

MENA EDUCATION NETWORK (MEdNet)

MEETING REPORT

QUALITY LEARNING THROUGH LIFE SKILLS

Amman, Jordan

30 November – 3 December 2015



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Acknowledgements

The following Report is based on the active contribution of representatives from country delegations who participated at the MENA Education Network (MEdNet) Meeting. Country delegations included representatives of Ministries of Education and other national institutions responsible of education, bilateral and multilateral organizations and NGOs. Fifteen MENA countries were represented including: Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, State of Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen. At the regional level the United Nations agencies contributing to the MEdNet Meeting and partnering in the development of the Analytical Mapping (AM) and Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (CPF) on life skills education in MENA include: International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the World Bank. Additional contributions were made, at a global and regional level, by the representatives of NGOs and experts mentioned in the list of participants.

Contents

List of boxes, figures and tables	iv
Acronyms and abbreviations	v
Executive summary	1
1 Introduction	5
2 Setting the stage: The need for quality learning through life skills in MENA	7
3 Towards a working definition of life skills education in MENA	13
4 A multiple pathways approach to life skills education	21
5 The need for a systems approach to life skills education	29
6 A monitoring and evaluation framework for life skills	33
7 The way forward for life skills education in MENA	39
Appendices	43
I Jordan Times article	43
II Agenda	44
III List of participants	50
IV Biographies of experts	56
V Participants' evaluation	60

List of boxes, figures and tables

Boxes

Box 1	Citizenship and human rights clubs in Tunisia	25
Box 2	The Personal Project for Learners in Morocco	26
Box 3	Life skills in Tunisia's education reform: A systems approach	31

Figures

Figure 1	Conceptual and Programmatic Framework for Life Skills for MENA	12
Figure 2	The 2009 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study Model of Civic Competence	37
Figure 3	The European Lifelong Learning Index Learning Framework	38

Tables

Table 1	Learning to Know: Key life skills for MENA	16
Table 2	Learning to Be: Key life skills for MENA	17
Table 3	Learning to Do: Key life skills for MENA	18
Table 4	Learning to Live Together: Key values for MENA	19
Table 5	Life skills for youth in emergency settings in the NRC Youth Programme	27
Table 6	Skills domains measured in STEP	36
Table 7	Learning to Live Together Indicators	38

Acronyms and abbreviations

AM	Analytical Mapping
COE	Council of Europe
CPF	Conceptual and Programmatic Framework
ELLI	European Lifelong Learning Index
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)
HRH	His Royal Highness
ICCS	International Civic and Citizenship Education Study
ICT	information and communication technology
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
ILO	International Labour Organization
IYF	International Youth Foundation
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MEdNet	MENA Education Network
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MENARO	Middle East and North Africa Regional Office
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education (Lebanon and Palestine)
NGO	non-governmental organization
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PEIC	Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict
PTS	Passport to Success
STEP	Skills Towards Employment and Productivity
TVET	technical vocational education and training
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
WB	World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Life skills constitute a prerequisite for quality, relevant education and successful learning, and they have been prioritized within the post-2015 international education agenda. There is ample global evidence that highlights how life skills play a fundamental role in the development of competencies needed not only for better learning, but also for positive self-empowerment, active citizenship, and enhanced employability. Life skills have also become an essential component of education in crisis contexts, as they increase the resilience of children and youth, and constitute a key pillar for recovery in disrupted societies.

Life skills are particularly important in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, where progress in access has not been paralleled by improvements in the quality of education. Countries in this region are lagging behind international standards related to learning achievements. High youth unemployment rates and weak skills for the labour market are massively affecting adolescents and youth, who are already suffering from an unstable political context and increased violence. Life skills education is a gateway for enhancing the quality of education in the context of MENA and an exceptional opportunity for the concrete empowerment of children and youth in the region.

The present Report summarizes the discussions and outcomes of the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) MENA Education Network (MEdNet) Meeting, which was held in Amman from 30 November to 3 December 2015. The MEdNet Meeting, organized periodically by the UNICEF MENA Regional Office (MENARO), reflected on the need to rethink education in MENA, **focusing on life skills as a key pillar of quality learning**. The Meeting engaged partners and experts on the conceptualization and implementation of life skills education in the region, facilitated a consultative and participatory process around an Analytical Mapping (AM) and a Conceptual Programmatic Framework (CPF), and explored the way forward for the mainstreaming of life skills education within the education sector.

The Meeting consisted of presentations, discussions and group work. More than 150 participants actively contributed to the Meeting throughout the four days, including 15 country delegations from MENA, regional and international education partners, experts, and UNICEF colleagues from Headquarters, MENARO and the Office of Research. The Meeting provided an opportunity to shape concrete partnerships with multiple partners, among them the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank (WB), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR), and to work towards a holistic vision of quality education through life skills.

The MEdNet Meeting Report will serve as an advocacy tool for stakeholders in MENA while work is ongoing on the Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (CPF). The results highlighted in the Report provide insight into the concepts, practices and prospects of quality education through life skills in MENA. The following are the key highlights of the Meeting:

There is a pressing **need for a strong vision of quality learning through life skills**, based on a common ethical foundation and an integrated holistic approach to learning. There was a general consensus on the need to reclaim a value-based vision of education that reaffirms respect for life and human dignity, equal rights (non-discrimination), social justice, and respect for cultural and religious diversity, in order to improve individual and social well-being. This vision was emphasized in the keynote speech of His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan, and was further highlighted by the participants.

A **definition of life skills** that is relevant and appropriate for different age groups, including clear and defined terminology, needs to be developed. To this end, a framework for quality learning through life skills was proposed. The framework is inspired by the UNESCO Delors Report, which defined the essential functions of life skills for lifelong learning through four pillars of education: Learning to Know, Learning to Be, Learning to Live Together and Learning to Do. These four pillars cover crosscutting Dimensions of Learning that form an integral part of quality education – the cognitive, individual, social and instrumental Dimensions – as interconnected facets of collective and individual lifelong learning.

Citizenship education was recognized as the core of quality and life skills education, and a pathway to social cohesion. A broad consensus was reached on the importance of adopting a human rights-based approach to citizenship education consistent with democratic and social justice values. Only a renewed approach to citizenship education, which requires curricula reform, pedagogies and higher quality education at large, will empower individuals to think critically and struggle for positive change. In the context of MENA, it was proposed that citizenship education, and the values it needs to promote, underpins quality and relevant education through life skills and therefore should be placed at the core of the other three Dimensions of Learning.

It was recognized that **a multiple pathways approach** is essential for mainstreaming quality education through life skills. A multiple pathways approach acknowledges that learning takes place at different times and in different contexts. It recognizes that life skills are being furthered through numerous pathways, including formal and non-formal channels, and through the workplace. While such an approach allows for enough flexibility to cater to differing contexts, it was underlined that these pathways need to be embedded in national policy frameworks and education systems, and they need to ensure accreditation and certification.

Only **a systems approach to life skills** will enable MENA countries to scale up and sustain relevant initiatives on life skills education and ensure quality learning. Within a systems approach to education, Ministries of Education (MoEs) have a prominent and leading role in defining policy frameworks, strategies and plans related to life skills education. The preliminary findings of the life skills mapping survey conducted in MENA revealed limited systems approaches to life skills with little or no alignment between the national education policy frameworks and interventions implemented by partners, particularly the private sector.

Great emphasis was placed on the potential benefits of establishing **coordination mechanisms** among government institutions (different ministries), international partners, and the private sector at the national level, for the successful implementation of quality learning through life skills programming. Partnership and coordination frameworks have been acknowledged as the key to fostering coherent approaches, as well as ensure efficient use of resources (human and financial), cross-fertilization, and recognition and certification of skills.

There is an increasing need for **technical guidance on the monitoring and evaluation** of life skills and citizenship education within MENA. The contributions presented in the relevant session highlighted the importance of introducing rigorous measurement of learning outcomes in relation to life skills, and evaluating the impact of life skills education. In this regard, two relevant experiences of measuring life skills education were presented: 1) the Skills Towards Employment and Productivity (STEP) Initiative that measures job skill requirements, as well as linkages between skill acquisition and educational achievement, personality and social background; and 2) the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) developed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), which has been implemented in 38 countries throughout Europe, Latin America and Asia.

Country delegations identified two actions to be undertaken at the national level as follow-up to the Meeting: first, engagement in national consultation processes with a variety of partners on quality learning through life skills in relation to the vision, definitions, national policies, coordination mechanisms, programmes, and technical issues on measurement; second, the identification of concrete steps to be undertaken in 2016 at the country level. The details of both actions are presented in Chapter 7.

With regard to **follow-up activities at the regional level**, UNICEF and partners will work together to support the AM process and the development of the CPF for life skills education, ensuring consultation with countries, partners and stakeholders. Lastly, a high-level regional launch of the final CPF will be organized with the aim of ensuring political support for life skills education as the basis for education reforms in MENA.

The Report structure consists of seven Chapters:

Chapter 1: The introduction outlines the purpose of the Meeting and stresses the necessity for MENA to rethink education based on the principles of respect for life, human dignity, equal rights, social justice, and cultural and religious diversity.

Chapter 2: Setting the stage: the need for quality learning through life skills in MENA explores the relevance of life skills as a critical component of quality education for producing a knowledge society, and increasing employment and social cohesion in the MENA region. It analyses the broader socio-political and economic context in which learning takes place, and presents the impacts of radicalization, social fracture and economic crises on education in the region. Finally, it provides an overview of learning in MENA, with particular focus on the status of citizenship education.

Chapter 3: Towards a working definition of life skills in MENA provides an outline of the conceptualization of life skills inspired by the UNESCO Delors Report and its four Dimensions of Learning, as well as the related skills that contribute to improved education outcomes, employability and civic engagement. It gives an account of a holistic and contextualized MENA vision. The Chapter also provides a working definition of life skills built on Delors' four Dimensions of Learning that place life skills at the core of quality learning and relevant education in MENA.

Chapter 4: A multiple pathways approach to life skills education looks into the features of such an approach to life skills programming, and presents relevant experiences and lessons learned. It introduces different practices for mainstreaming life skills into formal education and explores different modalities of delivery. It then looks into the role of non-formal education and how life skills programmes can be an effective means for reaching out to the most marginalized communities. Finally, it presents life skills acquisition through the workplace or on the road to the workplace. It emphasizes how life skills are not only necessary to close the skills mismatch between labour market demand and the actual competencies that youth possess, but is also an opportunity for the overall empowerment of young people.

Chapter 5: The need for a systems approach to life skills looks into the features of a systems approach to life skills education. It emphasizes that mainstreaming life skills into education requires looking at the education systems as a whole, with all its constituencies and components, and stresses the urgency of embedding life skills into education reforms to effect a system change. Finally, it provides an account of the exchanges of country experiences and plans related to the mainstreaming of life skills in national education sector reforms.

Chapter 6: A monitoring and evaluation framework for life skills introduces methodologies for measuring life skills education and presents a potential monitoring and evaluation framework for life skills programming in MENA. Criteria for good life skills programming in the region are analysed along with student assessments and measurements of learning outcomes related to life skills.

Chapter 7: The way forward for life skills in MENA reviews the key actions that have been identified by participants and country delegations for ways towards integrating life skills for quality learning into educational programmes.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background

In the context of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), life skills offer a key opportunity for enhancing the quality and relevance of education. They enable youth and children to reach their full potential, to participate in society as active citizens and to face the challenges that are currently affecting the region. Life skills education is exceptionally important in MENA, where learning achievements are lagging behind international standards and education systems strive to prepare youth for integration into complex labour markets. Exacerbating this critical situation is the increase of violence in the region. Seven countries are experiencing severe conflict, occupation and socio-political instability, while countries not enduring wars are affected by structural violence and diminished social cohesion. These situations restrict prospects for youth to actively participate in societies, and as a result those youth may become vulnerable to disenfranchisement and radicalization. In this context it is **imperative to rethink quality education** as a transformative social force and a pathway to social cohesion. Mainstreaming life skills education is crucial to enhancing quality learning and for the empowerment of children and youth in MENA.

There is increasing global evidence that life skills constitute a prerequisite for quality and relevant education, and successful learning. However, there is still a pressing need for a clear definition of life skills. Traditionally, life skills have been included within other issues such as traffic rules, hygiene, healthy living, and first aid programmes, while remaining part of ad-hoc and isolated interventions that are rarely anchored in education systems and curriculum reforms. There is a lack of systemic and coordinated efforts from policy makers to adopt and implement coherent education policy frameworks regarding life skills education. This fragmented situation has a negative impact on the scale and sustainability of life skills programmes.¹ The conceptual ambiguity in discourse and practise, the lack of unified definitions, programming frameworks, quality, rigorous standards, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms hinders the effectiveness of existing programmes in MENA.

The 2015 MEdNet Meeting

Life skills as a key pillar of quality learning in MENA was the focus of the 2015 MEdNet Meeting. The MEdNet Meeting is organized periodically by MENARO to engage with government counterparts from Ministries of Education, partners and experts on education programmatic directions and initiatives relevant to the MENA region. UNICEF MENARO is presently working on an Analytical Mapping (AM) and a Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (CPF) for life skills in the region, in collaboration with the International Youth Foundation and Birzeit University, and in partnership with ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNRWA and the World Bank. Building on this work, the Meeting aimed at:

- Introducing life skills as a key pillar for quality learning in MENA;
- Engaging with colleagues, partners and experts on the conceptualization and implementation of life skills education in MENA;
- Ensuring a consultative and participatory process that will inform the analytical mapping and development of the CPF for life skills education;
- Promoting a collaborative exchange of experiences and best practices on life skills in the region; and
- Identifying, together with partners, the way forward for mainstreaming life skills education in MENA.

¹ IYF (2013), *Preparing Youth for Success: An Analysis of Life skills Training in the MENA Region*, p.29.

The Meeting consisted of presentations, discussions and group work structured as follows:

Session 1: The context of learning in MENA. This session highlighted the relevance of life skills as a critical component of quality education to the production of a knowledge society, rising employment and social cohesion in MENA. It also provided a chance to identify the contextual and educational challenges and opportunities to implement life skills education in MENA.

Session 2: Introduction to the Dimensions of life skills. This session introduced the conceptualization of life skills as inspired by the UNESCO Delors Report and its four Dimensions of Learning (Learning to Know, Learning to Be, Learning to Do, and Learning to Live Together). Related core skills were identified as a result of group work discussion.

Session 3: Working definition of life skills in MENA. The proposed MENA Life Skills CPF was introduced. This included the consultation around a clear, holistic and contextualized MENA vision and working definition of life skills that is shared by diverse stakeholders and practitioners in the region.

Sessions 4 and 5: A multiple pathways and systems approach to life skills programming. The multiple pathways through which life skills education takes place were introduced. Diverse experiences including lessons learned were exchanged in relation to this approach to life skills programming. The systems approach to life skills programming was introduced and provided an opportunity to engage on country experiences and plans related to the mainstreaming of life skills in national education sector reforms.

Session 6: Monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Different methodologies and approaches for measuring life skills education were presented. Criteria for good life skills programming in the region were also analysed, along with student assessments and measurements of learning outcomes related to life skills.

Session 7: Way forward. This session provided the opportunity to define a way forward for life skills programming in MENA that includes short-, medium- and longer-term perspectives.

The 2015 MEdNet Meeting provided a high-level platform for exchange and dialogue for more than 150 participants who actively contributed to the Meeting. These included country delegations from 15 MENA countries (Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen), as well as UNICEF representatives from Turkey. The country delegations included United Nations colleagues, government counterparts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other relevant education partners and experts. Also among the participants were regional and international education partners and experts.

UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and the World Bank stressed the necessity for the MENA region to rethink education based on the principles of respect for life, human dignity, equal rights, social justice, and cultural and religious diversity. This rethinking in the context of MENA should help foster quality education and learning to address the current educational and geopolitical challenges facing the region, and allow children and adolescents to reach their full potential. Participants at the Meeting agreed to move forward in this process of rethinking by making **life skills a crucial component of quality education**.

Partners and contributors to the 2015 MEdNet Meeting agreed on the importance of aiming for a broader understanding of life skills as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, all underpinned by values that people can use autonomously and creatively in order to deal with normal and extraordinary circumstances of daily life. Understood in this broader sense, life skills education can play a significant role in promoting quality learning, assist children and youth to develop and increase their resilience to overcome challenges, improve their employability as productive members of their societies.

The opening remarks emphasized the opportunity provided by the MEdNet Meeting to contribute to the establishment of **a framework for quality education through life skills in MENA**. Working together it should be possible to mainstream a vision that is relevant, effective, humanistic, and enables children and youth to become responsible citizens, effective workers, caring community members, and life-long learners in an increasingly interdependent world.

CHAPTER 2

Setting the stage: The need for quality learning through life skills in MENA

Life skills are an essential component of quality and relevant education, and equip children and youth to mediate challenges and risks in their lives, and to enable productive participation in society.² This Chapter explores the relevance of life skills as a critical component of quality education, which can help to produce a knowledge society, and increase employment and social cohesion in the MENA region. First, it highlights the need for a renewed focus on a knowledge society in the context of MENA. Second, it provides an analysis of the broader socio-political and economic context in which learning takes place in the region. It emphasizes that enduring crises and conflicts have a dramatic impact on the lives of children, youth, and their opportunities for learning. It also stresses that life skills education plays a crucial role in promoting social cohesion and non-violent conflict resolution. Finally, this Chapter provides an overview of learning in MENA, with a focus on citizenship education, and the values it needs to promote, as underpinning quality and relevant education.

Knowledge society

“Education must become our highest priority” – urged His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan in his keynote speech. His Royal Highness continued by calling for **a value-based vision of education**, which places human dignity at its core and has the capability to promote humanitarianism as a basic orientation towards the interests and welfare of the people. It would be based on principles of respect for life and human dignity, equal rights, social justice, and respect for cultural and religious diversity. The intent is to establish education that is capable of preparing children and youth to face the challenges of life in the context of a distressed region, while building a culture that promotes diversity, tolerance, religious pluralism and social cohesion.

His Royal Highness highlighted the need for a renewed focus on **a knowledge society**, in the context of MENA at present, and pointed out that quality learning through life skills can and should provide the basis for a society that is nurtured by its diversity and capacities, and regards learning as a key component. After decades of authoritarian rule, Arab societies are not yet equipped with the skills and values needed to accept different, pluralistic norms of behaviour. Despite the progress that has been made in education, His Royal Highness recognized the need to rethink and reform education in MENA. He called for urgency in building “a platform for knowledge, aimed at redefining the very mission of education as a whole”.

Current education reform efforts in the region lack a basic human component: students need to learn at a very early stage what it means to be citizens who think, question, innovate and produce knowledge, rather than be subjects of the state who are taught what to think and how to behave.³ Life skills education, particularly citizenship education, was recognized as crucial for empowering children and youth to be catalysts for positive social transformation, and should be the core of education reform processes in MENA.

Finally, it was highlighted that in a world of increasing complexities, education systems in MENA must equip children and youth with key competencies required of 21st century knowledge-based societies, enabling them to critically seek, evaluate and create information and knowledge, and develop positive attitudes

² UNICEF (2012), *Global Evaluation of Life Skills Education Programmes*.

³ Faour, M. and Muasher, M. (2011), *Education for Citizenship in the Arab World. Key to the Future*, Carnegie Paper.

towards change. In this respect, life skills education can be a tremendous opportunity to enable learners to respond to the challenges of an information-intensive age. As Alvin Toffler reminds us: “The illiterate person in the 21st century is no longer the person who cannot read or write, but the person who does not know how to learn, to relearn and how to unlearn.”⁴

The socio-political and economic context of learning in MENA

Protracted crises, intensification of violence and population displacement are dramatically impacting the MENA region. In addition, the region has been reshaped by major trends such as a **crisis of legitimacy** intertwined with economic growth without a corresponding improvement in well-being, in which benefits have been unevenly distributed. Furthermore, the region has experienced an increase of poverty and unemployment rates and a decrease in social welfare provisions and protection schemes. As the quality of life has deteriorated, particularly for the middle class and even more so for disadvantaged groups, the level of the population’s dissatisfaction increased and people stopped believing in the ability of the state to deliver the kind of life they needed.

Another important trend in the region is the change in the nature of conflicts. States have lost control over violence as well as over their border areas. The region is in a stage of perpetual and irregular warfare, a fact that is even more evident in Iraq and Syria with ISIS’ takeover of a large portion of these countries. Wars are increasingly fought within states rather than between them, and non-state actors play a more important role in such conflicts, including conflicts that are increasingly targeting communities on the basis of sectarian and ethnic identities. Ultimately, there is an increased involvement of children in fighting (one third of the fighters in Yemen are children) and non-state actors are using education to recruit children into military activity. This has resulted in a further increase in militarization and mutual fear between communities that have peacefully coexisted for millennia.

Such a situation has a dramatic impact on education for children and youth. In fact, the MENA region is now host to some 21 million children who are either out of school or at risk of dropping out.⁵ The greatest majority of those children are Syrian and Iraqi refugees or from displaced populations. UNICEF reports that in 2016 about 2 million Syrian children and about 50 per cent of Syrian refugees aged 5 to 17 are not in school.⁶ This education deficit is catastrophic on multiple fronts. For children and youth, the absence of education represents a future with no hope and a missed opportunity for society. Without basic skills, children and youth have limited options for gainful employment or entrepreneurial activity. Additionally, it gives children and youth hope for a future that may appear devoid of it. Indeed, a young Syrian refugee best captured this when he was asked by the Human Rights Watch why he was joining the war in Syria. He responded with: “Maybe we’ll live, and maybe we’ll die.”

The region is facing not only the challenges of enduring crises and conflicts, but also those related to the changing requirements of the labour market. Life skills education plays a crucial role, particularly in crises, in redirecting children and youth’s energies into positive channels and enabling them to acquire knowledge and skills that can build their futures and serve as the basis for economic and social development. This is particularly true for citizenship education, which can be used as a tool to empower individuals and groups to promote social cohesion and non-violent conflict resolution.⁷ However, as the discussions highlighted, the challenges of providing quality education – including citizenship education – to refugees remains huge in countries that do not recognize them as citizens.

The status of learning in MENA

Life skills education is particularly important in MENA, where progress in accessibility has not been paralleled by improvements in the quality of learning. Over the past 60 years, the MENA region has recorded

⁴ Toffler, A. (1970), *Future Shock*. Quoted by Sobhi Tawil during his contribution at 2015 MEdNet Meeting: “Introducing Life Skills as the basis for Quality Learning”.

⁵ UNICEF and UIS (2014), *Regional Report on Out-of-School Children*, Amman: UNICEF.

⁶ UNICEF (2016), *Syria Crisis Education Strategic Paper*. London 2016 Conference.

⁷ Schugurensky, D. and Myers, J.P. (2003), *Citizenship Education: Theory, Research and Practice*, Encounters on Education, Vol. 4, Fall.

notable achievements in expanding access to formal education, closing gender gaps and reaching out to remote areas. Enrolment in primary education is nearly universal, with average enrolment being over 70 per cent in secondary schools and close to 30 per cent in tertiary education for both females and males.⁸ Yet, despite these successes and the considerable resources invested, MENA countries are lagging far behind international standards related to learning achievements, and education systems have fallen short of their promises to provide students with the skills needed for competitive labour markets and socially challenging environments. It is worth noting that youth unemployment rates in MENA are the highest in the world, 23.6 per cent in North Africa and 25.1 per cent in the Middle East.⁹ Even more worrisome is the fact that millions of students are completing the education cycle without achieving basic literacy and numeracy.

The major problems affecting education systems in the MENA region are:

- 1 **A weak institutional and public interest in education**, as well as the failure to prioritize education reform. As His Royal Highness also highlighted in his keynote speech, and as the Prime Minister of Jordan stated during a conference on development in July 2015, “Education has been overlooked for a long time, while it needs to receive the importance it deserves”. In cases where policies and procedures have been reformed, this has been done without challenging the education philosophy at their core. In Egypt, for instance, textbooks have been changed without revising instructional practices and the overall education philosophy; in Jordan, textbooks were revised for several grades in 2015 without changing the totality of the academic curriculum.¹⁰
- 2 **A shortage of trained and good-quality teachers**. This is mainly due to the weakness of pre-service training programmes, the fact that teaching is not considered rewarding or a socially and economically attractive job, and to an overall lack of engagement in society and communities at large. Additionally, weak governance structures and accountability mechanisms have resulted in a teacher workforce that is not motivated to make the required effort in the classroom, as witnessed by widespread teacher absenteeism. On average 22 per cent of students in MENA countries attended schools whose principals reported that teacher absenteeism was a serious problem.¹¹
- 3 **Poor internal efficiency and lack of external qualifications**. In this regard, students take more than 12 years to finish 12 years of education, which increases expenses and puts pressure on the system. Schools suffer from high failure and dropout rates, particularly in Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Tunisia and the Gulf countries. Additionally, a large number of children drop out during the transition from basic to secondary education. In terms of external qualifications, all countries are weak and students graduating from secondary school struggle to find job opportunities. A study on transition from school to work across multiple countries indicated that over 40 per cent of unemployed young people in Egypt, over 50 per cent in Iran, and over 70 per cent in Syria have spent more than one year looking for work.¹²
- 4 **A skills mismatch**. A serious mismatch between the skills provided by education and training systems and what the market requires is affecting MENA. In global studies, more firms in the region contend that inadequate labour force skills, both technical and soft, impede their growth and ability to hire employees. In many countries across the MENA region, these skills are provided after graduation through ad hoc NGO services that are not institutionalized and do not always have a demonstrated impact. The panel highlighted that while the significance of skill mismatch and the responsibility of education and training systems should not be denied, the reality is certainly more complex in MENA, as other factors impact labour markets in the region (such as salaries and overall job quality issues).
- 5 **Inadequate learning environments**. Educational and learning environments are poor and not conducive to the use of technology. However, participants discussed in depth about the importance of fostering the

⁸ Data based on Amira Kazem’s opening remarks at 2015 MEdNet Meeting.

⁹ ILO (2012), *Employment for stability and socio-economic progress in North Africa, Strategy for North Africa 2011-2015*.

¹⁰ Based on Thuqan Obeidat presentation at 2015 MEdNet Meeting.

¹¹ Data based on Amira Kazem’s opening remarks at 2015 MEdNet Meeting.

¹² Matsumoto, S. and Elder, S. (2010), *Characterizing the school-to-work transitions of young men and women: Evidence from the ILO school-to-work transition surveys*, ILO.

use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education in order to foster quality learning, particularly in remote areas and in refugee camps. Furthermore, the importance of partnering with the private sector in promoting life skills through educational technology and breaking down barriers between formal, non-formal and informal education, was heavily stressed. Life skills education in the information age calls for the urgent adoption of comprehensive approaches that integrates formal education with non-formal and informal interventions.

- 6 National assessment systems.** Public examinations were pointed out as further critical elements of education systems in the region (whereby success is measured through examinations that test the ability to memorize information instead of a continuous assessment of learnt competencies), as well as the low position of students in international evaluations. Results from the international TIMSS standardized test showed that the MENA region countries performed at or below the Low International Benchmark. The results from these assessments in maths and science further highlight an increasing trend of inequality – the gap between the top 20 per cent average score and the bottom 20 per cent was larger in TIMSS 2011 than in TIMSS 2007.
- 7 Socio-political challenges.** Despite the Arab Spring spreading throughout the MENA region, encouraging bottom-up political change, important ideological challenges have emerged that are hindering education systems from moving forward in life skills and citizenship education. In some situations, education has been taken hostage by agendas that disregard the main purpose of education; curriculums including the teaching of life skills have been removed in some countries such as Syria, Iraq and Libya, depriving children of the opportunity to learn about citizenship and human rights. Even regions where ideological radicalization has not gained traction are fearful of experiencing pushbacks in the near future.

The status of citizenship education in MENA countries was widely debated. Findings from research have revealed considerable shortcomings in citizenship education programmes, particularly in terms of out-dated, rigid curricula and inadequate pedagogical approaches. This has consequently hindered the learning and positive engagement of children and youth in society, and may lead to increased radicalization when compounded with tension, violence and social fragility. In the context of the socio-political transformations that started in 2011 in MENA, Faour and Muasher¹³ have enquired about the status of citizenship education in the region by posing crucial questions: are students taught about what it means to be a citizen? Are they taught to question, inquire, participate, work in teams and communicate? Are they taught to uphold values such as freedom, equality and respect for human rights? Or is knowledge spoon-fed to them in a manner that discourages questioning? The general method of teaching in MENA relies on the rote learning of information rather than promoting exploration, imagination and creativity to generate knowledge. Students are not supposed to question, analyse or consider any interpretations other than the one that is taught in the classroom. They are not expected to engage in debates and they are not provided with the freedom to learn how to challenge authority. Furthermore, citizenship education in curricula has been limited to **teaching about citizenship**, similar to what is traditionally referred to as civics education; providing information (rather than real knowledge and understanding) about civil concepts such as institutions, rights, the importance of the army and security, self-esteem, democracy, and life skills.

More comprehensive approaches, such as **citizenship for and through education**,¹⁴ are needed. While education about citizenship focuses on providing students with sufficient knowledge on national history and the processes of government and political life, education through citizenship involves students learning through active, participative experiences in schools, the local community and beyond.

On the other hand, education for citizenship encompasses the other two strands and involves equipping students with a set of tools (knowledge and understanding, skills and aptitudes, values and dispositions) which enables them to participate actively and sensibly in the roles they will encounter in their adult lives.

¹³ Faour, M. and Muasher, M. (2011), *Education for Citizenship in the Arab World. Key to the Future*, Carnegie Paper.

¹⁴ During his contribution at the MEdNet Meeting, Thuqan Obeidat has referred to the definitions introduced in Kerr, D. (1999) *Citizenship Education: an International Comparison*.

This method links citizenship education with the education experience, it does so by adopting experiential learning strategies to teach students citizenship through their involvement in civic activities and decision-making inside and outside schools. It also engages students in local, national and global issues (both in school and in society at large), and equips them with values and the disposition to actively participate in society. These deep learning experiences are rarely fostered in MENA countries. As Thuqan Obeidat has put it, “there is no opportunity for a real application and learning of citizenship in its value and meaning, and for constructing perspectives and behaviours of justice and equality”.

Opportunities of quality learning through life skills education

In this context, the inclusion of life skills education in national curricula was discussed as a necessary and crucial condition for successful learning. Such skills are critical in overcoming an education that is based on schooling rather than learning and fails to prepare students for life. Life skills education can play a tremendous role in linking the curriculum with the life that students live, helping them to become self-empowered and to be active citizens of a knowledge society.

Ultimately, the panel emphasized the importance of dialogue as a foundation of positive change. It stressed the importance of working together and “not in silos”, as His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan called for. The panel also highlighted the need to rethink quality education in MENA through life skills, to promote values of tolerance and coexistence, and to build bridges of cooperation between different cultures and faiths.

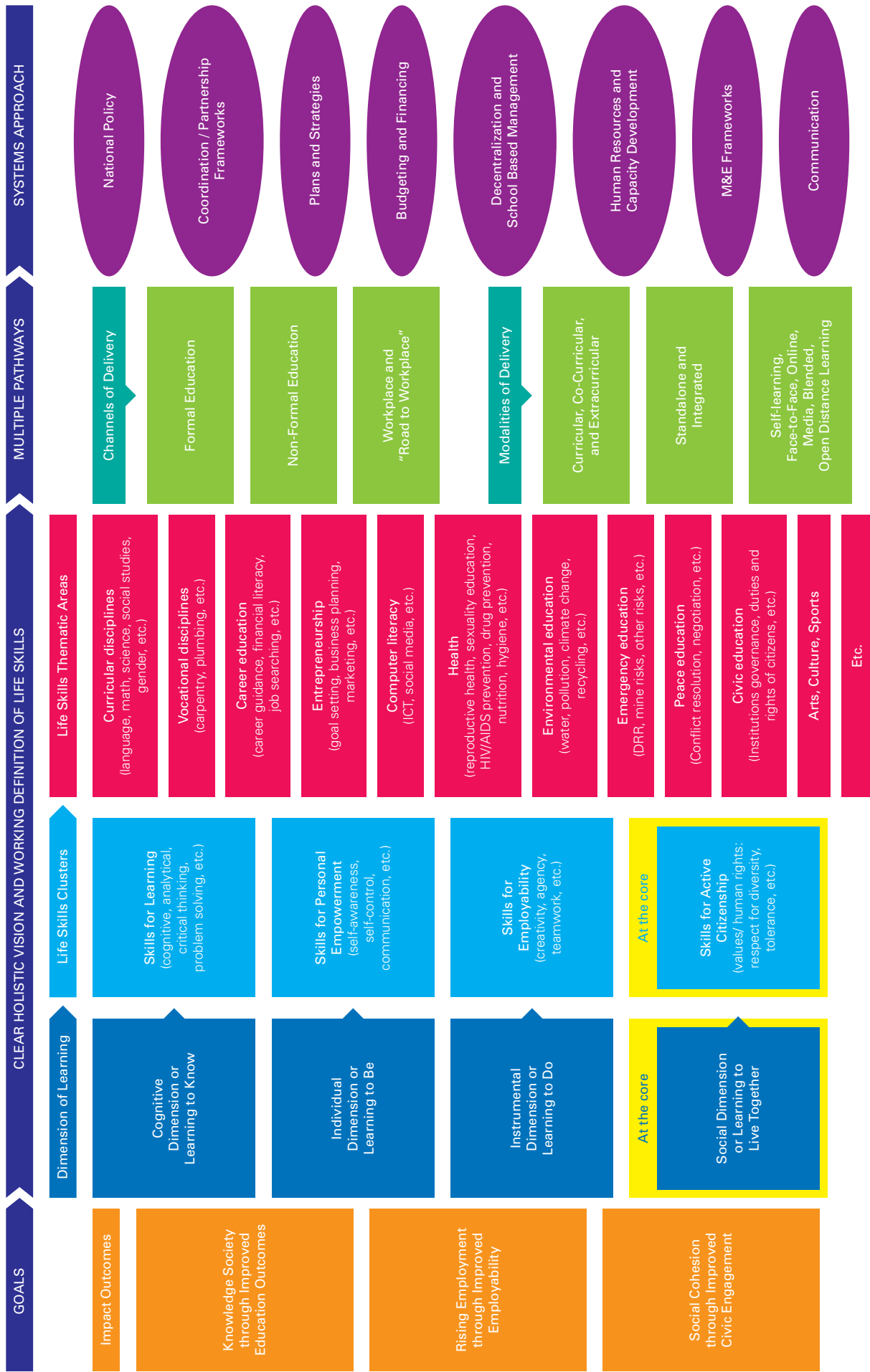
A Conceptual and Programmatic Framework for life skills education in MENA

Responding to the challenges identified during the opening session, the development of the Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (CPF) for life skills education was presented as the result of collaborative efforts by the International Youth Foundation and Birzeit University in Palestine, in partnership with key United Nations agencies working in the field of education and training in MENA (ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNRWA and the World Bank). The general objective is to support MENA countries in mainstreaming and institutionalizing life skills programming within their national education systems (both for formal and non-formal education) and in the workplace. In particular, the initiative will contribute to the following three strategic goals for the MENA region:

- 1 Creating a knowledge society through improved education outcomes;
- 2 Rising employment through improved employability; and
- 3 Ensuring social cohesion through improved civic engagement.

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the conceptualization of life skills education for MENA. The MEdNet Meeting provided an opportunity to unpack each component of the CPF. Overall, the interventions, group work and general discussion revolved around the following areas: The need for a holistic vision and a working definition of life skills education in MENA, the identification of the multiple pathways through which life skills education can be implemented, and finally the need for a systems approach to ensure effective, efficient, and sustainable delivery of life skills education. Each of these areas will be presented in detail in the following Chapters.

FIGURE 1 A Conceptual and Programmatic Framework for Life Skills Education in MENA



CHAPTER 3

Towards a working definition of life skills education in MENA

A definition of life skills education is critical to MENA. It facilitates a common understanding of what life skills are, how they may be acquired and assessed, as well as being crucial for guiding education programming and policy development. This Chapter gives an account of the extensive debate that has taken place around a contextualized MENA vision and the working definition of life skills as a key undertaking for mainstreaming quality life skills education in the region. Firstly, it explores the conceptual framework for life skills as inspired by Delors' four Dimensions of Learning, addressing the need for a strong vision of quality learning through life skills in the region based on a common ethical foundation and an integrated approach to learning. Secondly, a working definition of life skills education for MENA is outlined in detail. Emphasis is placed on the importance of understanding life skills as an interconnected and overlapping application of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours, with a strong focus on human rights values for citizenship, which are all integral to quality learning. Finally, this Chapter looks into the core proposal of the MEdNet Meeting to build the CPF around Delors' four Dimensions of Learning, and discusses the related core skills that contribute to improved education outcomes, improved employability and improved civic engagement in MENA.

The preliminary findings of the Analytical Mapping (AM) conducted by UNICEF MENARO, in collaboration with the International Youth Foundation and the Birzeit University, aimed to map the definition of life skill education, thematic areas and clusters of life skills against the Delors' four Dimensions of Learning. The findings pointed out that there is a lack of consistent definition for life skills education in MENA countries. Current definitions of life skills varies across national strategies in each country (e.g. some countries have included the definition in specific curriculum textbooks, while others have placed it in guidelines and manuals or have adopted international definitions). All countries in MENA included at least some type of life skill from all four Dimensions of Learning. Yet, it seems there are gaps in the clusters of skills within each of the four Dimensions at the national level. For instance, employability skills play a marginal role within national education systems and curricula. Learning to Do is mostly perceived to be the responsibility of the non-formal education sector or private sector training schemes. Other key skills related to Learning to Be (skills for personal empowerment), such as creativity, leadership, survival and resilience, were reported by the least number of MENA countries.

A conceptual framework for life skills education: Delors' four Dimensions of Learning. In order to develop a holistic and contextualized vision of life skills in MENA, the proposed working definition of life skills is inspired by the UNESCO Delors Report, which is widely considered as a key reference for the conceptualization of education and learning worldwide. Published in 1996, *Learning: The Treasure Within, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century*, chaired by Jacques Delors, proposed an integrated vision of education that went beyond the utilitarian economic idea that framed education primarily in terms of its positive impact on human development.

The Delors Report reaffirms a **humanistic vision of education** that aspires to enhance the dignity, capacity and welfare of the person in relation to others and nature. It has concerns for sustainable human and social development, recognizes that the reality of living is diverse in each case, and reaffirms the core ethical values, such as respect for life, human dignity, equal rights, social justice, and a collective responsibility and commitment to solidarity.¹⁵ A humanistic approach to education raises a fundamental question on the very purpose of education and the type of society we aim for. There is a need to develop a vision for societal development and both the nature and role of education. A humanistic approach to

¹⁵ UNESCO (2015), *Rethinking Education. Towards a Global Common Good?*

education has two major implications:

- 1 It has to specify a common ethical foundation, entailing principles and values.
- 2 It needs to adopt an integrated, holistic approach to learning that gives equal importance to the various Dimensions of Learning (psychosocial, cognitive, cultural, civic, spiritual, social and economic), which Delors' four pillars recall.

In this respect, the Delors Report proposed a renewed vision of learning. It reaffirmed and broadened the concept of "Learning throughout life", that was previously highlighted in the 1972 Faure Report Learning to Be, on which the Delors Report was built. With the lifelong learning paradigm set as a backdrop, the Report defined the essential functions of learning through four key pillars underlying education and life:

- **Learning to Be:** originally the central theme of the Faure Report published in 1972. This Dimension emphasized the development of human potential to its fullest and sought to enable everyone to improve their self-knowledge when recognizing their self-esteem. Special importance was given to independent judgement, combined with a stronger sense of personal responsibility for the attainment of common goals. It included skills for personal empowerment such as self-awareness, self-control, communication and agency.
- **Learning to Know:** this Dimension included not only basic learning skills, but also foundational skills that are important for learning: such as how to learn – an instrumental skill inherent to basic education, allowing individuals to fully benefit from educational opportunities – and other skills necessary for the relevant application and use of knowledge, such as analytical skills, critical thinking and problem solving.
- **Learning to Do:** this Dimension emphasized the acquisition of skills necessary to practice a profession; it included the skills needed to adapt to a variety of unforeseeable situations and the ability to work in a team. It encompassed the idea of alternating periods of work and study, and facing changes in demand in labour markets and in life.
- **Learning to Live Together:** this particular Dimension was seen as the need to develop an understanding of others, of their history and their traditions. To develop respect for human dignity and diversity, as well as for responsible and active citizenship.

The CPF proposes a working definition of life skills that is drawn in part from the definition provided by the Inter-Agency Working Group on Life Skills in EFA.¹⁶ It defines life skills as: "A process to be applied to various learning areas covering four Dimensions: the cognitive, the individual, the social and the instrumental (related to the four Delors pillars). Life skills are then regarded as a cross-cutting, interconnected and overlapping application of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills which are integral to quality education, and are universally applicable and contextual".

In order to develop a clear working definition of life skills for MENA, participants in the Meeting debated what key elements were missing from the given definition and how life skills programming could be directed if those elements were added. Overall, it was recognized that a **definition for life skills in MENA** should:

- Include an **element of vision** that recalls the fundamental purpose of fostering quality education through life skills.
- Recognize that four Dimensions of Learning (Learning to Know, Be, Do and Live Together) are closely interrelated, forming an integral part of quality education.
- Emphasize **why promoting life skills** in education is of paramount importance, stressing that life skills are crucial for the well-being of children and youth, as well as benefit society as a whole.
- Adopt a **learner-centred approach** as a key dimension of a shared vision for learning.

¹⁶ UNESCO (2004), *Report of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Life Skills in EFA*.

- Endorse a **lifelong learning perspective for life skills** (starting from early childhood).
- Emphasize a **human rights-based approach** to quality education that refers to the importance of rights, as well as to the responsibilities of children, youth and duty bearers.
- Address the needs of its **target group** (i.e. early childhood, children, adolescents, youth).
- Reflect a **participatory approach** to life skills education that calls for the greater involvement of communities and society (beyond the standard dichotomy of formal and non-formal).
- Consider **“Life Skills”** as **“Competencies for Life”**. There was some debate over the use of the term “life skills”, stressing that life skills could also be understood as “competencies for life”. However, as stated earlier, life skills are regarded as a cross-cutting, interconnected and overlapping application of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours, all integral to quality learning.

A commonly agreed definition and understanding of life skills is crucial for setting up a shared approach to implementation, improving programming coordination, and assessing the status of life skills programming in the country. Such as definition of life skills can also help in fostering processes of curricula reform, and prompt an overall change towards a learner-centred process that is anchored in the communities where children and youth live. A good definition would be helpful in identifying a proper M&E framework, and an evidence-based approach to planning for future life skills programmes. Ultimately, it could direct policy makers in mainstreaming a systematic, multiple pathways approach to quality education through life skills, and help motivate educational practitioners, curricula and textbook developers, and learners.

The four Dimensions of Learning and their related skills. Participants looked into the core proposal of the MEdNet Meeting to build the CPF around Delors’ four Dimensions of Learning, and discussed in greater depth on corresponding clusters of life skills. The four Dimensions should not necessarily be seen as categories for a taxonomy of skills, but rather, they should be understood as a generic reference for an integrated approach to the multiple Dimensions of Learning. The identification and definition of skills for each of the four Dimensions highlights the complementarity and overlap of core.

The following elements of conceptualization were suggested:

- I **The Cognitive Dimension, or Learning to Know.** This is the Dimension related to acquiring a body of knowledge and also, as Delors¹⁷ put it, a thirst for knowledge. It emphasizes learning how to learn throughout one’s life, completing basic education and still being full of curiosity and the desire to gain a better understanding of the world and other people.

There was a general consensus that literacy and numeracy skills traditionally referred to as *basic learning skills or foundation skills*,¹⁸ constitute the prerequisite of learning and are also furthered through life skills education. Despite the progress made in education in the region, ensuring minimal levels of literacy competency among children and youth in MENA remains a considerable challenge, due to the region’s instability and violent conflicts. It was underlined that literacy and numeracy skills should not be confused with cognitive skills and the learning to know Dimension should include skills, such as analytical, critical thinking and problem solving, as well as meta-cognition skills. Finally, attention was drawn to the importance of including *non-cognitive skills*, understood as sets of attitudes, behaviours and strategies taught to underpin success in school and at work.¹⁹ In fact, there is a body of research²⁰ that seems to suggest that non-cognitive skills are also very important for Learning to Know. Some, such as motivation, perseverance, self-control, social competencies, resilience, coping, and self-perceptions, have been included in life skills education approaches. Robust evidence of a causal relationship is limited, but there are correlations.

¹⁷ Delors, J. (2013), *The treasure within: Learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, Learning to be. What is the value of that treasure 15 years after its publication?* Springer Science and Business Media Dordrecht.

¹⁸ Defined as such by the Education For All movement.

¹⁹ Gutman, L. and Schoon, I. (2013), *The impact of non-cognitive skills on outcomes for young people*, Institute of Education, University of London.

²⁰ Gutman, L. and Schoon, I. (2013), *The impact of non-cognitive skills on outcomes for young people*, Institute of Education, University of London.

Less is known about how far it is possible to change a young person’s non-cognitive skills, yet the evidence is strongest in relation to skills underpinning academic outcomes. The dichotomy between cognitive and non-cognitive is currently a widely debated issue.

When participants were asked to identify the most important and relevant skills for MENA, the most frequent responses were (from most frequent to least frequent):

TABLE 1 Learning to Know: Key life skills for MENA

THE COGNITIVE DIMENSION OR LEARNING TO KNOW
Problem solving
Critical thinking
Creativity
Analytical skills
Listening skills
Metacognitive skills
Communication skills
Curiosity
Teamwork
Reasoning skills
Questioning skills

II The Individual Dimension, or Learning to Be. This is the Dimension related to the all-round development of each individual: mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic sense, personal responsibility and spiritual values – fully developing the creative potential of each individual, in all its richness and complexity. As Delors reminded us: “a treasure lies within each one of us, and continuing education must enable everyone to improve their self-knowledge during their vital quest for self-esteem”.²¹

As per the skills that are related to this Dimension, it was outlined that they should range from self-empowerment skills to communication, agency and independent judgment. These are the skills aimed at developing individuals who are able to relate to others, pursue a healthy lifestyle, be self-aware, communicate their own beliefs and views, live independently, assess risks and make informed decisions, and work in partnerships and teams. Other skills that could be included are ones aimed at developing individuals capable of leading and taking the initiative, solving problems, managing emotions, understanding different beliefs and cultures, developing informed ethical views and knowledge of the world. This Dimension could also include skills aimed at increasing the potential of individuals and their self-fulfilment, regardless of any instrumental function of learning, such as aesthetic appreciation through art, music, dance, etc.

Participants identified some of the most critical and relevant skills for MENA that should be considered for inclusion in the CPF. It was greatly emphasized that further conceptualization would be needed within each Dimension and corresponding life skills, taking note of interconnectedness, crosscutting elements and overlaps. This will be essential for the measurement of learning. The key life skills identified with regards to the *Individual Dimension or Learning to Be* were (from most frequent to least frequent):

²¹ Delors, J. (2013), *The treasure within: Learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, Learning to be. What is the value of that treasure 15 years after its publication?* p. 321, Springer Science and Business Media Dordrecht.

TABLE 2 Learning to Be: Key life skills for MENA

THE INDIVIDUAL DIMENSION OR LEARNING TO BE
Communication
Self-awareness
Self-control
Self-esteem
Self-confidence
Decision-making
Empathy
Adaptability
Creativity
Motivation
Agency
Resilience
Perseverance
Collaboration

III The Instrumental, or Learning to Do. This is the Dimension that refers to, but is not confined to, the acquisition of skills for employability. It is particularly relevant in light of the preliminary findings of the first LSE mapping survey, showing that employability skills play a marginal role within national education systems and curricula in MENA. The panel outlined that in the emerging knowledge-based economy, which is making human work increasingly immaterial, this Dimension calls for skills that are more behavioural than intellectual. As stated by Nan-Zhao, “the material and technology are becoming secondary to human qualities and interpersonal relationships”.²²

Attention was given to the fact that employability skills in the literature are numerous – references are given for soft, core and transferable skills. A straightforward definition for employability skills has been given by the United Kingdom’s Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES),²³ which is: “The skills almost everyone needs to do almost any job”. In this respect, it was emphasized that these skills should take employers’ views into account, as they increasingly demand a range of values and personal attributes.

According to a survey conducted in the United Kingdom by the Institute of Directors,²⁴ 88 per cent of British employers considered employability skills to be as important as technical or academic skills, if not more important. The results of the mentioned survey could reflect employers’ increasing need for a workforce that can cope with changes in the work environment, such as increasingly complex work practices, reduced supervision, greater job flexibility and rotation, and increased interaction with clients.

It was underlined that as life skills related to the other Dimensions, employability skills should become **part of a lifelong learning strategy**. Skills such as teamwork, problem-solving and negotiation should be taught in primary schools. These skills should then be developed, refined and applied to more complex situations as the learner progresses through education and into the workplace. They should be taught through a **learning by doing approach**, supporting workplace projects, mini-companies, enquiry-based learning, problem-solving and role-play.

Finally, there was a proposal to distinguish between two separate categories of skills for the instrumental Dimension or Learning to Do: a) Technical and vocational skills (more the preserve of TVET); and b) employability skills, which include important aspects of learning for personal development and learning to learn – these are referred to through a variety of terms, such as ‘21st century skills’.

²² Nan-Zhao, Z. (2005), *Four Pillars of Learning for the Reorientation and Reorganization of Curriculum: Reflections and Discussions*. UNESCO.

²³ UKCES (2009), *The employability challenge*. London: UK Commission for Employment and Skills.

²⁴ Data based on Muriel Dunbar’s presentation at 2015 MEdNet Meeting: *The Instrumental Dimension of Learning*.

When participants were asked to identify the most critical skills for MENA, the most frequent responses were (from most frequent to least frequent):

TABLE 3 Learning to Do: Key life skills for MENA

THE INDIVIDUAL DIMENSION OR LEARNING TO BE
Team work
Communication
Negotiation skills
Problem solving
Manage own learning
Self-awareness
Work under pressure
Taking initiatives
Resilience
Presentation skills
Client orientation
Organization skills
Agency
Creativity

IV The Social Dimension, or Learning to Live Together. This Dimension embodies the ethical foundation of all key competencies for life. In the context of MENA, it was proposed that this Dimension should be understood as **citizenship education**, and be placed at the core, with the values it needs to promote underpinning the other three Dimensions. Citizenship education recalls fundamental questions about the purpose and role of education in societal development: Where do we come from? Where are we? Where do we want to go? It reflects the values that are reinforced by society and is a fundamental component of quality learning. In this respect, participants placed stronger emphasis on the urgency for MENA to **identify the values that should be at the core of quality education** in the region. As some of the attendees provocatively put it: “Are we teaching our children skills for life or skills for death?”; “Are our education systems teaching youth to stop killing each other, to stop hatred and violence, or are they developing social, moral and political values such as human dignity, individual freedoms, equality, pluralism, inclusion, responsibility and concern for the common good, proving themselves capable of promoting positive social transformation?”

A broad consensus was reached on the importance of adopting a human rights-based approach in the conceptual framework of citizenship education, consistent with democratic and social justice values and principles. It was highlighted once again that a renewed approach to citizenship education aimed at empowering individuals to think critically and to be active citizens and drivers of change, rather than instilling obedience and submission, requires a deep reform of curricula, pedagogies and education. Such a reform should place at its core conflict resolution principles, dialogue, equality, and non-discrimination standards. These should be translated into instructional strategies, school plans, curricula, textbooks (through historical paths, for instance) laws, and policies capable of building a real culture of human rights in MENA.

Finally, citizenship education, through whatever mode of delivery, should also include themes that constitute common global concerns. In a pluralistic and interconnected world, citizenship education should focus on three thematic areas, and related key values and skills: a) **Human rights**, based on the principles of social justice and non-discrimination (awareness of rights and responsibilities); b) **Environmental issues**, based on the concept of sustainability (commitment to sustainable human and social development); c) **Intercultural understanding**, based on the principle of respect for cultural diversity (valuing diversity as part of common humanity).

With regards to the Social Dimension or *Learning to Live Together*, participants were asked to identify the core values that should underpin a human rights-based approach to citizenship education in MENA. The most relevant responses were:

TABLE 4 Learning to Live Together: Key values for MENA

THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OR LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER
Equity
Diversity
Freedom
Solidarity
Responsibility
Active tolerance
Non-discrimination
Social justice
Participation
Transparency
Acceptance

CHAPTER 4

A multiple pathways approach to life skills education

A multiple pathways approach is essential for mainstreaming quality education through life skills and recognizes that life skills are being furthered through numerous pathways. The following paragraphs present experiences and lessons learned relating to a multiple pathways approach, looking into experiences of life skills through formal and non-formal education. The chapter also presents experiences of life skills education implemented in workplace channels, emphasizing how critical multi-stakeholder frameworks are in maximizing the impact of life skills education on employability outcomes and youth empowerment. It is argued that mainstreaming life skills education cannot be achieved through the development of small-scale interventions, but instead requires systemic and coordinated efforts that need to be furthered within a systems approach to life skills.

The key preliminary findings of the AM show that at the national level, **channels of delivery** for life skills education focus primarily on the formal sector (80 per cent of countries), particularly on basic education (12 out of 14 countries), followed by formal post-basic education (9 out of 14 countries). Non-formal education comes third, while both learning in the workspace and during the transition to work, occupy the lowest rates of coverage. Life skills programmes implemented in MENA countries are reported to be mostly delivered either through extra-curricular activities or standalone training programmes, showing an increasing need to strengthen partnerships with the formal education sector. As for the modalities of delivery, at the country level, opportunities for life skills education include delivery mainly through school curricula and co-curricular activities. While at the programme level, life skills education programmes mostly focus on standalone training programmes as extra-curricular activities. Overall, in MENA countries, life skills education is mostly delivered using face-to-face techniques with limited use of innovative modalities of delivery, such as online, self-learning, media and blended learning. There is a need for the introduction of innovative and alternative modalities of delivery.

A **multiple pathways approach** acknowledges that learning takes place at different times and in different contexts; namely, it recognizes that life skills are being furthered through numerous pathways – formal (within education systems) and non-formal channels (NGOs and the private sector), and through the workplace or when transitioning to the workplace. While such an approach allows for enough flexibility to cater to differing contexts, it is important to unpack these pathways and ensure they are:

- 1 Following quality standards;
- 2 Targeting according to needs, particularly in marginalized communities; and
- 3 Embedded in national policy and coordination frameworks, including in accreditation and certification.

The role of the various partners working on adolescents and youth programming, including Ministries of Youth and Sports, was also discussed. In this regard, life skills-related interventions conducted around schools, particularly those implemented in youth or community centres have been recognized as integral components of the multiple pathways approach. These interventions need to be harmonized with the life skills education that is conducted within schools to ensure the consistency of messaging and programming. They are key to ensuring the development of an 'enabling environment' that further reinforces teaching and learning in schools, and sustains active engagement and the mobilization of parents and communities.

In sum, it is of paramount importance that a multiple pathways approach is adopted within the framework of **a systems approach to life skills education**: mainstreaming life skills education cannot be achieved through the development of small-scale interventions, but requires a mind shift and a complete reform of curricula, teaching and learning practices.

To this end, the proposed CPF identifies the channels and modalities of delivery that are relevant for life skills education programming. Channels of delivery include formal and non-formal education, learning in the workplace and when transitioning to the workplace. Formal education, as defined by UNESCO, refers to the hierarchically-structured, chronologically-graded educational system running from primary through to tertiary institutions (i.e. basic education from 5 to 15 years and post-basic/TVET/tertiary education from 15 to 24 years). Non-formal education is understood as an organized educational activity outside the established formal system that is intended to serve an identifiable learning clientele with identifiable learning objectives (from 5 to 24 years); it is normally delivered by a wide range of actors including, NGOs and civil society organizations, governments, United Nations agencies, trade unions, sports clubs, and national institutions. Learning in the workplace or when transitioning to the workplace refers to on-the-job learning opportunities, provided as part of apprenticeship programmes or hands-on training, which are part of post-basic education pathways targeting youth (from 15-24). As per the modalities of delivery, they are categorized as curricular and extra-curricular/co-curricular, standalone, integrated, self-learning, face-to-face, online, media, and blended learning interventions.

Life skills through formal and non-formal education

The delivery of life skills education has not been mainstreamed into curricula and there is little knowledge of the impact of life skills interventions beyond the school system. As the Global Evaluation of Life Skills Education Programmes²⁵ conducted by UNICEF in 2012 remind us, the NGO provision of life skills through non-formal education is small-scale and uncoordinated. Furthermore, it has not been able to reach out to the vulnerable and marginalized. The evaluation provided recommendations that are crucial for MENA: development of clear guidelines to integrate life skills into education systems, schools and classrooms; build on the experience gained in life skills-based curriculum development to support national curricula that are more quality and equity-focused, and meet the real life needs of all children and adolescents; and back national education efforts to build capacity at institutional and organizational levels to support life skills, both in the formal and non-formal education sectors.

These recommendations prompted the MEdNet Meeting to focus on the formal and non-formal education sectors. This section looks into different experiences of mainstreaming life skills in formal education settings, namely UNRWA's education reform and approaches within the MoEs across the region. The Chapter concludes with a look into the role of non-formal education and how life skills programmes can be an effective means to reach out to the most marginalized communities.

Life skills through formal education. With regards to the formal education sector, it has been largely emphasized that integrating life skills into the formal education system requires a holistic approach. This was heavily emphasized by the experience of UNRWA's education reform. The agency, which provides education in varied contexts, in five different host-country education systems, has gone through an in-depth reform in order to provide quality education to Palestinian refugees. This reform has highlighted areas related to governance frameworks, teachers' professional development, and the enrichment of national curricula to support the basic human rights of Palestinian children and to foster inclusive education. Each of these aspects is reinforced by research and an agency-wide Education Management Information System.

At the heart of such reform lies the professional development of teachers and the empowerment of schools. A professional, qualified and motivated teaching force is central to the provision of quality education and life skills programmes. In **UNRWA's experience**, policies that support the professional development of teachers and lay out benchmarks for a career path, are key in supporting and motivating teachers as valued professionals, and help them deliver the highest quality education. These policies encompass:

- Teacher recruitment in order to select the most able, talented and motivated individuals;
- Teacher support to engage them in lifelong professional learning;
- Professional development to make it an on-going and integrated activity;

²⁵ UNICEF (2012), *Global Evaluation of Life Skills Education Programmes*.

- Regular and effective monitoring of teacher performance and accountability; and
- Support measures to school leadership and participatory forms of school governance.

To this end, innovative modalities of delivery, such as blended learning strategies enabling teachers to learn in situ, have been introduced to foster their professional development and increase their human rights education capacity. In this respect, it was emphasized that mainstreaming life skills education cannot be achieved without changing the attitudes and practices of teachers, and other education staff, to foster equal access for all children to quality education and improve educational outcomes, regardless of gender, ability, disability, and socio-economic status.

The Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Youth Programme at UNRWA constitutes another essential area addressed by the reform, which aims at reaching a larger number of students, vulnerable youth in particular. The relevance and responsiveness of **TVET programmes** to labour markets has also been addressed. New courses, both in terms of their focus and their delivery modality, have been designed with a greater emphasis on the development of entrepreneurial skills. A strong emphasis has been put on **institutionalizing labour market linkages** through the establishment of Programme Advisory Committees and the introduction of apprenticeship programmes.

Addressing the curriculum is of paramount importance to foster substantial change in the education system. UNRWA's experience in the region provides an opportunity to discuss the importance of developing policies and standards for curricula together with a systemic and holistic approach to learning, assessment, and personal development. Since UNRWA schools must follow the curriculum of the host countries, the focus of UNRWA's work in the area of curriculum has been on producing appropriate and relevant conceptual materials for teachers and students. A Curriculum Framework for Analysis has been created with the aim of defining criteria against which textbooks and teacher guides are analysed and enriched in terms of key competences and skills, and in terms of universal values of equality and diversity.

Participants recognized that cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, inclusiveness, human rights and values are crucial for curriculum development, and that there is a need to reflect them in curriculum materials for children. Life skills, such as communication, empathy and respect, need to be addressed both explicitly and implicitly in curriculum and teacher support materials. In this respect, the Human Rights Conflict Resolution and Tolerance (HRCRT) initiative is a fine example of a systemic approach to life skills. It strives for the integration of human rights in school curricula: following the development of educational policies and strategies, human rights enrichment materials and standards have been produced to analyse current curricula, as well as fostering capacity building interventions. Thanks to this initiative, concepts of human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance have been integrated into the curriculum; students are learning about their rights and the rights of others; teacher toolkits have been produced; and elected school parliaments have been activated in all schools, with most of them having set up school parliament action plans.

Furthering citizenship education in formal education contexts. Integrating life skills education into the curriculum is a crucial step to undertake in order to mainstream it into the formal system. A discussion on curriculum reforms and life skills provided insights into such challenging work and highlighted the relevance of life skills in school curricula, not only for quality learning, but also as a means to promote resilience and social cohesion. To this end, the introduction and/or the enhancement of citizenship education in curricula can play a fundamental role in fostering active civic engagement and non-violent conflict resolution.

As for Learning to Live Together/citizenship education, a wider discussion took place on how it is possible to impact students' identities as individuals and citizens. Research suggests that providing repeated exposure to life skills, followed by explanations and stimulus activities such as behaviour-focused stories that are related to real life, has proven to be very beneficial for student learning. Discussing the skills, values and behaviours illustrated by the stimulus in class and including this content across the curriculum for reinforcement, has proven to be very effective. Unfortunately, education systems in MENA do not offer many opportunities for these innovative pedagogical approaches. Rather, education materials are few and outdated, school hours are short and classes are overcrowded, teacher-training practices are poor and

reference materials for teachers are rare. Some useful reflections that have been debated, particularly relating to the Cognitive Dimension (Learning to Know), highlight the importance of updating textbooks with thought-provoking content and teacher prompts to focus on comprehension, higher level learning and discussion, as well as the provision of textbooks and other materials to all students and the modernization of in-service and pre-service teacher education and training.

The **Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict (PEIC)** exploratory model highlights the importance of including:

- Stories based on skills, values and behaviours, with built-in teacher-led (or student-led) review points to discuss in class and in groups;
- Encouraging role-play where feasible and using true stories, proverbs, graphics and humour; and
- Promoting personal life skills and civic-mindedness in ways that are acceptable to teachers, students and parents, and are influential across the nation.

Content should be motivational to both students and teachers, and locally relevant citizenship stories should be generated. As for MoEs, it was suggested that they:

- Make use of baseline assessments by visiting disadvantaged schools in each region;
- Review student reading, comprehension, and critical thinking capacities, as well as teacher capacities and resources;
- Analyse the content of education materials that are in use and relevant to national exams;
- Talk to teachers, students, youth, women and employers;
- Agree on citizenship education content, textbook slots and time slots in examined subjects;
- Reinforce all subjects;
- Train textbook writers intensively in life skills content and in realistic approaches to skills, values and behaviour change, including school visits; and
- Pilot all materials.

The **strong commitment of the Ministry of Education** is of paramount importance in fostering substantial change in the education system and in addressing scalability and sustainability challenges. Regarding this, the panel explored the experiences of two countries (Morocco and Tunisia), which subsequently provided fruitful models for integrating the instrumental and Social Dimensions of life skills into formal education.

In particular, the Tunisian case on human rights and citizenship education (*see Box 1*) shows how a strong political will can give rise to a National Strategy for Citizenship and Human Rights Education, and can foster a culture of citizenship in schools. It also emphasizes how setting up partnerships with local, national and international organizations with strong political support (in particular from the MoE) is a crucial undertaking in fostering participation and human rights at school.

This has also been highlighted by the Personal Project for Learners in Primary Education in Morocco (*see Box 2 on page 26*). The Moroccan case provides an interesting model for integrating employability skills in basic education and recalls the importance of upholding a multi-stakeholder approach to life skills education programmes in formal education. As Delors pointed out,²⁶ “schools do not have the sole responsibility for fostering children and youth learning. The very concept of lifelong learning recalls the concept of an educational society that relates to and challenges the family, the social and the physical environment of the child, the working world, the economy, and policies on the provision of material resources in the education sector”.

²⁶ Delors, J. (2013), *The Treasure Within: Learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, Learning to be. What is the value of that treasure 15 years after its publication?* Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht.

BOX 1 Citizenship and Human Rights Clubs in Tunisia

“Car, il ne suffit pas de former des tête bien pleines pour avoir de bons citoyens. A l’acquisition de riches connaissances, doit s’ajouter celle d’une haute conscience (Habib Bourguiba).”²⁷

The Ministry of Education of Tunisia, the Arab Institute for Human Rights and a number of United Nations agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, OHCHR, UNIFEM, UNHCR and UNFPA) partnered together to put a strategic plan in place with the aim of fostering citizenship education and human rights. The plan was based on three components:

- 1 The first was *Research*, which involved reviewing programmes and textbooks from the perspective of citizenship education and human rights;
- 2 The second was *Training*, which aimed at building the capacity of educational staff and administrators; and
- 3 The third one was *Institutionalization*, which gave rise to the creation of a National Strategy for Citizenship and Human Rights Education, achieved through the testing of Citizenship and Human Rights Clubs in primary and secondary schools in unstable regions and marginalized communities across the country.

The project, initiated in 2012 by establishing clubs in seven schools (later extended to 18), aimed at:

- **Promoting child and youth participation** in public life through concrete citizenship projects in partnership with civil society organizations;
- **Reinforcing the capacity of teachers** to promote the values of civil commitment to human rights in the school environment, and strengthening the relationship between educational institutions and civil society organizations; and
- Creating a space for creativity and communication to **confront violence, intolerance and discrimination**, and to help develop critical thinking among students.

Each club’s core team is made up of two students and two teachers (from both sexes), one school principal, and one representative of civil society. Around 20 to 25 students take part in the activities, which range from capacity building for club members on the principles of human rights and democratic participation, to the establishment of citizenship projects open to the communities and the civil society organizations active in the vicinity of the school. Students’ rights and competencies to make decisions, express their opinions and participate in the management of school affairs are fully recognized.

Life skills through non-formal education. Non-formal pathways cover education service delivery implemented outside of formal schooling and plays a crucial role in reaching out to the most marginalized communities. Within non-formal pathways life skills education has become an essential component, particularly in crisis contexts, as it has the potential to increase the resilience of children and youth, and consequently, constitute a key pillar for recovery and social cohesion in disrupted societies.

The relevance of life skills education programmes in emergency situations is well documented in the experience of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), which has implemented training courses in the youth centres established in Syrian refugee camps in Jordan (mainly in Zaatari, EJC and Azraq camps). An estimated 20 per cent of the Syrian refugee population in Jordan, which amounts to approximately 120,000 people, is aged between 15 and 24 years old.²⁸ The situation of youth in camps is critical. They have limited livelihood and academic perspectives and, outside of camps, Syrian youth have restricted opportunities to continue their education due to inadequate spaces and a lack of positive outlets. The overall aim of the NRC intervention is to foster youth participation in their communities. To this end, the NRC is promoting post-basic technical training courses in camps, such as tailoring, male hairdressing, electrical wiring and IT courses (such as the International Computer Driving License, which is an international certified course). Students also take comprehensive courses in Arabic, maths, English and life skills, and engage in a range of sports and development activities to support their participation in communities. More than 1,700 youths have enrolled in training programmes, which currently provide the only opportunity for Syrian youth to

²⁷ “For it is not enough to feed peoples’ minds with knowledge to form good citizens. Beyond erudition, it is imperative to promote the acquisition of a high conscience and moral values” (Habib Bourguiba). Quoted by Maya Ben Khaled during her contribution to the 2015 MEdNet Meeting: “Citizenship Clubs in Tunisia”.

²⁸ Data based on presentation at 2015 MedNet Meeting by Paul Fearn, Youth Project Coordinator at the Norwegian Refugee Council in Jordan.

BOX 2 The Personal Project for Learners in Morocco

The Personal Project for Learners in Primary Education provides a model for integrating employability skills in basic education. The programme is aimed at supporting young learners in the sixth grade of primary school to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours that would help them make informed decisions regarding their education and professional paths. The programme also aims to disseminate the project methodology to make employability skills a more pervasive reality in the Moroccan education system.

The Personal Project for Learners fosters an **experimental approach based on experiential learning**, in which personal development and learning are achieved through the involvement of students in practical and real life situations. A constructivist approach is upheld throughout the programme, which puts the young students at the centre of the learning process and perceives teachers as facilitators, helping children to carry out the work required through a dialogical and highly interactive instructional method.

The programme was initiated in the 2009-2010 school year. During the first year the intervention engaged teachers and specialists in schools and provided professional guidance. It was then revised in 2015 based on the evaluation of the piloting phase.

The life skills that were targeted during the programme included communication, leadership, entrepreneurship, team work, problem solving, critical thinking, searching for information, responsibility, creative thinking, self-awareness, decision-making, and situation analysis.

The strategy of the intervention was based on the following pillars:

- 1 **Extra-curricular support:** the activities were not integrated into the curriculum, but were instead implemented outside the time allocated for school subjects or at the end of the school year;
- 2 **Involvement of all stakeholders:** communication with teachers, students and parents was of paramount importance to gain support, foster motivation and increase the project's success; and
- 3 **Use of unified assessment tools** through which the evaluation was conducted by both learners and teachers.

The challenge ahead will be in setting a clear national policy and action plans in order to integrate life skills at the centre of educational institutions and educator concerns.

continue some form of education within Jordan's camps. Life skills are integrated in the overall training package. They are contextualized and taught in progression, as shown in the following figure (the blue tables refer to core subjects, while the red tables refer to the project-based follow-up initiatives).

When it comes to life skills education, the methods of delivery are as important, if not more so, than the curriculum itself. Teaching methodologies were thus highly interactive and practical, and include exercises that represented real life situations or problems that youth might face in their life. The promotion of participation plays a fundamental role in instructional strategies and in the overall programme process: youth are given opportunities to apply life skills in real life by giving them the chance to express their voice in the media, decision-making processes (student councils), and in communities through volunteering activities. Strongly emphasized during discussions, life skills programmes through non-formal education should provide children and youth with opportunities for civic engagement in order to prepare them to effectively participate in their communities during adulthood.

Teaching life skills requires a rethinking of the conventional teaching approaches commonly used in MENA educational systems. Participants widely debated how the success of life skills education programmes in non-formal education depends heavily on the instructional methodologies that are upheld, as well as on the **quality of the learning materials** provided. In this respect, adopting a standard life skills manual and putting teacher development at its core shows that the development of fully worked-out curricula, teaching and learning materials, and training programmes where life skills are completely integrated, are all core elements in ensuring the highest quality life skills education programmes in the non-formal system.

TABLE 5 Life skills for youth in emergency settings in the NRC Youth Programme²⁹

LEARNING TO BE	LEARNING TO DO
Self awareness, self esteem and confidence, failure and persistence	Setting goals, CV writing, job interviews, teamwork and leadership
Skills and personal traits, developing strengths, self-awareness	Prioritization, product quality, communication, management and teamwork
LEARNING TO KNOW	LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER
Problem solving, creative thinking, planning	Communication, positive self control, collaboration
Decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking	Collaboration, positive approach to others

Further issues that were widely discussed as crucial include the necessity to build strong partnerships to support the programme and the need to involve key stakeholders that are relevant to the target group. Support from the media can be important in raising communities' awareness and support. With regards to programming, it was debated that life skills should not be merely integrated into the curricula, but into the overall programme. The M&E framework (including not only quantitative means but also qualitative tools) also plays a fundamental role in understanding the impact that life skills has on the trainees involved and, finally, the necessity to **strengthen links with the formal education system** was highly emphasized.

Life skills through the workplace or on the road to the workplace

Over the past two decades, educators, employers and policy makers have placed an increasing emphasis on the development of life skills as a way to prepare young people for work in a rapidly changing and globalized world. Although the number of young people pursuing formal education pathways has significantly increased, youth find that they are not adequately prepared for the world of work upon graduation. In the MENA region, the transition period from school to work lasts longer than in other emerging economies, and the increasing skills gap between what employers see as crucial skills for a successful career and the skills youth have is an enduring labour market issue.³⁰

Life skills are critical, not only to close the skills mismatch between labour market demand and actual competencies that youth possess, but also to:

- 1 **Improve economic and learning outcomes** for youth;
- 2 **Increase employer satisfaction** with new employees; and
- 3 **Change the personal behaviour** and social attitudes of youth.

This was the core message delivered in a rather touching speech by Omar Mohammad and Mufleh N'eimat, two young graduates that benefitted from life skills education programmes. Life skills education programmes helped them avoid being trapped by the harsh and poor circumstances of the region they grew up in, find jobs and retain them, achieve higher positions at work, and even continue with their studies. Ultimately, life skills programmes helped them increase their sense of self-esteem. As one of them said: "Today I am standing here in front of you to tell my story – I would have never imagined anything like that could happen!"

Partnership and coordination frameworks are also key in maximizing the impact of life skills education programming through the workplace. This has been strongly underlined by the International Youth Foundation (IYF), the Jordan Hotel Association, the Federation of Tourism Associations and the Sheraton Amman, who presented their intervention examples of reforming the curriculum of national education institutions through linkages with private sector demands as a means of fostering employability skills.

²⁹ Adapted from presentation at 2015 MEdNet Meeting of Paul Fean, Youth Project Coordinator at the Norwegian Refugee Council in Jordan.

³⁰ See ILO, 2015, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2015. International Labour Organisation, Geneva.

The IYF presented **Passport to Success (PTS)**, a skills training programme that is helping educational institutions, businesses and governments to bridge the skills gap between current employment opportunities and today's young job seekers.

PTS equips young people aged between 15 and 29 with the skills that help keep them in school and are in high demand by employers. At the core of the programme, which has been adapted and delivered in 30 countries, is an 88-module curriculum, developed and refined by IYF over the past decade. Through the course, PTS trainees gain skills in 10 key areas that experts agree are critical to effective life skills education programming, such as self-confidence, conflict and anger management, career planning, responsibility, job preparation, communication, respect, workplace readiness, cooperation, teamwork, decision-making, and project planning. PTS training has been adapted to build young people's skills in a variety of formats and settings, including public and private secondary schools, vocational technical institutes, colleges, businesses, and youth-serving non-profit organizations.

The establishment of multi-stakeholder frameworks on life skills education programming is crucial to increase the relevance and impact of TVET. Working with the private sector, particularly with local entrepreneurs and networks, is of paramount importance in the preparation phase of a life skills education programme. It would help identify and prioritize the skills required by the labour market, and to adapt the programme to the local context and challenges. Local entrepreneurs can provide valuable feedback to improve training as the programme is ongoing and can validate or suggest key personal skills that youth will need to start their own businesses. Moreover, strengthening the link with the private sector will provide more opportunities for youth to apply their acquired competencies through effective forms of apprenticeship, alternating theory with practical work experience.

Partnering with the public sector was also seen as crucial component of a quality life skills education programme, both in terms of institutionalizing the programme and in terms of providing a recognized framework for accreditation and certification. A wide consensus was reached on the urgent need to **enhance the role of the Ministry of Education** in life skills education programmes through the workplace, and to foster its collaboration with other ministries and local authorities on the matter. The involvement of partners and stakeholders should be as comprehensive as possible – from youth, trainers, partner organizations, educational institutions, government representatives, and employers – and should be done in each step of the programme process.

A great emphasis was placed on the involvement of families and communities. They need to be aware of the importance of life skills in order to support youth in their training and professional paths. The effective involvement of parents and the community at large has proven to be very beneficial for young people to succeed in the workplace and in their communities. The awareness of young trainees regarding the role of life skills in promoting personal and professional development is also strongly sustained throughout the programme.

With regards to the main mechanisms of choosing partners, assessing an organization's readiness to work on life skills and building the partner's capacity accordingly has been encouraged. In order to ensure quality in life skills education programmes through the workplace, or on the road to the workplace, it is essential to build the capacity of teachers, trainers and facilitators to successfully engage youth. The **use of experiential and interactive teaching methodologies** has also been strongly recommended, as well as the establishment of an effective and transparent quality-control mechanism to monitor and evaluate the programme.

Finally, research should be undertaken to shed light on the impact of life skills education programmes through the workplace on employability outcomes in the MENA region. This is a crucial area to investigate as MENA is lacking sufficient data on the subject. As it will be explored in Chapter 6, *A monitoring and evaluation framework for life skills education*, demonstrating a direct link between life skills education and employability outcomes (such as employment rates) is a challenging task, but one that can be addressed through a carefully designed M&E system and clear indicators that effectively measure life skills education outcomes.

CHAPTER 5

The need for a systems approach to life skills education

As discussed in the previous Chapter, mainstreaming quality learning through life skills cannot be solely achieved through the development of small-scale interventions. Rather, it requires a mind shift and an in-depth reform of curricula, teaching and learning practices. Life skills education needs to be embedded in national education and curriculum reforms, and furthered through national education policies, plans, strategies, and financing and capacity development frameworks. This is to ensure expanded coverage and scale, sustainability, overall quality, and relevance of service delivery. This Chapter explores the features of a systems approach in life skills education programming, providing an account of the exchanges of country experiences and plans related to the mainstreaming of life skills education in national education sector reforms.

The key preliminary findings of the AM show that there is a **lack of a systems approach** in the MENA region. There is little or no alignment between national education policy frameworks and other relevant partners, particularly the private sector, yet the Ministry of Education has a prominent role in defining policy frameworks, strategies and plans related to life skills education. All countries have integrated some form of life skills education into their national education reform processes, but this does not imply that a clear categorization is in place and it is not considered a compulsory requirement in the curriculum in most cases. Skills for employment are the least included life skills education in curriculum reform processes. Overall, there is a **lack of coordination in partnership frameworks** at the national level, and most life skills education programmes are implemented in isolation, with little or marginal impact. Opportunities and funding for life skills education are mostly available within the formal education system, both for basic and post basic/TVET/tertiary education. The funding of life skills education programmes outside the formal system mostly depends on multilateral funding agencies with little long-term sustainability.

A systems approach to life skills education recognizes that mainstreaming life skills into education requires looking at the education systems as a totality, in all its constituencies and components including:

- 1 National policy.** This includes the availability of national policy and regulatory frameworks relevant for life skills education, or where life skills are clearly referenced. It also includes the identification of critical skills and national priorities for life skills education along with the definition of national stakeholders for mainstreaming life skills education.
- 2 Coordination/partnership frameworks** for policy formulation and implementation. This clarifies areas of coordination and coordination bodies regulating life skills programming, as well as the complementary role of key stakeholders involved (e.g. national institutions, private sector, multilateral or bilateral agencies, etc.).
- 3 Plans and strategies** relevant to life skills education. This area defines the role of national plans and strategies for life skills education. Effective and efficient national strategies should ensure the implementation of life skills education to meet the needs of various age groups and the targeting of at risk groups.
- 4 Budgeting and financing:** At national level, this is key to determine equitable allocation of national budgets for life skills education. It also includes the availability of specific targeted budget allocation for vulnerable groups, and the capacity of tracking expenditures related to life skills education. At programme level, this area relates to the sources of funding of life skills education programs, the percentage of funding dedicated to life skills programming, and the average organizational cost of the programs per beneficiary.

- 5 Decentralization and school-based management.** This acknowledges the importance of ensuring autonomy and leadership at school level to ensure the transformation of teaching and learning practices. It also relates to the pressing need within the MENA national education systems in building schools' capacity to actively ensure and monitor quality learning at school level.
- 6 Human resources and capacity development.** This includes the types of human resources involved in life skills education at national and program levels, as well as the availability of national supervision systems, training and capacity development programs, training and professional development programs, and criteria for hiring human resources in life skills education. The allocation of budgets and human resources are also crucial components of strategic planning – life skills education programming is no exception. Country delegations from Lebanon, Yemen and Egypt stressed the importance of budget allocation, particularly to facilitate building institutional capacities to enhance life skills learning.
- 7 Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks.** M&E frameworks are fundamental components of life skills education programming and are crucial in verifying that a plan is investing in the right direction. In this respect, it was underlined that a systems approach to life skills education programming also warrants an equity focus, particularly because it can invest data, analysis and monitoring in both tracking and targeting. Jordan, Sudan, Syria and Libya were the country delegations that highlighted the importance of developing an M&E framework during group work. This is explored in next the Chapter.
- 8 Communication:** This area includes interventions related to community and parental mobilization supporting life skills education. It covers the enabling environment in which life skills education takes place at community level.

Great emphasis was placed on the **urgency for MENA to embed LSE into education reforms** in order to considerably effect a system change. Education reforms are not new in MENA countries. The main areas that have been looked into by education reforms are: a) access, in order to secure expansion, equality, inclusion; b) quality, through the improvement of curricula and pedagogy, as well as the integration of information and communication technology; and c) education system management, through decentralization, accountability, private-public partnerships and incentives for excellence. Furthermore, the building of a “knowledge society” became a top priority. At the beginning of this millennium, criticisms about education systems in the region became widespread, particularly related to curricula. These have gradually intensified, bringing into question whether education systems in the MENA region are imparting values needed for living together, being an active citizen and building sustainable societies. Among the core components discussed that would help mainstreaming life skills education into national education reform are:

Vision development and political commitment. A vision should be formulated that reflects the values and mission of life skills for societal development, as explored in Chapter 2. Country delegations highlighted that political commitment should involve all the relevant ministries and policy makers. It was also noted that for reform to take place and succeed, there should be a critical mass of social groups and members of social movements that support the need for change. Participation and dialogue were also identified as fundamental components for the reform of the education system. As underlined in the introductory chapters, the vision itself recalls the purpose, nature and role of education, and that it should be participatory. The degree of stakeholder involvement should be discussed and planned accordingly to make sure there is agreement on the analysis of the situation, the desired change, and how to effect this change.

Role of the Ministry of Education. A systems approach to life skills education programming should be anchored with Ministries of Education and in education systems. It should address the phases of any strategic planning process to maximize the impact of learning opportunities available to children and youth. In this respect, several country delegations identified in the group work (Yemen, Lebanon, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Djibouti) the need to undertake an education sector analysis as a relevant initiative to be implemented in their countries. They also expressed support for taking relevant steps in order to enable a national assessment and consequently identify bottlenecks and entry points for life skills education as a means to inform decision-making.

BOX 3 Life skills in Tunisia's education reform: A systems approach³¹

In Tunisia the current education reform provides an opportunity to adopt a systems approach to life skills education. It represents a **model of education reform in MENA** that integrates life skills education at a systemic level into curricular and extra-curricular interventions.

The Tunisian education system faces numerous key challenges, including:

- The rising phenomenon of student failure and dropout rates;
- Pupils' low learning achievements (particularly in languages and science) and low position in international evaluations;
- Limited integration of media and communication technologies into learning processes;
- A skills mismatch between what is required by the labour market and the skills provided by education and training systems;
- The deterioration of relations among diverse education stakeholders, officials and school personnel; and
- The emergence of new phenomena inside schools, these include risky behaviours such as drug abuse and violence.

In 2012, to address those challenges, the country triggered a reform of the education system. Its core principles were the promotion of values such as tolerance, solidarity, moderation and loyalty to Tunisia in the frame of national identity, cultural belonging and openness to human civilization, and active citizenship inspired by the ideals of humanity, freedom, democracy, social justice and human rights. Corresponding core life skills are to be integrated throughout the system and the reform process was identified.

A national consultation process was undertaken, ensuring the participation of all stakeholders, which subsequently led to the development of a road map for education reform in 2015; where life skills and citizenship education play a key role for improving quality education.

Along with national education reform, several life skills education initiatives were implemented at the school level. As an example, in 2013 the Ministry of Education developed an life skills education programme to fight the phenomenon of drug and alcohol abuse among pupils. The intervention was aimed at:

- Empowering pupils through life skills education and equipping them with skills such as self-awareness, communication, negotiation, empathy, cooperation and team work;
- Building their capacities to face social and psychological pressure and failure; and
- Helping them solve dilemmas with the support of their peers and adults.

Communication, awareness-raising and civil society involvement played a crucial role in the implementation of the programme activities, which entailed both curricular and extra-curricular interventions such as:

- The organization of meetings with parents in order to raise their awareness on substance dependence;
- The development of campaigns on the prevention of drug abuse with the support of local organizations; and
- Training sessions aimed at students, supervisors and professors, making use of interactive instructional methodologies and integrating life skills throughout training interventions.

The programme has proven to be very beneficial for both students and schools. **Students' participation** and desire to express their opinions in the class, participate in voluntary activities and work in teams have increased, while episodes of verbal and physical violence in school, and cases of substance abuse have declined significantly. Ultimately, the programme facilitated the acquisition of pedagogical strategies that avoid indoctrination and promote students' participation and dissent, and this in turn led to an increase in students' motivation to learn and improved relationships between the teachers and students.

The programme is going through a comprehensive evaluation to identify strengths and weaknesses. This will enable the model to transfer to further educational institutions, and then mainstream it in the framework of the ongoing reforms through an all-inclusive review of the curriculum. This will result in making **life skills education a cross-cutting subject in the context of a systemic approach**.

³¹ Based on the presentation at 2015 MEdNet Meeting of Tarek Loussaief, Director of Department of Educational Research at the Tunisia National Center for Pedagogical Innovation and Educational Research (CNIPRE).

Strategic Planning. Coherent policies, strategies and plans should be developed in order to define how countries intend to reach the visions they have formulated and what actions are to be implemented to realize it. Embedding life skills education in the national education systems, through the strengthening of policy frameworks, was identified as a crucial task that needs to be accomplished at national level by all country delegations. Capacity building interventions targeting both teachers and ministry officials were also mentioned as key priority actions by Lebanon, Yemen, Egypt, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Oman, Jordan, Sudan, Syria and Libya.

Role of partnership and coordination frameworks. Great emphasis was placed on the potential benefits of establishing partnership frameworks and coordination mechanisms between the Ministry of Education, government institutions (other ministries), international partners, NGOs, and the private sector for the successful implementation of quality learning through life skills education programming. Partnership and coordination frameworks, the efficient use of resources (human and financial), cross-fertilization, recognition, and certification of skills have also been recognized as key actions to foster coherent approaches.

CHAPTER 6

A monitoring and evaluation framework for life skills education

Monitoring and evaluation are critical to demonstrate the impact of life skills education on children's and youth's lives. By their very nature, life skills are difficult to measure, and indicators and assessment tools for life skills acquisition and development have proved particularly challenging. As already identified in the UNICEF Global Evaluation,³² the use of standards and benchmarks in LSE programmes is still limited and there are significant gaps in the M&E of outcomes, particularly in learning, attitudes and behaviours. Little assessment is done beyond traditional examinations in which knowledge acquisition tends to dominate – the MENA region is no exception. In this context, it is crucial to develop more effective assessment tools and strategies for measuring life skills education outcomes that can be integrated into education systems, schools, classrooms, non-formal interventions, and workplace channels. The following pages introduce methodologies for measuring life skills education and discuss a potential M&E framework for life skills programming in MENA. Criteria for good life skills programming in the region are presented along with student assessments and measurements of learning outcomes related to life skills education.

The preliminary findings of the analytical mapping show that the measurement of life skills education is very limited in MENA. Only a few countries have M&E frameworks for life skills, and even those which have an M&E framework use different and confusing terms; while only a third reported including baseline surveys. This raises issues related to the overall ability to assess the impact of life skills education interventions. There is an increasing demand to have technical guidance on what to measure and how to measure it, particularly in relation to learning outcomes. At the national level there is also a need to define what monitoring systems can do to support improving the quality and relevance of life skills education, particularly at the level of impact on learners.

CRITERIA FOR GOOD LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION PROGRAMMING. Looking into the criteria for the good programming of life skills education interventions is a fundamental step in building a strong M&E framework. The main components (and related criteria) identified for quality life skills education programmes were:

- 1 **Quality programme design** (that should include core competencies, address key stakeholders' needs, adapt curricula and pilot tests for relevancy, as well as use interactive, participatory and participant-centred methods for delivering content);
- 2 **A dynamic human resources system** (including clearly defined criteria for trainer selection, a robust training of trainers and mentoring system in place to support on-going trainer professional development);
- 3 **Consistent implementation** (including adequate time allocation for each lesson, a well-paced schedule, and a comfortable and safe learning environment for life skills learning); and
- 4 **A comprehensive on-going M&E process** is in place.

The latter includes formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is intended to improve programming and takes place when a programme is under development or being implemented. Information obtained through formative evaluation is used to make changes before the project ends in order to increase its effectiveness, for instance, during pilot interventions. At the other end, the summative evaluation is carried out once a project or programme has been completed. This typically includes an outcomes

³² UNICEF (2012), *Global Evaluation of Life Skills Education Programmes*.

evaluation (the evaluation of short and medium-term results) and impact assessment (the evaluation of results that are sustained, lasting and significant).

M&E tools and performance indicators were recognized as crucial for developing an effective M&E system. A combination of quantitative and qualitative tools to monitor programme implementation should be adopted. These indicators should encompass both programme outputs (the concrete, quantifiable activities or products that are carried out in a programme, such as the number of youth graduating from training) and programme outcomes (the results of the programming, for example, the number of youth having employment six months after graduation). The M&E system of a life skills education programme should gather data that enables not only the measurement of child and youth attendance and completion, but also changes in students' knowledge, behaviour, and attitudes. It should also measure children's and youth's satisfaction with the programme's content and delivery, as well as their improved school performance and/or their engagement in society; assess programme efficiency in terms of design, delivery, and costs; and determine whether the programme has met the needs identified by all stakeholders (including students, parents, trainers, employers, partners, and donors).

In the case of life skills education programmes through the workplace, it is recommended that employers' opinions should be examined to determine whether the programme achieved its intended objectives and/or had a significant return on investment, and the link between participants' life skills and employment outcomes should be assessed. In this respect, it was underlined that it may be difficult to establish a true cause-and-effect relationship between life skills training and improved employment outcomes due to the challenges in defining a control group.³³ Nevertheless, it was highly emphasized that new research efforts should be undertaken in MENA to analyse the impact of life skills programmes through the workplace on employability outcomes in the region. This is a key area to investigate as MENA is lacking significant data on the subject. Finally, it has drawn attention to the importance of further developing measurable quality standards in relation to the equity lens, linkages with national policy frameworks, certification and accreditation policies.

Recognition and certification of skills. Developing a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is crucial for the assessment, certification and recognition of skills. This has been a major international trend in reforming national education and training systems since the late 1990s. A qualifications framework, as the ILO pointed out, is an instrument for the development, classification and recognition of skills, knowledge and competencies along a continuum of agreed levels. It is a way of structuring existing and new qualifications, which are defined by learning outcomes, i.e. clear statements of what the learner must know or be able to do, whether learned in a classroom, on-the-job, or less formally. The qualifications framework indicates the comparability of different qualifications and how one can progress from one level to another, within and across occupations or industrial sectors – and even across vocational and academic fields if the NQF is designed to include both vocational and academic qualifications in a single framework.³⁴

Setting up an NQF is of paramount importance for life skills education. As NQF tools are used to reference education levels and create pathways, they can contribute to greatly clarifying the importance of life skills, certification; thus help in structuring dialogue with different stakeholders, including labour market representatives. The value of an NQF lies in its potential to contribute to policy goals, such as improving lifelong learning, enhancing employability and labour market mobility, and supporting skills recognition and utilization. The elements that make a NQF successful were discussed in depth. First, an NQF should be a single, nationally accepted framework with pathways that makes clear links between learning outcomes and occupational entry regulations. Learning outcomes should be defined externally to drive education reform. NQFs should be simple and user friendly, and entail simple institutional mechanisms.

Evidence has shown that NQFs are more successful if they are anchored to a long-term incremental policy reform process and support education and training institutions, particularly through the development of learning materials and professional development. Developing genuine support and trust for the NQF among

³³ A second group of individuals who do not receive training but have their outcomes measured for comparison purposes.

³⁴ Tuck, R. (2007), *An Introductory Guide to National Qualifications Frameworks: Conceptual and Practical Issues for Policy Makers*, International Labour Organization.

stakeholders was strongly emphasized. Employers and workers' organizations, such as trade unions, and social partners, should have a key role to play in the overall process – this might be a considerable challenge in a region like MENA, where social dialogue is very limited. The strong regulation of the labour market was highlighted as an element contributing to the success of an NQF. Finally, a holistic approach to the development of NQFs, that includes policy coherence across different ministries, enabling funding regimes, and as part of a wider strategy, can play a vital role in supporting overall reforms.

While there are a number of potential benefits in setting up NQFs, the development of an NQF can be technically, institutionally and financially demanding, in particular for developing countries. The development of NQFs in such countries remains a controversial issue and is widely debated. Further critiques point out that NQFs do not take into account the national complexities of certificates and occupations; their impact on education and training systems' performance and labour markets is long-term; definitions and meanings of levels are also contested, as well as the allocation of qualifications to levels. Furthermore, over-prescriptive and narrow approaches to qualifications results in assessments that do not command confidence; limited employer involvement and qualifications do not translate into increased earnings; lifelong learning is not always a reality as uncertainties in job markets leads to situations of over-qualification and periods of de-skilling. Ultimately, NQFs fail to deliver on equity – what matters is not the certificate but where it was obtained; and, for career development in bureaucratic environments, informal learning may play a bigger role than certified competencies.

Measuring life skills

Concerning student assessments, the MENA region lacks mechanisms for measuring learning outcomes through life skills, both cognitive and non-cognitive.³⁵ This knowledge gap ultimately hinders the capacity to assess the impact of strategies to improve the quality of learning at the individual level. This highlights the need to introduce the rigorous measurement of learning outcomes in relation to life skills.

Two relevant experiences of measuring life skills were discussed. The first one, a skills-measurement programme by the World Bank, **Skills Towards Employment and Productivity (STEP)**, linked the overall programme evaluation to students' learning assessments.

Overall, the STEP skills measurement programme, implemented in 17 developing countries, aimed at supporting policy makers, analysts and researchers to design systems that make use of life skills, particularly skills that enhance productivity and growth. To accomplish that, STEP developed two surveys to:

- Understand job skill requirements;
- Backward linkages between skill acquisition and educational achievement including measurement of personal and social backgrounds; and
- Forward connections between skill acquisition and living standards.³⁶

A household-based survey (representative of urban areas) targets individuals aged 15 to 64 (employed, unemployed and inactive) and includes a direct assessment of reading literacy (based on the same scale as the OECD's PIAAC assessment); self-reported measurement of literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills; standardized measurement of personality, behaviour and preferences; and the measurement of technical skills used at work and in daily life. An employer survey gathers information on job skill requirements using questions parallel to those in the household survey to facilitate the analysis of skill gaps and mismatches, as well as information on hiring and compensation, training, and enterprise productivity.

³⁵ El El-Amine, A. (2014). *Regional Mapping Report on Assessment in the Arab States. Survey of Student Assessment Systems in the Arab States*. UNESCO and ALECSO.

³⁶ World Bank (2014). *Step Skills Measurement Snapshot*.

TABLE 6 Skills domains measured in STEP³⁷

TYPES OF SKILLS	DOMAIN	HOUSEHOLD SURVEY	EMPLOYER SURVEY
Cognitive skills	Reading proficiency (direct measurement)	•	
	Reading (self-reported)	•	•
	Writing (self-reported)	•	•
	Numeracy (self-reported)	•	•
Socio-emotional skills (personality, behaviour, preferences)	Big Five Inventory: Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Openness to experience, Neuroticism, Agreeableness	•	•
	Grit scale	•	
	Hostile bias	•	
	Decision making	•	
	Preferences (risk aversion, time preference)	•	
	Interpersonal skills	•	
Job-relevant skills	Use of technology	•	•
	Use/repair machinery	•	•
	Autonomy and repetitiveness	•	•
	Cognitive skills used at work (problem solving)	•	•
	Time management	•	•
	Language	•	•
	Physical tasks	•	•

The skills that are measured include:

- **Cognitive skills** (through direct and indirect measures) that are understood as foundational skills such as reading, writing, numeracy and the ability to solve abstract problems;
- **Socio-emotional skills** that, for the first time in a large-scale survey, were assessed in order to shed light on their role in fostering employment and productivity – they relate to traits covering the social, emotional, personality, behavioural and attitudinal domains such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, hostile attribution bias, and decision-making; and
- **Job-relevant and task-related skills**, these are built on a combination of cognitive and socio-emotional skills.

The main findings of the STEP programme and implemented surveys pointed to the importance of a multiplicity of skills for labour market success and reminded participants that strong foundations for job-relevant skills acquisition are built early in life and shaped by family, socio-economic conditions and schools. Socio-emotional skills in particular, facilitate the school-to-work transition, and cognitive, socio-emotional and job-relevant skills correlate with higher wages above and beyond a worker's educational attainment. Educational systems, training and apprenticeship programmes should all do more to strengthen life skills. Lastly, workers' skills are yet to be fully utilized.

As underlined by one of the main findings of the STEP skills measurement programme, adults who participated in early childhood education have higher reading literacy proficiency and are more likely to have started primary education at the right age than those who did not. In MENA countries, enrolment in

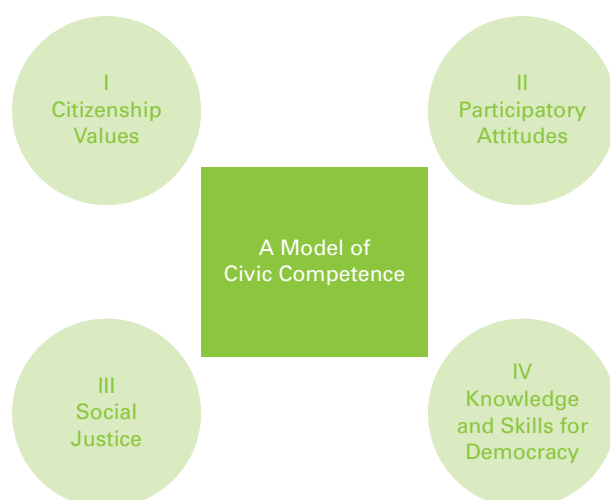
³⁷ Adapted from Amira Kazem's presentation at 2015 MEdNet Meeting: "World Bank Skills Towards Employment and Productivity (STEP): Linking Monitoring of Educational Achievements with Systems Evaluation".

pre-primary education is a major concern, with 58 per cent of pre-primary school age children out of school, while household wealth and geographical area are the main factors in school exclusion.³⁸ Participants discussed the challenge and reached a broad consensus on the importance of increasing children's access to early childhood education in the region, stressing the urgency of addressing life skills at earlier stages, to provide children with the opportunity for early cognitive, physical, and socio-emotional development and school readiness.

Further inputs on measuring the impact of life skills and citizenship education were provided by the **International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)** developed in 2009 by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and implemented in 38 countries throughout Europe, Latin America and Asia. The study was aimed at analysing the ways in which countries prepare their young people to undertake roles as citizens at local, national and global levels. It explores 13-year-old students' knowledge and understanding of concepts and issues related to civics and citizenship, as well as their values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours.

The ICCS collects and analyses a rich array of contextual data from policy makers, teachers, school principals, and students about the organization and content of civic and citizenship education in the curriculum, teacher qualifications and experiences, the school environment and climate, and home and community support. The study provided interesting inputs on how civic competence has been measured in relation to students' learning outcomes. Civic competence is understood in the study as a model entailing the following concepts: **citizenship values** (values of civic duty drawing on civic republican traditions were the ones taken into consideration), **participatory and social justice attitudes** (civic engagement and attitudes towards migrants, gender equality and minorities were among the activities and beliefs measured) and **knowledge and skills for democracy** (the study looked in particular at knowledge and skills for active citizenship).

FIGURE 2 The 2009 ICCS Study Model of Civic Competence³⁹



The contribution highlighted the challenge inherent to the measurement of items that are difficult to observe, such as values for active citizenship. As underlined, in such cases there are two options available:

- 1 To select a single indicator, a so-called proxy indicator (i.e. an indirect measure that approximates a phenomenon in the absence of a direct measure) representing the construct – an option that provides only a rough indication of what is to be measured;

³⁸ United Nations Children's Fund, Middle East and North Africa Out-of-School Children Initiative: Regional report on out-of-school children', UNICEF, Amman, 2014.

³⁹ Adapted from Bryony Hoskins's presentation at 2015 MEdNet Meeting: "Measuring Civic Competences".

2 as undertaken in the study, to combine a number of questions, each measuring part of the construct – a scale. The scale is then tested for reliability and for validity – i.e. that it is measuring the construct that needs to be measured.

It was highly emphasized the importance of building different and contextualized scales for MENA, capable of capturing the right questions and the relevant elements that should be investigated to measure citizenship education in the region. In this regard, a relevant initiative was presented: the **European Lifelong Learning Index (ELLI)**, a composite indicator that is built on a revised version of Delors’ four Dimensions of Learning. The ELLI is an annually updated index that measures lifelong learning at national and sub-national levels in Europe. The revisions are based on changes that reflect the European context and European policy environment and have been adapted according to existing data. It describes different learning Dimensions such as the formal education system (Learning to Know), vocational learning (Learning to Do), learning as personal growth (Learning to Be), and learning for social cohesion (Learning to Live Together). With regard to the Learning to Live Together Dimension (Table 7) indicators include: participation in active citizenship, tolerance and openness, trust in people and inclusion in informal social networks.

FIGURE 3 The European Lifelong Learning Index (ELLI) Learning Framework⁴⁰

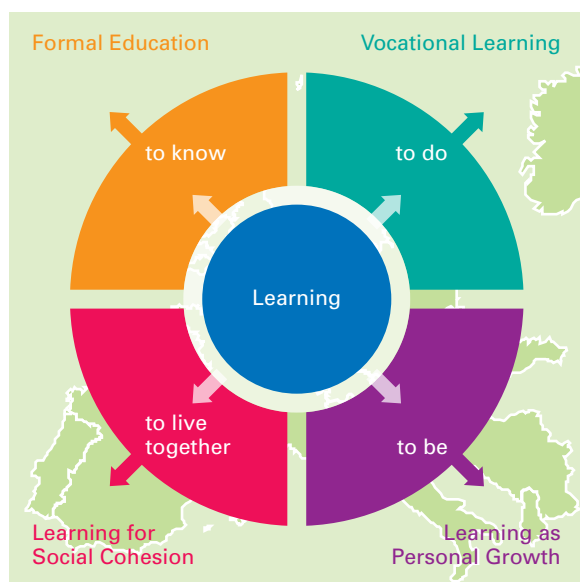


TABLE 7 Learning to Live Together Indicators⁴¹

MEASURES	INDICATORS
Involvement in work for voluntary or charitable organizations	Participation in active citizenship
Membership in any political party	
Working in a political party or action group	
Opinion that the country’s cultural life is either enriched or undermined by immigrants	Tolerance, trust and openness
Opinion that gay and lesbians should be free to live their own lives as they wish	
Trust in other people	
Meeting with friends, relatives or colleagues	Inclusion in social networks
Anyone to discuss personal matters with	

⁴⁰ From Bryony Hoskins’s presentation at 2015 MEdNet Meeting: “Measuring Civic Competences”.

⁴¹ From Bryony Hoskins’s presentation at 2015 MEdNet Meeting: “Measuring Civic Competences”.

CHAPTER 7

The way forward for life skills education in MENA

The MEdNet Meeting provided the opportunity to identify key actions towards integrating life skills for quality learning into educational programmes. Two follow-up actions at country level were proposed and discussed by participants and country delegations:

- 1 Engagement in national consultation processes with a variety of partners on quality learning through life skills in relation to vision, definitions, national policies, technical issues on measurement, and coordination mechanisms; and
- 2 Identification of concrete steps to be undertaken in 2016 at the country level.

To support follow-up activities at country level, the further exchange and sharing of relevant information will be facilitated through a webpage on LSE that will work as an exchange platform, along with a section on information alerts regarding national, regional and global life skills initiatives, best practices, and studies.

National consultation processes

Most countries expressed their **intention to engage in consultation processes at the national level**. To this end, each country formulated an approach that was contextual to its own situation. For instance, in the case of states currently involved in education reform processes, such as **Tunisia and the State of Palestine**, it was recommended that life skills education be integrated as part of the on-going consultations at national level, including meetings with stakeholders, as relevant. **Sudan** proposed organizing a consultative meeting among relevant stakeholders currently working on life skills education in order to formulate a strategic plan with a view to ensuring the integration of life skills as part of the education sector plan for 2017-2021, which is currently under formulation.

In the case of Iran, Djibouti, Morocco, Algeria, and Lebanon the delegations expressed strong support for taking steps to enable a national consultation process. **Iran** proposed establishing a national coordination mechanism among relevant national institutions to effectively operationalize the integration of life skills education in the national education system, which was considered a priority by members of the delegation. **Algeria** proposed to activate a national consultation process with the objective of formulating a concerted action plan that could be sent to relevant decision-makers at national level. **Morocco** and **Djibouti** recommended a multisectoral consultation process with the objective of elaborating an action plan for the integration of life skills in education systems. The **Iraq-KRI** delegation suggested the organization of a thematic workshop on LSE with the purpose of establishing a Life Skills and Citizenship Education Committee. **Lebanon** proposed the establishment of a National Consultation Committee that would operationalize a national consultation initiative including all duty-bearers (donors, ministries, the private sector, national NGOs etc.).

Egypt expressed its interest in undertaking a mapping of life skills according to educational levels in order to identify current initiatives and their impact on quality education within governorates. The delegation suggested organizing a workshop where the results of the mapping will be presented, which will provide the basis for a national consultation process.

Oman presented a multi-step process that includes the following: 1) Identification of partners that need to be involved; 2) Contextualization of the MEdNet Meeting's vision for Quality Learning through Life Skills to the local context in Oman; 3) Involvement of youth in the consultative meeting and surveys; 4) Education strategy 2040 (sic) in addition to the Education law in Oman; 5) Establishing indicators for the measurement of life skills; and 6) UNICEF country office to lead the consultative process in December 2015.

All country delegations present in the Way Forward session, except for Jordan and Syria, included representatives from relevant national institutions and ministries (Ministry of Education; Ministry of Youth and Sports). Among the countries whose national delegations did not provide any feedback regarding the establishment of a national consultation process were Libya and Yemen, in light of the current conflicts.

National steps for 2016

With regard to the steps to be undertaken at the national level to integrate life skills into education programmes during 2016, the following concrete actions were provided:

Country delegation	Action points
ALGERIA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Establishment of an inter-sectoral action plan that includes the following: Ministry of Education; Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education – Ministère de la Formation et de l'Enseignement Professionnels; Ministry of Youth and Sports; Ministry of National Solidarity/Social Cohesion – Ministère de la Solidarité, and targeting in-school and out-of-school children and adolescents (below 16 years old). 2 Conducting an in-depth diagnostic study regarding life skills within relevant sectors. 3 Development of a global and shared vision on life skills that will guide the development of a multi-sectoral action plan for 2016-2017.
DJIBOUTI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Reinforcement of existing initiatives regarding life skills education, including curriculum and guides. 2 Review of national curriculum on life skills and civic education in relation to the curriculum on basic skills (compétences de base). 3 Development of plans for teachers' professional development in life skills education.
EGYPT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Conducting a mapping study of life skills in national curricula at different educational levels to identify how life skills could be further embedded and mainstreamed in the curriculum. 2 Piloting of life skills education initiatives including providing opportunities for professional development for teachers, principals and supervisors on the implementation and activation of life skills. 3 Conducting the M&E of pilot experiences ensuring the measurement of the impact for further scaling up.
JORDAN	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Establishment of a multi-stakeholder partnership to ensure a unified view on life skills and citizenship education. 2 Engagement with the MoE to ensure the integration of life skills and citizenship education throughout the span of a child's time in school.
IRAN	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Identification of entry points for life skills within national curriculum frameworks. 2 Capacity development of education actors and implementing partners to mainstream life skills education at the national level.
IRAQ-KRI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Undertake a review of current education programmes to ensure the detailed identification of relevant life skills in the context of Iraq-KRI.
LEBANON	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Strengthen the coordination of life skills education, including linkages between formal and non-formal sectors through the establishment of a National Consultation Committee on Life Skills. 2 Build on current experiences of life skills implemented throughout the country, showcasing best practices in terms of partnerships between public, private and NGOs sectors.

LIBYA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 MoE review of the current curriculum to mainstream life skills at the national level. 2 Training of trainers to develop a cadre of qualified teachers who can integrate life skills within teaching and learning practices.
MOROCCO	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Mobilization and sensitization of civil society organizations and youth in relation to life skills education. 2 Ensure stronger coordination and consultation with the National Council for Human Rights and UNESCO as well as strategic partnerships with international actors (USAID, GIZ, EU, CoE). 3 Formulate a national LSE plan to be presented to the Higher Council for Education.
STATE OF PALESTINE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Development of teaching manuals including methodologies and strategies to teach life skills along with professional development for teachers (in Gaza). 2 MoEHE to finalize a manual on life skills (Grade 1) for all subjects and pilot it in eight schools, along with the training of two hundred teachers (in the West Bank).
SUDAN	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Ensuring a national consultation and curriculum review to further integrate life skills education. 2 Formulation of a strategic plan with a view to ensuring the integration of life skills as part of the education sector plan for 2017-2021.
SYRIA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Expanding cooperation with the MoE in terms of training teachers on life skills, including piloting in selected schools. 2 Continuous cooperation with partners (government and non-government) to advocate for life skills education.
OMAN	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Development of national standards for life skills, adapted to the context of Oman. 2 Application of these national standards and developing the scope and sequence for the implementation of national curricula.
TUNISIA	<p>Review of school schedules to include compulsory weekly lessons on life skills and piloting in 36 education institutions, with a further increase in 2016. In order to operationalize this initiative the following was proposed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Morning hours: cross-cutting integration of life skills across the curriculum. 2 Afternoon hours: integration of life skills within extra-curricular activities such as Citizenship Education Clubs, Environment Clubs, Road Safety Education/Traffic (sic) Clubs, Hygiene Promotion Clubs, etc.
YEMEN	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Strengthening Child Friendly schools in Yemen, emphasizing the life skills component in school development plans. 2 Emphasis on child participation and democratic participation in schools through school councils.

Follow-up at regional level

UNICEF and partners will work together to ensure the development of the AM and CPF for life skills education.

The AM will be based on an extensive desk-review of documents and literature, two mapping surveys (one quantitative and one qualitative), and an in-depth review of case studies in four selected countries (Palestine, Jordan, Egypt and Morocco). The AM will ensure:

- Understanding the process of developing the current vision and working definitions on life skills education, how it is shared by diverse stakeholders and challenges encountered;

- Analysing the current system's approach to life skills in terms of the nature, challenges and recommendations for further improvement in relation to the various aspects of national policy frameworks, strategies and plans: coordination/partnership frameworks in the country; budgeting and financing; human resources and capacity development; and M&E frameworks;
- Analysing the current multiple pathways approach to life skills in terms of how formal and informal education, workspace channels and diverse modalities of delivery are implemented/adopted; and
- Documenting best practices on life skills education at the national and programme levels, including successful and unsuccessful approaches in life skills education.

The AM process will further inform the development of the CPF, which will be based on an extensive consultation process with countries and partners. In particular the CPF will include:

- Development of a shared vision for life skills education that is relevant for the MENA context that includes a clear definition and quality standards for life skills education.
- Identification of clear programmatic guidelines for life skills programming in MENA countries, in terms of a 'systems approach' and a 'multiple pathways approach' to life skills.
- Introduction of a life skills M&E framework in MENA that includes the measurement of learning outcomes.

To support this process and ensure the mainstreaming of life skills and citizenship education in national education systems, the follow-up activities at regional level will be implemented:

- 1 Continue the **Analytical Mapping** through the following steps:
 - Finalizing the First Mapping Survey (Quantitative) to provide an early quantitative indication of the status quo of life skills education in the countries involved (15 MENA countries and the Gulf). This will also provide a mechanism through which relevant documentation about life skills education in the countries can be collected.
 - Undertaking the Second Mapping Survey (Qualitative) to complement the findings of the First Mapping Survey and provide a more in-depth understanding in relation to the quality and relevance of life skills education in MENA.
 - Conducting in-depth country reviews through country visits in Palestine, Jordan, Egypt and Morocco in order to collect qualitative information on different approaches to life skills education and programmes at the country level.
 - Providing technical support to other countries interested in undertaking in-depth reviews at the country level.
- 2 Engage countries and partners (ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNRWA and the World Bank) in the development of the **Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (CPF)** for life skills education, through a regional consultation event bringing together experts, partners and key countries actively engaged in life skills education.
- 3 Provide **technical support and programmatic guidance** to countries towards mainstreaming life skills and citizenship education, particularly in relation to national consultation processes and other national initiatives on life skills.
- 4 Develop a **webpage** on life skills as an exchange platform, including alerts regarding national, regional and global life skills initiatives, best practices, and studies.
- 5 Organize a **high-level regional launch of the final Conceptual and Programmatic Framework**, with the endorsement of the Ministries of Education in MENA in 2017, aimed at ensuring political support for life skills as the basis for education reforms in MENA.

APPENDICES

I JORDAN TIMES ARTICLE

Education must become our highest priority – Prince Hassan

By Jordan Times - November 30, 2015

AMMAN – HRH Prince Hassan on Monday said that education is the only tool to understand and consequently tackle human, economic, geographical and environmental concerns.

Delivering a speech at a UNICEF-organised conference titled “Quality Learning Through Life Skills”, the prince explained that humanitarianism is a basic orientation towards the interests and welfare of people.

“It encompasses respect for human life, a responsibility toward future generations and the human environment,” he said.

“If we are going to bridge the gap between education and the labour market, we need to look at human beings as capabilities and not merely as numbers and digits,” the prince added.

Prince Hassan, who is president of the Arab Thought Forum, also noted that education systems that place human dignity at their core enhance citizenship merits.

“From a policy level, life skills education means preparing a citizenry capable of facing the challenges of life as a society comprised of diverse individuals,” he noted.

“We need to formulate a value-based education for citizenship that can be a catalyst for social positive transformation,” the prince said in his speech, a copy of which was sent to The Jordan Times.

He explained that values of tolerance and coexistence are built primarily through dialogue. “Dialogue can build bridges of cooperation between different cultures and faiths by unmasking stereotypes and clarifying misconceptions.”

“Education must become our highest priority. More than classrooms, textbooks and qualified teachers, it means access to the latest available technology and appreciation of its human and social impact.”

<http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/education-must-become-our-highest-priority-%E2%80%94-prince-hassan>

II AGENDA

Day 1: Monday, 30 November

TIME	SESSION	CHAIR/FACILITATOR
08.00 – 08.30	Registration	
08.30 – 09.30	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening statement by UNICEF 10 min Statements by three partners: UNESCO, World Bank, ILO 30 min Introduction of participants 15 min Overview of workshop objectives and agenda 5 min 	Dina Craissati (UNICEF MENARO)
09.30 – 10.45	SESSION 1 SETTING THE STAGE: THE NEED FOR QUALITY LEARNING THROUGH LIFE SKILLS <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight the relevance of life skills as a critical component of quality education to the production of a knowledge society, rising employment and social cohesion in MENA. Discuss the environmental and educational challenges and opportunities to implementing life skills education in MENA. <p>• Key note: Knowledge society in MENA – HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan 45 min The key note sets the tone on the needed renewed focus on a knowledge society in the present particular context of MENA, and how quality learning through life skills can and should provide the basis for it. Discussion 30 min</p>	Peter Salama (UNICEF MENARO Regional Director)
10.45 – 11.15	Group photo and coffee break	
11.15 – 13.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The socio-political and economic context of learning in MENA – Maha Yahya (Carnegie Middle East Center) 20 min The presentation provides an overview of the broader sociopolitical and economic context in which learning takes place in MENA, looking at issues of radicalization, social fracture and economic crises as well as opportunities for change. Discussion 30 min The status of learning in MENA – Thuqan Obeidat (independent expert) 20 min The presentation provides an overview of learning in MENA focusing on the challenges for life skills education related to outdated and rigid curricula which are not conducive to quality learning. Discussion 30 min Briefing on security and logistics – Ayman Almadi and Daria Ng (UNICEF MENARO) 5 min 	Khalil Mahshi (independent expert)
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch	
14.00 – 15.30	SESSION 2 THE DIMENSIONS OF LIFE SKILLS <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce the conceptualization of life skills inspired by the UNESCO Delors Report and its four Dimensions of Learning ('Learning to Know', 'Learning to Be', 'Learning to Do', and 'Learning to Live Together'). Define the four Dimensions of Learning and related core skills that contribute to improved education outcomes, improved employability and improved civic engagement. 	Margaret Sinclair (PEIC Education Above All Foundation)
14.00 – 15.30 (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing life skills as the basis for quality learning: The Delors four Dimensions of Learning – Sobhi Tawil (UNESCO HQ) 20 min The presentation provides an overview of the four Dimensions of Learning as part of a holistic vision of quality education, including both an instrumentalist and a humanistic approach to life skills. Discussion 20 min The cognitive and individual Dimensions of Learning – David Clarke (independent expert) 20 min The presentation introduces the core skills related to the cognitive and individual Dimensions of Learning as related to the Delors Dimensions 'Learning to Know' and 'Learning to Be'. Interactive discussion 30 min 	Margaret Sinclair (PEIC Education Above All Foundation)
15.30 – 15.45	Coffee break	

Day 1: Monday, 30 November (continued)

TIME	SESSION	CHAIR/FACILITATOR
15.45 – 17.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The instrumental Dimension of Learning – Muriel Dunbar (Cambridge Education) 20 min The presentation focusses on employability skills as a key component of learning through life skills (the Delors Dimension 'Learning to Do'). This is an aspect that is poorly explored and acted upon in MENA, specifically as part of formal education systems. Interactive discussion 30 min The social Dimension of Learning: Citizenship education at the core – Abdel Basset Ben Hassen (Arab Institute for Human Rights) 20 min The presentation focusses on the Delors social Dimension of Learning ('Learning to Live Together') introducing citizenship education and related values as a core component of quality learning for the MENA region. Interactive discussion 30 min 	Amira Kazem (World Bank)
17.30 – 18.00	Organizers meet with presenters and facilitators of next day	Dina Craissati (UNICEF MENARO)
19.00 – 21.00	DINNER FOR PARTICIPANTS Buses depart from hotel at 18.00	

Day 2: Tuesday, 1 December

TIME	SESSION	CHAIR/FACILITATOR
09.00 – 10.00	<p>SESSION 3 TOWARDS A WORKING DEFINITION OF LIFE SKILLS IN MENA</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce the proposed MENA Life Skills Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (CPF). Present and discuss the results of the MENA mapping survey related to life skills Dimensions and types. Consult around a clear, holistic and contextualized MENA vision and working definition of life skills that is shared by diverse stakeholders and practitioners in the region. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback to the interactive discussion on the Dimensions of (UNESCO HQ) Learning – David Clarke, Muriel Dunbar and Abdel Basset Ben Hassen 30 min Introducing the Life Skills Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (CPF) – Dina Craissati (UNICEF MENARO) 15 min The presentation introduces the main components of the MENA Life Skills Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (CPF) in line with the provided Working Document. MENA mapping results related to the four Dimensions of Learning – David Clarke (independent expert) 15 min The presentation outlines the results of the mapping survey related to life skills Dimensions and types. 	Sobhi Tawil (UNESCO HQ)
10.00 – 11.00	<p>GROUP WORK ON THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be four groups. Each group will be assigned a facilitator, a rapporteur, and a plenary presenter. Questions will be provided to guide the discussions. The group with the best presentation will be awarded a present. The plenary will vote on the best presentation. 	
11.00 – 11.15	Coffee break	
11.15 – 12.15	PRESENTATION OF GROUP WORK RESULTS AND FACILITATION TOWARDS A WORKING DEFINITION OF LIFE SKILLS IN MENA	Sobhi Tawil (UNESCO HQ)
12.15 – 13.15	Lunch	

Day 2: Tuesday, 1 December (continued)

TIME	SESSION	CHAIR/FACILITATOR
13.15 – 14.45	<p>SESSION 4 A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO LIFE SKILLS</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present and discuss the results of the MENA mapping survey related to the systems approach to life skills programming. • Introduce the systems approach to life skills and examine its diverse facets in the context of MENA. • Exchange and consult on country experiences and plans related to the mainstreaming of life skills in national education sector reforms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MENA mapping results related to a systems approach to life skills – Bassem Nasir (International Youth Foundation) 15 min The presentation outlines the results of the mapping survey related to the systems approach to life skills programming. • What is a systems approach to life skills – Khalil Mahshi (independent expert) 20 min The presentation introduces the systems approach to life skills programming (as opposed to a project-based approach), building on global and regional practices, and including needed policy and coordination frameworks, plans and strategies, budgeting and financing, and capacity development. Discussion 20 min • Tunisia’s education reform as an opportunity to adopt a systems approach to life skills – Tarek Loussaief (Tunisia National Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Educational Research (CNIPRE)) 15 min The presentation reports on the Tunisian reform process and proposes a model of education reform in MENA that integrates life skills at a systemic level (into curricular and extra-curricular interventions). Discussion 20 min 	Nada Mneymneh (independent expert)
14.45 – 15.45	<p>GROUP WORK ON A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO LIFE SKILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be four groups. • Each group will be assigned a facilitator, a rapporteur, and a plenary presenter. • Questions will be provided to guide the discussions. • The group with the best presentation will be awarded a present. The plenary will vote on the best presentation. 	
15.45 – 16.00	Coffee break	
16.00 – 17.00	PRESENTATION OF GROUP WORK RESULTS AND FACILITATION TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO LIFE SKILLS IN MENA	Nada Mneymneh (independent expert)
17.00 – 17.30	Organizers meet with presenters and facilitators of next day	Dina Craissati (UNICEF MENARO)

Day 3: Wednesday, 2 December

TIME	SESSION	CHAIR/FACILITATOR
09.00 – 09.50	<p>SESSION 5 A MULTIPLE PATHWAYS APPROACH TO LIFE SKILLS</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present and discuss the results of the MENA mapping survey related to the multiple pathways approach to life skills programming. • Understand the features of a multiple pathways approach to life skills programming. • Exchange on experiences and lessons learned related to a multiple pathways approach to life skills programming. 	Abdel Basset Ben Hassen (Arab Institute for Human Rights)
09.00 – 09.50 (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MENA mapping results related to a multiple pathways approach to life skills – Osama Mimi (Bir Zeit University) 15 min The presentation outlines the results of the mapping survey related to the multiple pathways approach to life skills programming. • What is a multiple pathways approach to life skills – Khalil Mahshi (independent expert) 15 min The presentation outlines a multiple pathways approach to life skills that includes formal and non-formal education, as well as workplace channels. It links such multiple pathways to the systems approach to life skills programming. Discussion 20 min 	Abdel Basset Ben Hassen (Arab Institute for Human Rights)

Day 3: Wednesday, 2 December (continued)

TIME	SESSION	CHAIR/FACILITATOR
09.50 – 11.30	<p>PANEL ONE: Life skills through formal education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum reforms and life skills – Margaret Sinclair (PEIC Education Above All Foundation) 20 min UNRWA education reform approach to life skills – Caroline Pontefract (UNRWA HQ) 20 min Student ‘Personal Project’ in primary school in Morocco – Abdelmoujib M’Rabet (Morocco MoE) 15 min Citizenship Clubs in Tunisia – Maya Ben Khaled (Arab Institute for Human Rights) 15 min <p>The panel introduces different experiences to the mainstreaming of life skills in formal education, looking at different modalities of delivery (e.g. curricular and extra-curricular, standalone and integrated, etc.). The first presentation on curriculum reforms and life skills highlights the relevance of life skills in school curricula for quality learning and as a means to promote resilience and social cohesion. The presentation on the UNRWA education reform accounts for a holistic approach in integrating life skills into formal education through key initiatives such as the Human Rights Conflict Resolution and Tolerance (HRCRT) Program, UNRWA’s Curriculum Framework and the TVET Reform. Two country experiences (Morocco and Tunisia) provide models for integrating both Dimensions of life skills (the instrumental and humanistic) into formal education (the Morocco case on employability skills in basic education and the Tunisia case on human rights and citizenship education).</p> <p>Discussion 30 min</p>	Laila Iskandar (former Egypt Minister of State for Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements)
11.30 – 11.45	Coffee break	
11.45 – 13.30	<p>PANEL TWO: Life skills through non-formal education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life skills for the marginalized: The ‘Zabbaleen’ Project in Cairo – Laila Iskandar (former Egypt Minister of State for Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements) 20 min Life skills for girls’ empowerment: The ‘Ishraq’ Project in Egypt – Nadia Zibani (Population Council) 20 min Life skills for youth in emergency settings: The NRC Youth Education Pack (YEP) – Paul Fean (Norwegian Refugee Council) 20 min <p>The panel introduces the role of non-formal education in reaching the most marginalised through life skills programming. The “Zabbaleen” Project in Cairo provides an example of non-formal systems being supported and improved through partnerships and linkages with the formal sector. The Ishraq Project in Egypt presents an example of girl’s education combining traditional program elements like literacy with more innovative life skills programming. The NRC Youth Education Pack provides an example on how to reach conflict affected youth including refugees with quality literacy/numeracy and life skills training.</p> <p>Discussion 45 min</p>	Mounir Abou Assali (independent expert)
13.30 – 14.30	Lunch	
14.30 – 16.00	<p>PANEL THREE: Life skills through the workplace or on the road to the workplace (a multi-stakeholder engagement on life skills in the hospitality sector)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridging the gap between TVET and private sector demand through life skills – Rana Al Turk (International Youth Foundation) 20 min Reforming TVET curricula to meet labour market demands – Michael Nazzal (Jordan Hotel Association and Federation of Tourism Associations) 15 min A private sector perspective on skills for employability – Lara Asad (Sheraton Amman) 15 min A perspective of a young graduate – Omar Mohammad Mufleh N’eimat (Intercontinental Aqaba) 10 min <p>The panel shows the importance of establishing multistakeholders frameworks on life skills programming to increase the relevance and impact of TVET. It presents a practical example of reforming the curriculum of national education institutions through linkages with the private sector demands as a means to foster employability skills.</p> <p>Discussion 30 min</p>	Patrick Daru (ILO Regional Office for Arab States)
16.00 – 16.15	Coffee break	

Day 3: Wednesday, 2 December (continued)

TIME	SESSION	CHAIR/FACILITATOR
16.15 – 17:15	GROUP WORK ON A MULTIPLE PATHWAYS APPROACH TO LIFE SKILLS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be four groups. • Each group will be assigned a facilitator, a rapporteur, and a plenary presenter. • Questions will be provided to guide the discussions. • The group with the best presentation will be awarded a present. The plenary will vote on the best presentation. 	
17.15 – 17.45	Organizers meet with presenters and facilitators of next day	Dina Craissati (UNICEF MENARO)

Day 4: Thursday, 3 December

TIME	SESSION	CHAIR/FACILITATOR
09.00 – 10.00	PRESENTATION OF GROUP WORK RESULTS AND FACILITATION TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF A MULTIPLE PATHWAYS APPROACH TO LIFE SKILLS	Gemma Wilson-Clark (UNICEF HQ)
10.00 – 11.00	SESSION 6 A MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR LIFE SKILLS Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present the results of the MENA mapping survey related to monitoring and evaluation frameworks for life skills. • Introduce methodologies for measuring life skills education and consult around a potential M&E framework for life skills programming in MENA. • Define criteria for good life skills programming in MENA. • Discuss student assessments and measurement of learning outcomes as related to life skills. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations on MENA mapping results related to monitoring and evaluation frameworks for life skills – Alberto Biancoli (UNICEF MENARO) 10 min The presentation provides the results of the mapping survey related to life skills monitoring and evaluation frameworks. • Monitoring and evaluating a life skills program: Criteria for good programming – Karen Phillips (International Youth Foundation) 15 min The presentation provides an overview of quality life skills program design based on key standards for program monitoring and evaluation. It introduces M&E tools and performance indicators developed as a result of IYF's extensive research and experience on life skills implementation. It also underlines the need for establishing measurable quality standards in relation to an equity lens, linkages with national policy frameworks, and certification and accreditation policies. • Skills testing and certification: Assessing skills for increased employability – Patrick Daru (ILO Regional Office for Arab States) 15 min The presentation provides an overview of ILO's approach towards the development of national testing and certification systems that assess occupational competencies and skills, based on labour market requirements. The latest initiative in Jordan on skills testing and certification is presented as a best practice to support youth transition into the labour market by improving the information available to recruiting companies. Discussion 20 min 	Dominic Richardson (UNICEF Office of Research)
11.00 – 11.15	Coffee break	
11.15 – 13.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Bank Skills Toward Employment and Productivity (STEP): Linking monitoring of educational achievements with systems evaluation – Amira Kazem (World Bank) 25 min The presentation introduces the STEP Measurement Study as an example of measuring life skills education, linking program evaluation to student learning assessments. Interactive discussion 30 min • Measuring civic competence – Bryony Hoskins (University of Roehampton) 25 min The presentation introduces the IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) ICCS (International Civic and Citizenship Education Study) and other methodologies for the measurement of citizenship education in terms of learning outcomes. Interactive discussion 25 min 	Caroline Pontefract (UNRWA HQ)
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch	

Day 4: Thursday, 3 December (continued)

TIME	SESSION	CHAIR/FACILITATOR
14.00 – 16.00	<p>SESSION 7 WAY FORWARD ON LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION IN MENA</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Way forward on life skills mapping. • Advise a way forward for life skills programming in MENA that includes short, medium and longer term perspectives. 	Khalil Mahshi (independent expert)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Way forward on the MENA life skills mapping exercise Interactive discussion 60 min • Way forward for developing and implementing a Conceptual and Programmatic Framework on life skills in MENA Interactive discussion 60 min 	
16.00 – 16.15	Coffee break	
16.15 – 17.00	EVALUATION AND CLOSING	Hannan Sulieman (UNICEF MENARO Deputy Regional Director)

III LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Algeria

Kacem Djahlene	Directeur des Etudes Nationale	Ministère de l'Education	kdjehlane@yahoo.fr
Mouloud Boulaouinat	Sous-Directeur de l'Enseignement Professionnel	Ministère de la Formation et de l'Enseignement Professionnels	boulaouinatm@yahoo.fr
Mustapha Hamdi	Sous-Directeur des Programmes	Ministère de l'Education Nationale	mus.hamdi@yahoo.fr
Nawel Abdessemed	Chief Education, OiC	UNICEF	nabdessemed@unicef.org
Baghdad Benstaali	Education Officer	UNICEF	bbenstaali@unicef.org

Djibouti

Mohamed Barkat Siradj	Conseiller Technique Du Ministre	Ministry of Education	–
Said Mohamed Barkad	Chef de Service	Ministry of Education	said_barkad@yahoo.fr
Said Ahmed Ahmed	Education Officer	UNICEF	asaidahmed@unicef.org

Egypt

Magdy Abdel Ghany	Director General, Community Education Department	Ministry of Education	–
Mohamed Medhat	Head of Central Administration for Drop-Out Prevention	Ministry of Education	–
Randa Ahmed Hafez Shahin	Chairman of the Central Administration for Kindergarten and Basic Education	Ministry of Education	ra_sh_10@yahoo.com
Samir El Sharkawy	Director General, Social Work Department	Ministry of Education	–
Inas Hegazi	Education Specialist	UNICEF	ihgazi@unicef.org

Iran

Seyyedali Hosseini	Senior Advisor to the Deputy Minister, Secondary Education	Ministry of Education	sa.hosseini@medu.ir sahosseini14@gmail.com
Morteza Shokoohi	Deputy Director General of Primary Education	Ministry of Education	shokouhimanage@gmail.com
Seyyed Hadi Hosseini Alanvije	Expert on Research and Standardization of Health and Physical Wellbeing Education	Ministry of Education	hadihosseini56@yahoo.com
Sara Yasan	Education Specialist	UNICEF	syasan@unicef.org
Abandokht Sarkarati	Education Officer	UNICEF	Asarkarati@unicef.org

Iraq

Majeed Sadeq Kadhim	Director General of Curriculum	Ministry of Education	majeedsk16@yahoo.com
Muntaha Fahd Birassam	Senior Researcher, The General Directorate of Curriculum	Ministry of Education	muntahafahd@yahoo.com
Saif Husam Mohamad	Supervisor on Pre-primary Curriculum	Ministry of Education, Kurdistan	seyif.memet@hotmail.com
Sajjad Ismail	Education Specialist	UNICEF	sismail@unicef.org
Abdulkader Kakasur	Education Officer	UNICEF	akakasur@unicef.org

Jordan

Khawla Abu Haija	Managing Director of Education	Ministry of Education	–
Wafaa Abdullat	Director of Curriculum	Ministry of Education	–
Susan Ayari	Chief of Education	UNICEF	sayari@unicef.org
Rana Kawar	Education Specialist	UNICEF	rkawar@unicef.org
Maria Paradies	Education Specialist	UNICEF	mparadies@unicef.org
Bassam A.Saleh	Education Officer	UNICEF	bsaleh@unicef.org
Fatima Mughrabi	Education Officer	UNICEF	falmughrabi@unicef.org
Dina Al Jamal	Youth and Adolescent Development Specialist	UNICEF	daljamal@unicef.org
Besan Abdel Qader	Youth and Adolescent Development Officer	UNICEF	babdelqader@unicef.org
Samia Qumri	Youth and Adolescent Development Officer	UNICEF	squmri@1unicef.org

Lebanon

Pauline Yamine	Education Counselor	Ministry of Education and Higher Education	–
Samia Abu Hamad	Education Counselor	CERD	–
Ramy Lakkis	Director Lebanese	Organisation for Studies and Training	rlakkis@lostlb.com
Assem Shraif	Peace Building Unit Manager	Lebanese Organisation for Studies and Training	achreif@lostlb.com
Fayrouz Salameh	Director	Social Movement	–
Simone A.Vis	Manager, Lebanese Education Programme	UNICEF	svis@unicef.org
Sarah Shouman	Education Specialist	UNICEF	sshouman@unicef.org
Amal Obeid	Youth and Adolescent Development Officer	UNICEF	aobeid@unicef.org
Rania Zakhia	Education Specialist	UNICEF	rzakhia@unicef.org
Soha Bou Chabke	Education Specialist (systems)	UNICEF	sbouchabke@unicef.org

Libya

Om Khir Muftah Ali	General Director of the Centre for Teachers and Education Development	Ministry of Education	alwad_7@yahoo.co.uk
Moftah Mohamad Elhadi	Curriculum Education and Research Centre	Ministry of Education	–
Abdelgader Mohamed Abujalala	Curriculum and Education Research Centre	Ministry of Education	abujalala.72@gmail.com
Hamad Salih Irghabeen	Director of Education Department	Ministry of Education	hamad_60@yahoo.com
Nasser Kaddoura	Education Specialist	UNICEF	nkaddoura@unicef.org

Morocco

Abdelmojib Mrabet	Head of Division of Orientation and Counseling Direction	Ministry of Education, Evaluation	abdelmojib.mrabet@gmail.com
El Amrani Moulay Abderrazzak	Responsible of Curriculum Development	Ministry of Education, Curriculum Direction	elamrazzak@yahoo.fr
Hassane Aghzere	Responsible of Extracurricular Head of Division	Ministry of Education, Non Formal Education Direction	aghzere.hassane@yahoo.fr

Mbark Mezene	Head of Extra-Curricular Activities	Ministry of Education, Vie scolaire Direction	Mbark.MEZENE@men.gov.ma
Malika Djebli	Regional Academy Focal Point	Ministry of Education, Regional Academy of Education	djebli.ma@gmail.com
Mohamed Bâala	Regional Academy Focal Point	Ministry of Education, Regional Academy of Education	baalamohamed@yahoo.fr
Khalid Chenguiti	Chief of Education	UNICEF	kchenguiti@unicef.org
Meryem Skika	Education Officer	UNICEF	mskika@unicef.org

Oman

Shununa Salim Alhabsi	Government Project Officer Education	UNICEF/Misnistry of Education	ssalimalhabsi@unicef.org
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Palestine

Ihab Yousef Shukri Inayem	Coordinator for Reviewing and Developing Curriculum	Misnistry of Education	ihab_shukri@yahoo.com
Hanan Abd Al Azeem Abed	Coordinator of Child Friendly School Programme/School Health	Misnistry of Education	hanantabash@yahoo.com
Maida Pasic	Chief, Learning For Development	UNICEF	mpasic@unicef.org
Ingvill Morlandstoe	Education Specialist	UNICEF	imorlandstoe@unicef.org
Basima Ahed- Ahmad	Education Specialist	UNICEF	bahedahmad@unicef.org
Ibtisam Abu-Shammala	Education Officer	UNICEF	iabushammala@unicef.org
Maysoon Obeidi	Youth and Adolescent Development Officer	UNICEF	mobeidi@unicef.org

Sudan

Elsir Elsheikh Ahmed Mukhtar	Undersecretary	Ministry of Education	Atfa.badri@yahoo.com
Mohammed Salim	Director of Planning	Ministry of Education	Atfa.badri@yahoo.com
Hassan Ali Mohamed	Chief of Education	UNICEF	hasmohamed@unicef.org
Buthayna Osman Abdel Hakam	Youth and Adolescent Development Specialist	UNICEF	boabdelhakam@unicef.org

Syria

Fiaz Shah	Education Specialist	UNICEF	fishah@unicef.org
Atsuko Nishimoto	Education Specialist	UNICEF	anishimoto@unicef.org
Ibrahim Farah	Education Officer	UNICEF	ifarah@unicef.org
Siham Zakaria	Education Officer	UNICEF	szakaria@unicef.org
Mohamad Kanawati	Youth and Adolescent Development Specialist	UNICEF	mkanawati@unicef.org

Tunisia

Moez Bou Baker	Chief Minister Office	Ministry of Education	cabinet@minedu.edunet.tn
Tarek Loussaief	Directeur du Département Recherche au CNIPRE	Ministry of Education	tarek.loussaief@hotmail.fr
Elhem Barboura	Deputy Director	Ministry of Education	elhem.barboura@edunet.tn elhembourba@yahoo.fr
Maya Ben Khaled	Programme Officer Citizenship Education	Arab Institute for Human Rights	benkhaledmaya2@gmail.com

Abdelwahab Chaoued	Education Specialist	UNICEF	achaoued@unicef.org
Amel Cheikhrouhou	Youth and Adolescent Development Specialist Officer	UNICEF	acheikhrouhou@unicef.org

Yemen

Maisa Mahmood	General Manager of Training and Qualification	Ministry of Education	mo.8989@hotmail.com
Abdulla Qshaish			
Ali Ali Abdullah Alabab	Director General	Mareb Governorate Education Office	alialabbab@gmail.com
Huda Abdulslam	Assistant Director, Educational Economics	Ministry of Education	hoopoe.hs@gmail.com
Abdulwahid Saif			
Kenji Ohira	Education Specialist	UNICEF	kohira@unicef.org
Hema Vinod	Education Specialist	UNICEF	hvinod@unicef.org
Abdulrahman Alsharjabi	Education Officer	UNICEF	aalsharjabi@unicef.org
Tahani Saeed	Education Officer	UNICEF	tasaeed@unicef.org
Salam Al-Shehri	Education Officer	UNICEF	salshehri@unicef.org

Turkey

Chiharu Kondo	Education Specialist	UNICEF	ckondo@unicef.org
Özge Hassa	Inclusive Secondary Education Officer	UNICEF	ohassa@unicef.org

Multilateral Agencies

Sobhi Tawil	Senior Programme Specialist at Education Research and Foresight	UNESCO HQ Paris	s.tawil@unesco.org
Dakmara-Ana Georgescu	Programme Specialist, Curriculum, Teachers and Higher Education	UNESCO Regional Office Beirut	d.georgescu@unesco.org
Fatima Bourarach	Programme Specialist, Social and Human Sciences	UNESCO Cluster Office Morocco	f.bourarach@unesco.org
Amira Kazem	Senior Operations Officer	World Bank	akazem@worldbank.org
Patrick Daru	Senior Skills and Employability Specialist	ILO Regional Office for Arab States	daru@ilo.org
Caroline Pontefract	Director of Education	UNRWA HQ Amman	c.pontefract@unrwa.org
Ozlem Eskiocak	Human Rights Education Programme Coordinator	UNRWA HQ Amman	o.eskiocak@unrwa.org
Frosse Dabit	EiE, Education Programme Specialist	UNRWA HQ Amman	f.dabit@unrwa.org
Vick Ikobwa	Senior Regional Education Officer	UNHCR MENA Bureau Amman	ikobwa@unhcr.org
Aleksandar Sasha Bodiroza	Technical Advisor, Youth, HIV/AIDS	UNFPA Arab States Regional Office Cairo	bodiroza@unfpa.org

Bilateral Agencies

Jacob Arts	Programme Manager Education and Youth	EU Jordan	Jacob.arts@eeas.europa.eu
Sulafa Madanat	Senior Development Officer	Canada	Sulafa.Mdanat@international.gc.ca
Angie Haddad	Youth Specialist	USAID	ahaddad@usaid.gov

NGOs

Margaret Sinclair	Technical Adviser	PEIC Education Above All Foundation Qatar	msinclair@eea.org.qa
Abdel Basset	President of the Arab Institute Ben Hassen for Human Rights	Arab Institute for Human Rights Tunisia	basset.hassen@gmail.com
Mary Tadros	IB Recognition and Development Manager, Middle East and Senior Academic Advisor	Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA) and International Baccalaureate Organizations (IBO)	m.tadros@qrta.edu.jo mary.tadros@ibo.org
Deema Bibi	Chief Executive Officer	INJAZ Amman	dbibi@injaz.org.jo
Itaf Al Awawdeh	Education Advisor	Save the Children International Jordan	itaf.alawawdeh@savethechildren.org
Priya Jacob	Director, Programme Development and Quality	Save the Children International, Regional Office for Middle East and Eurasia	Priya.Jacob@savethechildren.org
Jane MacPhail	Director of No Lost Generation Programmes	Mercy Corps Jordan	jmacphail@jo.mercycorps.org
Jack Byrne	Country Director	International Rescue Committee Jordan	jack.byrne@rescue.org
Paul Fean	Youth Project Coordinator	Norwegian Refugee Council Jordan	paul.fean@nrc.no
Frances Charles	Advocacy Director	World Vision, Jordan	frances_charles@wvi.org

IYF

Bassem Nasir	Director, Programs	International Youth Foundation	b.nasir@iyfnet.org
Karen Phillips	Director of Training and Content	Birzeit University – Center for Continuing Education	k.phillips@iyfnet.org
Rana Al-Turk	Regional Director	International Youth Foundation	r.alturk@iyfnet.org
Osama Mimi	Director	Birzeit University – Center for Continuing Education	omimi@birzeit.edu
Rula Alqutami	Project Coordinator	Birzeit University – Center for Continuing Education	ralqutami@birzeit.edu
David Clarke	Independent Expert	International Youth Foundation	clarkedvd@hotmail.co.uk

Experts

Bryony Hoskins	Chair of Comparative Social Science	Department of Sociology University of Roehampton, London	Bryony.Hoskins@roehampton.ac.uk
Chiara Paganuzzi	Independent Expert, Rapporteur	–	c.paganuzzi@gmail.com
Dalal Salameh	Editor	Jordan Media Institute	dalalsalameh2000@yahoo.com
Khalil Mahshi	Independent Expert	–	mahshi@hotmail.com
Laila Iskandar	Former Egypt Minister of State for Urban Renewal and Informal Settlement	–	recicladoressdi@gmail.com
Lara Asad	Director of Human Resources and Training	Sheraton Al Nabil Hotel Amman	–
Maha Yahya	Senior Associate	Carnegie Middle East Center Beirut	myahya@carnegie-mec.org
Michael Nazzal	Chairman of the Jordan Federation of Tourism Associations	Amoun College Amman	–
Mounir Abou Assali	Independent Expert	–	abouassali.mounir@gmail.com

Muriel Dunbar	Senior Skills Adviser	Cambridge Education, Education for International Development	muriel.dunbar@camb-ed.com
Nada Mneymneh	Independent Expert	Faculty of Education Lebanese university	nada.mneymneh@gmail.com
Nadia Zibani	Population Council	West Asia – North Africa (WANA) Regional Office	nadiazibani@hotmail.com
Omar N'eimat	–	Intercontinental Aqaba	–
Thouqan Obeidat	Independent Expert	–	Tobiedatz@hotmail.com

UNICEF Head Quarters

Daniel Kelly	Education Consultant	UNICEF	dkelly@unicef.org
Manuel Cardoso	Education Specialist (Learning)	UNICEF	mcardoso@unicef.org
Friedrich Affolter	Education Expert	UNICEF	faffolter@unicef.org
Gemma Wilson-Clark	Senior Advisor	UNICEF	gwilsonclark@unicef.org
Dominic Richardson	Senior Education Specialist	UNICEF Office of Research	drichardson@unicef.org

UNICEF MENA Regional Office

Peter Salama	Regional Director	UNICEF	psalama@unicef.org
Hannan Sulieman	Deputy Regional Director	UNICEF	hsulieman@unicef.org
Simon Ingram	Regional Chief of Communication	UNICEF	singram@unicef.org
Juliette Touma	Communication Specialist	UNICEF	jtouma@unicef.org
Arthur van Diesen	Regional Adviser Social Policy	UNICEF	avandiesen@unicef.org
SM Moazzem Hossain	Regional Adviser Health	UNICEF	smhossain@unicef.org
Geetanjali Narayan	Regional Chief of Programme and Planning	UNICEF	gnarayan@unicef.org
Uzma Aftab	Consultant Programme and Planning	UNICEF	uaftab@unicef.org
Samir Anouti	Regional Adviser HIV/AIDS	UNICEF	sanouti@unicef.org
Isabella Castrogiovanni	Senior Protection Specialist	UNICEF	icastrogiovanni@unicef.org
Liv Elin Indreiten	Youth and Adolescent Development Specialist	UNICEF	lindreiten@unicef.org
Michael Florian	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist	UNICEF	mflorian@unicef.org
Dina Craissati	Regional Adviser Education	UNICEF	dcraissati@unicef.org
Alberto Biancoli	Education Specialist	UNICEF	abiancoli@unicef.org
Francesco Calcagno	Education Specialist	UNICEF	fcalcagno@unicef.org
Daria Ng	Education Specialist	UNICEF	dng@unicef.org
Reem Nashashibi	Information Management Specialist	UNICEF	rnashashibi@unicef.org
Reem AlAmin	Education Consultant	UNICEF	ralamin@unicef.org
Jorge Pescina	Education Consultant	UNICEF	jpescina@unicef.org
Maria del Mar Logrono Narbona	Education Consultant	UNICEF	marlogrono@gmail.com
Farida Aboudan	Education Consultant	UNICEF	farida_aboudan@hotmail.com
Fadwa Fraih	Programme Assistant	UNICEF	ffraih@unicef.org
Imar AlNaeb	Programme Assistant	UNICEF	ialnaeb@unicef.org
Mohannad Baker	Administrative Assistant	UNICEF	mbaker@unicef.org

IV BIOGRAPHIES OF EXPERTS

Keynote Speaker

HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal. His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal is a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and is the brother of His late Majesty King Hussein and the uncle of His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan, serving as Jordan's Crown Prince from 1965 until 1999. A pluralist and staunch campaigner for the rights of all to live in peace and dignity, HRH is a pioneer of interfaith dialogue and understanding. Prince Hassan's international commitments have included co-chairing the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues and his current membership of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor. Prince Hassan has long and active engagement with environmental organizations, having recently served as the Chairman of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. Prince Hassan currently chairs the High Level Forum for the Blue Peace Middle East plan. HRH established the Arab Thought Forum, the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies, the Higher Council for Science and Technology, the Royal Scientific Society and the West Asia-North Africa (WANA) Institute.

Experts

Lara Asad is Director of Human Resources and Training at the Sheraton Amman. Previously she has worked with several companies like IHG, Kempinski, and Umniah. She has 10 years of experience in the field of human resources and training. She is a certified master trainer (Certificate 4 in training and assessment) from Bremer Institute for TAFE (Australia) and has other certifications from other institutes. She is currently certifying for SHRMCP.

Mounir Abou Assali is an independent consultant with 40 years of experience in the field of education, strategic management and academic teaching (Organic Chemistry and Strategic Performance Management). Since 2011 he has been advisor to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education of Qatar. From 1994 to 1999, he led the Post-War Lebanese Education Reform, as president of the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD). From 1984-1994, he was the Founding Dean of the of the Medical, Dental, and Pharmacy Schools at the Lebanese University.

Abdel Basset Ben Hassen is the President of the Arab Institute for Human Rights since 2011. He is also the Chairman of the Tunisian National Committee for the Support to Refugees and has served as member of the High Committee for the realization of the objectives of the revolution, political reform and democratic transition. With over two decades of expertise in the field of human rights issues in the Arab countries, Ben Hassen has also held the position of Human Rights Programs Director at the Ford Foundation (2005-2011).

Maya Ben Khaled is an academic researcher. She holds a Master's degree in Sociology of Development and Strategies for Change. Since 2006 she has been in charge of the research programme at the Arab Institute for Human Rights, Tunis. She is currently overseeing the citizenship and human rights education programme. She is a member of the international network for the abolition of the death penalty.

David Clarke is an independent expert with a background in sociology and education. He was formerly UK Department for International Development's (DFID) lead adviser on the education response to HIV and AIDS. These continue to be his main areas of specialization. In over 30 years of experience of international development, he has worked in more than 50 countries across the world.

Patrick Daru is Senior Skills and Employability Specialist for the ILO Regional Office for Arab States. He also coordinates all ILO activities in Jordan. He previously managed the largest ILO project on youth employment in the Asia-Pacific region – with a Technical and Vocational Education and Training reform component. In the early 2000s, he managed two ILO regional projects on forced labor in South Asia and child labor in Eastern Europe, aiming at increasing the capabilities of at-risk populations.

Muriel Dunbar is Senior Skills Adviser at Education for International Development, Cambridge Education. She is former Director of the European Training Foundation (2004-2009). Her 30 year-career in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) includes fifteen years of work on TVET policies and strategies for low-income countries and countries in transition. Her areas of expertise include: skills development, technical and vocational education and training, market response education, private sector engagement, national qualification frameworks.

Paul Fean is Youth Project Coordinator at the Norwegian Refugee Council in Jordan. He has over ten years of experience in programme design, implementation and research in Sudan, South Sudan and the Middle East. Since 2003 he has participated in the design and implementation of education development initiatives related to curriculum design, adult and non-formal education, as well as action research for education quality and teacher development.

Dakmara-Ana Georgescu is a Programme Specialist in charge of Curriculum, Teachers and Higher Education at UNESCO Regional Office for Arab States in Beirut. Previously she coordinated UNESCO IBE's technical assistance for curriculum development (2003-2012). She has served as the Advisor to the Minister (primary and secondary education reform) within the Romanian Ministry of National Education. She has contributed to several long-term processes of systemic curriculum reforms in Eastern Europe under the auspices of UNICEF, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the World Bank.

Bryony Hoskins has a Chair in Comparative Social Science at the University of Roehampton and a visiting professorship at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. She is an expert on political socialization, specializing in political engagement across European Countries. She has over seven years of policy experience having previously worked at the Council of Europe in France leading on youth research, at the European Commission in Belgium and then in Italy leading the development of indicators on Active Citizenship.

Laila Iskandar was the Minister of State for Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements in Egypt from July 2014 to September 2015 and before that served as Minister of State for Environmental Affairs in the two cabinets following the June 30th Revolution. Prior to holding public office she was a leading member of civil society both nationally and internationally, working with grass roots communities in informal urban settlements and deprived villages in Upper Egypt as well as being part of global networks addressing issues of urban poverty.

Amira Kazem is a Senior Operations Officer with the Education Global Practice and the Education focal point in the World Bank's Cairo Office. She joined the World Bank as a human development economist with a focus on social protection. She has extensively been involved with education projects with a scope covering skills development, basic and tertiary education since 2002 in Jordan and Egypt and subsequently, she got involved in Yemen and Iraq. She holds special interest in competitiveness of SMEs.

Tarek Loussaief is Director of the Department for Educational Research at the National Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Educational Research (CNIPRE). He holds a Masters in Psychology and an advanced degree (DEA) in Sciences of Education from the University of Tunis. He began his career as a teacher (1989) and educational guidance counselor (1998). Since 2004 he has held several positions within the Ministry of Education in Tunisia: Chief of Educational Guidance and Counseling Services (2004) and Director of School Life for preparatory and secondary education (2012).

Khalil Mahshi is an independent expert, presently assisting UNICEF with planning Syrian refugee education in Jordan. He is the former Director of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP). He first joined IIEP in January 2001 as Programme Specialist in the Operational Activities Unit which he later headed (2005-2009). In this capacity he initiated IIEP's programme on planning education in post-conflict and post-disaster situations, and assisted UNESCO Member States with formulating education sector plans and institutional capacity development.

Osama Mimi is the Director of the Unit for Learning Innovation (ULI) at Birzeit University. He is specialized on learning methods and curriculum design with a focus on innovation as a means to significantly enhance learning outcomes within restricted and outdated educational systems. Through his work he has engaged in conceptualizing, designing, planning, and implementing a wide range of learning innovation projects at school and university levels in addition to non-formal education systems and institutional capacity building projects. He has supervised the implementation and evaluation of more than 60 projects to date.

Nada Abdelwahed Mneymneh is Professor at the Lebanese University Faculty of Education. She has more than 20 years of experience in the educational sector in Lebanon, leading on many projects in collaboration with international and regional organizations at the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education. From 2009-2014, she was the Director of the “Education Sector Development Secretariat”, a unit at the Ministry of Education responsible for planning and implementing the reform plans enacted by the Lebanese Government. Previously she was the Project Manager of the “Education Development Project” setting the reform plan of the Lebanese general educational sector.

Abdelmoujib M'Rabet is Inspector of educational guidance at the Ministry of Education and Professional Development in Morocco. He has academic and professional background in the field of educational/school guidance and has extensive work experience on school guidance-related projects. Since 2014 he has been working as project lead in the project for the development of the educational and vocational guidance system and as coordinator of the unit for information and guidance in the Ministry of National Education and Professional Development.

Omar Mohammad Mufleh N'eimat is a graduate from Amoun College for Hospitality. Although he did not finish high school, in 2013 he joined life skills courses in Ma'an and the hospitality courses in Amoun. After graduation he started working at the Kempinski Hotel Ishtar-Dead Sea, where he was promoted shortly after from operator to receptionist position. In 2015 Omar moved as receptionist to the Intercontinental Hotel in Aqaba, where he currently works.

Michael Nazzal is a leader in Jordan of the hospitality industry. He has been chairing the Jordan Hotel Association since 1988 and the Federation of Tourism Associations since 2004. He has been involved in the hospitality development and education and has played a major role in privatizing the Amoun Complex in Jordan, the first quality hospitality education center covering the education at all levels from high school (Tawjihi) to Diploma and Bachelor levels.

Thuqan Obeidat is an education expert and independent consultant. He has held multiple positions over his more than 35 year career at the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Jordan. He has been member of the advisory council to the Ministry of Education in Jordan. From 1985 to 1989, he was Jordan's permanent delegate at UNESCO Paris. He has extensive expertise in curriculum analysis and reform with relevant publications on life skills education.

Caroline Pontefract is the UNESCO employed Director of Education at UNRWA Headquarters with responsibility for the strategic and technical direction of the education programme in the Agency's five fields of operation. Since 2010 she has spearheaded an agency-wide transformational and systemic education reform. Prior to taking up her post in UNRWA she held different management and professional positions in the UN, INGOs, DFID and universities. Most recently she was Director for the Social Transformation Division in the Commonwealth Secretariat in London and before that Chief of Teacher Education at UNESCO HQ.

Margaret Sinclair has worked on education and conflict since 1987, initially for UNHCR's programme for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. She headed UNHCR's Education Unit in Geneva from 1993 to 1998. She has advocated for education for peace and learning to live together since 1997, including in publications with UNESCO's International Bureau of Education and International Institute for Educational Planning. Since 2009, she has been based in Qatar, working with the Education Above All Foundation, currently as Technical Adviser for its PEIC (Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict) programme.

Sobhi Tawil is Senior Programme Specialist at Education Research and Foresight at UNESCO, Paris, with background in sociology and education. Prior to his current position, he was Education Programme Specialist at UNESCO Cluster Office for the Maghreb in Rabat, preceded by a position as former Head of the Capacity Building Programme for Curriculum Development, UNESCO International Bureau of Education in Geneva.

Maha Yahya is Senior Associate at the Carnegie Middle East Center, where her research focuses on citizenship, pluralism, and social justice in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. Prior to joining Carnegie, she led work on Participatory Development and Social Justice at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA). She was previously regional adviser on social and urban policies at UN-ESCWA.

Nadia Zibani is a Senior Consultant for the Population Council WANA Regional Office, where she has held a series of program and research-related positions since 2001. She has a background in economic development, with an emphasis on gender and child labour. She has been involved in Ishraq project since its first pilot phase (2001-2004) and she helped secure major funding from Netherlands Embassy for the new Ishraq scale-up phase in 30 villages (2009-2011).

V PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION

MENA Education Network (MEdNet) Meeting Quality Learning through Life Skills 30 November – 3 December 2015

Executive summary

The Evaluation Form of the MEdNet Meeting was administered at the end of the last session of the Meeting, on 3 December, 2015.

Out of the 153 persons who participated throughout the four days of the MEdNet Meeting the number of completed evaluation forms was 109.

The main findings of the analysis of the evaluation forms are as follows:

- **Interest and relevance of sessions:** The findings show that the meeting was relevant and captured the interest of participants. On a scale of 5, the average amount of interest across all sessions is 4.06, while the average relevance stands at 3.96.
- **Learning during the meeting:** Respondents cited that the 'Importance and understanding of Life Skills as a cornerstone for quality learning', the 'Conceptualization and planning of Life Skills' and 'Information sharing and exchange of expertise among MENA countries' constituted major learning areas during the four days' meeting in Amman.
- **Objectives and contents of the meeting, resource persons' contribution and group work:** More than half (56 per cent) of participants agreed that the content of the sessions met the needs of the participants while 47 per cent agreed that the meeting's objectives were fulfilled. 50 per cent of participants strongly agreed that the resource persons' contributions were very useful. 52 per cent of participants strongly agreed that they were encouraged to take an active part in discussions and group work. Another 48 per cent of respondents agreed that group work around the three topics was useful.
- **Venue and logistics:** 72 per cent of the participants reported that the overall organization of the meeting was excellent. On a scale of 5, the meeting space scored 4.43 while meals/refreshments and simultaneous interpretation scored 4.27 and 3.56, respectively.
- **Participant understanding of the subject matter:** More than half of participants (54 per cent) agreed that the meeting had been successful in helping them understand the conceptualization, importance and need for 'Quality Learning through Life Skills in MENA'.
- **Other comments:** The participants expressed a strong interest in the subject of the MEdNet Meeting and highly appreciated the level of participation of the delegations from MENA countries. Particular appreciation was expressed in relation to the technical contribution from the regional and international experts as well as the role of the International Youth Foundation (IYF). Finally, most of the respondents emphasized the need for follow-up actions and continuous efforts to move forward with 'Quality Learning through Life Skills'.

1 Interest and relevance of sessions

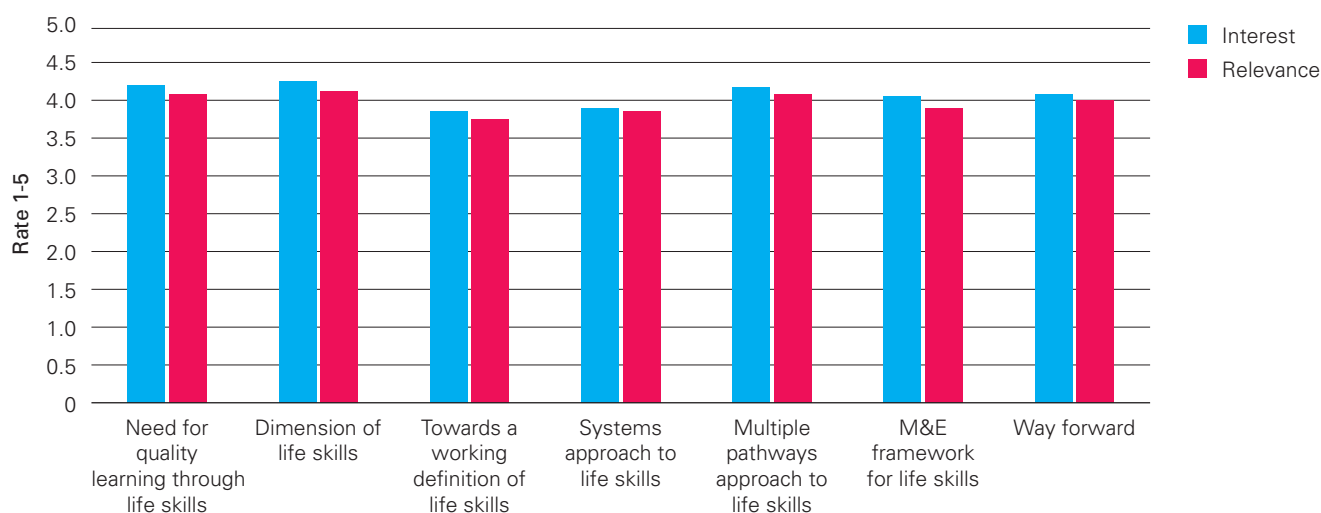
Kindly rate the different sessions in terms of interest to you and relevance to your work, by circling the relevant number (from 1 meaning 'least interesting/least relevant' to 5 meaning 'most interesting/most relevant').

Participants were asked to express the degree of interest and relevance of all seven sessions.

The average **interest** across all sessions was 4.06 out of 5, indicating that resource persons' presentations raised high levels of attention among the respondents. In particular, the highest rated session was 'The dimensions of life skills', followed by 'The need for quality learning through life skills' and 'A multiple pathways approach to life skills'.

A similar trend appears when analysing the **relevance** of all sessions which scored an average of 3.96. The highest score was assigned to the session on 'The dimensions of life skills' followed by 'Need for quality learning through life skills' and 'A multiple pathways approach to life skills'.

INTEREST AND RELEVANCE OF SESSIONS



2 Learning during the meeting

Please list the three most important things you learned during the MEdNet Meeting.

Participants were asked to list the three most important issues learned during the Meeting. Responses have been clustered as below:

Importance of life skills to enhance quality education: This included shared understanding of life skills as a cornerstone for quality learning and its impact on curricula, youth, teachers and children. Mainstreaming life skills education cannot be achieved through the development of ad-hoc training manuals or small-scale projects, but requires a mind shift and a complete reform of curricula, teaching and learning practices. It is also of paramount importance to address the need to articulate a common and clear vision for life skills education in MENA that takes into account current challenges and opportunities.

Conceptualization and working definition of life skills: This included a better understanding of the Delors four dimensions of learning and the conceptual framework of life skills including skills for learning, skills for personal empowerment, skills for active citizenship, and skills for employability. Comments were also provided on the importance of adopting an integrated multi-sectorial approach for mainstreaming life skills education.

Information sharing and networking: 44 per cent of participants confirmed that the MEdNet Meeting had been a good occasion to learn from others; the group work was seen as good example for country delegation to engage in fruitful discussions on life skills.

In addition, participants also listed the following issues as part of the learning experienced during the meeting:

- The importance of adopting multiple pathways within the framework of a systems approach to life skills;
- The importance of strengthening monitoring and evaluation frameworks for quality programming as well as introducing student assessment and measurement tools for monitoring learning;
- The importance of citizenship education and value-based education as a foundation of life skills;
- Engaging youth and expanding linkages with labour markets through the integration of employability skills in the curriculum;

- The way forward in relation to national reform processes including national consultations and the review of curricula.

3 Content of the meeting and experts contributions

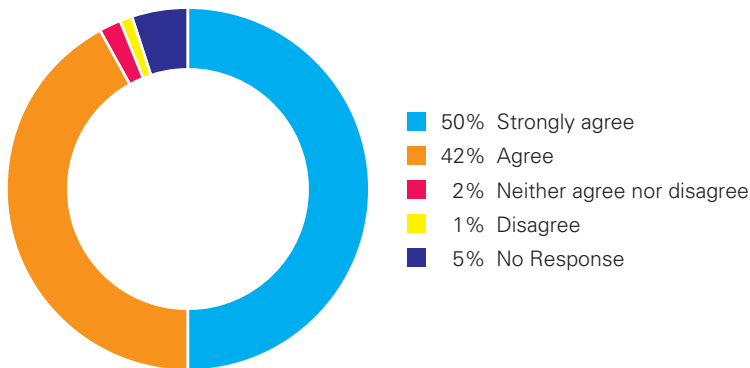
Please circle to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- Contribution of resource persons was useful.
- Content met needs.
- Meeting objectives were met.
- Participants encouraged to participate.
- Group work on 'The four dimensions of learning' was useful.
- Group work on 'A system approach to life skills' was useful.
- Group work on 'A multiple pathways approach to life skills' was useful.

Participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statements above, using a scale from 5 (Strongly agree) to 1 (Strongly disagree).

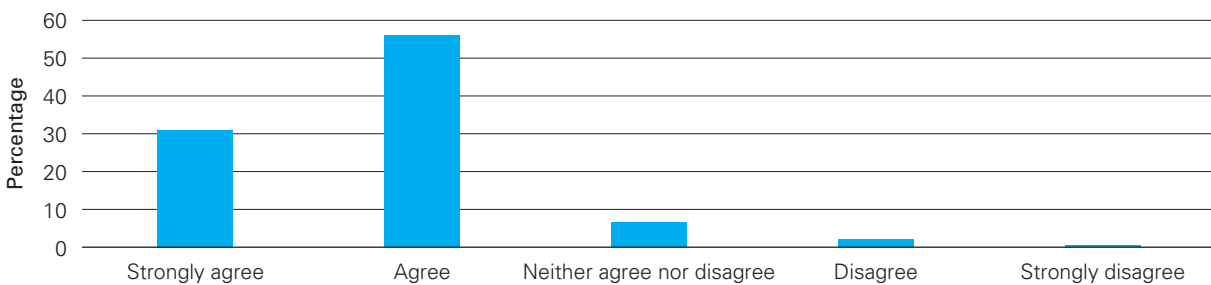
Resource persons' contribution was useful for 92 per cent of respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement; only 2 per cent of respondents did not agree or disagree, while 5 per cent did not respond.

USEFUL CONTRIBUTION OF RESOURCE PERSONS



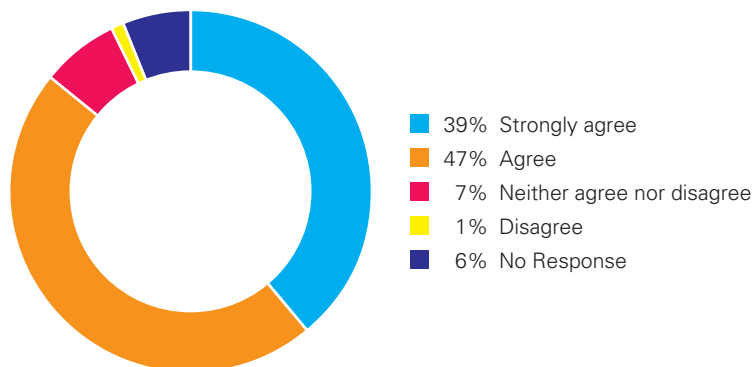
87 per cent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the MEdNet Meeting **content met their needs**. Few participants did not agree.

CONTENTS MET NEEDS



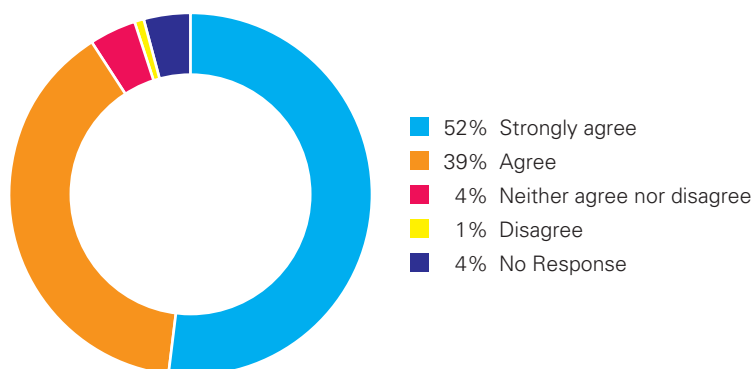
47 per cent of participants agreed and 39 per cent strongly agreed that the **objectives of the meeting were met**. 7 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed while 6 per cent did not respond to the statement, and only 1 per cent disagreed.

MEETING OBJECTIVES MET



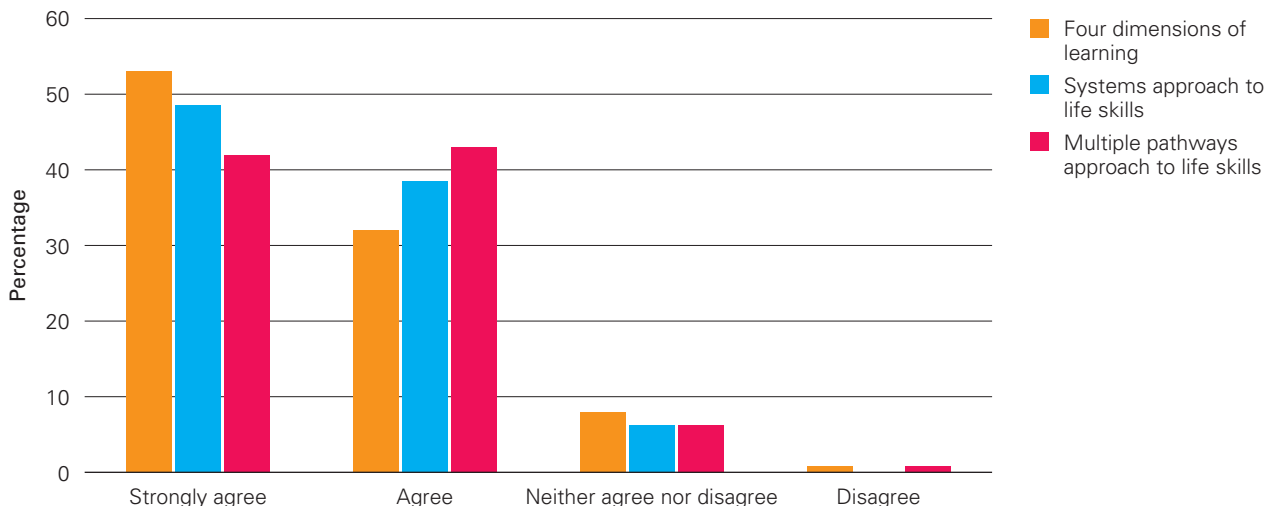
A majority of about 91 per cent of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that **participants were encouraged to take an active part during the discussions and group work**. This validates the participatory approach adopted by the organizers.

PARTICIPANTS ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE



The three group work sessions were useful for 9 out of 10 participants. About 7 per cent of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, 6 per cent did not respond, while only 1 per cent was in disagreement.

USEFULNESS OF GROUPS' WORK



4 Venue and logistics

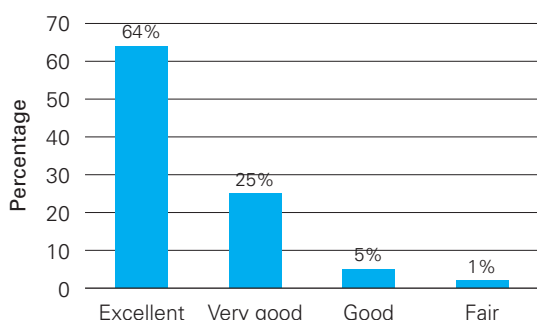
Please rate the following, as applicable (from 5 meaning 'Excellent' to 1 meaning 'Poor').

- Meeting space
- Meals/refreshments
- Simultaneous interpretation
- Overall organization

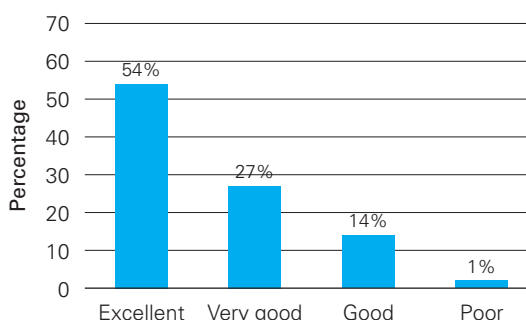
Participants were asked to rate the venue and the logistics of the 4-day MEdNet Meeting on a scale from 5 'Excellent' to 1 'Poor'.

The **meeting venue** received a mean score of 4.43 (64 per cent of participants ranked the venue as 'excellent' while about 30 per cent ranked the venue as 'very good' and 'good'). **Meals and refreshments** received a mean score of 4.27 (54 per cent and 27 per cent of participants considered them as 'very good' and 'good', respectively). **Simultaneous interpretation** received an average score of 3.56 (61 per cent of participants defined it as either 'excellent' or 'very good'). Finally, the **overall organization** had an 4.64 average score (72 per cent and 24 per cent of participants considered it 'excellent' and 'very good', respectively).

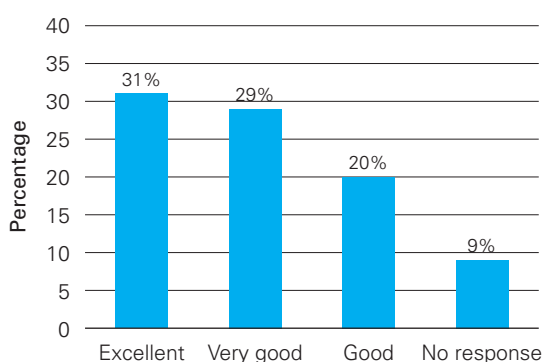
MEETING VENUE



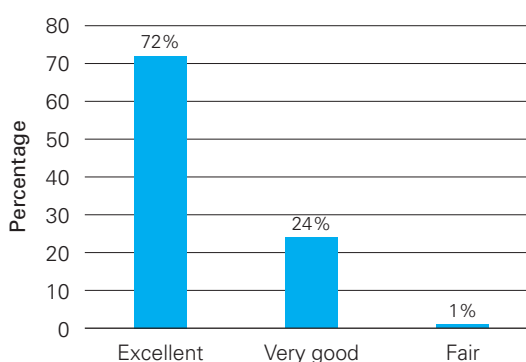
MEALS/REFRESHMENTS



SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION



OVERALL ORGANIZATION



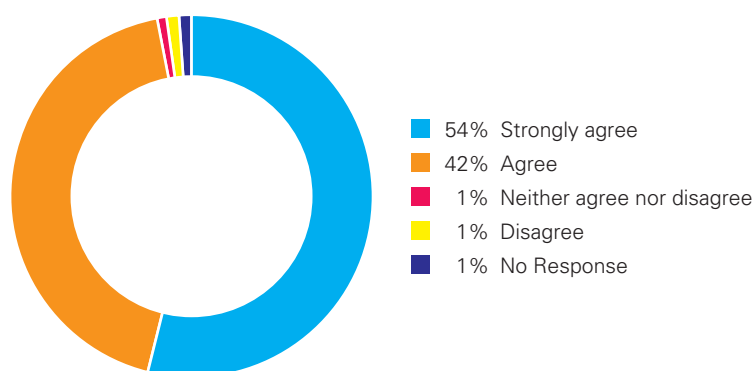
5 Participant understanding of the subject matter

Did the MEdNet Meeting help the participants understand the subject of the meeting?

Participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement above, using a scale from 5 'Strongly agree' to 1 'Strongly disagree'.

54 per cent of participants strongly agreed while 42 per cent agreed that the MEdNet Meeting was successful in helping them understand the importance of life skills for quality learning for children and youth in MENA.

MEETING HELPED UNDERSTAND QUALITY EDUCATION THROUGH LIFE SKILLS



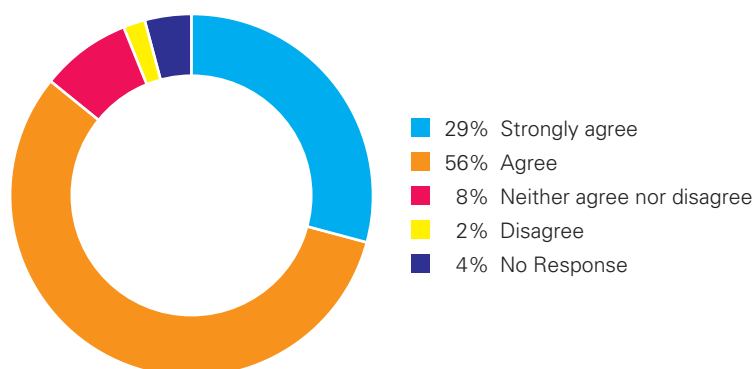
6 Way forward

Did the MEdNet Meeting help the participants define the way forward?

Participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement above, using a scale from 5 'Strongly agree' to 1 'Strongly disagree'.

A total of 58 per cent of respondents indicated that the meeting helped them understand and define the way forward, as opposed to 8 per cent who neither agreed nor disagreed with the above statement. 4 per cent of participants did not express any opinion while only 2 per cent disagreed.

THE WAY FORWARD



7 Other comments

Other comments?

Participants were encouraged to express their opinion and to share any comment, suggestion or recommendation with the organizers of the MEdNet Meeting. Below are some reflections:

- The invitation and the key note of HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal was inspiring.
- A suggested definition for life skills: life skills could be considered as personal and social competencies and behaviours that a person should have to be self-confident and active member within the community.
- The different and diverse background of participants enriched this 'dense' meeting. I hope concrete actions will be taken. Hard work needs to be done on the policy level with our governments and ministries.
- We could have spent more time discussing, defining and conceptualizing the 'learning to live together' or citizenship education topic. This is much needed and almost warrants a separate meeting in itself.

- Given the context in MENA, the political tensions, the low quality of education, the high presence of refugees and internally displaced persons, I believe the agenda of life skills with substantial focus on citizenship education should be prioritized and implemented especially in formal and informal education areas targeting children and adolescents.
- Participation of young people in the meeting would be very relevant.
- Continuous communication is needed with countries to measure the advancement in merging the life skills in the educational, social and economic aspects.
- Insufficient/limited time allocated for group work.
- Due to time constraints, some intensive sessions and presentations were passed by very quickly.
- Endorsement of Ministries of Education is of paramount importance to ensure the smooth implementation of life skills in MENA countries.
- The presence of participants from several countries has enriched the significant topic of the MEdNet Meeting. IYF expertise was an added value.
- Consider providing space/time for delegates from ministries to socialize and gather. This was an important experience as result of group work (#3).
- Follow-up actions to the objectives of the MEdNet Meeting and further communications are needed.

**For more information
visit our Website:**
www.oosci-mena.org

UNICEF Middle East and North Africa

Regional Office

P.O. Box 1551

Amman 11821

Jordan

Tel: +962-6-550-2400

Fax: +962-6-553-8880

Email: menaosci@unicef.org

Website: www.unicef.org/mena