Middle East and North Africa
5M-AWI Youth Initiative

Institutional Development to Strengthen Regional Arab Youth Policy and Youth Participation

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MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
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I. Introduction

1. The Arab Youth Initiative (AYI) was launched following the Arab Spring in January 2012, during which young people demanded and hoped for increased political participation. The AYI closed in spring 2015, during a time of great youth disillusionment. The origins of the AYI are linked to the youth-led mass protests that erupted in Tunisia in December 2010, and marked the beginning of a series of radical changes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Further uprisings resonated in various countries throughout the region and sharply brought a new focus on young people’s mounting grievances over their lack of employment opportunities, dignity, and voice. As pointed out by Slim Amamou, who briefly served as Secretary of State at the Ministry of Youth and Sports after the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, the uprisings across the Arab world were, in fact, one uprising, one revolution, and a new form of citizenship, in which active youth and social media played a leading role. Facebook users increased by 78 percent between January and December 2010 in Arab countries.

2. As demonstrated by their leading role in the Arab Spring, the majority of young people in MENA saw political participation as a right of citizenship that they wanted to exercise, despite the limited opportunities to do so at all levels. MENA has the population with the highest share of young people of over 30% (age 15-29 years) and the largest youth cohort in history with over 100 million youth aged 15 to 29 years. This young generation is the most technologically savvy of all times. At the same time, about 41% of these young people are not in work, education or training, and two out of three are unemployed. Findings from two economic sector work (ESW) undertaken on youth inclusion in Morocco and the Arab Republic of Egypt highlighted the importance of creating opportunities for structured youth participation in decision making, particularly the importance of establishing representative and independent youth advisory bodies that can contribute to shaping government’s decisions on youth issues. However, Arab youth activism has been limited to civil society and the virtual public space, while structured channels for youth participation in decision making have not yet materialized.

3. The AYI was developed in partnership with the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Marseille Center of Mediterranean Integration (CMI) to fill the gaps in the availability of

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3 Founded in 1945, the League of Arab States (LAS) is the most comprehensive regional integration organization, with a membership of 22 Arab countries (21 as of today, following the exclusion of the Syrian Arab Republic). Its main objective is to strengthen the political, socioeconomic, and cultural relations among member states. Its decision-making body is the Council of
mechanisms for structured engagement and participation for youth-led organizations and young people in the region. Following a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the World Bank and the LAS in January 2011, the AYI proposed concrete activities to promote participatory, constructive youth engagement with Arab policy makers. A grant agreement was signed with the LAS on May 27, 2012, for the implementation of an Institutional Development Fund (IDF), Institutional Development to Strengthen Regional Arab Youth Policy and Youth Participation which constituted the largest AYI activity. The IDF closed in May 2015.

4. Overall, it is important not to overstate the impact of the AYI, given the regional political context, the emerging conflicts across various Arab countries, as well as internal LAS circumstances. Active citizenship depends on trust and the willingness to constructively engage with institutions, and youth in MENA have expressed very low levels of trust. According to a 2013 Gallup World Poll, youth perceptions in MENA and sub-Saharan Africa scored at the bottom compared to other regions with respect to standards of living, life evaluation, social well-being, community attachment, volunteering, and trust in national government. In fact, MENA had more youth reporting worsening standards of living in 2013 compared to 2012, and less confidence in national governments than African youth (Gallup World Poll 2013). Greater civil liberties and youth participation may take years to develop in MENA, while the emergence of “Daesh,” also referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, in some aspects is turning the clock backward for youth participation. Yet supporting activities to engage young citizens, such as those proposed by the AYI, remains critical. Overall, while the activities of the AYI did manage to raise the awareness of the LAS and of the importance of youth participation programming, to have a significant impact, long-term investment in youth beyond this initiative is needed.

II. Objectives & Results Indicators

5. Overall, the aim of the Institutional Development to Strengthen Regional Arab Youth Participation and Active Citizenship was to support and establish partnerships with various Arab institutions that have the potential to bring about positive social change as well as greater opportunities for Arab youth. These youth were key actors in the revolution demanding social inclusion and political voice. To support these demands, the AYI adopted a two-pronged approach that included:

(i) Directly responding to youth organizations’ requests for capacity building for platform development to help increase their public influence and visibility;

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Ministers, which is composed of representatives of each member state. Since the Arab Spring, the LAS has increasingly showed off its mediating role in endogenous conflicts, as well as its weight in international venues (Le Figaro, “Quel Pouvoir à la Ligue Arabe,” November 16, 2011). In recent years, the LAS has received support from the Council of Europe to strengthen youth policy in the area of nonformal learning, and from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to conduct periodic Arab youth fora. More specifically, World Bank partnership on youth issues has been championed by the Assistant Secretary General for Social Affairs, who is a very respected and influential Arab leader, both within the LAS and among its member states.

4 On January 18, 2011, in Sharm El Sheik, the LAS and the World Bank set up a framework for cooperation for the development of regional activities and investments. This framework was formalized with the signing of an MOU that included youth issues among its priorities. The agreed-upon work program focused on training and capacity building, seminars and workshops, technical advisory services, economic and sector studies and research, and dissemination of information and reports.
(ii) Strengthening the capacity of pre-existing Arab institutions for youth-related policy making to ensure the adoption and sustainability of youth-focused approaches by policy makers.

6. More specifically, the objective was to strengthen regional Arab youth participation in decision making by:

(i) Strengthening the capacity of the LAS General Secretariat for Social Affairs to promote participatory youth programming, through technical assistance (TA);

(ii) Supporting research capacity with participatory approaches of the Arab Youth Observatory (AYO), which was to become a specialized regional body linked to the LAS; and

(iii) Supporting the development of independent, national youth-led platforms in countries such as Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, as well as of an independent regional youth platform, which could potentially include youth-led civil society organizations (CSOs) from a larger group of Arab countries.

7. As part of the AYI, a Steering Committee (composed of academics, youth NGOs, and representatives from the LAS’s Youth and Sports Department, and the Population Policies, Arab Expatriates, and Migration Department) was formed to provide guidance on AYI activities. The Steering Committee endorsed the independent youth platform, supported the LAS leadership team, and encouraged communication between the LAS’s Youth and Sports Department and the Population Policies, Arab Expatriates, and Migration Department.

11. Indicators of AYI progress included whether:

(i) At least 10 of LAS’s and affiliated institutions’ staff received training and TA;

(ii) AYO incorporated global best practices into its youth research and policy work, as well as an overall youth participation approach;

(iii) Independent, youth-led national platforms were established, with public recognition and participation mechanisms in relevant decision-making processes, in at least two participating Arab countries; and

(iv) LAS budget allocations reflected new youth policy and institutional directions, following the World Bank TA.

Revised Indicators

8. During implementation of the initiative, three of the four indicators (ii, iii, and iv) were revised to be more realistic. As the AYO in Morocco never materialized, indicator “ii” was no longer relevant. This activity was shifted to the John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement (The Center), a research center based at the American University of Cairo with a long-standing reputation for excellence in MENA regional youth research and
partnerships with donors on the youth participation agenda. The indicator related to the development of two national councils (iii) was also eliminated, given the constraints on youth political participation and activism existing in most countries, except Tunisia. Finally, due to the LAS’s frequent changes of project managers in the first phase of the AYI, there was not enough time to implement institutional changes, therefore indicator “iv” was removed.

9. The indicators were revised, as outlined below, and also included are details of their achievement:

(i) At least 10 of the LAS’s and affiliated institutions’ staff will receive training and TA, including 50 percent of female staff. Achievement: TA was provided to 14 staff, 50 percent of whom were women, by December 15, 2014.

(ii) A regional youth Web site will become operational, with contact information for active regional youth and youth CSOs in Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan. The Web site will provide opportunities for online collaboration and highlight upcoming regional youth activities and relevant events. Achievement: This Web site went online April 30, 2015, with these features.

(iii) Two workshops will be held, including one regional youth research workshop. Achievement: The first workshop, hosted by the LAS and the World Bank (“Regional Youth Consultation Workshop”), was held in Marseilles, November 6–7, 2013, with 20 participants from 10 countries, who shared best practices and lessons learned on youth participation and the development of the Arab youth network. A second workshop, “Arab Youth Capacity Building,” was held by the LAS in partnership with the John D. Gerhart Center in Cairo, September 7–11, 2014, with approximately 24 participants, including youth researchers from NGOs, government agencies, and academia.

III. Description of Arab Youth Initiative Activity

10. The following components were implemented.

Component 1: Strengthening the Capacity of the LAS’s General Secretariat for Social Affairs to Promote Participatory Youth Programming

11. This component included a strategic assessment to help reposition the LAS to play a stronger role with youth and government stakeholders. An international consultant prepared a strategic assessment in full partnership with LAS officials and their staff through document reviews and interviews with LAS senior management, operational staff, beneficiaries, and international partners. The General Secretariat of Social Affairs benefitted from the strategic assessment recommendations developed through the international TA. These included: revising the strategy and goals; identifying appropriate youth programming and implementation; strengthening internal and external communication; preparing budgets; and strengthening staff’s
capacity to fulfill responsibilities and follow the revised strategy and develop a follow-up/monitoring system for youth programming.

12. The assessment was implemented through a World Bank–funded Institutional Development Grant (IDF). In addition, the ongoing dialogue between the LAS and the World Bank contributed to learning from relevant international experience. The LAS benefitted from international experiences and best practices, such as those of the Council of Europe and the European Youth Forum, a system of collaborative governance (that is, national youth-led councils), as well as the European Commission’s “Youth in Action Program.”

Component 2: Supporting Arab Youth Research

13. The second component aimed to support Arab youth research by creating a network of young Arab researchers, while at the same time building their capacity. This component was originally expected to be implemented through the Arab Youth Observatory (AYO), which was to be established in Morocco. However, as the AYO did not materialize in Morocco, the LAS partnered with the John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement. As part of its support, the LAS provided seed funding for a leaning event and a regional youth research grant competition.

Component 3: Supporting the Development of Independent, National Youth-Led Platforms in Countries such as Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, and an Independent Regional Youth Platform

14. The third component was originally designed to support the establishment of independent youth bodies or platforms in several Arab countries. The goal was to establish a coordinating mechanism for existing local and national youth organizations and networks with the goal of: consolidating their representation; promoting cooperation; exchanging experiences on youth issues; communicating with and influencing relevant government and regional bodies; and sensitizing the public to youth issues. In European countries, these independent platforms are referred to as national youth councils, or the European Youth Forum, which is the formal body operating at regional level. During the design of the AYI, young leaders representing emerging movements and NGOs, particularly in Tunisia, expressed their interest in directly collaborating with the World Bank to establish transparent and representative practices for national and regional youth networks.

15. To support the development of national and regional youth platforms, this component included four activities.

(i) The first activity included the LAS’ participation in a regional youth consultation workshop to discuss the youth platform and share international lessons learned.

(ii) The second activity originally focused on the development of a regional youth platform and the development of national youth councils in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. The aim of the independent Arab youth-led platform was to provide youth with more voice at local, regional, and national government levels through working with regional intergovernmental bodies. It is important to note that the development of a regional youth platform and national youth council was initially to be included as
part of the LAS IDF. However, during implementation, and after extensive consultations both with the LAS and youth stakeholders, it was agreed that these activities should be supported independently, which became possible thanks to the financial support of Marseille CMI. Furthermore, the LAS opted for an observer status for activities related to the development of a regional and national youth platform. At the country level, efforts focused on the formation of a national youth council in Tunisia, in accordance with the findings of the mapping activity described in the Mapping Report (see attachment).

(iii) The third activity involved mapping national youth stakeholders, focusing on Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan. This was considered an important next step for the establishment of national youth councils, as well as for the regional platform. The mapping exercise aimed to identify key players and emerging youth-led organizations/associations in the region, while ensuring the inclusion and participation of marginalized and vulnerable youth groups.5

(iv) Finally, the fourth activity included the establishment of an online platform for existing youth organizations. This piece was developed with the aim of enabling youth organizations, bloggers, young activists as well as interested individuals to access applications for civic engagement, social accountability, and youth CSO governance tools to build national and regional youth-led representative bodies. Given the regional context and reduced scope of activity “ii” described above, the functions of the online platform were reduced. Instead, the LAS supported the development of a regional youth Web site that includes youth contacts identified through the mapping exercise, provides opportunities for online collaboration, and highlights youth research and upcoming regional youth activities.

IV. Assessment of Activity Implementation

16. The initial scope of the AYI was relatively ambitious, and activities had to be scaled down to reflect the reality on the ground. It began less than two years following the Arab Spring, during a time of high expectations for social change in the MENA region, and benefitted from the strong endorsement of two of the LAS’s former Assistants Secretary General for Social Affairs: H. E. Sima Bohaus and Amb. Faikha Al Saleh. The first Technical Coordinator, Ahmed Al Hindawi, left the post to become the first United Nations Secretary General Youth Envoy in early 2013.

17. The LAS’s focus was subsequently absorbed by various competing priorities, including the Syrian crisis. Meanwhile, staff changes and turnover continued in the AYI management team (three directors and three senior technical coordinators). This resulted in delays in the AYI’s overall implementation. However, by February 2014, the strong dedication of new Director Enas Ferghany and Senior Technical Coordinator Amr Sobhy resulted in the successful implementation of the components with a number of positive results, as detailed below.

5 Recent analytic work shows that the involvement of disadvantaged youth in NGO/association activities has been quite limited compared to other (relatively more privileged) youth groups.
Component 1: Strengthening the Capacity of the LAS’s General Secretariat for Social Affairs to Promote Participatory Youth Programming

18. With the preparation of the strategic assessment and the endorsement of the former and current Assistant Secretary General of Social Affairs, the first component was successfully completed. An international consultant was hired on June 10, 2014, and submitted an action plan to ensure the completion of all activities by May 2015. The consultant reviewed relevant documents and held a set of strategic assessment meetings with over 15 LAS staff members from various departments over August 31 – September 4, 2014 (Population Policies and Migration, Health and Humanitarian Relief, Cooperation and NGOs, Youth and Sports, Economic Affairs Council, and Social Affairs Council). During these meetings, the consultant met with the LAS Assistant Secretary General, who confirmed strong ownership of the different departments, such as the Youth and Sports Directorate, given the cross-cutting nature of youth policy issues. Based on the findings of the strategic assessment, a recommendations/implementation workshop was held on December 14, 2014, and the draft report was received on February 26, 2015. Based on feedback from the LAS and the World Bank, the final report was submitted to the LAS on May 25, 2015. The final recommendations on the youth mapping of NGOs included: (i) reconfirming the priority of youth policy and participation at the highest level; (ii) adopting a clear vision and consensus on youth issues for internal and external audiences; (iii) establishing a youth working group to lead the implementation of a youth strategy; (iv) appointing a youth policy coordinator reporting to the secretary general; and (v) investing in internal and external communications infrastructure on youth policy issues (see section IV for more details). The LAS is in the process of making follow-up plans to ensure the implementation of the recommendations at the institutional level by sharing the findings of the strategic assessment with the new Assistant Secretary General of Social Affairs, Dr. Badr Eddine Allali.6

Component 2: Supporting Arab Youth Research

19. This component was successfully completed through the implementation of a capacity-building workshop held September 7–11, 2014, for young Arab youth researchers, and through allocation of three seed grants to Arab youth researchers. On July 16, 2014, the LAS signed an MOU with the John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement. The Center held an “Arab Youth Capacity-Building Workshop” in Cairo, September 7–11, 2014, with approximately 24 participants, including youth researchers from NGOs, government, and academia. The objective of the workshop was to enhance the voice and influence of Arab youth under the age of 35 who work with research and advocacy in government, academia, CSOs, think tanks, and other relevant institutions in public policy making by introducing a capacity-building program that engages them in research and advocacy on public policy. As part of the workshop, a competition was held for seed money for selected research proposals totaling US$5,000 to be distributed among the winners. Proposals were reviewed by a diverse Steering Committee that included professors, youth, and staff from the LAS and the John D. Gerhart Center. Of the 46 proposals submitted, 18 were shortlisted and 3 were selected: 1 from the Republic of Yemen, and 2 from Egypt. Currently, the LAS has disbursed funding for these proposals, which focused on student participation in the Republic of Yemen during the public unrest in 2011, knowledge management and administrative decisions in Egypt, and women’s

6 Albader15@hotmail.com.
empowerment in Egypt. All planned activities were completed under this component. The LAS will continue to follow up with the research projects, including publishing the papers within the next few months. Given the success of the activity, the LAS is pursuing further dialogue with the John D. Gerhart Center for future collaboration on the implementation of additional youth capacity-building activities.

**Component 3: Supporting the Development of Independent, National, Youth-Led Platforms in Countries such as Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, and an Independent, Regional Youth Platform**

20. Although the formal development of national and regional youth platforms was not completed during the lifetime of the AYI due to mounting constraints in the operating environment of youth-led CSOs and platforms in most Arab countries, a number of concrete supporting activities were achieved, as detailed below.

- **A Regional Youth Consultation workshop, activity 1,** was hosted by the World Bank and the LAS in Marseille, November 6–7, 2013, including 20 participants. The objective of the workshop was to share best practices and lessons learned on youth participation and receive feedback on the development of the Arab youth platform. The former Director of the Population Policies, Arab Expatriates, and Migration Department and the Director of the World Bank Center for Mediterranean Integration jointly opened the workshop. The findings of the workshop stressed the importance of the Arab youth network independence from the LAS. The LAS financed the attendance of two staff members to the consultation workshop from its own budget.

- **Initial efforts were made for the development of the Regional Arab Youth Platform, activity 2,** including the forming of an interim Steering Committee in April 2014, preparation of draft bylaws, and the hosting of online and Facebook discussions on the bylaws and other issues. A workshop was held April 1–3, 2014, in Tunisia, with 12 young people active in civil society from 10 Arab countries. The meeting focused on determining the process of establishing the platform, and the policy and governance of the interim phase of the platform. The meeting ended with election of a chairperson and a secretary general for the interim phase, as well as an agreement on a structure and committees chairs for the period from April 2014 until the end of 2014. In early summer of 2014, online activities were ongoing, including several discussion groups on Facebook. The initiative adopted the name Network 22 — Regional Platform for Youth of the Arab Countries. However, activities were put on hold when consulted youth indicated that the regional context was not appropriate for the regional platform.

- As noted above, initial steps have been taken to form a national youth council in Tunisia, activity 2, as the youth mapping exercise (activity 3 described below) confirmed the country readiness based on the capacity and demands of the CSOs and the political environment. In spring 2015, meetings were held with 10 of the largest and most influential NGOs in Tunisia, their partners, and other national institutions to explore the possibility of creating a national youth council. As a result of these meetings, a proposal was drafted describing the administrative support functions of
the council, including proposing that the NGO Jamaity plays this role. Jamaity is an (online) platform for the NGO sector in Tunisia and offers different kinds of educational opportunities for NGOs. In May 2015, for the first time, a meeting of the largest and most influential youth organizations in Tunisia was organized to build the capacity of NGOs and share the global best practices of national youth platform/councils. In addition, the meeting aimed to develop common objectives for a Tunisian national youth council. Based on this, leading youth organizations, Jamaity (the administrative support platform), and international experts will prepare a proposal for a national youth council for donors.

- **Activity 3, the Mapping of Youth Stakeholders in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia,** was completed by December 2014, and the final assessment report was finalized by May 2015. In June 2014, three mapping consultant contracts were signed for work in Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan, and an action plan to complete the work was submitted to the LAS. Training workshops for the mapping consultants were held in Jordan, June 26–27, 2014, and in Cairo, July 16–17, 2014. The mapping report included a directory of youth groups and donors in Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia, as well as recommendations for future activities. The mapping findings highlighted a number of recommendations (see annex 2), including the importance of: (i) providing open access to information on youth NGOs at the national level, particularly in Tunisia and Egypt, through information centers; (ii) supporting capacity building and training for youth NGOs on strategic planning and in other areas, given the lack of capacity in this area in Egypt and Tunisia; 7 and (iii) setting up a national and regional volunteer/internship exchange program, because these types of programs do not exist either at a regional or national level. The mapping findings helped determine the readiness of Tunisia to form an independent national youth council, particularly given the ease of registration of new NGOs with the new constitution (compared to Egypt, where it is more challenging to register a new independent NGO, and to Jordan, where most youth NGOs are affiliated with the government).

- **For activity 4, the regional youth Web site, Tashbeek.org,** went live on April 30, 2015, serving as a platform to support regional youth collaboration, initially focusing on youth organizations identified in the mapping in Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan. Tashbeek, meaning networking in Arabic, features hundreds of NGOs and classifies them based on their location, objective, and activities.

One of the options for the maintenance of Tashbeek is to have Co-Opinion host Tashbeek. Co-Opinion is a student-run, independent, nonprofit policy-oriented youth network that addresses youth challenges in the MENA region through direct youth engagement. The network aims to improve youth economic and social prospects, produce academic knowledge, and engage in relevant policy-oriented projects to help establish participatory institutional mechanisms for youth. The network brings together influential youth NGOs, associations, and academic institutions from six countries (Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Iraq, and Lebanon) as partner

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7 In Jordan, this is less needed, because most youth NGOs have a 5–10 year strategic plan and receive support for this type of capacity building from the government (most NGOs are government affiliated).
institutions. Co-Opinion hosts an Annual Youth Summit in different countries, where their partner institutions operate, to produce policy briefs to deliver to the policy makers and to raise social responsibility projects to alleviate youth problems. The next summit will take place August 27–30, 2015, and will include young activists, academics, young entrepreneurs, NGO representatives, and journalists. Moving forward, it is expected that this promising youth regional platform will receive support from several donors, including Marseille CMI.

Although a media consultant was originally expected to be hired to prepare content for the online platform, this activity had very limited results, with only one blog delivered. As of June 30, 2014, a blog space was developed by the media consultant (http://network22blog.wordpress.com). However, the media consultant quit in August 2014, and there has been no follow up.

V. Final Recommendations

21. The recommendations highlighted below are primarily drawn from the strategic assessment conducted for the LAS.

To the LAS:

- **Reconfirm the priority of youth policy and participation at highest levels.** Moving forward, it is vital that the LAS substantiates, at the level of the secretary general, the importance of youth policy and participation in the vision, mandate, and activities of the LAS.

- **Adopt a vision of clarity and consensus on youth.** As a result of the tremendous change in the Arab world over the last four years, the LAS may consider putting forward, both for an external audience as well as for its internal organization, its vision for youth and youth-related activities.

- **Create a youth working group to lead the implementation of a youth strategy.** A formal working group representing the interests of stakeholder departments could be created to draft and implement the youth strategy, given that it is a cross-cutting issue.

- **Ensure systematic consultations and engagement with youth constituency and youth-led NGOs on concrete policy issues and programming.** The LAS may want to consider, in particular, supporting a regional volunteer/internship exchange program, which currently does not exist either at the regional or national level, and engage youth organizations in its planning and delivery. This would address a key recommendation of the youth mapping.

- **Appoint a youth policy coordinator who will report to the secretary general.** The LAS may consider appointing a strategic focal point for youth policy at high level who can coordinate the development of a new youth strategy and serve as an external ambassador for youth issues.
To the Social Affairs Secretariat of the LAS

- **Minimize the number of youth fora, but maximize their impact.** The LAS tends to hold youth fora very frequently, as it is the primary programming of the Youth and Sports Department. Instead, it is recommended that a youth forum is held once a quarter, with a set of structured topics, and strategically selected participants to ensure connectivity in messages across the forums and greater impact.

- **Foster improved collaboration with regional bodies beyond Europe.** While the collaboration with the Council of Europe on convening youth across geographies has been advantageous for both sides, it is important for the LAS to harness lessons through collaboration on a “South-to-South” and “East-to-East” basis with partners in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and East and Southeast Asia.

- **Consolidate and publish existing documentation and databases.** There are a number of documents and statistical databases that have been produced within the Social Affairs Secretariat that are relevant and valuable, including those related to this project. They should be accessible for future projects and to those working on strengthening youth policy in the LAS.

**VI. Proposed Future Collaboration with the World Bank**

22. Following the closure of the AYI, the LAS has proposed the following areas for continued collaboration with the World Bank:

- **Capacity building:** Because the youth NGO stakeholder mapping highlighted gaps in staff capacity building and training, the LAS would like to partner with institutions to provide needed training to NGO staff members in the region. Because most donors finance implementation of youth programs rather than capacity building, this would be an important area for further investment.

- **Volunteering:** Both the youth NGO stakeholder mapping and the strategic assessment identified the lack of a culture of youth volunteerism in the region. This is a growing area of interest for the LAS, which would like to support youth policies on volunteerism in member states and capacity building in this area.

- **Optimization of information management:** As identified by the strategic assessment, the LAS needs to develop a system for information management. The LAS is a huge organization, with numerous departments and activities, and where a tremendous amount of information is generated. In fact, the LAS’s current youth database includes thousands of young people. The LAS would like to develop an internal information management platform to enhance its ability to utilize this information.

- **Youth NGOs:** The LAS proposes to continue to build the Web site and youth stakeholder mapping by expanding to more countries. However, it is important to
emphasize that the World Bank and youth organizations pointed out that the Web site should continue to be managed independently. The LAS is currently identifying potential platforms in the region to host the existing Web site.