



GIVING VOICE TO DATA

STORIES FROM THE YOUTH PROFILE

unicef 



وقتنا.. دورنا.. مستقبلنا

وقتنا.. دورنا.. مستقبلنا





ABOUT GENU

The United Nations General Assembly launched Generation Unlimited (GenU) at its 73rd session in September 2018. GenU is a global multi-stakeholder platform that aims at addressing the urgent need for expanded education, training and employment opportunities for young people, aged 10 to 24, on an unprecedented scale.

Youth voices is at the core of GenU's approach, which is ultimately about creating Public-Private-Youth Partnerships (PYPPs).

GENU IN EGYPT

UNICEF Egypt, in collaboration with multiple UN agencies, has been working on supporting the creation of a National led version of GenU in Egypt. The process adopted entailed a thorough review of the literature around the situation of young people in Egypt, as well as already existing programming with regards to the four core areas of Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Engagement. Throughout this process, a diverse group of stakeholders along with young people have been engaged around priorities, prospects,

and the ideal way forward with regards to a synergistic approach to the development and empowerment of young people in Egypt.

This process is generating multiple publications, including 1) a data-based profile of the state of children and young people in Egypt with regards to Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Engagement (The Youth Profile), and 2) mapping and analysis of already existing programming in the spheres of Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Engagement (The Country Landscape Analysis). Insights from both publications and data collection efforts are being synthesized to create GenU Egypt's priorities, theory of change, and strategy (The Country Investment Agenda).

Hence, GenU's vision in Egypt is that "Children and youth have equitable access to quality opportunities that equip them for the future, for reaching their full potential, and for actively contributing to the social and economic development of their communities" through building a multi-stakeholder platform that includes government, private sector, national civil society, UN agencies and young people.

THE YOUTH PROFILE

The youth profile is largely informed by quantitative data and evidence-based resources around the situation of young people aged 10-24 in Egypt across the four spheres of Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Engagement. The report relied on analyzing and synthesizing data from professional reports official data sources and conducting secondary analyses of various data sets including Egypt Labor Market Panel Survey (ELMPS) 2018, Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE) 2014, and Egypt Census 2017.

Giving Voice to the Data from the Youth Profile

To bring children and youth-related data to life, the Youth Profile was supplemented with a series of focus group discussions and life story interviews that aim at capturing the experiences of young people themselves along with the realities which the numbers and data available about young people in Egypt reflect. Youth engaged in primary data collection included young males and females living in different settings such as semi-urban areas and border governorates, young migrants, young people with disabilities, as well as young people forced to drop out of school, to work through their education, and/or to grow up in alternative care homes. Next, we present the main messages and themes that emerged from the Youth Profile and from engaging young people around their stories and evolution from childhood to adolescence, to early adulthood.



MORE INVESTMENTS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO EDUCATION

“I want to learn. . . it’s not enough to know how to do agricultural work or feed cattle. Education, and learning how to read is what really matters to me. This is why when I had the opportunity to re-enroll to school through the community school that opened recently at my village, I did so”

Osama, a 16-year-old male, Behbeit Village, a rural area in the south of Giza governorate, Upper Egypt

At 16 years old, Osama is one of the 38.9 million children under 18 years of age in Egypt (40 percent of the total population)[1]. Today, more youth reside in rural areas than in urban areas, with around two-thirds of youth aged 15 to 24 residing in rural areas. Specifically, 43 percent of youth in rural areas are residing in Lower Egypt, and 41 percent in Upper Egypt.

Osama’s village has one community school that offers a secondary education, and one primary school that is 3 kilometers away. Children have to walk on busy highways to be able to reach the school, which leaves parents worried about sending their children to school. This is especially true since several children were victims of road accidents on their way to school. This is one of the main reasons why Osama didn’t attend school; his parents were worried about his safety during the journey to school. And was only able to re-enroll after establishing the community school.

According to the 2018 ELM PS, parental or child unwillingness is a primary reason for never attending or dropping out of school, followed by financial barriers.[2]

[1] CAPMAS Bulletin on Population Size, by Governorate, District, Gender, and Place of Residence 2018 available online at: <https://www.capmas.gov.eg/Admin/Pages%20Files/201892594224Untitled4.pdf>

[2] El Zanaty & Associates, Egypt Youth Data Snapshot: Youth Profile Desktop Review, 2020, UNICEF Egypt

Access to education is multi-faceted and requires interventions around road safety, parental awareness and support, as well as the quality and relevance of the educational experience itself.

MORE INVESTMENTS TOWARDS CREATING NOT JUST JOBS, BUT QUALITY AND DECENT JOBS THROUGH EGYPT

“I can't imagine my professional career in Tanta. I love my city and I would love to continue living here, but it's a very small and limited community. There is no labour market here. I cannot find any opportunities for training in my field. I have to go to Cairo, where all media work is centralized”

Noha, 19-year old female
from Tanta, Gharbia Governorate,
Lower Egypt

Noha lives in Tanta city in Gharbeya governorate, 100 km to the north of Cairo. Tanta has a population of over 1.2 million people [3]. Noha is currently enrolled in the Faculty of Media Studies at Menoufia University in Shibin El-Kom city, which is 25 KM from her hometown. She knows that a field like media is very competitive with limited opportunities in her hometown, her situation is compounded by the fact that she has a disability. Noha knows that at a certain point, she will have to move to Cairo, where she can find opportunities for training and work, just like her two older sisters. For her, Tanta is a very small city that does not have much to offer should she decide to pursue a professional career in media.

Data from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development included in the 2021 Egypt Human Development Report (HDR) shows that the highest unemployment rate in Egypt is that among the 15 to 24 age group, with females having a significantly higher unemployment rate than males across all age groups [4]. As for the unemployment rates as per geographical locations, according to Egypt's Description by Information Report, the unemployment rate of young people aged 15-29 is the highest in the governorates of Suez, Damietta, North Sinai, and Port Said (ranging from 25.6-32.2%), followed by Cairo, Alexandria, Aswan, Red Sea, and the New Valley Governorates (ranging from 21.4-25.7%) [5]. Additionally, female unemployment rates are much higher, as they range between 39.4% (Fayoum) and 95% (New Valley), with the average rate being 40.6% [6].

Geographical location still represents a barrier to accessing job opportunities, and how the barriers to entering the labour market are compounded by certain factors such as gender, and having a disability.



[3] CAPMAS Bulletin on Population Size, by Governorate, District, Gender, and Place of Residence 2018.

[4] Egypt Human Development Report 2021,

<https://www.eg.undp.org/content/egypt/en/home/launch-of-egypt-human-development-report-2021.html>

[5] IDSC. (2021). Egypt's Description by Information: 12th Edition. Retrieved from: <https://idsc.gov.eg/DocumentLibrary/View/4824>

[6] Ibid.



TRAINING AND MENTORING ENHANCE YOUNG PEOPLE'S EMPLOYABILITY

“My advice for any young person is not to be afraid. To go out into the world and gain as many practical experiences as possible. I really hope that parents would also allow their children the freedom to explore the real world, and not to shelter them”

*Mounir, a 19-year-old male employee,
Assiut Governorate, Upper Egypt*

Mounir is a second-year student at a Business Management Institute, while also working as a Warehouse Manager and Sales Representative at his cousin's book and gift shop in Upper Egypt. Mounir found himself obliged to work for a living since he was in primary school. He worked in a spice shop, an auto parts dealership, a car mechanic workshop, a bakery, and an animal feed shop, among others.

Mounir sees his job at the bookshop as a turning point in his life as this was his first time to learn about work ethics and the importance of customer satisfaction.

Mounir shed light on the little access he has to quality career guidance and mentorship and the discrepancy between the curricula at the Management Institute and the work and business environment at his current job.

A 2014 report by the World Bank reveals that private sector companies were unable to fill 600,000 vacancies due to the lack of qualified candidates in 2012 alone [7]. Additionally, a significant proportion of young Egyptians are considered discouraged job seekers, and youth not in employment or training (NEET) was at a high of 22.4% (11.5% for young males, and 34.4% for females) [8].

Comprehensive career guidance and mentorship services, as well as on-the-job training, can facilitate the transition of young Egyptians into the workplace, especially in light of the skills mismatch between work and education.

[7] World Bank. (2014). More Jobs, Better Jobs: A Priority for Egypt. Report No. 88447-EG.

[8] ILO & ADWA. (2021). Regional Report on Jobs and Growth in North Africa 2020,

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-abidjan/---sro-cairo/documents/publication/wcms_809435.pdf , p 21

COMPREHENSIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT, THAT INCLUDES THE SERVICES OF MENTAL HEALTH, NOT ONLY TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL, IS NEEDED FOR A VIBRANT EGYPTIAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM.

“There are more training opportunities in Upper Egypt now. However, I hope to see financial and technical support opportunities more widespread beyond main cities to reach those most in need.”

Sara, a 25-year-old female entrepreneur, Qena Governorate, Upper Egypt

Sara is a young woman who lives and operates her own business in Upper Egypt. Her journey with entrepreneurship started as she was active in many student activities, which helped her shape her passion for flower arrangement into an actual business.

The main challenges that Sara faced were due to the dearth of support in Rural Upper Egypt, as well as the accessibility of the array of resources available in Cairo to other governorates in Egypt. Additionally, her mental health represented one of the main challenges throughout her journey. As a female founder, Sara represents one in every 4 Egyptian entrepreneurs. Worth noting that 76 percent of Egyptians perceive entrepreneurship as a good choice; and 82 percent perceive successful entrepreneurs as having high social status [9].

Total early-stage entrepreneurial activity (TEA) captures the percentage of a population aged 18-64 who are nascent entrepreneurs, or

owners/managers of a new business. Egypt's TEA score was at 13.3 percent in 2017, and 9.3% in 2018, compared to a global average of 12.6%. While TEA and perceptions of entrepreneurship are on the high end, the business discontinuation rates in Egypt are equally high. The discontinuation rate in Egypt reached a high of 7.6%, the 8th highest rate globally. Profitability, access to finance, and family or business reasons are amongst the most commonly listed reasons for discontinuation in Egypt.

Comprehensive entrepreneurship support, including technical and financial services, and a special emphasis on marginalized groups, whether by location or gender, is essential for unleashing the full potential of young business owners across the nation. In parallel, the mental health of young labour market entrants, and especially entrepreneurs and small business owners require attention within the capital and beyond.



[9] Ismail, A., Tolba, A., Barakat, Sh., Meshreki, H., & Ghalwash, S. (2019). Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. Egypt National Report. Cairo: The American University in Cairo, for Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. <https://www.gemconsortium.org/economy-profiles/egypt>

LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM THROUGH CULTIVATING CREATIVITY AND EXPRESSION: A KEY STRATEGY FOR EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY GIRLS

“I started to attend art and theatre activities at the age of eight. The most important activity to me was theatre, where I felt empowered to act on the stage and express myself in front of others. ... Those activities changed me a lot. If I hadn't taken part, I wouldn't be the person who is talking to you right now. I was very shy; I wouldn't say a word”

Hoda, 19-year-old female, from a marginalized neighborhood in Mokattam, Cairo Governorate

Hoda is in her 2nd year of her undergraduate degree at Cairo University's, faculty of Law. Out of the total of 2.44 million students enrolled in public universities, Hoda is one of the nearly 1.3 million female public university students [10].

As a child, she took part in multiple extra-curricular activities at a local non-profit organization that works with local community members on building self-expression, engagement, and overall life skills. Theatre-based activities were her favorite because it gave her the freedom to adopt a different persona, shed her skin and to evolve into a confident and communicative young

woman.

Hoda remembers how with the support of the Non Governmental Organization she developed an initiative to encourage girls to engage in sports, and to challenge the stereotype that only boys can play sports. Her initiative entailed organizing a sports day for girls in her neighborhood, where they can learn and practice football, and are introduced to some self-defense techniques.

Results from the 2018 ELMPS indicates that only 7 percent of youth in the 15 to 24 age group participate in any voluntary activities during the 12 months preceding the survey, with limited gender variations. Only 8 percent of male youth and 7 percent of female youth reported being engaged in community services. The level of community participation is higher among older youth in the 20 to 24 age group (10 percent), in rural areas (8 percent) and Upper Egypt (9 percent), youth who have ever been married (11 percent), youth who have completed a secondary education or higher (10 percent), and youth living in the highest wealth quintiles (10 percent). On the other hand, the lowest rates of participation were observed among youth residing in Urban Governorates (3 percent) followed by those with no education (5 percent). Looking at the findings through a gender lens shows some interesting variations, including how 13 percent of female youth who have had some primary education reported participating in community services, compared to only 2 percent among their male counterparts [11].

Access to extracurricular activities and life skills programs in marginalized communities can act as a powerful tool for children and young people to unleash their full potential. Sustaining and expanding community-based and youth-led interventions in this sphere is essential for fostering the engagement and ultimately employability of young people from

[10] El Zanaty & Associates, Egypt Youth Data Snapshot: Youth Profile Desktop Review, 2020, UNICEF Egypt

[11] El Zanaty & Associates, Egypt Youth Data Snapshot: Youth Profile Desktop Review, 2020, UNICEF Egypt, p 24.

different walks of life.

PARTICIPATION AND LOCALIZATION AS CORE TOOLS FOR CAPITALIZING ON LOCAL ASSETS

“Most of the teachers are not from the local community, they do not understand the culture or context. Students and local teachers are not allowed to dress like they would dress at home or in their natural environment. It used to frustrate me a lot when I would go to other cities, and they have no idea what Shalateen is, what our heritage is, and that there are even people living in Shalateen”

*Nour 26 years old young female
from Shalateen, Red Sea Governorate*

Shalateen has a total population of approximately 23,544, most of whom belong to either the Al Beshareya or Al Ababda tribes. It is the largest town in the Halaib Triangle [12].

Nour recalls her childhood, 10 or 15 years ago, and life in Shalateen when she was a child. She used to go to Al Kholwa for education, and then come back and try to wrap up any schoolwork before sunset. Al Kholwa is an indigenous mode of education that is still adopted in Shalateen. Students use natural materials, such as wooden boards, wooden pens, and inks, wear their traditional clothing (which is not allowed in public schools), and are educated in a setting similar to that at home, sitting on the floor or on straw mats.

Nour works now as a kindergarten teacher in a public school in Shalateen. One of her largest frustrations with her formal schooling experience, or her experience as a teacher, is how curricula, teaching mechanisms, or even the entire educational set-up is not adapted to the local context.

Another frustration is how core aspects of her hometown are rapidly changing; e.g. the pace of

life, the daily schedule, and the interconnectedness between family members. One of the main experiences that Nour is grateful for is the participatory research project that she was involved in. Nour mentioned how this was one of the most enriching experiences of her life because of the two-directional exchange that took place, where she got to educate the group about her own culture, and to also learn with them about her history. She also appreciated the exposure and deep connections that she built with the diverse group as they attempted to learn about and document the area's rich heritage together.

The adoption of participatory approaches and tailoring programming to local contexts are essential, as they allow for capitalizing on local knowledge, assets, and empowering local residents with the tools to lead their own growth and development.

DIGITAL ACCESS CAN BE A GAME CHANGER: ENSURING THAT A WORLD OF KNOWLEDGE AND OPPORTUNITY IS AT YOUNG PEOPLE'S FINGERTIPS

“Don't wait for anyone to help you out. Work with what you have. If you have 10% of the possible assets that you can have, use them. Invest in them. They'll grow. And you'll get to where you want. It might take you longer, but it's better than not doing anything at all.”

*Tarek, 24 years old male,
Cairo governorate*

Tarek stopped attending school from the age of 12, preferring to go to work instead. Tarek grew up in an alternative care home, but his days there ended when he was just 16. He had caused a problem at school, and was too scared of the consequences so he ran away without putting much thought into what would come

[12] Red Sea Governorate Website, available online at: <http://www.redsea.gov.eg/t/shalteen/shalateenhistory1.aspx>

next.

Tarek used to be one of 10,000 children without parental care that live in care home institutions and another 12,000 in alternative families (Kafala) [13].

Over the years, and after working multiple low paying and informal jobs, Tarek carved a life path for himself through the internet. He taught himself English by watching movies, taught himself how to sing, and is now trying to prove himself as a young and emerging talent. His story with singing started with him humming while he worked at a bakery, and his friend encouraged him to sing. Today, seven years later, Tarek is becoming an internet sensation, with thousands of social media followers tracking his cover songs and new releases. He sings in both Arabic and English and is 100% self-taught. He taught himself the English language and is nurturing his talent for song through online resources and tutorials.

“Karate Kid” was his response to the question about how it all started. When he was in his early teen years, the movie had just been released, and he really liked it. He decided to use the movie to learn English. It took him four months. Four months of taking the script word for word, looking up translations, and picking up on the language through the movie.

The ELMPS investigated the availability of digital devices and the use of the internet among youth. Results from the survey indicates that about three-quarters of youth had a mobile phone, 7 percent had a laptop, and 4 percent had tablets. On access to social media, data from the Egypt Health Issues Survey in 2015 show that 43 percent of male youth (in the 15 to 24 age group) reporting use of social media at least once a week compared to 27 percent

among female youth [14].

Digital access can enable marginalized young people to carve an alternative life path for themselves. The internet can enable young people to learn languages, give access to tools for self-expression, and have access to wider opportunities that goes beyond their local communities. Investing in equitable access to digital accessibility can be a transformative tool for children and young people, especially for those who live in marginalized settings.

However, in order to enable marginalized youth through digital access the digital divide needs to be addressed as the costs of the digital divide can be high for the current generation of young people. As economies rapidly digitize with most jobs requiring digital literacy, those unable to acquire these new skills will not be able to participate in the workforce and will have less opportunities to succeed in life [15].

This document is a byproduct of the “Youth Profile,” which synthesized information from qualitative and quantitative sources about the situation of young Egyptians aged 10-24. The data cover the four spheres of Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Engagement. The Youth Profile was developed to inform the localization of the global initiative: Generation Unlimited, in Egypt, in close collaboration with UNICEF Egypt.

The Youth Profile and its byproducts were developed by Ahead of the Curve and Collective Routes in December 2021.

[13] Abdel Aziz A.H. (2022) Deinstitutionalization and Alternative Care Systems: A Case Study of Children Without Parental Care in Egypt. In: Ali H.E., Bhuiyan S. (eds) Institutional Reforms, Governance, and Services Delivery in the Global South. International Series on Public Policy. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-82257-6_4

[14] El Zanaty & Associates, Egypt Youth Data Snapshot: Youth Profile Desktop Review, 2020, UNICEF Egypt, p 5.

[15] <https://www.unicef.org/eap/bridging-digital-divide-children-and-adolescents-east-asia-and-pacific>



وقتنا.. دورنا.. مستقبلنا



Website:



-  www.unicef.org/egypt/
-  UNICEFEgypt
-  UNICEF_Egypt
-  unicef.egypt