

MEDNET 2 – Innovation, exchange, networking for a new
leading class in the Mediterranean

Third COUNTRY REPORT : Lebanon

Update Thematic Dossier #3:

Youth mobility, exchange, study and training
opportunities through the Mediterranean Area

Insight:

Experiences and good practices in the field of Youth mobility in the Med Countries

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DPNA-Lebanon

INTRODUCTION

Lebanon, being part of the developing world, is a demographically young country. The population numbered approximately 3.1 million persons in 1996. The youth population numbered 585,000 and thus accounted for just under 19 percent of the total population. The number of young persons is expected to continue to increase during the next twenty years and is projected to reach 714,200 in the year 2016 (Table 2). The relative importance of youth is projected to gradually decrease to just under 17 percent by the year 2011 and to 17.3 percent in the year 2016.

Proportion of youth in total population, 1970-2016
(Thousands, percent)

	1970	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016
Youth	376.8	585.2	612.4	628.2	655.4	714.2
Total	2126.3	3090.7	3363.5	3636.0	3897.6	4138.6
Percent	17.7	18.9	18.2	17.3	16.9	17.3

Source: Lebanon Ministry of Planning 1970; Ministry of Social Affairs (Unpublished Data), UNDP nhdr 98 Chap. 4

Youth in Lebanon has been considered active according to certain waves. Civil movements had a positive impact on youth especially in mobilizing them to understand their responsibilities and protect their rights that the government should be taking the responsibility of providing to youth. Unfortunately, youth get shut down most of the time due to conflicts and political instabilities in the region in general which leads to disappointment and youth discouragement. Leading youth to feel like they are stuck in between two options: stay home and work on immigrating and looking for countries where they feel that they can be change makers and have their own impact in the society or try and take the action to do something that would cause this change in their country. Despite that Lebanese youth are still considered as powerful agents of change and impactful citizens.

In order to achieve those changes, a change in the whole system in the country is required. A change to a system that would be based on integrating youth in the decision making process as they are the future! Here lies the largest part of this burden on the Civil Society, since both the Public sector and the Private sector are not really present in the Lebanese society. Rami Shamma (Program Manager at DPNA) states that: "This is our decision in the end, we have to work towards a better system. We should live with reality and change it little by little".

DPNA's Youth Mobility Projects

As Development for People and Nature (DPNA) our main focus is on youth and their development on all levels. Our work orbits around the concept of sustainable development and capacity building for youth. We provide them with workshops and opportunities allowing them to express themselves and share their ideas and initiatives in order for their voices to be heard, for them to become leaders and to be able to make a positive change in their society. Since we believe that young people are a fundamental asset but in order to enable them to fully express their potential it is necessary to invest in measures for social and economic inclusion.

Throughout DPNA's 13 years of working in the civil society, we have been implementing projects with youth whether it was sharing experiences in between youth from different countries such as the Copain du Monde movement in France, MedNet, ISV Active Citizens, Jezzine Hub and IVLP. Providing youth with guides allowing them to understand their roles and responsibilities in their society as well as to help them in their future such as: Guide for Youth and Municipalities, Guide for Youth to participate in politics, Guide for Youth and Active Citizenship, Guide for participation and negotiation, Youth and Peace Culture, Entrance to enterprise, Guide for Youth and Human Rights and Working with Conflict.

All the guides and programs listed above aimed at mobilizing youth and encouraging their active participation as well as to build their capacities using different methodologies and approaches.

JEZZINE HUB

Jezzine Hub is a youth-led centre that constitutes a platform and an incubator environment for youth between the ages of 18 and 30 in Jezzine region as a whole to meet, share creative ideas and build their capacities on all levels. The Hub is a project funded by the European Union and is currently being implemented in partnership between: Oxfam Italy, Development for People and Nature Association (DPNA), Italian Development Cooperation and Union of Jezzine Municipalities.

The Hub project was launched in January 2015 and will go over a period of 3 years with close guidance and monitoring from the implementing partners, afterwards the Hub will ensure its sustainability because of the youth and their activities. The Hub will be managed by two committees: The management committee (youth) and the steering committee (partners) in order to build the capacities of the youth in it and give them the opportunity to learn and acquire experiences from the older generation. It targets 500 youth aged between 18 and 30 (30% of the youth permanently living in the Jezzine Caza, est. 1.600 people), reached by and involved in the activities promoted by the Hub (at least 40% women and 50% graduates). The Hub will provide the youth with trainings on entrepreneurship, youth and municipality work, project management, club and NGO management as well as interpersonal skills and soft skills that will be of good benefit for building their future. They will use the gained skills to benefit their communities by writing project proposals and implementing initiatives aiming at sustainable development in their communities.

Throughout the duration of the project, youth will be offered the chance to network with the 71 Hubs around the world, learning from their experiences and initiatives. There will be two exchange visits between a Hub in Florence and in Dubai in order to gain on hand experience on Hub management as well as to study the best practices in each country and establish professional relationships in between the two countries throughout youth.

Jezzine Hub project highlights the crucial importance of youth mobility and engagement on socio-economic level. It encourages youth to take action by empowering them with the needed skills and offering them the opportunity to apply their learnings in order to be change makers in their communities. Adding to that the exchange visits play the role of essential incentives for youth participation in such a project.

ACTIVE CITIZENS

Active Citizens is a project that aims at building understanding and trust between communities by establishing an enduring global network of community leaders, who can work together to address the global issues of the 21st century. Active Citizens connects people and organizations involved in local initiatives that benefit their community. It provides them with tools and support to better understand how to work with people from diverse backgrounds and to put new skills into practice by setting up or adapting the way they run their own social development and innovation, by sharing ideas and practice and working on joint projects with their peers in the global Active Citizens network.

Active Citizens was launched in 2009 and currently, it is running in over twenty countries in the Middle East and North Africa, Europe, South and East Asia and the UK.

The Active Citizens Learning Journey is core to the overall programme. It is based on an exploration of the ways in which people relate to each other and appreciate diversity. It involves participants carrying out a social action project in relation to an issue of concern to them and putting their learning into practice. It is underpinned by a commitment to social justice, to social inclusion and to enabling people to take a lead in shaping society. The project is implemented in partnership with the British Council targeting people and mostly youth all over Lebanon. So far more than 3600 people have been part of this empowering training.

TOOLS AND CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATIONS

Exchange visits outside Lebanon are always perceived as incentives and motivation for youth to know more and be involved. Basically nearly all activities implemented outside their community are always considered as empowering and encouraging. Youth are always eager and curious to learn new things and discover places. Therefore one of the tools used to mobilize youth are exchange visits and trips. On the other hand, youth are always looking for incubator places in which they can feel safe and express themselves with their talents. Here lies the role of looking for youth with talents and providing them with this crucial need and a place where they can meet and share their knowledge and experiences such as El Moltaqa and Jezzine Hub. This would help them grow as people and encourages them to be more involved.

At the same time some of the methods that we as DPNA use is to support the local community products in order to achieve behavioral change in the characteristics, attitude or practices of the person. We deliver support on the Economic level while taking into consideration to be legal, responsible and authentic towards the society in order to ensure socio-economic development and achieve a change in the mentality of people and their engagement.

CONCLUSION

In general in Lebanon the responsibility of youth mobilization is mainly relying on CSOs since the government is quit absent when it comes to youth mobilization. In Lebanon there is the Ministry of Youth and Sports and unfortunately the focus is on sports and the part concerning youth is barely existing which leads to the lack of mobilization of youth in Lebanon. This emphasizes the importance of the active role of youth ministries, entities (private and public), department and policies in mobilizing youth.

Unfortunately this is the situation encountered in countries south the Mediterranean leading to increase the gap in between the North and the South. Here lies the importance of exchange programs and networks with on sites visits as well as maybe a mobile application that would link all young people together to share their interests and experiences. Adding to that the implementation of programs that aim to promote the culture of the north to the south and vice versa. Which leads to decreasing the gap in between the North and the South and encouraging young people mobility due to exchange of interest and experiences.

Moreover, projects and programs promoting young people mobility should be communicated in a way ensuring the reach to the majority of youth from diverse social classes and backgrounds as well as keeping in mind to always have place for incentives and visits since online activities are no considered encouraging nor feasible to all youth.