

1. *If you look at the 3 regions that we focus on (MENA, Horn of Africa, Sahel) – can you mention specific trends per region which are relevant for the strategy. Are there, for example, specific sectors where there is much to be gained? Or specific skills that young people lack in a certain region or sector?*

Education

- Investment is needed in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and programmes for (social) entrepreneurship, which stimulate young people to move away from traditional and government jobs, and get engaged in sectors with promising job opportunities like tourism, construction, retail, logistics, IT and media.
- TVET programmes are seen as less prestigious and suffer from a perception of low quality. TVET needs a 'make-over', including scaling-up, strong relationships with local companies, up to date equipment, forms of blended learning, and well educated and practice-oriented teachers.
- The accessibility of education should be improved, investing in systems for scholarships or education vouchers. These systems should include specific requirements concerning the performance and outcomes, for educational institutions (gender equality of participants, focus on students coming from lower income families, participation of students in decision-making processes) as well as for students (finishing the degree, accepting jobs offered).
- Investment should be focused on private and public-private education. In general these are more efficient and result-oriented compared to public education, which suffers a lot from nepotism, bureaucracy and inertia.
- Innovative education initiatives could be supported, preferably in Arabic and building on technological possibilities (like virtual classrooms or MOOC providers).

Work

- In many MENA countries, there is a large turnover amongst young people who just entered the labour market. Training and support on-the-job is needed to make sure young people not only get a job, but stay in the job as well. Donors should include requirements for on-the-job support in their job programmes.
- When stimulating Dutch companies to invest in the MENA region, the Dutch government should encourage them to offer job opportunities for local young people, and develop internship and traineeship opportunities, supported by a scholarship for a trainee system.
- Supporting entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial mindsets is important, but should be combined with supporting an infrastructure (social, financial, economic) which facilitates economic activity and gives young people a real opportunity for setting up their own business. For example: setting up an investment fund or microcredit particularly for young and talented entrepreneurs from low income families.
- Investment should anticipate (future) developments in work and the labour market, including the effects of (information) technology and climate change. A focus should be on meaningful and sustainable work, rather than short-term job creation only.

Participation and citizenship

- Challenges facing youth are not merely economic. MENA youngsters live in a political, educational and social system which doesn't allow them to participate actively as citizens. Investing in youth participation and citizenship is as important as investing in education and job opportunities.
- Involving young people should be considered as an opportunity – for governments, international and non-governmental organisations, and companies – to genuinely work on sustainable development in the MENA region. When it comes to rebuilding programmes in post-conflict societies (such as Syria and Iraq), it is essential to actively involve young people and consider them as a resource. Donors and international organisations should include criteria and requirements for youth participation in their programmes. The Dutch government should use its position in the UN and other multilateral organisations to work on this.
- Youth participation shouldn't be a single project or an initiative on the side. It should be included and mainstreamed in all the efforts and investments made, making sure that young people (60 percent of the MENA population) have the opportunity to work on their own environment and their own future.

2. *Do you have examples of successful "scaled up" initiatives / programs in the field of education and work to increase youth employment, and if so, which ones? Or do you know of certain successful initiatives that are worth scaling up in the 3 regions mentioned?*

- The Luminus Education Group runs the Luminus Technical University College, a leading TVET provider in Jordan. It aims to address the mismatch between the type of skills being taught in the classroom and those required by the private sector. See for more information this case study: http://www.luminuseducation.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/IFC_Luminus_Case_Study.pdf.
- SEKEM Initiative, founded in Egypt in 1977, aims to develop the individual, society and environment through a holistic approach which integrates ecology, economy, societal and cultural life.
- We Love Tripoli is a Lebanese youth-led organisation promoting cultural, social and environmental activism in the city of Tripoli. It encourages young people to reclaim public space and raise their voice, in their own local environment. By now, similar organisations have been set up in other Lebanese cities and other countries in the region.
- The HOPES programme (EU financed, administered by a consortium with DAAD, British Council, Edu France and NUFFIC) offers multiple opportunities to Syrian students and host country students. The package includes English language training, scholarships for study at local universities, projects to increase access to education and the job market, and education and work counseling, and offers a holistic approach to skills development of Syrian refugees and host country students.

3. *Do you have specific ideas or additions about how we can make young people part of this policy? How do we ensure that they participate in the implementation of this strategy?*

- Support is needed for (local) civil society organisations which promote civic engagement and where young people can directly influence their own lives and societies.
- Support positive and diverse role models in the region. Young people, young women in particular, lack positive role models to motivate and inspire them, and to help earn the support from families and society for untraditional paths. Media outlets (mainly online) should be supported to give a platform to positive and diverse role models, and to raise awareness on issues like citizenship and participation.

4. *Anything else you feel is worth mentioning?*

- A long-term and holistic vision on the MENA region is needed. No important complex issue in this time and age can still be analysed or solved from a single discipline. Policies and programmes therefore should be developed in an integrated and holistic way, with human beings at its core and young people in particular being actively involved, and focused on the constructive powers in society which strive for sustainable development of their countries and societies. See for more information these recommendations for youth employment and participation by young people themselves: <http://www.hetgrotemiddenoostenplatform.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Youth-Employment-Participation-in-the-Middle-East-1.pdf>.
- The MENA region is an immense and diverse region, including a huge variety in peoples, cultures, contexts and conditions. There are no single solutions which could be applied region-wide. Tailor-made policies and programmes are needed to effectively respond to people's needs.
- In general, financial support to intermediary institutions and organisations should be limited, or based on localisation, where Dutch organisations closely work with local organisations which know very well the local context and needs.