



## Building Resilience to Radicalisation in MENA

### *Educating and Skilling a New Generation in MENA*

Written evidence submission for the British Council All Party Parliamentary Group – Building Resilience to Radicalisation Inquiry by Giulia Marchesini, Senior Partnership Specialist, Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), The World Bank.

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#### Violent extremism as a regional public bad

1. **Recent terrorist attacks and the growth of ISIS have highlighted how the phenomenon of violent extremism is a regional public bad.** Indeed, violent extremism and radicalisation have direct consequences over development: they impact economic stability and can reduce the overall growth rate of a country through impacts on tourism, potential output, demand, financial markets and investments.
2. **Providing regional public goods is now a priority for the Mediterranean** and development actors can bring a clear value added in the fight against radicalisation by providing an effective and coordinated response. The response does not touch security issues: it focuses on human and economic development areas with effects expected on the medium- and long-term. Moreover, a purely national focus has strong limitations and a regional and cooperative approach is essential.

#### Exclusion as the main driver for radicalisation

3. **Throughout the Mediterranean, young people<sup>1</sup> are bearing the brunt of the crisis:** massive unemployment and demographic pressure, alienation, dangerous sea crossings to reach Europe, and the lure of extremism that could go as far as outright violence.
4. **Unemployment and social and economic instability are major issues in the region.** The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has a large reservoir of untapped human resources, with the world's highest

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<sup>1</sup>Youth aged 15-29 represent 19.8% of the population in the Mediterranean (European Union, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian territories, Tunisia), meaning about 140 million youth.

unemployment rate among youth, with more than 20% of youth in the MENA region unemployed and only 40% of youth work in the formal sector, and the lowest participation of females in the labour force<sup>2</sup>. The share of young people neither in employment, education, or training (NEET)<sup>3</sup> also explains the lack of opportunities and the absence of a vision on the future for youth. Moreover, the current organisation of the production system between the Northern and Southern Mediterranean restricts the Southern economies to the low value-added end as well as short-term subcontracting arrangements, thus preventing reduction of the abnormally high levels of underemployment of skilled workers which fuels expatriation<sup>4</sup>.

5. **Over the past 60 years, MENA countries have invested a great part of their resources in education** by spending on average over 5% of their GDP on education, which is higher than the world average of 4%<sup>5</sup>. This has let the region have good infrastructure and an education open to all, covering a large part of the population without gender discrimination.
6. **Despite the considerable resources invested, education systems in MENA have fallen short of their promise for social and economic inclusion** and the success in expanding access did not lead to the necessary learning required for economic inclusion and development. MENA is among the lowest ranked regions in terms of quality of education, leading to extremely high rates of educated youth unemployment in the region. Many youth are leaving school unequipped with the skills they need for life and work, leading to their exclusion from political, social, and economic life with limited opportunities and voice in public life.
7. **The political elites have underestimated the perils of massive exclusion** and abandoned large numbers of their young men and women to their own devices<sup>6</sup> without answering their social, political and economic grievances. This social frustration is now leading youth to fall into *trabendisme*<sup>7</sup>, to leave their countries for Europe, Western countries and to oil producing Arab countries, and to resort to violence.
8. **Social and economic exclusion generates more grievances and increase the probability of joining extremist groups.** A recent study by the World Bank<sup>8</sup> proved that there is a strong association between a country's male unemployment rate and the propensity of that country to supply Daesh foreign recruits. Moreover, this study also shown that there is no direct correlation between low levels of education and radicalisation, and individuals who resort to violence are far from being uneducated or illiterate. Indeed, 69% of Daesh recruits report to have at least a secondary education and a large fraction claim to have gone to university while only 15% left school before high school and less than 2% are illiterate. This indicates that access to education is not the primary issue to address to prevent violent extremism.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Jobs for Shared Prosperity: Time for Action in the Middle East and North Africa', World Bank, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> According to ILO statistics, the number of NEETs in the Mediterranean (European Union, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian territories, Tunisia. No data available for Algeria and Lebanon) was 12,020.3 thousand in 2013.

<sup>4</sup> 'Economic Transitions in the Mediterranean' policy paper, CMI, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> 'Education for Competitiveness', Islamic Development Bank Group and World Bank Group, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> 'Economic Transitions in the Mediterranean', CMI, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> In Maghreb slang: peddler, small trafficker.

<sup>8</sup> Shanta Devarajan, Lili Mottaghi, Quy-Toan Do, Anne Brockmeyer, Clément Joubert, Kartika Bhatia, Mohamed Abdel Jelil: 'Economic and Social Inclusion to Prevent Violent Extremism', Middle East and North Africa Economic Monitor, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2016.

9. **This underlines the need to mobilise development actors in countering radicalisation and violence extremism.** Economic exclusion coupled with the lack of responses from the State to increase opportunities highlights the failure of the education system to achieve its full potential and the decline of the quality of education in MENA. If Mediterranean States need to concentrate on enhancing the quality of education and its contribution to economic growth, development actors will have to contribute through coordinated actions aiming at creating plurality and enhancing citizens' engagement and personal development through local actions, knowledge contribution, dissemination and cooperation.

### Rethinking education to foster youth inclusion and prevent violent extremism

10. A recent joint initiative launched by the World Bank Group and the Islamic Development Bank Group<sup>9</sup> highlighted the fact that **a new vision of education is critical for the MENA region – one that promotes critical thinking, creativity and innovation.** This would support countries to achieve inclusive growth, social stability and global competitiveness. The transition should be accompanied by a shift from an 'education for all' to 'learning for all' in order to increase open-mindedness, employability, and growth to foster youth inclusion.
11. **Enhancing quality of education is essential to achieve inclusive growth and empower youth.** There are many challenges that contribute to the decline of the quality of education in MENA and restrain prevent education systems to achieve their full potential: greater emphasis on schooling than on learning, pedagogical approaches focused on rote learning, weak student assessment systems, widespread teacher absenteeism, rampant private tutoring, shortage in instructional materials, inefficient use of resources and weak governance structures and accountability mechanisms.
12. **New pedagogical methods need to be developed in order to end rote memorisation and passive learning** which do not maximize learning and do not encourage dialogue and critical thinking. The new pedagogical methods should allow to promote critical and free thinking, problem-solving and open discussion between students and teachers and help to demystify the violent narratives and give youth the tools to build a peaceful and stable society.
13. **Investing in soft skills, and transmitting values and ethics** not only fosters skills development but also increases open-mindedness, employability, growth, social cohesion, and inclusion. Thus, this is also a solution to foster inclusion of marginalised groups, particularly young men and women in rural and periurban areas (through vocational training, for instance).
14. **Improving the content of the teaching materials by identifying and better understanding best practices, policies and participatory mechanisms.** Indeed, some of the actual content might sometimes be inconsistent with current constitutions, and might even reflect gender discrimination and intolerance towards different ethnic or religious groups.

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<sup>9</sup> 'Education for Competitiveness', Islamic Development Bank Group and World Bank Group, 2016.

15. **Education systems need to contribute to expand civic engagement among young people.** Despite the massive surge subsequent to the Arab Springs few years ago, civic engagement among young people in the MENA region is weak and critical thinking is not encouraged in formal schooling. A 2012 study showed that more educated people in Arab countries do not embrace democratic values compared to less educated individuals as much as in the rest of the world, and they are not as driven to participate in civic action<sup>10</sup>. Youth are actors for change and civic engagement is a pathway towards social and economic inclusion.
16. **Public policies aiming at social and economic inclusion should be encouraged.** Policies addressing the quality of education should be accompanied by policies fighting all kind of discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation; policies aiming to support youth organisations; new ways of communication; and debating techniques.

### Providing regional public goods to address key challenges in the region: CMI's approach to radicalisation

**The Centre for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) is a multi-partner platform** that brings together governments, development agencies, local authorities and civil society from the South and the North of the Mediterranean: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian authority, France, Greece, Italy, the French Agency for Development, the European Investment Bank, the World Bank, the City of Marseille and the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region.

The mandate of the CMI is to **provide regional public goods in the Mediterranean and to have a regional and cooperative approach** on the issues to address to achieve peace and stability in the region. The CMI convenes its members, partners and key regional stakeholders in order to exchange knowledge, discuss public policies, and identify the solutions needed to enhance integration in the Mediterranean region.

In this framework, the CMI has developed an approach to preventing violent extremism structured around three pillars:

1. Awareness building to support strategies aiming at changing attitudes and behaviours through the dissemination of relevant existing analysis and studies and the promotion of academic works in Southern countries;
2. Identification and support pilot innovative solutions to prevent violent extremism;
3. In the long-term, contribute to build operational responses through identification and selection of public policies.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.