YOUTH PROGRAMME

Programme area: Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP)

UNICEF Libya Country Office 2023
1- Overview and background

Libya is a young society, with approximately 55 per cent under the age of 30 and 26.4 per cent falling in the demographic of 'young people', aged 10-24.1 This demographic composition can provide the country an opportunity for a potential 'demographic dividend' for economic growth as the working age population expands in relation to the total population.2 However, in order for this to be realized, appropriate policy frameworks will need to be in place in Libya to guide investment in human development and the provision of services. Access to quality inclusive education and skills development that match the labor market will be critical, as will be diversification of the economy and expansion of the private sector.3 This will be challenging given Libya's long history of a State dominated economy and provider of public sector employment, dependence on oil and gas for foreign revenue generation, and reliance on migrant workers for skilled labor.4

As of July 2023, Libya remains in political crisis, divided and in a stalemate with competing parallel power bases in the West and East of the country, with a risk for the resumption of the armed conflict still present. Peacebuilding in Libya will require addressing the root causes and dynamics of violent conflict to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. The lack of opportunities for young people, particularly in certain regions such as the South, remains a potent driver of instability and conflict, as criminal networks and armed groups locally recruit frustrated male youth.5 Supporting the acquisition and application of skills, as well as engaging young people in the decision making, dialogue, peacebuilding, and development initiatives in their communities will ensure their contribution to sustainable peace from the ground up.6 The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has supported a ‘youth track’ within the formal Libyan Political Dialogue Forum as well as an on-line dialogue platform.7 Looking forward, engaging young people on political dialogue, reconciliation, and peacebuilding could be far more robust with specific strategies and concrete actions articulated – both for the UN Mission and the UN Agencies, Funds, and Programmes (AFPs) operating in Libya.8

Young women and girls face distinct challenges which vary depending on a diverse set of experiences informed by identity factors and geographic location, but overall are characterized by marginalization and inequality in economic, social, and political spheres. This is largely driven by social norms and codified in family law that discriminates against and disadvantages women in relation to men.9 According to a 2020 UN Women policy brief, Libyan women face unequal access to training opportunities, social support, and access to capital. As a result, they are rarely found in higher paying private sector jobs and concentrated largely in public sector jobs such as health and education, retail jobs, and administration.10

Youth with disabilities also face challenges in accessing health, education, protection, transportation, and recreational services, in addition to a host of other issues including acceptance by host communities for non-Libyans and access to information.11 While data on this population group is severely lacking, the 2021 UN Common Country Analysis indicates the percentage of the population living with a disability in Libya as somewhere between 2.9 per cent and 14.3 per cent, including those with conflict-related disabilities.12 In 2022, UNICEF partnered with UNCHR to conduct Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with those living with different disabilities (vision, hearing, communication, mobility, and emotional/behavioral) to understand their experiences, challenges, and needs with regard to accessing services. The findings of this exercise will inform an awareness raising and advocacy campaign, as well as improve education and child protection services for those with disability.13

Finally, migrant and refugee children, adolescents, and youth are extremely vulnerable and face a wide range of protection issues and obstacles in accessing education and other services.14 With Libya being a channel for migration to Europe with the situation exploding over the last decade with many refugees from conflicts in Sudan, Syria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Palestine,15 IOM reported 705,746 migrants in Libya in March and April 2023, with over 44 different nationalities across 100 municipalities, of which 11 per cent are children.16 Academic research and investigative reporting from INGOs like Amnesty International detail human rights abuses and conditions migrants and refugees face including kidnapping, human trafficking, enslavement, gender-based violence, exploitation, and torture.

According to a 2022 Arab Reform Initiative Youth Study, engagement with young people by external ‘nexus’ stakeholders - international donors and organizations working in the humanitarian, peacebuilding, and/or development fields - and internal Libyan policy makers and power brokers has been limited. Within this context, youth may face exclusion as international organizations prioritize responding to children’s needs, while decision-making processes and community engagement are controlled by traditional adult and elder gatekeepers.

In UNICEF’s new global strategic plan (2022-2025), there is an explicit focus on engaging and partnering with young people as “problem-solvers and agents of change with good ideas who can contribute to innovative solutions and sustainable results for children.” For UNICEF Libya, a youth strategy has been developed highlighting key areas of focus linked to programme areas of education, child protection, health, WASH and social policy. For education, peacebuilding, life skills and civic engagement; for child protection, addressing violence in schools and MHPS, for WASH, awareness campaigns in schools on climate change and water scarcity; for health, adolescent gender-responsive health and nutrition policies and MHPS and in social policy, support and advocacy for the most vulnerable children in Libya through leveraging Government support mechanisms.

Prioritizing vulnerable youth, including those in the South, girls and youth with disability, UNICEF’s critical area of intervention has been the provision of life skills through formal and non-formal education settings, with other core activities including peace-building skills training, strengthening and giving youth networks a voice to articulate their needs, and engaging young people in climate awareness solutions.
2- Key results achieved

a. Over the last three years, more than 5,000 young people have participated in community life skills programmes supported by UNICEF. UNICEF developed its life skills programmes based on the belief that they are the most important transversal and transmissible psychosocial skills. These are the basic skills that enable youth to acquire the attitudes and behaviors necessary to cope with everyday life, to progress and succeed in school and work settings and in social life. Emerging from conflict and given Libya’s complex situation, youth and adolescents often find themselves lacking healthy role models other than militia groups or leaders. Promoting life skills makes youth more resilient and helps them counter high-risk behavior, encouraging positive engagement with community and with themselves. Life skills is popular among youth especially in urban areas where age-appropriate activities are unavailable.

b. One of UNICEF’s core streams of work is with the Curriculum Department in the Ministry of Education to develop a life skills framework and to map life skills in the current curriculum.

c. UNICEF partners with LECAO, a climate change youth network in Libya, and has ongoing activities to raise awareness of climate change such as tree planting in schools and advocacy with the Government across Libya.

d. UNICEF undertook a youth employability assessment in early 2023, which highlights the employability gaps and needs of Libyan youth. Key findings from the study are below:

- High youth unemployment in Libya is attributed to a weak private sector, limited economic diversification, and a competitive job market dominated by the public and informal sectors. Barriers to employment include a lack of open positions, limited social connections, inadequate skills, difficulties in obtaining permits, lack of information about available jobs, and the influence of nepotism and favouritism in recruitment processes.
- To address these challenges, efforts should be made to promote economic diversification, enhance private-sector development, improve education and skills training programs, reduce nepotism, and create more job opportunities in non-oil sectors. Promoting employment centres and platforms for advertising vacancies and advocating for meritocracy in recruitment processes can also benefit young people.
- There is a perceived lack of training opportunities for young people, and a mismatch between the skills learned in formal education and those demanded by the modern workplace.
- The Libyan education system needs reforms, including updating curricula, integrating practical and technical skills development, vocational training, computer literacy, and communication skills. Tailored education programs for different regions are recommended. The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system likewise requires improvements in technical capacity, aligning training programs with market needs, changing the perception of vocational education, and promoting vocational skills.
- Growth sectors in Libya include digital technology, computer and software engineering, education and social work, nursing and healthcare, construction and infrastructure, renewable energy, and food processing and manufacture.
- Women, youth with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and rural areas face specific barriers to accessing employment and training, such as cultural norms, discrimination, limited social connections, and accessibility issues.
- The policy environment in Libya lacks a unified national policy and investment plan for education and TVET. Key informants suggest government reforms, increased investment in education, support for entrepreneurs and the private sector, youth participation in decision-making, and reducing labour market discrimination.
- Key recommendations to address youth employment challenges in Libya include raising awareness among young people about job opportunities through employment centres and online platforms, supporting training in English and basic computing skills, promoting vocational training in sectors like construction and engineering, investing in vocational training for women in both traditional and non-traditional fields, developing interpersonal, personal and life skills curricula, improving accessibility for youth with disabilities, addressing regional disparities by investing in employment centres in different regions, improving the quality of TVET programs for young migrants, establishing partnerships between businesses and young people for practical training and placements, supporting young entrepreneurs through financial linkages and business development support, and funding vocational training facilities and equipment. UNICEF will use these findings and continue their core focus on life skills development for all young people, and promote inclusivity across all programme areas.
3- Key interventions and/or planned action

a. UNICEF’s life skills programme for out-of-school children and youth embraces seven core life skills: critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication, care for self, care for the community and care for the environment. These focus on specific needs of displaced or refugee youth, which are primarily geared towards confronting and integrating into the new and complex reality in which they live. These programmes will be rolled out from August 2023 for youth in Baity centres across Libya as well as the new youth centres in the South. More than 3,600 youth will participate in these programmes in 2023 and 2024.

b. Skills-building including entrepreneurial training for young people in social, economic, and civic engagement in targeted municipalities, particularly in the South of Libya.

c. Ensuring that community-based child protection services are linked to skills and opportunity development, particularly for children on the move and children associated with armed groups. This will include linking Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and life skills training with reintegration and rehabilitation programmes for young people.


e. Establishing Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) clubs for girls in selected schools across Libya.

f. Introducing UPSHIFT, an entrepreneurial programme designed by the global UNICEF team to build transferable skills and create opportunity, with a focus on the most disadvantaged young people.

g. Engaging young people in political dialogue, reconciliation, and peacebuilding through sponsoring a UNSMIL-led youth leadership programme for women, as well as training youth in selected municipalities in the South on peace-building skills.

4- Why invest in youth with UNICEF

The combined impact of the political stalemate, economic crisis, and armed conflict has had a deeply adverse impact on the young people in Libya. Engaging with youth means contributing to improved cohesion, encouraging positive behavior and providing hope for the future for younger generations. Building peace and resilience in Libya requires the full and meaningful engagement of young people to ensure that they reach their fullest potential and that they have skills and opportunities to positively contribute to society. UNICEF is strategically positioned with the Ministry of Education and key civil society partners in Libya, such as universities and NGOs and will continue to cooperate with international partner organizations, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Bank, African Development Bank, and the British Council, and will coordinate emergency relief with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), and IOM.

5- Financial Implementation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Budget required</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifeskills programming in schools and for OOSC</td>
<td>$750,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction of UNICEF’s UPSHIFT programme</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction of UNICEF’s Learning Passport for online life skills programmes</td>
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<td>YAG and cross-cutting youth advocacy</td>
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<td>Technical support, including human resources</td>
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<td><strong>Sub-total Direct programme support</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Indirect programme support costs (including operations, security,</td>
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<td>administration, monitoring and evaluation, and communications and visibility)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total programmable costs</strong></td>
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<td>Cost recovery (8 per cent)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL BUDGET REQUIRED</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5,000,000</strong></td>
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