CITIES AND YOUTH IN THE MENA REGION

Three young Egyptian boys on a street in Cairo. © Andrea Zeman/Cities Alliance

February 21, 2012

Franck Bousquet

Sector Manager - Urban and Social Development – MENA – The World Bank

Agenda

1. Youth bulge in the Arab World
2. MENA cities' main challenges
3. What can cities do - Entry points for youth participation at the local level in MENA
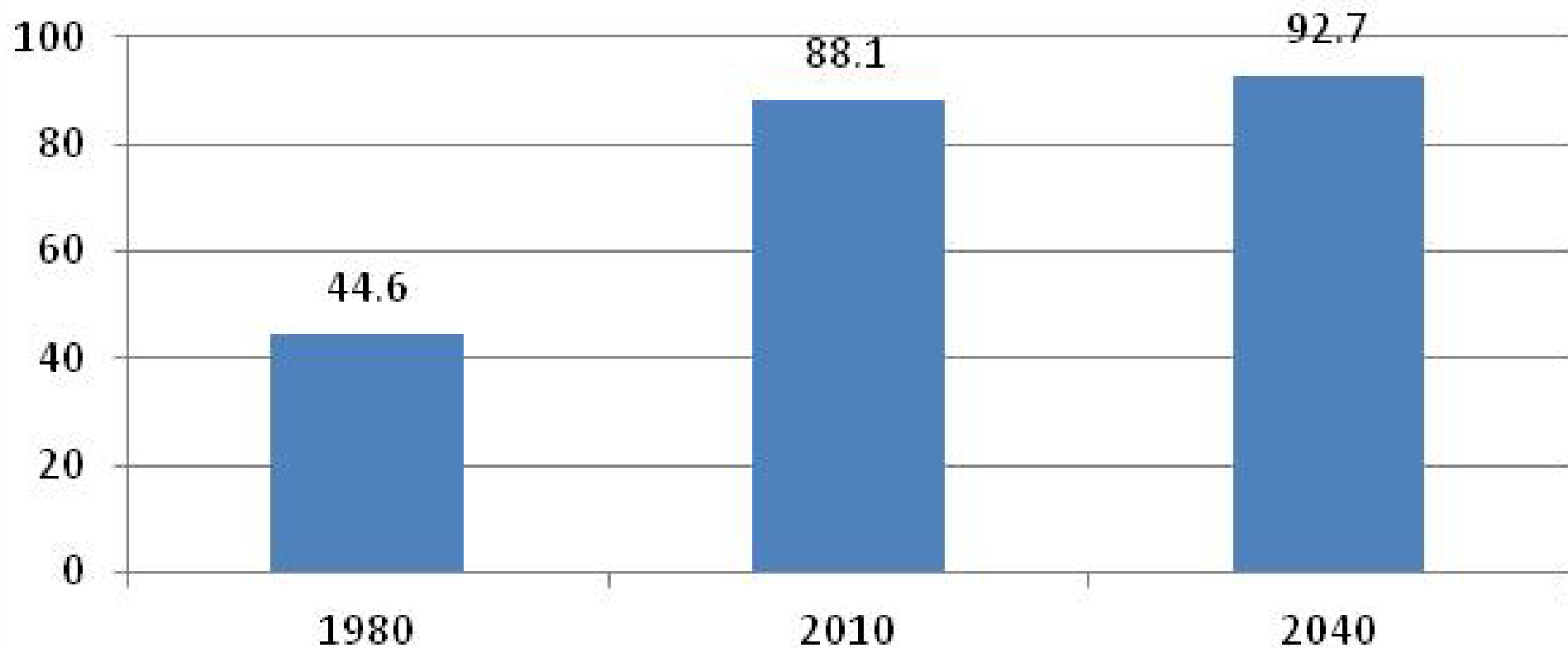
1. Youth Bulge in MENA

Youth Bulge in MENA

- MENA and its **youth bulge**: 100 m aged 15-29 years

- Unemployment Is a Youth Phenomenon : Self declared **un-employment** at 35-40%

- Youth are leading **social inclusion, equity and cohesion** in effective ways (i.e., Face book users surged 78% between Jan and Dec 2010)

- Structural lack of jobs, and especially good quality jobs, in the economy

- The bulk of the jobless are youth with low education despite the high unemployment rate of young graduates (Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan)

- The percentage of out of school /out of work youth is much higher than the official youth unemployment rate

- Young female inactivity is extremely high, but domestic work and home business are undercounted (Morocco)

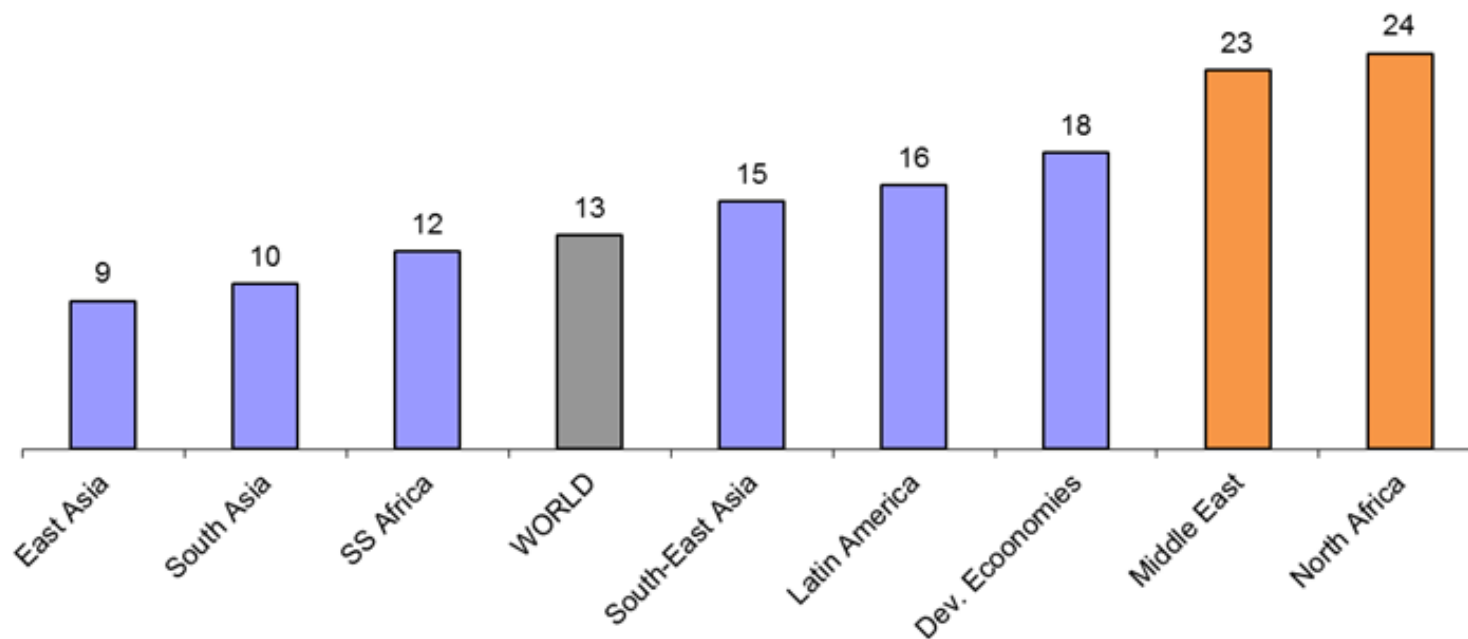- Young men inactivity is due to high discouragement (Morocco and Egypt)

Youth Population Growth in MENA

Ages 15 to 24, in millions

Source: Population Reference Bureau

Youth Unemployment Is the Highest in MENA

2010 Population Reference Bureau

Youth excluded from sustained economic growth and social participation

- Young people's mounting grievances over the lack of employment opportunities, accountability and voice were brought into a new focus across the MENA Region by a wave of youth-led uprisings

- With 60 percent of the population below 25 years of age, Arab countries face the challenge of providing employment opportunities for their young people whose current unemployment rates range from 11 percent in Kuwait to 35 percent in Morocco.

- Across countries, young people's right to an institutionalized role in the decision making process have not yet been systematically granted, despite a marked increase in on-line activism.

Strategic priorities of youth development in MENA

- Two strategic priorities:
  - **facilitating transition to work from school/college/university or from unemployment**
  - **promoting youth participation/active citizenship for unemployed female and male graduates, and under-privileged youth**
- The goal is to ensure direct, visible and sizable impact on youth opportunities

2. MENA Cities: Challenges and Potential

Although youth demands are addressed at the national level, local authorities are the ones especially challenged to respond quickly, effectively and with the increasing participation of their citizens

A. Region with a high urbanization rate

☐ **Average growth rate of 2.1% – MENA is one of the world's most rapidly expanding populations**

☐ **60% urbanized**, with an urban population expected to double or triple in the next 3 decades

☐ The region will experience a 65% increase of its urban population of, corresponding to **over 130 million additional urban inhabitants by 2030**

☐ Urbanization has been in particular driven by the region's economic development, migration to oil rich countries, drought and conflict driven displacement

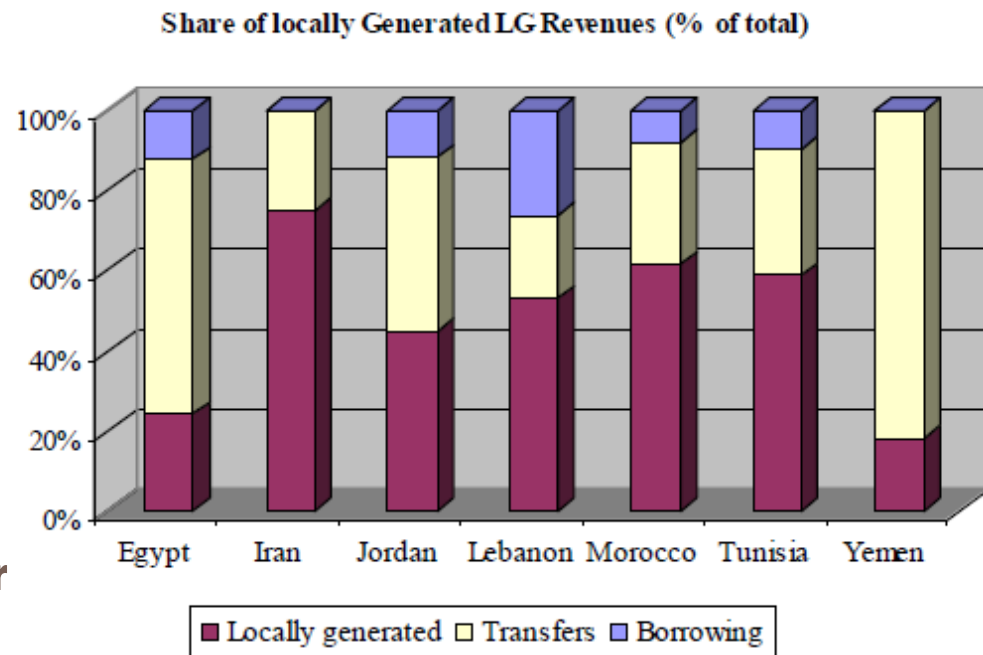# B. Increasing Infrastructure and Housing Deficit

Lagging Service Delivery

☐ **Proliferation of slums and informal settlements (between 20% and 40% of urban residents leave in slums)**

Dysfunctional Land and Housing Markets

☐ **Dysfunctional land markets, lack of strategic planning, weak city/urban management and planning**

☐ **Lack of secure property rights hindering the ability to use land and real estate as collateral to access finance**

☐ **Underdeveloped mortgage finance markets**

C. Significant pressure on cities to deliver infrastructure and services but limited devolution of responsibilities to local authorities

☐ **Highly centralized planning and decision-making processes**, lagging fiscal decentralization, and a **growing number of indebted and/or under-served cities**

☐ **In many countries, most of the devolution of authority has been through deconcentration of power from the national to local levels**

☐ **Total local government expenditures are among the lowest in the world**, ranging from 3% of GDP in Jordan to 18% in Egypt.

Share of locally Generated LG Revenues (% of total)

Source: Decentralization and Local Governance in MENA: A Survey of Policies, Institutions and Practices, 2007

D. MENA Cities – Engines of growth – A huge untapped potential

- Services and manufacturing activities constitute up to 90% of the region's urban centers GDP: in short, cities are the region's main engines of growth.

- Cities need to be well governed, empowered, and sustainably managed to fully leverage local and regional potentials.

- Current *ad hoc* approaches to urban management and planning and scarce natural resources across the region require a different answer: truly transformational local development approaches.

- Need to further promote local empowerment, participatory approaches and social accountability at the local level

- Repositioning Arab cities will allow governments to tap into an incredible and unexploited potential for the benefit of all

3. What can cities do - Entry points for youth participation at the city level in MENA

The future of cities depends on the future of young people.

What can MENA cities do ? (1/2)

- Cities have a key role to play in capturing the energy of the youth bulge
  - Access to quality education
  - Provision of jobs
  - Better provision of local services and safe spaces
  - Enhancing youth participation in decision making
- Given the cross-sectoral nature of the youth agenda, there is a need to scale up and mainstream activities if they are to have a critical impact on youth unemployment and participation within a more enabling environment
- Creating a stable environment for young people's active participation in the urban transformation

What can MENA cities do ? (2/2)

☐ Attracting new investments to cities to create jobs and allow young people some economic security before they start their families.

☐ Encouraging organizations of young people, to facilitate their leadership and participation in local decision-making

☐ Involving young people in urban planning including decision-making, monitoring and evaluation of city programmes designed for them

☐ Providing improved governance, meaningful representation, or economic and social roles for their youthful populations

☐ Spatial urban planning and renewal such as integrating safer design principles into infrastructure works are all basic elements that can prevent crime and violence

What are the benefits of youth participation in municipal/local development?

Youth Participation

Governance

Youth Empowerment

Positive impact of youth-led councils and platforms on public administrations:
- **open planning process**
- **accountability**

• Positive impact of youth participation in decision-making on:
- **youth aspirations for broader institutional change**
- **acquisition of leadership and soft skills (i.e. negotiation, team work, problem solving, decision making…etc.) also valuable for employability**

Entry Points for Youth Participation

Level	Entry Points for Youth Participation	What can institutions do?
Local	• Participation in policy discussions, program design, baseline assessments, and community mapping work • Youth NGOs as monitors for projects and programs to oversee the quality of works and level of community participation • Participation in community meetings with local authorities • Elections of youth as community representatives (i.e. in Community Development Councils). • Establishment of independent Municipal Youth Councils or platforms representing youth organizations in local decision making and programming	• Municipal administrations appoint a focal point for youth issues and youth orgs • Municipal Councils set up Children and Youth Commission for local policy making • Municipal administrations allocate yearly budgets for youth programming
National	• Youth led-platfoms and local councils establish a unified mechanism for representation at national level • On line platform for information and knowledge sharing is established to facilitate coordinated actions among various youth-led orgs • Structured dialogue between Government and/or Parliament and youth representatives • Development of proposed legislative/constitutional changes and institutional frameworks for youth participation in decision making, also at local level.	• Institutional development for coalition building by national institutions (i.e. National Youth Observatory) • Governmental entity delegated as interface for national youth platforms/councils and as focal point for youth policy and budgeting • Establishment of Youth Legislative Committee to advocate for stronger youth policy framework

Entry Points for Youth Participation

Level	Entry Points for Youth Participation	What can institutions do?
Regional	• National youth led-platforms and councils establish a unified mechanism for representation at regional level •On line platform for information and knowledge sharing is established to facilitate coordinated actions among various youth-led orgs at regional level •Structured dialogue between regional organizations such as the League of Arab States , Union for the Maghreb and Arab Youth Observatory Government and regional youth platforms/councils or networks elected through bottom-up mechanisms •Development of formal venues and institutional frameworks for youth participation in decision making at regional level, proposed by regional platforms and councils, based on similar successful global experiences.	• Institutional development for coalition building by regional institutions (i.e. Arab Youth Observatory) • League of Arab States and other Arab regional institutions adopt a formal mechanism for youth voice and participation in their decision-making and accountability • Regional institutions develop regional programming to facilitate youth-NGO led activities and inter-Arab exchanges