

United Nations' Development Report

Arab Youth Caught between Globalisation Unemployment

Methodically speaking, it is difficult to tackle the youth's conditions apart from the overall economic, social, political and geographical environment. When we talk about Arab youth, we are faced with several real hardships and various local, regional and international challenges. Indeed, the issue of Arab youth has become today's a topic of several regional studies and researches, and the subject of national and regional strategies and development plans.

Some links the attention granted to youth today to their number in the region's population (92 million are between 10 and 24 years old). Others explain the Arab government's care by their fear of the rise of youths' protest and adherence to extremist trends. Despite these different interpretations, everybody agrees that the involvement of youth is one of the best means to reach sustainable development in the region, and to narrow the divides between them and their counterparts in the most developed, democratic, stable and prosperous regions.

It is in this framework that lies the Report entitled " Arab Youth Planning MDGs » which is released recently by the United Nations' Development Programme in collaboration with the Economic and Social Development Division. The Report aims to make Arab youth conditions' known in light of the MDGs. It relies on working papers and debates of three workshops held respectively in Bahrain, Sanaa and Rabat to examine the issue of youth and globalisation under different themes the media, unemployment, power and gender.

Globalisation... a phenomenon of multiple arms

The UNDP report confirms the impact of globalisation on the region and the Arab youth. This impact on youth is obvious in different social, cultural, economic and political dimensions. Participants agreed in the above workshops, which drafted the report that this "multi-faceted" phenomenon represents a direct threat to Arab culture, which translated in the change of the values and traditions of youths and their linguistic, intellectual and artistic production. The effects of globalisation also threaten the youths' identity and their belongingness particularly among disadvantaged youth.

Media... a mixture of challenge and opportunities

The UNDP report points out that, the media in its relation with globalisation is a mixture of challenges and opportunities. Indeed, it has contributed to the deep

change, which touched upon the Arab society due to the spread of information. This stood as a challenge for Arab youth who found themselves torn between two worlds. Yet, one should not ignore the opportunities that media provide to youth to express themselves and get acquainted with other cultures and experiences. The report highlighted the " right of Arab youths to eradicate technological illiteracy" considering technology an effective means to enhance Arab youth's abilities and its Command is the most appropriate way to face globalisation and take advantage from it.

Unemployment ... road to poverty

The UNDP report confirms the existence of institutional impediments to youth's employment. Indeed, the labour markets are rigid and unable to fulfill their mission. This is in turn weakens the manpower handling mechanisms in the region. Besides, the lack of an effective complementary support for small projects according to the report, the spread of unemployment among youths high especially in moderate-income countries, occupied ones such as Palestine and Iraq, civil wars and conflicts such as Lebanon, Somalia, Sudan and Algeria.

The rate of unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa ranges from 13% in Bahrain to 39% in Algeria, while it reaches 50% in occupied Palestine and 25% in Egypt. In this context, the report considered "unemployment" the major

challenge leading to poverty. In fact, unemployment touches upon youth in a period where they are yearning for a professional future and an independent life. The impact of unemployment in the Arab world is even greater due to the low production and the fall of the real value of wages and the desintegration of 2.5 million young people in the labour market. Besides, the rate of unemployment among females is higher by 50% than males.

Despite the spread of unemployment in all the Arab countries, it impacts Arab youth in different ways. While, Economic firms in Gulf oil countries prefer under-paid foreign labour force and the privatisation policy and structural adjustment programmes in several other Arab countries led to the expansion of unemployment, the report concluded that globalisation excludes disadvantaged youth in education and health from the means of production and income.

Besides, the mechanisms of globalisation only to integrate the privileged limited group of youth, who have been fortunate to have access to the appropriate skills and knowledge to integrate in the world market.

Political Participation... gender gap

The UNDP report also addresses the relationship of Arab youth with governance and democracy, pointing out the presence of ten countries under occupation and others suffering from civil strife among the 22