



**Study of Civil Society in the Mediterranean region:
what you need to know for a potential partnership with NGOs in the
MENA region**

*This project has been funded through the
Voluntary Organisations Project Scheme managed by the Malta Council for the
Voluntary Sector on behalf of Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sports and
Voluntary Organisations within the Ministry for Education and Employment*

Executive Summary

The main aim of this research is that of understanding the current situation in the Mediterranean area, trying to answer these two questions:

- Who is working there at present? Which International Organizations and NGOs?
- What kind of projects are these NGOs bringing forward? In which field are these NGOs working?

In order to understand this wide and certainly not easy context, the paper opens with a first chapter about the European Neighbourhood Policy. In fact, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is a foreign relations instrument of the European Union (EU) which seeks to tie those countries to the east and south of the European territory of the EU to the Union.

The ENP was reviewed in 2011, following the Arab uprisings. A major novelty was the so-called “more for more” principle, whereby additional reform efforts by partner countries were to be rewarded with additional financial and other support.

Under the revised ENP, stabilisation of the region, in political, economic, and security related terms, will be at the heart of the new policy.

The ENP is complemented by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), an intergovernmental organisation bringing together the 28 European Union Member States and 15 countries from the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean. It provides a unique forum to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The UfM has been bringing forward several field projects with the cooperation of local NGOs in the MENA region. These projects are aimed at promoting investment and the development of a stronger private sector in the Mediterranean region. There are also other projects which are aimed at promoting regional sustainable development.

UfM works in cooperation also with another intergovernmental organization called Anna Lindh Foundation which works to bring together civil society and citizens across the Mediterranean to build trust and improve mutual understanding. It promotes intercultural exchanges and common projects among the civil societies of the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The second chapter is a description of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), one of the main actors of cooperation in the Mediterranean, and its members. In fact, ANND is a regional network, working in 12 Arab countries with nine national networks (with an extended membership of 250 CSOs from different backgrounds) and 23 NGO members.

ANND aims to strengthen the role of civil society, enhancing the values of democracies, respect for human rights and sustainable development in the region.

Among its members there is PNGO - Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network, an umbrella organization comprising many Palestinian NGO member organizations, and Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR).

ANND is now involved in a project called SOLiD - South Mediterranean Social Dialogue. Solid is a pilot project for the promotion of social dialogue in the Southern Mediterranean Neighbourhood. Its main aim is that of solving economic and social issues.

In fact, in the MENA region, for example, informal labour is an issue and a core component of modern Arab economies and for this reason ANND has launched the third issue of the Arab Watch on Economic and Social Rights, with a focus on the question of informal labour.

Many other platforms and NGOs are involved in this project, and among these Istituto Progetto Sud and SOLIDAR.

SOLIDAR is a European network of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. At moment SOLIDAR is working also in other projects such as the regional project “Decent Work, Social Protection and Freedom of Association in the Middle East and North Africa: Mobilising for Social Justice by strengthening and promoting the role of CSOs, social movements and (independent) trade unions in reforms and democratic change” and “Inclus : Europe for the integration of young migrants and refugees” which aims to support youth associations to better understand the obstacles to inclusion in society and to integration in the labour market of young migrants and refugees.

SOLIDAR is also member of SOCIAL PLATFORM (the European platform of social NGOs) which is largest network of European rights- and value-based civil society organisations working in the social sector. Social Platform which works to support members in their project and developing joint campaigns on specific issues, has analysed some efficient projects that have been being implemented by some organization in Sweden that help low- and medium-skilled migrants to find work, so that they can begin to integrate into society and enjoy access to various rights.

The third chapter is a description of many other platforms and NGOs, working in the Mediterranean.

The first paragraph is an overview of some NGOs working in the Middle East Region such as LDN - The Lebanese Development Network, a national non-profit organization dedicated to assist individuals, communities and institutions build their capacities by conveying knowledge and improving practical performance to enable them manage the changing social requirements, catch opportunities and meet the development challenges. LDN is also partner of MEDITER – Woman for change, a project which aims to strengthen women’s leadership within local authorities and NGOs and, through them, to provide an appropriate response to risks of economic, political and cultural marginalism in the Mediterranean region, one of the strategic areas of European gravity.

LDN is member of Arab Foundations Forum, a Jordanian NGO which aims to foster dialogue and collaboration opportunities amongst its network in order to bolster the capacity and efficacy of strategic philanthropy in the Arab region. Among its members there is also Alfanar, another NGO which at moment is supporting a campaign called

#BeTheBeacon. #BeTheBeacon is about how anyone can become a social innovator and change the world for the better.

With their funds and thanks to this campaign, Alfanar is helping many other organizations in Egypt and Lebanon, such as Ana Aqra Association, Future Eve Foundation, Together For You, MMKM, Innash and The Women Program Association.

Always in Lebanon it is important to remember other NGOs such as Michel Issa Foundation for Local Development and Insan, an NGO working in the Human Rights field.

A second paragraph is about the International Forum of National NGO Platforms (IFP) which brings together 64 national platforms from Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania and 6 regional coalitions, which together account for more than 22,000 organizations.

Partner of IFP is ACTED, a French NGO committed to immediate humanitarian relief to support those in urgent need and to protect people's dignity.

Among the members of IFP, there is Coordination Sud, a national platform of French international solidarity NGOs, and REF – Réseau Euromed France, a network that brings together 42 French civil society organizations (associations, collectives and trade unions) engaged in the countries around the Mediterranean.

In the third, fourth and fifth paragraph it is an introduction to many other NGOs working in Cyprus, such as Cardet (Center for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology), in Greece where at moment some NGOs are working to help refugees, and in North Africa where there are many NGOs working in different fields.

The sixth and last paragraph is about the NGOs working in Palestine and also here the context is huge and complicated. In fact, Palestinian Civil Society Organisations are different from most civil societies and most Palestinian CSOs were created out of an established "state framework". This means that most organisations emerged and developed in the absence of the state and in the absence of national independence. So, this is a very important peculiar characteristic which makes Palestinian organizations a unique case in the world. Among these NGOs, working in the oPt (occupied Palestinian territories), it is important to remember the European Platform for Middle East Dialogue (EPMED), an independent NGO with simple yet powerful goals: inclusive constructive dialogue, humanisation of the other, education and empowerment. Their main work focuses at the moment are the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Refugee Response in Europe.

In Palestine it is important to remember again PNGO - Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network, the umbrella organization comprising many Palestinian NGO member organizations, already mentioned at the beginning, as being a member of ANND. Many Italian NGOs are working in the oPt, such as Cesvi, Cisp, Vento di Terra and Vis, and also many French NGOs. In fact, regarding the Palestinian Question, there is an important French platform that works with REF, called Plateforme Palestine, a network composed of 40 French NGOs that are active in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In the framework of the regional project “Decent Work, Social Protection and Freedom of Association in the Middle East and North Africa: Mobilising for Social Justice by strengthening and promoting the role of CSOs, social movements and (independent) trade unions in reforms and democratic change”, mentioned above, it is possible to notice that SOLIDAR works in collaboration with ANND and its partners in Palestine, such as Democracy and Workers’ Rights Centre (DWRC), Palestinian NGO Network Organisation (PNGO) and Stars of Hope in order to assess the progress of the implementation of the ENP in Palestine.

The fourth chapter is an analysis of some SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) in the specific context of the MENA region, such as SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) in the oPt; SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions); SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth) in the specific context of Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine.

In the Middle East and North Africa, the achievement of SDGs seems to be quite difficult and totally unique. The current political situation in the MENA region is still unstable; in fact, the Arab Spring, spread in many Arabic countries, has brought some important changes but in some countries, it has turned into an unstable situation, or worse into a long and painful civil war still ongoing, like in Libya, Syria and Yemen.

In the first paragraph it has been examined the SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), in fact the MENA region is considered the most water scarce region in the world and the achievement of the SDG 6 in this region will be a very hard challenge. Regarding the oPt, here the situation is really difficult due to the political situation. In fact, many Palestinian people living in the Area C of the West Bank, suffer from restricted access to the water resources due to the restrictions of Israeli policies. In oPt many NGOs work in the field of WASH “Water, Sanitation and Hygiene”, both local and international NGOs, such as PNGO (Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network), a Palestinian NGO umbrella, which works in the water and sanitation sector together with other local NGOs such as Pengon, Al-Haq and MA’AN.

The second paragraph is an in-depth examination of SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and its implementation is vital for the Middle East and North Africa, considering the current situation in the MENA region that is still difficult and many countries are in serious trouble such as in Syria, Libya, Iraq and Yemen where the Arab Spring has been descending into civil war. In some other countries fortunately there is no war, but the current political situation remains unstable and even here the implementation of this SDG is considered a priority.

The third paragraph is about the SDG 5 (Gender Equality) one of the more complicated SDGs, especially if addressed to the MENA Region. In fact, in the MENA region women continue to have gaps and difficulties in terms of participation in social and economic life, despite they have access to the education. In several Mena countries, Islam has been proclaimed the official religion and despite these countries have furthermore ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

(CEDAW), more conservative interpretations of *Shari'a* or tradition take primacy (especially when it comes to the practice of the law), while other legal frameworks, including international commitments such as CEDAW, may be viewed as inferior to this religious “framework”.

The first subparagraph is an in-depth analysis of the issues which hinder the achievement of the SDG 5 (Gender Equality) in some countries of MENA region (Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine) and it is interesting to notice how the principles of Islamic *Shari'a* influence the current constitutions and the status and situation of girls and women in this region. In fact, all matters of marriage, divorce and inheritance are managed through *Shari'a* courts for Muslims and this is the main issue that hinder the achievement of gender equality.

The only country which can be considered the most progressive in the Arab world is Tunisia where since 1956 a new Family Law was approved and considered, at that time, a real revolution in women’s rights for an Arab country, with the abolition of polygamy and the possibility of divorce. Other steps, in order to achieve gender equality, has been the abolition of the law which prohibited women from marrying a non-Muslim and the recent law of 26th July 2017 to combat the violence against the women.

The second and third subparagraph is an in-depth analysis of the main NGOs working in the MENA region such as many Italian NGOs that are working at the moment in this context for the empowerment of women, a global issue that has a particular resonance in the Arab world. Among the local NGOs there are some which have a long experience, such as Jordanian Women Union in Jordan, Cawtar (Center of Arab Women for Training and Research) in Tunisia, The Palestinian Businesswomen’s Association – Asala in Palestine, Insan in Lebanon and AYB-SD Alashanek ya baladi Association for Sustainable Development in Egypt.

The fourth paragraph is an analysis of the SDG 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth) another goal considered vital in the MENA region. In fact, here the unemployment rate is very high and young men and women face the highest youth unemployment levels in the world and the achievement of this goal will be not easy, even if it is possible to affirm that at least young people, more than in the past, are more aware of their current situation and proof of this awareness is the Arab Spring and certainly the unemployment in these countries can be considered one of the catalysts of Arab Spring.

In a first subparagraph some countries of the MENA region have been analysed one by one and it is interesting to notice that in the majority of these countries unemployment situation is featured by the so called “paradox” of unemployment or the phenomenon of “educated employment”, known already for a decade as a typical feature of the MENA region labour market.

The second paragraph is an in-depth examination of Public employment services (PES) in the MENA countries where there are different models for administration of public employment services that can be the function of the labour ministry or a department within; it can be an autonomous agency or in some countries NGOs carry a big role in the

provision. Private employment agencies are allowed to function in some countries while in some others, private provision of employment services is not allowed.

Analysing one by one some countries of the MENA region it is possible to notice that the Public employment services (PES) have many gaps and in order to combat unemployment and help people find work, the local authorities have to make huge efforts in order to improve these services.

The last part is a brief conclusion: an overview of all the main problems, described previously in the document, that represent the main obstacles faced by local and foreign NGOs, and a series of useful recommendations for all the main stakeholders working in the Mediterranean region.

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Introduction: Mediterranean Region

The history of the peoples and countries along the shores of the Mediterranean has been heavily influenced by geography, or better by this large sea, better known as Mediterranean Sea.

The Mediterranean Sea covers an approximate area of 2.5 million km² and it is bordered on the north by Europe, the east by Asia, and in the south by Africa. The countries with coastlines on the Mediterranean Sea are Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Monaco, Montenegro, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. In addition, the Gaza Strip and the British Overseas Territories of Gibraltar and Akrotiri and Dhekelia have coastlines on the sea.

The Mediterranean Sea has been the cradle of many great empires: the Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines, and later the Arabs, Ottomans, British, and French and since ancient times most of the great civilizations preferred travelling by the sea, considering the Mediterranean safer and faster than land routes.

The Sea, the Great Sea, *Mare Nostrum*, no matter how the peoples on its shores called it, has always been considered a source of life, food, trade, wealth, and riches. It was seen as a waterway leading to new worlds and new territories, where colonies could be established and foreign kingdoms conquered. As travellers began reaching new lands, this expanse of water was called as the “sea between lands” - *Mesogeios* in Greek, or *mediterraneus* from Latin, which means exactly “inland” or “in the middle of land” (from *medius*, “middle” and *terra*, “land”)¹.

The Mediterranean Sea was an important route for merchants and travellers of ancient times that allowed for trade and cultural exchange between emergent peoples of the region. The history of the Mediterranean region is crucial to understanding the origins and development of many modern societies.

The Mediterranean Sea was not only people and goods that travelled by sea, but also art, science, and culture. The Mediterranean’s large port cities were the birthplace of new ideas, as well as venues for the interaction of different civilizations. Even religions crossed the sea, carrying new messages of the fight between good and evil, whilst spreading teachings of salvation.

From Homer’s *Odyssey* onwards, the Mediterranean Sea has been linked to glorious days of culture, science, philosophy, and trade, but also to the dark pages of history infested with wars, invasions, and destruction. The same applies today.

Therefore, analysing the history, it is possible to say that since ancient times the Mediterranean Sea has been a place of exchange of art, science and culture but nowadays seems that people are not willing anymore this exchange of cultures and they are blocked and terrified by the latest terrorist attacks and all refugees and migrants are seen as a

¹ See Markos Kyprianou, “Perspectives on Mediterranean Security and Stability”, *CIRSD*, <http://www.cirsd.org/en/horizons/horizons-autumn-2016--issue-no-8/perspectives-on-mediterranean-security-and-stability> (last accessed 18/09/17).

possible terrorist and instead of creating new links and exchanges, many countries and many politicians prefer building walls, mental or material.

Therefore, analysing the current situation is it possible to talk today about a “shared” or “common” Mediterranean cultural, economic, and political space? And what are the threats and challenges faced by the countries and societies on the diverse shores of the Mediterranean?

Barcelona Process, ENP, Union for the Mediterranean

Europe has always paid close attention to its neighbours on the other side of the Mediterranean and since the 50s, when the European Economic Community was created. Therefore, since its inauguration Europe privileged bilateral relations were first established with Morocco and Tunisia, at the time French protectorates, soon to be complemented by the conclusion of agreements with other Mediterranean countries.

But it was only until after the end of the Cold War, that Euro-Mediterranean relations witnessed a profound renewal with the inauguration of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

In fact, a first step for the creation of a “shared” Mediterranean was the Process of Barcelona, or Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Euromed), started in 1995, with the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean Conference. It was on that occasion that the foreign ministers of the European Union and their counterparts from Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and the Palestinian Authority met in Barcelona to discuss an economic, social, and political collaborative project.

The result of this conference was the Barcelona Declaration, which set down three different pillars, or partnerships.

The first was a Political and Security partnership in order to establish a common area of peace and stability. The second was an Economic and Financial partnership in order to create an area of shared prosperity. Finally, the third partnership was in social, cultural, and human affairs, with the aim of promoting understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies. Unfortunately, the three pillars of the Barcelona Process were not equally strong: the economic and trade pillar was solid, while the other two were not well-structured also because the governments of the southern partners, in the pursuit of their own national agendas and interests, preferred placing greater emphasis on the economic and trade partnership leaving aside the other two.

A second step for the creation of a “shared” Mediterranean was in 2004, when the European Union launched its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as an arrangement between the EU and each partner country in its neighbourhood. The ENP was designed as a strategic framework for cooperation, with the EU offering its neighbours a privileged relationship based on democracy, human rights, the rule of law, good governance, market economy principles, and sustainable development.

The main instruments of this cooperation under the ENP are the bilateral Association Agreements between the EU and these partners.

The Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean were meant to complement and enrich the ENP.

In fact, the Union for the Mediterranean was another step, in order to achieve the objective to create a “shared” Mediterranean, but this organization was not a natural progression of the Barcelona Process nor of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The creation of this new intergovernmental organization was an idea of the former president of France, Nicolas Sarkozy who started talking of this union as a campaign slogan for the 2007 French presidential election. Actually, the intent of Sarkozy was that of Turkish membership in the Mediterranean Union as an alternative to Ankara’s membership in the European Union; even if he considered this union a forum for dialogue between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

In February 2008, France’s then Minister of State for European Affairs, Jean-Pierre Jouyet, said that “there is no Mediterranean Union” but rather a “Union for the Mediterranean,” which would only be “completing and enriching” existing EU structures and policies in the region. The difference between “for” and “of” was not just semantics; it marked a completely different political approach to this Union.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) was launched at the July 2008 Paris Summit, gathering 43 heads of state and government from the Euro-Mediterranean region. It was presented as a new phase of the Barcelona Process.

For many scholars in the reality since 1995 these efforts for a “shared” Mediterranean - Barcelona Process, ENP, UfM - have lacked of an adequate understanding of the region and its countries.

Furthermore, after the Arab Spring in 2011 many EU Countries have decided to keep their distance towards southern partners. For instance, some EU Member States (mainly the Nordic ones) have a very rigid approach towards the EU’s cooperation with Egypt and its army which swept away Muhammad Morsi and supported the current president, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Current political situation in some countries of the MENA region

1. Egypt

Egypt is the largest Arab country and has played a central role in Middle Eastern politics in modern times.

Egypt is a republic since 1952 when Gamal Abdel Nasser established the republic and ended the monarchy rule in Egypt, following the 1952 Egyptian revolution. In the 1950s President Gamal Abdal Nasser pioneered Arab nationalism and the non-aligned movement, while his successor Anwar Sadat made peace with Israel and turned back to the West.

The protests that ousted President Hosni Mubarak in 2011 raised the hopes of those seeking democratic reform and an end to decades of repressive rule.

But it was the Islamists who initially benefited, with the election of Muhammad Morsi as the first president after the Revolution of 25th January. Soon he was swept away by the

military and secularist protesters, prompting speculation about a return to authoritarianism.

In fact, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi took power after the July 2013 coup that led to the removal of President Mohammad Morsi. With his Authoritarianism the situation in Egypt is not changed at all even if there has been a revolution, born with the main aim of changing the status quo of this country under the control of Hosni Mubarak, at the power for 30 years.

At the moment the country is under a state of emergency and dozens of media outlets have been shut down by the government, following a series of terrorist attacks. In recent months, numerous civil society leaders have been subjected to travel bans, asset freezes, and criminal interrogations.

Current situation – Human Rights – Issues:

- President al-Sisi recently approved an extremely restrictive new law to govern civil society organizations (CSOs). Law 70 of 2017 on Associations and Other Foundations Working in the Field of Civil Work², published in the Official Gazette on May 29, 2017, is one of the most draconian civil society laws adopted in the Middle East if not worldwide. The new law replaces Law 84 of 2002 on Associations and Foundations. CSOs of all types in Egypt have one year from the enactment of Law 70 to register under the law and comply with its provisions. The law was enacted in the context of an ongoing crackdown on civil society and civic space in Egypt³.
- Public criticism of the country is banned.
- Parliament and authorities took unprecedented steps to restrict independent human rights work by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), threatening their very existence.
- Egypt's National Security Agency (NSA), in order to intimidate opponents, continues to torture detainees and hundreds of people disappear every day and accused of sympathy with or membership in the Muslim Brotherhood, which the government named a terrorist group in 2013.
- Conditions in detention remained harsh. Most of them political prisoners, suffered abuses at the hands of Interior Ministry officers, including beatings, force feedings, deprivation of contact with relatives and lawyers, and interference in medical care.
- Even the freedom of expression is very limited. In order to have under control the Press Syndicate many journalists have been arrested with the charge of supporting the old government of the Muslim Brotherhood, and of publishing fake news.
- Parliament passed an amendment to a law prohibiting female genital mutilation (FGM), increasing the penalties. The new law provided for prison terms of five to seven years for those who carry out FGM and up to 15 years if the procedure results

² To deep what the new law provides: <http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Egypt/law70english.pdf> (last accessed 15/09/17).

³ See “Civic Freedom Monitor: Egypt”, *ICNL*, <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/egypt.html> (last accessed 15/09/17).

in permanent disability or death. Anyone who escorts girls to undergo female genital mutilation will also face one to three years in prison. FGM is still widely practiced, and prosecutors have only obtained one conviction since the law was passed in 2008.

- Sexual harassment and violence against women remain endemic. The Interior Ministry appointed Brig. Gen. Nahed Salah, a woman, to a new position in charge of combating violence against women. Salah publicly urged women to avoid talking or laughing loudly in public and to be cautious about how they dress to avoid street harassment.
- Women continue to face discrimination under Egypt's personal status law on equal access to divorce, child custody, and inheritance.
- Sexual relations outside marriage are criminalized. Since 2013, authorities have pursued a campaign to intimidate, track, and arrest lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Police regularly used forced anal examinations in prosecutions of those suspected of homosexual sex⁴.

2. Tunisia

On March 1956 Tunisia became independent with Bourguiba as prime minister and in 1957 the monarchy was abolished and Tunisia became a republic.

In 1987 there was the famous Bloodless palace coup: Prime Minister Zine El Abidine Ben Ali declared the President Bourguiba mentally unfit to rule and he took power himself.

In 1989 Ben Ali won the presidential elections and he was re-elected four more times, the last time in 2009.

In December 2010, protests broke out over unemployment and political restrictions, and spread nationwide. Mass protests unseated President Ben Ali and in January 2011 President Ben Ali went into exile amid continuing protests.

The country's transition has been relatively peaceful, but secular Tunisians, especially women, are still worried about the growing influence of ultra-conservative Islamists.

In January 2014 Parliament passed the country's first constitution since President Ben Ali was ousted in 2011.

Six years after ousting its authoritarian president, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, Tunisia continued to consolidate human rights protections, even as serious violations continued.

Current situation – Human Rights – Issues:

- The 2014 constitution upheld many key civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights. However, the constitution does not abolish the death penalty, even though authorities have observed that its application dates back to the early 1990s.
- With the new constitution of 2014 Tunisia made positive steps such as: the right to a lawyer from the onset of detention (and shortening the maximum duration of pre-charge detention to 48 hours, renewable once, for all crimes except for terrorism cases

⁴ See Human Right Watch, *Egypt – Country Summary*, January 2017, pp. 1-9. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/egypt_0.pdf (last accessed 12/09/17).

where pre-charge detention can last up to 15 days); and establishing a Supreme Judicial Council (SJC).

- In 2011, the transitional authorities liberalized the press code and law pertaining to the broadcast media, eliminating most of the criminal penalties these laws imposed on speech offenses. However, the penal code, Code of Military Justice, and the Telecommunications Law still contain articles that imposed prison terms as a punishment for speech offenses.
- On December 24, 2013, the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) adopted the Law on Establishing and Organizing Transitional Justice. The law sets out a comprehensive approach to addressing past human rights abuses. The law also established a Truth and Dignity Commission tasked with uncovering the truth about abuses committed between July 1955, shortly before Tunisia's independence from France, and the law's adoption in 2013. The commission declared that it had received 62,065 complaints from people alleging human rights abuses and had begun processing them.
- The National Constituent Assembly in October 2013 approved legislation to create the High Authority for the Prevention of Torture.
- Regarding women's rights, Tunisia, is considered the most progressive Arab country with respect to women's rights since 1956 when the new Family Law was approved and considered, at that time, a real revolution in women's rights for an Arab country, with the abolition of polygamy and the possibility of divorce. The last step, in order to achieve gender equality, is the abolition of the law which prohibited women from marrying a non-Muslim. President Beji Caid Essebsi called for the government to lift the ban dating back to 1973, arguing that existing practice violates Tunisia's constitution, adopted in 2014 in the wake of the Arab Spring revolution. In fact, until September 14th, 2017 a non-Muslim man who wished to marry a Muslim Tunisian woman had to convert to Islam and submit a certificate of his conversion as proof while a Muslim Tunisian man is allowed to marry a non-Muslim woman.
- Another important and recent law is that of 26th July 2017 to combat the violence against the women; 43 articles to provide effective measures against any form of violence or abuse with the aim of ensuring women respect for dignity and ensuring gender equality through a comprehensive approach based on prevention, conviction of offenders, protection of victims and the elimination of any form of inequality between the sexes at work. This new law abolished a clause that allowed rapists to escape any punishment if they married their victims.
- While Tunisia's personal status code gives women a wide array of rights⁵, the code retains some discriminatory provisions, especially with regard to inheritance. However even in this case authorities and NGOs have been debating for a long time in order to find a solution and Beji Caid Essebsi said that Tunisia will find soon a

⁵ Another law of 10th November 2015 allows women to travel with their minor children without getting permission from the children's father.

solution regarding inheritance right in order to achieve an absolute equality between men and women.

- The penal code punishes consensual same-sex conduct with up to three years in prison. Anal testing is used as the main evidence in order to convict men for homosexuality⁶.

3. Jordan

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, being in the middle of the Middle East, often plays the role of mediator between neighbouring countries and factions. Jordan came into being in the 20th century as part of the French and British division of the Arabian Peninsula.

When the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the League of Nations assumed a mandate over its Middle Eastern territories. Britain and France agreed to divide up the region, as the mandatory powers, with France taking Syria and Lebanon, and Britain taking Palestine (which included Transjordan). In 1922, Britain assigned a Hashemite lord, Abdullah I, to govern Transjordan.

King Abdullah obtained a country with only about 200,000 citizens, approximately half of them nomadic. On May 22, 1946, the United Nations abolished the mandate for Transjordan and it became a sovereign state.

The current King Abdullah II, Jordan's monarch since 1999, over the past few years, has been facing growing demands for political reform, and following the popular uprising in Tunisia which led to the flight of the president in January 2011, King Abdullah dismissed his government and appointed the first in a series of prime ministers to oversee the introduction of political change.

In March 2016, under instruction by King Abdullah, Jordanian authorities launched the Comprehensive National Plan for Human Rights, a 10-year initiative that calls for changes to numerous laws, policies, and practices. Positive changes included a commitment to allow suspects the right to a lawyer at the time of arrest and to move jurisdiction over crimes of torture and ill-treatment from the police court to regular courts. Bassel Tararwneh, Jordan's governmental human rights coordinator, facilitated government interaction with local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and held open consultation sessions on human rights issues⁷.

Current situation – Human Rights – Issues:

- Jordanian law criminalizes speech deemed critical of the king, foreign countries, government officials and institutions, as well as Islam and speech considered to defame others.
- In 2016 many people were arrested because accused of supporting extremism and the Islamic State, also known as ISIS.

⁶ See Human Right Watch, *Tunisia– Country Summary*, January 2017, pp. 1-6. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/tunisia_2.pdf (last accessed 12/09/17).

⁷See Human Right Watch, *Jordan – Country Summary*, January 2017, p. 1. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/jordan_1.pdf (last accessed 13/09/17).

- Jordan's court system is independent of the king, and includes a supreme court called the "Court of Cassation", as well as several Courts of Appeal. The lower courts are divided into civil courts and *Shari'a* courts: civil courts decide criminal matters as well as some types of civil cases, including those that involve parties from different religions; *Shari'a* courts have jurisdiction over Muslim citizens only and hear cases involving marriage, divorce, inheritance, and charitable giving (*waqf*).
- A legislative overhaul of the penal code was put to parliament in 2015 proposing to amend at least 180 articles of the 1960 code. The draft amendments provided alternatives to imprisonment, such as community service.
- Between 2011 and 2016, over 659,000 persons from Syria had sought refuge in Jordan, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)⁸. Of these, approximately 79,000 were housed at the Zaatari Refugee Camp in northern Jordan; 54,000 were registered in Azraq Camp, 100 kilometres east of Amman; and 7,300 were at the Emirates Jordan Camp in Zarqa Governorate. The rest were living outside refugee camps.
- Jordan hosted around 80,000 migrant domestic workers in 2016, mostly from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. NGOs repeatedly referred domestic workers who had suffered multiple abuses to labour ministry investigators. Abuses included non-payment of salaries, unsafe working conditions, long hours, document confiscation, and sometimes physical, verbal and sexual abuse.
- Since the amended Public Gatherings Law took effect in March 2011, Jordanians no longer require government permission to hold public meetings or demonstrations. However, Amman hotels and other venues continued to seek permission to host public meetings and events.
- Jordan's personal status code remains discriminatory, despite a 2010 amendment that included widening women's access to divorce and child custody. Marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men, for instance, are not recognized. Article 9 of Jordan's nationality law does not allow Jordanian women married to non-Jordanian spouses to pass on their nationality to their spouse and children.
- Penal code articles 98 and 340, which allow reduced sentences for perpetrators of "honour crimes," remained in force.

4. Lebanon

Lebanon was controlled by the Ottoman Empire until the end of World War I, at which time the League of Nations gave the land to France. Lebanon drafted its first constitution in 1926 and in 1943, it gained independence. Since gaining independence however, Lebanon has been unstable as various religious groups have fought for power.

In 1967, the Arab-Israeli war broke out and Palestinian refugees began entering Lebanon in 1969 and again in 1970. This caused conflict to develop between Muslim and Christian

⁸ See UNHCR, *JORDAN UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE*, June 2017. Available at: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Jordan%20Operational%20Update%20-%20June%202017.pdf> (last accessed 13/09/17).

groups and in April 1975, a civil war began in Lebanon which lasted until 1981 and eventually included Israel, Syria and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which entered the country in 1970. The war came to an end at the end of 1990 and it led to the loss of property and human life, and it devastated the country's economy.

From 1992 to 2005, Lebanon underwent a post-war reconstruction but it was still plagued with social and political instability. There were also several conflicts with the Hezbollah and the country's economy struggled as its currency collapsed.

In 2006, war returned to Lebanon when the Hezbollah entered Israel and killed three Israeli soldiers and kidnapped two more on July 12. This began a war with Israel and Hezbollah positions throughout Lebanon were attacked. The war lasted until August 14 and one-fourth of Lebanon's population was displaced and much of its infrastructure was destroyed.

On October 31st, 2016, after more than two years of deadlock while the presidency remained vacant, Lebanon's parliament finally elected a president, Michel Aoun. Soon after assuming office, President Aoun appointed a new cabinet including four new ministries that work on issues affecting civil society: The State Ministry for Women's Affairs, the State Ministry for Human Rights, the State Ministry for Refugee Affairs, and the State Ministry for Anti-Terrorism⁹.

Current situation – Human Rights – Issues:

- Detainees continued to suffer from ill-treatment and torture, but in October 2016 parliament established a National Human Rights Institute and national preventative mechanism against torture.
- While freedom of expression is generally respected in Lebanon, defaming or criticizing the Lebanese president or army is a criminal offense. The Lebanese penal code also criminalizes libel and defamation of public officials, authorizing imprisonment of up to one year.
- An estimated 250,000 migrant domestic workers, primarily from Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Nepal, and Bangladesh are excluded from labour law protections. The *kafala* (sponsorship) system subjects them to restrictive immigration rules and places them at risk of exploitation and abuse.
- Despite women's active participation in all aspects of Lebanese society, discriminatory provisions remain in personal status laws, nationality laws, and the criminal code.
- Sex trafficking continues to put women and girls at risk. Syrian women appear to be at particular risk of trafficking into forced prostitution and sexual exploitation.
- A 2014 Law on the Protection of Women and Family from Domestic Violence established important protection measures and introduced policing and court reforms. But it failed to criminalize all forms of domestic violence, including marital rape.

⁹ See "Civic Freedom Monitor: Lebanon", *ICNL*, <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/lebanon.html> (last accessed 13/09/17).

Some women continued to face obstacles in pursuing criminal complaints of domestic violence, mostly due to lengthy delays.

- Women also continue to suffer discrimination, including unequal access to divorce, residence of children after divorce, and property rights. Unlike Lebanese men, Lebanese women cannot pass on their nationality to foreign husbands and children and are subject to discriminatory inheritance laws.
- Sexual relations outside of marriage - adultery and fornication - are criminalized under Lebanon's penal code.
- Authorities conducted raids to arrest persons involved in same-sex conduct, some of whom were subjected to torture including forced anal examinations.
- There are more than one million Syrian refugees registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon¹⁰. Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, and refugees lacking legal status risk detention for illegal presence in the country.
- Human Rights Watch has also documented isolated forcible deportations of Syrians and Palestinians back to Syria, putting them at risk of arbitrary detention, torture, or other persecution¹¹.

5. Occupied Palestinian territories

The expressions "Palestinian territories" and "occupied Palestinian territories" (oPt) are used to describe the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip, which are occupied or otherwise under the control of Israel.

The term "Occupied Palestinian Territories" was used by the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations between 1998 to 2013 in order to refer to areas controlled by the Palestinian National Authority, established in 1994 following the Gaza-Jericho Agreement to govern the Gaza Strip and Areas A and B of the West Bank, as a consequence of the 1993 Oslo Accords.

Despite the creation of the Palestinian National Authority, since over 60 years, after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Palestinians live a real sad situation. In fact, their territories have been occupied several times by Israel. On September 1995 the Interim Agreements between Israel and the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization), commonly known as Oslo II, divided the Palestine in three Area: A, B and C.

The first of them currently includes all the Palestinian cities and most of the Palestinian population of the West Bank; the Palestinian Authority (PA) is endowed with most governmental powers this area. Area B includes large rural areas; Israel retained security control of the area and transferred control of civil matters to the PA. In the Area C Israel retains almost complete control of this area, including security matters and all land-related civil matters, including land allocation, planning and construction, and infrastructure. The

¹⁰ See <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> (last accessed 13/09/17).

¹¹ See Human Right Watch, *Lebanon – Country Summary*, January 2017, pp. 1-5. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/lebanon_0.pdf (last accessed 13/09/17).

PA is responsible for providing education and medical services to the Palestinian population in Area C.

The area C is also the zone of the West Bank richest of natural resources, where there is the potential for a substantial economic development. It also represents the only portion of West Bank where the Palestinian Authority has no security or administrative control. The division into areas was supposed to be temporary, but this “temporary” arrangement has remained in force for more than twenty years, further worsening the living conditions of the Palestinians who live mainly in areas considered Area C, according to the Oslo II Agreements.

Current situation – Human Rights – Issues:

- Israel’s closure of the Gaza Strip, particularly restrictions on movement of people and on outgoing goods, continued to have severe consequences for the civilian population, separating families, restricting access to medical care and educational and economic opportunities, and perpetuating unemployment and poverty
- Israel continued to enforce severe and discriminatory restrictions on Palestinians’ human rights, to facilitate the transfer of Israeli civilians to the occupied West Bank, and to severely restrict the movement of people and goods into and out of the Gaza Strip.
- The situation is not stable and violent demonstrations continued in the West Bank and at the Gaza border with Israel. According to the United Nations between January 1 and October 31, 2016, Palestinians killed at least 11 Israelis, including 2 security officers, and injured 131 Israelis, including 46 security officers, in the West Bank and Israel. Israeli security forces killed at least 94 Palestinians and injured at least 3,203 Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel¹².
- Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza restricted freedom of expression, tortured and ill-treated detainees, and in Gaza executed at least four people, including one person accused of same-sex relations.
- In the West Bank, Israeli authorities continue to displace Palestinians and to destroy homes and other Palestinian properties, following discriminatory practices that severely restrict access to construction permits for the Palestinians.
- Israel maintained severe restrictions on the movement of people and goods into and out of Gaza, exacerbated by Egypt’s closure of its own border¹³ with Gaza most of the time, and by Israel’s refusal to allow Gaza to operate an airport or seaport.

¹² See Human Right Watch, *Israel/Palestine – Country Summary*, January 2017, pp. 1-5. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/israelpalestine_1.pdf (last accessed 15/09/17).

¹³The Rafah Border Crossing is the sole crossing point between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. It is located on the international border that was recognized by the 1979 Israel–Egypt Peace Treaty. The Rafah Border Crossing is a passage only for people, whereas for traffic of goods is diverted to the Kerem Shalom border crossing. At moment Egypt opens the passage rarely. Probably last time was at the end of August when Egypt decided to open the passage, after three months of closing, to allow 2,500 Gazans to join the annual hajj pilgrimage to Mecca (see Adam Rasgon, “Egypt opens Rafah crossing for first time in three months”, *Jerusalem Post*, August 15, 2017. Available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Egypt-opens-Rafah-crossing-for-first-time-in-three-months-502518>, last accessed 15/09/17).

- After the second “Intifada”, even the Erez Crossing, Gaza’s passenger crossing to Israel, the West Bank, and the outside world, is limited. Only for “exceptional humanitarian cases” (medical patients, their companions, and prominent businesspersons) is possible to travel through the Erez Crossing.
- The Palestinian Authority (PA) and Hamas continue to arrest activists who criticize their leaders, security forces or politicians.
- The Israeli authorities have declared an area inside Gaza but near the border with Israel to be a “no-go” zone, and Israeli soldiers fire at people who enter it.
- Even the fishermen are limited in their work and they are not allowed to go beyond six nautical miles from the shore. This restriction is for Israel a way to prevent weapons smuggling.
- Palestinians are not access to construction materials and with a lack of funding they cannot rebuild their houses severely damaged or destroyed during Israel’s 2014 military operation in Gaza. About 65,000 people who lost their homes remain displaced. Israel defends itself by saying that construction materials can be used for military purposes.
- Building permits are difficult, if not impossible, for Palestinians to obtain in East Jerusalem or in the 60 percent of the West Bank under exclusive Israeli control (Area C).
- Israel maintains onerous restrictions on the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank, including checkpoints and the separation barrier, a combination of wall and fence that Israel said it built for security reasons but often placed well within the West Bank rather than on the Green Line separating the West Bank from Israel. Israel continued construction of the separation barrier around East Jerusalem. Some 85 percent of the barrier falls within the West Bank, isolating 11,000 Palestinians on the western side of the barrier who are not allowed to travel to Israel and must cross the barrier to access their own property as well as services in the West Bank.
- Israeli security forces continue to arrest children suspected of criminal offenses, usually stone-throwing; question them without a family member or a lawyer present; and coerce them to sign confessions in Hebrew, which they do not understand.
- In Gaza, whose laws differ somewhat from the laws in the West Bank, having “unnatural intercourse” of a sexual nature, understood to include same-sex relationships, is a crime punishable by up to 10 years in prison.
- Bedouin citizens of Israel who live in “unrecognized” villages suffered discriminatory home demolitions on the basis that their homes were built those villages existed before the State of Israel was established, and others were created in the 1950s on land to which Israel transferred Bedouin citizens. Israeli authorities refused to prepare plans for the communities or approve construction permits, and rejected plans submitted by the communities themselves that would allow them to build lawfully. Many Bedouin communities were uprooted by the establishment of Jewish towns and cities, and a succession of Israeli governments has moved them from place to place, failing to provide adequate housing.

1. European Neighbourhood Policy

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is a foreign relations instrument of the European Union (EU) which aims at bringing Europe and its neighbours closer. The countries covered include Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia in the South and Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine in the East. Russia has a special status with the EU-Russia Common Spaces instead of ENP participation.

The ENP was launched in 2004 based on a Communication entitled “Wider Europe – Neighbourhood” adopted by the European Commission one year earlier.

European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is a foreign relations instrument of the European Union (EU) which seeks to build on common interests with partner countries of the East and South of the European territory of the EU and to work jointly in key priority areas, including in the promotion of democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, and social cohesion.

Among these countries, primarily developing countries, there are some which are seeking to become one day either a member state of the European Union, or more closely integrated with the European Union.

The Policy was set as a framework to manage the EU’s relations with 16 of the EU’s Eastern and Southern Neighbours in order to achieve the closest possible political association and the greatest possible degree of economic integration. To the South: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia and to the East: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Russia takes part in Cross-Border Cooperation activities under the ENP and is not a part of the ENP as such.

The ENP was reviewed in 2011, following the Arab uprisings. A major novelty was the so-called “more for more” principle, whereby additional reform efforts by partner countries were to be rewarded with additional financial and other support.

Under the revised ENP, stabilisation of the region, in political, economic, and security related terms, will be at the heart of the new policy.

The ENP review proposes revised joint priorities for cooperation, better suited to the challenges of our time and adapted to the regions evolutions. In addition to good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights, three other sets of joint priorities have been identified, each of them covering a wide number of cooperation sectors: 1) economic development for stabilisation; 2) the security dimension and 3) migration and mobility.

A key element of the ENP is to strengthen and promote the role of civil society actors in reforms and democratic changes taking place in the Neighbourhood countries. In particular local civil society organisations and their capacity to engage with public authorities are being strengthened¹.

¹ See https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/overview_en (last accessed 03/07/17).

The ENP is complemented by three regional initiatives: The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the Black Sea Synergy² and the Eastern Partnership³. The UfM and the Eastern Partnership are multilateral and involve shared institutions (Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM, Euronest, regular summits).

Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) is a key element of the EU policy towards its neighbours. It supports sustainable development along the EU's external borders, helps reducing differences in living standards and addressing common challenges across these borders. It was first recognised as such in the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) regulation for the period 2007-2013. This was confirmed for the period 2014-2020 in the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) regulation adopted in March 2014.

The ENPI CBCMED is the financial instrument which supports the ENP through concrete assistance actions.

The multilateral cross-border cooperation "Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme" is part of the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and of its financing instrument (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument - ENPI) for the 2007-2013 period: it aims at reinforcing cooperation between the European Union (EU) and partner countries regions placed along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

14 participating countries, which represent 76 territories and around 110 million people, are eligible under the Programme: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Palestinian Authority, Portugal, Spain, Syria and Tunisia.

The Operational Programme, approved on August 14th 2008 by European Commission decision, establishes a strategic framework of 4 Priorities jointly defined by the participating countries:

- 1) promotion of socio-economic development and enhancement of territories;
- 2) promotion of environmental sustainability at basin level;
- 3) promotion of better conditions and modalities for ensuring the mobility of persons, goods and capitals;
- 4) promotion of cultural dialogue and local governance.

The ENI CBCMED "Mediterranean Sea Basin" Programme is rather a new instrument adopted by the European Commission on 17 December 2015. The Joint Monitoring Committee, a body composed of 14 countries – Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Palestine, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia – was responsible for designing the strategy and implementing modalities of the new Programme.

²The EU supports regional development in South-East Europe with its Black Sea Synergy. By encouraging cooperation between the countries surrounding the Black Sea, the synergy offers a forum for tackling common problems while encouraging political and economic reform.

³ The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a joint initiative involving the EU, its member states and 6 eastern European partners: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The new Programme is based on four main objectives:

- Business and SMEs development;
- Support to education, research, technological development and innovation;
- Promotion of social inclusion and fight against poverty;
- Environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The first one is considered one of the biggest challenges of the cooperation area and it meant creating economic opportunities and jobs in order to reduce high rates of unemployment; in fact, the thematic objective *Business and SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) development* seeks to positively contribute to this situation through the support to start-up enterprises and the enhancement of Euro-Mediterranean value chains and clusters.

Innovation is a major driver for competitiveness and productivity of Mediterranean economies. The objective referring to *Support to education, research, technological development and innovation* focuses on technological transfer, commercialisation of research results and links between industry and research.

Promotion of social inclusion and fight against poverty represents a new topic of the Programme compared to the current one. Issues to be addressed concern the support to the NEETS category (Not in Education, Employment or Training) as well to actors from the social and solidarity economy.

Environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation continues to be a major field of intervention of the Programme. Efficiency in water, waste and energy management as well as conservation of coastal areas are set to contribute to a more sustainable Mediterranean region.

People to people cooperation shall be considered as a modality to achieve the four thematic objectives mentioned above while *institutional capacity building* will act as a transversal priority.

1.2 Union for Mediterranean

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), is an intergovernmental organisation bringing together the 28 European Union Member States and 15 countries from the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean. It provides a unique forum to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

It was created in July 2008 at the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, with a view to reinforcing the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Euromed) that was set up in 1995 and known as the Barcelona Process.

The Union has the aim of promoting stability and prosperity throughout the Mediterranean region.

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The UfM is an ecosystem. In a collaborative approach, institutions, universities, students, researchers, parliamentarians, local authorities, the private sector, NGOs, social actors and cooperation stakeholders contribute decisively to the effectiveness of regional cooperation, with significant benefit for the overall objective of mutual understanding, development, peace and stability.

The Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean, based in Barcelona and the first permanent structure dedicated to the intergovernmental Mediterranean partnership, is the operational institution that empowers this regional dialogue between the UfM Member States and stakeholders, fostering synergies among them and promoting cooperation projects and initiatives with a direct impact on the lives of people.

The UfM have six priority area of intervention: 1. Business Development 2. Transport and Urban Development 3. Energy and Climate Action 4. Water and Environment 5. Higher Education and Research 6. Social and Civil Affairs.

In these years the UfM brought together Ministers and other key stakeholders to discuss fundamental regional issues such as employment, women's empowerment and regional cooperation and planning.

During 2016, 10 new projects were approved by UfM Senior Officials at their regular meetings. The new projects will contribute to strengthening regional cooperation in the areas of women's empowerment, youth employability and sustainable development, and bring the organisation closer to reaching the overarching goals of regional stability, human development and integration. Concretely, these projects will aim to stimulate private investments for renewable energies, address the challenges of marine litter, improve shipping services, raise awareness of and better women's health, foster SME development, job creation and matching as well as enhance education and stimulate infrastructure development.

During 2017, UfM Ministerial conferences are foreseen in the areas of Water, Sustainable Urban Development and Women's Empowerment.

Investing in people and human development in the region is one of the main objectives of UfM. Human development is a key driver for stability and security in the Mediterranean, more specifically through youth employability, higher education and women's empowerment, which are at the very heart of current challenges, be they economic growth, social cohesion, migration or efforts to counter radicalisation. The UfM Secretariat has amplified initiatives targeting, in particular, young people's and women's involvement in socio-economic life, education and research, further developing the UfM "Med4Jobs initiative", which currently includes 12 projects on the southern and northern shores of the Mediterranean. In addition, intercultural and interfaith dialogue in the Mediterranean is an important underlying dimension of all regional cooperation activities in the framework of the UfM.

These are some examples of the projects implemented by UFM:

Economic Development through Inclusive and Local Empowerment (EDILE), financed through CBC-Med, aims to build the capacity of national and local authorities to select the best public and private investment projects, ones which will have a positive local impact in terms of job creation, opportunities for subcontracting and respect for the environment.

EUROMED Invest Promotion & Observatory(EMIPO), financed by the EC and PACA region, aims to strengthen the private sector in the Mediterranean region by encouraging investment and business partnerships, promoting the region to foreign investors and providing training and technical assistance to entrepreneurs. The ultimate aim is stronger integration of the region's economies.

These two projects are aimed at promoting investment and the development of a stronger private sector in the Mediterranean region.

YouMatch – making employment services really serve young people. Tailoring labour market services to the needs of young people is the aim of YouMatch, a regional project involving Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia, which gained its UfM label and support in June 2016, and set to work one month later.

The UfM has given its official stamp of approval to the **Agadir SME Programme**, which aims to enhance the competitiveness of SMEs in the four members of the Agadir Free Trade Zone, namely Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. The project, due to begin with a pilot phase in January 2017, aims to increase economic integration and contribute to economic development and prosperity by encouraging SME-led growth.

Promoting regional sustainable development is another important objective of UfM. In coherence with and full implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and relevant UfM Ministerial Meetings and Declarations, the UfM Secretariat is amplifying its action and using its multi-partner approach to promote the regional agenda on sustainable development, through the sharing of experiences, exchanges of best practices, regional and sub-regional networks, and developing concrete projects and initiatives aimed at reinforcing infrastructures and interconnectivity. Special emphasis is placed on the multiplier effects of infrastructure transport networks, sustainable urban development and digital economy, fostering regional cooperation in the fields of energy, environment and water and relying on the climate action agenda as a driver for innovation, job creation and green growth.

Other examples of projects:

Reducing plastic pollution in the Mediterranean Sea - A project which could be vital for the health of the whole Mediterranean kicked off in Siena in April 2016. Plastic Busters aims to measure the impact of plastic marine litter on the Mediterranean and put forward some practical suggestions for preventing and reducing this form of pollution.

Clean-up of Tunisia's Lake Bizerte begins in earnest - November 2016 saw the official launch of the UfM labelled project for the environmental clean-up of Lake Bizerte in Northern Tunisia, which is integrated into the Euro-Mediterranean Horizon 2020 Initiative for a cleaner Mediterranean Sea.

Work begins on seamless sea connections across the Mediterranean - The UfM moved a step closer to the vision of making the Mediterranean a sea that joins, not separates, its people, with the labelling in 2016 of the first two projects under the UfM-labelled project Motorways of the Sea (MoS) activities. The first Motorways of the Sea will see new seamless intermodal services for transporting goods established between the port of Izmir, Turkey, those of Bari, Brindisi and Taranto in Italy and those of La Goulette and Radès in Tunisia. The second Motorways of the Sea project will help establish a new transport corridor in the Mediterranean by piloting a new interhub connection from the port of Porto Torres in Italy to the port of Beirut in Lebanon.

The UfM Motorways of the Sea activities are aimed at making the maritime connections of the Mediterranean more efficient and reliable and encouraging more sustainable and profitable trade links. Once established, these new trade routes will be able to act as a catalyst for socio-economic development and further regional integration.

The implementation of these projects was and is possible in cooperation with:

1. Euro-Mediterranean Institutions, such as:

- Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM), the European Parliament;
- European People's Party (EPP);
- European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs.;
- Anna Lindh Foundation
- Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM)

2. Cooperation with international organisations, such as:

- Council of Europe (CoE);
- Economic and Social Councils;
- League of Arab States;
- OECD, The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development;
- G7 Deauville Partnership⁴;
- International Labour Organization;
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations;
- UNESCO;
- UNIDO, United Nations Industrial Development Organization;
- European Training Foundation;
- United Nations;
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

2. NGOs, non-governmental actors and specialised organisations

3. Partnerships with financial stakeholders, such as:

⁴ See www.bmz.de/g7/en/Entwicklungspolitische_Schwerpunkte/Deauville-Partnerschaft/index.html (last accessed 17/06/17).

- European Investment Bank;
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The Anna Lindh Foundation⁵ is an inter-governmental institution bringing together civil society and citizens across the Mediterranean to build trust and improve mutual understanding.

The Anna Lindh Foundation is an international organisation which promotes intercultural exchanges and common projects among the civil societies of the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The purpose of the Anna Lindh Foundation is to bring people together from across the Mediterranean to improve mutual respect between cultures and to support civil society working for a common future for the region.

Since 2005, the ALF has launched and supported action across fields impacting on mutual perceptions – education, culture and media – as well as developing a region-wide Network of over 4000 civil society organisations. Through its action and reflection, the ALF aims to contribute to the development of an Intercultural Strategy for the Euro-Mediterranean Region, providing recommendations to decision-makers and institutions and advocating for shared values.

The main scope of the ALF is overcoming the misunderstandings and stereotypes which affect relations between and within the societies of the Region, a task which became of utmost importance in the last decade. As a contribution to the creation of a space of prosperity, coexistence and peace, the ALF works to restore trust in dialogue and bridge the gaps in mutual perceptions, as well as promoting diversity and coexistence.

⁵ See <http://www.annalindhfoundation.org/> (last accessed 21/06/17).

2. ANND Arab NGO Network for Development

Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), one of the main actors of cooperation in the Mediterranean, is a regional network, working in 12 Arab countries with nine national networks (with an extended membership of 250 CSOs from different backgrounds) and 23 NGO members. ANND was initiated in 1997 and had its secretariat office in Beirut since 2000.

ANND's program focuses on advocating for social and economic rights in the Arab region. It works in three main areas: (1) development policies in the region, (2) social and economic reform agendas and the role of international and regional organizations, (3) economic and trade liberalization policies and its social and economic implications.

ANND aims to strengthen the role of civil society, enhancing the values of democracies, respect for human rights and sustainable development in the region.

The Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)¹ is a regional network, working in 12 Arab countries with nine national networks (with an extended membership of 250 CSOs from different backgrounds) and 23 NGO members. ANND was established in 1997 and its headquarters is located in Beirut, Lebanon since 2000.

ANND aims at strengthening the role of civil society, enhancing the values of democracy, respect of human rights and sustainable development in the region. ANND advocates for more sound and effective socio-economic reforms in the region, which integrate the concepts of sustainable development, gender justice, and the rights-based approach.

The network programs cover three main areas:

1. Development Policies in the region
2. Social and economic reform agendas and the role of international and regional organizations.
3. Economic and trade liberalization policies and its social and economic implications.

CSR-DAR² is an online resource portal initiated by ANND with the purpose of making accessible a variety of resources on development issues in the Arab region that can be used as information tools for advocacy. It includes books, papers and articles, guides and methods, and other relevant resources that are produced by ANND, its members, and partners. It also contains some other relevant documents from official sources. In addition to being a disseminator of valuable information, CSR-DAR is also a platform where civil society organizations active in the Arab region or on issues pertaining to the region can share their own news, events, and resources.

ANND's members:

| Organization | Country |
|---|----------------|
| Association to Support women in Vulnerability | Algeria |

¹ See <http://www.annd.org/english/index.php> (last accessed 05/07/17)

² See <http://csrdar.org/> (last accessed 06/06/17)

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|--|---------|
| Bahrain Transparency Society (BTS) | Bahrain |
| The Bahrain Young Ladies Association | Bahrain |
| Social Bahraini Association | Bahrain |
| Awal Women Society | Bahrain |
| Bahraini Human Rights Society | Bahrain |
| Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights | Egypt |
| New Women Foundation | Egypt |
| The Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement; EACPE | Egypt |
| Rehabilitation Education and Community's Health | Iraq |
| Tammuz Organization for Social Development (TOSD) | Iraq |
| Iraqi Women's League | Iraq |
| Iraqi Al-Amal Association | Iraq |
| Association of Lawyers for Human Rights Jordan | Jordan |
| Jordanian Women's Union | Jordan |
| Collective of the right of the child | Lebanon |
| Rassemblement démocratique de la femme libanaise | Lebanon |
| NGO Platform of Saida (Tajamoh) | Lebanon |
| The Coordination Forum of NGOs Working among the Palestinian Community | Lebanon |
| Lebanese NGO Network collective | Lebanon |
| Nahwa Al Muwatiniya | Lebanon |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Réseau Mauritanien Pour l'Action Sociale | Mauritania |
| Espace Associatif | Morocco |
| Palestinian NGO Network | Palestine |
| Sudanese Development Call. Organization (NIDAA) | Sudan |
| Group for Economic, Social & Cultural Rights Studies | Sudan |
| Abdel Karim Mirghani Cultural Centre in Omdurman | Sudan |
| Gender Centre for Research and Training | Sudan |
| National Civic Forum | Sudan |
| Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme | Tunis |
| Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrate | Tunis |
| Arab Institute for human rights | Tunis |
| Yemeni Observatory for Human Rights | Yemen |
| Social and Democratic Forum | Yemen |
| Human Rights Information and Training Center | Yemen |

PNGO - Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (<http://www.pngo.net/>) is for example one of these organization working with ANND and in the same time it is as well a network, an umbrella organization comprising many Palestinian NGO member organizations, working in different sectors: agriculture, children, culture, democracy and human rights, education, health, law, research and environment, society and development, women and youth³.

PNGO was established in September 1993, as a response to the signing of the Oslo Agreements with the objective of enhancing coordination, consultation and cooperation between member organizations working in different developmental domains. Because of the security measurements imposed by the Israel which divided Gaza Strip (GS) and West

³ To know the name of these members, see <http://www.pngo.net/our-members/> (last accessed 02/06/17).

Bank (WB) into disconnected areas, PNGO adopted to continue its work through its two main offices in GS and WB. These offices are managed by two Coordination Committees elected by the general assembly which represents PNGO members. PNGO carry out its activities through different committees from its members working in the following five main sectors: health, democracy and human rights, women and children, rehabilitation and agriculture. Any NGO can join PNGO once it meets a set of criteria. PNGO role is to establish general guidelines and coordinate the NGOs work but has no line authority on the NGOs. At present, PNGO boasts of 135 national NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that work across sectors in different developmental fields

During the past fifteen years PNGO has become an important component of the Palestinian society. PNGO has become an important reference and mechanism for coordinating the Non-Governmental sector. It has succeeded in establishing relations with different civil society organizations, such as the 'Palestinian Union of Charitable Societies', the 'National Institute for NGOs', the various Palestinian Political Parties and the Professional Unions.

Another important NGO, member of ANND is ECESR - Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (<https://www.escr-net.org/member/egyptian-center-economic-and-social-rights-ecesar>) in Arabic المركز المصري للحقوق الاقتصادية والاجتماعية.

The Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights is an Egyptian non-governmental legal institution, founded in 2009, arising from values of justice, liberty and equality.

The ECESR works through litigation, research, data providing and campaigning to patronize and protect economic and social rights and expand their domain.

The centre's mission covers a wide range of programs and issues, including social rights such as labour rights, unionizing and organizing, education, health, housing; and economic policies including taxes, debts, free trade, public budgeting, investment, privatization and corruption.

ECESR has filed many cases that were cornerstones to the public discourse, such as the national minimum wage case, the expropriation for public utility case, and many cases related to the corrupt privatization deals of public property.

The institution operates through 3 branches in Alexandria, Daqahliya and Aswan, with the main office in Cairo, in addition to legal representatives in more than 20 governorates across Egypt. The ECESR coordinates with grass-root movements such as national unions and initiatives, as well as operating within anti-poverty national, regional and international networks that counter marginalization and fight injustice.

2.1 SOLiD project

SOLiD is a project aimed at for the promotion of social dialogue in the Southern Mediterranean Neighbourhood. ANND is involved in this project, together with other organizations, such as SOLIDAR. The objectives of the social dialogue are: Social peace; Resolution of the economic and social major problems;

Sustainability of businesses and social protection; Economic development and social progress; Creation of descent and productive jobs.

With this project, SOLiD is trying to solve economic and social problems, e.g. Informal labour in the MENA region, where it is considered an issue and a core component of modern Arab economies.

ANND is now involved in a project called SOLiD - South Mediterranean Social Dialogue⁴. SOLiD⁵ is a pilot project for the promotion of social dialogue in the Southern Mediterranean Neighbourhood. It is a three years programme (2016-2018), financed by the European Union. SOLiD brings together regional and international representatives of social partners as well as a number of relevant partners from the EU.

Social dialogue is the process of negotiation by which different actors in society (or “social partners”) reach agreement to work together on policies and activities. Social dialogue takes place at national, sectoral and regional level.

The social dialogue can be “bipartite” and brings together workers and employers, whereas “tripartite” social dialogue also involves government.

The objectives of the social dialogue are:

- Social peace
- Resolution of the economic and social major problems;
- Sustainability of businesses and social protection;
- Economic development and social progress;
- Creation of descent and productive jobs.

Many organizations are involved in this project. The mains ones are:

1. Istituto Progetto Sud (<http://www.progettosud.org>) is an Italian Non-Governmental Organization, established in 1984 by the will of the UIL (Italian Union of Labour), formally recognized by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The organization promotes and implements development programs, assistance, training, research and information in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

With its projects, the Institute aims to improve the living conditions of citizens and workers in the South of the world.

To achieve these objectives Istituto Progetto Sud send abroad, under the provisions in force, aid workers and skilled technicians for training of local staff, teachers for vocational training and trade unions. In order to ensure the sustainability of the interventions, South project pays special attention to involve local stakeholders, making sure that they attach themselves to the project while also providing services with the aim of strengthening the organizations and develop local human resources.

⁴ See http://www.medsocialdialogue.org/project_en (last accessed 02/06/17)

⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bxqffPyV3A> this is a short video introducing the SOLiD project, the objectives, partners and expected results of the programme, co-funded by the European Union (last accessed 02/06/17).

Alongside this international activity, the Institute organizes seminars, workshops and provides educational materials, aimed at schools and workplaces on issues of development education.

In recent years the Institute is paying particular attention to the Mediterranean Basin concentrating its activities in projects aimed at the management of migration flows and social inclusion of immigrants, working with Italian local authorities and trade unions in the countries concerned these issues.

2. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) (www.ituc-csi.org). The ITUC's primary mission is the promotion and defence of workers' rights and interests, through international cooperation between trade unions, global campaigning and advocacy within the major global institutions.
3. Arab Trade Union Confederation (ATUC) (<http://www.arabtradeunion.org>) is an organization that works to unify and unite the world of Arab workers and to defend their rights, including the rights of women and youth working against discrimination and the rights of migrant workers against exploitation.

This organization, run by men, women and youth alike, aims to create forces that advocate social justice and respect for human dignity and individual freedoms. The organization created a network of Arab women, an Arab youth union and a Journalist union network, as well as the legal workers who defend workers' rights and work to protect them. The Arab Trade Union Confederation is a social institution that interferes with labour relations based on respect for the dignity of the worker, the maintenance of the productive enterprise, ensuring the continuity, stability and success of the economic institutions in the Arab countries, as well as the principles of equality and freedom for Arab citizens in the workplace.

4. Businessmed The Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises (<http://www.businessmed-umce.org>) is the main representative of the private sector that reflects the interest of 22 Confederations of Enterprises around the Southern and Northern Mediterranean Countries.

Since its creation in 2004, BUSINESSMED became a key platform for multilateral cooperation dedicated to its confederations Member, a promoter of foreign direct investment, a lever for Mediterranean dialogue and socio-economic integration.

Their activities are mainly focused on the private sector in the Mediterranean Basin. As one of the major economic development clusters, BUSINESSMED seeks multiple objectives and missions such as: increasing exchanges between the European Union and Mediterranean countries; enhancing technological transfer and know-how toward South-Mediterranean countries; increasing foreign direct investment flows; implementing a regulatory framework for investors; undertaking partnership actions between the various business communities in the region; lobbying and business advocating for a wider participation of the private sector in the actions to be undertaken by governments in order to achieve a prosperous free trade area in the Mediterranean.

5. ISCOS, Istituto Sindacale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo, (<http://www.iscos.eu/>) is an Italian NGO, established in 1983 from CISL's trade union experience to promote international cooperation actions and programs. ISCOS wants to develop and strengthen solidarity and ties among peoples, promote economic, social, technical and cultural progress, to contribute to the realization of a world where sustainable development, respect for human and association rights, fundamental freedoms and Social justice represent the true principles of globalization for the development of peoples.
6. Fundação AIP – Pessoas.Empresas.Economia (<http://fundacaoaip.pt/>).
7. SOLIDAR (<http://www.solidar.org>) is a European network of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. With over 60-member organisations based in 27 countries (22 of which are EU countries), member organisations are national CSOs in Europe, as well as some non-EU and EU-wide organisations, working in one or more of its fields of activity.
8. NAR Nationale Arbeidsraad (<http://www.nar.be/>).
9. CESE Morocco, Economic, Social and Environmental Council, (<http://www.cese.ma>).

SOLiD is therefore is a project whose aim is that of solving economic and social problems. In fact, in the MENA region, for example, Informal labour is an issue and a core component of modern Arab economies.

The Arab NGO Network on Development (ANND) launched the third issue of the Arab Watch on Economic and Social Rights, with a focus on the question of Informal Labour and Samir Aita⁶, lead researcher of the Arab NGO Network on Development (ANND), talked about this issue, at the launch of the 2017 edition of the Arab Watch on Economic and Social Rights, last May 8 in Beirut.

Furthermore, the report about this issue, launched publicly at the American University, says that “informal labour in Arab countries is mostly waged labour, except in rare cases, which contradicts another idea that says that informal labour is a choice, as young people entering the job market have no choice but to find any type of livelihood, no matter how fragile or temporary.”

The report shows that civil and economic rights are at the core of the question of informal labour, especially rights related to health insurance, pensions, and decent living, in addition to the right to housing, clean drinking water, sanitation, social services, and infrastructure.

⁶See “Launching of the Arab watch on informal labour”, *SOCIAL WATCH*, May 12, 2017, <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/17627> (last accessed 05/06/17).

On the website of ANND there is another interesting article of 17/05/2017⁷ about the work situation in Arab countries. There is an interesting example of a “tuc tuc” driver⁸ in Egypt, working every day from 10am to 9pm, on a small cart he bought eight years ago, using a loan. The problem for him was born when his tuc tuc crashed, which had happened very often during the last three years and he had to spend days at home in order to repair it. This means for him, no work, no money and no food for his family. This is the best example to understand the work situation in Arab countries where there is no help from the government and no rights related to health insurance, pensions for the poorest people. In the majority of Arab countries, from the east to the west, there is this common phenomenon called informal labour: housekeepers – whether domestic or foreign- street hawkers, agricultural and construction workers, or even educated workers in the private or public sector and also those who belong to the middle class. In Egypt six out of ten people work informally and this type of work is prevalent in all Arab countries but Arab governments believe that pursuing a non-decent or improper job is better than not working at all. For some scholars the main reason of this phenomenon is because in the Arab societies did not witness the industrial revolution that was experienced in Europe in the nineteenth century which had developed the labour ties between the business owners who manage the means of production and the workers who are paid for their time and efforts. Therefore, many issues have arisen at the level of providing these workers with their different rights in association, demonstrations, strikes, health, and pensions, etc. and according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), nearly half of the workers in a country like Egypt remain poor. They work constantly but cannot support themselves or their families enough to get a decent life.

Informal work is socially and economically unsustainable, as “workers in the informal economy are not recognized and are not registered or organized or protected by labour and social protection legislation and thus cannot practice or defend their fundamental right” as mentioned by the regional author of the Arab Watch Report, Mr. Samir Aita. Therefore, the ILO found that the disadvantages of informal labour are greater than the advantages and it has worked on creating rules and recommendations that would improve the status of informal workers, which has been ignored by most of Arab states.

Another example of informal work is that with Karim and Huber which are two technology company which offer a private car transport service through a mobile application that connects passengers and drivers. This kind of company is expanding and spreading across the world and more importantly creating more informal workers, also in the Arab countries, like in Egypt, where Uber and Karim are growing and earning billions of profits, and in the same time creating informal work for hundreds of thousands of people who cannot be considered employees through a regular employment contract.

⁷See Salma Hussein, “Laborious work at minimum subsistence”, *ANND*, May 17, 2017, <http://www.annd.org/english/itemId.php?itemId=507#sthash.IDl3oKed.8zVCeyRj.dpbs> (last accessed 06/06/17).

⁸The situation of Taxi driver in Egypt is well explained in the best seller “Taxi” of Khaled al-Khamissi, published in December 2006.

These drivers, according to the law, are working for themselves, without health insurance or pension benefits, and do not have the right to join the syndicate of taxi drivers, or to form their own syndicate to defend and express their interests. They could organize themselves in a group in order to express their interests but anyway for many scholars the solution is that of improving the working conditions for labour and support the income redistribution that is expected to increase the level of growth.

The Arab Spring, starting in Tunisia in 2010, was in fact the consequence of this general discomfort especially in work field and the result of unemployment and labour's frustration. Tarek el-Tayeb Mohamed Bouazizi was a Tunisian street vendor who set himself on fire on 17 December 2010, in response to the confiscation of his wares and the harassment and humiliation that he said was inflicted on him by a municipal official. This act became a catalyst for the Tunisian Revolution and the wider Arab Spring, inciting demonstrations and riots throughout Tunisia in protest of social and political issues in the country.

2.2 SOLIDAR

SOLIDAR is a European network of NGOs working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. At the moment SOLIDAR is involved in a project called “Decent Work, Social Protection and Freedom of Association in the Middle East and North Africa: Mobilising for Social Justice by strengthening and promoting CSOs, social movements and (independent) trade unions’ role in reforms and democratic changes”.

SOLIDAR (<http://www.solidar.org>) is involved in a regional project called “Decent Work, Social Protection and Freedom of Association in the Middle East and North Africa: Mobilizing for Social Justice by strengthening and promoting CSOs, social movements and independent trade unions’ role in reforms and democratic changes”.

This platform aims to bring together representatives of civil society organisations, independent trade unions to share resources and materials to identify best and innovative practices around Freedom of Association and Decent Work and Social Protection through online regional exchanges.

Last October 2016 (24-25 October), SOLIDAR attended the 2016 Euromed summit of economic and social councils and similar institutions in Greece. The Euromed Summit was an opportunity to discuss key issues at stake for the EuroMed region, including ongoing conflicts, radicalisation and terrorism, bilateral cooperation, trade, migration, human rights and regional civil society cooperation. The main aim of this summit was that of promoting the space for the independent labour movement in the region to defend the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, decent work and social protection.

Last 6th October 2016 SOLIDAR member the Spanish NGO Movimiento por la Paz (MPDL)⁹ and the PNGO - Palestinian Non-Governmental Organisations

⁹ See Movimiento por la Paz-MPDL in Palestine at: www.mpdl.org (last accessed 09/06/17).

Network (<http://www.pngo.net/>), organised the social policy making workshop “Pathways to Decent Work for Youth” in Al-Bireh, Palestine. The event was attended by representatives of the EU Representative Office, Palestinian human rights and development organisations and over forty youth activists.

The workshop was part of the regional project “Decent Work, Social Protection and Freedom of Association in the Middle East and North Africa: Mobilising for Social Justice by strengthening and promoting CSOs, social movements and (independent) trade unions’ role in reforms and democratic changes” implemented by SOLIDAR and funded by the European Union.

The workshop was an opportunity for civil society organisations (CSOs), trade unions and the EU representative to exchange views on pathways for youth to access decent work in Palestine.

In the framework of the regional project “Decent Work, Social Protection and Freedom of Association in the Middle East and North Africa: Mobilising for Social Justice by strengthening and promoting the role of CSOs, social movements and (independent) trade unions in reforms and democratic change”, SOLIDAR has worked in collaboration with ANND and its partners in Palestine: Democracy and Workers’ Rights Centre (DWRC)¹⁰, Palestinian NGO Network Organisation (PNGO) and Stars of Hope¹¹ with the aim to assess the progress of the implementation of the ENP¹² in Palestine.

Democracy and Workers’ Rights Centre (DWRC) is a Palestinian non-governmental, non-profit organization, not affiliated with any political party, that aims to defend workers’ rights.

DWRC was established in 1993 by a group of lawyers, academics, trade unionists and other prominent figures in the Palestinian society to defend Palestinian workers’ rights and promote principles of democracy and social justice in the Palestinian territories.

DWRC targets Palestinian workers who work in the private and public sector from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza. The centre also targets labour leaders, trade union leaders, and youth activists.

DWRC is a member of:

- The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net);
- The Global Network which is part of SOLIDAR:

¹⁰ See <http://www.dwrc.org> (last accessed 03/07/17).

¹¹ Stars of Hope is another Palestinian NGO located in Ramallah which is run by women with disabilities, for women with disabilities. It is the only organization of its kind in Palestine and one of a very small number internationally. Stars of Hope website: <http://www.starsofhope.org> (last accessed 03/07/17).

¹² Through its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which has been revised in November 2015, the EU works with its Southern and Eastern Neighbours to foster stabilisation, security and prosperity, in line with the Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy.

- Workers' Rights Defence, Advocacy and Education Network (formerly International Federation of Workers' Education Associations in the Arab Countries - IFWEA/AC)¹³;
- The Palestinian Network of NGOs (PNGO).

Members of SOLIDAR:

- Arbetarnas Bildnings förbund (ABF), Sweden
- Association Européenne des Droits de l'Homme (AEDH), EU
- Arbejdernes Oplysningsforbund (AOF DK), Denmark
- Studieforbundet AOF (AOF NO), Norway
- Alianza por la Solidaridad (APS), Spain
- Associazione di Promozione Sociale (ARCI), Italy
- ARCS Culture Solidali, Italy
- Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB), Germany
- Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASBÖ), Austria
- Auser, Italy
- Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO), Germany
- Berufsförderungsinstitut Oberösterreich (BFI OÖ), Austria
- Centres d'Entraînement aux Méthodes d'Education Active (CEMEA), France
- De Mens.nu, Belgium
- Fagligt Internationalt Center (FIC), Denmark
- Fondsvoor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking – Socialistische Solidariteit (FOS), Belgium
- Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), EU
- Humanitas, The Netherlands
- International Cooperation Network (CGIL), Italy
- Internationaler Bund (IB), Germany
- International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA), South Africa
- Instituto Sindical de Cooperacion al Desarrollo (ISCOD), Spain
- International Solidarity Foundation (ISF), Finland
- La Liga Española de la Educación y la Cultura Popular (La Liga Española), Spain
- La Ligue de l'Enseignement (La Ligue), France
- Movimiento por la Paz, el Desarme y la Libertad (MPDL), Spain
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Norway
- Olof Palme International Center (OPIC), Sweden
- Progetto Sud, Italy
- Solidar Suisse – Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk (SAH), Switzerland
- Solidarité Laïque, France
- Työväen Sivistysliitto - Worker's Educational Association (TSL), Finland

¹³ See <http://ifwea.asocion.com> (last accessed 03/07/17). IFWEA is the international organisation responsible for the development of workers' education. It brings together national and international trade unions, workers' education associations, NGOs and foundations engaged in the provision of adult education opportunities for workers and the communities in which they live throughout the world.

- Volunteering matters, United Kingdom
- Workers' Educational Association (WEA), UK

Affiliate Members:

- Arbeiterwohlfahrt International (AWO INTL), Germany
- Asociácia Odborných Pracovníkov Sociálnych Služieb (AOPSS), Slovakia
- Asociația pentru Dialog, Ocupare și Migrație (CONNECT), Romania
- Asamblea de Cooperación por la Paz (ACPP), Spain
- Baltic Platform comprising:
 - Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus (JMK), Estonia;
 - Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees (LIZDA), Latvia;
 - Lithuanian Labour Education Society (LLES), Lithuania
- Center for Peace Studies (CMS), Croatia
- Coordinamento delle Organizzazioni non governative per la Cooperazione Internazionale alla Sviluppo (COCIS), Italy
- Czech Council on Foreign Relations - Rada Pro Mezinárodní Vztahy (CCFR), Czech Republic
- DGB-Bildungswerk (DGB BW), Germany
- Forum Solidarni Dla Postępu, Poland
- Initiative for Development and Cooperation (IDC), Serbia
- Institute for Social Integration (ISI), Bulgaria
- Instituto de Soldadura e Qualidade (ISQ), Portugal
- Institut für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik (ISS), Germany
- International Union of Tenants (IUT)
- IRIS Association Network of providers of social services (IRIS), Southern Eastern Europe
- Istituto Sindacale di Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (ISCOS), Italy
- Multicultural Center Prague (MKC), Czech Republic
- Narodna Dopomoha (People's Aid), Ukraine
- Pour la Solidarité (PLS), Belgium
- Samaritan International (SAMI)
- Solidarité Socialiste (SolSoc), Belgium
- Solidarité Syndicale (OGBL), Luxembourg
- Solidarity Overseas Service (SOS), Malta
- Union Aid Abroad (APHEDA), Australia
- Volkshilfe Hellas, Greece
- Volkshilfe Österreich Bundesverband (VH), Austria

2.3 INCLUS Project

“Inclus” is another interesting project with the main aim of supporting young migrants and refugees in order to have access to labour market, the first step toward integration.

Another interesting project of SOLIDAR is Inklus. Funded under the Erasmus + programme, the project “Inklus: Europe for the integration of young migrants and refugees” aims to support youth associations to better understand the obstacles to inclusion in society and to integration in the labour market of young migrants and refugees as well as to empower directly young migrants and refugees to take part in youth associations through the use of non-formal and informal learning methods and training tools.

One of the main innovative aspects of the project is the cross-sectoral supporting structure called the “Innovative Inclusive Committee” composed of representatives of youth associations, trade-unions, employment services, policy makers, EU policy experts and young migrants and refugees.

Members of the project are:

FIC¹⁴ (Denmark);

FIC youth (Denmark);

3F København¹⁵ (Denmark);

Ofensiva Tinerilor¹⁶ (Romania);

Geocopol¹⁷ (Romania);

Dev-Aid¹⁸ (Albania);

SOLIDAR Foundation¹⁹ (Europe).

2.4 Social Platform and some examples of projects

SOCIAL PLATFORM (the European platform of social NGOs), is the largest network of European rights - and value - based civil society organisations working in the social sector²⁰. Its mission is to advocate for policies that bring social progress to all in the European Union. Social Platform applies a human-rights approach to all of its work to fight for a socially just and cohesive Europe that promotes equality, diversity, solidarity, democracy and human dignity.

Social Platform which works to support members in their project and developing joint campaigns on specific issues, has analysed some efficient projects that have been being implemented by some organization in Sweden that help low- and medium-skilled migrants to find work, so that they can begin to integrate into society and enjoy access to various rights.

SOLIDAR, the European network of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide, works in cooperation with progressive

¹⁴ See <https://fic.dk/> (last accessed 05/07/17).

¹⁵ See <http://www.3fkbh.dk/> (last accessed 05/07/17).

¹⁶ See <http://www.ofensivatinerilor.ro/index.php/en/> (last accessed 05/07/17).

¹⁷ See <http://geocopol.webs.com/> (last accessed 05/07/17).

¹⁸ See <http://www.devaid.al/en/rjetezim/> (last accessed 05/07/17).

¹⁹ See <http://www.solidar.org/en/about-us/solidar-foundation> (last accessed 05/07/17).

²⁰ In order to understand its vision and mission see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZRUpKW6Yk4> (last accessed 19/07/17).

civil society, labour movement organisations and progressive parties. SOLIDAR is a member of the SOCIAL PLATFORM (the European platform of social NGOs)²¹, CONCORD (EU NGO Confederation for Relief and Development) and the Lifelong Learning Platform (European Civil Society for Education).

SOCIAL PLATFORM works in different areas and one of these is “Inclusion” because they believe that everyone has the right to live a life in dignity, and actively promoting social inclusion is one way of achieving this. In this context on 14-15 December 2016 a delegation of Social Platform members travelled to southern Sweden to learn more about successful ways of including migrants and refugees in economic and social life. They met three organisations, such as Yalla Trappan, Ester Foundation and Merit that help low- and medium-skilled migrants to find work – including through training, mentoring and job placements – so that they can begin to integrate into society and enjoy access to various rights, including the right to live a life in dignity.

Yalla Trappan²² works to help the migrant women with little to no formal education and for this reason considered some of the most excluded members of society. The Yalla Trappan organisation helps these women to break the cycle of isolation and exclusion, by trying to integrate them into society and job market²³.

The Ester Foundation is a social enterprise that helps women with migrant backgrounds to become entrepreneurs. Their work supports driven and creative women to develop not just their business skills, but their self-esteem and confidence, too²⁴.

Merit²⁵ is a private company that is contracted by the local authorities to help migrants overcome all those problems related to their *status quo*, and ultimately find jobs matched to their own individual skills and interests. In fact, Migrants face many challenges in gaining access to the labour market – some don’t have the necessary language skills, while others have no support in looking after their families and Merit provides them, for instance, with languages courses and training.

²¹ See <http://www.socialplatform.org> (last accessed 19/07/17).

²² See <http://www.yallatrappan.se/> (last accessed 19/07/17).

²³ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uceApjuTMs> (last accessed 19/0/17). This video is interesting to understand how this organization works to help these most vulnerable women.

²⁴ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2axAQm8ZZd0> (last accessed 19/07/17). This video is interesting to understand how this organization work to achieve its main mission, that is that of helping vulnerable women to become entrepreneurs.

²⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-R0-15ZIArc> (last accessed 19/07/17).

3. Platforms and NGOs in the Mediterranean region

3.1 Middle East Region

Many NGOs have been working in the Mediterranean region, local and foreign organizations which work together in order to solve the main issues present in this wide region.

Analysing the Middle East Region and starting from LDN - The Lebanese Development Network it is possible to connect this NGO with many other NGOs in the Middle East, such as The Arab Foundations Forum in Jordan; LDN is also partner of MEDITER – Woman for change, a project which aims to strengthen women’s leadership.

LDN¹ - The Lebanese Development Network is a national non-profit organization dedicated to assist individuals, communities and institutions build their capacities by conveying knowledge and improving practical performance to enable them manage the changing social requirements, catch opportunities and meet the development challenges.

Objectives:

- To contribute in the implementation of viable projects on the social, economic, educational, cultural and health levels;
- To promote the culture of democracy, human rights, dialogue and citizenship, and help constituencies display a high degree of leadership;
- To increase personal ability through purposeful reflection, planning and action;
- To improve organizational proficiency in growing stronger achieving their purpose and mission;
- To help constituents efficiently interact and positively influence their societies.
- To foster better environment for sustainable growth;
- To identify social needs, design solutions, and promote higher livelihood standards;
- To carry out proficient guidance to develop suitable programs and creates job opportunities.

Partners:

1. Innovety, Egypt.
2. Jovesolidés, Jovenes Hacia la solidaridat y el desarrollo, Spain.
3. National University “Odessa Law Academy”, Ukraine.
4. EP.
5. Formetica, I Valori della formazione, Italy.
6. Club Culturel Ali BELHOUANE (CCAB), Tunisia.
7. Adapt, Italy.
8. GIOLLI Cooperativa Sociale, Italy
9. Futuro Digitale, Associazione Formazione Sociale, Italy.

On the occasion of the visit of the Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades to Lebanon and the convening of the economic meeting organized by the Federation of Chambers of

¹ See <http://www.ldn-lb.org> (last accessed 17/06/17).

Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, the Lebanese Development Network (LDN), in partnership with COMED, announced the launch of the “International Center for Development and Services” (ICDS) in Larnaca - Cyprus.

LDN President Amin Nehme said that this event is a continuation of the policy of open horizons adopted by the organization in its strategy of expanding its services and transferring its experience in the areas of “Capacity Building” and “Social Marketing” to neighbouring countries either in the Arab region or in Europe.

LDN is partner of MEDITER – Woman for change². This a project funded by the EuropeAid Cooperation Office, which manages the external cooperation programs of the EU.

The overall objective of the project MEDITER - Women for Change aims to strengthen women’s leadership within Local Authorities and NGOs and, through them, to provide an appropriate response to risks of economic, political and cultural marginalism in the Mediterranean region, one of the strategic areas of European gravity.

Indirectly, the project aims to reduce the risk of crises (economic, political and social) in the Mediterranean, through the strengthening of women’s representation in the areas of administrative hierarchy and decision-making positions within the Authorities and local NGOs.

To achieve these objectives, the project aims in particular to complete the following two specific objectives:

1. To increase the preparation level and access of women in decision-making positions by developing an ongoing program of higher education for women-manager in Local Authorities and NGOs;
2. To encourage permanent exchange between women-manager of public and non-profit sectors on subjects of common interest, through the creation of a thematic network dedicated to the development of cultural policies.

Under the second goal, in January 2011, the network MEDITER - Euro-Mediterranean Network for cooperation has been created.

The countries participating in MEDITER - Women for Change project are: Italy, France, Malta, Tunisia, Lebanon.

The partners of the MEDITER Women for Change project are:

- IRIS, Istituto di Ricerca e Interventi Socio-educativi (lead-partner), Provincia di Pescara Italy;
- GRAIF - Groupement Régional pour l’Action et l’Information des Femmes, France ;
- CAWTAR - Center of Arab Woman for Training and Research, Tunisia;
- SAFADI Foundation, Lebanon;
- Foundation for Women Entrepreneurs, Malta.

LDN is also member of Beyond Beirut and Arab Foundations Forum. Beyond Beirut³ is a Lebanese non-governmental organization with a mission to encourage the development

² See <http://euromediter.eu/projects/women-for-change/> (last accessed 23/06/17).

³ See <http://beyondbeirut.com> (last accessed 23/06/17).

of experiential tourism beyond the city limits of Beirut as a means for sustainable economic development in rural Lebanon.

Arab Foundations Forum⁴ is a not-for-profit membership-based association of philanthropic foundations in the Arab region.

The Arab Foundations Forum (Jordan) serves as a hub for networking, knowledge sharing and capacity building for its members and partners. It aims to foster dialogue and collaboration opportunities amongst its network in order to bolster the capacity and efficacy of strategic philanthropy in the Arab region.

Among its members:

1. Alfanar⁵ Established in 2004, Alfanar is the first venture philanthropy organisation working exclusively in the Arab region.

Its vision is of an Arab world in which the poor and vulnerable, especially women and children, are able to access the education and opportunity they need to lead productive and dignified lives.

Alfanar wants to help social enterprises improve the lives of more people while increasing their financial sustainability. It does this by providing tailored technical and financial support to ambitious grassroots organisations, helping them to achieve lasting social change in their communities.

Alfanar has different locations in Lebanon, Egypt, Libya (suspended at present), UK, US.

At the moment Alfanar is supporting a campaign called #BeTheBeacon. #BeTheBeacon is about how anyone can become a social innovator and change the world for the better. Alfanar believes that Social entrepreneurs are making a difference. These are the people on the frontlines, challenging the *status quo*, serving the most marginalized populations and creating a new equilibrium.

Alfanar finds the social entrepreneurs who are demonstrating measurable results and works with them to strengthen, sustain, and scale their impact by providing financing and critical management support. Over the course of its investment, social enterprises it supports reach 36% more people each year and generate 49% more revenue to serve their communities each year.

With its funds and thanks to this campaign, Alfanar is helping many other organizations in Egypt and Lebanon, such as Ana Aqra Association⁶, Future Eve Foundation⁷, Together For You, MMKM⁸, Innash⁹ and The Women Program Association.

Ana Aqra Association targets the educational, psychosocial and cultural needs of underprivileged children, aged 4 to 14 and attending Lebanese elementary public schools, providing support to their parents, teachers, and the school administration.

⁴ See <http://arabfoundationsforum.org/> (last accessed 23/06/17).

⁵ See <http://www.alfanar.org.uk/> (last accessed 23/06/17).

⁶ See <https://ana-aqra.org/> (last accessed 28/06/17).

⁷ See <http://futureeve.org/> (last accessed 29/06/17).

⁸ See <http://www.mmkn.org/> (last accessed 28/06/17).

⁹ See <http://www.inaash.org/> (last accessed 28/06/17)

Since 2010, the main focus of the association has been to advance literacy through investing in programs that build teachers' capacity while providing the opportunity for struggling readers to become independent learners.

Ana Aqra aims to impact another 3,300 teachers and 250,000 children. Ana Aqra is also selling its products to private schools in remote areas, with the aim of building a portfolio in the private sector. Moreover, Ana Aqra recently won a consulting project in Greece to support education efforts for refugees and it is studying the possibility to do the same for displaced people in Iraq.

The Future Eve Foundation, established in 2001, is one of the leading organisations working with women in Minya and works to raise awareness among women on topics ranging from their legal rights to reproductive health issues and to prevent female genital mutilation.

In 2012, Future Eve launched the Amal Project, an economic empowerment initiative that uses vocational and financial literacy training, as well as microloans, to equip Minya's widows with the resources to launch their own microenterprises to sustain themselves and their families.

Together For You is training low-income women in Cairo to become certified elderly caregivers. Alfanar provides an injection of capital to allow Together For You to greatly increase the number of women it trains and employs.

MMKN¹⁰ (Mumkin), meaning "It's possible" in Arabic, recruits and trains University students to become volunteer tutors. Using a curriculum developed by MMKN to reinforce brevet-level public school teaching, students coach disadvantaged pupils to ensure that they are ready to take the exam. The results speak for themselves: over the past 4 years, MMKN has created a network of 220 volunteer tutors to reach 1699 students across Lebanon, 96% of which passed their brevet exam.

Alfanar worked with MMKN to establish a fee-based after-school programme with the objective to fund its work with disadvantaged children. In the first year, the Study Room delivered 347 hours of private tutoring to 35 students from various private universities and high schools, employing 15 of MMKN's University Students tutors. The success rate of students who benefited from this tutoring was 100%.

MUMKIN has implemented many projects in different fields for women empowerment and public-school support.

Inaash¹¹ works to promote Palestinian cultural heritage through the production of high-end traditional embroidery, and to create economic opportunities for women living in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Its network of highly skilled embroiderers produces beautiful handmade goods including apparel, home and fashion accessories that are sold across the world.

The Women Program Association (WPA) serves nine out of 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, including the Burj al Barajneh Camp where the organisation

¹⁰ See <http://www.mmkn.org/> (last accessed 30/09/17).

¹¹ See <http://www.inaash.org/> (last accessed 30/06/17).

provides education and vocational skills training for women as well as offering microloans to members of the community.

Alfanar has worked with WPA to help it set up a new catering unit, called Soufra (meaning “feast” in Arabic). After an initial year that combined business support with seed funding to cover the costs of launching the new catering unit, in 2014 it renewed its commitment to WPA, providing a new injection of funds and support to help it professionalise its efforts. The unit has already recovered all its start-up costs, improved its offering and gained an edge in Lebanon’s highly competitive catering market. Alfanar is also working with WPA to help it set up a microloan programme for widows and female heads of households, drawing on the successful model developed with its support by Alfanar’s investee the Future Eve Foundation in Egypt.

2. Injaz (<http://www.injaz.org.jo>), Jordan.
3. A.M. Qattan Foundation – AMQF (<http://www.qattanfoundation.org>), Palestine.
4. Arab Human Rights Fund (<http://www.ahrfund.org>), Lebanon.

Always in Lebanon there is another NGO called Michel Issa Foundation¹² for Local Development. This Lebanese NGO was founded in 2012 and its main aim is to enhance the capability of the local community and to work for local development.

This Ngo in January 2017 has signed a memorandum of understanding with Berytech in order to develop a Business and Innovation Center in Amchit. This centre is due to open in fall 2018. It aims at contributing to the economic development and bringing high value and impact to the Kesserwan, Jbeil and Northern Kazas.

Berytech provides support and growth to innovative and passionate entrepreneurs. Initiated in 2002 by the Saint-Joseph University, Berytech provides a dynamic environment for the creation and development of start-ups fostering innovation, technology and entrepreneurship.

Founded in 2001 and being the first in the region to receive EU accreditation as a Business Innovation Center, Berytech currently manages 3 business development centres (located in Mathaf, Beirut Digital District & Mar Roukoz), in addition to one technology fund and a media cluster and is still growing, playing a major role in the economic revival of Lebanon, while organizing pioneering programs, activities and initiatives for entrepreneurs.

Berytech supports many projects such as 5TOI Energy, Water and Agriculture in the South Mediterranean Neighbourhood¹³, a EU project for a radically new way to generate innovation in the South Mediterranean Neighbourhood, and WeHubs¹⁴, the first European community connecting business ecosystems and providing them with mentoring tools to support women entrepreneurs in the digital sector.

¹² See <https://www.facebook.com/michelissafoundation/> (last accessed 28/06/17).

¹³ See <http://www.5toi.eu/> (last accessed 28/06/17).

¹⁴ See <http://wehubs.eu/> (last accessed 28/06/17).

In Lebanon another Ngo, working in the Human Rights field, is Insan¹⁵. The Arabic word *Insan* means “Human”.

Insan Association acts to protect and promote the rights of the most marginalised individuals, families and children living in Lebanon – such as refugees, migrant workers, asylum seekers and non-identities – without discrimination of any kind, such as ethnicity nationality, gender, social origins, religion and political or other affiliations. Through the years, beneficiaries of different nationalities benefited from its services: Syrian, Kurdish and Turkmen Syrian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Egyptian, Filipino, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Ethiopian, Sudanese, Nigerian, Ghanaian, Cameroonian, Malagasy etc. All of them are living in Lebanon in very difficult conditions notably due to severe poverty, lack of legal status, isolation and racism. Excluded from the system, they fail to access basic rights and services.

Through a comprehensive scheme consisting of educational, psychosocial and legal services as well as advocacy and awareness raising projects, Insan aims to empower these communities, to help them take control of their lives and reach their full potential.

Insan pays close attention to children. The organization believes that children have a right to be free from abuses, exploitation and neglect. The children, who benefit from Insan’s services, face discrimination, insecurity and poverty – their lives can be unstable and chaotic. The organization is therefore committed to creating a secure environment for them. Insan’s child protection policy outlines what will be done to protect all children in Insan’s care.

LDI - Lebanon Dialogue Initiative (<http://lebanondialogue.org>)

LDI is a civil society movement supported by various academic, business and civil society organizations, in particular, by Notre Dame University-Louaizé (NDU). It calls upon Lebanese in Lebanon and the Diaspora, as well as friends of Lebanon and people of good will, to support this Initiative to designate Lebanon as a universal Land of Dialogue and to establish an international centre for dialogue in Lebanon in response to contemporary local, national and international disputes by contributing to conflict reduction, reconciliation, social justice, and peace building. By such international recognition, it believes that Lebanon will be able to secure the international solidarity it needs to recover its historic vocation - a vocation to which Lebanon still manages somehow to be faithful.

Other NGOs in Jordan:

General Federation of Jordanian Women (<https://www.facebook.com/General-Federation-of-Jordanian-Women-474029492702233/photos>); (<http://www.gfjw.org.jo/>)

The GFJW was established in 1981 as a national non-governmental organization of women’s associations and societies to enhance the political, economic and social status of women in Jordan. The Federation’s membership includes 135 women’s organisations which are registered at the Ministry of Social Development. It has headquarters in each

¹⁵ See <http://www.insanassociation.org> (last accessed 23/06/17).

of the 12 governorates and offers educational opportunities and guidance in family welfare and health. It also advocates for legislative reform that favours women and initiates income-generating activities. The GFJW has been a member of Jordanian National Commission for Women since its establishment, in addition to its membership in JNCW's NGO Coordinating Committee. The Federation offers training programmes for women in various trades to help improve their social, health and economic standards. Among the federation's many achievements are soft loans projects which are offered to women through women's charitable organizations, these loans have also helped benefit women through job creation.

Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development (<http://www.hayatcenter.org/>).

Al Hayat Center for Civil Society Development was established by a group of young Jordanian activists in 2006. Through their experience in NGOs, student unions, and student associations, they observed a serious lack of youth participation in NGO and political life. While there were often programs targeting youth, the young demographic was often uninvolved in planning and executing projects outside the capital, Amman. With this in mind, Al Hayat Center opened its first office in Irbid in 2006, working to strengthen youth participation in development work across Jordan and to increase youth critical thinking and decision-making abilities as well as their awareness of rights and opportunities for participation in political life. From the outset, Al Hayat Center started to work on difficult, and sometimes controversial, topics such as monitoring parliamentary elections. Maintaining its focus on rural areas, the Center opened a second office in 2008 in Karak. In 2009, Al Hayat Center opened its Amman office that would later become the main headquarters.

The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (<http://www.johud.org.jo/>)

Established in 1977, the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD) is the oldest and largest non-profit, non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting rights-based, sustainable human development in Jordan.

With their network of 51 Community Development Centres located throughout the country, JOHUD is at the forefront of building a brighter future for those living in under-served, poor, and remote communities. JOHUD provides sustainable support that empowers individuals to work with their neighbours, strengthen their communities and secure access to the resources they need to achieve healthy and fulfilled lives.

Others NGOs in Egypt:

Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (<http://en.eohr.org/>)

Established in 1985, the non-profit EOHR is one of the oldest NGOs in Egypt. Part of the wider Arab and international human rights movements, EOHR draws no lines and strives to end all types of violations against all individuals. Its peaceful initiatives to defend human rights are carried out by five interlinked departments. The Field Work unit embarks on fact-finding missions to prisons, collecting testimonies and documenting

information about violations against prisoners' rights. The Field team then passes this information on to EOHR's Research and Publications Unit, which compiles and researches the raw data provided. The EOHR also has two legal aid projects, Women's Legal Aid and Refugee Legal Aid, for assisting persons with more specialised cases.

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (<http://www.cihrs.org/?lang=en>)

CIHRS is another of Egypt's oldest NGOs fighting for human dignity and democratic principles. Expanding further into the Arab world, CIHRS is analysing the difficulties that prevent application of international human rights laws and promulgating a sense of respect for human rights in the region. Taking on the role of coordinator among other NGOs and key groups, CIHRS brings together coalitions to "raise public awareness about these issues and to reach solutions in line with international human rights law".

Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights (<http://ecwronline.org/>)

A staggering number of women in Egypt have experienced sexual harassment. In fact, a recent study from the United Nations claims 99 per cent of women in Egypt have experienced sexual harassment in some form, while those same studies say that 96.5 per cent have been physically harassed. The Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights began in 1996 to fight against the *status quo* of harassment in Egypt. It fights for the rights of women in Egypt to be treated equally by providing legal services to women and pressuring lawmakers to bring Egyptian law in line with international agreements on the treatment of women.

Egyptian Centre For Housing Rights - UN Habitat (<https://unhabitat.org/egypt/>)

Finding affordable and sustainable housing in a large city like Cairo is daunting, especially for the lowest strata of society; with the growing population shift towards urban areas, it's likely to get worse before it gets better. Nearly half of Egypt's population lives in three cities, Cairo, Giza, and Alexandria, with almost 15 million people living in the slums of these cities, without access to reliable services and squalid conditions.

Adequate housing is a fundamental part of the International Bill of Human Rights. UN Habitat and the Egyptian Centre for Housing Rights work to address the issue in Cairo by developing programs to assist policy makers in finding lasting solutions to the housing problems faced by so many citizens. Their goal is to create "Cities without Slums" in which every person has reliable access to clean water, electricity, and safe neighbourhoods in which to live.

Egyptian Centre for Human Rights Education (<http://www.echre.org/>)

Formed in 2009, ECHRE is dedicated to educating Egypt and the Arab world on human rights, working with universities and NGOs, and advocating for dissemination of information and empowerment of individuals. The Centre hopes that, once educated,

people will realise their individual capacity for change and take charge of their lives to affect real social change.¹⁶

3.2 International Forum of National NGO Platforms

IFP is an international forum which brings together many platforms around the world. Established in 2008 in Paris, it works for the defence of human rights and for the inclusion of the most vulnerable people.

Among the members of IFP, in the MENA region there are the Moroccan NGO called Espace Associatif and Coordination Sud, a national platform of French international solidarity NGOs, in turn member of REF – Réseau Euromed France, a network that brings together 42 French civil society organizations (associations, collectives and trade unions) engaged in the countries around the Mediterranean.

The International Forum of National NGO Platforms¹⁷ (IFP) brings together 64 national platforms from Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania and 6 regional coalitions, which together account for more than 22,000 organizations. The IFP was founded at an international conference in Paris in 2008. The members of its global network work together through a shared vision and common values: the defence of human rights, the inclusion of the most vulnerable populations, the fight against inequalities and injustice, as well as the eradication of poverty and sustainable development. National platforms from the five continents have endorsed joint advocacy positions and promoted non-governmental diplomacy initiatives to effectively broaden CSOs space in the international arena and influence local and global debates, promoting its vision of a fair and sustainable world.

The IFP seeks to create the conditions for greater participation of NGOs in the international public debate so that they can influence international negotiations in the areas of development, fundamental rights and international solidarity. It promotes Non-Governmental Diplomacy in order to monitor intergovernmental negotiations at the national, regional and global level, and to ensure civil society's participation in decision-making processes and mechanisms of global governance.

Its partners: Beyond 2015 and ACTED (Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development).

Beyond 2015 (www.beyond2015.org/) was a global civil society campaign, pushing for a strong and legitimate successor framework to the Millennium Development Goals.

ACTED (www.acted.org) is a non-governmental organization with headquarters in Paris, founded in 1993. Independent, private and not-for-profit, ACTED respects a strict political and religious impartiality and operates according to principles of non-discrimination and transparency.

¹⁶ See <http://www.cairoscene.com/Listicles/5-NGOs-Fighting-for-Human-Rights-in-Egypt> (last accessed 02/06/17).

¹⁷ See <http://ifp-fip.org/en>(last accessed 17/06/17).

Since 1993, as the second French NGO, ACTED has been committed to immediate humanitarian relief to support those in urgent need and protect people's dignity, while co-creating longer term opportunities for sustainable growth and fulfilling people's potential.

Council members elected in March 2015 until 2018:

Africa:

- CONGAD, Senegal.
- ESPACE ASSOCIATIF, Morocco.
- MACOSS, Mauritius.

Latin America:

- ABONG, Brazil.
- ACCION, Chile.
- CONGCOOP, Guatemala.

North America:

- INTERACTION, United States.

Asia:

- KCOC, South Korea.
- VANI, India.
- NFN, Nepal.

Europe:

- COORDINATION SUD, France.
- BOND, United Kingdom.
- KEHYS, Finland.

Pacific:

- PIANGO, Pacific Islands.

Among the member of IFP, in the MENA region there is the Moroccan NGO called EspaceAssociatif.

Espace Associatif, established in 1996, is a Moroccan association contributing to the reinforcement and promotion of the associative movement for democratic development. The main aims of Espace Associatif are those of strengthening the competencies and aptitudes of the associative frameworks and improving the environment of the action of those associations.

Partner of Espace Associatif:

- Asociacion para la Cooperacion con el Sur (ACSUR)
- Agence de Développement Social (ADS)
- Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)
- Comité Européen pour la Formation et l'Agriculture (CEFA)
- Programme projet genre de la coopération technique allemande (GTZ)
- Ministère du Développement Social, de la Famille et de la Solidarité (MDSFS)
- National Endowment for Democracy (NED)
- Oxfam NOVIB

- Save the Children

It is interesting to notice that Espace Associatif has, like ANND and SOLIDAR, some projects about Informal work in the MENA region.

Coordination Sud - Development Emergency Solidarity (<https://www.coordinationsud.org/>), also member of IFP, is the national platform of French international solidarity NGOs, registered as a non-profit association under the French law 1901. Established in 1994, it brings together over 170 NGOs that carry out humanitarian aid, development assistance, environmental protection, the defence of disadvantaged people's human rights and international solidarity education and advocacy. Coordination SUD fulfils a dual mission of supporting the professionalization of French NGOs and representing their positions to public and private institutions in France, Europe and around the world. It takes part in activities at the European level with Concord, the European NGO confederation for relief and development, and the International Forum of Platforms, which brings together more than 1800 NGOs.

Coordination Sud has many members and some of them are:

- ACTED which has many projects also in the MENA area: Iraq, Libya, Jordan, Syria, oPt, Lebanon.
- Solidarité Laïque, also member of SOLIDAR.

Another member of Coordination Sud is REF - RéseauEuromed France (<http://www.euromed-france.org/>) a platform for reflection and inquiry on Mediterranean issues and the implementation of public policies towards the region. It supports the advocacy actions of its members and partners and carries out its own campaigns to raise awareness among the general public and to challenge the French and European public authorities. It is a network that brings together 42 French civil society organizations (associations, collectives and trade unions) engaged in the countries around the Mediterranean.

At the moment REF has been implementing two interesting projects: Libya Project and Syria Project.

Libya Project. Since 2013, the REF has been engaged in exchange and capacity building working in partnership with Libyan civil society organizations (CSOs). The first stage of this work was structured around three exchange and diagnostic meetings in France and Libya (November 2013 - June 2014). This preliminary work led to the launch of a second stage of work, built as a cycle of internships for young people engaged in civil society in Libya.

Syria Project. Since April 2016, REF has been engaged in a project to support Syrian civil society organizations (CSOs) and its youngest actors. Like the project carried out with Libyan CSOs, the REF organizes each year courses of capacity building and exchange of practices with young Syrians engaged in the civil society, in partnership with the Syrian League for the Citizenship (SL4C).

REF has been implementing also a project called PROGRAMME JEUNESSES MÉDITERRANÉENNES. In 2015, a group of member associations committed to support youth, launched with REF a program of intergenerational meetings of civil society around issues of employment and vocational training, citizen participation, migration, art and culture, called “Jeunesses méditerranéennes”. The first meetings took place in Paris (October 2015) and in Casablanca (April 2017), with the participation of 70 representatives of CSOs from all the countries around the Mediterranean.

On the website of REF, there are many interesting articles about MENA region, focusing on many issues related for example to the Palestinian Question, the situation in Syria, the problem of refugees in the Mediterranean area.

Regarding the Palestinian Question, there is another important French platform that works with REF: its name is Plateforme Palestine(<https://www.pplateforme-palestine.org/-2017->). This Platform is a network composed of 40 French NGOs that are active in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Platform’s mission includes:

1. “Raising awareness and informing the public about the rights of Palestinians and advocating on their behalf to institutions and elected officials.
2. Being a forum for the exchange of information, meetings, and collaboration between French Palestinian-solidarity NGOs and Palestinians organizations. Being a resource hub through its creation of tools for use by members and partners.
3. Improving the capabilities of activists working on issues related to the rights of the Palestinians and the development of Palestine.”

On the website of REF, there are also many other articles, resources, published by other important NGOs or platforms such as: Concord, ARCI, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies and ANND.

Members of REF are 42 and they are the followings:

- Action pour le Développement Intégré et la Formation (ADIF)
- Action Solidaire pour le Développement Humain (ASODH)
- Agence de Promotion des Cultures et du Voyage (APCV)
- Agence de promotion et d’ingénierie interculturelles (AP2i)
- animateurs socio-urbains sans frontières
- ASSDAC.MED
- Association des Femmes d’Europe Méridionale (AFEM)
- Association des Marocains en France (AMF)
- Association des Travailleurs Maghrébins de France (ATMF)
- Association des Tunisiens en France (ATF)
- Association en Sorbonne sur l’Histoire du Monde Arabe (ASHMA)
- Association Internationale des Techniciens, Experts et Chercheurs (Aitec)
- Association Migrations, Solidarités et Echanges pour le Développement (AMSED)
- Association pour le développement des initiatives citoyennes et européenne (ADICE)
- Ateliers Sans Frontières

- Centre d'actions et de réalisations internationales (CARI)
- Centre d'Education et de Formation Interculturel Rencontre (CEFIR)
- Collectif Judéo Arabe et Citoyen pour la Palestine (CJACP)
- Collectif Subito Presto – Association Trisunic
- Collège des adherents individuels
- Comité pour le Développement et le Patrimoine (CDP)
- Comité pour le Respect des Libertés et des Droits de l'Homme en Tunisie (CRLDHT)
- Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT)
- Fédération des Tunisiens pour une Citoyenneté des deux Rives (FTCR)
- France Terre d'Asile
- Groupement des Retraités Educateurs Sans Frontières (GREF)
- Indigènes Films
- InFLÉchir
- Institut de Coopération Sociale Internationale (ICOSI)
- Initiatives et Changement
- Instants Vidéo Numériques et Poétiques
- Institut de la Méditerranée de Corse (IMC)
- Institut Méditerranéen de Formation et Recherche en Travail Social (IMF)
- Institut de Recherches et d'études Méditerranée Moyen-Orient (iReMMO)
- Ligue de l'enseignement – FAIL 13
- Ligue des Droits de l'Homme (LDH)
- Méditerranées
- NOUAS
- Plateforme des ONG Françaises pour la Palestine
- Programme Solidarité Eau (pS-Eau)
- Solidarité Laïque
- U Marinu
- Younga Solidaire

3.3 Cyprus¹⁸

Cardet is a Cyprian NGO, involved in many projects, such as INTEGR8, designed precisely to create an intercultural platform for dialogue and lively cross-border debate among European citizens on policies related to migration and asylum in Europe.

CARDET¹⁹ (Center for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental, research and development organization based in Cyprus with partners around the world. CARDET is becoming one of the leading institutions in the Euro-Mediterranean region for research, evaluation and

¹⁸ For more info about NGOs in Cyprus see <http://www.ngo-sc.org> and <http://www.ngosincyprus.org/> (last accessed 15/06/17).

¹⁹ See <http://www.cardet.org> (last accessed 15/06/17).

development. The CARDET team strives to offer the highest quality research and development capabilities and educational opportunities to benefit society.

Cardet is involved in many projects such as INTEGR8. The project, funded with the support of the “Europe for Citizens” programme, has created an intercultural platform for dialogue and lively cross-border debate among European citizens on policies related to migration and asylum in Europe. According to estimates by the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration, IOM, persecution, wars, conflicts and extreme poverty have forced an unprecedented one million people to flee to Europe in 2015. As stated by the European Commission, the EU’s external borders have increasingly been the scene of human tragedies to which the EU, together with its Member States, must take immediate action through a shared and more coordinated approach in accordance with the fundamental values at the heart of the European Union and international laws.

The partnership:

- Prism – Promozione Internazionale Sicilia-Mondo - Italy, Caltanissetta (Project coordinator) Prism acts as a local development agent encouraging transnational cooperation on policies promoted by the European Commission. The association is intended as a laboratory where both public and private organizations and individuals with related interests can converge, exchange ideas and collaborate to develop projects that promote the economic, social and cultural development of the territory. Website: associazioneprism.eu.
- Migranti Solidali - Italy, Caltanissetta The Association is a migrant self-help organization that unrolls social activities concerning intercultural mediation, orientation, information and support of refugees and migrants, including educational workshop, events and seminars that promote intercultural dialogue and exchange at both local and international level. Facebook page: Aps Migranti Solidali.
- Seiklejate Vennaskond - Estonia, Tartu Seiklejate Vennaskond is non-governmental non-profit organization active in youth field from Tartu, Estonia. Organization target groups include young people 13-30, youth workers and youth leaders. Organization helps young people to take initiative and put their good ideas into practice. Website: seiklejad.org.
- Inter Alia - Greece, Athens Inter Alia is a civic organization and a think-tank based in Athens, Greece. Its mission is to raise the capacity and awareness of European citizens on the available channels for acting, participating & shaping Europe. The four main tools for action are: Analysis, Debate, Networking and Research. Website: interaliaproject.com.
- INFOREF Initiatives pour une Formation Efficace - Belgium, Liege INFOREF is an association to promote the use of information and communication technologies as well as innovative teaching methods. INFOREF provides training for teachers and adults and has participated for twenty years in national and European projects related to education and learning. Website: inforef.be.

- A.D.E.L. - Association for Development, Education and Labour - Slovakia, Stropkov
A.D.E.L. is an organization, which creates opportunities for personal and professional development of young people. A.D.E.L. aims to enrich the educational, social and cultural life of young people living in the country, with a focus on young people with fewer opportunities and coming from Eastern Slovakia. Website: adelslovakia.org.
- HUMANA People to people in Latvia - Latvia, Riga Humana People to People in Latvia is a non-governmental organization, founded in 2006. Its aim is to promote public awareness of development issues, calling for everyone to understand their role in the modern world and to play an active and responsible behaviour in its creation. Website: hpplatvia.com
- Siauliai Municipality Care Home - Lithuania, Šiaulių miesto savivaldybės globos namai is the Šiauliai Municipal social services agency. The main purpose of this organization is to provide social services for disabled people, old and elderly people and migrants who live in Lithuania. Website: globosnamai.siauliai.lt
- Aufbruch Neukölln - Germany, Berlin Aufbruch Neukölln is committed to the convention that migration benefits migrants and society. Its mission is to advance understanding of migration issues, uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants, support migrants in the process of integration. Website: aufbruch-neukoelln.de.
- EFUS - European forum for urban security - France, Paris Created in 1987, the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS) is the only European network of local and regional authorities dedicated to urban security. Bringing together nearly 250 cities and regions from 16 countries, it aims to strengthen crime reduction policies and to promote the role of the local level in the design and implementation of national and European policies. Website: efus.eu.
- Tudás Alapítvány - Hungary, Hódmezővásárhely The Tudás Alapítvány (Foundation for Knowledge) was formed in 1994. Its objectives are: to support young artists and their art exhibitions; to support lecturers and researchers; to support book and journal publishing; to release various publications; to organise scientific and cultural conferences; to present and support Hungarian culture abroad; to support the studies of talented students. Website: tudAsalapitvany.hu.
- Centro em Rede de Investigaçãom Antropologia - Portugal, Lisbon CRIA is an inter-institutional centre devoted to advanced training and research in anthropology. CRIA promotes new research opportunities providing scientific research leadership and optimizing intellectual and material resources. One of the fundamental areas of research at national and international level is the development of projects within the area of migration, refugees, and mobility. Website: cria.org.pt.
- Roma Youth Centre - Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kumanovo Roma Youth Centre is a non-governmental, non-profit Roma youth voluntary organization. RYC is active youth organization lead by Roma youth working on the empowerment of young people, in particular Roma, to help them be active part of the civic society

and the community they live in, to represent the voice of the new generation as potential of tomorrow. Facebook page: Roma Youth Centre.

- Centrul pentru Studiul Comparat al Migratiei - Romania, Cluj Napoca Romanian Center for Comparative Migration Studies was established in 2011. Starting with 2013 it is affiliated to the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work at Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The Center deals with topics such as international migration, forms and dynamics of international migration, transnational migration, and transnational citizenship. Website: migrationcenter.ro.
- Association of European projects in Bulgaria - Bulgaria, Varna, Association "European projects in Bulgaria" is a no-profit organization who works in interaction with social institutions, schools, public entities and individuals in the field of social work, psychology, computer science, health, law, art and volunteering. Facebook page: Association of European Projects in Bulgaria.

3.4 Greece

In Greece there are many NGOs working in many fields but in the last years, in order to solve the problems related to the migrants, most of them are now involved especially in the immigration field, such as ARSIS and the Greek Council for Refugees.

In Greece there are many NGOs. Following the last events in the Mediterranean Sea, with the problems related to the migrants, most of them, born for other aims, are now involved in the help of the refugees. Some of these NGOs are:

- ARSIS (Association for the Social Support of Youth) is an organization founded in 1992 for the rights of children and adolescents. It takes care especially of unaccompanied minors. Website: <http://arsis.gr/en/home/>.
- The Greek Council for Refugees focuses its work on full support for refugees and asylum applicants and provides, inter alia, a social and legal advice. Website: <http://www.gcr.gr/index.php/en/>.
- The Greek Forum of Migrants is(GFM) is a network of immigrant organizations and communities, founded in September 2002 website: <http://www.migrant.gr/cgi-bin/pages/indexv2.pl?arlang=Greek&type=index#>.
- The organization Kivotostou Kosmou (Ark of the world) supports children of different nationalities from socially disadvantaged families. The work of Ark includes *inter alia* the provision of food, child-care, afternoon courses and other measures for social inclusion. Website: www.kivotostoukosmou.org.
- The organization Paidia tis Gis (Children of the World) takes care of children of all nationalities and works with youth prisons and orphanages, helping street children. Website <http://www.paidiatisgis.gr/>.

- Organisation Earth was founded in 2010 to raise awareness for the environment. Since May 2016 the subdivision Earth Refugee exists, which is especially engaged in the camps in Sounio (Lavrio) and Skaramangas to help refugees Website: <http://www.organizationearth.org/> or <https://www.facebook.com/EarthRefugee>.
- The Greek Association of Paraplegic Persons (wheelchair users) PASPA supports refugees e.g. who have lost a leg and have to use a wheelchair or a prosthesis in war and possibly also their families by offering housing, nutrition, medical care and legal advice. Website: <http://www.paspa.gr>.
- The organization Praksis fights poverty and exclusion; it reaches out to the poor, homeless, uninsured, migrants any form (refugees, asylum-seekers, unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking and forced prostitution). It provides counselling, education and support for people at risk of social exclusion. Website: <http://www.praksis.gr/en/about-praksis>.
- Solidarity Now advocates for the rights of people in risk of social exclusion such as Roma but also refugees and migrants, and provides food aid, accommodation and medical care. The organization functions as a network for various help organizations and operates a Solidarity Center in Athens (since December 2014) and Thessaloniki (since January 2014). Special programme (Shelter, PSS, medical, legal and social aid) since February 2017 with EU and UNHCR funds for LGBTQ refugees “Safe Refugee”: <http://www.solidaritynow.org/en/safe-refugee/>. Website: http://www.solidaritynow.org//index_en.html.
- The Smile of the Child advocates since more than 21 years for the rights of children and adolescents and unaccompanied minors, providing them accommodation, care and medical provisions. Website: www.hamogelo.gr.
- APOSTOLI is the major charity, welfare and humanitarian aid agency of the Archdiocese of Athens (Church of Greece). “Apostoli” offers charity, welfare, emergency relief and development assistance and programmes to all those in need, without discrimination. Website: www.mkoapostoli.gr.
- The Ecumenical Refugee Program (ECRP) founded in 1994 offers a wide variety of help for refugees. It is a project partner for EU DG ECHO, UNHCR and the Greek Health Ministry and offers social and legal aid, interpreters and shelter for refugees. It also assists family reunion e.g. of unaccompanied minors. Website: <http://refugeeshub.org/places/athina/accommodation/ecumenical-refugee-program-erp/>.

3.5 North Africa

In North Africa the civil society and the situation of NGOs is not always the same and it changes depending on in which country they operate. For instance, Morocco, with new Constitution following popular protests in 2011, could be considered among the most enabling in the Arab world and a model for other countries in terms of freedom of association, even if there is a disparity between

what the law says and what happens in the reality. In fact, associations touching on sensitive topics such as Western Sahara, the monarchy, and religion, have reported some resistance from authorities.

In Algeria the context is quite different and civil society operates in a politically complex environment, therefore local NGOs face many restrictions in carrying out their activities, and some organizations opting to close down voluntarily rather than confront administrative and legal hurdles.

In Tunisia the current situation seems quite different in fact Tunisia one of the “most ahead” countries in the MENA region in terms of Human Rights, especially regarding women rights. Nevertheless, at the moment Tunisian civil society seems to face new restrictions on their ability to operate freely and effectively in fact the government issued a statement on June 12, 2017, pressuring CSOs to publish all sources of foreign funding within one month or face dissolution in the case of non-compliance.

Morocco

Morocco’s legal framework for civil society could be considered among the most enabling in the Arab world and a model for other countries. In fact, since King Mohammed VI ascended to the throne in 1999, in Morocco there have been many reforms including the passage of substantial amendments to the Decree on the Right to Establish Associations in 2002 and approval of a new Constitution following popular protests in 2011. Following the 2011 amendments, the Constitution provides more expansive rights for civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. These reforms have enlarged the legal space for civil society, expanding its rights as well as its role in policymaking and the public sphere.

Despite these new laws, there is a disparity between what the law says and what happens in the reality. In fact, associations touching on sensitive topics such as Western Sahara, the monarchy, and religion, have reported some resistance from authorities, both within and outside the bounds of the law and since May 2017, security forces have arrested more than 400 protesters, including children and several journalists over the largely peaceful protests²⁰.

Some Moroccan NGOs:

Espace Associatif (<http://www.espace-associatif.ma>) is a Moroccan association, established in 1996, contributing to the strengthening and promotion of the associative movement for democratic development.

In order to develop the efficiency and quality of intervention of associations, Espace Associatif works for:

- Strengthening the skills and abilities of community leaders,
- Improving the environment of the action of these associations.

²⁰ See “Civic Freedom Monitor: Morocco”, *ICNL*, <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/algeria.html> (last accessed 18/12/17).

The challenges for Espace Associatif are many, and for this reason Espace Associatif focuses on mobilization around crucial themes, mainly socio-economic rights, gender mainstreaming in action programs, education, good governance, Local Management and the Environment

With the main aim of promoting of associationism Espace Associatif works as a platform for the exchange of associative experiences.

ADFM - Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (<http://www.adfm.ma/>) is a non-governmental, non-profit, feminist and autonomous organization. Physically, the ADFM is located in three cities: Rabat, Casablanca and Marrakech. However, the Association is focused on creating capacity building of new similar associations in many regions and cities of Morocco. The ADFM' s approaches are: advocacy, proximity, capacity building and networking. The ADFM mission is: the protection and promotion of human rights of women as universally recognized. Its main objective is to promote strategic rights and interests of women.

AMDH - Association Marocaine des Droits Humains (<http://www.amdh.org.ma>) works for the preservation of human dignity, respect for all human rights in their universality and for the protection and promotion of these rights.

AMDH is based on the following principles:

- The Universality of Human Rights: for AMDH, Human Rights are the heritage of all humanity and must benefit all human beings;
- The Globality of Human Rights: AMDH defends human rights in their indivisibility and considers that they can be respected effectively and efficiently only if respect extends to all areas: political, civil, economic, social and cultural;
- Mass Action: AMDH considers that the action for Human Rights cannot be the work of the elites only, but that of all the citizens and first of all of those who suffer of their violation;
- Independence: in its activity the AMDH is independent of any political organization;
- Democracy: AMDH is based on democratic principles. AMDH considers that respect for human rights in their universal and global acceptance can only be truly and effectively established in the context of a society where political, economic, social and cultural democracy reigns and of the state of which *laïcité* is one of the essential characteristics.

Algeria

Civil society in Algeria operates in a politically complex environment, influenced by attempts at manipulation by different political forces. For over two decades, associations were governed by the highly restrictive *Law on Associations* (Law 90-31 of 1990), which was adopted shortly before a military coup and a prolonged period of violence and terrorism in Algeria. Following the pro-reform uprisings in other Arab countries in early 2011, President Bouteflika pledged that he would enact major political and legislative

reforms to address popular discontent, including a number of new laws to enhance individual rights and freedoms²¹.

But the new *Law on Associations* (Law 12-06 of 2012), adopted in 2012, created more additional restrictions on the freedom of association. According to the 2012 Law the government can refuse to register associations and fails to provide them with an adequate remedy to appeal a rejection of their registration request. The law also allows the government to suspend an association's activities or dissolve it on vague grounds, places restrictions on associations' founders, makes it difficult for associations to receive foreign funds, and imposes heavy fines and criminal penalties for members or leaders of informal associations. Since the Law's adoption, a number of associations have faced new obstacles in carrying out their activities, with some organizations opting to close down voluntarily rather than confront administrative and legal hurdles.

In addition, in January 2012, Algeria's government adopted a new *Law on Information*, which places substantial restrictions on associations' ability to publish and disseminate information.

Some Algerian NGOs:

Algerian Association for Youth and Development. Oran, Algeria (<http://www.aajdz.org/>).

The Algerian Association for Youth and Development (AAYD) is a non-profit making Algerian organisation working in the areas of youth and the environment. Its aim is to develop exchange links for mutual help and to bring young people together, fostering the design and development of exchange projects.

Its membership includes training and development specialists operating at different levels across a wide range of activities, with a particular focus on:

- Community development;
- Outdoor activities;
- Environmental work;
- Training and education for the most deprived groups.

Its aims:

1. Classroom based and practical training;
2. Designing and developing ecological projects;
3. Setting up cross cultural projects and programmes;
4. Developing leisure and cultural tourism products.

Association Arc en Ciel (<http://www.arcencieldz.org/>)

This NGO has a cultural and educational vocation. It works with schools and young people 13-40 years old, implementing projects in the field of education for sustainable development and cultural heritage, intercultural and global education and active citizenship.

²¹ See "Civic Freedom Monitor: Algeria", *ICNL*, <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/algeria.html> (last accessed 18/11/17).

This association has been implementing many projects, working in cooperation with some French NGOs. Established in Ain Séfra in 2005, it was recognized as an association in April 2007 and in the first years it was composed of young Sefraoui university students. Association Arc en Ciel regularly organizes events and specialized exhibitions for a public of students and citizens, especially to raise awareness of preservation of Algerian heritage.

The association works to establish a network of partners and actors who have the originality to associate closely culture and action for the safeguarding of the Algerian environment and biodiversity.

Association Culturelle Amusnaw (<http://www.amusnaw.new.fr>)

The association *Amusnaw*²² was established in 1991 and it is based in Tizi-Ouzou, Kabylie. Since the beginning it has been working to promote cultural activities, including theatre, cinema and singing, adapting to the transformation of current social and cultural context and trying to respond to the current needs: the care of the population, especially children and women.

In addition to offering cultural activities, the association has tried to respond to the needs of young people through the establishment of a media library which offers multimedia training, office automation, Internet, computer graphics, video editing, tutoring and a reading area.

The association, sensitive to the condition of children and women who are victims of violence, provide psychological assistance in order to support these vulnerable people. This action has helped to draw society's attention to the situation of the children often victims of any kind of violence, in order to take care of many of the child's problems and to accompany many children in their daily lives and their education. The listening unit works in collaboration with numerous associations and listening points installed in schools.

Graine de paix (aldjiafifi@yahoo.fr)

Graine de paix is a local association recently established by some members of the Network of Algerian Ombudsmen active since July 2005 across the national territory to set up prevention and reconstruction of human relationships in a society that has experienced a period marked by painful and often tragic events that have since sought peace, serenity, justice and tolerance. Managing conflict through mediation is one of the most common ways to reach its goals and meet its needs.

Graine de paix works locally, nationally and internationally through methods and tools promoting and valuing the concepts related to intercultural pedagogy, interpersonal communication, mediation as an alternative way of regulating conflicts in order to foster to live better together in the community and especially in the youth environment.

²² The *Amusnaw* is the highly respected sage who blends poetic language with political critique. This word comes from Amazigh language.

Graine de paix uses artistic and multi-media tools (drawing, music, theatre, singing, photography, video) as means of expression and recognition of potentialities.

Youth Association for Environment and Culture (www.ajaec.01.ma)

Youth Association for Environment and Culture was founded under the Algerian law 12-06 by the beginning of 2013. It is a non-profit NGO which works to improve the quality of life for those people living in Beni Senous Region. The Beni Senous region is the largest rural area in the Wilaya of Tlemcen. Its main goal is to protect, maintain, and enhance the ecology of its region for the environmental, social, and economic wellbeing of area residents. It aims to do this through projects that:

- Improve & enhance the environment;
- Create educational learning opportunities;
- Increase cultural & historic awareness;
- Save and protect the cultural heritage of the region;
- Encourage young people to ecological tourism by organising outputs and excursions;
- Create opportunities for recreational & economic development;
- Bring people together through volunteerism, thus contributing to a strong and vibrant community;
- Spread peace culture between young people.

Y.A.E.C is governed by a volunteer Board of teachers, students and engineers.

Association de Réflexion, d'Echanges et d'Actions pour l'Environnement et le Développement - AREA-ED - ChercHELL-Tipasa (<http://www.area-ed.org/>)

L'AREA-ED is an Algerian association established in October 1993 by a group of young university students. It is formally recognized by the Ministry of the Interior and Local Authorities.

AREA-ED' main objectives:

- Preservation and respect of natural landscapes and their components, animal life, and wild and domestic biodiversity;
- Preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage;
- Enhancement of natural and cultural heritage in local development policies;
- Participation and involvement of civil society in all issues related to the environment and local development.

Other NGOs:

Association Algérienne d'Alphabétisation

Association Algérienne de Solidarité aux Malades Respiratoires

Association Algérienne pour la Planification Familiale

Association d'aide aux enfants cancéreux

Association Nationale de Volontariat Touiza

Comite Algérien des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples (CADHP)

Croissant Rouge Algérien

Fédération des Associations des Handicapés Moteur
Fondation pour la Promotion de la Santé et le Développement de la Recherche (FOREM)
S.O.S. Femmes en Détresse
Scouts Musulmans Algériens

Tunisia

Tunisia, together with Lebanon, is considered for some reasons one of the “most ahead” countries in the MENA region in terms of Human Rights, especially regarding women rights. Nevertheless, at the moment Tunisian civil society seems to face new restrictions on its ability to operate freely and effectively, following a consultative meeting held in last June where the Tunisian government proposed amending the existing Decree on Association to overcome challenges in the law, and for this reason many civil society and human rights organizations in Tunisia are concerned that amending the law could restrict freedom of association. In addition, the government issued a statement on June 12, 2017, pressuring CSOs to publish all sources of foreign funding within one month or face dissolution in the case of non-compliance²³.

Some Tunisian NGOs:

Jamaity - La plateforme de la société civile tunisienne (<http://jamaity.org/>)

Jamaity is a project that aims to create a suitable environment for the development of CSOs in Tunisia. The platform was launched in January 2014, with the support of various stakeholders. Jamaity was born as an initiative of the British Council and the Euro-Mediterranean Network for Human Rights (EMHRN) in partnership with the European Union following the idea that the Tunisian civil society can change things.

Jamaity is an associative, interactive and participatory platform that brings together CSOs in the same space to facilitate their networking, give them access to information and opportunities available for them.

The specific objectives of the project are as follows:

Objective 1: Collect and disseminate information on associations and technical and financial partners.

Objective 2: Facilitate networking and communication between the associations and the technical and financial partners.

World Association of Women Entrepreneurs

(<https://www.nawbo.org/partners/international-alliances/world-association-women-entrepreneurs-fcem>)

FCEM is non-profit, non-governmental, non-political and non-sectarian organization whose activities at the national and international level are aimed at promoting women's entrepreneurial initiatives and reinforcing national associations of women business owners. FCEM is the acronym for “Les Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises Mondiales”, or

²³ See “Civic Freedom Monitor: Tunisia”, *ICNL*, <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/Tunisia.html> (last accessed 20/11/17).

World Association of Women Entrepreneurs. Today, the FCEM network includes over 60 countries across five continents.

Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research

(<https://www.facebook.com/CenterofArabWomenforTrainingandResearch/>)

The Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), created in 1993 with headquarters in Tunis, is a unique Regional Institution in the Arab Region. Its interests are focused on gender issues, and it seeks to promote Arab woman's participation in development and to provide services to the different parties concerned with these issues. These services include training, research and networking with the aim to achieve a better understanding of women's conditions combined to a better appreciation of the status and role of Arab women, and to support gender equality as an integral part of human rights in the Arab world. The centre benefits from the unique structure of its board of trustees establishing strong partnership relations with Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations, International institutions and Regional development programmes mainly in collaboration with the United Nations agencies.

Union Nationale de la Femme Tunisienne (<http://www.unft.org.tn/fr/>)

The Union Nationale de la femme tunisienne, is a non-governmental organization established in 1956, with the independence of Tunisia. In August of the same year, the Personal Status Code was promulgated. In the beginning, UNFT dedicated its outreach campaigns to women across the country to raise awareness of their rights and their role in economic and social development. Since then, UNFT has been campaigning for the improvement of the status of Tunisian women. It has thus worked to strengthen the legal base which, under the leadership of the current President, has been a decisive advance thanks to the amendments to the code introduced in August 1992 and the presidential measures of April 1996.

Atlas - Association Tunisienne pour l'Auto-développement et la Solidarité

(<https://www.facebook.com/pg/fondationatlastun/about/>)

ATLAS is a Tunisian association recognized in 1990. ATLAS works to contribute effectively to the establishment and maintenance of a dynamic and sustainable development, socially equitable, geographically balanced, and strongly rooted in culture. The main aims of ATLAS are:

- Helping people to value their tangible and intangible local heritage, their culture, their traditions, their wisdom and their local know-how in order to use them as sources of development and identity.
- Promoting, in particular, silvo-pastoral tourism present in the regions offering this potential, such as the North-West regions, specifically the Khroumirie-Mogods region.
- Promoting natural and forest resources as integrated development levers, to offer high value-added products and services, related to cosmetics and hygiene.

Institut Arabe des Droits de l'Homme. AIHR. ([Http://www.aihr-iadh.net](http://www.aihr-iadh.net))

The Arab Institute for Human Rights is an independent Arab non-governmental organization based in Tunisia. It was founded in 1989 at the initiative of the Arab Organization for Human Rights, the Arab Lawyers Union, and the Tunisian League for Human Rights and with the support of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights. The Institute received the UNESCO International Award for Human Rights Education for the year 1992.

AJMEC (<https://www.facebook.com/ajmec.tunusia/>)

AJMEC is a non-governmental independent and non-profit organization active in the field of youth. The main objectives of AJMEC are:

- Providing opportunities of international exchanges for young people.
- Promoting youth initiatives in order to improve social work and to facilitate the integration of young people in local society.
- Establishing an active cooperation with Mediterranean and international organizations working in the context of youth and culture.

Through various activities, it tries to provide opportunities for positive and varied development of personality for local and foreign youth. It also actively seeks to involve more young Tunisians in community life locally, nationally and internationally in order to promote their openings mind, creativity and learning. Its main target is young Tunisians aged between 15 and 30 years. Its main activities are the organization of discussions and debates on various topics (social, environmental, cultural) for young people to introduce them to different priorities such as fight against racism, xenophobia and segregation and promote the values of peace, democracy, mutual respect of human rights and tolerance.

Association Tunisienne de Lutte contre les comportements à risque

(<https://www.facebook.com/ATLCR.tn/>)

The Tunisian Association for the Fight against risk behaviours (ATLCR) is a newly formed association. It is a non-profit organization to fight against all risk behaviours. Created on March 9th, 2014, the organization's mission consists in: prevention, support, accompaniment and psychosocial support for vulnerable and high-risk people living with HIV /AIDS, injection drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with men, with regard to a human rights approach based on equity, non-discrimination, acceptance, non-judgment, impartiality, independence and confidentiality. The ATLCR aims through its multiple activities (prevention, risk reduction, support, assistance, help for self-representation, research, advocacy) to promote the health of vulnerable people, facilitate their socio-professional integration and fight against any form of stigmatization, exclusion and violence against them. Missions: 1. Preventing risky behaviour among vulnerable populations through information, education and communication (IEC). 2. Prevent sexually transmitted infections and AIDS. 3. Preventing drug use and reduce new infections in HIV / HCV among IDUs. 4. Preventing violence in all its forms, especially gender-based violence. Beneficiaries: - Young people in the region aged 25 to 30- People

living with HIV- Men who have sex with men (MSM) - Sex workers (TS) - Abused women - Injection drug users (IDU) Implementation tools: Organization of information sessions, education and communication (IEC); listen, advice and guidance. 5. Psychosocial and legal accompaniment. 6. Strengthening the partnership with other organizations (GOs and NGOs). 7. Contribution to research and multidisciplinary scientific studies on risk behaviour.

Association Tunisienne d'Action Culturelle (ATAC) (<http://atac.tn>)

The Association Tunisienne d'Action Culturelle (ATAC) is an association that wants to share resources in order to cope with stagnant phenomena and inaction by encouraging young people to engage in different areas: Cultural, Social, Development and Human Rights.

Other NGOs:

Association d'Assistance aux Grands handicapés à Domicile (AAGHD)

Association de Défense des Tunisiens à l'Étranger

Association de Sauvegarde des Monuments et Sites

Association des Études Internationales

Association des Habitants d'El Mourouj 2

Association Féminine Tunisie 21

Association Femme et Développement

Association pour la Promotion de l'Emploi et du Logement (A.P.E.L.)

Association pour la Protection de la Nature et de l'Environnement, Kairouan

Association Santé et Environnement

Association Tunisie-Méditerranée pour le Développement Durable

Association Tunisienne de la Communication

Association Tunisienne de Prévention de Toxicomanie

Association Tunisienne des Auberges et Tourisme de Jeunes

Association Tunisienne des Mères

Association Tunisienne des Villages d'Enfants SOS

Association Tunisienne du Planning Familial (ATPF)

Association Tunisienne pour la Protection de la Nature et de l'Environnement

Fédération de Tunis de Solidarité Sociale

Fondation El Kef pour le Développement Régional

Nadi Al Bassar - North African Center for Sight and Visual Sciences

Organisation de la mère maghrébine

Organisation Nationale de l'Enfance Tunisienne

Organisation Tunisienne de Jeunes Médecins Sans Frontières

Organisation Tunisienne de l'Éducation et de la Famille

Scouts Tunisienne, Les

Société Tunisienne des Sciences Médicales

3.6 NGOs working in Palestine

Palestinian Civil Society Organisations are different from most civil societies and most Palestinian CSOs were created out of an established “state framework”. This means that most organisations emerged and developed in the absence of the state and in the absence of national independence. Therefore, this is a very important peculiar characteristic which makes Palestinian organizations a unique case in the world.

European Platform for Middle East Dialogue (EPMED) is an independent NGO working in oPt with simple yet powerful goals: inclusive constructive dialogue, humanisation of the other, education and empowerment. Their main work focuses at the moment are the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Refugee Response in Europe.

The European Platform for Middle East Dialogue²⁴ (EPMED) is an independent NGO with simple yet powerful goals: inclusive constructive dialogue, humanisation of the other, education and empowerment. Their main work focuses at the moment are the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Refugee Response in Europe.

EPMED was founded to empower Europe to effectively facilitate dialogue and foster understanding, and to empower local people on the international level, allowing their voices to be heard and to influence policy making.

The European Platform for Middle East Dialogue (EPMED) creates a space for constructive inclusive dialogue, tolerance, respect, education and understanding in Europe for topics related to the many Middle Eastern conflicts, with a particular focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Through the examination of an inclusive range of voices and many perspectives living the conflicts in the Middle East, EPMED facilitates conflict transformation from within Europe, thus promoting religious and racial harmony and advancing conflict resolution and reconciliation. EPMED is open to both local and international partners in order to accomplish its aims. Primary beneficiaries will be those who attend its educational events and receive its briefings, as well as those who travel from the conflict zones in order to conduct their peace work in a neutral area. Secondary beneficiaries are the communities at large from which its participants and audiences come from, as word spreads of Irish and EU support of the peace process and how it can be involved. Tertiary beneficiaries are the people of the Middle East, and Israel and Palestine in particular, as the ripple effects of its work may have an eventual impact on the peace process and wider public discourse.

Channel 4 Change

The Channel 4 Change is its network of Partners in Israel and Palestine, with whom EPMED undertake projects and whose experiences they draw on for needs assessments and first-hand perspectives. The C4C is responsible for participating in its bi-monthly Conflict Perspectives newsletters, as well as leading its Bi-Annual Position Papers to be made available to key EU policy makers and think tanks.

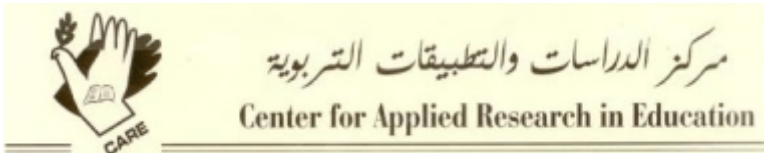
²⁴ See <http://ep-med.org> (last accessed 19/06/17).



The Debate for Peace program²⁵ brings together Arab and Jewish students from all over Israel to participate in Model United Nations conferences, where they debate, negotiate and ultimately attempt to resolve the most difficult and pressing challenges in international relations.

Political is Personal

Political is Personal²⁶, within the spirit of the principles of gender mainstreaming and UNSCR 1325, was inspired to create a way in which the women living out the realities and consequences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be heard. PiP envisions a world where women's voices are essential in conflict zones, the initiative's long-term objective is to not only contribute to policy shaping, study and long-term resolutions in this conflict, but to do so in other conflict zones as well.



CARE Palestine²⁷ was established in 1989, through the initiative of educationalists and intellectuals. The foundation's legal status being based on the Israeli legislation (Reg. No. 511 59343-6) and later on (7-25/106) the Palestinian legislation and International Conventions. It is a non-profit, voluntary institution whose objective is to initiate and promote activities that lead to the development of democracy, civic society, culture, and a more human world.



²⁵ See <https://debateforpeace.wordpress.com/> (last accessed 19/06/17).

²⁶ See <http://www.politicalispersonal.org/> (last accessed 19/06/17).

²⁷ See <http://www.care-palestine.com> (last accessed 19/06/17).

HOME²⁸'s goal is humanization of the other. They engage in activities on the ground bringing together Jews, Muslims and Christians, supporting children affected by conflict on both sides in Israel-Palestine.



Two States One Homeland²⁹ is a political initiative run by local grassroots activists which supports the right of Israelis and Palestinians, Jews, Muslims and Christians, to live and share the land.



GN4C³⁰ is driven by the belief in a locally-led, conflict-sensitive and inclusive approach towards social transformation, GN4C opens communication channels between conflicting parties and trains insider-partial mediators. GN4C is creating sustainable dialogue platforms across Syria contributing to civic dialogue and conciliation efforts. GN4C is dedicated to positive transformation.



The Ethical Journalism Network³¹ promotes ethics, good governance and independent regulation of media content. Their aim is simple: to support the values of honesty, truth and public purpose in media and to build trust in journalism as an instrument of democratic expression, as a guarantor of free speech, and as a reliable and trusted interpreter of the complex world in which they live.



²⁸ See <https://the-home.org/> (last accessed 20/06/17).

²⁹ See <http://2states1homeland.org/en> (last accessed 19/06/17).

³⁰ See <http://www.gn4c.org> (last accessed 19/06/17).

³¹ See <http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org> (last accessed 19/06/17).

MEPEACE³² is a network for peace with thousands of peacemakers and millions of page visits on mepeace.org. Online, the MEPEACE web platform enables individuals and organizations from more than 200 countries to overcome physical barriers, share and learn about one another. The Israeli media has called MEPEACE the “Facebook of Peace” because it works like Facebook and is dedicated to peace. All are invited to join on mepeace.org. It will be working with Mepeace on its Tech Startup Project in 2017 bringing together young Palestinian and Israeli tech entrepreneurs.

كتلة السلام
גוש שלום
GUSH SHALOM
info@gush-shalom.org 03 5221732



Gush Shalom³³ (גוש שלום, lit. The Peace Bloc [Coalition]) is an Israeli peace activism group founded and led by former Irgun and Knesset Member and journalist, Uri Avery, in 1993. It will be engaging with Gush Shalom during their annual olive harvest which pairs Israelis and Internationals with Palestinian families in order to bring back these voices for its Perspectives Project.

Italian NGOs working in the West Bank and Gaza Strip:

1. Aispo: Associazione Italiana per la Solidarietà tra I Popoli e ONG, recognized in 1985 by MAE and set up by two professionals from the San Raffaele hospital in Milan to promote cooperation in developing countries.
2. Acs: Since 1998 ACS is a non-denominational NGO with a special proven expertise in agriculture, including organic agriculture, and microfinance.
3. Avsi: AVSI is an NGO founded in 1972 and is involved in over 100 development projects in 39 countries, including the Palestinian Territories.
4. Ats: Associazione di Terra Santa collects and promotes the conservation of Palestinian heritage gathered during the guardianship of the Holy Land. ATS was born from the need to provide qualified services, technical assistance and direct intervention in preserving cultural heritage.
5. Cesvi: *Cooperazione e Sviluppo*, is an independent humanitarian organization founded on 15 January 1985 in Bergamo, where its headquarters sit. Between 1994 and 2005 CESVI has worked in the Palestinian Territories on projects for children and in support of SMEs. IN 1996 CESVI reached an agreement with Centro Italiano per la Pace in Medio Oriente (Cipmo) to implement humanitarian projects throughout the Middle East. CESVI has been involved in Palestinian development projects since 1996; since 2000 it is committed to strengthening the Palestinian economy through *cash for work* initiatives and support for young people in Beit Leed.

³² See <http://mepeace.org/> (last accessed 19/06/17).

³³ See <http://www.gush-shalom.org> (last accessed 19/06/17).

6. Cisp: Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli, is an NGO recognised as such by the 49/87 laws. It works in the field of international development and social inclusion. It has been operating in Palestine (Gaza and West Bank) since 1995.
7. Ciss: Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud is a not-for-profit organisation set up in Palermo in 1985. In 1989 the Italian MAE afforded CISS NGO status, capable of implementing development projects in developing countries.
8. Cric: Centro Regionale di Intervento per la Cooperazione, founded in Reggio Calabria in 1983 as Associazione di Volontariato Internazionale. In 1986, it was recognized as an NGO by the MAE and it has since collaborated closely with the EU on education for development and international cooperation. In 1987 it joined COCIS (the NGO coordination entity). Since 1987 it also runs activities in support of civilian populations affected by conflict, working in Palestine since 1987.
9. Coopi: Cooperazione Internazionale is a non-denominational, independent Italian NGO founded in 1965. Today, COOPI operates in 25 countries with more than 150 development and emergency projects. COOPI is committed to reduce poverty in the Global South through sustainable development initiatives;
10. Cospe: Is a private, non-denominational and not-for-profit organisation. Since its establishment in 1983 it operates in the Global South, in Italy and Europe for intercultural dialogue, sustainable development, human rights, peace and justice amongst peoples. At present, Cospe is running over 100 projects in approximately 30 countries around the world.
11. DisVi: Disarmo e Sviluppo, was founded in October 1982 by a group of doctors formerly working in development in Mozambique and a group of concerned citizens from the city of Asti (Piedmont). DISVI focuses on socio-health issues and environmental matters, integrating technical and professional skills in its projects.
12. EducAid: is an NGO recognised by the Italian MAE founded in 2000. It involves organizations, socially-responsible businesses and individuals working in professional and ethical education and social initiatives in international and intercultural settings. EducAid operates in a number of countries supporting education projects and building capacity for the inclusion of all children in education, especially disadvantaged ones.
13. Gvc: GVC is a non-denominational development NGO recognized by the Italian MAE and the EU. Founded in Italy in 1971, today it operates in 27 countries in the Global South. GVC seeks to promote sustainable development that continues in time and brings about concrete results. These include: water, children, rights, education, employment, fighting AIDS, etc.
14. Medina: is an NGO working in development and international solidarity in the global south, supporting justice, equality, human rights and socio-environmental solidarity.
15. Nexus: Nexus Emilia Romagna is a development NGO supported by CGIL Emilia Romagna. It was set up in 1993 and recognised by the Italian MAE in 2007. Nexus works in the field of international development to contribute to the improvement of

- standards of living and strengthening of democratic institutions, in respect of cultural differences and in light of the principles of self-determination of peoples.
16. Overseas: Overseas was founded in 1971 by a group of volunteers from Modena. Initially the organisation focused on promoting “global development” through development projects in small rural communities in Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zaire.
 17. Oxfam Italia: Oxfam is one of the largest international confederations specialized in humanitarian aid and development projects. It is made up of 17 branches in different countries that collaborate with 3.000 local partners in over 90 countries to identify sustainable solutions for poverty and injustice. Oxfam Italia joined the Oxfam international confederation in 2010 and is built on the experiences of Ucodep, an Italian NGO operating with passion and professionalism for over three decades to improve the living conditions of thousands of poor people around the world to empower their future lives and for the enjoyment of human rights.
 18. Terre des Hommes: Terre des Hommes Italia onlus, is one of the most active and recognizable NGOs focusing on children’s rights in developing countries, without political, ethnic or religious discrimination. TDH is a member of the International Federation of Terre des homes with branches in Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Syria; it operates in 72 countries through 1.164 projects. In Palestine TDH coordinates various projects
 19. Un Ponte Per: Is an organization of volunteers for international solidarity founded in 1991. Since then this NGO works to prevent new conflicts, especially in the Middle East and the Balkans, through awareness raising, cultural exchanges and international cooperation projects in partnership with local civil society organizations.
 20. Vento di Terra: Since 2006 VdT has operated in the fields of education, eco-architecture and SMEs. In Palestine it has set up two schools for local Bedouin communities. Its projects involving part of the Jordan Valley have caught the attention of the media and the UN. VdT supports two cooperatives producing traditional jewellery and leather sandals, distributed by Commercio Equo. VdT aims at initiating ongoing development processes and new techniques to replicate. In 2011 it set up an Infancy Centre for the Um al Nasser community in Gaza. VdT is also present in Haiti and Mozambique. Various VdT projects have achieved international recognition.
 21. Vis: Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo is a formal NGO established in 1986. It is based on Christian principles and the charisma of Don Bosco, and it is part of the Centro Nazionale Opere Salesiane - CNOS. Its projects are almost exclusively in the field of education, including inclusion of street children, literacy, the protection of human rights and women’s emancipation, vocational training and the professional reintegration of poor and marginalized young people. For many years in Palestine, VIS has supported vocational training courses at the Salesian Technical School in Bethlehem for local young people.
 22. RTM. Reggio Terzo Mondo is an international voluntary non-governmental organization (NGO) inspired by Christian values. Since 1973, it has promoted international cooperation and solidarity projects in Africa, Central and South-Eastern

Europe, Latin America, Western Balkans and Middle East as well as information, sensitization and development education activities in Italy.

RTM's mission consists in promoting people's dignity, safeguard their fundamental rights and support the economic and social development processes, paying particular attention to people and environment.

RTM operates through medium and long-term interventions with the active participation of local partners and the involvement of local communities.

4. MDGs and SDGs in the MENA Region

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) are a universal set of goals, targets and indicators that UN member states will be expected to use to frame their agendas and political policies over the next 15 years. This set of goals was created as the Post 2015 Development Agenda (successor to the Millennium Development Goals, expired in 2015).

In the Middle East and North Africa, the achievement of SDGs seems to be quite difficult and totally unique. The current political situation in the MENA region is still unstable; in fact, the Arab Spring, spread in many Arabic countries, has been bringing some important changes but in some countries, it has turned into an unstable situation, or worse into a long and painful civil war still ongoing, like in Libya, Syria and Yemen.

In this chapter some SDGs has been deepened and analysed in the specific context of the MENA region, such as SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) in the oPt; SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions); SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth) in the specific context of Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine.

In 2015, the year in which the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set to expire, the United Nations adopted a new resolution, affirming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its list of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by the year 2030. The new development agenda enshrined in the SDGs is intended to serve as successor to the expired MDGs, and it vastly expands upon the eight original Millennium Development Goals to include a number of heretofore unspecified development challenges. Among the 17 SDGs are: ending poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1); ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture (SDG 2); ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages (SDG 3); achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (SDG 5); building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation (SDG 9); and strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing global partnerships for sustainable development (SDG 17). In the context of this global endeavour, it is important to determine where each country stands in regard to each of these dimensions, and the extent to which the SDG agenda has influenced or been integrated into national development strategies.

In the Middle East and North Africa, the achievement of SDGs - following the 2011 revolutions, the current civil wars in Syria and Yemen, and the instability still present in many countries of the Mena region - seems to be quite difficult and totally unique.

In fact, in the MENA region, in order to achieve the 8 Millennium goals by 2015, in the period 2000-2011 has made some progress but the situation went down in the 2011. In fact, many countries are still in an absolute chaos, as in Syria, where the revolution has turned into a long and painful civil war still ongoing.

Therefore, the concerned region has unique peculiar aspects, to keep in mind in order to achieve the new SDGs by 2030.

Perhaps the progress made since the new millennium were not enough for the people who live in the MENA region who called, in a number of Arab countries during the civil protests of 2011, for freedom, social justice and dignity.

In some Arab Countries the human rights and civil liberties were not respected and the socio-economic situation has worsened by years of absolutist regimes. Consequently, several protests have spread in various Arab countries, the first in Tunisia, with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a vegetable vendor, who was slapped by the police because he refused to hand over his unauthorised cart to the authorities. The humiliated vendor marched to the front of a government building and set himself on fire. This extreme gesture can be considered the flame of the revolution in Tunisia and later on in other Arab Countries.

These revolutions have not always led to real radical changes, indeed in some countries the situation has deteriorated but certainly it is not possible to say that the revolution was something wrong, indeed thanks to these revolution people began to think that a hope exists and human beings can change the *status quo*. The Arab spring can be better described as an awakening: the real revolution is not so much in the streets as in the mind. This is the most important result of the Arab Spring.

For sure it is impossible to expect a sudden birth of democracy in all Arab countries involved in the Arab Springs, as the democracy is not an item that people can export wherever they want, but a concept and an idea which develops over time, step by step. Therefore, moving on in this direction people can change their *status quo* and achieve at least some of most important SDGs of Agenda 2030.

4.1 SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

The Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA) is the most water scarce region in the world. Therefore, the achievement of the SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) in the MENA region will be a very hard challenge and some improvements can be possible if there is a real effort by the institutions. Regarding the oPt here the situation is really difficult due to the political situation. In fact, many Palestinian people living in the Area C of the West Bank, suffer from restricted access to the water resources due to the restrictions of Israeli policies, and 80 percent of water sources in the West Bank remain under Israeli control.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region features huge obstacles to achieving SDG 6, that is “Ensure access to water and sanitation for all”. The scarcity of water and the consequences of climate change combine with human-made hazards of weak water governance, inequitable distribution, poor infrastructure, the world’s highest rate of capital flight, mega projects altering major water courses, as well as creeping privatization of this vital resource.

In Palestine water is the object of institutionalized material discrimination, whereby the Israeli parastatal Mekorot¹ is chartered to dispossess and administer the water resources

¹Mekorot is the national water company of Israel and the country’s top agency for water management, founded in 1937. For more info see www.mekorot.co.il/eng/ (last accessed 21/07/17).

of the Palestinian people and deny their equitable access to it, and in the same time privileging the foreign immigrant and settler population. Thus, Mekorot works in the opposite direction to the achievement of SDG 6, which requires extensive international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water and wastewater activities and programs.

Even in Lebanon there are many issues related to the access to the water. In fact, here, although Lebanon's Decree No.144/1925 considers water resources as public domain, its government has no public policy and unified legislation regulating the management of water resources. Public institutions lack sufficient capacity to ensure everyone's water services, while 80 percent of public water supplies are polluted at the source or in distribution.

The privatization of the water sector in Lebanon has ignored the human right to water and corresponding state obligations. Publicly marketed projects such as Lebanon's "Blue Gold"² confers a public asset to profit-seeking local and off-shore business and private banks, while also threatening acquired water rights. Similar processes in Morocco and Mauritania have sparked mass protests³.

Meanwhile, other MENA countries with functioning public water-resource management are under domestic and external pressure to surrender this vital and scarce resource to private interests.

This shows how difficult it is to reach SDG 6 in the MENA region and there are many NGOs working in the field of water and sanitation.

For instance, despite external aid, water sector in Gaza and in the oPt, has not significantly developed and Palestinian people suffer from restricted access to the water resources. This is exacerbated by low water availability per capita, inadequate water service in terms of access, reliability and water quality, and major seasonal water shortages, especially in rural areas.

Apart from the climatic dimension of the water supply there is also a political one as more than 80 percent of water sources in the West Bank remain under Israeli control. This situation is a result of an inequitable division of water under the Oslo Interim Agreement and Israelis were allocated four times more water from the shared mountain aquifer than Palestinians. The worse consequence of this unequal access to water is that Israeli settlement farms are well irrigated and prolific, while Palestinian farmers and communities are largely dependent on tankered water, which they have to pay for.

The term WASH, used in international development programmes, refers to "Water, Sanitation and Hygiene". Specifically, it refers to a water, sanitation and hygiene advocacy campaign initiated by the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council.

²Blue gold is a National 5-year water plan optimizing the Lebanese Government water strategy. For more info see <http://bluegoldlebanon.com/en/> (last accessed 21/07/17).

³See *Spotlight on Sustainable Development: Reclaiming policies for the public*, 2017, https://www.2030spotlight.org/sites/default/files/download/spotlight_170626_final_web.pdf (last accessed 21/07/17).

In the occupied Palestinian territories, the Emergency Water and Sanitation-Hygiene Group⁴ (EWaSH), is a coalition of 30 organisations working in the water and sanitation sector, founded in 2002.

An interesting campaign of EWaSH, to support Palestinian people about their issues related to the access to the water in the oPt, is *Thirsting for Justice*⁵. This campaign has been launched by EWaSH, through its Advocacy Task Force (ATF), to mobilise European citizens to demand that their governments pressure Israel to change its policies and practices in order to comply with international law and respect Palestinians' human rights.

4.1.1 Palestinian and international NGOs working in WASH

In oPt many NGOs work in the field of WASH “Water, Sanitation and Hygiene”, both local and international NGOs, such as PNGO (Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network), a Palestinian NGO umbrella, which works in the water and sanitation sector together with other local NGOs such as Pengon, Al-Haq and MA’AN.

In the oPt many Palestinian NGOs are organized into a single network, called PNGO⁶ (Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network), a Palestinian NGO umbrella organization comprising 92 Palestinian NGO member organizations.

Also with the help of other international NGOs, some of these Palestinian NGOs worked and work at present in the oPt in the water and sanitation sector as a member of Ewash, such as Pengon (Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network), PHG (Palestinian Hydrology Group), AL-HAQ, MA’AN development centre, and many others.

The first of them, Pengon⁷(Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization established in 1996 to serve the Palestinian environment by coordinating the scattered efforts of the different Palestinian NGOs working in the field of environment. Pengon is therefore a network of NGOs working on water and sanitation issues and this idea of establishing a network of Palestinian environmental organizations began when a number of NGOs felt the urgent need to protect their environment and face the environmental violations.

Pengon members' organizations cover a wide range of environmental issues such as: developing and sustaining natural resources; environmental awareness; protecting wildlife; preventing desertification; combating environmental pollution; developing and maintaining archaeological sites; eco and environmental tourism; developing alternative and renewable energy.

Its main aim is to serve Palestinian environmental issues by coordinating endeavours between the member organizations, strengthening and building the capacity within each

⁴EWaSH's website available at: <http://www.ewash.org/en/> (last accessed 21/07/17).

⁵*Thirsting for Justice* Campaign's website available at: <http://www.thirstingforjustice.org/> (last accessed 21/07/17) and Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/ThirstingForJustice/> (last accessed 21/07/17).

⁶ PNGO's website is available at: www.pngo.net (last accessed 18/07/17).

⁷ PENGON's website is available at: www.pengon.org (last accessed 18/07/17).

member organization, and enhancing relations with other local and international organizations including local government agencies and international environmental organizations.

Its campaign Water for Life was initiated during the Second Intifada in order to document and monitor the Israeli aggression on water resources and infrastructure in the oPt. Moreover, it was aiming at creating an information base to provide timely reliable information on the key emergency needs and proposed action to mitigate the impacts resulted from such aggression.

Regarding PHG⁸ (Palestinian Hydrology Group), it is a Palestinian non-governmental non-profit organization working on water and sanitation issues. It monitors, analyses and reports on the changing state of water quality, sanitation and water access, pollution and infrastructure. PHG is also striving to promote the role of women and civil societies in managing local water and its related environmental resources to ensure transparency, good water governance and equal provision of water and sanitation services to the rural and marginalized communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

As a member of Ewash and Pengon, PHG participated in the campaign Water for Life, of which there are also many reports⁹ developed within the framework of a project founded by UNICEF and implemented by PHG/WaSH MP.

PHG is also striving to promote water research capacity and infrastructure in Palestine. PHG is seeking local and international networking and partnerships to participate actively in promoting the sustainability and the rights-based approach for a fair allocation of water resources at the local, regional and global levels.

PHG was established in 1987 with offices throughout Palestine, including Gaza, Hebron, Jerusalem, Nablus and Ramallah. PHG's role and functions specific to the Palestinian water sector include:

- Water resources and infrastructure development;
- Service delivery to public institutions and communities;
- Public education on water and the environment to encourage community participation, particularly women, in water management;
- Policy oriented and field research;
- Empowerment of Local Authorities;
- Rural development;
- Training and Development / Capacity Building of Human Resources;
- Lobbying and Advocacy;
- Local, national and international networking and the development of partnerships.

There are many other NGOs which work in the water and sanitation sector, not always or necessarily on the ground, but commissioning and publishing research, therefore doing

⁸PHG's website is available at: <http://www.phg.org> (last accessed 21/07/17).

⁹Among these reports is very interesting that of 2007/2008: PHG / WaSH MP, *Water for Life: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Monitoring Program (WaSH MP) 2007/2008*. Available at: http://phg.org/data/files/publications/general_reports/Reports/2008/waterforlife_07_08.pdf (last accessed 21/07/17).

advocacy works. One of these NGOs is AL-HAQ¹⁰ (الحق), Arabic word which means in English “the right”, therefore, it refers to the law or rather to the rights that are too often denied to Palestinians in the occupied territories.

AL-HAQ wrote in 2013 an interesting study about the issue of water in the oPt, titled *Water for one people only*¹¹ where it is stated that Israel’s policies and practices in relation to water in the oPt amount to a system of “water-apartheid”¹².

Another important NGO, working also in the field of water and sanitation sector is MA’AN (معا)¹³. This word translated from Arabic to English means “together”, because its focal aim is to work together with other constituents to maintain human dignity and to achieve self-reliance through team work, participation and equal opportunities.

Working in partnership with local, national, and international CSOs and solidarity groups, its mission is that of contributing to the development of an effective Palestinian Civil Society.

About water and sanitation sector, MA’AN published an interesting factsheet in 2010, titled “Draining Away: The water and sanitation crisis in the Jordan Valley”¹⁴, where it is stated that Israel’s water policies violate basic human rights of Palestinian residents in the oPt, including the right to health, the right to adequate housing, the right to equality, and the right to benefit from their natural resources.

In short, this report talks about this situation and it relates to one of the worst affected areas: the Jordan Valley. Water scarcity, abysmal sanitation facilities and polluted water resources present a constant challenge to the survival of this already vulnerable community. Although access to safe water is compromised in many developing countries, as this report shows, it is the deliberately discriminatory nature of Israel’s policies, highlighted by its unflinching ability to guarantee safe water access and distribution for its settler population, that make this man-made water crisis unique. It also however means that much can be achieved by forcing Israel to abide by its obligations as set out in numerous legal frameworks and conventions.

As a non-profit, non-governmental organization, MA’AN depends on grants from organizations and individuals who are interested in supporting its work. In addition to wide contacts, partnerships, and relationships with many Palestinian NGOs and women’s committees, various international partners have played a role in MA’AN’s development and financing since its establishment in 1989.

Some of its past and present international contributors and partners include:

¹⁰ AL-HAQ’s website available at: <http://www.alhaq.org/> (last accessed 21/07/17).

¹¹See Elisabeth Koek, *Water for one people only: Discriminatory Access and “Water-Apartheid” in the oPt*, AL-HAQ Institute, 2013. Available at: <http://www.alhaq.org/publications/Water-For-One-People-Only.pdf> (last accessed 21/07/17).

¹² See Ayman Rabi, “Water apartheid in Palestine - a crime against humanity?”, *Ecologist*, March 22, 2014. Available at: http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/2329259/water_apartheid_in_palestine_a_crime_against_humanity.html (last accessed 21/07/17).

¹³ MA’AN’s website available at: <http://maan-ctr.org/> (last accessed 21/07/17).

¹⁴See MA’AN Development Centre, *Draining Away: The water and sanitation crisis in the Jordan Valley*, 2010. Available at http://www.apis.ps/documents/MaanWaterCrisis_JVpdf.pdf (last accessed 21/07/17).

UNICEF, UNIFEM, OXFAM, UNDP, UNRWA, OXFAM /GB, OXFAM /NOVIB (The Netherlands), Save the Children, World Bank, NGOs Development Center (NDC), ECHO, European Union and many other.

Among the many foreign NGOs, which work in the oPt, there is an Italian NGO named Cisp¹⁵ (Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli), established in 1983. Cisp worked in the oPt with Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG), already mentioned above, as its partner. The objectives of this project were:

- To contribute to the enhancement of living conditions of vulnerable farmers (Bedouins and not Bedouins) in Area C through the enhancement of drinkable water system;
- To respond to water emergency of the most vulnerable families.

In general, its main aim is “to alleviate lack of water for most vulnerable farmers (Bedouins and not Bedouins) living in Jericho and Ramallah, in Area C and in West Bank” as says the title of the project.

Under the project “Support to the Bedouin communities and livestock farmers in the West Bank”, always responding to the issues of access to the water for Bedouins and their livestock, Cisp has built a veterinary clinic for Bedouins in the West Bank, thanks also to the financial support of Fondation Assistance Internazionale¹⁶.

Cisp built a veterinary clinic right in the middle of desert, where the rainfall is scarce, and where it is very difficult the access to drinking water and to the pastures for their livestock. In short Cisp has worked in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, since 1995 and it works currently in these territories, with the idea of contributing to the peace process, which in those years was developing with high hopes.

Through the support of local institutions Cisp has been implementing a number of interventions aimed at the promotion and development of basic services in the healthcare sector, collaborating with local institutions in training programs and training for the use of medical instrumentation also first aid.

Over the years, in Palestine, Cisp has been supporting the fishing industry and the community of Bedouins, seriously threatened in their existence. In Lebanon, Cisp has been providing assistance to the Palestinian people sought refuge and support to health services for pre-hospital type.

Another NGO working in the occupied Palestinian Territories is B'Tselem - The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories¹⁷ which works to end Israel's occupation in acknowledgment of the fact that ending the occupation regime is

¹⁵Cisp website available at: <http://www.sviluppodeipopoli.org/> (last accessed 21/07/17).

¹⁶ The “Fondation Assistance Internationale” (FAI), or International Assistance Foundation, was created in 2002 by private donors and it is a foundation registered under Swiss law. Its headquarters are in Lugano and it is subject to the supervision of the Swiss Confederation. The aims of the FAI are exclusively those of social and humanitarian solidarity. FAI's website available at: <http://www.fondationassistanceinternationale.ch/eng/> (last accessed 21/07/17).

¹⁷ See <https://www.btselem.org> (last accessed 21/06/17).

the only way to forge a future in which human rights, democracy, liberty and equality are ensured to all persons living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. While it is not B'Tselem's role to choose between the various political options that can bring about this future, one thing is clear: none of them include continuation of the occupation. B'Tselem was founded in 1989 and until recently devoted most of its efforts to documenting human rights violations that come under Israel's purview as occupying power.

4.2 SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Implementation of SDG 16 is vital for the Middle East and North Africa. The current situation in the MENA region is quite difficult and many countries of this region are in serious trouble such as in Syria, Libya, Iraq and Yemen where the Arab Spring has been descending into civil war. In some other countries fortunately there is no war, but the current political situation remains unstable and even here the implementation of SDG 16 is considered a priority. In addition, it is important to remind that in Palestine the situation of violence which has lasted for 70 years, does not seem to come to an end, rather it gets worse, with more and more illegal occupations by Israel.

The SDG 16 “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”, aims to significantly reduce all forms of violence, and works with governments and communities to find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity and this because without peace, stability, human rights and effective governance, based on the rule of law – it is impossible to hope for sustainable development. Nowadays the world is increasingly divided. Some regions enjoy sustained levels of peace, security and prosperity, while others fall into seemingly endless cycles of conflict and violence. SDG 16 is considered as “one of the more controversial goals,” or that having “contentious origins” and it took its place among the 17 goals, reaffirming that peace, justice, effective and accountable institutions as well as inclusive societies are prerequisites for sustainable development.

SDG 16 became distinctive with its transformative nature, requiring genuine implementation, effective monitoring and enhanced accountability for overall progress of the 2030 Agenda. However, currently there is no significant progress with regard to SDG 16. In fact, looking at the current situation in North Africa and Middle East for sure it is impossible to find a positive situation a situation but especially instability and in the worst cases wars that do not seem to come to an end. This is the current situation: 1. In Syria there is a war, lasting for 6 years since 2011 and in the neighbouring countries there are around 5 million of refugees waiting for a political resolution.

2. At the moment in the world there are 71 different conflicts, among them 11 civil wars with high atrocity; six of them are in the Arab region, while eight are in the Middle East.

3. In Palestine the situation does not seem to change but rather becomes more and more complicated with more and more illegal occupations by Israel, with whom peace does not seem possible even after 70 years of wars, intifadas, agreements and so on.

Thus, in this context the SDG 16, though powerful, seems to be also difficult to achieve as it requires significant shifts in all its interlinked aspects: peace should be sustainable, positive (i.e., not simply the absence of violence)¹⁸.

More than two decades ago, in 1994, the UN Human Development Report introduced the concept of human security. With its seven identified components (namely economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security), human security – defined simply as freedom from fear and freedom from want – necessitated a shift from a State-centric security approach. This transition was affirmed in the report, which stated that “it is now time to make a transition from the narrow concept of national security to the all-encompassing concept of human security”¹⁹.

Nevertheless, the global context now is in reverse mode; recent practices and discourse on security promote national security foremost, such as the US President who promises to build a border wall to boost national security, or some southern European countries within which the priority is to keep refugees far away from Europe and for this reason other border walls have been built such as in Hungary.

It is interesting to notice that the private military and security industry directly affects the realization of SDG 16 to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. Thus, the private military and security industry is considered an obstacle for the achievement of the SDG 16.

4.3 SDG 5: Gender Equality

SDG 5 “Gender Equality” is one of the more complicated SDGs, especially if addressed to the MENA Region. In fact, in the MENA region women continue to have gaps and difficulties in terms of participation in social and economic life, despite they have access to the education. In fact, Women’s labour force participation remains persistently low, despite women are well-educated. There are therefore other cultural factors that limit women, such as the religion, or better a conservative interpretation of this religion.

In fact, in many Mena countries, Islam has been proclaimed the official religion and despite they have furthermore ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), more conservative interpretations of *Shari’a* or tradition take primacy (especially when it comes to the practice of the law), while other legal frameworks, including international

¹⁸ See Ziad Abdel Samad, “SDG 16 Progressive implementation of the 2030 Agenda depends on achieving sustainable peace”, *SPOTLIGHT on Sustainable Development 2017, Reclaiming policies for the public*, p. 143. Available at: https://www.2030spotlight.org/sites/default/files/download/spotlight_170626_final_web.pdf (last accessed 13/11/17).

¹⁹ *Idem*, p. 144.

commitments such as CEDAW, may be viewed as inferior to this religious “framework”.

Among the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030, the sixth says to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. This SDG is one of the more complicated especially if addressed to the MENA Region.

In this context one of the main objective is that of improving the participation of women in social and economic life in Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Palestine and in general in all countries North Africa and Middle East.

It is really interesting to notice that despite women in this region having access to the education, regardless of gender, they continue to have gaps and difficulties in terms of participation in social and economic life.

In order to have a better understanding of the situation it is necessary to examine and answer some interrelated questions focusing on the five countries, including:

1. To what extent do women have access to any kind of capital asset that is critical collateral for accessing finance and credit? How much control do husbands or male heads of household exert over women’s income and spending decisions?
2. What forms of discrimination do the women live every day? Do these discriminations constitute an impediment with respect to accessing the labour market and job opportunities?
3. Is women’s mobility constrained by social norms or aggravated by insecurity and the risk of violence in public spaces?
4. What progress has been made towards greater representation of women in the political sphere and has this involved a commitment to more gender-sensitive policies that may enhance women’s socio-economic status at all levels?

Women’s labour force participation remains persistently low and shows signs of recent decline in some instances. In some countries women’s unemployment rates are systematically higher than men among tertiary graduates. Furthermore, women tend to prefer working in lower-paid positions in the public sector (i.e. civil service jobs) to the private sector because public sector jobs in the region tend to offer them more stability, more paid family leave and finance and credit options. The public sector also tends to have working hours that may facilitate better work and life balance.

The entrepreneurial sector in the Mena region is underdeveloped and women face more difficulties than men in accessing financial resources and information to start their businesses; in some cases, women have been denied access altogether. The low levels of labour force participation despite high levels of literacy and health indicators suggest that there are other factors affecting women’s economic agency and participation. In particular, it is possible to affirm that the main issue is considerable legal restrictions on women’s labour rights and, to some extent, legal restrictions on civil rights.

In most of the national constitutions of the Mena countries, Islam has been proclaimed the official religion of the states and they have ratified the Convention on the Elimination

of All Forms of Discrimination²⁰ or tradition take primacy (especially when it comes to the practice of the law), while other legal frameworks, including international commitments such as CEDAW, may be viewed as inferior to this religious “framework”. Penal codes have evolved but are still easily influenced by conservative interpretations of *Shari’a*. Labour codes, insofar as they guarantee rights, have often remained “gender blind” and, paradoxically, still may comprise gender-based restrictions for some professions and night work.

Furthermore, in most of these countries it is possible to notice that women face major discrimination over land and property ownership, inheritance rights, civil registry access and access to information. The low level of women’s labour force participation especially affects choice in accessing and controlling resources, including over incomes and associated employment benefits.

Property and inheritance rights in the countries can be more or less effective for women, depending on the ways that plural legal systems interact. Rights might be recognised by statutory laws, but might also be limited, interpreted or even negated by customary laws that still permeate statutory laws or their application by the judicial system.

Furthermore, bureaucratic red tape – a barrier for all entrepreneurs – is especially restrictive in the case of private business initiatives made by women, who already face greater barriers than men entrepreneurs.

In the end it is possible to add that in these countries there is a high prevalence of violence against women (VAW) both in private (including physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence) and public spaces (including harassment and rape). Some countries have made incremental advancements towards necessary legal reforms; Tunisia there is a national programme aimed at combating VAW.

While there may be no specific restrictions on women’s movement in the countries’ constitutions, women’s freedom of movement across the region is reduced due to various factors. These include: family control over women’s choices, marital status and age, legal discrimination in family law, a lack of safe and affordable public transportation, and attitudes towards sexually harassed women in the street. Reduced mobility lowers women’s access to education, work, services and participation in community and societal activities.

Guardianship and early marriage practices inhibit women’s rights to education and employment, which in turn prevent them from developing life and work skills and accessing resources, information and services.

In the Mena Region Polygamy still exists though in some countries is restricted, in Tunisia and Lebanon is considered illegal and prohibited. Egyptian and Jordanian women still need permission from a *wali* (or legal guardian) to get married. Early marriages (i.e. of a

²⁰ The term *Shari’a*, when used in Arabic in a religious context, means “way to enforce the law (of God)”. *Shari’a* is often translated as “Islamic law”, which is an imprecise translation since it only partially encompasses the true sense of the word. *Shari’a* codifies both the public and private aspects of life and is considered a source of law.

girl under the age of 18) are believed to be widespread in all these countries and increasing.

Women's representation in national parliaments across Mena countries ranges from around 2 per cent (Egypt after elections in 2012) to 30.1 per cent (Tunisia). Most countries, have instituted various gender-based electoral quotas. Women in politics face stigma in the media, public and within political institutions. Women's participation at the municipal levels is increasing, as evidenced by a rising number of elected women councillors in Morocco after most recent local elections.

4.3.1 Gender equality profile - Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia and Palestine

In order to better understand the issues that hinder the achievement of the SDG 5 (Gender Equality), could be useful to analyse some countries of the MENA region and notice how the principles of Islamic *Shari'a* influence the current constitutions and the status and situation of girls and women in many countries in the MENA Region. In fact, all matters of marriage, divorce and inheritance are managed through *Shari'a* courts for Muslims and this is the main issue that hinder the achievement of gender equality.

Analysing these countries, it is possible to consider Tunisia the most progressive Arab country with respect to women's rights since 1956 when the new Family Law was approved and considered, at that time, a real revolution in women's rights for an Arab country, with the abolition of polygamy and the possibility of divorce. Other steps, in order to achieve gender equality, has been the abolition of the law which prohibited women from marrying a non-Muslim and the recent law of 26th July 2017 to combat the violence against the women.

The Arab republic of Egypt has a new constitution since 2014. The article 2 of this new constitution stipulates that: "Islam is the religion of the State and Arabic is its official language. The principles of Islamic *Shari'a* are the main source of legislation" but there is also another article, the article 3, that says that: "the principles of Christian and Jewish *Shari'a* (religious law) of Egyptian Christians and Jews are the main source of legislation that regulate their respective personal status, religious affairs, and selection of spiritual leaders". Therefore, this further article regulates the family issues of Christian (Coptic) and Jewish communities in Egypt and in general all the recognised religious minorities in Egypt, such as Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. It also makes it clear that family law must be based on the interpretation of *Shari'a*, despite the principle of equality stated in the constitution: "The State shall ensure the achievement of equality between women and men in all civil, economic, social and cultural rights in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution" (Art. 11). The Egyptian Muslim Family Law is not codified in a comprehensive and complete charter. Provisions on matters of dispute relating to the family are organised into two sets of laws, substantive laws and procedural laws and related decisions of personal status. Other provisions

relating to the family can also be found in the civil laws (e.g. the validity of marriage, guardianship and custodianship)²¹.

Starting from 2014, with this new constitution all family disputes (alimony, custody, divorce, etc.) are now consolidated into a single case heard by one court. Family courts, however, still suffer from judges' lack of specialisation, lengthy procedures and the absence of implementation mechanisms, but for sure better than before 2014 when the Muslim Family Law was administered within the national courts with judges trained in *Shari'a*.

Regarding the women in Egypt, they can request that certain legal conditions be entered into the marriage contract, including the right to attain a divorce if their future husband attempts to prevent the exercise of certain rights, such as education and work. However, Women's rights to education and work are not automatic legal rights unless stated clearly in the marriage contract.

Actually, in Egypt before the law, Egyptian women and men are equal but not in practice. They have equal rights to land tenure and property ownership. In reality, however, the proportion of women owning land is very low. It is estimated by the NGOs' CEDAW shadow report (Alliance for Arab Women, 2009)²² to be around 5.8 per cent (women hold about 6 per cent of the cultivated area in Lower Egypt and 4 per cent in Upper Egypt). Customary traditional practices play a significant role in limiting women's ownership of land and property. It is considered more appropriate for property to be registered under a man's name, whether a husband or father.

In Jordan *Shari'a* is considered as the main source of the Jordanian Personal Status Law in addition to the *urf* (العرف: all matters of marriage, divorce and ²³(customary law inheritance are managed through *Shari'a* courts for Muslims.

The 2010 Jordanian Personal Status Law specifies men as heads of the family, designates a secondary status to women in the family, and allocates to men full control over women through guardianship laws. Furthermore, polygamy and repudiation are permitted and a husband can prohibit his wife to work if he has entered this as a condition in the marriage contract or if his wife was not working before marriage. Therefore, is clearly defined in the marriage contract husbands also have the right to place conditions on and limit women's education, place of residence and freedom of movement.

²¹ See European Bank, *Enhancing Women's Voice, Agency and Participation in The Economy*, April 2015, pp. 38-39. Available at: <http://www.ebrd.com/enhancing-womens-voice-agency-and-participation-semed-and-turkey> (last accessed 02/08/17).

²² See Alliance for Arab Women (AAW), *Shadow NGO Report on Egypt's fourth and fifth Combined Periodic Report to The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against women*, December 2009, p.7. Available at: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/EGY/INT_CEDAW_NGO_EGY_45_8670_E.pdf (last accessed 04/08/17).

²³ '*Urfs* is an Arabic term that means "customs" and "practices" of a particular society present at the time of the prophet Muhammad but to be recognized in an Islamic society, '*urf* must be compatible with the *Shari'a*. In some countries, '*urf* or '*urfi* marriages' refer to marriages without official papers issued by the state.

Furthermore, in Jordan the majority of population are Bedouins and for this reason customary law (consuetudinary or unofficial law) continues to operate through tribes and it regulates social relations and, particularly in rural and Bedouin areas, replaces legal procedures. In this context matters relating to divorce, inheritance resolutions, domestic violence, and marriage conflict resolutions are managed by the *sheikhs* (traditional chiefs) rather than through courts and legal institutions.

In Tunisia in 1956, the year of its independence, was enacted a PSC (Code of Personal Status), which acknowledged the rights of women relating to family and civil matters. The code prohibited polygamy, introduced a new family organisation based on the equality of spouses before the law, made divorce available to both spouses and granted women the right to manage their own assets. The government also required parents to send girls to school.

The Constitution adopted in June 1959, stated equality between women and men by way of Article 6: “All citizens have the same rights and obligations. All are equal before the law”.

In the 1990s there were other legislative reforms which advanced the status of women, and for example Article 831 of the Code of Obligations and Contracts, requiring the authorisation of the husband for married women to sign service contracts and allowing the husband to rescind contracts signed without his approval, was repealed by Law 17 of 2000.

After the Revolution of 2011 in Tunisia, with the birth of a new state, a new constitution was adopted on 26th January of 2014. It stipulates the following:

Article 1: “Tunisia is a free, independent and sovereign State. Islam is its religion, Arabic its language, and the republic its system. This article cannot be amended”;

Article 21: “All citizens, male and female alike, have equal rights and duties, and are equal before the law without any discrimination”;

Article 46: “The State shall commit to protecting women’s achieved rights and seek to support and develop them. The State shall guarantee equal opportunities between men and women in the bearing of all the various responsibilities in all fields. The State shall seek to achieve equal representation for women and men in elected councils. The State shall take the necessary measures to eliminate violence against women”.

The Lebanese legal system is primarily based on the French and Egyptian legal systems. The different religious communities in Lebanon have their own personal status laws (which govern legal procedures that pertain to matters such as marriage, divorce and inheritance). For Muslims, the *Shari’a* courts hear personal status cases. The courts are separated into Sunni and Shiite hearings. For the different Christian denominations in the Lebanese society the ecclesiastical courts have jurisdiction over personal status issues. In Lebanon there are 18 legally recognized religious groups. The largest groups are the Sunni Muslims, the Shiite Muslims and the Maronite Christians.

Regarding the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Lebanon acceded to the CEDAW in 1997 and maintains reservations to several articles: 9 (2) (equal rights with regard to nationality) 16 (1) (c) (d) (f) (g) (equal rights in marriage and family life) and 29 (1) (related to the administration of the convention; arbitration in the event of a dispute). Several of these articles contain provisions that are central to the purpose of the convention and the CEDAW Committee has indicated that: “reservations to article 16, whether lodged for national, traditional, religious or cultural reasons, are incompatible with the Convention and therefore impermissible”²⁴.

According to the law, Lebanese women married to foreign spouses cannot pass their Lebanese nationality to their children or to their spouse while all children of Lebanese fathers will be considered Lebanese and Lebanese men have the right to pass their citizenship to a non-Lebanese spouse. A Lebanese woman can pass her nationality to her child only in cases when the father is unknown. The children resulting from a marriage between a Lebanese woman and a foreign man will be considered residents rather than citizens and will not have the same rights. For example, they will not have equal access to education. A draft new law has been considered, but not yet approved, which gives women equal rights with men to pass on their nationality, with the exception that a Lebanese woman would not be able to pass on her nationality to her spouse if he is a Palestinian refugee²⁵.

The Palestinian Authority was established in 1994. Since 2007 two different authorities have governed the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) with Hamas in control in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. The laws in oPt have multiple sources such as Egyptian and Jordanian law, British Mandate law, Israeli law and Islamic law (*Shari'a*).

The Palestinian Basic Law, ratified in 2002, acts as a temporary constitution before the establishment of a Palestinian state. Regarding matters related to inheritance, marriage, divorce and child custody, these are based on Islamic law. *Shari'a* courts hear cases related to personal status.

In the West Bank the Jordanian personal status law of 1976 is applied while in Gaza the Egyptian personal status law of 1954 is in effect. Although both Jordan and Egypt have amended their personal status laws since these times to eliminate some of the provisions that discriminate against women, the laws applied in the West Bank and Gaza remain mostly unchanged. The testimony of a woman is worth only half of that of a man in cases

²⁴ See UNICEF, *LEBANON MENA Gender Equality Profile Status of Girls and Women in the Middle East and North Africa*, October 2011, pp. 1-2. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Lebanon-Gender-Eqaulity-Profile-2011.pdf> (last accessed 04/08/17).

²⁵ The Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are considered resident foreigners and lack citizenship rights. Due to this fact, the status of Palestinian refugee women and men in Lebanese society differs significantly from that of Lebanese nationals. For example, Palestinian refugees are denied access to public social services, have limited access to public health and educational facilities and are not allowed to work in several professions.

related to marriage, divorce and child custody. The different Christian communities apply their own rules with regard to matters of personal status²⁶.

Palestine is not an independent state and for this reason it cannot ratify United Nations international conventions, but, in a symbolic act, President Mahmoud Abbas signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in March 2009, on the occasion of International Women's Day.

Regarding citizenship rights, they are still governed by the laws that were in effect before the 1967 Israeli occupation. In the West Bank the Jordanian nationality code is applied and in Gaza the Egyptian nationality code is applied. In both cases it is men that have the right to pass their nationality to their children and spouses. Women do not have this right. Palestinian women and men are also subjected to discriminatory Israeli laws on residence and citizenship. Palestinians from the occupied territory that are married to Palestinians who are Israeli citizens or are permanent residents of Israel (such as Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem) are not allowed to obtain Israeli citizenship nor residency, and many Palestinian families end up living separated from each other.

In the countries described above penal codes have been influenced by interpretations of *Shari'a* and customary laws. Penal codes deal with violence against women (VAW), and anything pertaining to violations of bodily integrity, which includes rape, "honour crimes", and female genital mutilation (FGM), which is only known to exist in Egypt.

In Jordan, those who commit "honour crimes" can benefit from mitigating circumstances and receive lenient sentences if their victims are over 18 years old. Penal codes are also often written in such a way that allows rapists to escape penalty if they agree to marry their victims (as is the case in Egypt and Jordan).

Regarding the labour codes in the Mena region typically do not take into account the different needs and circumstances that male and female workers have in order to promote equal opportunities and protection. However, several countries have recently introduced articles on gender discrimination and equal pay.

For example, night work is still prohibited in Egypt and Jordan and in certain professions in the other countries.

Furthermore, it is really interesting to notice that in the majority of these countries not all workers are protected, for example in Egypt labour codes still do not apply to agricultural workers or domestic workers (Egypt and Jordan), nor to foreign investment companies and free zones (Egypt).

In Tunisia, the labour code established gender equality in 1993 through an amendment to Article 135, which contained non-egalitarian provisions concerning the salaries of women working in the agricultural sector.

The amendment of Article 5 stipulates "there should be no discrimination between men and women in implementing the provisions of the present code and the texts enforcing

²⁶ See UNICEF, *OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY MENA Gender Equality Profile Status of Girls and Women in the Middle East and North Africa*, October 2011, p. 1. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/gender/files/oPT-Gender-Eqaulity-Profile-2011.pdf> (last accessed 07/08/17).

it". Additionally, the Public Civil Servant Law of 1983 stipulates in Article 11 that there is no gender discrimination.

The context described shows how is complicated the system of laws in the Mena Region due to the fact that in the most of these countries religious and secular law coexist and for this reason it is not easy to find a solution for achieving gender equality. This phenomenon is exacerbated when there is coexistence and a degree of tension between religious laws or traditions and positive and secular laws, as this sends a contradictory message.

The interaction between plural legal systems and social norms influences critical areas such as mobility, occupational choice, civil matters (such as marriage, divorce, nationality and inheritance), ownership of assets and land, and many other factors crucial for women's economic empowerment.

Access to and control over resources

Egypt:

- Women's ownership of land is among the lowest in Egypt because women are encouraged to waive their inheritance rights in favour of their brothers;
- Many poor, rural (but also urban) women have no identity cards, meaning they are not recognised as citizens, and they have no access to their inheritance rights, to loans or, more fundamentally, to any public institution or service;

Jordan:

- Access to family assets and properties is limited for women, and men control the share women may have;
- It is usual practice for women to waive their shares of inheritance, including in urban and wealthy areas;
- Banks require the husband to have joint possession in order for a woman to be granted a loan;
- Microcredit programmes do not challenge the stereotyped roles of women and do not realise their objectives of eliminating poverty or empowering women.

Tunisia:

- Despite a progressive Personal Status Code, women often waive their unequal share of inheritance and lack the collateral required to access credit.
- Red tape for registering and operating a business is more restrictive for women entrepreneurs than for men.
- Women are the main beneficiaries of microcredit but are offered smaller amounts than men.
- The inexistence of childcare services is perceived by women as a major obstacle to accessing and operating a business and for accessing employment opportunities.

Lebanon:

- According to the 1959 Civil Law of Inheritance, which applies to non-Muslims in Lebanese society, women and men enjoy equal rights with regard to inheritance. Islamic law establishes inheritance rights for Muslim women and men and the rules

differ slightly for Sunnis and Shiites. However, in general, a woman's share of the inheritance will be half of that of a man.

- Lebanese women have access to bank loans and other forms of financial credit, without discrimination. There are micro-lending programs, of which some specifically target women.

oPt (occupied Palestinian territories):

- The Jordanian inheritance law, which is based on Islamic law, is applied in the whole Palestinian territory. Women have the right to inherit but will in general inherit a smaller share than men. For example, a daughter has the right to a share that is half of her brother's share.
- Women in oPt have access to bank loans and other forms of financial credit without legal discrimination. There are many microcredit schemes that specifically target women with the objective to encourage their economic participation and alleviate poverty²⁷.

Violence against women

CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) defines VAW (Violence against women) as: "a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men".

In order to understand the context, could be useful analysing some MENA countries one by one. In Egypt the situation is the following:

- There is a high prevalence of VAW with freedom of movement and household chores among the main causes;
- VAW is treated as any other crime in the Penal Code without any consideration of the sensitivity of cases, and the burden of proof is placed on the victim;
- There is a degree of hostility shown by judges and police;
- Rape is believed to have become more frequent since the revolution;
- There is a general debate about dress codes, being outside the home until late into the evening and non-adherence to tradition.

In Jordan, the situation is not so different, even if this country is considered one of the most westernized countries in the Middle East. It is possible to summarize the situation here in some points:

- There is a high prevalence of VAW;
- The implementation of procedures regarding marital and family violence is lacking;
- Sexual harassment is widespread; it is criminalised but few cases are reported;
- Honour killings pose a threat to the rule of law.

²⁷ According to the World Bank report, *Checkpoints and Barriers: Searching for Livelihoods in the West Bank and Gaza* (January 2010), the results of these lending schemes have been mixed and some women take out loans upon request of their husbands since men are not eligible for many of the programmes. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/806041468321869487/pdf/496990ESW0P1071C0disclosed081101101.pdf> (last accessed 07/08/17).

In Tunisia, the situation is quite different:

- There is a high prevalence of VAW;
- There is also a sharp increase in the prevalence of VAW in public spaces since the transition;
- Domestic workers are subject to sexual harassment;
- A new law on VAW has been announced last 26th July 2017 to combat the violence against the women. This new law abolished a clause that allowed rapists to escape any punishment if they married their victims.

Lebanon:

- Rape is a crime with a minimum punishment of five years in prison. There are no specific laws against domestic violence and spousal rape. Draft legislation banning domestic violence was considered by the cabinet in 2009, backed by women's rights NGOs, but has been stopped in parliament by certain political parties;
- "Honour killings" do occur in Lebanon but the penal code was amended in July 2011 withdrawing the article that offered lenient sentences in cases where a man kills his wife or another female relative caught in the act of "illegal sexual intercourse"²⁸;
- Domestic workers are subject to contemporary forms of slavery²⁹;

oPt (occupied Palestinian territories). The Jordanian and Egyptian laws in effect in the West Bank and Gaza, respectively, contain similar provisions with regard to gender-based violence, which fall short of offering sufficient protection:

- There is no specific law against domestic violence in oPt, nor there is a law against spousal rape.
- Although rape is a crime, a perpetrator of rape can avoid punishment by marrying his victim.
- Both the Jordanian and Egyptian Penal Codes allow a lenient sentence for a man who kills his wife on the grounds of her committing adultery.
- According to the Jordanian Penal Code if a girl wants to file a complaint for violence or abuse, a male relative must file the complaint on her behalf.
- in 2008 Hamas drafted a new "unified penal code" that would allow the punishment of "death by stoning" for adultery, as well as punishments such as whipping and amputation in Gaza. These parts of the law change did not pass.

Freedom of movement

Egypt:

- Leaving the house without the husband's permission is a reason for physical abuse directed at the wife;

²⁸ See "Lebanon: Law Reform Targets "Honour" Crimes", *Human Rights Watch*, August 11, 2011. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/08/11/lebanon-law-reform-targets-honor-crimes> (last accessed 04/08/17).

²⁹ See OHCHR, *Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon are legally invisible - UN human rights expert on contemporary forms of slavery*, October 17, 2011. Available at: <http://newsarchive.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=11499&LangID=E> (last accessed 04/08/17).

- The right of women to hold their own passport was obtained in 2000 but there remain restrictions in practice;
- There is a high risk of sexual harassment in the streets and on public transport;
- There are reports of collective sexual harassment against women in the streets as a means of intimidation, resulting in decreasing economic participation rates for women;
- The experience of Cairo Underground with reserving carriages for women has shown mixed results;
- A set of recommendations aimed at fighting the plague of sexual harassment in public spaces has been discussed recently.

Jordan:

- The right of women to hold a passport without restrictions was obtained in 2012;
- However, under the Personal Status Law, fathers (or legal guardians) can prevent children from travelling; this law is applied until the age of 30 for women;
- A woman can lose her financial rights after divorce if she has left her house without permission (for reasons other than visiting her parents or an emergency);
- Women walking at night (but not driving cars) can be stopped by the police under the Public Moral Act;
- Sexual harassment and insecurity on public transport may lead women to quit their jobs.

Tunisia:

- The freedom of movement and safety that women used to enjoy is perceived as diminishing and the number of public spaces available to women as shrinking as a result of threats and intimidation after the revolution;
- Poor transportation systems negatively affect women's freedom of movement;
- There has been a rapid increase in the international mobility of Tunisian girls to France, Germany, Canada, the United States and Belgium.

Lebanon:

- No laws restrict the freedom of movement of Lebanese women. Lebanese women have been allowed to obtain a passport and travel abroad without their husband's consent since 1974.

oPt (occupied Palestinian territories):

- In the oPt the freedom of movement does not only concern women but also men, and freedom of movement is restricted in many ways. In fact, here Israeli checkpoints and other barriers to movement such as the separation wall, affect all Palestinians in the West Bank. In Gaza, the closed border crossings restrict everyone's movement.
- In addition to these restrictions, women in oPt face additional barriers to free movement. Although there is no such legal requirement (it was removed in 1996), government officials often require women to show proof of permission from their male guardian before they can obtain a passport.

Decision-making over family formation

Egypt:

- A woman has to secure the acceptance of her male guardian, and in practice the acceptance of all male members in the family for her decision to get married;
- Early marriages are still widespread; they inevitably imply leaving school and limiting job opportunities, access to information, health and well-being;
- Women's rights to education and work are not automatic legal rights unless stated clearly in the marriage contract;
- Women's participation in decision-making in the family is still very limited;
- The judicial process of divorce, when initiated by women, is very complex and tense, takes a very long time, is costly, and is unpredictable in the application of standards, while men have an autonomous and absolute right to divorce without resorting to legal proceedings;
- Before asking for a divorce, women often have to secure a place of residence;
- Divorced women are still stigmatised.

Jordan:

- Based on the guardianship provisions, women cannot enter a marriage contract unless the marriage is authorised by their guardians, while men represent themselves and can arrange the marriage without any agent acting on their behalf;
- Early marriages are still widespread. They can be authorised if marriage serves certain "interests" defined in a variety of ways: those of the girl, of the family, and the tribe;
- In rural areas, the practice of women giving birth to as many children as they can until they have a male child is still the norm.

Tunisia:

- Legal changes and an advanced legal framework do not guarantee women's full rights and are not enough to make the required social advancements;
- Early marriages are still widespread;
- A study on the jurisprudence of ordinary courts found that some judges holding traditional views on the family could subvert legal guarantees of equality contained in the Code of Personal Status by using religious references.

Lebanon:

- It is only among the Armenian Orthodox that mothers and fathers share parental authority. Among all other denominations, the father has parental authority as the legal guardian of the child. Upon a divorce the mother may be granted custody, but, in the case of most religions, this will only be until the child reaches a certain age.
- The rules for divorce are different depending on which religious group a woman or man belongs to. The process for a Muslim man to divorce his wife is relatively simple, for a Muslim woman it is more difficult. For example, a Sunni woman can seek divorce from her husband for a number of specified reasons. Another option, available to both Sunni and Shiite women, is for a woman to return her dowry and forfeit any financial maintenance in exchange for divorce. For Catholics, as another example,

divorce is not allowed, however there is a number of legitimate reasons under which the marriage can be annulled³⁰.

- Early marriages are still widespread;

oPt (occupied Palestinian territories):

- According to the personal status laws that apply to Muslims (the Jordanian law in the West Bank and the Egyptian law in Gaza), a man can divorce his wife for any reason, under certain specific circumstances. A woman can also seek divorce without the burden of evidence, but then she will give up any financial rights and must return her dowry. The latter type of divorce is only possible if the husband concedes.
- The father is the legal guardian of his children. Upon a divorce, women may be granted custody of their sons until they reach 10 and their daughters until they reach the age of 12.
- In the West Bank, the minimum age of marriage is 15 for girls and 16 for boys. In Gaza the minimum age is 17 for girls and 18 for boys.
- Polygamy is legal, but it is rarely practiced³¹.

Having voice in the society and influencing policy

Egypt:

- Women's representation in parliament dropped from 12.6 per cent in 2010 to 2.2 in 2012, after which the parliament was dissolved; the figure rose again with the adoption of a new quota for 2015 elections when 89 women were elected as members the upcoming parliament, marking the highest female representation in Egypt's parliamentary history. The 89 female members in parliament make up 14.9 percent of available seats, which is considered a giant "leap" in women's representation³².
- Women demonstrators have been subjected to verbal and physical assaults and threatened with rape while in detention as a form of retaliation for their role in the uprising.

Jordan:

- Women's representation is 12 percent in parliament and 35 per cent in local councils, aided in part by quotas at the national and municipal levels;
- However, the decision of women, particularly in rural areas and areas governed by tribes, to run for municipal elections is often controlled by the tribe and does not automatically introduce the women's agenda into the councils.

Tunisia:

³⁰See Freedom House, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Lebanon*, 2010, pp. 11-15. Available at: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/Lebanon.pdf (last accessed 04/08/17).

³¹See Freedom House, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Palestine*, 2010, p. 11. Available at: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/Palestine%20%28Palestinian%20Authority%20and%20Israeli%20Occupied%20Territories%29.pdf (last accessed 07/08/17).

³² See Hend el-Behary, "Women's representation in new parliament highest in Egypt's history", *Egypt Independent*, January 5, 2016. Available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/women-s-representation-new-parliament-highest-egypt-s-history/> (last accessed 09/08/17).

- The “zipper” quota system resulted in 26.3 per cent women representation in the National Constituent Assembly and 30.1 per cent in the new National Assembly in 2014.
- Women candidates did not benefit from wide coverage by the press and the media.

Lebanon:

- Women gained the right to vote and stand for election in 1952. The first time a woman was appointed to parliament was in 1991. Currently women occupy 4 out of the 128 seats in the lower house of parliament (3 per cent of the seats). There are no women in ministerial positions in the new government formed in 2011³³.

oPt (occupied Palestinian territories):

- Equal voting rights and equal rights to stand for election are guaranteed under the Palestinian Basic Law³⁴.
- Following the 2006 elections to the PLC, women occupied 14 per cent of the seats in the PLC (an increase from 6 per cent following the 1996 elections). Local elections were held in the Palestinian territory in 2004 and 2005 and thanks to a quota system, women’s representation in local councils increased.
- Women are present in the judiciary, but they are few in number. Only 12 per cent of the judges and 11 per cent of the prosecutors-general are women.
- After the establishment of the Palestinian Legislative Council, women’s rights groups lobbied intensively for gender equality and the reform of discriminatory laws.

4.3.2 NGOs working for Women Empowerment

Economic integration and empowerment of women are a global issue that has a particular resonance in the Arab world. Women represent just one quarter of the labour force and in order to change this situation many international and local NGOs are working at the moment for women empowerment. Among the local NGOs there are some which have a long experience, such as Jordanian Women Union in Jordan, Cawtar (Center of Arab Women for Training and Research) in Tunisia, The Palestinian Businesswomen’s Association – Asala in Palestine, Insan in Lebanon and AYW-SD Alashanek ya baladi Association for Sustainable Development in Egypt.

Some NGOs in Jordan³⁵:

³³See Walid Hussein, “The “Female Quota” in Lebanon: A Temporary Solution to a Chronic Political Problem”, *Heinrich Böll Stiftung Middle East*, February 17, 2017. Available at: https://lb.boell.org/en/2017/02/17/female-quota-lebanon-temporary-solution-chronic-political-problem#_edn4 (last accessed 04/08/17).

³⁴ Women were able to exercise this right for the first time under the Palestinian Authority in the first election to the Palestinian Legislative Council PLC) in 1996.

³⁵ See Agnieszka Majcher-Teleon, Olfa Ben Slimène, *Women and Work in Jordan. Case Study of Tourism and Ict Sectors*, European Training Foundation, July 2009, pp. 30-31. Available at: <http://www.silviacambie.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/womenwork-in-jordan.pdf> (last accessed 31/07/17).

1. Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW)³⁶. The JNCW was created by cabinet decision in 1992 as a semi-governmental institution in order to promote the advancement of women through the mainstreaming of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Initially, it was established to: design a national strategy to guide the development of women in Jordan; act as a link between the grass-roots and the country's decision-makers; create networks among the various parties involved in women's issues in the country; orchestrate their efforts and collaborate with them to implement developmental schemes.

In 1996, by cabinet decision, the JNCW mission was broadened to include the following additional tasks: identifying priorities, plans and programmes in the public and private sectors, and monitoring their implementation; reviewing legislation regarding women, and suggesting amendments; lobbying and advocacy; examining policies in government offices to determine their gender sensitivity; increasing the participation of women in the economy, politics and decision-making; formulating strategies to ensure the effectiveness and continuity of the development process.

Princess Basma Bint Talal has been president of the JNCW since 2003. Members include top-ranking officials from the government and civil society, and representatives of NGOs and academic, research and professional institutions. The JNCW has four permanent committees and also engages specialists in women's issues from the public and private sectors. The Legal Committee consists of legal experts (both women and men). Since it was formed in 1993, it has reviewed the Labour Law, Retirement Law, Social Security Law, Landlords and Tenants Law, Personal Status Law, Nationality Law, Passport Law, Civil Status Law, Penal Law, Income Tax Law, Civil Service Regulations, and Health Insurance Regulations. The Network of Focal Points in Government Institutions consists of policy-makers (women and men) in direct contact with ministries. This committee is in charge of monitoring the status of women in the public sector and determining the extent to which the Beijing Platform for Action and the National Strategy for Women are being implemented in the public sector. The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Coordinating Committee consists of representatives of women's associations in Jordan and coordinates between them in order to avoid duplication, assesses their activities, and report new issues relating to women to the JNCW. The Professional Women's Committee consists of prominent Jordanian professional women in the fields of education, health, economics and the media. It is in charge of improving the status of working women, raising awareness about rights at work, and establishing a mentoring system for new starters in the various sectors.

2. General Federation of Jordanian Women (GFJW)³⁷. The GFJW is a national non-governmental organisation of women's associations and societies that works to enhance the political, economic and social status of women in Jordan. The federation's membership includes over 80 societies, committees and headquarters in each of the 12 governorates, mobilising women's efforts to play an effective role in political decision-

³⁶ See <http://www.women.jo/> (last accessed 07/08/17).

³⁷ See www.gfjw.org.jo or its Facebook page [الإتحاد النسائي الأردني العام](#).

making. It offers educational opportunities and guidance in family welfare and health, advocates legislative reform favouring women and initiates income-generating activities in collaboration with other non-governmental organisations, including the Noor Al Hussein Foundation. The GFJW recently established a National Information Center for Women, which is the first of its kind in Jordan and the Arab world. The centre comprises a research unit, a comprehensive interactive library with audio-visual aids and access to the internet, as well as a consultation and information department. The latter will provide researchers, planners and women with information on national, regional and international organisations concerned with women's affairs.

3. Jordanian National Forum for Women³⁸. The Jordanian National Forum for Women is one of the largest women's forums in Jordan and is also headed by Princess Basma Bint Talal. It was established after the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995. It is active in various fields, including parliamentary and municipal elections, campaigns such as the establishment of the Alimony Fund, and the organisation of training.

4. Princess Basma Women's Resource Centre (PBWRC)³⁹. The PBWRC was established after the Beijing Women's Conference, to act as a support mechanism for women's groups, linking grass-roots and policy-making bodies. The PBWRC, with nine employees, is currently compiling a database on research related to Jordanian women. It conducts training in gender and development as well as workshops and seminars. The centre is also writing a national research agenda on women's issues and oversees a national information network. It publishes various studies and specialised research reports.

5. Arab Women Organisation (AWO)⁴⁰. AWO was founded in 1970 by a group of women activists. It is active at political as well as grass-roots level. Its major areas of activity are income-generating projects for impoverished women, providing services through a network of reproductive health and family planning clinics, and spreading awareness amongst women and young people of both sexes concerning the importance of protecting the environment.

6. Jordanian Women's Union⁴¹ (اتحاد المرأة الاردنية). The Jordanian Women's Union (JWU), headquartered in Amman, is a non-governmental, democratically elected organization that is committed to improving the status of women. It is one of the most prominent and influential women's organizations in the Arab world. The JWU was established in 1945. In 1957, martial law was declared in Jordan and all non-governmental organizations were dissolved. Thus, the JWU was forced to disband. In 1974, the organization re-emerged as the Women's Union of Jordan and continued its activities until 1981 when, once again, it was obligated to suspend its operations. With the democratization of Jordan's parliament in 1990, the Women's Union of Jordan again resumed operation. In 1994, it adopted its present name, the Jordanian Women's Union.

³⁸ See <http://jnfw.org/> (last accessed 07/08/17).

³⁹ See http://www.princessbasma.jo/index.php?page_type=pages&page_id=490 (last accessed 07/08/17).

⁴⁰ See <http://http://awo.org.jo/en/> (last accessed 07/08/17).

⁴¹ See <http://jwu.org.jo> (last accessed 07/08/17).

This is another NGO that aims to improve the status of Jordanian women and to promote their rights. It undertakes programmes on income generation and skills training courses for women.

At the moment JWU has many ongoing projects and some of them are income-generating projects. In fact, the department of income-generating projects in JWU began its work in the year 2003 to enhance the Union's approach regarding training, rehabilitation and empowerment of women especially abused women to guarantee economic independence.

These projects aim at:

- Securing a steady source of income to cover an important portion of the increasing expenses of the Union;
- Working on training, rehabilitation and providing job opportunities for women according to their capacities and special conditions;
- Communicating with the local society through offering various social and economic services.

The Income-generating Department includes 5 projects:

- A Beauty Salon.
- A Computer Center and an Internet Café.
- A Kitchen.
- Heritage and Manual Handicrafts Project.
- Canteen.

One of these project is “Hemayati” (حمائتي), word which means “my protection or protect me”. Implemented with the support of Italian NGO Un ponte per⁴², this is a project addressed to the populations affected by the Syrian crisis in Amman, Zarqa, Mafraq, Irbid, Ajloun and Ma'an. The main aim of this project is that of providing:

- psycho-social, medical and legal support;
- provision of medical assistance for all pregnant women;
- set up of the reproductive health clinics;
- awareness raising sessions;
- literacy classes;
- computer literacy courses;
- handicraft course.

Another project is called “Ahlan” (أهلا) which means “welcome” and it is a project focused on Syrian refugees, especially children women and adolescent girls.

With a special focus on the Syrian refugee women is also the project “OCHA”, funded exactly by the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and leaded by Un Ponte per (UPP), an Italian NGO, established in 1991. In Jordan, UPP is operating since 2004 in partnership with local organisations, where it has implemented projects and programs to respond mostly at the Iraqi crisis (2003) and at the current Syrian crisis focusing on several sectors such as

⁴² See <http://www.unponteper.it> (last accessed 09/08/17).

Education, Protection, Sexual and Gender-Based violence, Mental health and Psycho-social support.

7. Sisterhood Is Global Institute – Jordan (SIGI/J)⁴³. SIGI is an international, non-governmental, non-profit-making organisation established in 1998. Its founders include lawyers, jurists and human rights activists working to support and promote women's rights through education, skills training and modern technology. Its programmes include the Human Rights Education Program, based on the Arabic version of the training manual 'Claiming our Rights'; the Combating Violence against Women and Girls Program, based on the Arabic version of the training manual 'Safe and Secure'; the Knowledge Partnership Program, which provides ICT training; and the Cultural Events Program, which highlights the experiences of women leaders.

SIGI believes in helping to build capacity in its community by helping to train and educate women in communities all over Jordan. Through workshops, training, and seminars women are given the skills they need to transform their lives and the lives of those around them.

8. Business and Professional Women Association – Amman⁴⁴. This is a business counselling association that offers business advice and financial support for women entrepreneurs, as well as a legal consultative service office for women and an information and documentation centre for women's studies. It is a dynamic business association of dedicated female professionals established in 1976 by a number of professional and pioneering women in Jordan. It is a member of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW International) and its focus is to identify and communicate the productive, independent role of Women in Arab and Islamic society. BPW Amman is working with UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) in a project for "Promoting women empowerment for Inclusive and Sustainable Development in the Middle East and North Africa region".

Another project is "Inspiring Young Women to Join the Workforce" which aims at connecting professional female role models with Jordanian young people, to inspire, encourage and increase Jordanian females' participation in the workforce.

Some past projects linking gender and tourism development⁴⁵:

1. Jordan Tourism Development Project (SIYAHA). This project encompassed technical assistance, training and other services to help Jordan implement its National Tourism Strategy, which was designed to double tourism receipts by 2010. It promoted Jordan's competitiveness as an international tourism destination by establishing a strong institutional and regulatory framework that promotes private sector investment, stimulates tourism growth and preserves national tourism assets and the environment. The

⁴³ See <http://sigi-jordan.org/en/> (last accessed 07/08/17).

⁴⁴ See <http://bpwa-amman.org/en-us/> (last accessed 07/08/17).

⁴⁵ See Agnieszka Majcher-Teleon, Olfa Ben Slimène, *Women and Work in Jordan. Case Study of Tourism and Ict Sectors...* op. cit., pp. 32-33. Available at: <http://www.silviacambie.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/womenwork-in-jordan.pdf> (last accessed 31/07/17).

programme assisted private investors to develop new and comprehensive products and services across the tourism value chain. It also aimed to increase awareness among Jordanians of the importance of the tourism sector, and to position the industry as the employer of choice. The project was implemented in the period 2005–08 with an estimated budget of USD 17,424,283. The project also aimed for the first time to reach women (offering training at VTC and practical training in hotels, and mediating employment). Initially the percentage of women participating was very high (40%), though it subsequently decreased (to around 20% of the 700 students). The project design included awareness-raising campaigns such as bringing parents to the hotels to show them that they were respectable places to work. Women were also allowed to retain their traditional clothes and headscarves. In general, women were not willing to accept job offers at hotels following completion of the training. Some of them were placed in jobs in hospitals instead (in kitchens).

2. Izdihar project. Izdihar (‘prosperity’) project was funded by the EC and implemented by the Friedrich Neumann Foundation. Its objective was poverty alleviation through training and employment in the services sector. Around 100 women and 50 men received training (women mainly at local training centres and men on hotel premises). However, only a few women accepted job offers in hotels. The project also had some very interesting features. Firstly, training included a so-called empowerment component, i.e. awareness-raising about employees’ rights and responsibilities, personal skills and conflict-resolution skills. Secondly, efforts were made to make families more comfortable with the idea of sending their daughters to work in hotels (visits to the hotel premises; a meeting with the *Shari’a* professor from Jordan University who explained the permissibility of working in hotels). Thirdly, constant feedback was offered to girls (and employers) during the training and the first few months of employment. For example, if a girl did not turn up for work, the employer could contact the foundation, who would try to find out what the problem was, try to convince the parents to send their daughter to work and instruct the girl in how she should behave towards the employer (including, where appropriate, communicating to the employer her willingness to leave her job). Special arrangements were negotiated with the hotels for trainees (good salaries – approximately JOD 120 – health insurance, career prospects).

Some past projects linking women and ICT⁴⁶:

1. Achieving E-Quality in the ICT Sector (Phase II). In 1997 Cisco launched the Networking Academy programme to train young people in technical skills. In 2001 Cisco began a partnership with Unifem to create the “Achieving E-Quality in the IT Sector” programme in North Africa and the Middle East. The programme provides scholarships and training to women in underserved communities. The goal is to increase the number of women contributing to a country’s economic development. Since its inception, 1,620 students have participated in the programme, with 44% female enrolment and 1,057

⁴⁶*Idem*, p. 33.

programme graduates. “E-Quality” is part of Cisco’s global “Gender Initiative”. This initiative is dedicated to achieving three fundamental goals: provide access to the internet: create strategies and solutions to increase internet access for women, such as donating networking equipment to global NGOs and non-profit making organisations in support of sustainable programmes; build knowledge: increase access to knowledge and skills through technology-based delivery platforms such as the Networking Academy; create careers: connect Cisco volunteers and partners with community organisations to provide mentoring opportunities for girls and women, educate them about career opportunities in technology, and attract and retain women in the ICT industry. In Jordan, the project has been implemented with the USAID support and has resulted in the graduation of 889 Cisco Certified Network Associates (CCNA). It also includes establishing an “e-village” initiative in two villages in Northern Jordan to improve the chances of graduates from rural areas to be linked to the ICT job market. The project lasted for four years (2004–08).

Some NGOs in Tunisia:

In Tunisia, in 2014, a group of international non-governmental organisations, the European Union, the British Council and the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), launched a new NGO platform, the most important of its kind in Tunisia. This platform is called [Jamaity.com](http://jamaity.com)⁴⁷ and it is an umbrella organization which bring together the majority of Tunisian NGOs. Among these NGOs, there are some women’s organisations, such as:

1. Center of Arab Women for Training and Research - CAWTAR⁴⁸. Established in 1993, the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) is a non-profit non-governmental regional Organization, enjoying an international legal personality. Its main aim is that of eradicating discrimination against Arab women and reduce gender gaps by promoting research, education, training and advocacy in all areas of life that affect the status of women, and carrying its message to policy makers, researchers, activists and local communities alike. Thus, its mission is to empower women and promote gender equality and to reduce gender gaps as a means of achieving sustainable development in the Arab Region.

2. Union Nationale de la femme tunisienne⁴⁹. The Union Nationale de la femme tunisienne (National Union of Tunisian Women), is a non-governmental organization established in 1956, with the independence of Tunisia. In August of the same year, the Personal Status Code was promulgated.

At the beginning UNFT devoted its efforts to advocacy campaigns for women across the country to raise awareness of their rights and their role in economic and social development. Since then, UNFT has been working to improve the status of Tunisian women.

⁴⁷ See <http://jamaity.org> (last accessed 11/08/17).

⁴⁸ See <http://www.cawtar.org> (last accessed 09/08/17).

⁴⁹ See <http://www.unft.org.tn/fr/index.php> (last accessed 09/08/17).

It has thus worked to strengthen the legal base which has made a decisive breakthrough thanks to the amendments of the code introduced in August 1992 and the presidential measures of April 1996.

In order to empower the situation of women in Tunisia, the National Union of Tunisian Women, provides many training courses. Spread over Tunisian territory, the 200 UNFT training centres offer young girls and young men from disadvantaged neighbourhoods or rural areas a professional qualification that will enable them to build a project for the future. Among these training courses there are:

- Embroidery and sewing;
- Hairdressing and Aesthetics;
- Cooking and baking;
- Mosaic;
- Painting on silk and glass;
- Leather;
- Weaving (handmade carpets);
- Agriculture;
- Accounting management;
- Marketing of the product;
- Health education courses;
- Computer and Internet courses.

This NGO has also many other centres, such as the shelters for the women victims of domestic violence, centres for support women's economic activity and centres where women can attend literacy classes. Spread over the entire territory, especially in rural areas, the literacy classes are aimed at girls who stopped their education, illiterate women and especially rural women and men.

Some NGOs in Palestine:

1. The Palestinian Businesswomen's Association - Asala⁵⁰(أصالة).

In the oPt many NGOs work in the field of microfinance with the main purpose to sustain in general vulnerable families which, obtaining credits, can manage to overcome the poverty line.

Microfinance is also a tool for improving the role of women in business. While it is very difficult for women to access the banking system, gender does not play a role in micro-credit awards. Hence, growing role of microfinance in the country will increase the role of women entrepreneurs. Furthermore, it will expand women's employment opportunities, as women entrepreneurs tend to recruit female employees and provide employment for women in their families.

The Palestinian Businesswomen's Association - Asala, is one of these NGOs which work in the field of microfinance, helping specially women entrepreneurs. The Arabic word

⁵⁰ See <http://www.asala-pal.org> (last accessed 11/08/17).

asala (أصالة) means “originality”, so the originality and the genuineness of women in the world of business.

Asala has been actively providing loans to women since its establishment in 1997. Asala’s headquarters is in Ramallah and it has ten strategically located branch offices throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Asala targets impoverished and excluded Palestinian women in order to empower them and put them on a track that will lead to financial independence and stability. Asala provides Palestinian women entrepreneurs with a comprehensive package of support including guidance, counselling, training, micro, small, and Islamic financing, and extensive follow up. Success stories⁵¹ are real, tangible, and documented. Asala, in partnership with women entrepreneurs, is alleviating suffocating and detrimental poverty in Palestine one family at a time. Progress may be slow, but it is stable, sustainable, and recyclable.

Asala Association is a leader in small and micro financing and believes in the role of microcredit in the fight against poverty. Asala also believes that its microfinance programme serves as a leading model for reaching sustainable long-term development. Palestinian women, often the only individual able to revive the economic life of the family due to the suffocating and exacerbating political reality, are given real opportunities to pull themselves and their families out of poverty.

Asala was born from a dream to empower and to sustain impoverished Palestinian women. It was born in 1997 with a relatively small lending capacity. 13 years later, Asala’s small loan volume has rotated over 10 times, and resulted in a loan portfolio of 3 million USD. Asala has successfully served over 15,000 project all over Palestine, and is now bracing itself to take some very large steps. Asala has remained true to its vision of enabling and assisting Palestinian women to achieve economic independence.

Asala, along with other NGOs and organizations, is part of The PNSMF (Palestinian Network for Small & Microfinance)⁵², a Palestinian Non-Governmental Non-profit Organization, which represents a forum of small and Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) in Palestine.

2. Welfare Association - Taawon (مؤسسة التعاون)⁵³. The Arabic word *taawon* means “co-operation”. This NGO was established in 1983 by a group of Palestinian and Arab businessmen and thinkers. The Foundation has been established to support the sustainable development of the Palestinian people in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, as well as the refugee camps in Lebanon.

The Foundation has offices in Geneva, London, Amman, Beirut, Ramallah, Jerusalem and Gaza.

The Welfare Association – Taawon, works in different fields and has many programmes such as: Education, Culture, Community Development, Youth Empowerment Support,

⁵¹ To read success stories see Asala’s *Annual Report 2012*, pp. 12-15, Available at: <http://www.asala-pal.org/annual-report-2012/> (last accessed 11/08/17) or <http://www.asala-pal.org/asalas-impact/success-stories/> (last accessed 11/08/17).

⁵² See <http://www.palmfi.ps> (last accessed 11/08/17).

⁵³ See <http://www.taawon.org> or its Facebook profile at <https://www.facebook.com/TaawonPalestine/> (last accessed 11/08/17).

Orphan Support Program, Old City of Jerusalem Revitalization Program, The Palestinian Museum, Taawon for Youth.

The Youth Empowerment Support (YES) empowers youth aged 15 to 29 with the skills and resources required to successfully transition into employment. YES activities include:

- Online career-counselling portal that helps students identify their ideal career path;
- Technical and Vocational Training opportunities;
- An employment portal where job seekers can access paid internship and apprenticeship opportunities and.

Also, many young women gained benefit from this program such as Rowayda, a 24 years old girl from Gaza, who described her experience with these words “Being a woman with a disability in Gaza, and in the absence of any opportunity for self-fulfilment, desperation and despair were all I felt in the past. Later on, I joined WA culinary training program that is specifically tailored for people with hearing impairments. The program gave me new opportunities and I got a job at the “Atfaluna”⁵⁴ (أطفالنا “our children) restaurant. I can now confidently say that my chances of living a fulfilled life are much higher now.” Roweida’s trainer had this to say about her: “Roweida has proven her ability to learn and work hard. She is skilled at a number of different dishes, and she has a good level of professionalism. She’s a quick learner, efficient and committed”.

3. Women’s organisations came together and formed Women’s Affairs Technical Committee - WATC⁵⁵, which has been very active. Women rights groups have also advocated for quotas to increase women’s representation in decision-making bodies and have organised training for women to support them in their political participation. The reality of the current situation in oPt with a volatile security situation and domestic political tension, as well as a deteriorating economic situation, have led some women’s rights groups to focus more on national unity, peace and security, than on equal rights.

4. MA’AN (معا)⁵⁶ is another important NGO, working also in the field of water and sanitation sector. The word *ma’an* (معا) translated from Arabic to English means “together”, because its focal aim is to work together with other constituents to maintain human dignity and to achieve self-reliance through team work, participation and equal opportunities.

Working in partnership with local, national, and international CSOs and solidarity groups, its mission is that of contributing to the development of an effective Palestinian Civil Society.

Regarding Women’s Development Program MA’AN aims to empower Palestinian women in the context of the continual hardship brought by occupation and equip them to succeed in the extraordinary and multiple roles that are often demanded of them. This program aims to emphasis equality and contribute to a more equal society for women.

Historically, Palestinian women have been largely responsible for ensuring the domestic wellbeing of their families. However, imprisonment and exile of husbands and sons has

⁵⁴ See <http://www.atfaluna.net> (last accessed 11/08/17).

⁵⁵ See <http://www.watcpal.org/watcpal/en/> (last accessed 14/08/17).

⁵⁶ See <http://www.maan-ctr.org> (last accessed 28/08/14).

meant that many families and communities suffer from a frequent absence of male wage earners and community leaders. In such circumstances women have often emerged to take up new roles in communities and central positions in decision-making processes. In Palestine as a whole, few women participate in the official labour market but many women, especially in rural areas, often work unofficially or their labour is not recognized because it largely takes place in the home and is unpaid. However almost 65% of agricultural work is done by women as part of their household duties and women often carry out a significant amount of unpaid work in rural areas.

Some NGOs in Lebanon:

Lebanon has an active women's rights movement that has been instrumental in pushing for the amendment of discriminatory laws. The movement, however, has been affected by conflicts and wars over the years. The 1975–1990 civil war had affected the movement as well, as activists mainly focussed on social and relief services. It was after the civil war that women's rights groups began to concentrate their efforts on the reform of discriminatory laws. Progress on women's rights since the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah has been limited.

1. As explained in the third chapter Insan⁵⁷ is a Lebanese Ngo, working in the Human Rights field. The Arabic word *insan* (إنسان), means “human being”.

Insan Association is an independent, non-profit human rights organization serving marginalized individuals in Lebanon, most of whom are refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers, stateless individuals and their children.

Insan offers a variety of services to their beneficiaries, ranging from education and life skills training to social, psychological, and legal support. These departments complement and facilitate each other, ensuring that beneficiaries' needs are being addressed from all sides. Insan takes a holistic approach, working with the entire family – both children and parents – to help improve their situation. These services are tailored to individuals' and families' specific needs.

Insan offers schooling and different other kinds of support to underprivileged boys and girls, who are neglected by society and suffer from discrimination, extreme poverty or the lack of legal papers. With its holistic approach Insan does not only provide education but on a case to case basis offers psychological and social support to the children as well as their parents and families. In addition, Insan pays special attention to girls, to ensure that they have access to one of their fundamental rights: education.

2. Himaya⁵⁸ is a Lebanese Non-Governmental Organization dedicated to making child protection a right across Lebanon, in fact the word *himaya* (حمية) means “protection”.

Himaya aims to break the silence and offers children the life skills they need to defend themselves. Himaya also supports survivors of abuse and gives them the psychosocial support they need to overcome their experiences. In order to be as effective as possible, Himaya works with children, their families, and surroundings as a whole. It strives to

⁵⁷ See <http://www.insanassociation.org> (last accessed 14/07/17).

⁵⁸ See <https://www.himaya.org> (last accessed 16/08/17).

make a change on a national level with the help of its two main programs: the prevention and resilience programs. It covers the majority of Lebanese territory with offices in Mansourieh, Beirut, Baalbeck, Zahle, Zgharta, Halba and Sidon.

3. The Lebanese organisation for studies and training - LOST⁵⁹ is a Lebanese NGO working with people, particularly women and youth to create a more developed and equitable society through reducing poverty, eliminating exclusion, and fostering a culture of peace.

In order to improve and empower the women conditions, this NGO provides training courses, such as, for example, courses to become a make-up artist, TOEFL preparation courses or vocational training courses for Lebanese and Syrian youth. With these courses women and men can start to work and improve their life and the life of their relatives and children.

An example of this is Sukayna Jamal Nassridine, a 24-year old participant who was enrolled in the make-up class. Following the 2-month make-up course that Sukayna attended, the young participant was able to obtain a job at a local salon in Hermel, as an assistant. “I learned and benefitted a lot from the course, thanks to the performance of the trainer and her wonderful style of explanation”, Sukayna excitedly stated. In addition, Sukayna expressed her gratitude to the supervisors and the project managers for “providing and securing the appropriate materials and conditions for the course”.

4. Amel Association⁶⁰ (*amel* عامل means “worker”) is a non-profit, non-sectarian organization that supports the most underprivileged populations in Lebanon, through various programs involving health care, psychosocial support, rural development, vocational training, child protection and the promotion of human rights.

Amel has currently 24 centres in the most underprivileged zones in Lebanon (Southern Suburbs of Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Bekaa Valley and South Lebanon).

5. KAFa (*kafa* كفى means “enough”) Violence & Exploitation (كفى عنف واستغلال)⁶¹ is a feminist, secular, Lebanese, non-profit, non-governmental civil society organization seeking to create a society that is free of social, economic and legal patriarchal structures that discriminate against women.

KAFa has been aiming to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence and exploitation since its establishment in 2005. It seeks to realize substantive gender equality through the adoption of a combination of different approaches, such as: advocacy for law reform and introduction of new laws and policies; influencing public opinion, practices and mentality; conducting research and training; and empowering women and children victims of violence, and providing them with social, legal, and psychological support.

Some NGOs in Egypt:

⁵⁹ See <http://lostlb.org> (last accessed 16/08/17).

⁶⁰ See <http://amel.org> (last accessed 16/08/17).

⁶¹ See <http://www.kafa.org.lb> (last accessed 28/08/17).

1. Dakahlya Businessmen Association for Community Development - DBACD⁶². DBACD was established in 1995, in Mansoura, the capital of Governorate of Daqahliyya, the Nile delta region in Egypt. This NGO works especially in the field of microfinance in order to improve the living standard of the lower income groups in the Delta community by providing financial and non-financial services in a sustainable and efficient manner. In 2006, DBACD became a Grameen-Jameel⁶³ partner. Grameen-Jameel is a non-profit organization and it helps the world's poorest – especially women – improve their lives and escape poverty by providing them with access to appropriate financial services, such as microsavings and loans.

2. Alashanek ya baladi Association for Sustainable Development - AYB-SD (جمعية عشانك يا بلدي للتنمية المستدامة)⁶⁴ is a non-governmental organization established in 2002 in Maadi (Cairo). In 2010 AYB-SD started expanding its reach and replicated its model in eight new governorates (Fayoum, Sharkeya, Kharbeya, Monofeya, Dakahleya, Qena, Beni Souef and Luxor).

AYB-SD is an NGO which providing suitable employment opportunities for beneficiaries through offering several programs such as vocational, life skills, and specialized training to prepare youth for the job market and match their skills with the market needs.

4.3.3 Italian NGOs working in MENA region

In Italy there are many NGOs that are working at the moment in the MENA region. Some of these NGOs have long experience in this area, such as CRIC in Reggio Calabria, CISS in Palermo or Cope in Catania which has been working to improve the life conditions of the most vulnerable people, implementing projects with the help of some local NGOs especially in Palestine; Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan and Morocco.

1. Centro Regionale di Intervento per la Cooperazione - CRIC⁶⁵ is an Italian NGO established in Reggio Calabria in 1983 as an International Voluntary Association. In 1986, it was recognized as a non-governmental organization (NGO) by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In the Mena region CRIC works especially in Palestine and Morocco bringing forward many projects in different fields such as Gender - Empowerment, Sustainable Development, Training, Environment and Territory, and Emergency and Prevention.

In Palestine CRIC has been working to improve the life conditions of many Bedouin communities, by providing them any kind of activities, promoted and implemented in order to strengthen basic education, traditional productive capacities and to promote environmental safety in communities.

⁶² See <http://www.dbacd-eg.org> (last accessed 23/08/17).

⁶³ See <http://grameen-jameel.com> (last accessed 23/08/17).

⁶⁴ See <http://www.ayb-sd.org> (last accessed 25/08/17).

⁶⁵ See <http://www.cric.it/> (last accessed 16/08/17).

CRIC implemented many training courses, such as reading and writing for many unfortunate people, especially women and children, who did not have the opportunity to attend a school. Therefore, this is a first step for the achievement of a better future.

2. Another NGO working in the Mena region is Gruppo di Volontariato Civile - GVC⁶⁶, a secular and independent non-governmental organization established in Bologna in 1971. It is active in international cooperation with complex strategies of intervention: from humanitarian assistance to populations affected by conflicts and natural disasters to reconstruction, from health to food security, from rural development to education, to the protection of women in childhood.

This NGO, established in Bologna, has further branches and offices around Italy, such as in the south of Italy, in Bari and Brindisi.

GVC is active in many sectors, from development education to freedom of expression, from reinforcing civil society to supporting local organizations. This is the only way for societies to live together with a view to dignity, exchange, and reciprocity. GVC works in many countries and also in Tunisia, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.

GVC is bringing forward many projects for the empowerment of women, such as in Tunisia and Morocco. One of these project is called “Eco de Femmes”⁶⁷ and it aims at playing an important role in boosting social and economic protection of Tunisian and Moroccan rural women, in promoting equality for the control and the access of economic resources and, lastly, in encouraging the exchange and diffusion of good practice in the Mediterranean basin.

3. Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud - CISS⁶⁸ is an Italian NGO, established in Palermo in 1985. CISS is bringing forward many projects around the world, especially in the south, and also in many countries of Mena region, such as Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine and Lebanon.

In Palestine, in the field of sustainable tourism, CISS implemented a project called “Bilad al-Sham I”. The project planned a theoretical and practical and training course in antique mosaics restoration, to which participated young people from 5 Middle-Eastern countries. They worked in different sites of Syria and Jordan.

In project’s range were realized different activities in order to offer to youngest generations the possibility to come near their cultural heritage, in order to understand its value and to stimulate its safeguard. At the end of the project was realized in Jerusalem an exhibition about the reached results accompanied with the exposition of antique mosaics.

At the moment, always in Palestine, CISS is implementing the project “The promotion of psychosocial health of children, adolescents and women in Nablus” with the main aim of promoting the protection and the rights of women and young among the communities, the NGOs, the religious leaders and local authorities in the occupied Palestinian territories

⁶⁶ See <http://www.gvc-italia.org> (last accessed 18/08/17).

⁶⁷ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOcck-R2Dh4> (last accessed 18/08/17). This video is really interesting because it shows the situation of the women in the Tunisian rural areas.

⁶⁸ See <http://www.ciisong.org> (last accessed 18/08/17).

with the aim to fight poverty and create an environment more favourable to social integration and development. Within this project there are literacy classes, school support activities (Arabic and English language and mathematics), art workshops (art, theatre, dance), sport activities. A toy and game centre and the adjoining garden will be renovated for outdoor activities, there will be a nursery service to ensure the participation of women in literacy classes and will be conducted a study and a research on children's rights.

4. SVI.MED. EuroMediterranean Center for the Sustainable Development⁶⁹ is a non-profit organization established in Ragusa. SVI.MED supports strategies and models of development drawing on the 1995 Barcelona Declaration that contemplates: "Turning the Euro-Mediterranean area into a common space of peace, stability and prosperity through the strengthening of political dialogue, the understanding between cultures and the promotion of social, cultural and human partnerships for developing the human resources and promoting the exchanges among civil societies."

Among its main objectives SVI.MED believes into dialogue with Mediterranean Countries facing joint cultural and environmental challenges. In order to achieve this objective SVI.MED supports the programme ENI CBC MED 2014-2020 which aims to promote fair, equitable and sustainable economic, social and territorial development in the regions along the Mediterranean coast.

SVI.MED supported also the programme INTERREG V-A ITALIA MALTA⁷⁰ and ENI Coopération Transfrontalière Italie Tunisie 2007-2013⁷¹ with the main objective to promote economic, social, institutional and cultural integration between the Sicilian and Tunisian territories through a joint and sustainable development process.

5. International Promotion Sicily-World - PRISM⁷² is another Sicilian NGO, established in Enna. PRISM aims at creating development opportunities for the territories in which it operates, encouraging economic, cultural and social growth through international cooperation.

PRISM promotes competencies and skills for entrepreneurship and innovation of young people, providing them with a valuable edge for their expression at European and international level.

6. Cooperazione Paesi Emergenti - COPE⁷³ is a Sicilian NGO established in Catania in 1983. This NGO promotes and organizes health, agricultural, educational and social projects to foster self-development of local populations in Emerging Countries. Currently, COPE is present in Africa (Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Tanzania) and Latin America (Peru).

COPE also deals with training and in order to help local people it sends volunteer groups with professional skills to some developing countries, providing there training courses and more to improve the living conditions of these people.

⁶⁹ See <http://www.svimed.eu/website/> (last accessed 18/08/17).

⁷⁰ See <http://www.italiamalta.eu> (last accessed 18/08/17).

⁷¹ See <http://www.italietunisie.eu> (last accessed 18/08/17).

⁷² See <http://www.associazioneprism.eu> (last accessed 21/08/17).

⁷³ See <http://cope.it> (last accessed 21/08/17).

7. Osservatorio Migranti Basilicata⁷⁴ is an NGO established in Potenza (Basilicata) and it works especially with migrants living there, providing them any kind of support: legal assistance for bureaucratic questions such as the residence permit; information offices, union assistance to foreign workers, informing them of their rights and giving them work assistance.

Osservatorio Migranti aims at improving the lives of migrants in the area, and their effective integration into local communities.

8. Cooperazione nei Territori del Mondo - CTM⁷⁵ is an NGO established in 1985 in Lecce (Apulia). In over 30 years of activity, CTM has implemented international cooperation projects, and put forward initiatives in favour of people in difficulty. CTM works with schools, associations and grassroots, and promote training courses, education to development, as well as initiatives for supporting decentralized cooperation, involving public opinion and local bodies.

CTM is member of the Association of Italian organizations for cooperation and international solidarity (AOI)⁷⁶.

Since 2003, CTM has mainly been active in Lebanon, through social development projects, aiming at improving the life conditions of disadvantaged groups, with the help of inclusion and integration programs, which, once implemented, are managed by CTM local partners.

9. Comunità Promozione e Sviluppo - CPS⁷⁷ is an NGO, established in 1974 in Castellammare di Stabia (Napoli). This NGO has been implementing development projects aimed at self-promotion and improving the living conditions of disadvantaged peoples in Senegal, Congo and Peru in the areas of: protection of children and women; training; health; local development; and environmental protection.

10. Another NGO established in Napoli (in 1972) is Laici Terzo Mondo - LTM⁷⁸. Since 1979 to present LTM has carried out several projects in Benin, Cameroon and Madagascar, and has intervened in emergency situations in Sri Lanka and Kosovo.

In developing countries, LTM focuses mainly on rural development, food security, training and micro-credit, paying particular attention to the enhancement of local human resources and the role of women, respect for the socio-cultural environment, vocational training, technical, economic and environmental sustainability.

LTM helps local governments and it provides education not only to primary school children, but also to adults by organizing literacy courses. In fact, LTM believes that “knowledge saves one’s life and that of others”; therefore, people can improve their living conditions starting from the education and acquiring new knowledge and skills.

11. Movimento Cooperazione Internazionale - Mo.CI⁷⁹ is an NGO established in 1983. Its offices are located in Cosenza, Reggio Calabria e Milan. In the world Mo.CI operates,

⁷⁴ See <http://www.osservatoriomigrantibasilicata.it> (last accessed 21/08/17).

⁷⁵ See <http://www.ctm-lecce.it> (last accessed 21/08/17).

⁷⁶ See <http://www.ong.it> (last accessed 21/08/17).

⁷⁷ See <http://www.cps-ong.it> (last accessed 21/08/17).

⁷⁸ See <http://www.ltmong.org> (last accessed 21/08/17).

⁷⁹ See <http://www.mocimondo.org> (last accessed 21/08/17).

especially in Benin, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and India by promoting development projects in the sectors: basic education and social services, access to water and food sovereignty, with a view to self-development and intercultural exchange.

4.4 SDG 8: Decent work and Economic Growth

According to the International Labour Organization, more than 204 million people were unemployed in 2015 and the main objective of SDG8 (Decent work and Economic Growth) is that of achieving full and productive employment, and decent work, for all women and men by 2030.

Regarding the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region here young men and women face the highest youth unemployment levels in the world. Therefore the achievement of this SDG in the MENA region will be a very hard challenge, even if some improvements has been done or better it is possible to affirm that at least young people, more than in the past, are aware of their current situation and proof of this awareness is the Arab Spring, that probably in some countries didn't change the political framework but for sure young people have become more aware of their issues and political situation, also thanks to the spread of social medias.

According to United Nations Development Programme over the past 25 years the number of workers living in extreme poverty has reduced, despite the last economic crisis and global recession of 2008.

However, according to the International Labour Organization, more than 204 million people were unemployed in 2015.

The SDG 8 promotes economic growth, higher levels of productivity and technological innovation. The main objective is that of achieving full and productive employment, and decent work, for all women and men by 2030.

Some targets of SDG 8 are:

- By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value;
- By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training;
- Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

Regarding the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region here young men and women face the highest youth unemployment levels in the world. Almost 60% of the regional population is currently under the age of 30, and the number of under-15s is expected to increase by over 18% by 2020. 2.8 million young people enter the job market each year in the MENA region. With an average of about 30% youth unemployment, the Middle East and North Africa region has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the

world. The International Labour Organization has estimated that the region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) could increase by \$25 billion by 2018 if the youth unemployment rate is reduced by half⁸⁰. Therefore, MENA countries need to urgently develop and implement strategies focused on fully engaging youth in the economy, society and public life. So far, young people have only limited opportunities to influence policy making, and several lack adequate access to decent employment, quality education and affordable healthcare.

In fact, five years after what has become known as the Arab Spring, young men and women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region still face considerable obstacles in becoming a driving force for social and economic development in their countries. MENA youth are facing higher unemployment levels than young people in any other region in the world. While around 15% of young people aged 15-29 in OECD countries as a whole are not in education, employment or training, inactivity levels for the age cohort 15-24 are as high as 25% for young men in the Palestinian Authority and around 41% for young women in Egypt. As the share of 15-29-year-olds exceeds 30% of the working-age population in most MENA countries, there is an urgent need to create decent opportunities for youth in both public and private sector to play a productive role in all areas of life, in particular by creating the space for youth to raise their voice and shape policies that reflect their realities and aspirations⁸¹.

Contrary to the popular belief that young people are not interested in politics, recent evidence shows that a majority of MENA youth not only express a general interest in politics but are looking for ways to engage.

On the website of Euro-med⁸² it is possible to find many testimonies of young people from different Mediterranean countries talking about the political situation in their countries, their future and their possibilities.

As explained above, especially in the MENA area is not easy to find a job and among these testimonies, there is one from Egypt which is very interesting to understand the current situation in the country and why they try to leave their country at all costs.

In Egypt there is little chance to get good work and create your own career. That is why they try to get a good chance outside Egypt, and the Youth Programme⁸³ has been trying

⁸⁰ See UfM, *Med4Jobs - Creating Job Opportunities Promoting Inclusive Growth*, December 2016, p.1. Available at: http://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/UfM-Med4Jobs-Leaflet-EN_web_final.pdf (last accessed 07/08/17).

⁸¹ See OECD, *Youth in the MENA Region HOW TO BRING THEM IN*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2016, p. 9. Available at: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/youth-in-the-mena-region_9789264265721-en (last accessed 07/09/17).

⁸²EURO-MED is a platform and its main aim is that of bringing NGOs from the European and Mediterranean regions together in an environment of tolerance and mutual understanding by assisting them in networking and capacity building, increasing their participation and exchanging good practice. See <http://euromedp.eupa.org.mt/> (last accessed 06/06/17).

⁸³See "Youth in Action" Programme (YiA) at: <http://yia.eupa.org.mt/>. The aim of the YiA office within the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) is to help and support you achieve this and more opportunities. They believe that bringing young people together from diverse cultures serves them to learn about each other and allows them to express openly their hitherto hidden capabilities.

in the last years to help these young people with different initiatives, activities which generally oriented towards youth development through recreation, social life, prevention, intervention, or education.

Most of the young people in Egypt did not have the chance to practise anything or to learn anything because from childhood they attended public school which unfortunately are not the best and only rich people can attend international and private school. Some of them have the possibility to go to the university and try to finish it quickly to get a chance to work. But it is not so easy to find a good job even after the university. With this programme, the government tries to introduce money to Egyptian youth for small project, or trying to fix the desert as some solution.

In Egypt there are 70 million people, and in Cairo 20 million people. So, they are suffering from many kinds of problems like unemployment, and a variety of environmental problems, especially air and water pollution.

The problems concerning young people are many and this situation could be improved or solved starting from the education, which the key of everything, and if the government is not able to ensure a good education, it is in this specific field which many NGOs have to work by helping young people to improve their skills through training course, vocational training courses in order to enter the labour market.

4.4.1 Unemployment in the MENA region/ Economic Characteristics

Unemployment in the MENA region is one of the most urgent issue, and it has been one of the catalysts of Arab Spring. In the Mediterranean young women and men are 20% of the population and in the same time these young people represent the highest unemployment rate in the world. Therefore, job creation and employability are necessary to achieve youth inclusion in the Mediterranean. Analysing one by one some countries of the MENA region it is interesting to notice that in the majority of these countries unemployment situation is featured by the so called “paradox” of unemployment or the phenomenon of “educated employment”, known already for a decade as a typical feature of the MENA region labour market. This means that low-educated or non-educated workers show very low unemployment levels, whereas unemployment increases with education step by step for the graduates of general and TVET secondary schools and then for postsecondary and university graduates.

In the Mediterranean region there are about 140 million young (aged 15-29) women and men. That is almost 20 percent of the population. They account for a large reservoir of untapped human resources, with the world’s highest unemployment rate among youth and the lowest participation of females in the labour force⁸⁴ (25 percent in the Southern Mediterranean – the lowest in the world).

Therefore, fostering job creation and employability is necessary to achieve youth inclusion in the Mediterranean.

⁸⁴ See World Bank, *Jobs for Shared Prosperity: Time for Action in the Middle East and North Africa*, 2013. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/13284> (last accessed 09/10/17)

Moreover, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region countries need to gradually move to knowledge-based economies, as knowledge is recognised as a key driver for productivity and economic growth.

In fact, young people entering the labour market need to acquire the range of skills that is required by the labour market and continuously adapt these skills. Despite the success of the MENA countries in ensuring access to education and infrastructures, curricula and learning methods do not impart sufficient skills that match labour market needs, which constitute necessary conditions for inclusion, self-fulfilment and social mobility. A new vision of education is critical for the MENA region – one that promotes critical thinking, creativity and innovation that would allow the region to achieve inclusive growth, stability, and global competitiveness.

Egypt has a population of 91.5 million in 2015. The demographic pressure is still high, with young people aged 15–24 accounting for 28.1% (2015 according to UNDP data) of the 15–64 age band.

Although the GDP is on a path of steady growth, the economy in this country is still on shaky ground and this instability affects mostly young people.

A drop in tourism, considered one of the main sector of the Egyptian economy, has been impeding economic activity, and many people, especially young people who used to work in this field before the Arab Spring, are now unemployed.

Unemployment is high (13% in 2014). In common with the other countries of the region Egypt is characterised by a very low economic activity rate for females, which in the last five years has remained around 15%. The unemployment rate of women is almost double that of men (24% versus 9.6% in 2014).

The main factors that influence the national economy and the demand for skills are the following:

- The current economic crisis has affected employment opportunities at all levels. The private sector has reduced the offer of new jobs, particularly in the tourism sector. The public sector has discontinued the previous policy of increasing public employment to address national unemployment. That policy had been very costly for the state; in 2010–2011, for example, 26% of the total government expenditure was used to pay the wages of public employees.
- Demographic growth is still very strong and represents a big challenge for the labour market. Currently around 800 000 newcomers join the labour market each year.
- The negative conditions for new businesses (Egypt scored 110th in the Doing Business ranking in 2012, and 131st in 2016) also reduce the possibility for entrepreneurial initiatives.

Furthermore, it is really interesting to notice that unemployment situation in Egypt is featured by the so called “paradox” of unemployment or the phenomenon of “educated employment”, known already for a decade as a typical feature of the Egyptian labour market. This means that low-educated or non-educated workers show very low unemployment levels, whereas unemployment increases with education step by step for

the graduates of general and TVET secondary schools (10.4% and 12.3% respectively in 2012) and then for postsecondary and university graduates (12.6% and 13.6% respectively in 2012). This shows a clear need to revise curricula or to adapt the education and training offer to labour market needs. It also implies a need to re-discuss the national economic model, which is probably not able to generate enough high-quality jobs requiring highly qualified workers⁸⁵.

It is even more interesting notice that this paradox is a feature purely male. In fact, whereas education affects the employment prospects of males only slightly, it changes women's employment prospects drastically. The unemployment rates of females are 30% for those with general secondary education (compared with 6% for males), 37% for TVET secondary education graduates (5% for males), 29% for those with postsecondary education (6% for males) and 25% for university graduates (7% for males). The increased enrolment of women in education does not translate into job prospects. Moreover, the impact of TVET is opposite: it improves employment prospects for men and worsens those for women. TVET needs to be reconsidered in terms of real job prospects, especially for women who, in the absence of such prospects, end up in a vicious cycle of unemployment and then inactivity.

Employment in the private sector continues to be dominated by small firms and informal work. In 2012, 45% of employment was in firms with one to four employees, and this has changed little over time; 17% of employment was in firms with five to nine employees. According to the World Bank, the size of the informal sector as a percentage of GDP is estimated to have been 36.2% before the revolution, while the share of the labour force who do not contribute to any social security has gone up to 44.5% among employees and 28.2% among the self-employed⁸⁶.

Labour emigration remains an important issue for the country. Egyptian emigrants work mainly in the Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the Gulf countries) and to a lesser extent in the USA and Europe (in particular Italy and France). Recently a rise in migration to Europe – mostly irregular – especially Italy and France, has been recorded. Egyptian migration is currently experiencing “the permanence of temporary migration”, whereby migration towards Arab countries is becoming less temporary⁸⁷.

Regarding the refugees' crisis the number of Syrian refugees is limited compared to the total population. Egypt remains a destination and transit country for refugees and asylum-

⁸⁵ See European Training Foundation, *Egypt: Education, Training and Employment Developments 2016*, 2017, pp. 3-4. Available at: [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/D0CEE2F12BD31483C12580E6005211D2/\\$file/Egypt%202016.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/D0CEE2F12BD31483C12580E6005211D2/$file/Egypt%202016.pdf) (last accessed 09/10/17).

⁸⁶ See Angel-Urdinola, Roberta Gatti Diego F., Silva Joana, Bodor Andras, *Striving for better jobs: The challenge of informality in the Middle East and North Africa region*, MENA Knowledge and Learning Quick Notes Series, N. 49, World Bank, Washington DC, 2011, pp. 1-4. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/936991468059653314/pdf/661100BRI0Box30Informality0revised1.pdf> (last accessed 11/10/17).

⁸⁷ See Philippe Fargues (Ed.), *EU neighbourhood migration report 2013*, European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, Migration Policy Centre, 2013, p. 75. Available at: http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/27394/MPC_EU_NeighbourhoodMigrationReport2013_web.pdf?sequence=5 (last accessed 11/10/17).

seekers, most of which live in urban areas. Currently, according to UNHCR, there are 211,104 refugees and asylum-seekers of 63 different nationalities and the number has been constant since 2013. Over half are from Syria. Egypt receives a lot of support from many public and private donors to deal with the refugee situation⁸⁸.

Tunisia is a young nation. Out of a total of 11.3 million inhabitants in 2015, more than half the population was under the age of 29.

Despite a slight improvement since 2011, unemployment has remained a major challenge in Tunisia in recent years. Here, like in many other MENA region countries, there is a high youth unemployment rate (35.5% in 2015) and young people, between 15 and 24 years old, are the main victims of this unemployment. Geography also affects unemployment trends, and important differences exist between the regions: from 12.4% in the centre and east of the country to 26.1% in the southeast (Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, 2012).

This data puts severe pressure on policy makers in terms of needing to provide adequate schooling and health services, and future jobs.

The country's political situation remains unstable and this has repercussions on the economy and on employment, even if after the Revolution of 2011 many reforms have emerged.

Tunisia is an upper middle-income country. Several dichotomies affect the country's potential for economic growth and employment generation, including the intergenerational divide and gender and regional disparities. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew at a rate of 0.8% in 2015, a step backward compared to 2014 when it was 2.7%. This deteriorating situation can be linked to the security issues that had serious consequences for foreign direct investment (FDI) and key sectors such as tourism. Tunisia ranked 74th out of the 189 countries listed in the Doing Business 2016 Index (very different from its ranking in 36th place in 2008), and ranked 92nd in the Global Competitive Index in 2016, much lower than its ranking in 40th place in 2011⁸⁹.

The structure of the national economy is characterised by a large informal sector, and a predominance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), that are weak in terms of capacity to innovate, the quality of jobs generated and working conditions.

In the last years Tunisian economy has been characterized by huge losses in the tourism industry. Currently the Tunisian economy is moderately diversified and services play an increasingly important role. In fact, the service sector was the biggest contributor to GDP

⁸⁸ See UNHCR FACT SHEET, *Egypt*, September 2017. Available at: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Egypt%20Factsheet%20-%20September%202017.pdf> (last accessed 11/10/17).

⁸⁹ See European Training Foundation, *Tunisia: Education, Training and Employment Developments 2016*, 2017, pp. 3-4. Available at: [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/3DAA62B4504B9E0DC12580E60050AF67/\\$file/Tunisia%202016.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/3DAA62B4504B9E0DC12580E60050AF67/$file/Tunisia%202016.pdf) (last accessed 11/10/17).

(61.9%) in 2014. This was followed by industry (29.3%) and agriculture (8.8%) (World Bank). The latter still accounted for 14.8% of employment in 2015 (INS).

Tunisia is traditionally a country of emigration, with about 6% of its population living abroad, mainly in Europe (83%). In the last few years Tunisia has increasingly become a country of immigration (33600 immigrants), particularly for Libyans following the change of regime.

Furthermore, the Tunisian economy is featured by large disparities, especially between interior and rural regions and those in the north of the country and along the coast. Tunisia is at the forefront of women's rights among Arab countries. This is clear in the new constitution. However, Tunisia still ranked only 96th out of 188 countries in the 2014 Gender Inequality Index. Tunisia also still faces the challenge of corruption and was ranked 76th out of 175 countries in the fight against corruption by Transparency International in 2015.

Regarding education and training, Tunisian education and VET systems are predominantly public and non-fee paying, granting equal access at all levels and fostering a highly educated population. Furthermore, Tunisia has made incredible improvements in literacy and schooling rates over the years: the overall illiteracy rate fell to 19% in 2015 (compared to 31.7% in 1994), while youth literacy rates among the 15 to 24 age group increased to 96.8%. Tunisia has almost achieved the goal of universal primary education, one of the Millennium Development Goals.

Despite these successes, many other improvements are necessary. In fact, it is important to take under consideration that a substantial number of young people are not in employment, education and training (NEETs). Furthermore Males (57% in 2015) tend to abandon school more than females (46.2%). School authorities do not provide any explanations for this phenomenon, which negatively affects the country's economic development, especially in innovative, technology-based sectors.

Another challenge concerns the poor-quality education at primary and secondary levels and it is considered at the heart of problems in the VET and higher education systems. Even the transition from school to work seems quite difficult in the country. Improved education levels have not always translated into good access to the labour market.

Therefore, labour market participation remains very weak, with female participation scoring particularly low (26.3% in 2014, compared to 69.8% for men in the same year). Among Arab countries, Tunisia is traditionally recognised for women's rights and basic parity in access to education. However, this is not yet reflected in labour market outcomes. Women remain largely excluded.

The differences between young women and young men are small in dynamic urban areas, but wider in the less dynamic regions and in rural areas. Young women living in the northern or central interior areas are more vulnerable to unemployment; those living in southern areas are more often classified as being out of the labour market.

Like in Egypt, even in Tunisia there is the so-called "paradox" of unemployment or the phenomenon of "educated employment" which means that more educated young people are those who are affected most by unemployment. This is due to weak coordination

between university and labour market and the unemployment rate of highly educated people is almost double the rate of those with medium-level qualifications.

Decent work is a key problem in Tunisia. Informal employment is widespread: according to the World Bank, 50% of the labour force was in informal employment in 2011. The sector accounts for 30% of GDP (IMF, 2012) and is characterized by precariousness, long working hours, low incomes (including unpaid family workers, most of whom are female) and the lack of social protection.

Lebanon has a unique socio-political setting due to the fragile institutional situation and the growing pressure of the Syrian crisis. This situation made difficult for governments to implement reforms, which are often blocked or slowed down due to changing priorities and problems in reaching consensus.

Therefore, due to the current political situation, attention is focused on security and on providing a solid response to the Syrian crisis, which is putting tremendous socioeconomic pressure on the country. However, some attempts have been made to develop a strategy for vocational education and training (VET).

Demographics in Lebanon are characterised by two factors: a young population and the inflow of displaced persons from Syria. The young population (15 to 24 years) accounts for almost 30% of the labour force (15 to 64 years). The ratio of 15 to 24-year-olds to the working age population (15 to 64-year-olds) has decreased since 2011, which means that the estimated population is slightly older than in the recent past.

According to the Lebanon's national statistics office (Central Administration of Statistics (CAS)) the country's total population is 3.7 million. However, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which includes the Palestinian population living in refugee camps and displaced Syrians who have reached the country, estimated the population to be 5.8 million in 2015.

Lebanese society has been always featured by migration flows, primarily linked to the country's socio-political developments. In the past, emigration was mainly a consequence of war. More recently, it is linked to general instability in the region and increasing unemployment. Immigration has been largely characterised by regional political developments and to a lesser extent by work-related issues (mainly domestic workers coming from Syria, Egypt, Bangladesh and Sudan).

Lebanon is a middle-income country with an open and largely service-oriented economy. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) remain the main form of business organisation, particularly micro and small enterprises. There is also a large informal sector in the country. Economic growth was high in recent years but has dropped significantly since 2011.

In fact, economic growth is still slow due to political instability, the global financial crisis, the regional political situation and the impact of the ongoing conflict in neighbouring Syria. Lebanon has lost an important trading partner as a result of the Syrian crisis. Regarding the education, Lebanon retains high education standards, despite difficult periods of instability. It should be noted that private education features strongly in the

education system. An enrolment rate of above 50% in private education has also been a traditional characteristic of vocational education and training (VET), but the trend seems to have reversed in recent years.

A major issue for Lebanon is the dramatic increase in the number of Syrian students in the Lebanese formal education system in the past five years. Since 2012, Lebanese public schools and universities have allowed Syrian refugees to enrol and Commendable efforts were made by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and education sector stakeholders to respond to the Syrian crisis in the last four years.

The Lebanese labour market is characterised by low activity and employment rates, a low contribution by women to economic life, a large informal sector, a high influx of foreign workers, a large number of skilled Lebanese people seeking employment abroad and high youth unemployment (18% for males and 20.4% for females).

The low employment and low activity rates of females are attributed to social, cultural and economic factors. The largest share of employed women works as professionals such as university lecturers, teachers, doctors and engineers. Female activity rates increase with education level. While female participation in entrepreneurship is relatively high in Lebanon, the number of women in the top category of managers (senior officials) remains low, with only 7% of working women in this occupation (as opposed to 16% of working men)⁹⁰.

Furthermore, also in Lebanon, like in Egypt and Tunisia there is the so-called paradox of “educated employment”, in fact unemployment rates are particularly high among university graduates, which also indicates a significant mismatch between labour supply and demand. In fact, in most cases, the increasingly higher educational attainment of the labour force does not match the needs of micro and small enterprises, which still constitute the backbone of the national economy.

Jordan, like Lebanon, is another country in the Middle East that more than others is suffering the war in Syria, supporting thousands of Syrian refugees and their influx seems to have affected the Jordanian labour market. The impact of the Syrian crisis has been strongly felt in Lebanon and Jordan and there have been negative consequences for tourism, foreign investment and capital inflows.

Another issue related to this crisis, is the unemployment which regards both Syrian and Jordan youth.

Jordan has a population of 9.5 million. This number includes also migrant and refugee workers. The population of Jordan has increased more than tenfold in the last 55 years. This last increase is due to the war in Syria and the high migration rate to Jordan. This situation has created a demographic pressure.

⁹⁰ See European Training Foundation, *Lebanon: Education, Training and Employment Developments 2016, 2017*, pp. 6-7. Available at: [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/A5C1FD46A96C7D58C12580E600517539/\\$file/Lebanon%202016.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/A5C1FD46A96C7D58C12580E600517539/$file/Lebanon%202016.pdf) (last accessed 16/10/17).

It is also very interesting to notice that Jordanian population is characterized by a large percentage of Palestinian descent and also by a high influx of refugees from other Arab countries such as Iraq and Libya.

Jordan is an upper middle-income country and considered an emerging market with an open economy. It has scarce water supplies and limited other natural resources. The country is highly dependent on energy imports. Despite these negative aspects in the last year experienced strong economic growth in the last years before the crisis of 2007-2008. Regarding the education in Jordan, here the situation seems better than his neighbour countries and the adult literacy rate is the highest in the region.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO)⁹¹, the vast majority of Syrians have lower education compared to Jordanians: 60% of Syrian refugees above the age of 15 have never completed basic schooling, and only about 15% have completed secondary education, compared to 42% of Jordanians above the age of 15.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that more girls than boys enrol at all education levels (the opposite is the case if Syrian refugees and others are included) but the gender-based subject choices lead women to work mainly in the education, health and social sectors (three-quarters of all employed women) and in the public sector (more than half of all employed women are government employees).

In 2012, 24.6% of young people aged between 15 and 24 were not in employment, education or training (NEETs). The ratio is higher for women (34.8%). Students do not find the vocational education stream particularly attractive, mainly because of the low quality of training delivered in these schools (outdated curricula and equipment, very weak links with companies and the labour market)⁹².

Therefore, Jordan has high level of unemployment, that is particularly high for women (22.5%) and young people aged 15 to 24 years (30.8%). This means that labour market in Jordan faces important structural problems. It does not create a sufficient number of jobs to absorb the increasing influx of jobseekers and there are also weak linkages between education outputs and labour market needs, as well as mismatch in terms of quality and expectations.

The Jordanian labour market is also characterised by a very high percentage of people employed by the public sector as many young people prefer public jobs for job security, shorter working hours and non-wage benefits.

Another feature of labour market in Jordan is the unemployment rates that are particularly high among university graduates. The main consequence of this phenomena, already noted in Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon, is the migration of high educated Jordanian young abroad and at the same time, Jordan faces high levels of migrant labour inflows. The

⁹¹ See Svein Erik Stave and Solveig Hillesund, *Impact of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian labour market*, ILO, 2015, pp. 5-6. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_364162.pdf (last accessed 23/10/17).

⁹² See European Training Foundation, *Jordan: Education, Training and Employment Developments 2016, 2017*, pp. 5-6. Available at: [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/95AC225CF1A1764FC12580E60051967F/\\$file/Jordan%202016.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/95AC225CF1A1764FC12580E60051967F/$file/Jordan%202016.pdf) (last accessed 23/10/17).

economy creates many low-skilled jobs, which are mostly taken by migrant workers, at wages and conditions incompatible with the rather high expectations of the Jordanian workers. The main characteristics of foreign workers are that they are low skilled (62% have less than secondary education), mostly men (60%) and employed mainly in manufacturing, construction, services (households) and agriculture.

The labour market is also negatively affected by the large size of the informal sector: according to government research, it represents 44% of total employment in the Jordanian economy. The geographical mismatch is also a problem, as jobs are mainly created in the capital and the main cities while the majority of unemployed people are located outside of these areas. The lack and poor quality of public transport further contributes to the already low mobility of the workforce.

Palestine's unemployment rate is very high and has increased in recent years from 20.9% in 2011 to 25.9% in 2015. Most striking are the youth unemployment rate (40.7%) and the female unemployment rate (39.2%). The NEET (not in employment, education or training) rate of 32.1% clearly shows the need for a solid system to support young people to become active in the labour market⁹³.

Palestine has a population of 4.7 million living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 1.4 million living inside Israel and 5.6 million living in exile. It has the highest population growth (3% in 2013) and fertility rates (4.6 children per women) in the Middle East and North African region. The relative size of the youth population (15–24 age group) is 38.2%, ranking amongst the highest not only in the region but also in the world.

The Palestinian economy as a lower middle-income economy. GDP growth is severely constrained by political instability and difficulties in the progress of the peace process.

The Palestinian economy is largely dominated by small and family-owned enterprises. Indeed, 82% of Palestinians are employed by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The informal sector plays an important role in the creation of new jobs in small enterprises.

Despite the efforts already done, the Palestinian government needs more and more strategies in order to enhance national competitiveness in industry, agriculture, housing and tourism. Recently an agreement with the European Union (EU) has been signed to remove quotas on Palestinian agricultural products for their access to the EU market.

However, in this country any effort has to be considered double because of his political situation and his relationship with Israel, and the main economic and demographic factors that influence the Palestinian economy are the following:

- Israeli restrictions on the control of land and natural resources and on freedom of movement. This is the biggest factor limiting the expansion of the economy in the

⁹³ See European Training Foundation, *Palestine: Education, Training and Employment Developments 2016, 2017, p. 3.* Available at: [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/8E2A5A5B9817CE61C12580E60050EF05/\\$file/Palestine%202016.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/8E2A5A5B9817CE61C12580E60050EF05/$file/Palestine%202016.pdf) (last accessed 23/10/17).

country and any improvement in relation to these aspects will significantly impact the Palestinian economy and as a consequence the demand for skills.

- Demographic pressure. The high population growth rate means that there is a constant stream of young people entering the labour market in large numbers, which the stagnant economy and the labour market cannot absorb.
- The difficult labour market situation, which is pushing many Palestinians, especially those with a high education, towards migration to Europe or the Gulf countries. Furthermore, young high educated people who decide to do not leave the country to find abroad a job, have often qualifications which do not match labour market needs, as the Palestinian labour market does not create enough high-quality jobs.

Regarding the education for Palestinians is a high priority and sometime a real national obsession generated by historical trends plus the pressure of migration.

Despite the efforts, the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) sector is still weak for the following reasons:

- limited relevance to labour market needs;
- lack of quality assurance;
- no structured link with formal education.

Even the strong effort of national stakeholders, including NGOs, and international actors (EU, GIZ, BTC and others) to improve the effectiveness of the TVET sector has not yet had the hoped-for impact in terms of a quantitative increase in the numbers of students enrolled in TVET. However, it is setting the agenda for the future and the improvement in the quality of education in TVET is what all actors are focusing on now.

The weakness of the TVET sector translate also in unemployment which has increased in Palestine from 20.9% in 2011 to 25.9% in 2015 and the most striking figures are the youth unemployment rate (40.7%) and the female unemployment rate (39.2%).

The unemployment in Palestine is a very burden and numbers show the need for a solid system to support young people trying to become active in the labour market, especially NEET whose rate of employment is very low (32.1%).

Even here in Palestine, like in many other Mena countries above mentioned, the higher education does not translate in employment, but on the opposite, the unemployment rate for people with a higher education degree is significantly higher than for those with upper secondary qualifications.

Therefore, also the Palestinian economy is featured by the so-called “paradox” of unemployment or the phenomenon of “educated employment”, already observed in many Mena countries, which shows a sharp deterioration in the employment rates of highly skilled workers and a clear mismatch between supply and demand in the labour market. It also shows the incapacity of the national economy to generate enough qualified jobs to respond to the skills available.

The most striking are the women who, despite their higher education, cannot find a job for many reasons even if sometimes the main problem concerns cultural resistance (families are not willing to have women travel), lack of social policies (very weak social protection measures often makes it not worthwhile for women with children to do waged

work) and the structure of the economy. Micro and small enterprises are reluctant to hire women, and labour markets are highly gender-segmented, offering women access to an extraordinarily limited number of sectors in non-growth areas of the economy, and are unable to absorb new female labour market entrants, leading to a persistently high rate of female unemployment over the last years.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the labour market in Palestine is highly segmented not only by gender but geographically, administratively, and according to public-private and formal-informal breakdowns. The geographic and administrative segmentation between the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Israel is very pronounced and poses a major constraint on growth. Each area operates has its own labour market characteristics. Compared to the West Bank, the situation in Gaza Strip is definitely worse with a higher unemployment, lower activity and employment rates, lower wages and a smaller private sector.

In addition, there is the situation of Palestinians working in the Israeli market. In the reality the Palestinian labour flows to Israel has decreased due to the changes in Israeli policy. But nevertheless, the Israeli labour market still provides jobs for around one-tenth of the Palestinian labour force. Palestinians working in Israel or in the settlements are heavily affected by the political situation. In crisis periods, physical access to Israel is restricted, making it impossible for Palestinians to work. This also affects Israeli's employers' willingness to employ Palestinians, as their actual, constant presence on the job may not be assured.

The Palestinian labour market is also negatively affected by the large size of the informal sector.

4.4.2 Public employment services in the MENA region

Public employment services (PES) are the authorities that helps match supply and demand on the labour market. In the MENA countries there are different models for administration of public employment services. It can be the function of the labour ministry or a department within; it can be an autonomous agency or in some countries NGOs carry a big role in the provision. Private employment agencies are allowed to function in some countries while in some others, private provision of employment services is not allowed.

In Egypt the national PES or the ministry responsible of employment services is the Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MoMM); in Tunisia there is the National Agency for Employment and Independent Work (ANETI) and the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment; in Lebanon the National Employment Office (NEO) and the Ministry of Labour; in Jordan the Department of Employment and Training (DET), under the Ministry of Labour; and in Palestine the Palestinian Fund for Employment (PFESP).

Analysing one by one some countries of the MENA region it is possible to notice that the PES have many gaps and in order to combat unemployment and help people find work, the local authorities have to make huge efforts in order to improve the public employment services.

Public employment services (PES) are the authorities that connect jobseekers with employers. In other words, PES helps match supply and demand on the labour market through information, placement and active support service at local, national and international level.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, developed countries (mainly OECD) created public bodies – commonly known as public employment offices – to combat unemployment and help people find work. The first PES was established in London (United Kingdom) through the Labour Bureau and subsequently offices were opened nationwide through the Labour Exchanges Act 1909.

Today, all OECD⁹⁴ countries (as well as many middle-income countries and some low-income countries in ECA region) have a national PES. The aim of the PES is to provide a broadly-based all-round job assistance and counselling service to people registered at the employment office, with the aim of increasing their chances of finding jobs in the labour market.

This assistance comprises many different types of activities: for example, initial interviews at employment offices, in-depth counselling during an unemployment spell, job clubs, among others. Traditionally, employment services were provided exclusively by public agencies but now, in many countries, public and private services coexist, usually serving different clientele. For example, public employment services target the disadvantaged and the long-term unemployed while private agencies focus more on the job-changers, skilled, and white-collar workers.

The PES typically serves the unemployed through the management of unemployment benefits; providing job search assistance and counselling, and referring the jobseekers to ALMPs⁹⁵. Nevertheless, there are many other labour market policy interventions ranging from labour market intermediation services to training, start-up incentives, and direct job creation programs, among others. While most of the literature on PES has been developed for OECD countries, assessment of PES in developing countries and in the emerging market economies has become a topic of interest in recent years⁹⁶.

In the MENA countries there are different models for administration of public employment services. It can be the function of the labour ministry or a department within; it can be an autonomous agency or in some countries NGOs carry a big role in the provision. In Yemen, for example 150 registered NGOs work in the field of employment. In other countries it is the function of the relevant labour ministry or the department of the ministry, such as in Yemen, Egypt or Jordan, while in Syria, Lebanon, Morocco and

⁹⁴ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is an intergovernmental economic organisation with member countries, founded in 1960 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.

⁹⁵ ALMPs (Active Labour Market Policies) are government programme that intervene in the labour market to help unemployment find work.

⁹⁶ See World Bank, *Public Employment Services in The Middle East and North Africa*, May 2012, pp. 8-9. Available at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download;jsessionid=B59F860CC8B2ADF4E1D84543D3A7DF3C?doi=10.1.1.248.6010&rep=rep1&type=pdf> (last accessed 06/10/17).

Tunisia public employment services function as an independent and autonomous agency supervised by the labour ministry (see the Table 1).

Private employment agencies are allowed to function in some countries while in some others, private provision of employment services is not allowed.

| | Legal name of national PES, and/or the ministry responsible for employment services | Year of establishment | Number of regional offices | Number of NGOs providing services | Number of private employment agencies |
|---------|---|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Egypt | Ministry of Manpower and Migration | 1961 | 307 | 3 | 54 |
| Jordan | Department of Employment and Training under the Ministry of Labor | 2006 | 14 | | 45 |
| Lebanon | National Employment Office, Ministry of Labor | 1977 | 3 | 4 | ... |
| Morocco | National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Competence (ANAPEC), Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training | 2001 | 74 | - | - |
| Syria | Central Nomination Unit at the Directorate of Labor, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor | 2001 | 28 | 4 | Legalized in 2010 |
| Tunisia | Independent National Agency for Employment and Labor (ANETI), Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment | 1993 | 91 | 2 | Illegal |
| Yemen | Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor | 1996 | 20 | 150 | - |

Table 1: Public employment services in selected MENA countries, end-2009 (See World Bank, *Public Employment Services in The Middle East and North Africa*, May 2012, p.19). Available at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download;jsessionid=B59F860CC8B2ADF4E1D84543D3A7DF3C?doi=10.1.1.248.6010&rep=rep1&type=pdf> (last accessed 06/10/17).

In Egypt many actors play a role in employment, but with little coordination. The main among these actors is the Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MoMM)⁹⁷, considered the primary Public Employment Services (PES) agency, established in 1961. It has 307 branches throughout the country. During the past ten years the Ministry has seen its role change dramatically, as the national employment strategy shifted from public sector employment guarantees to job creation in the private sector.

MoMM is responsible for labour policy, managing labour supply and demand, increasing the employability of the labour force, and monitoring labour market demand. Unfortunately, most of the PES offices are underdeveloped, understaffed and under resourced and provide a very limited range of employment services, merely issuing work permits and registration.

Some future changes are expected in the implementation framework of the National Programme for Training for Employment. An ambitious plan was defined in 2015 but its implementation has not yet started. This plan aims to reduce the unemployment rate sufficiently to reach global rates by conducting effective reforms that will link education

⁹⁷Website available at: <http://www.manpower.gov.eg/> (last accessed 09/10/17).

and training outputs with current and projected labour market needs. The programme has a life of five years and has identified very detailed and ambitious objectives, such as:

- identifying the skills required for the training and rehabilitation of 750 000 trainees annually in 300 professions and occupations according to modern training systems in order to meet the needs of the labour market and the new projects in Egypt;
- conducting special programmes for the training of 850 000 trainees to qualify them to work abroad in accordance with modern standards and techniques.

Regarding active labour market policies (ALMPs) there are numerous ongoing and emerging initiatives, which are implemented by various stakeholders and in many cases supported by donors. Non-governmental and non-profit organisations are the main implementing organisations of ALMPs.

In Tunisia, employment issues are the responsibility of the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment that is in charge of developing strategic political priorities and policy orientations. The National Agency for Employment and Independent Work (ANETI) is the main body that is responsible for the implementation of employment policies in Tunisia. It comprises of 91 regional employment and independent work offices. Those offices can be either: i) multi service employment offices, ii) sector related employment offices, or iii) specialized employment offices. Multi service employment offices conduct complex operational tasks, related to providing information and vocational guidance, placement and insertion and the promotion of micro enterprises and independent work. Sector related employment offices aim at facilitating operations related to one specific economic sector (a sector identified as highly important to the region in question). Specialized employment offices assist specific employment seekers, taking their qualifications and needs into account.

ANETI's mission is quite broad and includes the national labour market but also migrants and people with special needs. Specific areas of work include:

- stimulating the job market, at national, regional, local and sectoral levels through its network of employment and self-employment offices;
- developing information on employment and professional qualifications for businesses and jobseekers;
- implementing programmes that have been entrusted to them by the regulatory authority to promote employment and integrate young people;
- providing the necessary support to promote small firms and self-employment.

In January 2016, ANETI launched the new Forsati (فرصتي "My chance") programme, which provides personalised support to jobseekers to identify and give shape to professional development projects.

The objective of the programme is to provide training in languages, information technology, communications, life skills or other technical specialisations. The main idea behind Forsati is to improve competences and skills on the basis of the needs of the labour market, whether this is with a view to being employed or self-employed in Tunisia or abroad.

In Lebanon, the various institutions in charge of employment-related matters are fragmented and have limited coordination mechanisms and limited resources to fulfil their mandates. The National Employment Office (NEO)⁹⁸ is a financially and administratively independent agency under the custody of the Minister of Labour, who chairs its Board of Directors. The NEO was established in 1977. Its purpose is to offer job matching and counselling services and to deliver vocational training by subcontracting NGOs.

The Board includes both employer and worker representatives in addition to representatives from the education sector and academia. The NEO has only 3 offices (in Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon). The agency is extremely understaffed and its capacity is very limited. By 2011, NEO's budget had doubled. The budget increase was intended to mainly finance the establishment of two new regional offices and the recruitment of an additional 41 staff.

The training courses organised through the NEO are the main form of active labour market programme (ALMP) provided in Lebanon for both unemployed and disabled people.

Another government institution involved in the provision of training-related ALMPs is The Vocational Training Centre, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

It provides short vocational training programmes in 58 of its social development centres. Most of the training programmes provided are supply driven and tend to be disconnected from private sector demands. To a large extent, programs are based on in-class training and rarely involve on-the-job training or internships. The various private institutions and NGOs also provide overlapping courses of different durations. However, their value in the labour market is unknown.

Private employment agencies are increasingly spreading in Lebanon, but mainly offer services to migrant workers coming to work in Lebanon. Attempts have been made to regulate these agencies, especially those dealing with domestic workers.

The working situation in Lebanon seems to be characterized by mainly from a mismatch between an increasingly educated workforce and an underdeveloped economic structure that is characterised mostly by micro and small enterprises, a lack of innovativeness and repetitive simple processes. This gap means that, instead of exporting specialised products and services, the country tends to export specialised manpower, therefore generating little added value for the economy apart from remittances.

In Jordan Public employment services (PES) are provided by the Ministry of Labour which is the main provider of public employment services in Jordan with 21 public employment offices staffed by a total of 85 employees. Three of these offices (Amman,

⁹⁸Website available at: <http://www.neo.gov.lb/home.aspx> (last accessed 09/10/17).

Irbid, Zarqa) were recently transformed into “one-stop-shop” services. In addition, around 40 private employment agencies exist.

The Ministry of Labour operates and maintains a National Electronic Employment System (NEES): an online platform to match jobseekers and employers. The main purpose of the NEES is to foster matching between jobseekers and companies.

The Department of Employment and Training (DET), under the Ministry of Labour, runs the basic labour intermediation function and also licenses private employment agencies. In parallel, the National Training and Employment Project (NTEP)⁹⁹, an autonomous agency under the Ministry of Labour, also provides ALMPs to the unemployed. The Vocational Training Centre is the main agency directly providing skills training programs and accrediting training providers. Finally, an independent agency called the National Employment and Training Company (NET) managed by the Jordanian Armed Forces is running a specialized ALMP for the construction sector.

The VTC (a semi-autonomous agency) owns and operates a network of 10 specialised institutes and 35 training institutes (VTIs), with about 10 000 enrolments per year, targeting young people aged 16 and above. Eleven of these VTIs are specialised centres of excellence (in the tourism sector) and 31 are multidisciplinary training institutes. The VTC offers vocational training and apprenticeship programmes at semi-skilled, skilled and craftsman levels. Some upgrading programmes are also organised for in-service workers based on employers’ clearly defined needs, and other training programmes are offered on an ad hoc basis. The VTC is the only TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) institution that has a “dual system” of training. In addition, the introduction of model centres of excellence has been a benchmark in the transformation of the VTC’s service delivery model to one that can respond better to local market needs.

In Palestine the provision of employment services is politically and geographically very fragmented.

PFESP-The Palestinian Fund for Employment¹⁰⁰ (الصندوق الفلسطيني للتشغيل) is an autonomous national fund that aims to create decent job opportunities for job seekers, focusing on youth graduates and marginalized groups, and to contribute in reduction the unemployment rate and poverty reduction, systematically; achieving social justice and promoting sustainable development, by supporting programs and projects that increase the competitiveness of Palestinian labour force in national and international labour markets, in collaboration with local and international partners, through creating sufficient job opportunities. Further to employ human resources and achieving a competitive advantage for the national economy, including doubling the operating potential.

Historically in Palestine, the labour market is characterised by the active involvement of NGOs, with the public sector and private agencies not playing any prominent role. Indeed, strengthening public employment services and ensuring structured coordination among different providers are among key national employment strategy objectives.

⁹⁹Website available at: <http://www.ntep.gov.jo/> (last accessed 09/10/17).

¹⁰⁰Website available at: <http://pfesp.ps/lang/en> (last accessed 06/10/17).

One of the most prominent achievements is the development of GIZ¹⁰¹-supported comprehensive employment offices in the four governorates of Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron and Nablus, referred to as One-Stop-Shop (OSS) offices, intended to narrow employment gaps by reducing the mismatch between labour demand and supply. Their services are available to jobseekers, graduates, the unemployed, dropouts and women. They provide career guidance and counselling services to employees and jobseekers, including vocational guidance, employment counselling, job placement and guidance in self-employment and small enterprise creation (start-ups). They also provide services to employers, especially the matching of qualified staff to employer needs, and they collect and provide labour market information for their target groups.

The NGO sector in Palestine, with more than 2000 organisations and some 17000 paid employees, is an important player in the provision of social and employment services. Over a quarter (25.6%) of NGOs provide professional training and career development programmes. Some of these organisations run consolidated programmes sustained by international and national donors. The UNRWA, for example, has a parallel system of relief programmes that include training and employment components for Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Sharek Forum¹⁰², the Welfare Association¹⁰³, the Education for Employment Foundation¹⁰⁴ and the International Youth Foundation (IYF)¹⁰⁵ are other important NGOs¹⁰⁶.

The most active private sector employment service provider in Palestine is an online portal called Jobs.ps Ltd¹⁰⁷ that connects jobseeker with employers. Employers and businesses can announce job vacancies and jobseekers can conduct searches for these vacancies and apply for jobs through the website. The easy-to-use website covers all the Palestinian territories.

¹⁰¹ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German cooperation organisation).

¹⁰² Sharek Young Forum is a non-governmental organisation focuses on the development of young people into engaged, employable, and active citizens. It has implemented four innovative programs in recent years to help young people make the transition from education to work or self-employment. Website available at: <http://sharek.ps/en/1/> (last accessed 06/10/2017).

¹⁰³ See pp. 109-10 of this document.

¹⁰⁴ The Education for Employment Foundation was founded in 2008 to act as a bridge between academia and the private sector. It aims to give unemployed young Palestinians entrepreneurship training and assistance that meets employer needs or enables them to start their own business. Website available at: <https://efe.org/> (last accessed 06/10/17).

¹⁰⁵ Website available at: <https://www.iyfnet.org/country/palestine> (last accessed 06/10/17).

¹⁰⁶ See Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute for ETF (European Training Foundation), *Labour Market and Employment Policies in Palestine*, 2014, pp. 20-21. Available at: [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/49583C88B3C1AD0DC1257CD1003DA5FC/\\$file/Employment%20policies_Palestine.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/49583C88B3C1AD0DC1257CD1003DA5FC/$file/Employment%20policies_Palestine.pdf) (last accessed 06/10/17).

¹⁰⁷ Website available at: <http://www.jobs.ps> (last accessed 06/10/17).

Conclusion and Recommendations

At the end of this paper about the main stakeholders in the MENA region, before arriving to some recommendations it will be useful to list the main challenges and obstacles currently face by civil society organizations in the region:

- The rigidity of legal and political system;
- The lack of comprehensive vision and strategies defining NGOs activities;
- The constraints related to human and financial resources;
- The presence of political conflicts and contradictions between certain countries;
- The deficit regarding information and communication.

Considering this list above as the main challenges face by local and foreign NGOs working in the MENA region, some recommendations have been addressed to both actors: countries' governments and NGOs in order to improve their qualitative and quantitative participation.

The political, economic and social context of a nation has a key role in the efficiency of its civil society. For that purpose, in order to improve the participation of MENA NGOs at local, national and international levels, Arab countries' governments should guarantee a good governance and a socioeconomic development:

1. Promote an appropriate legal and political system: the legal framework seems to be the most important factor determining the work of domestic and foreign NGOs in the MENA region context. For that reason, the improvement of MENA' NGOs participation requires a clarification of the legal system governing the civil society action in Arab world. A set of laws must be well defined in order to protect civil society actors and to clarify roles and involvements held by different entities (government, private sector and civil society) and links existing between them. This specification of legal system could avoid interferences observed today in MENA countries between governments and civil society.

According to Ziad Abdel Samad¹ legislation should accord with international declarations of human rights, and be developed in dialogue with local civil society. In relation to CSOs, the legal system's principal goal should be to regulate relations between organizations and the state.

Furthermore, according to Abdel Samad for the definition of these laws it is also necessary to take into account the existence of different varieties of NGOs and the fact that in the most Arab countries, tribal, ethnic, or confessional relations are stronger than the structures of state and local authorities. In practice, the relevant law is tribal or communitarian. It is difficult to imagine the implementation and respect of

¹ See Ziad Abdel Samad, "Civil Society in the Arab Region: Its Necessary Role and the Obstacles to Fulfilment", *The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law*, Volume 9, Issue 2, April 2007, pp. 3-24. Available at http://www.icnl.org/research/journal/vol9iss2/ijnl_vol9iss2.pdf (last accessed 22/11/17).

a non-profit law under this context, therefore for the definition of these laws it is necessary to take account of these circumstances.

2. Ensure peace and political stability in the Arab region: several MENA countries are experiencing currently a situation of political instability. This political insecurity weakens enormously the civil society action in the region. This situation deteriorates human and material resources of NGOs, making them vulnerable and restraining their work on the ground and at international level. For that purpose, it is necessary to ensure peace and stability in the region. Countries should particularly:
 - solve definitively the Israeli- Palestinian conflict;
 - solve definitely all the civil wars present at the moment in the MENA region, like in Libya, Syria and Yemen, where the Arab Spring has turned into a long and painful civil war;
 - Prevent eventual conflict situations in the region by developing a continuous dialogue between different protagonists.
3. Strengthen economic and social reforms undertaken by countries: several MENA countries have adopted several economic and social reforms which objectives are essentially to achieve high economic growth. These reforms should relieve also the suffering of most vulnerable people and not enrich more and more rich people. These reforms should be a benefit to the whole of society and for that reason, social developments policies should be defined and set jointly with NGOs, and followed by communication and awareness raising actions toward populations.

On the other hand, even MENA NGOs must play their part and focus in achievement of some specific objectives in order to improve their performance at local and international level.

In this paper some specific SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) has been analysed in the specific context of the MENA region, such as SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) in the oPt; SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions); SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth) in the specific context of Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine.

In order to achieve these SDGs, all the main stakeholders of the MENA region, should follow some recommendation divided here by SDGs:

Recommendations to contribute to the achievement of the SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) in the oPt:

1. The region suffers from diminishing water resources that require immediate cooperation among riparian states for the management of water resources and their equitable allocation and distribution. Additionally, new water resources should be developed in order to subsidize the needs of people in the region. Israel control over the bulk of water resources negatively affects any joint efforts with its riparian states.
2. Israel's domination over West Bank aquifers constitutes the chief obstacle for the development of the Palestinian water sector. The inequitable abstraction, allocation, and consumption of water are violations of international initiatives as well as the Oslo

II Interim Agreement. Furthermore, Israel's control over water resources has been extended with the construction of the Separation Wall, which takes over 35 Palestinian wells installed to pump the Western Aquifer waters. Israel is required by international law to withdraw from all areas of the WBGS and allocate Palestinians the quantities their rightful shares in the water resources.

3. Israel's unilateral water policies in the oPt have caused a wide deficit in the Palestinian water budget. This has resulted in a forced dependency on the water supplied by the Israeli National Water Company "Mekorot"², with approximately 52% of Palestinian domestic water use in the WB being purchased from Mekorot. It should become a political priority on the Palestinian agenda to reclaim Palestinian rights to abstract water from West Bank Aquifers and the Jordan River Basin.
4. Water bodies in charge of providing water and sanitation services in the oPt suffer from grave institutional weaknesses that could possibly be overcome with the creation of a central water authority that unites both governmental and non-governmental organizations and agencies in the confrontation of the water supply challenges. This authority should enact laws allowing for the preeminent management and planning within the current circumstances. Additionally, this authority would help create alternative and sustainable solutions for the water deficit.
5. The deteriorating WaSH conditions in the oPt require the enhancement of data collection programs in order to examine and identify the problems that need to be addressed. This would help in identifying excruciating circumstances in certain communities and path the way for humanitarian relief. Additionally, data collection would enable Palestinians to conduct long term planning. For instance, knowing the "real yield" for the Western Aquifer would help quantify the safe abstraction levels or would increase the preparedness for a next round of negotiations.
6. The full extent of the health impacts of the water crisis for the Jordan Valley Bedouin are currently unknown as many of these communities do not have access to adequate health services. An urgent need is therefore to conduct a comprehensive health survey of this population to determine the full extent of the consequences of poor water quality and low consumption.
7. The Bedouin's lack of water and the demolition of infrastructure need to be highlighted as significant triggers for forced displacement in Area C and policies to address the water crisis should be included in the International Community's collaborative response to internal displacement in the oPt.
8. While immediate drought and emergency water supply interventions, such as the provision of water tankers, are needed, these must not be at the expense of medium to

² "Mekorot" - Israel's National Water Company. From 1967 to 1982 the West Bank water system was under the management of the Israeli military authorities. In 1982, then Minister of Defence Ariel Sharon transferred ownership over all West Bank water supply systems to 'Mekorot,' of which the State of Israel owns 50 per cent. In exchange for ownership over all Palestinian-owned water infrastructure with an estimated value of 5 million USD, 'Mekorot' made a symbolic payment of one NIS (approximately 0.25 USD), whereby the integration of the OPT's water system into the metropolitan Israeli network was completed.

long term improvements to Palestinian water infrastructure in the Jordan Valley. Continued short term provision of water for the Bedouin serves to bypass the illegality of the current situation and prolong dependency. Thus, while access to water and storage capacity can be improved by supporting the provision of water tankers and transportation for communities to reach filling points, rehabilitation of available springs, extension of available reservoirs and opening of new filling points must also be carried out³.

Some recommendations to contribute to the achievement of the SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions):

1. Focus on addressing inequalities in achieving peaceful societies: Inequality and lack of inclusion remain the core challenge in the region hampering societal peace and stability. This challenge can only be addressed by eradicating disparities at multiple levels: geographic, political, gender, social, economic, cultural and environmental. This also requires the revision of social and economic policy choices.
2. Redesign relations with international partners and institutions: These relations should be based on the mutual respect of interests, mutual accountability and the protection of a more equitable policy space based on the right to self-determination and the right to development.
3. Prioritize human rights and democracy as values and regard security as a tool to protect them: The current tendency, not only in the region but worldwide, is to consider security as a value by itself, which is creating massive harm to development efforts and violating basic human rights.
4. Foster political participation, inclusion, citizen empowerment and engagement: People should enjoy an enabling environment for a more active engagement in public policy-making through increased levels of transparency and social dialogue.
5. Reconstitute the state and ensure the separation of powers: The accumulation of all powers in either one or a few hands is common in the region. Together with widespread corruption, clientelism and nepotism this jeopardizes accountability, widens inequalities and creates policies of exclusion and discrimination and gross human rights violations.

Some recommendations to contribute to the achievement of the SDG 5 (Gender Equality):

1. Increasing the prominence of civil, political and economic rights of women in national visions and strategies in the MENA region and embedding international gender equality standards into national gender equality visions and strategies more prominently, including those specified in the CEDAW.
2. Ensuring consistency of national labour legislation with international standards: by ratifying the outstanding International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions,

³ Cf. MA'AN Development Centre, *Draining Away: The water and sanitation crisis in the Jordan Valley...* op. cit. Available at http://www.apis.ps/documents/MaanWaterCrisis_JVpdf.pdf (last accessed 24/11/17).

including the Night Work Convention, Maternity, Protection Convention and Hours of Work Convention; ensuring incorporation of the ILO standards into the national legislations across the region, including embedding the principle of gender equality into the general provisions of the legislation, removing unnecessary restrictions on the occupations of women and either abolish the prohibition to employ women at night or reduce the number of “night work” hours.

3. Eliminating violence against women by developing framework laws on violence against women (e.g. domestic violence, female genital mutilation, trafficking of women, prostitution and violence outside the home). Furthermore, it is necessary to repeal discriminatory provisions in criminal law, in particular the laws on adultery and crimes against women in the name of honour, to ensure the equal treatment of women before the law and the abolition of the diluted criminal-law liability and strengthen the penalties imposed on men who commit so-called “crimes of honour”.
4. Ensuring equality in nationality rights by enabling full equality between the mother and the father in their ability to transfer their nationality to their children and providing for full equality between men and women with regard to the privileges in obtaining and attributing their nationality by marriage, as recommended by the CEDAW.
5. Direct investments in the private sector, in support of women’s entrepreneurship, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and the gender-responsive design and delivery of municipal services and infrastructure, especially safe transport to increase women’s movement and access to markets.
6. Policy dialogue particularly in sectors where women have restrictions on their ability to work on the prevalence and prevention of violence within public spaces (including workspaces), and on reducing bureaucratic processes for registering a business, which are more burdensome for women than for men.
7. Internal operations by increasing the presence of regional-based gender specialists to build expertise on the ground and in policy dialogue, ensuring thorough gap analyses in due diligence processes to close the gaps within plural legal frameworks as they relate to the Bank’s Environmental and Social Policy, and building capacity for staff through related tools and training opportunities.
8. Enhancing women’s ability to raise their voice and participation in civil society by taking steps to foster an active and vibrant civil society with women’s participation in and their access to leadership in these organizations; providing technical skills to maximise open dialogue via digital means among women and activists in order to exchange ideas, including social media; building women’s capacity to communicate with officials, defend their rights and develop organisational and leadership skills; and by providing media training on removing gender stereotypes.

Some recommendations for the achievement of the SDG 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth):

In the reviewed MENA countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine), large informal labour markets and weak capacity to implement programs may limit what PES can achieve in terms of creating formal employment.

Analysing some countries in the MENA region, some conclusions can be made and a simple policy framework is proposed. In general, the institutional capacity of PES is quite limited and in several countries in MENA region, the number of frontline advisers is totally inadequate for delivering ALMPs, specifically effective and personalized mediation service. The efficiency and quality of service could be improved markedly by placing more PES staff on the front line dealing with clients.

As a result, in many MENA countries, only a fraction of all workers finds a job through labour offices (public or private). Job placement rates are not high enough to absorb the growing number of unemployed individuals.

Some groups of jobseekers are especially vulnerable in the labour market and need specialized services. ALMPs also tend to mainly help disadvantaged groups, such as female participants and the less-educated. Despite the fact that women in MENA have much higher unemployment rates than men, only 18% of the programs are designed to specifically target females. The PES should have tools and resources in hand to address specific needs of jobless females, long-term unemployed, less educated jobseekers and other disadvantaged groups⁴.

Therefore, in order to improve and change the general situation above described, all the stakeholders should achieve the following objectives:

1. **Develop Public Private Partnerships:** in industrial countries, there is an increasing dependence on private delivery of services (e.g., for training, employment services, and public works). In this context the governments, in order to ensure that services match to market requirements, should have closer partnership with private service providers, training and education institutions, employers and communities. Public employment services in the region will need to develop partnerships with the private sector to (i) deliver training and employment services to the stock of unemployed (notably youth), (ii) promote beneficiary participation in internships and on-the-job training, and (iii) develop demand driven programs tailored to the needs of the private sector.
2. **Focus on Employment Services:** the main employment services – job search assistance and counselling have been found to be the most cost-effective labour market measures for the general population of the unemployed. That is, they achieve similar results as other interventions, however at a significantly lower cost and MENA countries, contrary to international best-practices, are moving away from less costly employment service and into more expensive training and employment incentives.

⁴ See World Bank, *Public Employment Services in The Middle East and North Africa...* op. cit., p.45. Available at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download;jsessionid=B59F860CC8B2ADF4E1D84543D3A7DF3C?doi=10.1.1.248.6010&rep=rep1&type=pdf> (last accessed 24/11/17).

Therefore the PES of many MENA countries could be improved by focusing more on group-based activities, such as collective sessions on: (i) labour market information in which the unemployed learn about the local and regional labour market situation, including jobs offered and the qualifications needed to apply for them; (ii) job counselling in which the unemployed participants are counselled about the skills and qualifications they need to improve in order to increase their employability, and obtain information about education, training, and alternative job opportunities; and (iii) job search skill training programs that offer employment, such as in drafting job applications and succeeding in job interviews.

In general, to reduce unnecessary costs and having efficient service at the same time PES should focus on registering as many vacancies as possible and found for these vacancies the largest number of candidates. Another important step should be the creation or the extension of self-service facilities for jobseekers and employers. Many countries have built up CV-data banks of jobseekers which can be assessed by employers electronically.

3. Improve governance and accountability: most countries in the MENA region need to develop clear framework (and allocate resources) to monitor and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of existing employment programs. This could be done, among others, by developing clear M&E legal frameworks, results-based labour market information systems, and by promoting a culture of program evaluation and auditing.
4. Strengthen institutional and regulatory frameworks: while labour intermediation remains largely undeveloped, vocational training continues to be the main type of program provided by PES in MENA targeting mainly high-skilled unemployed youth. Training programs are certainly useful for some categories of workers but in the same time have their limitations: first, because they are expensive and thus participation would be limited; second, their impact will be limited when job opportunities for trained workers are scarce. Finally, PES cannot be a substitute of educational system and not always can fill gaps of school system.

In general MENA countries need to improve institutional capacity to deliver employment services. This could be achieved by reducing system fragmentation. It is necessary an efficient institutional coordination which should be promoted across relevant agencies as well as between central and local agencies (as the needs of the unemployed vary across localities).

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