

British Council
Building Resilience to Radicalisation in MENA
Evidence Session
25 October 2016

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Chair

Hello. Sorry we are running a bit late. I do apologise. There will be people on this side of the enormous horseshoe who will come and go no doubt throughout this. There are others due to come, and I know that some people have to go off to other things; such is life in this extraordinary and strange place. Thank you very much for coming, all of you. This is the third of our evidence sessions. The first one we had was on defining what radicalisation really is and decoding what that might mean from an academic perspective. The second one was what has been done in response to that: looking at organisations and looking at individuals on the ground. This is on the education and the skills side of things, as you know. I am very pleased to welcome you all here, and thank you for coming so far. We have people from Spain, Jordan, Canada, Marseille and Brighton. We are very grateful to you for being here. We do have two hours. We may finish early or whatever because it is flexible. We shall see how it goes.

The minutes are being taken throughout. Everything is being recorded and will appear on the website so everybody can see what it is that we are doing and what progress we are making. We are going to start with some introductions from each of you, which would be terrific, and then we will do questions. There are three topics that we have identified. One is on the education, skills and training side of things. Another is on the ground perspective and where things are at the moment, and then the strategies for positive interventions. We may move around those areas. It

might not be so clearly defined as that; we shall see how it goes. I suppose it is easiest to go along the line. If I could ask you – we do have biographies of you here but they are full of words I cannot say, and they are very complicated and difficult. It would be lovely for you could perhaps say who you are, your background and what you do before you give your little bit, if that is alright with you.

Eugenie Teasley

My name is Eugenie Teasley. I am very excited to be here, thank you for the invite. I am currently the chief executive and the head of a new UK education charity foundation called the Goodall Foundation, and my chairman, Andrew, is here with me today as well. I am not an expert in the Middle East and North Africa, but I am a lapsed teacher and have been working in and around education for the last 12 years. I taught in London. I did a Master's in social and cultural studies in education over at Berkeley, and when I moved back to the UK I set up a youth charity called Spark+Mettle, which is spelt M-E-T-T-L-E. It is not an electrician or a welders; it is about developing character resilience and soft skills, which I will talk a little bit more about, in marginalised young people. We started doing that in the UK and now it has widened.

We have just finished the first year of a very successful programme in the Middle East and North Africa across seven countries, in partnership with the British council and funded by HSBC, to develop life skills. It is programme that is aimed at 15 to 16 year olds there. It is a blended learning programme called Taqaddam, which means move forward in Arabic. The programme is about equipping young people with a wide set of enduring personal and professional strengths and skills that will enable them to lead successful and fulfilling lives. I would say that it is a programme that does not directly try to counter any radicalisation, but indirectly it might help promote prosocial behaviour, socially orientated action and purposeful employment.

There are three things I want to say at the start. One is to explain what character strengths and soft skills are, because it is one of those things that nobody ever really gets. Two is to say quickly why they are important, and I can go into detail about that later. Three is to talk about the challenges that exist when trying to tackle them. What are they? They are basically the non-technical or the non-academic skills that we want to have in all the friends and colleagues we have around us, so they are qualities, behaviours and attitudes. They are things like being resilient, being a team player and being communitive. In the studies around these things everybody wants to have their own flag and stake in the ground saying what they are. For psychologists it is about things like motivation, self-regulation, resilience and coping skills.

For employers they are things like communication and interpersonal skills: decision-making and problem-solving. For the programmes that I have run, both through Spark+Mettle which we have now taken and are running through the Goodall Foundation, we use a use a blend of both. We use the core character strengths what make us who we are, and we also think about the sorts of skills that employers are looking for. They are looking for them more and more because as jobs of the future are very much up in the air, including in the Middle East and North Africa, these are quite useful as transferable skills, so whatever the jobs market they will probably be useful.

Why are they important? They are good for everybody. They are good for students and young people themselves. They are good for the teachers that are trying to support them. They are good for employers. They are good for the economy, and they are good for society at large. The Early Intervention Foundation, which is an organisation here in London, has done lots of research into these, as have many other people. They have shown that in comparison to cognitive ability when assessed when children are 10 years old, social and emotional skills are more important for general mental health wellbeing in adult life, such as greater life satisfaction. They are just as important for other socioeconomic and labour market outcomes, such as being employed.

What is depressing is that in the UK children who grow up in poorer households tend to exhibit lower levels of these strengths and skills, even by the age of three. There is a suggestion that we need to tackle these early on. They are good for teachers, having been a teacher. Education comes from the Latin word *educare*, which does not mean to pour in and to indoctrinate but to bring out. It is about what can we bring out in these young people and help them flourish and fulfil their potential. It is good for teachers and that is important, but it is very hard to know how to do that sometimes. It is good for employers, but there is a skills mismatch, and I am sure that others here will talk about this, particularly in MENA.

There was a poll conducted in 2015 where the factors most looked for in candidates for MENA employers was communication, collaboration and leadership. These are just these sorts of things that I am talking about. Young people themselves in the region find them very important too. In Bahrain people skills is the number one thing that Generation Y think are important, it is leadership skills via young children in the United Arab Emirates and team skills are what young people in Qatar deem most important. There are two more things. They are good for the economy. There was a report last year by Development Economics on behalf of McDonald's, maybe we will put that in pre-emphasis, saying that better soft skills development would contribute £88 billion to the UK economy each year. I do not have comparative figures for the MENA region, but that is interesting to think about as we move to jobs of the future.

Finally, these character strengths and soft skills development are good for society. As I say, it does not necessarily directly connect to anti-radicalisation but one of our ultimate outcomes for the Taqaddam programme, for example, is for participants to make a positive contribution to their communities and wider society. There are challenges in trying to develop these strengths and skills in young people. As I said, people know what they are when they see them and they get them, but they are hard to pinpoint and clarify. It is a bit like trying to hold a cloud. Even if you have many of them you are not necessarily going to engage in prosocial behaviour. You can be incredibly resilient and gritty and you can go and get involved in non-prosocial things.

Chuka Umunna did a lot of work a few years ago around gangs and entrepreneurial zeal amongst them and that is one example of how these strengths and skills, if not channelled appropriately, can end up going down the wrong line in society's opinion. My hope and aim through the Goodall Foundation and the work that we do, both in MENA and more broadly, is to create data-rich and engaging learning programmes and often blended learning programmes. We use technology and media along with facilitators and teachers in order to develop and track this very nebula, soft stuff so that we can empower people to change their lives and the lives of their communities for the better.

Chair

Thank you very much, Eugenie.

Tayyar Sukru Cansizoglu

My name is Tayyar Sukru Cansizoglu. I am working as Senior Regional Protection Coordinator for the United Nations Refugee Agency in the regional office in Amman, Jordan. It is first a pleasure to be here and to be given the opportunity to talk about the educational challenges and the activities that the humanitarian agencies are undertaking in response to the Syria crisis. I am not so sure whether I should tell you more about the UN Refugee Agency. It is the main UN agency mandated to help refugees worldwide, and this year it has the highest number of persons of concern ever registered since the Second World War.

There are about 62 million persons of concern to whom UNHCR provides protection and support. What we are doing in the Middle East and North Africa, as you are well aware, is coordinating the

response on this displacement that is taking place as a result of the conflicts in Iraq, Yemen and Syria. The situation in the region requires a much wider response than ever in terms of protection and humanitarian needs. What we are talking about here are about 4.8 million Syrian refugees in the region only, which is much bigger than the population of Ireland today. They all come with different skill-sets and competencies. We are looking, together with the development agencies including UNDP and the World Bank, at how we can reach out to refugees, along with national governments, to help them better contribute to the economy and society. UNHCR has a budget of \$2.1 billion for 2016, and we are delivering protection and assistance together with local and international partners and the national governments in the region mainly.

Chair

That is great, thank you.

Giulia Marchesini

Hello, good morning. Thank you for inviting me and giving me this opportunity to present myself and to present our work.

Chair

You are very welcome.

Giulia Marchesini

My name is Giulia Marchesini and I am the Senior Partnership Specialist at the Centre for Mediterranean Integration (CMI). The Centre for Mediterranean Integration is a partnership that brings together governments from the north and the south of the Mediterranean: our members from the south are Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestinian authority and from the north are Italy, France and Greece. Among our members we have also development actors including the World Bank and European Investment Bank, Agence Française de Développement (French Agency for Development), and some local authorities: the city of Marseille and the region Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur.

The mandate of CMI is to provide regional public goods in the Mediterranean and to have a regional and cooperative approach on the issues that need to be tackled in a regional way manner in order to achieve peace and stability. For this reason, we work on violent extremism and development. What is the linkage between these two issues? Violent extremism has direct consequences over development. However, radicalisation and violent extremism are new issues for development actors and clear avenues for collaboration need to be identified while avoiding the security dimension which is definitely out of the mandate of development actors.

We cannot fight terrorism because it is not our mandate, but there is an interest in looking at how development actors can contribute in the field in preventing radicalisation and violent extremism. This implies looking at the causes, trying to understand what the linkages are and how we can implement concrete actions to counter radicalisation. Of course radicalisation has direct consequences over development, for instance one terrorist attack in Tunisia has direct costs to the Tunisian economy. This is so huge that it does not make any sense to provide development solutions for this country and not to focus on the big issues: tackling the roots of violent extremism. It is not something we are used to do, so we are trying to learn from each-others (i.e. development actors) and to seek the best approach. For this we decided to structure our intervention in three main pillars.

The first one is awareness-building because there is not enough knowledge shared on these issues. In particular, we are trying to identify the valuable knowledge that is produced in the south and that is not so well known. We easily find very good research coming from the north, but on the south of the Mediterranean it is more difficult. We think this is part of the response: the fact that people in the south get empowered and get to know the issues much better. The second pillar we identified is supporting pilot innovative solutions. Maybe I will come to this later. The third pillar, in the long-term, because as a development actor we look at the long-term perspective, is to identify what are the public policies that can be implemented in the Mediterranean region in order to prevent radicalisation.

Talking about public policies, of course education, skills and learning are some of the most evident sectors in which development actors can do something. The idea is to shift from education for all to learning for all. If we ever look at the data we see that the recruits that have joined Daesh from the south of the Mediterranean are not illiterate people. According to a new report published by the World Bank Middle East and North Africa Region Mena Economic Monitor - on 'Economic and Social Inclusion to Prevent Violent Extremism', 69% of these recruits have at least a secondary level of education, so they are even better placed than the average in countries from the South of the Mediterranean. There is also a huge number of engineers among foreign fighters. What this means is that we have to focus on the teaching methods and programmes, and not on access to education.

On this, we think that the approach is to shift from a quantitative to a qualitative aspect. I agree with my colleague that says that for example non-cognitive skills are very important in this respect. The idea is to try to foster the critical thinking and the open-mindedness of the youth and to try to empower them. Once you get out of school and you have a diploma and you do not find a job, because the unemployment rate in the MENA region is one of the highest in the world, of course you do not feel included. You are excluded from society and from the economy and that causes a lot of frustration. There are a lot of consequences that comes into the picture. The idea for us is to try and work on the education, as this is essential to contribute to inclusive growth. Maybe I can come back later on the question of specific issues. Thank you very much.

Chair

Thank you very much.

Aly Jetha

Thank you. Thanks for letting me speak, for inviting me here and for wanting to hear about our work. I hope you feel that was a good decision after I have finished.

Chair

We shall see.

Aly Jetha

My name is Aly Jetha. I am the CEO of a company called Big Bad Boo. Big Bad Boo is a children's media company that develops highly engaging entertainment that has educational content built into it. We have been working in the area of promoting civic education with children for around 10 years, and we have recently been doing a lot of work in countering violent extremism. The types of products that we develop are animated cartoons that go on television, comic books and academic curricula that go into schools. The philosophy that we have is that if you are going to be effective in teaching children your best bet is to make sure that they are engaged and they want to watch the content as entertainment. The more engaged they are the more you will teach them. All

of our cartoons are made by artists and storytellers from companies like Disney and Warner Bros. We also use childhood development psychologists from Sesame Workshop, departments of education and local experts.

A product that we are very well known for is called 1001 Nights. It is the old tales of One Thousand and One Nights, and we recreated 52 of the stories so that every episode teaches a different civic lesson: do not cheat, do not steal, follow the rule of law, respect other people's beliefs and opinions, etc. The animated series airs on television as commercial entertainment in 80 countries around the world, including in every single Arabic speaking country and almost all Asian countries. Its global audience is about 75 million people a year, and it is the number one show on commercial television in the Middle East in all Arabic speaking countries. We have also developed 1001 Nights into a curriculum that goes into classrooms where, for a 40-week period, every week the kids watch a new episode of the show, they discuss it and they go home to their parents and they talk about the ideas.

We do a lot of data monitoring on this programme, and one of the things that we do is pre-value assessments before any exposure to the materials and then a post-exposure values test. We use these two tests to measure the change in appreciation of key civic values as a result of the programme. In a recent implementation in a country with severe extremist challenges: 65% of those kids that were intolerant of people from outside groups in their pre-values tests -the basis of sectarianism- became prosocial afterwards; 48% who were intolerant of different ideas became more accepting afterwards; 25% who preferred violent or aggressive methods of dispute resolution went to non-violent; and the same sorts of data appeared for gender equality as well as tolerance for different ideas. This content is now being used for specific de-radicalisation programmes that undermine the narratives of different extremist groups around the world. We also have a global partnership with Unicef where we are using the materials with Syrian refugees throughout the Middle East and parts of Europe.

1001 Nights targets kids between the ages of 6 and 12. From our perspective, if your objective is to prevent radicalisation, focusing on this age group is extraordinary important. It is highly unlikely that somebody who has grown up believing in non-violence, who is empathetic, who believes in gender equality and tolerance of different ideas from the age of 6 to to 14 will suddenly pick up a gun at the age of 16 and say it is a good idea to shoot somebody. The value systems that underpin extremism are developed over a very long period of time and from a very young age.

Our data also supports this. In one country where we implemented 1001 Nights with kids between the ages of 8 and 10, our pre-values tests found that 8% of 8 year olds were deemed to be hostile to outside groups. Amongst 9 year olds, this number increased to 18%. And amongst 10 year olds it went up to 25%. So between the ages of 8 and 10 children are learning the concept of "otherness" and whether "otherness" is positive or negative. After using our materials, that 8% went down to 6%, the 18% went down to 7% and the 25% went down to 5%. Interestingly, the same data trends were found for gender equality and tolerance for different ideas and beliefs. It is during that period when they learn those concepts. Other ideas, like empathy and violent versus non-violent dispute resolution are learned even younger than 6-11. Our data and experiences show that the further upstream you go in terms of teaching core values that undermine extremism, the more successful you are going to be at preventing extremist narratives from taking root.

Downstream programs that try to de-radicalise or teach tolerance to 18 year olds who are already radicalised is extremely difficult. Unfortunately, we have to deal with the fact that extremism is going to be with us for a very long time and in our opinion, the most effective long-term solution is looking upstream and changing the ethos of people to make sure they are more tolerant, more inclusive and more diverse as a preventive measure.

Chair

Those are good results.

Moussa Bourekba

First, thank you for inviting me and for being part of this impressive panel. My name is Moussa Bourekba. I am French and now based in Spain. I am working at the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs. CIDOB is a Barcelona-based think tank where, among many departments, we have a strong MENA department. I also teach international relations in the MENA region and at the Ramon Llull University in Barcelona. I would say I have two hats. One is dealing with MENA-related issues. Among those includes violent extremism in the MENA region and in Europe with a specific focus on France. Most of my time is devoted to the SAHWA project. It is a project funded by the European Commission which I will talk about. Basically, my current areas of study now are trying to approach violent extremism as if it was a phenomenon similar to migration: meaning that you have pull and push factors, and you should try and analyse as many of them in order to have an accurate approach of this phenomenon. Education, skills and unemployment is one element of a much broader spectrum of causes and motivation to join violent extremist groups. SAHWA is a project that brings together 15 research centres from Europe and from Arab countries. From Arab countries we work with partners based in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon. In each country we have a research organisation doing the research. Following my colleague Giulia's comment on the poor amount of research done MENA-based researchers, we are collaborating with them and we have roughly three objectives.

The first one is conceptualising youth, and this is something that is definitely important when it comes to violent extremism to the extent in Europe/ Western countries, we tend to see youth as a life stage only or as an age without responsibilities. Our research suggests that youth is a condition more than only a life stage, at least in our countries of study. We have a huge amount of young people from the MENA region who are trapped between childhood and waiting to become adults. To do so they need to be employed, mostly because one of the compulsory steps to become an adult is to get married. To get married you need to have a job in order to be economically independent, so you can see how education, employment and the fact of becoming an adult are crucial in this regard. The second objective has to do with mapping social and political change in the region and having a youth sensitive approach.

Finally, SAHWA is a policy-oriented project. We try to inform policy-makers about the views, conditions and perspectives of young people in the region with a range of tools and with a unique data set; we do it through public events, closed door seminars and some policy briefings. Many events were held and will be held in Brussels, in Arab countries and at the national level.

Regarding the topics covered by SAHWA, the first main research axis is youth education, employment and social inclusion. The second one has to do with youth social and political engagement. The third one is about youth cultures, values and perceptions. We then have other cross-cutting topics such as gender issues, migration, public policies and international cooperation in the field of youth for those countries.

Now, regarding the methodology, our approach is different from what we have seen until today in the field of youth studies in the region. Although It means that we have done a lot of research, but there is a huge gap regarding what young people from the region think about the issues that there are faced with and how they address these issues. In this regard we developed an extensive survey throughout the five countries of study within the framework of SAHWA. We went to face-to-face interview 10,000 people, so this creates a huge, unique comparative data set in order to have an original approach but also a country-to-country one.

At the qualitative level, we carried out about 400 qualitative interviews through focus groups, narrative interviews and other ethnographic techniques. I will wait for the questions and answers, but one of the things that I definitely want to insist on is having this focus on youth, at least for the MENA region, for people being trapped between childhood and adulthood. This has to do with education and employment. As Giulia Marchesini said, one of the biggest factors is youth unemployment rate in the MENA region: it is double of that of the global average. There is one particular pattern that is definitely relevant when it comes to violent extremism. One key fact of youth employment in this region is that education does not necessarily lead to employment. Secondly, the more that you are educated the fewer your chances are to get a job. This is something crucial when tackling violent extremism through the perspective of relative deprivation.

Chair

I will throw it open to my colleagues.

Stephen Gethins

Firstly, that was really fascinating and really interesting. This throws up a number of questions. I have got a number of questions for you all, but I should not be selfish. Aly, I was interested in what you were saying from a commercial perspective in getting some of these messages across from an early age. You mentioned the 8 to 10 years old group. I throw this open because, Eugenie, you may have some thoughts on this as well. At what age should you be starting this civic education with kids? When is too early?

Aly Jetha

My personal opinion, and that of most development psychologists, is you can never start too early. Most development psychologists will tell you that people develop their core value systems between the ages of 1 and 14, and during this period different ideas and values are developing at different points in time. Between 1 and five people learn empathy, non-violent dispute resolution and primary relationships. If a child at the age of three sees one parent strike another parent, that will scar them for the rest of their life. Non-violent dispute resolution is very visceral. If you see a child and you grab something out of their hand that they are not supposed to have, that will teach them that is an appropriate behaviour. Between 6 and 9 they are learning concepts of right and wrong that underpin civil rights and the rule of law. Between 10 and 14 they are not learning as much as they are organising how their belief system should be defended. Do you resort to mob justice or do we turn to a court of law? Do you take what you want or is there a democratic process and laws that we live by?

In different countries we are working across all age groups. In Canada, for example, the government has said that the best way that we can counter extremism is to teach pluralism and inclusion at a very young age. So there we are developing programming purely from a commercial standpoint that normalises diversity and inclusion. It is not heavy handed in any way, but it makes it very innate that people with different backgrounds and religions respect each other, and they live together. It is simply normalising pluralism. Between the ages of 6 and 9 we are doing stuff that teaches the non-violent dispute resolution and the civic education. For older audiences, we are developing drama and superhero types of programmes. I also do not think that the focus should simply be at risk youth of specific groups or regions. We have to rethink the ethos of all youth. Somebody who is radicalised in Britain, in Canada, the United States or France is reacting to exclusion and a disenfranchisement. As much as you have to teach civic education and non-violence to a targeted at risk group of people, we also have to make society a little bit kinder and nicer so that specific groups of youth don't feel excluded, marginalized or disenfranchised and that starts at a very young age.

Eugenie Teasley

To add to that, I would agree with that and it is really interesting what you say, Aly. There are various studies done in this area by psychologists. Those at the University of Sussex who have done a lot into this discovered that when they were trying to teach empathy and foster empathy amongst young children the impact that they see if they do it in schools, and this through media in the way that Aly might do it so it might be a bit less engaging, is that the effects last as long as they are in the classroom. The problem is when the kids step outside again and go back into the real world where they hear their parents and people in the community talking in one way. I absolutely agree that those effects can dwindle. I would be fascinated to know how long the effects last if you track those as 65%: whether that is in a month's time or two months' time.

You can have that surge, which is great and good to embed, but there needs to be much broader societal things done in order to maximise it. Yes, early intervention is obviously key, but there needs to be stuff done about later intervention too. That is where socially actioned projects service stuff in US terms: where you can proactively develop programmes where young people can develop skills that might be useful for employment whilst also engaging prosocial behaviour and taking on social action projects etc. It is quite a nice way for them to get both and think of the benefits of feeling empathetic towards a broader community whilst also developing skills that might be useful on their CV or resume when they go into writing them.

Giulia Marchesini

If I can add a small thing from a development perspective, the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank launched a programme that is called 'Education for Competitiveness: a Framework for action', and the idea is really to promote a new vision for education in the Middle East and North Africa Region. In this new vision for education, one that promotes critical thinking, creativity and innovation they are saying that what is required is a comprehensive, holistic approach to education that spans from early childhood to university in order to have an effect on the young people of the Mediterranean region. There is a focus on the fact that there is a continuum from early age until university. You cannot concentrate on one slot. You need to work through all the ages.

Chair

On that, Giulia, you were talking about piloting innovative solutions that you would come onto later. What are those?

Giulia Marchesini

For example, I would like to focus on an initiative that we managed to come across, and it is the development by some Tunisian intellectuals and academics of a MOOC. MOOC means Massive Open Online Course, and it is articulated around a seven-week module that has been developed by these researchers and university intellectuals and academics on radicalisation and terrorism. It has been conceived and it is being prepared in order to be proposed in the education system in Tunisia. There is an agreement that is going to be signed with the Ministry of Education in order to have the students be sensitised to these issues. The origins and causes are analysed, and the MOOC aims to better understand the phenomena and to promote the critical thinking needed not to be victims of this recruitment. The objective is to have it included as a mandatory module in all Bachelor Degrees in humanities, and as an optional module in engineering degrees, all over Tunisia. It is something that we are very proud of because it is an initiative that is coming from the south. It is addressing the issue in a very concrete manner and will be implemented in schools notably. What

we are trying to do is to help them and to have a regional approach, and to maybe spread this experience throughout the region in the future. This is just one example.

Baroness Suttie

If I could ask specifically, Tayyar, our guest from UNHCR, as far as I understand there is quite a lot of research that has been done into the lost generations of children from refugees who have had not education. I wondered if you could say a little bit more about that and if any of you have any more statistics on the children of refugees who are not receiving education at all and the impact on radicalisation. Could you also say a little about what responses UNHCR is doing on the ground? I work regularly at the moment in Jordan, and I know that the figures in Jordan are relatively impressive. I think it is only 16% or 17% in Jordan where children are not receiving education, but even there is it an area of concern. I wondered what could be done on the ground to try and help this.

Tayyar Sukru Cansizoglu

The age group of 15-24 constitutes one third of the Syrian population as we speak. Out of that around half are not going to school. As my colleague says, there are a lot of issues related to the access, availability and appropriateness of the schools, an acceptance of the curriculum that is taught in the schools, and the quality that is provided. We need to look at these issues all together. If you look at primary, secondary or tertiary education, starting from kindergarten, what is more important is to see education as a continuum. We need to support education at every level. One of the key issues that you always see is that the refugee children did not necessarily regular school attendance before they reached the new countries.

We have seen kids that have been displaced multiple times in Syria before they have sought refuge, for example, in Jordan or Lebanon. In those cases we need to understand that the knowledge and skills that are required for these refugee children to thrive at school might no longer be on par with the children in these countries. It is about how we can build their knowledge back again and, by doing so, take into account the issues: the fact that they are refugees from Syria, and that they have experienced displacements which can sometimes be very traumatic. In the course of the displacement, they may have been separated from their families. It is about how we are going to deal with all those feelings and experiences at this age. What we would like to emphasis is that our focus has always been to look at the better side of the picture. The young children have demonstrated extraordinary resourcefulness in identifying the challenges and finding solutions for them. We need to see how the majority of these youngsters are looking for an opportunity to develop and contribute to society. If they were given the opportunities and have their educations prioritised within family's budgets in this region then they will not necessary fall into negative coping mechanisms.

When I am talking about negative coping mechanisms, as Moussa rightly indicated, there are many factors. Some children go into child labour, some of them falling into worst forms of child labour, and some girls find themselves in child marriage. Some people resort to other forms of recruitment that might not necessarily be positive. In all of these situations, what we really need to focus on is working with them, to give them a voice and to understand what their aspirations are. Before the conflict, the primary school enrolment rate in Syria was 93%. This is a country where the population grew six times in 50 years. Despite this, by 2010 they had reached a remarkable level of enrolment. The enrolment ratio for university students was 25% before the crisis. Today we talk about at most 2% to 4% enrolment in universities among Syrian refugees, depending on the country.

Baroness Suttie

What was that figure?

Tayyar Sukru Cansizoglu

At the moment, 2% to 4% of Syrians who are at university age are attending university today. We need to create role models. We need to show to Syrians that there is something to aspire to. That could only be done when we are working with them, understanding them and supporting them throughout this whole process. You were asking the question of what can we really do. Education is indeed the primary vehicle that can lift people out of poverty, as we see today in this region. 86 % of Syrian refugees in Jordan, according to the latest survey, are below the national poverty line. They are in need of support. In order to be able to do this, all stakeholders need to look at the different forms of education, as I said, and to remove all possible challenges and to give them a way forward.

One of them is language, and language is an enabler.

To be able to speak the language of the country of asylum allows refugees to have access to the labour markets. They can access the services that are available in this country and they will be able to plan their life further. UNHCR is working together with the Turkish Government and other universities to build Turkish language competency among Syrian refugees in Turkey. Similarly, together with the British Council, we are working in Jordan and Lebanon on how we can improve the competency in English and help them acquire this important linguistic skill. This needs to be addressed at every level. I believe that we need to continue robust programming to give language skills to refugees so that they will be seamlessly integrated into the society where they live.

We need to also look, as my colleague said, at the transition from education to employment. It is not easy. We need to first underline the fact that refugees are living under a different legal and policy framework. They need work permits, and a work permit is not always granted. They need the ability to have their educational qualifications recognised. This may not necessarily happen. We need to look at all those elements and remove the barriers legal- and policy-wise in order to allow them to move forward. I have to say that there are very strong efforts that have been put in place. Last year at the London Conference, the compacts that have been agreed to for Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey have led to magnificent results.

Today, we are speaking of 26,000 work permits that have been given by the Jordanian Government to Syrian refugees, and labour markets have been opened up to Syrian refugees in Turkey as well. With all those efforts, what we need to continue is working together with all refugee girls and boys and try to establish, as much as possible, the multiple education avenues that will allow them to realise their full potential. At the core of this process, citizenship education, human rights education as well as life skills must be included. Without that, as Aly mentioned, it is impossible for us to be able to see how we can help further this group. Only through this will we be in the position to prevent, hopefully, a lost generation. Otherwise, it might already be too late.

Aly Jetha

Can I also address that? First of all, Tayyar made a fantastic statement overall but the way that children deal with trauma and the way that adults deal with trauma is very different. Children are extremely resilient. They always look to what can they do in the future. For Syrian parents, many of them cannot let go past and what they have lost. Children inherently want to walk forward. We have been working very closely with Unicef on the lost generation issue, and from our perspective we have been looking at it from three different angles. One is that children have not gone to school. They have lost several years of matriculation and they need to catch up. The second is that

the refugee crisis is so big in many countries that it is causing a lot of strain, and that strain making its way back into the schools system. What you will find is that Syrian children and refugees who go to school in Lebanon, for example, face incredible amounts of cruelty from the host Lebanese populations. It is not that they are cruel people: Lebanon has been very kind and generous with the number of refugees it has accepted, but the strains that exist have created repercussions on a lot of the kids – and they do not want to go to school, in many cases. That needs to be dealt with structurally, in a sense.

The third and last thing is just dealing with the trauma, because, even if you educate kids and you manage to reach them, children who have undergone sustained political or ethnic violence have a very special type of trauma that develops in them, which needs to be unwound in a very specific way. Number one is that you have to reset their normative values in terms of violent/non-violent dispute resolution and how they engage with people, i.e. their normative patterns. Number two is that you have to unwind negative stereotypes, because violence has been propagated against them in the name of a specific religion, culture or ethnicity. Their own role models embody those same prejudices which are the reason this violence has happened to them. You also have to give them notions of what it is like to live in a world where war does not exist, because many of them do not know what that world is like.

Through our work, we have found that many of the children who have gone through this trauma are very difficult to reach through human interaction. It is another human being going up to them and saying, ‘What have you gone through? Can you talk?’ It is almost too real to face that, so when we use entertainment it has the ability to reach them in a certain way. Even though you have a very negative society around them and a negative reality around them, the reason why this stuff works is because you can use entertainment to create positive role models. The reason why this works is because when children see an entertainment character, they believe it is real. When a child sees Elmo, they think Elmo is real. That character can form a positive role model that is directly in contrast to the reality of what they are experiencing and set positive normative values and positive methods of interactions. There are years of studies that show how entertainment impacts children and how these lessons carry with them through their adult lives.

I would finally add that the “lost generation” is framed as a humanitarian crisis, but it is also a security crisis. If you think about Daesh right now, it is 60,000 kids run amok. We now have 6 million refugee children who have lost their purpose, who do not have a place to live, who are very angry and who do not know anything other than the violence they have experienced all their lives. Their susceptibility to recruitment and radicalization if nothing is done is a very real security issue as well.

Lord Purvis

It is fascinating. Taking a step back, of the various countries that you all work in and have links with, are there any – perhaps with the exception of Syria, given the severity of the conflict – countries where you think there are coherent educational strategies at a central-government level, where you believe the policymakers at the centre have a good understanding or there is a clear policy framework across the country?

Moussa Bourekba

If I may, part of our questionnaire coming for the SAHWA youth survey had to do with education. Actually, from a quantitative and qualitative point of view, we asked what young people thought and then did some analysis of the policies implemented by different governments. We found out was that education systems in the region definitely fail to make education lead to employment. From a quantitative point of view, we can see that Morocco or Tunisia for instance, government

expenditure on education is higher than the average European level. Therefore, a lot of money is invested in education. They spend about 6% of GDP. That represents a huge expense.

Now, when you ask young people about their education and so on, the first thing they say is that education does not lead to employment. They underline the lack of practical application of whatever they are taught. They also underline that they do not have internships; they do not learn skills – not even soft skills such as doing a CV presentation or learning interview techniques. Finally, they are dropped in the labour market with an engineering degree without being able to go for a job interview. This is something that was quite striking. In many qualitative interviews, young people often expressed the wish that they had never spent money on education. Besides, there is this huge distortion between what they are told and taught in terms of democracy, rule of law and human rights and what they find outside the class. This is actually one of the topics that is researched, in terms of how this distortion could feed violent extremism, for instance.

In other terms, just to reflect on what was said, I would like to insist on One thing: from what I understood, we suspect that the quality of education, its mismatch with the labour market or education in general could possibly feed violent extremism – being characterised by the lack of tolerance, by people not being open minded and so on. Another point I would like to stress is that, when dealing with this issue with young people from this region, almost nobody was talking about ideological or political reasons for joining these groups. The overwhelming majority suspected financial or material reasons as being the main push factors to join a violent extremist group.

This is not anecdotal, because once you actually study the communications of groups such as Daesh or Al-Qaeda, one can figure out that it is not about beheading; they are selling dreams to people. You have job offers sent out to young people who live in Morocco or Indonesia. You are promised by these groups that you will have a house and a wife; you will be part of a project, a cause. Finally, the choice of joining them is presented as a way to join a society that has an interest in you, which is not the case of the majority of people in the region. This is one thing I wanted to insist on for the conversation.

Giulia Marchesini

If I may, I think it is really striking that in the MENA region the resources allocated to education are, on average, more than the world average. Today MENA countries spend an average of over 5% of their GDP on education, which is higher than the world average of 4% and higher than the share spent by other regions. It is not that they do not have resources or they do not have access. Now, as you said, enrolment in primary school is almost at 100% and on the other levels it has really increased well. The problem is really the shift from a quantitative to qualitative approach has not been done, and there are some key educational challenges that are common in the region. For example, pedagogical approaches focus on rote learning. The way the lesson is taught is not trying to understand and reflect on something; it is more to learn by heart and then repeat the lesson. It does not put you in a position to adopt an attitude that will develop you as a person.

They have a very weak student-assessment system in the entire region. We do not really have data that explains what can be improved, because there is not assessment that provides data. There is widespread teacher absenteeism, which is very important. The students go to the school, but the professors are often not there. This is something that is, of course, a very delicate and sensitive topic and it has to be addressed somehow. There is a lot of private tutoring, as well. The same professors who should be at school actually do not go to school; they give private lessons to the same children sometimes. That creates a lot of disparities between the different children.

This is really just to say that there is a mindset that has to be modified a little bit in order to create something that will not lead to exclusion. It is not the poverty that is a driver for radicalisation but

the exclusion. When you are not the actor of your future because you have not been empowered in school, through your education, you cannot be an actor in the world of today – and it is much more difficult to resist.

Lord Purvis

As a follow-up question, I was wondering whether it would be fair for this inquiry to try to understand whether there are consistent factors across the region or whether it is naïve to think there is a similar type of approach to education that can be spread across North Africa and the Middle East in particular. Is it as holistic as the Western European system, where we are able to compare and contrast with Nordic countries, France and Germany? Is it worth us doing that, from your perspective, or should we look at it country-by-country? We might even look at the confessional system for different countries. I do not know whether you have any thoughts from your experience of [inaudible].

Tayyar Sukru Cansizoglu

I think what we need to look at more is, for example, that in Lebanon at the moment 25% of the population are Syrian refugees. It is 10% in Jordan, 3% in Turkey. In one of the provinces of Turkey, Kilis, the refugees are basically in the majority. If you look at those numbers, what we basically see is that sometimes there are central policies that have been enacted which might not necessarily have been followed in the provinces. It shows that the degree of willingness or commitment of the government at the central level may still need to be translated into action in the areas where refugees are.

What we also see is that, when you have a significant number of refugees, like in the case of Lebanon, education structures in almost every single place are strained. There are not enough classrooms; there are not enough teachers. Some schools have basically addressed this through double shifts. All of this really needs to be addressed, however. When we actually go to other, more remote areas, sometimes, as I said, it is not the willingness of the government, but the attitudes of the host communities that might not be so receptive. We might need to work with these communities so they will welcome refugees, so they will work with them and understand the predicaments in which they are living and try to help them.

On one side, we have a supply problem in terms of quantity and quality of education. However, there is also the demand side. Sometimes, because of the problems the refugees and others are facing, they are not seeking those services or they do not find them appropriate. They do not speak the language and they cannot really understand what is taught at school. What I would really say is that we need to look at this in terms of an area-based approach. I do not mean only the country, but within these countries there are different areas that have different challenges, and we need to find a solution. It is only through this area-based approach that we will be in a position to help them.

Eugenie Teasley

One thing I would add is that, although I do not know the specifics in terms of how it is broken up across the region, it seems as though, looking at it from the other side, the side of the employers, there is a general, regional view that the quality of education there is low. Several recent studies have indicated that even though the numbers of young people going to primary school have increased by 10% and there are more people in secondary and tertiary education than there have ever been in the region, actually, basic proficiency in literacy and numeracy are well below international averages. About 50% of children in the region are apparently not meeting those averages.

The private sector believes that it is the low quality of education that is leading them to this skills mismatch in terms of jobs and employment. If schools are there, as they are in most parts of the world, to serve and support children as they move through to adult life and become productive citizens, both in terms of the money they earn and the things there, both in the region but also elsewhere. In the UK, we are facing similar issues as well in terms of how to connect what they are learning in skills with what they need for work.

Interestingly, actually, I found that on LinkedIn this week – this is an aside – the top skills of 2016 per country and per region. And six out of 10 of the top skills searched in the UAE, in the MENA region, are all to do with computer programming. That is looking particularly at STEM and computer programming. This is things like UI, user interaction, and statistical analysis etc. Nine out of the 10 skills searched for in the UK are to do with computer programming and STEM stuff as well – and 10 out of 10 in the US. It is interesting that computer programming is actually a key piece, and STEM education in the MENA region is fairly weak and under-served for the children there now.

Lord Purvis

As a follow-up question, is there a secondary issue as to who is providing the education, whether it is a secular, municipal authority, whether it is a confessional system or whether it is through a more tribal structure in a town? That is second order compared to the quality of the teaching. You are nodding. If I can come back on that, when I was in Lebanon three weeks ago, I visited a school. What struck me was not only the lack of facilities and the fact the teaching resources are 15 years out of date; nobody is taking into consideration the need for a form of reconciliation and dialogue. Teachers have not been retrained, and they are under a huge amount of pressure. The system is very divided.

This goes especially to Aly's point. The system is structured: the classes are segregated; the teaching is segregated; almost the entire structure is segregated. The design of the system is undermining almost all of the work you are doing, Aly. It does not matter whether they are watching the TV programmes. The environment in which they are learning is acting against that on a daily basis. Is that an unfair observation?

Eugenie Teasley

In the Taqaddam programme we ran last year – I will be very brief; I am sure others have great things to say – there were unintended outcomes to the programme. We were delivering workshops. It was a blended learning programme: facilitated workshops at the beginning and the end and a competition, and then six weeks' online interactive stuff to develop strengths and skills etc. That was done in schools with teachers, and the teachers attended all the workshops as well. However, we had not anticipated the number of teachers coming up from every single country, saying, 'We do not just want to learn the content, although this is good. We want to learn how you are teaching this. How do you do this in this facilitatory and participatory style? It is something that we are just not privy to and we do not have the opportunity to learn ourselves. That is anecdotal.

Aly Jetha

We actually implement our stuff in the classroom, as well, in highly segregated environments. In Iraq, for example, we were implementing in Erbil, Baghdad and throughout the country. Even in those segregated environments, when you are teaching critical thinking and you are teaching tolerance, inclusion and diversity, it is still very powerful. For example, even with gender equality, in same-sex schools the boys that appreciated gender equality rose by 27%, and the girls by 24%. The boys actually went even higher, even though they are living in a very patriarchal society

With regard to your question before about which governments are doing it well and whether there is an approach that could be implemented across the region, all schools, all ministries of education in all countries, are suffering pretty severely – this is a lot of what Tayyar outlined – because of the strains in society. Some are handling it better than others. In Jordan, they are coming to grips with second-shift schools and trying to get everybody in school much better than other countries are. What seems to be very consistent across the board is teaching methodologies that do not employ and stimulate critical thinking. Also, there are no programmes that promote human rights and civic education.

The silver lining to this whole thing is that almost every single ministry of education I have met, including Saudi Arabia, has stated that there is a need for critical thinking and promotion of civic education. To date, I have had no objection to our programs. Most countries in the MENA region realise that there is a problem, and they are actually looking for solutions. What I have also found, though, is that there is an equal amount of fear and mistrust. On the one hand, they are happy to take learning methodologies and pedagogies that are promoted by foreign governments, but, when it comes to the content of their curriculum and what goes inside it, there is fear that we are trying to stuff western liberal views into this, and that there is an agenda.

One of the reasons why we have been successful in implementing our curriculum with ministries of education in a number of different countries is that we approached them as a private company and we say, ‘Look, you have an issue with civic education and critical thinking. We have a solution. We are not a government. If you want it, you can have it – but you have to pay to implement it.’ We go in as a private citizen, helping them solve a problem so it eliminates the perception that there is an agenda.

As a government, there are certain things that you can do, however. You can train and help them learn how to stimulate critical thinking and better teaching methodologies. However, in terms of providing curricula, which they know they need, to promote civic education, it might be something that is better left to the hand of the private sector, perhaps with the support of funding in some way. When the local government evaluates a program that they like that comes from a private party, it is easier for them. There is no question, however, that the governments in the MENA region are looking for content and solutions that promotes civic and peace education as well as critical thinking. They are in the middle of it and are very aware that the problem exists.

Eugenie Teasley

We have had success in embedding it in both Qatar and Egypt. In Qatar’s Supreme Education Council, we embedded the programme there within the first year – and also in the Ministry of Education. In Egypt, as well, we had success embedding it across the national institutes there as well. I agree that there is interest in trying to embed it; it is about trying to get that balance of what that looks like.

Chair

There is interest, but there is a conflict. They know they want it, but yet they know it might disrupt things – or bring in this woolly minded liberalism.

Aly Jetha

There is a desire to have things that promote these ideas, but they do not want them to be western, liberal, democratic ideas that come in. When we develop our content, we actually overlay the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human-rights tenets. When we speak with governments in the Muslim world, we say we are teaching Islamic values and we work with Muslim scholars to build the content to ensure we are teaching these core values: do not cheat; do

not steal; respect other people's opinions – and that sort of thing. I think they want it, but they want to make sure it is done in a way that is respectful of their cultures and traditions. It is not so much a conflict; it is about the methodology of doing it.

Eugenie Teasley

Yes. We do it in terms of bridging the employability-skills gap. It is about teaching these skills that will support the students and help them move into gainful employment.

Tayyar Sukru Cansizoglu

In the case of refugees, we also see there are unintended consequences of some of the decisions the governments take. As I mentioned, the fact the Syrian refugees have not attended school for a number of years will require them to have separate classes to catch up with the rest of their peers, which may be offered in another school. Sometimes you have these double shifts where Syrians go to the afternoon classes while the morning classes are for Lebanese students, for example. There are very legitimate reasons why they need to do this, but I have to say there are consequences, unintended consequences, which might in fact be harmful in the long-term.

Therefore, what we really need to see is that all of this catch-up and non-formal education – or non-standardised education – should be dropped for a formal education. As soon as Syrian refugees finish their accelerated learning programmes and catch up with their peers, they should be admitted to classrooms together with the host community children. That is the only way we will be in the position to further the concepts that we would like to teach through citizenship and human rights. Prolonging this separation is really unhelpful and, as I said, it might even create harm. We should really keep this 'do no harm' principle in mind in all activities and projects we implement. Perhaps at one point the special measures were well justified, but we also need to look at the longer-term impacts it might have on children.

Moussa Bourekba

I would just add something. I see a sort of conflict – or maybe a red line. Yes, some governments advocate for critical thinking, but only in some specific fields. We are talking about violent extremism. A lot of governments in the region are pushing for critical thinking regarding radical ideologies such as Jihadi-Salafism, for instance, but we should not forget the authoritarian nature of many regimes in the MENA region. In this respect, promoting critical thinking is often seen as a way to possibly jeopardise their own interests in remaining in power. This is the red line. It is also something that came out from our interviews within the framework of SAHWA project.

Lord Purvis

I will probably move on to the next broad section now. I am very interested to hearing about the unintended consequences. It is perhaps anecdotal, but I saw and heard this for myself in Lebanon. This is especially the case when some of the Syrian children, who have been through the donor community, the UNHCR and others, have received brand new equipment, backpacks and school uniforms. The Lebanese children do not have that – and children are exceptionally observant, as to how they see other children and the facilities that are provided. I take that point entirely.

It is following on to some extent, but I was wondering whether, when it comes to the setting of the curriculum across the region, there is any consistent and ongoing dialogue between ministries and officials that you are aware of to discuss how curricula are set. Are discussions taking place about updating curricula in the context of what you have been outlining and the change in the need for education? Are you aware of any of that happening? Giulia, I was interested in your dialogue

forum; does something like that happen in a wider sense about the wider curriculum being offered or not?

Giulia Marchesini

It is actually still a very sensitive issue in countries in the south of the Mediterranean. They are aware of the subject; they are aware of the risks. They are in the phase of taking stock of this. The direct response to this challenge has not been implemented. There are some initiatives – and I mentioned one. It comes from an independent person in Tunisia, who is a professor in Tunisia, an academic; they are convinced of the idea. They are proposing a seven-week course to the minister of education in order to understand the dynamics of radicalisation and terrorism. This is something that is going to be widespread in Tunisia, but it is still the initiative of some individual intellectuals who are going into the public sphere.

Of course, in other countries they are also making their reflections, but, as you mentioned, there has not been a huge spread of public policies in order to tackle this subject in the field of education. We are still in the phase where we are taking stock of what is going on and trying to understand how we can tackle this in a better way. This is also what the development actors are trying to do. There are active projects or programmes in the education field in these countries. They want to see how they can implement this component in the financing they are doing, for example. There is not a massive focus on this, however. I think it is still a little bit too early to be at this stage, but I am confident it will come soon.

Aly Jetha

Whenever I have gone to different countries to meet with ministries, on almost all occasions it has been stimulated by somebody else in the government who has seen our programming and sees a need for it within the ministry. Ministries of education have been cognisant of the fact there is a need for it, and they see the need for this type of content in schools, the need to build it into the system. Like Giulia says, however, it is not so much resistance, but their ministries of education do tend to move a little bit slower. I see a lot of intent not only from ministries and religious authorities to try to get education systems to implement this content, but the movement within ministries of education is slow

Lord Purvis

I was just going to ask a quick follow-up to that with regards to the religious structures. We have not really talked about that very much, but, given their influence on the way the curriculum is set and the way the teachers operate, would any of you have any observations with regards to how they are seeing the challenges?

Aly Jetha

It differs. For example, in Morocco, the Rabbita Des Oulema is the religious authority in the country. They are very involved in the education system and they are pretty proactive about seeing whether they can advance different programs that counter extremism within the cultural context of Morocco. In other countries, you are going to have a little bit of fear. It depends on which country you are in, and often the personalities in certain posts, as to whether the religious bodies are assisting or resisting.

Lord Purvis

Are there any areas where you can see that some form of education can be common ground among, talking about Lebanon, the various confessional groups? Each of the ministries, staff has to be

divided up on a confessional basis. I was actually recently in Iraq, also, in Erbil. I have been there a number of times this year. The way they are looking at [inaudible], who is in exile at the moment. The message from both Lebanon and Iraq for me was that some form of education can be common ground, but it does seem that, for me, there was an element of wishful thinking on both counts to some extent.

Does it have any credibility to think that some consistent form of education provision can be common ground across the region? Moussa, I do not know whether you have any thoughts with your experience. I am just wondering. Our subject area is about breaking down barriers between different groups. We want education to be a mechanism where young people can learn different ways of resolving disputes between themselves and other young people but, also, between the groups that their parents, families and communities are having with other groups. If education cannot be common ground between these groups, we are struggling across the board, are we not?

Eugenie Teasley

I would respond to that by saying that, if we think of education in a much broader sense that the four walls of a traditional school building, there could be an answer there. Actually, the MENA region – like other parts of the world that have not progressed in the way that the UK and the US and other parts of the [global north?] have – has a huge opportunity in the face of the challenges they have right now. We have been speaking quite a lot about all of the challenges that exist. We have to imagine what will be available in the future and start preparing it for the young people in that region and elsewhere now.

The schools are not great in that region currently. The opportunities for formal learning are not equally apportioned across everybody who is there. However, there are huge opportunities of technology and opportunities around non-formal learning, where I think young people can be pulled into different communities. For some, it could be for pro-social behaviour and some, possibly, it could be for anti-social behaviour.

How can governments and other actors in these fields think about using technology as a way of leapfrogging above and beyond traditional, formal education in order to engage people and create empathy, communities and a sense of common ground? There are lots of opportunities there. It also speaks to the opportunities for employment that there are going to be in the future when other things dry up – quite literally in the case of the wells etc – and there is a global movement toward flexible, blended learning, both in-person and online, and there are opportunities there in the region for young people to be able to engage in learning in these new and novel ways.

Aly Jetha

When we implemented our curriculum in Iraq, we actually had the KRG Ministry of Education teachers and the Iraqi Ministry of Education teachers all together. It was the first time they actually came together on agreeing to implement something together on teacher training. There were no fights that broke out; everybody was very happy about it and excited. What I have found – even in many of the countries that are heavily divided by sectarianism – is most ministries of education are very well intentioned, so they are a good vehicle. I have never thought of framing them as a vehicle in the manner you have suggested, but I think it is interesting and could work well.

Stephen Kinnoek

Thank you very much. I am sorry I joined the meeting a bit late, but I have found all of your comments absolutely fascinating. Thinking about the education around civics, the humanities and, if you like, the more political topics that are mentioned, for example, through the Immunising the Mind project that is mentioned in here, can you say a bit more about how the teacher training takes

place around those? How do you approach those very sensitive topics which are also quite subjective in terms of their interpretation to ensure you get a balanced curriculum and you are achieving the objectives you want to achieve? I do not know who the best person to answer that is, actually. Have any of you been particularly involved in the education in the humanities, civics, politics or political science at all?

Tayyar Sukru Cansizoglu

Yes, clearly I would say, indeed, the quality of teachers is a very important element, but we also need to see whether there are sufficient hours of face-time, as you were saying, with the teachers. Is it sufficient or not? Is the curriculum they are using a recognised one or not? There are many curricula that are not accredited, which do not necessarily lead to any recognition of the diplomas. With all those elements, we need to recognize the fact that there are certain needs. We need to look at the teachers' education, their quality, the selection of them and their availability, as Giulia was saying as well.

There are lots of elements that we need to really look at here: the formative years from kindergarten until tertiary education, and the teachers to target. Each of them has an important role to play. Throughout this, in the way Aly pointed out, we need to approach the formative years from a different perspective. We need to try to help pupils and build certain values across the board. We need to make the teachers understand this and be able to impart it, and we need to work together with them to understand that.

The second element is that education is not only a teacher-student relationship. The parents and the community both also bear a duty here. We also need to see how they behave at home. How do they talk? How do they deal with it? Does the community actually condone certain kinds of behaviour or not? Do the parents give value to education? All of this will basically improve the quality of education that the children have and help the educators to educate the kids to the best of their knowledge and ability.

Stephen Kinnock

Relating it to my own experience as a politician in this country, knocking doors in the run-up to an election for example, on many occasions – you might share this, David, as well – absolutely shocked by the low level of understanding of our political system and our institutions. You would knock on a door in my constituency and a young person, maybe 18/19 years old, a week before a general election, would not know the general election was on. They would say, 'Who are you, then?' 'I am from Labour.' 'What is that?' Sometimes they would say, 'Are you ruling the country or is somebody else ruling the country?' I think there is this global trend of a massive disconnect between our young people and our political system. There has been a massive drop in the sense of a kind of active citizenship.

I suppose I am trying to get a sense of how that challenge plays out in some of the countries we are talking about today. I think it is safe to say that, in many of them, there is a very different sort of governance. Is it even possible to have that conversation with young people? There is none of that sense of a vote mattering, because it is not a democratic system in the sense that we would understand. I just wondered whether you have any experiences you could share in terms of the impact on young people of the political system in which they live. I guess that is absolutely central to the topic we are discussing around extremism and radicalisation.

Moussa Bourekba

The striking result from our SAHWA Youth survey in terms of political engagement concerns the levels of trust in government, parliament and other national institutions. We asked people on a

scale from 0-10 how much they trusted their parliament, political parties and politicians, with 0 meaning no confidence at all. At the regional level, the rate of interviewees saying they have no confidence at all is either close to or over 50% in the five countries we studied in the project: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon. When we asked young people about their ability to play an active role in a politically engaged group, , , one out of three interviewees believe to have a moderate role to play while one out of four think they cannot have any influence or role to play at the political level. At the qualitative level, when talking about politics to young people, most people were saying, ‘Stop. I do not want to talk about politics. I do not care.’ This is basically the result of decades of authoritarian regimes where no credibility is given to the rulers and politics in general. Everybody qualifies politics as being a joke or a theatre. The most interesting part, actually, is that, when talking to these young people, who saw what happened in 2011 with people taking to the streets and asking for democracy, accountability and a better governance, the ones who were not participating at all in terms of votes, in terms of going to political meetings and so on, are actually involved into civic engagement. It is more about working and doing community work rather than being involved in traditional politics. It is about working in your neighbourhood, because there is absolutely no hope of trying to change things through politics.

You have two reactions to this topic. The first one is, ‘It gives me headaches.’ This is literally what a young Algerian told us. The other reaction is fear in some countries of study. The interviews were carried out in 2015. If you talk about politics, although the interviews were carried out by locals, not by foreign people, in some countries people decline your questions. You cannot always tackle this topic comfortably. They cut the conversation.

From what we see in Algeria for instance, the profile of people who are civically engaged are the ones who are better integrated into society. In the Algerian case, we are talking about a young male; he comes from an urban area; he is in his late twenties; and he has a job. Being single or married is not a crucial parameter in that case. In other cases, as I said, some reactions were like ‘Politics is a joke. Let us not lose time talking about that. We can talk about neighbourhood or community work or whatever, but not politics.’

Stephen Kinnock

Would any attempt to address that through the education system be a waste of time and resources? The levels of cynicism and disengagement are so high that you could not shift that through a formal institution like a school [inaudible] to go elsewhere.

Moussa Bourekba

In general, although there is this constant comment on the lack of critical thinking, every single young person knows that what he or she is told in terms of democracy, the separation of powers, human rights and the rule of law does not entirely apply in real life. At the same time, an authoritarian regime does not have any kind of interest in promoting critical thinking as that could threaten the stability of the country according to them.

Stephen Kinnock

It has to do with control.

Moussa Bourekba

Exactly, yes. It is also quite difficult to find people who are politically engaged through random sampling as most young people are not politically engaged. Less than 2% of the 10,000 interviewed are reported to participate actively in a political party, a political movement or a group seeking to provide services to the community.

According to the SAHWA Youth Survey, only a few young people follow political news everyday: 7,59% while more than a third of them say they never follow political news. In some qualitative studies, young activists even they say to foreign actors supporting civil society organisations, for instance, ‘Do not come here. If you want to help us, you can fund us – but be discreet. Do not come to our country to do the job. It is better if we do the work ourselves. Do not come with a foreign initiative of whatever and employ foreign people to do it. You can help us discreetly, maybe, officially and legally. And that is much better than coming physically as that could create the risk for us of being accused of being spies or complicit with foreign actors. But we are here talking about civic engagement and civil society organisations, not about politics.’

Stephen Kinnock

Thank you.

Lord Purvis

In your research, Moussa, do you find the same applies to young people depending on how well they have progressed in terms of attainment levels in education? Do you ask about that? Do you have a feeling that there is a different perspective if they have higher educational attainment? Does it make a difference?

Moussa Bourekba

It will be the next step. We gathered the data a few days ago, so we will start processing the data now. At the moment, from a quantitative point of view, I cannot ensure that, but within our focus groups we were mostly with graduate and university students. When talking to somebody who is coming from a village in Morocco 40 miles away from Marrakesh, politics is something that simply does not exist or, at least, something they are not interested in. They may be aware of who is the local leader of the village, but their interest in politics at national level is another story. At this stage, we do not have a serious and in-depth study on that.

Tayyar Sukru Cansizoglu

In the global consultations that UNHCR has undertaken with the refugee children and youth, what we see is that refugee youth have the same aspirations as any other group of young people around the world. Sometimes, they feel overlooked, actually. They feel they are not necessarily given the opportunity to fully participate in the decisions that affect them. They would like to see how they contribute to the different processes, how they can really contribute with their assets and talents and, basically, be there to be part of the solutions.

What we really need to see, very clearly, from this global consultation is that we cannot develop projects without engaging with young people. We need to sit with them and see how they see the world, how they are inspired, what their needs are and what kind of solutions they actually see for themselves. Our efforts should be to complement those efforts, to strengthen and enable them to reach what they really want to achieve. It is an environment we really need to nourish.

Chair

That takes us to positive interventions. How do you measure the success of an intervention and how do you measure the success of a programme or initiative? Aly, I was interested when you said that using your materials increased tolerant or pro-social behaviour by a percentage point. How do you measure that?

Aly Jetha

We are quite data-driven, and we measure the impact of our programmes through a lot of different instruments. One of the instruments we use is an assessment of the social values of the children before any exposure to the materials and then again six months afterwards. The way we measure them is through a series of Heinz dilemmas, which are questions like, “If you are hungry, is it okay to steal food?” or “If somebody snatches your toy in the playground, what do you do? Do you snatch it back or do you go get a group of your friends to get it back? Do you go to the individual and say, ‘Hey, that’s my toy’? Or do you say, ‘Let us share.’” You are measuring attitudes on different metrics before and after exposure.

Using similar instruments, we also quantitatively measure critical thinking skills.

Chair

Each of those questions is assigned a level of tolerance, then.

Aly Jetha

They are all coded in different ways. For example, one of our instruments goes beyond attitudinal shifts and is an actual behavioural change test. We do is we put the kids in a simulated environment where, if they compromise they all win; if they do not compromise they all lose. But we don’t just measure whether they manage to compromise or not. We code and measure how they engage with each other. Are they kicking and screaming? Are they yelling and belittling each other? Or are they saying, ‘Let us try to find a compromise’? You are measuring each engagement that the kids have and then comparing that to a control group that has had no exposure to our materials.

Giulia Marchesini

On the subject of measuring, there are international student assessments that can be done with the students in the MENA region: for example, TIMSS and PIRLS. When you compare the results of these tests, you see that the MENA region scores below the average of the other countries. This is why we face the challenges I mentioned before. There is no student assessment; there is a pedagogical approach based on rote learning. All these challenges have an impact, because when the students do the same international assessment you see that they really score low.

There is a way of changing it, but it is a decision of the governments. The policies are implemented from a top-down level. It is also very difficult to get these things to the classroom, because there are a lot of polices. You have to trickle these things down to the level of the classroom, and this is not easy. The knowledge that needs to go through to create a better pedagogical approach is huge. These are the kinds of things that can sometimes block the way in this respect.

Eugenie Teasley

Yes, we have a wide range of M&E approaches as well, both qualitative and quantitative, using both pre and post surveys. We interview students, teachers, parents, the wider community and stakeholders. The outcomes and the impact we see is the vague stuff. Trying to get hard quantitative data is the stuff we are excited about. We are constantly on a journey of making that better. How do we measure enhanced positive relationship with other peers? How do we measure increased motivation and confidence among female participants? How do we measure a greater sense of connection and empathy with the communities?

We do a blended approach. Some of the online missions and challenges the young people complete in our programme in the Middle East are actually explicitly speaking to those things, so we can sort

of analyse that data there, as well as pre and post quantitative stuff. We then triangulate that with feedback from teachers and parents as well. It is in-depth and complicated. Trying to streamline and simplify that is not a straightforward process.

Chair

No, it is very data driven. We are in the last few minutes. I do not know whether any of you would like to say anything else or add anything more.

Lord Purvis

I just have one question, Chair. Very briefly, from your perspectives, if we had to make one recommendation to government – I suspect there may be more than one – what do you think we should really focus in on?

Moussa Bourekba

Regarding education, you mean. From our study and from our project, one key recommendation is to into the field or at least to try to include young people in the policymaking process. I think that is crucial, because there is a huge gap between the considerations of a specific policymaker – and even more if the regime is authoritarian – and the demands and claims of young people. The concerns are not the same at all.

I definitely think it is crucial to try to interview young people in the field to measure impacts and not only have objective indicators, and it is crucial to include them in the policymaking process when it comes to the design of education policies and inclusive policies in the labour market.

Aly Jetha

Cartoons can save the world.

Chair

If only that were true!

Eugenie Teasley

Is that your strapline?

Aly Jetha

Exactly, yes. It is a new one.

Chair

My kids would be superheroes.

Aly Jetha

They are. I would say that politicians are always looking for immediate results, but the issue of extremism is a very long-term problem. Many people are afraid to invest upstream. That, however, is where your greatest long-term impact is going to be. Trying to convince an enraged youth who is about to pick up a gun at the age of 18 is extremely difficult –some would say impossible. It is much easier to teach tolerance, inclusion and non-violence to a five year old than it is to reverse normative values that support violent extremism when they are 18. So my recommendation would be: start early.

Giulia Marchesini

Yes, I would say to focus on promoting greater inclusion: economic, social, political and cultural inclusion. This is the best way to bring down the level of violent extremism and, also, to improve economic performance in general. This is something that political leaders have not borne in mind, at least in the MENA region, and they have left a lot of young people excluded from these dimensions – and we are paying the bill now.

Tayyar Sukru Cansizoglu

For UNHCR, we need to say that basic and tertiary educations are both linked to a broader agenda on protection and solutions. Therefore, we should really look at more systematic linkages between education, child protection, livelihoods and addressing the protection needs of refugees overall. That is how we will be in the position to mitigate the risks of refugees and refugee families resorting to negative coping mechanisms.

Eugenie Teasley

I am a lapsed teacher, but I am very frustrated with the education system. I would say we have to engage young people with where they are at and where they want to be. That is not about being inside a school; it is about getting them set up for jobs they are going to want to love to do. I would look to the future and look to where there are opportunities so you can actually point them in that direction and get them the skills they need. The skills do not have to come through traditional educational practices.

Chair

Thank you. Those were great answers. Thank you. Can I say an enormous thanks to all of you for coming? It is hugely fascinating for us and immensely useful. It will all be taken on. We shall act and thrust forward. Thank you so much for coming. I hereby close the meeting, unless anybody else has anything to say. No – you are free.

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