The youth face various challenges that affect their personal as well as career development. It is widely accepted that youth has come to the limelight and occupied a significant position in the national agenda; young people's diversity and autonomy has been recognized, and this is reflected in the creation of especially designed programmes and projects. The study shows that the number of young people within the Egyptian population is increasing significantly compared to other age groups, a so-called "youth bulge". In the coming decade, these young people will become the largest group in Egypt's long history that made its way to adulthood. This demographic transition represents both an opportunity and a challenge.

The youth policy in Egypt is derived from the constitution and legislations that aim at socializing youth and teenagers, guaranteeing their rights and defining their duties. These rights and duties have been stretched out through a large number of laws that regulate the family, child rights, education and political rights. There are many formal regulations that organize the field of youth work in Egypt: firstly, the law 77 issued in 1975, and modified in 1978, which regulates the formation and activities of institutions and bodies that work in the field of youth. Secondly, the presidential decrees that established the main coordinating bodies which formulate and implement the national policy and thirdly, the bills and regulations that the concerned ministry issued to deal with youth such as the bills of youth centres and student union. It is important to note that the law 77 has been the only legislation related to youth drafted by the government and adopted by the parliament. The main dilemma with this law is that it does not clearly determine the place and role of youth in society, as well as the responsibility of that society and public institutions towards them. A striking point that

stands out is that this law regulates the work of youth bodies and actors, though it does not refer to the youth policy or the definition of youth. Furthermore, there is instability and inconsistency in institutions and bills. It is obvious that there is no well-defined legislation that looks at youth from a comprehensive and inclusive perspective. It was suggested that Egypt needs a law for youth like the Child Law, but the problem of overlap between the jurisdiction of ministries and agencies was raised and hindered this idea.

The first thing to note on the national youth policy in Egypt is the overlapping definition of youth and children due to the type and the set up of ministries and agencies considered responsible for youth such as: Education, Higher Education, Youth and Sports. According to the NDP youth policy paper, young people are between the ages of 18 and 35 years old. However, it also mentions those who are between 6 and 18 years old. On the other hand, a document issued from the Supreme Council for Youth and Sport in May 1996 considered youth as being from 6-30 years old. The NCY differentiates between two groups: the age group from 6-18 years old (teenagers and children) and from 18- 30 years old (Youth).

Secondly, it is important to take into consideration that there are many authorities and actors responsible for devising and implementing youth policy such as the National Council for Youth, the National Council for Sport, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Higher Education. Although the National Council for Youth (NCY) is in charge of formulating and implementing cross-sectorial policies, there is uncertainty about its ability to guarantee their effective implementation. It can be argued that there is only a restricted cross-sectorial national youth policy without strong linkage to other youth-serving ministries.

The third important remark that stands out is the need to differentiate between two kinds of cooperation: firstly, cooperation in formulating and implementing a coherent youth policy which includes coordination in aims and goals to reach a better investment of the state human capital; secondly, the cooperation between different actors in implementing a joint activity or programme. The study concluded that a reasonable degree of cooperation in the second aspect is found, but the first aspect of cooperation faces strong obstacles, despite efforts on this aspect. Youth policy in Egypt needs a common vision and strategy, and without this strategy, every action or programme will just have a limited effect.

With regard to non-formal education and the youth NGOs, the NCY provides civil education for a large number of youth and teenagers and considers it one of its priorities. The NCY has established the central administration for civil education and young leadership which is responsible for youth training and capacity building of youth workers in NGOs and governmental organizations. In the recent years, there has been an upward trend in the number of youth leadership developmental programmes, whether government-led and organized by the National Youth Council or by other actors like UNICEF and Euromed Youth Programme. A number of officials confirm that NGOs are invited to play a leading role in experimenting with, and then scaling up the less formal education programmes. It is now increasingly accepted that civil society and youth associations are critical of any sustainable process of development.

Many youth-led initiatives, as well as youth-targeting initiatives, have contributed to the emergence of a youth civil society. Youth-led civil society in Egypt has witnessed a revival in the past 10 years. Youth-led NGOs and student-led clubs and associations are only a small indication of changes in youth organizations. Media tools used by youth, and for youth, whether in magazines or more recently in electronic format, including «blogs», are testimonies to this revival. The UN study in cooperation with the Arab Network for NGOs showed that 303 NGOs now exist in Egypt. Another study carried out by the World Bank classified 122 NGOs as youth NGOs and 44 groups as informal youth groups. Only 14 youth organisations are members of a union of youth NGOs called the “Federation of Egyptian Youth NGOs” which was established in January 2006. It can be argued that the percentage of youth organizations is small in relation to the general percentage of NGOs in Egypt (less than 0.5%). Moreover, the percentage of youth NGOs is small in relation to other NGOs concerned with specific target groups, such as women. However, generally, youth organizations face major obstacles to become more effective, the most important of which are limited funding, poorly qualified staff, and difficulty in attracting unpaid volunteers. The legal framework governing youth associations is the same law that governs civil society organizations. Consequently, the current Law 84/2002 is a crucial dimension in recognition and funding of associations and impacts powerfully on their effectiveness. This Law allows greater recognition of civil society organizations than any previous law, but it also restricts civil society.

The Euromed Youth Programme used to be lively and energetic in Egypt during its first and second phases (1999-2004). The main activity of the Programme was youth exchange projects which gave a large number of Egyptian young people the opportunity to travel and visit other countries and to get to know and understand other cultures. In addition to this, many other international and regional organizations work in the field of youth. Some of them work with the formal and governmental bodies, and others support Youth NGOs. The National Council for Youth cooperates with different kinds of organizations. There are many initiatives in this field like the Arab League’s Programme on the empowerment of youth, the Bibliotheca Alexandria Forum and the International Youth Forum hosted by Suzanne Mubarak International Women for Peace, as well as international mechanisms like the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNICEF and the Anna Lindh Foundation based in Alexandria which play an important role in the field of youth.

The national youth policy in Egypt needs a vision, by and for youth of the present and future society, and with participation of all stakeholders, linked directly to both formal and non-formal education, and stressing that the vision of youth should be seen as a vibrant resource and indeed a solution and not only as a problem for society.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that Egypt possesses a substantial human capital from a young age group that accounts for a large section of the population. Therefore, it would be quite opportune to bolster the development process through falling back upon such young hands and new minds in all fields. The youth policy should provide the opportunities that enable youth to fully participate in normally prescribed roles and activities. These include receiving quality education, decent employment, affordable housing and the power to shape their communities. On the other hand, the failure in accomplishing these goals can lead to a dangerous situation of exclusion.

## 1.1 Objectives

The main goal of this study is to look closely at the national youth policy in Egypt with the lens of youth policy as a guiding conceptual framework which includes three universal concepts: 'Participation', 'Equity' and 'Cohesion'. The analysis focuses on the situation of youth in Egypt particularly on the demographic, economic, educational, cultural and political conditions as well as the institutional and legal structure of youth policy with references to policies and programmes dealing with youth and their needs. The study pays a great attention to the growing role of youth NGOs and movements in Egyptian society in the last ten years, and discusses the issues of non-formal education as well as the regional and international supporting mechanisms for the youth.

## 1.2 Methodology

The study depended on interviews and focus groups to collect data from decision-makers, youth leaders and young people. The interviews were carried out with officials and representatives of governmental and non-governmental youth organizations. Focus groups were used to facilitate access to a wider representation of young people in rural and urban areas. Moreover, it was necessary to analyze documents, reports and formal decisions that organize the national youth policy in Egypt. The aim of the study is to produce a factual and objective report, supported by documented evidence.

## 1.3 Challenges of the study

There were some challenges that appeared during undertaking this study. The most important one is that a number of people responsible for youth within the National Council for Youth (NCY) apologized or refused to meet the researcher or provide him with the required data and information. Another important challenge was the absence of a youth-specific database and disparities in data collection methods.

## 2. SITUATION OF YOUTH

Youth in Egypt has acquired more importance in the national agendas. Although youth potentially constitutes a demographic gift, they put enormous pressures on the educational system and the labour and housing markets. This analysis focuses on the impact of socio-economic changes and fluctuations on the lives of young people and discusses the situation of youth especially the demographic, economic, educational, cultural and political conditions.

### 2.1 Definition of Youth

In Egypt, the formal governmental body in charge of youth issues, the National Council for Youth (NCY) defines youth as the age group from 18 – 30 years old (Gharbouch, 2006, p. 921). In its youth policy paper, the National Democratic Party (NDP), the ruling party, defines youth as the age group from 18 – 35 years old. This long period of time is due to the fact that large sectors of young people between 18 and 35 in Egypt usually face the same problems and challenges, such as unemployment, poor education, low health awareness and limited access to training, educational, volunteering and job opportunities.

### 2.2 General Statistics: Demography, young people's rights and conditions

According to population estimates prepared by the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (**Algehaz Almarkazy Letta'bi'a Ela'mahh Wa El-ehssa'a**)<sup>(1)</sup> the youth population between 15- 35 years old is about 23 million out of the total population of 76 million in 2006 ( 30%). The number of young people aged 15- 29 is about 19 million (25%). The percentage of young people sharply increases, if those who are above 6 to 35 are added to this figure which would jump to 69% of the population as the National Democratic Party (**Elhezb Elwattany Edimowcarratty**) declared in its youth policy paper.

**Table (1): The growing percentage and numbers of youth (15-30 years old) from 1976- 2025**

Year	Numbers in million	Percentage (%)
1976	9.7	26.6
1986	13	27
1996	16	27.6
2005	20	28.5
2015	22	27.1
2025	24	25.7

The source: Salwa Elamry, 2002, pp, 426-429

Egypt is going through a period in which the youth population is increasing significantly compared to other age groups, a so-called “youth bulge” (Dhillon & Yousef, 2007, p3). This demographic transition represents both an opportunity and a challenge. Once this youth population reaches working age, its ratio to the older and younger non-working populations will shrink, potentially constituting a “demographic gift.” Until then, these youths will put enormous pressures on the educational system and the labour and housing markets (Assaad & Barsoums, 2007, p. 8). This is the challenge of youth inclusion, defined as the provision of opportunities that enable youth to fully participate in normally prescribed roles and activities. These include receiving quality education, decent employment, affordable housing and the power to shape their communities (Dhillon & Yousef, 2007, p1).

The dangerous situation of exclusion was measured in numbers. The cost of youth unemployment, early school leaving, adolescent pregnancy, and youth migration is significantly high. The total cost of youth exclusion can reach a staggering 17.4% of GDP in Egypt. The cost of youth exclusion in Egypt is as high as the total value-added of Egypt’s agricultural sector, close to 17% of GDP (Chaaban, 2008, p. 18).

Education in Egypt has witnessed big improvements as school enrolment has remarkably increased. Illiteracy among youth has also remarkably fallen. There has been a dramatic expansion in the education system. More children get to school and more children stay in school for longer periods. According to the World Bank (2006a), the net enrolment rate in primary education increased from 83.7% in 1985 to 98.3% in 2003. Gross enrolment rates in secondary school were 61.4 percent in 1985 and rose to 87.1% and higher education enrolment from 18.1% to 32.6% in the same period. While the figures show rapid growth in school enrolment at all education levels and near-universal enrolment in primary schooling, there are still those who are excluded (Assaad & Barsoums, 2000, p.10). While educational enrolment has increased dramatically in recent years, the quality of education has not improved. Early school dropout and non-enrolment persist for certain groups in certain parts of the country, particularly for girls in rural Upper Egypt. Some factors hinder good education such as overcrowding in classes, teaching by rote, private lessons, and the wide gap between education and job market requirements. Households try to compensate for the limitations of public education through private tutoring (UNDP, 2006, p. 28).

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) report on the economic trends in the Mediterranean region for the year 2002, suggests that the unemployment rate in Egypt amounted to 10.8% in 1995. The number of unemployed males and females accounts for 95.5% of the new entrants in the labour market (UNDP, 2006, p. 49). Between the late 1970s and early 2000s, the number of new entrants to the labour market more than doubled, to about 850,000. Currently, they constitute the greatest percentage of the unemployed. The unemployment rate declined from 11.7% in 1998 to 8.3% in 2006. The total number of unemployed youth in Egypt in 2006 was about 1.6 million. Eighty-three percent of the unemployed were in the age group of 15-29 and 47% were between the ages of 20-24. Although declining, the unemployment rate among those 15-29 is still much higher than the overall rate. Youth with a secondary education or above made up 95% of youth unemployment in 2006, up from 87% in 1998 (Assaad & Barsoums, 2007, p.19). Unemployment rates at the end of the 1990s were highest for those with a technical secondary education, followed by post-secondary institute

graduates, then by university graduates. This pattern changed by 2006, with university graduates having the highest unemployment rates among young men and post-secondary institute graduates having the highest rates among young women. In fact, university graduates are the only educational group whose unemployment rates increased since 1998 (Assaad & Barsoums, 2007, p.19).

The good news about the decline in unemployment is marred by the growth in what the World Bank terms to be “bad jobs.” These are essentially low-paid jobs that provide little in terms of social insurance, stability, and potential for advancement (Ibid, p. 20, 21).

The high unemployment rates of young people led to multiple negative consequences, both for the young people themselves and their society. Statistics showed that unemployment represents a suitable environment for committing crimes, for example, 44% of thieves were unemployed (Galbi: 2006, p. 637). Poverty is increasing in Egypt in the last years, and the brunt of this poverty is mostly borne by youth. Poverty affects rural zones, especially young farmers. Poverty in urban areas is largely attributed to deprivation and economic deterioration in rural areas, as people are consistently moving from there to urban ones (UNDP: 2006, p.27). As a result, high desire for emigration is emerging due to widespread of frustration of both economic and social conditions. According to the 2002 Arab Human Development Report, 51% of Arab youth and 45% of younger adolescents expressed a desire to emigrate, clearly indicating dissatisfaction with current conditions and with future prospects especially in rural areas (UNDP: 2006, pp. 30, 31).

With regard to health conditions, relatively high percentages of males smoke tobacco and they begin smoking at the young ages of 17-18. Young people are poorly informed about how to protect their sexual health. As a result, they are susceptible to unwanted pregnancies, the health risks associated with early pregnancy, unsafe abortions, ATIs and HIV.

## **2.3 Youth culture and trends**

Many observers have pointed to the collective nature of social life in the Egyptian context and to the central role played by family members in shaping the values and self-conceptions of individuals. Young people typically live at home until they are married and remain dependent on older family members for financial and emotional support as young adults. One implication of this arrangement is that the adolescent experience in Egypt is less likely to be characterized by rebellion or social distancing from parents than is the case in Western societies. In Egypt, the important task of adolescent socialization is learning how to mobilize social networks rather than how to become autonomous as a means of achieving personal goals (Mensch, et al, March 2003, p. 10). However, some observers see that better education of the younger generation, greater urbanization, together with social networks resulted in a generation gap. This generation gap deprives young people of parental and familial support and the counselling they need.

Egyptian youth culture now enjoys a visible presence and certain acknowledgement from society and media that was unseen in the 1980s or 1990s. Egyptian youth activists in recent years found new independent sites for their activism in the emerging «blogosphere». Internet blogs became

platforms of political and cultural expression for some, as well as a mode of social and political networking, campaigning and organization for others. Blogging remained a platform for cultural expression and networking alongside new independent venues like Al-Sawy Culture Wheel, Rawabet and the Townhouse Gallery, for example, which also became platforms for alternative youth culture production and consumption. Diverse music bands, photography exhibitions, theatre, and even mobile phone film-making, gained ground outside the universities and official cultural institutions. Recent years also witnessed the birth and rise of a new generation of young directors and screenplay writers, with many entering the mainstream Egyptian movie scene. For as much as these developments are significant and worth noting, the percentage of active youth in all of the above is very small (Ghoneim, 17-23 April 2008).

Polls show that 73% of those in school had no access to computers. It also shows that only 20% of those who were unemployed used computer technology to search for jobs and only 11.5% of those who were working used computers on the job. Only 10% of those interviewed in six governorates had access to computer technology (Assaad & Barsoums, 2007, p. 15). The World Development Report (World Bank, 2006) shows a higher prevalence of computer use in Egypt, at 15%. Interviews illustrate that more young people have access to the Internet through cyber cafes that are in Cairo and other urban centres. But technology use among youth is limited to chatting, downloading songs, and access to religious sites. While less highlighted in interviews, Internet use for pornography is common. Youth using the Internet do not have a substantive use of information technology that can add to their knowledge base or career potentials (Assaad & Barsoums, 2007, p. 15).

The opportunities presented by the new media did not address the problems of «ideology» and «identity» in Egyptian youth culture. A cultural polarization still prevails between religious trends on the one hand and the Westernized trend on the other hand. The religious component in the daily lives of the Egyptian youth is very large, manifested mainly in individual prayer rituals, the spread of the veil among girls, and the continued popularity of the modern preachers. A generation ago, for example, few young women covered their heads, and few Egyptian men made it a practice to go to the mosque for the five daily prayers. Now the “*hijab*”, a scarf that covers the hair and neck of young girls, is nearly universal, and mosques are filled throughout the day with young men, and often their fathers. Many youth support the slogans of the Muslim Brotherhood, a banned organization in Egypt (Slackman, February 17, 2008). Commentators refer to the phenomena of bewildering duality in the society (UNDP, 2006, pp. 25, 26); the split between the religious and the secular elements appears to intensify divisions (Ibid, p. 59). Yet, at the same time, the popularity of Arabic music video clips featuring ever more scantily clad performers equally grows. It is unwise, therefore, to draw assumptions that directly link cultural consumption with cultural identity. Many commentators tend to associate the cultural identity of youth with the cultural products they are consuming: their Western tastes in dress, fast food, music or even the celebration of Valentine's Day. They conclude that national cultural identity is threatened by such choices. A closer look reveals that besides the influence of global capitalism and global cultural goods, young Egyptians equally consume local cultural products and they strongly identify both with their religion and with their national Egyptian identity - especially in international football tournaments (Ghoneim, 17-23 April 2008).

## 2.4 Young people's needs and challenges

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The needs of youth cannot be considered as a homogenous bloc as they depend on the needs of sub-groups such as: urban youth, rural youth, girls and young women, students, young workers, disabled youth, refugee and migrant youth etc. The needs of youth can be classified upon different criteria. One important classification is that linked them to three groups which each one has its own sets of needs and justified reasons for discontent, and requires the special attention of the government and society, albeit in different ways (UNDP, 2006, pp. 25, 26). The first and most important category of youth - numerically, and for human considerations - belongs to the lower classes. Their problems are primarily caused by poverty. On the end of the spectrum there are the street-children, especially girls among them, numbering in the millions (Fergany, April, 2008).

The second category of young Egyptians, albeit for totally different reasons than economic, consists of the rich youth. This is the category most exposed to globalization with its good and bad influences. But more and more of this younger generation do not wish to stay in Egypt and emigrate in pursuit of their dreams elsewhere leading to an unfortunate brain drain. The third category of youth is the in-between social group that belongs to the lower-middle class. This category suffers from all the ailments caused by poor education (versus total lack of education of the first category), frustration from not being able to fulfil dreams, especially teased by a consumer society, inflamed by a mindless media. This is the category most prone to embrace fundamentalism, and eventually for some, terrorism (Habib, April, 2008).

Today, despite a more robust economic growth, young people are unable to fully participate in activities they consider integral to leading a fulfilling life. As in other developing countries, youth in Egypt face various challenges that affect their personal as well as career development. The old social contract between the state and citizens that once guaranteed employment and social protection is now eroding, and young people are more vulnerable to economic shocks and volatility (Dhillon & Yousef, 2007, p2). Past generations benefited from a state-led social contract, which provided public sector employment and protected workers. But the current generation faces a two-fold challenge: State institutions are no longer able to meet their expectations for employment and social protection, and private sector jobs remain an elusive reality. In addition, advances in telecommunication and media expose young people to international norms. This exposure raises the expectations for consumption and living standards and creates a new sense of exclusion. Young people are also at the heart of a process of political change and debate. They are emerging as agents of change (Dhillon & Yousef, 2007, pp. 7.8).

The youth in Egypt face various challenges that affect their personal as well as career development. The Egypt Human Development Report (UNDP, 2006: 62) concluded that the quality of education in Egypt is a major challenge. While the report stressed the need to go beyond the acquisition of basic learning and the need to address issues of "excellence," it still emphasized that schooling in Egypt is challenged even at providing basic skills. The education system does not prepare young people for work in the modern world. Nor, does its economy provide enough well-paid jobs to allow many young people to afford marriage. The education system was originally devised to produce government workers under a contract with society forged in the heady early days of President Gamal Abdel Nasser's administration in the late 1950s and '60s. Every graduate was guaranteed a government job, and peasant families

for the first time were offered the prospect of social mobility through education. Now children of illiterate peasant farmers have degrees in engineering, law or business. The dream of mobility survives, but there are not enough government jobs for the floods of graduates. And many are not qualified for the private sector jobs that do exist, government and business officials said, because of their poor schooling (Slacman, February 17, 2008).

The rising costs of raising a family increasingly cause young men and women to delay marriage. Many young people are being forced to put off marriage, the gateway to independence, sexual activity and societal respect. Economic stress and rapid social changes are behind the rising age of marriage. There is a concern about the destabilizing effect of so many men and women who cannot afford to marry. And so, instead of marrying, people wait and seek outlets for their frustrations (Slackman, February 17, 2008). The resurgence of non-traditional forms of marriage often is described as a way for young people to cope with the high costs of marriage. There is no evidence-based research on the prevalence of «*urfi*» marriage in Egypt<sup>(2)</sup>. But newspaper articles and television programmes often mention it. This type of marriage is usually secret and carried out without informing parents. Consequently, women's legal rights as wives are subsumed within this arrangement (Assaad & Barsoums, 2007, p.28).

The Egypt Human Development Report (2008, p.10) refers to a visible manifestation of low participation rates from youth in the 18-35 ages. Recent surveys of youth revealed some alarming notions that can be closely tied to the limited outlets for civic participation (UNDP, 2007). The study documents a prevailing apathy and lack of initiative. Young people reported having "little faith that their own voices (and that their) efforts might be appreciated, heard or considered" (ibid, 5). The nationally representative sample of 2,400 Egyptian youths showed that 67% were never involved in any school activities. Only 13% of the respondents did some kind of volunteer work. While youths reported having a reasonable amount of leisure time, watching television was the most frequently performed activity followed by listening to music and spending time with friends and family. Only 1% of the sample chose voluntary work as a preferred activity. On the other hand, youth, who are often accused by passivity and apathy, have shown a unique capacity for work and organisation. Several demonstrations had been staged in defiance of legislations that undermined the rights of workers and farmers and many segments of the middle-class (UNDP, 2006, p. 33). While the general trend of participation shows that the younger generations are less involved in political activities, the recent years witnessed the emergence of new groups of active youth many of whom are not legal. There is a message from political leaders that calls for participation, but the outstanding political institutions and parties are not attractive for youth. In the last few years, it was possible to witness new forms of political activism by some Egyptian young people who found new independent sites for their actions in the emerging «*blogosphere*» away from the control of universities and political parties. About 70 thousands of youths enlisted in the 'Group of 6 April' on the Face Book that called for the famous strike of 6 April 2008<sup>(3)</sup>. A recent report, issued by the Information Centre in the Ministerial Council in April 2008, mentioned that there are 160 thousands bloggers between 20-30 years old<sup>(4)</sup>.

(2) Customary (Urfi) Marriage is a relation between two young people: male and female which is called a «*marriage*» but it is non-formal and not documented. Drawing on the Islamic requirements of only two witnesses and that the betrothal become public knowledge, this practice has evolved into one in which Egyptian youth are obtaining clandestine marriage certificates without announcing to their families their intentions to marry, so they often reject it.

(3) It was the first general strike in Egypt in the last decades. A number of young people and workers, without any support from the main political powers, called the people to stay at home. The strike led to violent demonstrations in the industrial city of ElMahala.

(4) [www.masrawy.com](http://www.masrawy.com), 7/5/2008

# 3. STRUCTURAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE ASPECTS OF YOUTH POLICY

The national youth policy in Egypt is clearly echoed through several formal reports and documents that express the state's formal policy. However, it is rather difficult to say that any of those documents have ushered in a comprehensive vision for a youth policy. Despite the fact that there is not one formal document that contains the state's public policy in this field, youth policy is rather echoed in the legislations, institutions, fiscal budgets and programmes of political socialization of youth and children.

## 3.1 Provisions

The youth policy in Egypt is derived from the constitution and legislations that aim at socializing youth and teenagers, guaranteeing their rights and defining their duties. These rights and duties have been stretched out through a big number of laws such as Family, Child, Education, Small projects, Political rights and the law of Youth Bodies that work in Caring for youth, in addition to several bills that need to be carefully gathered and collected in one comprehensive document or law.

The Second Chapter of the Egyptian Constitution, entitled « Basic Constituents of the Society”, refer to children and youth as article No. 10 stipulates that:» The State shall guarantee the protection of motherhood and childhood, take care of children and youth and provide the suitable conditions for the development of their talents» (The Constitution, 2005, p.3). In addition to this, it mentions the economic, social and political rights and duties of Egyptian citizens as a whole and among them youth. The constitution safeguards the right to live, learn, work, receive cultural, social, and health services. It also secures the right to protection against discrimination, the rights to equality before the law, to equal opportunities, to freedom of expression and to demonstrate. The right to participate in decision-making also falls under this category of rights to which youth are entitled. On the other hand youth are asked to be loyally devoted to their nation and preserve its unity. They must contribute to economic, social, political, and cultural development and advance democracy and the supremacy of law. They should also be committed to citizenship rights, fight against corruption and discrimination based on religion, sex, profession or class. There are many other regulations that are related to youth such as the laws of the child, identity card, license of driver, voting and nominating in elections.

Beside the constitution, there are many formal regulations that organize the field of youth work in Egypt: firstly, the law 77 issued in 1975, and modified in 1978, which regulates the formation and activities of institutions and bodies that work in the field of youth. Secondly, the presidential decrees that established the main coordinating bodies which formulate and implement the national policy and thirdly, the bills and regulations that the concerned ministries issued to deal with youth such as the bills of youth centres and student union.



The main legislation that organizes some aspects of youth policy in Egypt is the law No 77 issued in 1975, known as the law of the Popular Bodies Responsible for Caring for Youth and Sport (**Elhye'atte Eshabie'a Elamela Fi Re'yatte Eshabab Wa Rieada**) (Elgariada Errasmeaa, No. 31, 1975). The republican decree 51 / 1978 in its first article modified the name of the law and replaced «the responsible bodies» by «public bodies». The law defines these bodies as: «All groups that are constant, organized and non-profitable, whose aims are to care for youth and develop their skills through providing sport, national, social, spiritual and healthy services within the state public policy and the planning of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports». The law decrees the establishment of youth organizations, the decision-making process inside them, electoral process, financial resources and their relation with the government. These youth bodies cover each part of the country at both local and national levels and are in charge of the implementation of the youth action plan at those different levels. The Law defines them in: Sports bodies like Olympic Committee, Games unions and Clubs - Scout Federation - Youth Houses Association - Youth Centres - Camps, journey and travelling - Volunteer services.

It is important to note that the law 77 has been the only legislation related to youth drafted by the government and adopted by the parliament. The main problem with this law is that it does not clearly determine the place and role of youth in society, as well as the responsibility of that society and public institutions towards youth. A striking point that stands out is that this law regulates the work of youth bodies and organizations; though it does not refer to youth policy or the definition of youth. Furthermore, there is instability in institutions and bills.

It is obvious that there is no well-defined legislation that looks at youth from a comprehensive perspective. During discussions among a number of officials in the National Council of Youth (**Almaglis Elqaumy Leshabab**), it was suggested that Egypt urgently needs a youth law like the «Child Law», but the problem of overlapping between the jurisdiction of ministries and agencies was raised and hindered this proposal. As a result the NCY concentrated on changing the law 77 and considered it one of its main priorities - as it was in its four-year plan 2006-2010. The Council constituted a committee in order to formulate a new law on youth authorities coping with the variables and new developments in the society. The committee included professionals in youth action and representatives from different organizations related to youth such as Cities and Villages Youth Centres Federation, Scout Federation, Youth Labour Federation, Federation for Young Moslems Associations, Christian Young Men Association and Youth Houses Association (ESIS Year Book, 2006).

Youth centres imply the bodies that ensure space for youth activities, operated under the supervision of government. The bill of youth centres No 282 issued in 2002 (Elgariada Errasmeaa, No. 180, 2002) considers youth centres as «popular, educational, and independent bodies that contribute to the development of youth and teenagers, socializing them in a good and balanced way, developing their capacity, discovering their talents, and encouraging their initiatives». This new bill is very important because until the end of the nineties the youth centres' bills would not give the right of voting to youth under 21 years, so this bill has been changed to allow youth who are 18 years old to vote and elect their representatives, as well as ensuring women representation in the elected councils of youth centres. On the other hand, this bill could have a negative effect

on the participation of youth. For example, the article 53 of the bill 282 gives the minister the right to abolish any decision by the elected council of the youth centres, and article 63 gives him the right to dissolve this elected council and assign a new one. In addition to this, article 68 gives him the right to stop any activity of the council. These articles cause many problems and many people have sued the government asking the court to abolish its rejected decisions.

Apart from the law 77, all other regulations and institutions in the field of youth witnessed dramatic changes and fluctuations in the last ten years. In 1999 the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports (**El-Maglis El-alla Lele-Shabab Weriyada**), which was established in 1979, was closed when the Ministry of Youth was established. The latter was dissolved in 2005 when two national councils were established: one for youth and the other for sport. Furthermore, there is instability in laws and bills; a former official in the youth sector said that «every minister changes the former bill and create a new one; the same minister may change the bill many times». For example, there may be more than ten modifications in the bill of youth centres in less than ten years.

As a sign of its commitment to and respect for youth rights, Egypt has put a number of *age related regulations and rights*. The principle of free education in the different grades, as well as making it obligatory in the primary grade, is enshrined in the Constitution. Article No. 18 stipulates that:» Education is a right guaranteed by the State. It is obligatory in the primary stage and the State shall work to extend obligation to other stages». Article No. 20 stipulates that: «Education in the State educational institutions shall be free of charge in its various stages”.

With regard to work, the principle of right to work and prevention of forced labour is enshrined in Article No. 13 of the Constitution, which stipulates that: “Work is a right, a duty, and an honour ensured by the State. Workers who excel in their field of work shall receive the appreciation of the State and the society. No work shall be imposed on the citizens, except by virtue of the law, for the performance of a public service and in return for a fair remuneration». The law of child prohibits the work of children who are under 14 years old.

Egypt was among the first countries to sign the international agreement on child rights in December 1989. The law of child (2008) consider a child who is less than 18 years. This law diminished the sanctions and penalties on children.

The military and national service is obligatory for young people male and female when they become 18 years old.

The law of political rights gives the citizens who are 18 years old the right to vote. Young people who are 16 years old should have an identity card and at the age of 18 can have a driving license.

The legal minimum age for young girls to marry in Egypt was 16 years old (UNDP: 2006, p. 74), and later was raised to 18 in the law of child in 2008. The personal code makes it easier for women to obtain a divorce. Abortion is only legal to save a woman's life in Egypt (UNDP: 2006, p. 76). Female Genital Mutilation is prohibited by Law.

Other laws try to provide young people with protection. The drug law, for example, protects young people under 21 years old through enforcing punishment to reach death penalty for the criminal who exploits them in drug dealing (Abdelmoniem: 2006, P. 888).

There is no particularly judiciary system for youth, while the law of child has set up a youngster's court concerned with children who commit crimes.

## 3.2 Institutional approach to the Youth Sector

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A striking point in the formal *definition of youth* is that the confusion between youth and children. According to the NDP youth policy paper, young people are between the ages of 18 and 35 years old. However, it also mentions those who are between 6 and 18 years old. A document issued from the Supreme Council for Youth and Sport in May 1996 considered youth as being from 6-30 years old, and they represent about 56.6% from the total population (The Shoura Council: 2000, P.10). It can be argued that the overlap is due to the nature and type of ministries that are considered responsible for youth such as: Education, Higher Education, Youth and Sports. The formal view tends to divide youth into three categories (Ibid, p. 11):

- From 6-18 years old which represent the stage of basic and secondary education.
- From 18- 23 years old which represent the stage of higher education especially universities.
- From 23- 30 years old which represent the stage of continued education and the new social role of marriage and work.

The NCY differentiates between two groups: the age group from 6-18 years old (teenagers and children) and from 18- 30 years old (Youth). (Gharbouch: 2006, p. 921)

Egypt's youth policy witnessed numerous changes in institutions and agencies responsible for youth, and this resulted in a legacy of presidential and other formal decrees and bills that are considered the main reference for the current youth policy. In 1956, law no. 197 was issued to establish the Supreme Council for Youth Care. In 1978, the Republican decree was issued to establish a youth ministry. In 1979, the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports was established. In 1999, a decree was issued to organize the youth ministry; its third article stipulated establishing a Youth and Sport National Council. In December 2005, the Ministry of Youth and Sport was abolished and the National Council for Youth was established (ESIS, Year Book 2006).

It is obvious that there are many authorities and actors responsible for devising and implementing youth policy in the present, but the more important ones are the following:

National Council for Youth (**Almaglis Alqaumy Leshabab**): The third article of the republican decree 425, which established the NCY at the end of 2005, defines its jurisdictions and missions; the most important one is that it includes the cross-sectorial policies concerned with youth activities in order to achieve better cooperation. Another important mission is to propose legislations and sets the required regulations and mechanisms to determine the relations, duties and responsibilities as well as organizing

all youth activities and monitoring them. The NCY put an action plan for four years (2006-2010) that the Prime Minister ratified, and made an annual evaluation of programmes and projects related to achieving its goals. The decree 425 confirms that all ministries and public agencies and local administrations implement the plans, projects and programmes proposed by the NCY in the field of youth.

National Council for Sports (**Almaglis Alqumy Leriada**): It was established in December 2005 to implement an integrated policy aiming to promote sports. The third article from the republican decree 426 assured that the NCS puts the cross-sectorial policies between bodies and agencies concerned with sports activities in order to achieve a better cooperation. As a result, the NCS implements policies in sports activities while the NCY is responsible for policies in the youth field. In other words, there is now a separation between sport and youth after a long period of strong connection. An important expert and former official in the Ministry of Youth said: «Separation between youth and sport is wrong, but gathering them was wrong also».

Ministry of Education: Children and teenagers in basic and secondary schools are the largest category in Egypt, and youth policies consider them an important target for their activities. The Ministry of Education declared that the main mission of the state is «to provide youth and children with experiences and activities of capacity building to become qualified to practise political participation, and this starts at an early age from primary and secondary schools until the university» (Shoura Council, 2000, pp, 84- 89).

Ministry of Higher Education: Youth in universities represent 25% from the age group between 18- 24 years old. The Ministry of Higher Education provides them with several kinds of services that include social and sport activities. The formal student organizations in universities consist of student unions and families (**Elossar**) which can be seen as youth clubs. The political preparation of students is launched by the Leaders Preparation Institute (LPI) (**Ma'ahad Edaad El-Qada**) in Helwan which is affiliated to the Higher Education Ministry (Shoura Council, 2000, PP. 98- 100).

A former minister of youth said that «Youth policy means national policy and preparation of youth means preparation of Egypt» (Shoura Council, 2000, p. 114). He means that youth policy has many aspects: health, sports, educational...etc, and it must not be adopted in isolation, but should instead be integrated into a coherent national policy. The study differentiates between two kinds of cooperation: firstly, cooperation in making and implementing a coherent youth policy which includes coordination in aims and goals to reach a better investment of the state resources; and secondly, cooperation in implementing a number of activities and programmes which take place between different bodies and actors. It can be argued that there is a reasonable degree of cooperation in the second aspect. For example, one of the main jobs of the former ministry of youth was to supervise and observe physical sports in schools. There is also cooperation between the NCY and Ministry of Higher Education in organizing and implementing student activities. On the other hand, the first aspect of cooperation faces strong obstacles despite many efforts in this field.

It is important to point out that the document of national youth policy of the ruling NDP called for establishing a ministerial committee for youth which consists of all concerned ministers. The dilemma, as

it seems from the interviews, is which entity has the power and influence to impose the implementation of its decisions and policies on other actors. Actually, it seems that this depends on the political power of the minister of youth or the president of the NCY. Experts call for supporting partnership among government agencies dealing with youth programmes and defining related appropriate channels for effective coordination.

In the last ten years many changes have taken place in the national youth policy in Egypt which is clearly echoed through several formal reports and documents that imply the state's policy. The most important one was the «National Youth policy» which was formulated in 2003-2004 by the NDP. Later, this policy was unfortunately neglected though it was due to be adopted by the government and parliament.

The other important documents include the "National Youth Plan for the Millennium" (December 2000) and the documents on the establishment of youth higher institutions like the republican decree that established the National Council for Youth. However, it would be difficult to say that any of those documents have ushered in a comprehensive vision for a youth policy in Egypt. Moreover, none has been adopted by the government or the parliament. These reports and documents could be collected and analyzed according to the international criteria of youth policy «that is drafted by the government in cooperation with youth organizations and adopted by the Parliament or Ministerial Council or Head of a country, which clearly determines the place and role of youth in society, as well as the responsibility of society and public institutions towards youth» (Angel, 2005). These important documents include:

1- *National Plan for Preparing Youth for the Millennium* (December 2000): A formal report prepared by the Education, Scientific Research and Youth Committee, it contained the final report summarizing more than 15 papers and workshops about youth policy, as well as the formal statements of many ministers who were responsible for youth and students affairs in that period like Media, Education, Higher Education and Youth ministers. The plan called for a common vision, strategy and policies to prepare and develop Egyptian youth.

2- NDP's *National Youth policy* (2003/2004): It was prepared by the National Democratic Party (NDP) and it confirmed that «Governmental and non-governmental organizations have been presented with a draft containing plans and programmes relating to the needs of youth». The NDP promised to propound this paper for youth-concerned organizations pledging that the opinions of these organizations would be the basis for the final draft of the national youth policy. The fields of this national youth policy included: Employment - Political participation - Education - Health - Population - Culture - Media - Sports and entertainment - Environment - Social activities and voluntary work - Research and studies. The paper confirmed that while youth policy targets Egypt's youth as a whole, it particularly targeted the following groups: Unemployed youth - Young women - Youth in the countryside - Youth with special needs. The paper was formulated in 2003-2004 and was due to be adopted by the Government and Parliament. After a long time, it has not been adopted by the government or the parliament, and the ministry of youth which supported the document was dissolved. A prominent figure in the NCY said that «NCY adopted the paper and submitted it into international conferences».

The budget of both NCY and NCS in the year 2007-2008 reached 442 and 392 million Egyptian pounds (EP) respectively. This means that the total budget for youth and sport is 814 million, about 35 EP per young person per year (equivalent to 4 euro).

This shows that the available budget is not sufficient to meet young people's needs.

The state provides services for youth through a package of structures and work programmes, including<sup>(5)</sup>:

1. Youth centres activities which aim at promoting the common values and concepts in youth sectors (4460 centres distributed all over the country)
2. Youth Camps (31 throughout Egypt)
3. Youth Villages (Service Integrated Compounds)
4. Civil Education and Preparing Young Leaderships
5. Avant-garde Parliaments
6. Development of the Voluntary Spirit and Spreading Culture of Free Work.
7. Combating Illiteracy...Education for all
8. Youth for Peace (the International Youth Forum).
9. Supporting Peace Culture and Positive Participation.
10. Promoting the Culture of Private Business
11. Youth Housing: A Proper House with a Reasonable Price
12. National Project for Training the Young Graduated Youth according to the Needs of Society.
13. Social Fund for Development (SFD)
14. Youth and Small-size Industries.
15. Youth and Sports Fairs.
16. Mubarak's National Project for Young Graduates.

### **3.3 Non-formal education and youth work**

The NCY and several NGOs provide civil education for a large number of youth and teenagers and consider this work one of their priorities. The Egypt Human Development Report assures that: Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are invited to play a leading role, under the supervision of law, in experimenting with, and then scaling up the less formal education programmes such as early childhood development (pre-school education), girls' education (one classroom schools), adult and working children literacy classes, qualifying out-of-school 11-14 year olds for the 3rd primary certificate and establishing IT clubs ...etc. Actually, many NGOs play a fundamental role in the areas of continuous revisions of curriculum, adding and emphasizing particular common concepts related to human rights, citizenship, participation, democracy, governance, equality and elimination of discriminatory concepts (The Egypt Human Development Report, 2008, pp.21-23).

There has been an increase in the number of youth leadership development programmes, whether government-led and organized by the National Youth Council, or by other youth supporting mechanisms such as UNICEF and Euromed Youth Programme. The NCY established the central administration for civil education and young leadership, which focuses on youth training and capacity building of youth

workers in youth NGOs and in governmental organizations to strengthen their leadership abilities and skills. One of the NCY important activities is the civil education programmes aiming at developing the spirit of citizenship and supporting the feeling of the Egyptian identity of the teenagers (13-18 years) and the young people (18-24 years), deep-rooting the values of participation and voluntary work, supporting the spirit of tolerance (ESIS, Year Book, 2007).

One remarkable feature of the youth NGOs is that the staff who directly communicate and interact with youth are not trained for this job and therefore are not youth workers. Youth NGOs do not pay enough attention to the development and training of staff. Consequently, there is increasing demand for the provision of technical assistance and institutional building for youth NGOs through a series of trainings tailored according to their needs. Opportunities could be given to young volunteers who could be trained to assist leaders inside youth NGOs (World Bank, 2007. pp 22-24).

The NDP Youth Policy paper says that «though there have been incessant calls for youth to get more actively politically involved, youth political participation is still very low». It is worth mentioning that the youth policy in Egypt differentiates between political participation and party involvement in the campus, the former is acceptable but the latter is prohibited inside universities (Eshoura Council, 2000, p.55). Despite the difficulties in defining the differences in the real life between the two kinds of participation, there are disparities in implementation of this decision inside universities. Interviews with a number of activists in universities show that outlets for activism are closed. There is a strong intervention from the administration in the student union elections, and the student bill gives it the right to reject the nomination of thousands of youth every year to the election due to their political orientations. Interviews also show that it could take six months for a youth group on campus to distribute newsletters in the university. Campus security officials impose strict censorship rules on the contents of these newsletters to avoid unrest.

The NDP national youth policy says that «participation in social activities and voluntary work are seen as major tools for youth to improve their society». Some youths are turning to social service and volunteering as a path to launch their adult lives. While exact numbers are not known, studies recently conducted in Egypt suggest that it is a growing phenomenon among urban university graduates. Whereas previous generations were motivated by nationalist or market discourses, today's young volunteers wrap their experience in religious language. Both Muslim and Christian youth speak of volunteering for spiritual credit or out of religious obligation. Among those with secondary motivations, two groups have emerged. First, there are those who volunteer to repay a debt to society, believing that official structures have failed to provide for the disadvantaged. A second group has few prospects for employment and hopes to gain contacts and skills and to escape the constraints of home (females) or the street (males) (Dhillon & Yousef, 2007, p 25). Most of the youth NGOs depend on volunteers to implement some of their activities. The average number of volunteers in youth NGOs range from 20-25 volunteers from both sexes. However, organizations which focus on charity activities as **Resala** (Message) depend on a bigger number of volunteers that ranges between 200 and 1500 volunteers (World Bank, 2007, p. 19).

The government considers the availability of information and knowledge one of its priorities. Programmes that provide labour market information and employment services began emerging in the Internet especially in the websites of the NCY and the Ministry of Manpower and Migration.

## 4. THE YOUTH ASSOCIATIONS AND NGOs DEALING WITH YOUTH

Many youth-led initiatives as well as youth-targeting initiatives, have contributed to the emergence of a youth civil society. Youth-led civil society in Egypt has witnessed a revival in the past 10 years. Youth-led NGOs and student-led clubs and associations are only a small indication of changes in youth organization. Media tools used by youth, and for youth, whether in magazines or more recently in electronic format, including «blogspots», are testimonies to this revival.

Securing a national voice for youth associations is dependent on the presence of a legitimate point of entry provided by the appropriate enabling legislation. The legal framework governing youth associations is the same law that governing civil society organizations. Consequently, the current Law 84/2002 is a crucial dimension in recognition and funding associations and impacts powerfully on their effectiveness. This Law allows greater recognition of civil society organizations than any previous law, but it also restricts civil society. Many features of Law 84 are constructive and supportive of youth association activities. Benefits include exemption from contract registration fees and various taxes such as postal and customs taxation; reduced travelling costs; a special telephone tariff; reduced water, gas, and electricity tariffs; and income tax deductions. Exemption from customs taxes on foreign donations and gifts are granted by a decree of the Prime Minister based on recommendations from the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the Minister of Finance (The Egypt Human Development Report 2008, pp 90, 91).

However, controversy has risen on the perception that certain articles and clauses in Law 84/2002 increase state control over civil society and youth organizations, are in violation of international covenants and agreements to which Egypt is party, and inconsistent with international legislation governing their freedoms. The viewpoint of Egypt's government, echoed in Parliamentary debates, is that constraints are necessary to protect the country's greater interests (Ibid, p 92). Complicated bureaucratic procedures for licensing organizations, tight control on daily activities of NGOs, powers to confiscate funds, dissolve organizations, supervise details of budgets, limit access to information — all of these restrict freedoms (Ibid, p 10).

A former responsible for youth thinks that «the situation of youth bodies as youth centres is worse than the civil associations as a result of unstable bills and regulations of youth bodies». Paradoxically, and concurrent with these restraining actions, has come a recognition of the effectiveness of civil society partners as welfare service providers and as potential extensions of the state services apparatus. It is now increasingly accepted that civil society and youth associations are critical to any sustainable process of development, with new roles for these and for government, to be supported by enabling legislation, new knowledge and skills learned by listening to and engaging with local communities, and a willingness by all to successfully negotiate this transition phase (The Egypt Human Development Report 2008, p. 4).



A number of studies have indicated that young people have been disinclined to participate in civil society activities and development efforts, partly as the result of traditional management attitudes that have downplayed the value of youth's potential contributions (Amany Kandil, 2007, pp. 16, 17). To channel these idle productive energies, and in addition to recreation and sport facilities, there has been a visible effort by Civil Society Organizations (CSO) to set up associations for the youth of Egypt for the acquisition of computer or business skills or for providing vocational training in income-generating semi professional activities. A 2007 UN study, in cooperation with the Arab Network for NGOs, shows that 303 NGOs now exist in Egypt - in addition to 8 central associations with regional branches that focus on youth. Of these, 167 associations or more than 50 percent were created in the last few years (Ibid, p.17).

Another important study was carried out by the World Bank in 2007. Four criteria were developed to assess the status of youth NGOs in Egypt. The four criteria are:

1. Number of youth in the board exceeds 60 %.
2. The programmes/services of the organization are directed mainly to youth and children.
3. Number of employees under 35 exceeds 70%.
4. The organization depends on youth volunteers in planning and implementing its activities (World Bank, 2007, p. 8, 9).

Based on the above criteria, the study classified 122 NGOs as youth NGOs divided into three types:

- a. 38 youth organizations (all the four criteria are met).
- b. 63 youth-led NGOs (criteria one and three are met; board and employees are mostly youth).
- c. 21 youth-Serving NGOs (criteria two and four are met).

The percentage of youth organizations is small in relation to the general percentage of NGOs in Egypt (less than 0.5%). Moreover, the percentage of youth NGOs is small in relation to other NGOs concerned with specific target groups, such as women. The World Bank study also showed that there should be at least 2000 youth NGOs in Egypt according to youth needs and size in society (Ibid, pp. 13, 14). Youth NGOs are 'young' and they were mainly founded and registered during the last five years, in fact a high percentage of them was registered only during the past two years. Only exceptions are the traditional NGOs with a long history in working with youth, such as the Scouts and the Muslim Youth, which provide traditional services to the youth (Ibid, p. 15). Youth organizations face major obstacles to become more effective, the most important of which are limited funding, poorly qualified staff, and difficulty in attracting unpaid volunteers (The Egypt Human Development Report 2008, p 72-73).

The strategy of the NCY refers to the civil and popular characteristics of youth bodies. However, many spheres of civil society and state activities are overlapping in practice, and many forms of collective citizen action are difficult to categorize into a specific sphere. In some cases, there is overlap among the categories of semi-governmental social agencies, or state-reliant unions, all

of which may fall into a grey area since they are not fully autonomous (The Egypt Human Development Report 2008, p 5). The case of youth centres and many bodies that are responsible for caring for youth and sports such as Scouts, Sport Clubs, Olympic Committee and Games Unions, which are similar to community development associations (CDAs) and syndicates, fall within this area (Ibid, p 66). Youth centres are common intervention model that promote youth development activities, but are often underutilized, ill equipped, and do not provide safe space for girls.

There were difficulties to reach youth groups as they operate on an informal basis. They are not registered; and could not be found in a permanent location which made it hard to reach them in most of the Governorates<sup>(6)</sup>. The World Bank study of youth NGOs (p. 25) mentioned 44 informal youth groups and classified them in two groups: (1) groups concerned with art and cultural activities; and (2) groups concerned with environmental activities. The main characteristics of youth groups are:

- Youth groups function according to the personal thoughts and beliefs of the group. They are not formed in response to specific needs in the surrounding society.
- None of the youth groups has access to funds, but very few groups receive small funds from local NGOs.
- Most of the groups dream of being structured as NGOs and to provide the group with a formal identity.
- All members of successful groups are volunteers.

Within the youth groups lies a big potential for future youth organizations. The extraordinary commitment of the youth attached to these groups shows that youth in Egypt are willing to get more involved in society (World Bank, 2007, p. 25). Although the government does not recognize youth groups, one of the youth workers has received a promise from officials in the NCY that youth groups are very likely to be registered as it happens in ministries of youth in Jordan and Palestine.

Although most youth NGOs are located in the greater Cairo region, they do not make a big effort to coordinate their work and create active alliances. Only 14 youth organizations are members of a union of youth NGOs.

The Federation of Egyptian Youth NGOs (FEY) was established in January 2006 after the emerging of the urgent need for creating a mechanism for NGOs to work together, especially those concerned with the same issues and target groups. The FEY does not represent a national council of youth but is a non-governmental organization which organizes and supports other youth organizations. Consequently, the main goal of FEY is to coordinate between youth associations themselves and between the associations and governmental and international institutions. It also works as a network of associations that assists and supports them. The role of FEY is to coordinate between projects and associations not the implementation, as well as arranging agreements with donors. One important challenge that faces NGOs is a lack of core funding for institution building

(6) There are six regions in Egypt. Every region includes a number of governorates (muhafazat) which all amount to 26 governorates.

- Great Cairo Region which includes Al Qahirah (Cairo), Al Jizah (Giza) and Al Qalyubiyah.
- West Delta Region which includes Al Iskandariyah (Alexandria), Al Buhayrah and Matruh.
- Middle and East Delta which includes Ad Daqahliyah, Dumyat, Al Minufiyah Al Gharbiyah and Kafr ash Shaykh.
- Suez Canal and Sinai region includes Shamal Sina', Janub Sina', Bur Sa'id, Al Isma'iliyah, As Suways, Ash Sharqiyah.
- North Upper Egypt includes Al Fayyum, Bani Suwayf and Al Minya.
- South Upper Egypt includes Asyut, Qina, Al Wadi al Jadid, Suhaj, Aswan and Al Bahr al Ahmar.

beyond programmatic support. One of the few core donors is the EFG-Hermes Foundation, which supports the capacity building and sustainability efforts of youth-led NGOs through its collaboration with the Federation of Egyptian Youth NGOs.

The FEY began with 11 youth organizations and the number increased to 14 in many governorates like: Cairo, Alexandria, Elmenia and North Siena'a. There are three criteria for any organization to join FEY NGOs: to be a youth organization, registered and work in the field of development.

There are three kinds of activities and programmes:

1. Raising the effectiveness of associations through training courses and assisting them to establish profitable projects.
2. National projects that includes several governorates such as the project with Microsoft Corporation to train six thousands of Egyptian youths on computer skills.
3. Participating in the making of youth policies, such as attending the meetings in October and November 2007 in the Ministerial Council to put a «Vision for Egypt 2030»; as well as participating in the committee of youth work in cooperation with the Manpower Ministry and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

A *youth-led initiative* is the Student Free Union (**Etihad Ettolab Elhor**). While the idea emerged in 1996, it was not implemented until 2005 due to the political openings climate in 2004-2005. The initiative represents a symbolic response and reaction from the students prevented from being nominated to students' election. The formation of the Free Union has come after conducting non-formal elections in 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 under the supervision of Professors' Club and human rights organization. Although the educational administration sharply rejected these elections and considered it illegal, thousands of youths participated in the election in 7 universities in 2005/2006 and 14 universities in 2006/2007. The main goals of the SFU, as the interviews with activists show, are to declare a protesting message against the authorities and to present good services to the students. There are two kinds of activities: firstly, student activities that serve students in cultural, sports and social fields and secondly, supporting the political reform inside universities and society.

Youth NGOs are promising phenomena for several reasons, but most importantly because youth-targeted programmes led by youth are usually more understanding of their peers' needs and priorities. Examples of good practice include the Namma'a Project that depends on interactive methods, problem solving and workshops. It motivates the youth to initiate, and encourages them to establish, new projects or join outstanding initiatives. There is also Massriaty group and Mountada Qaiedy Elmogtamaa inside Nahdet Elmahrousa which works as an incubator for ideas that support successful youth development ideas to become models for national implementation.

# 5. THE EUROMED YOUTH PROGRAMME

The Euromed Youth Programme was lively and energetic in Egypt during its first and second phases (1999-2004) as a result of the work of the former National Coordinator based within the Ministry of Youth. The main activity of the Programme was youth exchange projects which gave a large number of Egyptian young people the opportunity to travel and visit other countries and to get to know and understand other cultures. The young people who participated in such activities confirm that they gained knowledge about other cultures and benefited from new methods of thought. They also became more confident in themselves.

The Programme succeeded to get in touch with more than 400 associations through the Ministry of Youth and Internet.

The interviews with a number of participants and youth workers confirmed that the Programme reached about 1500-2000 youth and contributed to their capacity- building through non-formal education and training, as well as developing the concepts of tolerance and accepting diversities through travelling and coexisting with other youth from different cultures. Moreover, the Programme remarkably contributed in preparing many youth workers according to the international standards. It is worth noting that a number of participants either changed their careers to continue as youth workers or joined other youth initiatives. However, some officials expressed in the interviews a negative assessment about the results of the Programme which they considered weak either in quality or quantity.

## 6. OTHER YOUTH SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Many international and regional organizations work in the field of youth in Egypt. Some of them directly work with the government especially the NCY, and others support youth NGOs. The NCY cooperates with different kinds of organizations particularly UNICEF and Frederich Naoman. There are many initiatives in the field of youth like the Arab League's programme on the empowerment of youth, as well as the Bibliotheca Alexandrina that holds an annual discussion forum with Arab youth. In September 2007, the Suzanne Mubarak International Women for Peace organization hosted the International Youth Forum in Sharma El Sheikh.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Communication and Technology (MCIT) through Egypt ICT Trust Fund established the Community Development Portal ([www.kenanaonline.com](http://www.kenanaonline.com)) to promote sustainable human development. In addition to this, UNDP launched other initiatives like the United Nations Volunteers Programme. The National Council for Youth in cooperation with UNICEF issued a civil education guide for youth in order to teach them the values of citizenship, equality and democracy in 2006. UNICEF also has an initiative that seeks to provide girl-friendly schools and a national youth leadership programme called «Save the Children». There is also the Egypt Education Reform Program (ERP) which is a bilateral agreement between the Ministry of Education and USAID. Moreover, the Anna Lindh Foundation, based in Alexandria, supports a number of youth projects and cooperates with some formal institutions and NGOs in Egypt.

In 2003, at the Youth Employment Network, established by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank and the United Nations, Egypt committed itself to be a lead country in developing a national action plan for youth employment. Since 2006, the ILO has supported Egypt in its development of that plan. While Egypt's Youth Employment National Action Plan (YENAP) is being prepared under the leadership of the Ministry of Manpower and Migration, for the first time there is the participation of all the main decision-makers and stakeholders relevant to youth employment. As it seems from the interviews, several youth organizations attended many meetings and workshops about this initiative. It can be argued that resources and funds available for youth leadership and youth programmes have increased. The Amman-based regional funds dedicated to youth development, including Naseej (Weave) and Safar (Travel), funded by the Ford Foundation and Siraj (Night Light), are funded by the US Agency for International Development.

# 7. PERCEPTION OF THE ACTORS

The Interviews and focus groups showed that there are some similarities and disparity among every group and inside the same group about the national youth policy (NYP) in Egypt.

There is a perception among the decision-makers about youth as a substantial human capital and a “demographic gift» that constitutes a considerable opportunity to bolster development in Egypt. An increasing number of sectors are starting to view youth as an asset of vast potential, able to contribute positively to the community development. On the other hand, there is a prevalent view of the youth as a liability and danger among some decision-makers and this view leads to the situation of youth exclusion.

It can be argued that there are two viewpoints about the way in which youth should be helped to fully develop and mature. The first one focuses on the socialization process and preparation of the youth and teenagers and it often looks at youth as just negative recipients. On the other hand, the other viewpoint calls for participation of youth in designing and implementing youth policies and programmes and for social dialogue between the younger and elder people in order to increase their self-esteem and leadership skills.

It seems that there is no general agreement on the definition of youth among all state’s institutions and ministries especially in defining the maximum and minimum age brackets, which leads to a lack of differentiation between the stages of childhood, teenage and youth. There is a notable trend among officials and experts who tend to raise the age of youth to 40 years old due to the social and economic problems that affect youth and delaying their adult roles in society. Another view comprehends that as a result of mobilization ideology in sixties.

There is a disagreement about the Egyptian youth policy. Decision-makers assure that it exists in the national policy of the state and emerges in youth institutions, budget, legislations and programmes. However, a number of them calls for a law or formal document containing this policy while others refer to the problems of implementation. An expert confirms that the NYP depends on mobilization not participation. Decisions makers also assure that there is a continual evaluation and assessment from the NCY and the other parties which participate in the projects and programmes.

Decision-makers declare that young people and youth NGOs participate in the process of devising, preparing and implementing of the youth policy especially through discussions in the various working groups and meetings that prepare the policies, and the state invites civil society and the private sector to participate in implementing the national youth policy as both are considered major partners. They also assure that coordination and cooperation are running and growing at different levels between ministries and institutions.

With regard to the views of youth leaders, there is a general agreement among representatives of youth organizations that the national youth policy in Egypt is problematic, but they offer different arguments. A number of them refer to the absence of a comprehensive vision and coordination; others say that NYP in Egypt is just a number of programmes and projects. They agree that there is an urgent need for partnership and cooperation between the state, private sector and youth organizations. They assure that youth organizations did not participate in the drafting of the national youth policy, although some of them participated in discussing and preparing a number of projects and programmes.

Several youth leaders interpret the low level of coordination among actors responsible for youth due to the weak influence of the NCY comparing with other actors, while others think that «the members of the NCY do not have a vision about the NYP and they urgently need a training and capacity building».

With regard to the view of young people, as the focus groups showed, the main trend among youth is to concentrate on their problems, needs and dreams which include receiving quality education, decent employment, affordable housing and the power to shape their communities. One important point that stands out is that their needs differ according to their age and their socio-economic situation. For example, young people who are still studying are concerned with their studies, exams and private tutoring. After graduation, they seek for employment with a good salary to become able to buy a flat and to get married. Rural youth find it very difficult to get any work in their villages; as a result they are obliged to immigrate to big cities as Cairo or abroad to earn some money. The priorities of the political activists are the political freedom and free elections.

## 8. CONCLUSION

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Youth policy in Egypt urgently needs a common vision and strategy, and without this strategy, every action or programme will just have a limited impact. Egypt has specific ministries and institutions responsible for youth since a long time, and there is a considerable effort to formulate a national youth policy that has cross-sectorial policies. However, it is not obvious that Egypt has a cross-sectorial and decentralized NYP with effective action. It can be argued that there is a restricted sectorial NYP confined to the NCY responsible for Youth.



## Annex 1: Acknowledgements

My gratitude and deep thanks are due to Sally Salem and all the interviewees for the remarkable mutual cooperative atmosphere. They have cooperated and provided all the verified detailed and most recent data required to produce this report.

The author likes to express special thanks to Abdullah Tohami and Walla Mahmoud for their invaluable role in preparing the focus groups and collecting data.

## Annex 2: Country profile (part 1)

<b>Full name of the Country</b>	Arab Republic of Egypt	
<b>Government Type</b>	Republican - Presidential	
<b>Area</b>	1 Million km2	
<b>Capital City</b>	Cairo	
<b>Other main cities</b>	Alexandria- Giza- Minya	
<b>Population</b>	76,699,427 million (in 2008)	
<b>Gender Ratio (F/M)</b>	F: 35578975 (in 2006) M: 37219056	
<b>Ethnic composition</b>	There is no ethnic divisions	
<b>Age Structure</b>		
<b>0-14</b>	18,365,035	
<b>15-24</b>	14,215,164	
<b>25-30</b>	4,711,365	
<b>Educational background (F/M ratio)</b>		
<b>Primary</b>	F: 2,553,186 Total: 5,618,646	M: 3,065,460
<b>Preparatory</b>	F: 2,484,094 Total: 5,519,466	M: 3,035,372
<b>Intermediate</b>	F: 6,539,150 Total 14778002	M 8,238,852
<b>Above Intermediate</b>	F 624,374 Total 1,450,056	M 825,682
<b>University</b>	F 2,190,873 Total 5,332,490	M 3,141,617
<b>Literacy rate</b>	Youth: 23%	Adult: 22%

## Annex 2: Country profile (part 2)

Unemployment rate	
Youth: 27.10%	Adult: 8.3%
Summary of age related regulations and rights	
Compulsory education (up to.....)	15
Compulsory military service	18
Legally employable (from...)	+15
Marriage without parental consent	21
Minimum voting age	18
Minimum age to be elected	30
Driving licence	18
Purchase of alcohol and drinkink	Irrelevant
Purchase of tobacco products and smoking	Irrelevant
Local Currency/ Exchange rate (Euro)	
	1 € = 7.8 Egyptian pound

## Annex 3: List of Abbreviations (part 1)

<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organizations
<b>EP</b>	Egyptian Pounds
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-governmental Organizations
<b>NYP</b>	National Youth Policy
<b>NDP</b>	National Democratic Party (the ruling party)
<b>NCY</b>	National Council for Youth
<b>NCS</b>	National Council of Sport
<b>NCYS</b>	National Council of Youth and Sport
<b>SCYS</b>	Supreme Council for Youth and Sports
<b>MY</b>	Ministry of Youth
<b>LPI</b>	Leaders Preparation Institute
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nation Development Programme
<b>USAID</b>	United State Aid Programme
<b>CDAs</b>	Community Development Associations
<b>CAPMAS</b>	The Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics
<b>ESISYB</b>	Egypt State Information Service Year Book

## Annex 3: List of Abbreviations (part 2)

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<b>FEY</b>	Federation of Egyptian Youth NGOs
<b>YO</b>	Youth Organizations
<b>YENAP</b>	Youth Employment National Action Plan
<b>NCMC</b>	National Council for Motherhood and Childhood

## Annex 4: Glossary

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**Customary (Urfi) Marriage:** a relation between two young people - male and female - which is called a «marriage» but it is non-formal and not documented. Drawing on the Islamic requirements of only two witnesses and that the betrothal become public knowledge, this practice has evolved into one in which Egyptian youth are obtaining clandestine marriage certificates without announcing to their families their intentions to marry, so they often reject it.

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## **Annex 6: Additional statistical tables/charts**

### **1/ Indicators about employment and labour force in Egypt**

<b>Annual GDP Growth 2000-04 (%)</b>	2.79%
<b>Annual GDP Growth per capita (%)</b>	1.23%
<b>Labour Force, 2000 (millions)</b>	20.01
<b>Labour Force, 2005 (millions)</b>	22.88
<b>Youth unemployed (thousands)</b>	1152.70
<b>Youth unemployment rate (%)</b>	27.10 %
<b>Youth-to-adult unemployment ratio</b>	4.80
<b>Youth unemployment in youth population (%)</b>	8.10%

The source: Dhillon and Yousef, 2007, p. 22

### **2/ State Efforts to Provide New Job Opportunities for Youth during 2002** **550,000 new job opportunities were provided in the following fields:**

<b>Field</b>	<b>No. of jobs</b>
<b>Job opportunities for graduates to meet the government needs of teachers, physicians and social workers including 8,077 jobs for people with special needs</b>	170.000
<b>Job opportunities in the private sector through labour offices</b>	1000.000
<b>Job opportunities in the village information centres</b>	30.000
<b>Rehabilitating and training graduates to work in the oil sector</b>	30.000
<b>Rehabilitating and training in agricultural-related handicraft fields together with a soft loan at the end of the training</b>	120.000
<b>Preparing and training in vocational centres in the fields of information, communications, electricity and industrial vocations with a soft loan from SFD</b>	100.000
<b>Total</b>	<b>550.000</b>

The source: Egypt State Information Service, year book, Issue 2003

### 3/ Map of the Arab Republic of Egypt<sup>(7)</sup>:







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This programme is funded by  
the European Union

