

Youth for Change

Inspiring, Informing and Involving Arab Youth as Agents of Change



A project implemented by: TakingITGlobal & the Bibliotheca Alexandrina

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www.yfc.tigweb.org

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Executive Summary



TakingITGlobal, in partnership with the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, launched the "Youth for Change" program phase II in **Sep 2009** to engage Arab youth in cross-cultural dialogue, as well as support youth-led development projects in 14 Arab countries; Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Bahrain, Yemen, Sudan, KSA, Kuwait, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine.

The Youth for Change program utilized online and offline tools and spaces in order to support cross cultural dialogue among Arab youth on the local, regional and international levels. In addition, the program also provided mini-grants and online training to support 27 projects in the different countries. Those projects focused on crucial issues facing young people in the Arab World, such as: employment, education, environment, HIV/AIDS, volunteerism, social media, women rights, human rights and democracy, etc.

The program also offered scholarships to 6 mini-grant winners (Ahmed Haroon from Egypt, Hala Murad from Jordan, Grace Al-Azar from Lebanon, Ehsan Nasr from Palestine, Hafedh Ben Miled from Tunisia and Mohammed Al-Jaberi from Yemen) to attend the World Youth Congress 2010 in Turkey, in order to receive additional support, training and access to international networks focused on supporting youth-led development.



Overall, the "Youth for Change" program in phases I and II succeeded in reaching out for and supporting hundreds of Arab youth in the different targeted Arab countries:

Phase I results:

- 9 youth have been chosen as focal points to coordinate and promote the program activities in their countries.
- 9 host organizations supported and promoted the program. That promotional campaign, along with TIG and BA networks, made it possible for over 360 youths to participate in the open forums and over 100 to participate in the live chats.
- We received 55 project applications for the mini-grants of which 13 were offered the mini-grants. Those projects focused on crucial issues facing young people in the Arab world, such as: employment, education, environment, HIV/AIDS, health, culture and identity, cross-cultural dialogue, human rights and democracy.
- 2 winners (Asmaa Abdel Gawad from Egypt and Rashed Ghayeb from Bahrain) participated in the World Youth Congress in Quebec, Canada to receive additional support,

training and access to international networks focused on supporting youth-led development.

- 8 winners as well as 3 focal points participated in the 4th Arab Youth Forum and the 6th Arab Reform Conference in Alexandria, Egypt to present their projects and share experiences with other youth in the MENA region.
- The number of TIG members from the MENA region increased from 5,500 to reach 6,200 members, which is an increase of 700, over the course of the program. Those new members have been actively contributing to the different sections of TIG including the discussion boards, blogs, Panorama and Global Gallery sections.

Phase II results:

- 13 active youths have been chosen as focal points to coordinate and promote the project activities in their countries.
- 13 host organizations supported and promoted the program. That astounding promotional campaign along with TIG and BA networks made it possible for over 435 youths to participate in the knowledge sharing events, 200 to participate in the live chats and proposal writing sessions, and over 150 young people to take part in the Panorama and Global Gallery contests.
- We received 160 project applications for the mini-grants where 27 applications were chosen as winners.
- The number of TIG members from the MENA region increased from 6,200 to reach 8,000 members, which is an increase of 1,800, over the course of the program. Those new members have been actively contributing to the different sections of TIG including the discussion boards, blogs, Panorama and Global Gallery sections.

Project Components

The "Youth for Change" program has achieved its objectives through organizing a number of activities related to the following project components:

- 1- **Knowledge Sharing Events:** The "Youth for Change" Knowledge Sharing events were conducted for the mini-grant winners in each country to present their projects, and share experiences and lessons learned. The events also included workshops for participants to identify key challenges facing youth in community participation and how they can be addressed in their opinion.
- 2- **Online Engagement:** Ongoing cross-cultural dialogue was facilitated through the use of online community tools and spaces including blogs, discussion forums, as well as organizing online live chats to encourage discussion among participants on the following themes:
 - *"Social Entrepreneurs and Community Participation"*
 - *"Global Youth Culture"*
 - *"Web 2.0 for Social Change"*
 - *"New Media and Cross-cultural Dialogue"*

Furthermore, a Panorama and Global Gallery contest under the theme of "Global Youth Culture" was also conducted. There were more than 100 writing submissions and more than 50 art submissions, during the contest, from youth from 35 different countries who wanted to share their thoughts and ideas concerning their own definition and perspective of Global Youth Culture. A publication was created to feature the works submitted as part of this contest. It also aims to foster cross-cultural dialogue and sharing experiences among youth around the world. http://yfc.tigweb.org/yfcmag_final_004.pdf

- 3- **Mini-Grant Awards and Project Management E-course:** 27 youth-led action projects were supported through mini-grants and an online project management e-course based on the materials and methodology of the TakingITGlobal "Sprout e-course" program (<http://www.sproutecourse.org/>). Also, an Arabic version of the e-course was created specifically for Youth for Change.
- 4- **Conference Scholarships:** 6 mini-grant winners received scholarships to attend the World Youth Congress in Turkey 2010, allowing them to get additional support, training and access to international networks that focus on supporting youth-led development.

Project Activities

A. Knowledge Sharing Events:

Main Outcomes:

- TakingITGlobal conducted **15** Knowledge sharing events in **13** countries with over **435** participants.
- Main recommendations we got from those events:
 - To organize similar events regularly in the targeted Arab countries
 - To support further youth-led development projects
 - To organize online trainings to build the capacity of youth in different areas
- Event pages were created on TIG's website for each knowledge sharing event. The events were promoted on Youth for Change website, Social Media channels, and among partners and different networks
- Most knowledge sharing events were covered in the media (local Newspapers, and radio and television shows).
- Total number of Takingitglobal members from the MENA region increased from 6,200 to reach 8,000 members.

Starting from June till October, the focal points in the **13** countries, with the support of the host organizations, conducted knowledge sharing events targeting active youth in their countries. The 2-3 hour events offered a space for the mini-grant winners to present their project experiences, challenges and lessons learned. Those events also included discussions about challenges facing youth in terms of community participation, as well as ways for youth to address that issue.



The events were fully promoted on Youth for Change website as well as TakingITGlobal's website through general spotlights on the homepage, as well as a page for each event. They were also promoted on the program's Social Media channels, the program partners and networks, as well as the Arab InfoMall, which is a web portal under the umbrella of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the Arab Reform Forum. The events targeted around 20-40 participants in each country and most of them were covered by and promoted through local newspapers and radio programs.

Lessons Learned:

- Hosting more than one knowledge sharing event in different cities/communities in the same country allowed more youth to be introduced to have the chance to express their views about important issues related to their communities. It also allowed a greater opportunity for community building and networking among youth. That was evident in Egypt, Palestine and Morocco, where the Youth for Change team has witnessed the importance of this step.
- It was not possible to find a committed focal point in Kuwait, especially since there is less interest, among youth in the Gulf region, in civil society initiatives. In Kuwait, there is also less support to these types of initiatives and a greater focus on business oriented initiatives or charity work. That is why we came to the conclusion that in the future, it is essential to identify an existing civil society organization as a host partner who can nominate its own focal point. Another solution could be to be familiar with events that are already being conducted that target youth from the gulf, and create a partnership with those events and initiatives.
- Conducting knowledge sharing events where youth from different countries can join is a good opportunity for Arab youth to interact and network with each other. The open forum which was organized in collaboration with the Arab Thought Foundation in Lebanon, as well as the one in Alexandria at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, offered that opportunity where youths from different Arab countries participated.

Main Challenges:

- Due to the timing of Ramadan, most focal points had to postpone the Knowledge sharing events till the end of September (the end of the phase II). Thus, there was a need for more follow up.
- The focal point in Kuwait quitted during the project, and it was difficult to find a replacement or someone who could organize the Knowledge sharing event there.

B. Online Engagement

Main Outcomes:

Four live chats were conducted with over **100** participants and **10** speakers from different countries. The live chats focused on the following topics:

- *"Social Entrepreneurs and Community Participation"*
- *"Global Youth Culture"*
- *"Web 2.0 for Social Change"*
- *"New Media and Cross-Cultural Dialogue"*

These live chats offer an opportunity for youth in the MENA region and other countries to network and discuss issues of mutual interest. They also encourage the participants to further discuss those topics on the Youth for Change website and TIG through the discussion boards and blogs.

Two Proposal Writing sessions with over **100** participants were conducted during the call for proposals to provide applicants with tips on proposal writing and filling in their applications.

A Panorama and Global Gallery contest under the theme of "Global Youth Culture" was also conducted. There were more than **100** writing submissions and more than **50** art submissions from youth from **35** different countries.

"Youth for Change" has focused on providing youth with the space to express their views freely and discuss the challenges and issues that affect them whether online, through discussion forums, live chats, blogs (in both Arabic and English), as well as the Panorama and global gallery sections, or through local events conducted in each of the targeted countries. More specifically the "Youth for Change" website www.yfc.tigweb.org provided similar tools, such as: blogs and discussion boards for the project participants to discuss issues related to the program and issues of concern. The website was also used as an announcement board to update participants with the latest news, activities and related documents of the program, and as a communication tool to send them any important announcements and initiations to activities.

The live chats were promoted on Youth for Change website as well as TakingITGlobal's homepage. Also, a specific event page was created for each event, to give further details about the live chat and to encourage the participants to register in advance.

While receiving mini-grants applications, two Proposal Writing sessions were conducted to provide general tips on preparing proposals and explaining the application furthermore. The two sessions were facilitated by Ahmed Tamam from Egypt and Samar Mezghanni from Tunisia, both experts in proposal writing and advisors of phase II.

As part of the program, a writing and art contest on Global Youth Culture was conducted from March 10th till to April 10th 2010 to encourage youth (ages: 16-32) to express their views and thoughts about what global youth culture means to them. Participants were invited to add their writings in Arabic, English and French to Panorama Zine, TIG's online publication for youth. Their artwork was also collected in TIG's Global Gallery, a platform for artistic expression that aims to promote cross-cultural understanding worldwide

The contest received over 100 writing submissions and over 50 art submissions from youth from 35 different countries.

A publication was created to feature works submitted as part of that contest. It also aims to foster cross- cultural dialogue and sharing experiences among youth around the world. The publication was first distributed at the World Youth Congress in Turkey 2010. The top 3 art submissions were also featured at Youth for Change booth there. Currently these artworks are being showcased at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

<http://www.yfc.tigweb.org/getinvolved/contest.html>.

Lessons learned:

- There is a strong interest in having further live chats organized in Arabic, in order to facilitate networking and understanding among Arab youth themselves. In addition, there is a desire for further English live chats to be organized among Arab youth and youth from other parts of the world to promote cross cultural exchange. The follow up on the live chats should encourage extending the online discussions into offline actions by having teams of youth in different locations to work together and collaborate on projects.
- Conducting the Proposal Writing sessions was a lesson learned from phase I and we continued on having it in phase II, as it keeps us in contact with the applicants and encourages them to apply for the grants.
- The Panorama and Global Gallery contest was included in phase II and proved to be an excellent tool for exchanging experiences and views among youth around the world. The publication and showcasing of the artwork was a great opportunity for us to promote the program at a larger scale and among different groups.

C. Mini-Grant Awards

Main Outcomes:

- 27 active youth have been chosen to receive the project mini-grants. The winners were from : Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Iraq, Bahrain, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Palestine. Their projects focused on different topics, such as: Education, Health, Environment, HIV/Aids, Employment, Democracy, Human Rights, Women rights, social media, etc.
- An online project management e-course was offered to all winners throughout 8 weeks. It was based on the materials and methodology of the TakingITGlobal "Sprout e-course" program (<http://www.sproutecourse.org/>) as well as the Arabic version of the e-course created for Youth for Change.

The mini-grants were announced in December 2010. An application form was designed for this purpose in both English and Arabic and distributed through the program different media tools and networks.

We received over 160 applications from the different targeted countries. Those applications were reviewed by two evaluation committees, the first consisting of Tala Nabulsi- Program Manager and the focal point of each country, whereas the second committee consisted of the Program Manager, the program advisors and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina team.

The applications were reviewed on a 1-5 scale, based on the following criteria:

- Relevant to major challenges/problems in the community, such as: health, education, employment, participation in society and environment.
- SMART objectives and tangible activities
- Anticipated direct results / outcomes (measurable results directed towards the target group and society)
- Creativity and uniqueness
- Innovation
- Number of beneficiaries and impact
- Level of youth contribution and participation in the project
- Utilization of TIG tools in project activities
- Budget: Items specified for funding must be realistic and with no duplication
- Professional Writing and complete application

27 projects were chosen covering the following countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Those projects were

focusing on different important issues such as: Education, Health, Environment, HIV/Aids, Employment, Volunteerism, Democracy and Human Rights, Women rights, social media, etc. The mini-grants offered by Bibliotheca Alexandrina ranged from \$ 500-1000 USD and the winners received them at the Fifth Arab Youth Forum in Alexandria. The winners were also asked to present their projects within 5 minutes, followed by 3 questions from the evaluation committee. Based on the results of the evaluations, a number of winners received \$ 1000 USD and others received \$ 500 USD. Each winner had to sign an agreement to govern the relationship between them and the program partners. It also included details of the project activities, deadline for completing the project and submitting the final report. Upon returning to their countries, there was regular follow up on the winners' projects through e-mails, phone calls and progress reports. The focal points from each country were also in contact with the winners, following up on their activities and attending some of their activities.

During the course of their projects, an 8 week e-course was conducted based on the materials and methodology of the TakingITGlobal "Sprout e-course" program (<http://www.sproutecourse.org/>). However, it was translated into Arabic and tailor-made to suit the needs of youth in the MENA region through offering extra case studies and resources. Each week, participants were introduced to a new topic and were asked to submit assignments. Each participant was also linked to a mentor who is an expert in project management to assist him/her with his/her lessons and assignments.

Lessons Learned

- Inviting the potential winners to Alexandria to attend the Arab Youth Forum and present their projects was an effective way to evaluate them and meet them in person before providing them with the grants. It was also a great opportunity for them to discuss their projects and create a strong network. The forum itself was an opportunity for them to meet 400 active youths from the MENA region and share experiences.
- Having two evaluation committees consisting of the focal point, program manager, advisors and BA team proved to be an effective model for identifying mini-grant winners. This is because the focal points have a better idea of the needs of their communities and can make a check on the winners beforehand. The second committee also looked further into the applications.
- Having the Sprout e-course translated into Arabic proved to be a valuable resource for the mini-grant winners, due to the language barrier. Also, assigning mentors for each winner made it easier for them to understand the e-course materials and assignments.

D. Scholarships – WYC 2010

Main Outcomes:

- Six of the mini-grant winners from Jordan, Palestine, Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt and Lebanon received a full scholarship to attend the World Youth Congress in Turkey 2010
- The Panorama and Global Gallery Contest Publication was distributed at the congress and the best 3 art submissions were featured at the Youth for Change booth.

Based on the progress of their projects and results of their e-course assignments, 6 of the 27 winners were selected to attend the World Youth Congress 2010, in Turkey.

The winners were:

- **Hala Murad -Jordan**
- **Ehsan Naser - Palestine**
- **Hafedh Bin Milad - Tunisia**
- **Mohammed Al-Jaberi- Yemen**
- **Ahmed Haroon-Egypt**
- **Grace Al-Azar-Lebanon**

The winners had the chance to network with other youth from around the world and promote their projects widely among representatives of organizations and UN agencies. They also received training and orientation in different topics related to youth-led development.

Also, two of the YFC team members and four of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina staff attended the World Youth Congress. The BA team conducted a workshop on "Utilizing New Media to Promote Dialogue across Cultures".

Conclusions and Next steps

Thanks to the efforts of TakingITGlobal, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the program partners and their support, YFC phase II that has helped youth in the MENA region be more inspired, informed and involved in issues that affect them.

Phase II has gone beyond geographic boundaries and encouraged cultural dialogue and networking among youth from different Arabic countries and around the world through the range of online tools, training and support offered. The knowledge sharing events conducted in each country have provided the opportunity for active youth to discuss freely their challenges and different ways of addressing them, and have helped to develop a network of youth at the local level, who aim at creating positive change in their communities. This project has also encouraged youth from the MENA region to interact and share experiences with youth from all over the world, in an attempt to promote the concept of dialogue between people- to address misconceptions or prejudices, to prevent conflicts and, most importantly, to foster a culture of peace and understanding.

The mini-grants along with the technical support and guidance that were provided to the mini-grant winners from the different Arab countries, was a highlight in this phase, as it opened the doors for youth to work on action projects affecting social and environmental change at the community level. In some cases, this level of support was the first opportunity for youth leaders to have a chance to transform ideas into actions, in order to address crucial issues ranging from HIV/AIDS to human rights and democracy, and that targets different groups in their communities.

Moving into 2010, TakingITGlobal was very interested in the possibility of implementing a next phase of the project in cooperation with Bibliotheca Alexandrina, in order to support further the cross cultural dialogue among youth from the MENA and support youth-led development projects. Given the interest generated from the project among youth from other Arabic countries, we are hoping that a third phase could involve all 22 Arab countries, as well as build upon the initiatives and momentum established in the second phase with our targeted countries. Our goal for Phase III would be to cover the 22 countries and develop more our current components. Also, to produce a publication to showcase the initiatives of the Youth for Change mini-grant winners and the impact they reached in their communities.

Finally and based on the experiences of the 6 scholarship winners who attended the World Youth Congress in Turkey 2010, we are hoping that the next phase could include a scholarship component allowing youth to attend an international conference that offers training and networking opportunities. The next World Youth Congress is scheduled to take place in Brazil 2012 and can serve as another opportunity for partnership!

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